

Minsmere 19/5/18

Andrew reported:

41 of us arrived on a warm sunny day. There were 40-50 Sand Martins around the sandy bank where they often nest en masse. In the scrub to our right we could hear Blackcap, Chiffchaff and (fleetingly) Willow Warbler singing. There were several Barnacle Geese near North Hide, then, in the open on the North Wall, we scanned unsuccessfully for the nesting Stone Curlew, but saw and heard Linnets and Whitethroat. At the reedbed we saw Reed Bunting and heard Reed Warblers, then Jean found a Bittern hunting on the edge of a pool only 40 metres away.



We watched enthralled for several minutes: it was either a 'lifer' or 'my best ever view' for most of us. Although views were brilliant to the naked eye (Marion's photo of the watchers) it wasn't that easy to take a photo! (Dilshan's view of the Bittern)



Onto the dunes and the sea, which was quiet: gulls, Common Terns and Scoter - found by Otto. Some saw another Bittern flying along the seawall, being mobbed by a gull, and several Swallows. On the scrapes there were Black-Tailed Godwits, numbers of Mediterranean Gulls, Little and Sandwich Terns, large numbers of Kittiwakes, Ringed Plover, Dunlin, Turnstone, a smart summer plumage Grey Plover, Shelduck and Shoveler. Near the sluice a lovely pair of Green Hairstreak butterflies, courtesy of Jan, and a Stonechat. A Cuckoo dashed around us, and we watched

Skylarks ascending. We found 4-5 Hobbies hunting over the reedbed, and a Marsh Harrier. Island Mere was quiet, though we saw Otter prints underneath, and heard several more Willow Warblers and a snatch of Bearded Tit. At the Bittern Hide we saw another one flying, had a brief view of a Water Rail in the open, and watched a Hobby hunting. One or two people caught up with both Stone Curlew and Dartford Warbler. In all the group saw 81 species.

Marion added:

Mark was more persistent in his search for Stone Curlew as he couldn't go on our trip to Weeting Heath. He found 2 Stone Curlew and a chick on a field west of the Scotts Hall intersection. Someone else walked across to Dunwich Heath – where we'd decided not to have our optional coach stop on this occasion – and was rewarded by seeing 3 Dartford Warblers including one singing just 10ft away. He also had a Bittern flying over and a Common Scoter.