

## Dungeness 24 /3/ 18

Andrew reported:

36 of us set out on an overcast but mild day. We went straight to the bird observatory on the coast. There were many gulls on the outfall and a number of Great Crested Grebes elsewhere. 3 Gannets flew around behind a buoy, with a Razorbill, Red Throated Diver and Scoter seen flying. A flock of around 70 Brent Geese flew past nearby. Walking back to the coach, most of us had brief, but good views of a Firecrest feeding in the lighthouse garden.

Next, to the ARC pits, where there were Goldeneye, Shelduck, Gadwall and Tufted Ducks. Walking back to the coach we watched a flock of Lapwing and a hunting Sparrowhawk.

As we drove onto the reserve, we saw a Great White Egret alongside 2 horses. At Burrowes Pit there were displaying Goldeneye, Cormorant, Black Backed and Common Gulls, Oystercatcher, Reed Bunting and a male Marsh Harrier hunting along the far bank. A 60 strong flock of Golden Plover flew around looking for somewhere to feed. They were latterly joined by a small group of Dunlin. We kept hearing Sandwich Terns calling without seeing them: we finally realised we were hearing their taped calls to encourage breeding! From Christmas Hide we admired a stunning 'white nun' (male Smew) with a female. Approaching Denge Marsh we puzzled over a perched Buzzard (against the light), then found the Slavonian Grebe. We were thrilled to hear and then see 4 Bearded Tits of both sexes moving through reeds only yards away (thank you, Mark), and a Linnet flock. From the mound viewpoint we heard a Bittern booming (Barbara had glimpsed it landing), and a fleeting Cetti's Warbler. Although we couldn't get to the Bluethroat that was around, we had a good day, seeing 68 species.



Rabbit and Porpoise also listed among the highlights.

Marion wrote to a few new(ish) MBS members and friends who came on this trip. A couple sent photos including prolific bird photographer and Tweeter, Dilshan, who wrote: "I found the trip very useful and people helpful. I sure did manage to see a lot more than I would have seen on my own. I sure will be coming along to the future events."

He'd already Tweeted: "Great trip to Dungeness RSPB reserve with @BirdsMBS" to accompany some gull photos and "Few more shots from Dungeness RSPB trip with @BirdsMBS, fantastic flyby by a group of Golden Plovers and a very distant Buzzard."

Another wrote: "I thought it was an excellent trip. The highlights for me were the Smew and Firecrest, so it was well worth the trip for them let alone everything else we saw! It's great for me to go out with expert birders and they never seem to get fed up with me asking, 'What's that?..... What's that?...' I can't wait for the next one!"