

MBS Pulborough Brooks Coach Trip, 23 November 2019.

Steve Ripley writes:

About 25 MBS members and friends were on the coach arriving at Pulborough Brooks RSPB Reserve at around 10a.m. The usual Leader Andrew was unavailable, so Gaye and Steve shared the Leadership duties in best MBS fashion, with a loose group of a dozen or so following them. From the viewing point outside the visitor centre some of us had brief views of ring-tailed (i.e. female or juvenile) Hen Harrier. Later, groups of Redwings kept their distance as we approached.



Further on, Mark drew our attention to some distant Bullfinch in the trees to our right. By the time I had my scope on the first, we were treated to 3 males and 1 female all in the same scope view. ("lucky her!" someone muttered). Later the trees in this area were to yield good views of Fieldfare.

We moved to Fattengates Courtyard with mixed tit flocks, and then worked our way clockwise round the hides and viewpoints. Feeders en route gave us good views of Nuthatch, and brief views of Coal Tit.

The first hide produced half-a-dozen elegant Pintail in good light.

We managed to avoid the worst shower of the day in a hide and the lunch stop was enlivened when one of our number called Barn Owl, which was rapidly upgraded to Short-Eared Owl. We were treated to a brief view, but most of us got on this bird again from the next hide along, watching the bird quartering along a bank.

We had good views of Kestrel and Great Spotted Woodpecker one above the other on the "Peregrine tree". The Kestrel, a male (grey head) later flew towards us and perched directly above us, affording good, rather unusual views. We were also treated to a low overfly by a Red Kite. Graeme spotted a bird which turned out to be a hybrid, Ruddy Shelduck x Common Shelduck.



Having arrived early, it had been a long day. At 3p.m. most of us partook of the Tea, Coffee and Traybake that had been laid on in the classroom for us by the RSPB, presumably in an effort to avoid crowding the main Café area. Our initial misgivings regarding administration and change soon proved groundless as a pile of notes and coins grew in front of Jean, who had volunteered to collect the payments for the refreshments.

I was lucky enough to get good views of the Hen Harrier again shortly before boarding the coach, and Jean managed to add a Barn Owl to the list.

With 75 species seen, and the rain mostly avoided, it was another good day at this always-reliable reserve.

You can see more photos of the outing on <https://www.facebook.com/groups/MBS2020/>.