

Day Trip Summary

Name of trip: Vale of Mowbray (GBR271)

Date of trip: 16 December 2021

Species highlights (5+): 2 hunting Barn Owls, hundreds of Curlew and Lapwing, Stunning male Goldeneye, Barnacle Goose

Summary of the day: The day started in the car park at Nosterfield Local Nature Reserve at 9.30am. Initially the sun was shining and visibility good, but the temperature was just above freezing. After introductions and a briefing we moved to the viewing screen overlooking the main lake where we enjoyed a selection of birds including several hundred Curlew, a close Redshank and Little Egret. Ducks included Goldeneye, Wigeon, Mallard, Tufted Duck and Teal. After a while a layer of mist appeared, covering the reserve and restricting our view. This lasted about 45 minutes. We set off to walk to the North Lake viewing screen and enroute found an interesting selection of birds in the path-side bushes including Bullfinch, Redwing, Marsh Tit, Long-tailed Tit, Coal Tit, Great Tit and Blue Tit. Once at the North Lake we were pleased that the mist lifted and with a clear sunny sky, the temperature rose. It stayed sunny and still for the rest of the day, which was a real bonus for us being outside on a mid-December day. From the viewing area we enjoyed the number of ducks including our first Shoveler. There were six Grey Herons and lots of Greylag and Canada Geese, and some saw Skylark and Sparrowhawk. On the walk back to the car park we added Song Thrush, Fieldfare and Jackdaw to our ever-growing day list.

From the car park we drove the short distance to Nosterfield Quarry. We started by looking over Lingham Lake from the viewing screen where additions included Great Cormorant, Great Crested and Little Grebes, and Coot. We enjoyed watching many smart male Goldeneye and stunning Pintails, together with an interesting Black Swan. As we watched a skein of Greylag and Canada Geese landed on the lake and we were delighted to find a single Barnacle Goose amongst them. We then had our lunch at the picnic tables.

Next we walked along the footpath to Flasks Lane to view the lake. Once there we increased our gull species adding Common Gull, Herring Gull and Lesser Black-backed Gull to the many Black-headed Gulls we had seen. We then crossed the causeway between Flasks and Kiln Lakes to visit the screen overlooking the Reedbed. In the reedbed area we delighted in watching a small flock of Redpoll feeding on seed heads. We also found a Pied Wagtail and added Gadwall to the duck count. We then returned along the same route.

After a pleasant walk we arrived back at our cars and drove to Masham where we visited the Market Place to make use of the public facilities. We then drove the short distance to Marfield Wetlands where we made a tour of the reserve passing the lakes, crossing the empty stock fields and returning through woodland. Crossing the fields we heard a 'mewing' and on looking up spotted a fine Common Buzzard. As we returned to the woodland path we could glimpse an adjacent meadow where a Barn Owl was spotted quartering the meadow between the trees and the river. We dashed to the fence and were mesmerized as the owl caught what we thought must be a small mammal. Then a second whiter Barn Owl came into view and our delight doubled. As the light was fading we moved back to the path and completed our circuit, but not before adding Willow Tit and Great Spotted Woodpecker to our sightings.

Eventually we arrived back at the car park where we said our goodbyes and departed after an enjoyable day in the Vale of Mowbray.