

MBS coach trip to Pegwell Bay and Sandwich Bay Bird Observatory 28/1/17

January 28th 2017 and no surprise the weather was less than inspiring. But a promise of a day birding in fine company was enough to cajole myself and 35 MBS trippers to get out there. First twitch of the day, find the Andersons Coach among the flock of identical coaches lined up next to Euston Station. Check.

Stop 1. Pegwell Bay. A place I visited last Summer whilst on an entomological field trip. This time however my sweep net was replaced with binoculars and summer insects with winter birds. The two are of course intrinsically linked and fascinating to me in equal measure. Retracing my summertime footsteps, looking out across the lagoons and marshy shoreline were Widgeon, Teal, Gadwall, Lapwing etc, a variety of the usual dabblers and waders. 3 types of Gull - Black-headed, Common, Herring. Around this time the sun made an appearance. Then an excited call from Andrew had everyone transfixed on a stunning Peregrine eating her lunch (a tiny wader by the look of it) on a spit of shore further out in the bay. One of the reasons bird outings such as these are so nice is the thoughtful nature of more experienced birders to share general knowledge and their scopes, in an attempt to make sure everyone gets a good view and a little info on special birds.



Stop 2. Sandwich Bay Bird Observatory. An introductory talk by the warden was followed by the heartbreaking moment the MBS had to split into three groups to wander the reserve. I went with the hustle and bustle and with a little "strategic standing" I ended up in Andrew's group. Good job too as I believe we were lucky to see the White-fronted Geese from The Scrape Hide. We passed at least 16 Curlew in the first field adjacent to the Observatory Centre before we got to the hide. An interesting

moment when two of the three MBS groups went head to head along the foot path, like 'binoculars at dawn' it was. We were first into the Scrape Hide and a beautiful sight to behold. Waders and ducks packed every inch of the panoramic hide windows. Some of the best views of Snipe were had here by everyone as they prodded their way along the closest edge of the scrape, right next to the hide. A soothing scene and perfect place



to sit and eat lunch. It was at this moment that a large flock of Graylag Geese flew in to settle on the water. We counted 13 of the smaller White-fronts among them to the delight of those of us in the hide.

A stroll along the sea front gave some of the group views of Turnstones and Common Seals. Stonechat seemed to follow us around the remaining walk across the golf course with Fieldfare lining the edges of the final stretch back towards the centre. Self-serve tea and a chance to catch up with the 'rival' groups before the coach back revealed everyone had a great day.

Dawn Painter. More pictures at <https://www.flickr.com/photos/mbsbirds/albums/72157680286533566>