

## **NORTH WALES COAST & CONWAY – 15th MARCH 2020**

A group of 18 embarked on a coach trip to the North Wales coast and Conway. We could never have foreseen what was going to happen nationally after this trip when a week later we would all be in lock down and for many self-isolation with the rest of our trips and meetings cancelled for the season. With hindsight, it was certainly a trip to remember.

The weather leading up to this trip had been very wet with flooding across the country but we were fortunate to have a dry forecast for the day ahead.



Gadwall (pair)

Our initial stop was at Rhos on Sea upon looking out onto the coast although the birds were quite some distance away but we could see an array of gulls including common, black headed, herring and great black backed. Kittiwakes, fulmar, gannets, cormorants and shag could be seen flying out at sea. Curlew, oystercatchers and turnstone were spread out along the coastline. Red-breasted merganser, Great Crested Grebe and Scoter were bobbing up and down on the ocean.

Some members of the group opted to walk down to see St Trillo's chapel, which is on the promenade and is reported to be the smallest church in the UK holding only six parishioners.

After this, we headed off to RSPB Conway receiving a warm welcome from the wardens who informed us this was the 25th anniversary year of the reserve. It is a beautiful reserve situated on the east side of the Conway estuary. It was created as compensation for the destruction of areas of wildlife habitat during the construction of the A55 road tunnel between 1986 and 1991. Waste from dredging was dumped on the site, which was later landscaped to create two large lagoons and several smaller ones. The reserve provides good views of the Welsh mountains, Conway Castle and the estuary. We set off on a circular route around the reserve and from the various hides were rewarded with views of a variety of birds including wigeon, goldeneye, shoveler, shelduck, tufted ducks, goldeneye, mute swans, black tailed godwits and a lesser black-backed gull occupying the large lagoons.



Wigeon

Walking around the trail the distinct sound of a water rail could be heard but unsurprisingly there were no confirmed sightings of it. A solitary sand martin was

seen flying over the water the first one of the season for all of us. Blue tits, robin, green finches and gold finch were feasting on the feeders. There were also close up views of the Carneddu ponies, which wander the reserve to keep the grass short for breeding lapwings although there was none to be seen that day.

The last track leading back to the visitor centre runs alongside the estuary with good views of the castle on the other side. On the estuary, there were large groups of curlew and a buzzard flying in the distance. I took some time to sit down on a bench and enjoy the nice weather and fine views. I went off in search a goldcrest that had been seen by some other members in a nearby tree it took me some time but eventually I was rewarded with a nice sighting of it as it flitted about.



Curlews

After Conway, we stopped off at Pensarn where some of the group saw a red-throated diver, which evaded me. The final stop was Rhyl to look up the river, the birds there were an unusually long way away possibly because of all the recent rain and water logging which meant they didn't need to come as close up as usual. However, we managed to spot some Goosander and had a nice view of a seal swimming from the river towards the sea.



Dunnock

In total 69 species of bird were spotted I think it is fair to say we did not see anything unusual. However, given the national situation at the time of writing this report, I really appreciate having been able to get out that day and it was certainly something to look back on in the lockdown period. I am sure I am not alone in looking forward to getting back out on future trips.

*Photos by Robert D*

**ANNETTE R**