

MBS trip to Titchfield Haven October 22nd 2016



Andrew's report of the day:

It was a beautiful sunny autumnal day. Our first birds were Turnstones feeding in groups on the shingle only feet away as we got off the coach. We walked along boardwalks through woodland and carr to the first hide, hearing tits and Goldcrests on route.

From the Meadow Hide, looking out over rough pasture, hedges and water, we had good views of a male Stonechat, a Buzzard on a post, and, more distantly, Lapwing, Teal, and several Pintail on a pool. Next we saw a distant Marsh Harrier hunting which was putting the waterbirds to flight while Stock Doves and Jays squabbled on the ground and a Kestrel hovered overhead.

The day was notable for numerous views of Water Rails walking about in the open. We saw 5-6 individuals - lovely to see this generally 'secretive' bird so well as they spend most of their time in reedbeds. Similarly, we had good views of numbers of Snipe.



We had our lunch sitting on the harbour wall, watching small groups of Brent Geese feeding at the waterline 60 metres away, together with Oystercatchers. A Little Egret potted about in the shallows, a group of around 15 Wigeon were resting on the sea and a Grey Heron flapped about.

Looking at reed-fringed pools from the road, on the way to the Scrapes Trail after lunch, we saw Dabchicks, Black-Tailed Godwits and Redshank. A Kingfisher flashed by, and Bearded Tits called nearby. From a hide a Sparrowhawk flashed in front of us, flying inches above the ground. Later we had great views of a flock of Golden Plover, first at rest in a pool, then dashing about in a flock, alternating their yellow tops with their white undersides as they banked and wheeled about 'like a murmuration' as somebody said. We saw a Chiffchaff, and heard numbers of Cetti's Warblers. We finished the day seeing a dozen roosting Ringed Plovers on the beach, followed by a Marsh Harrier hunting, and a group of Pintail flying around.

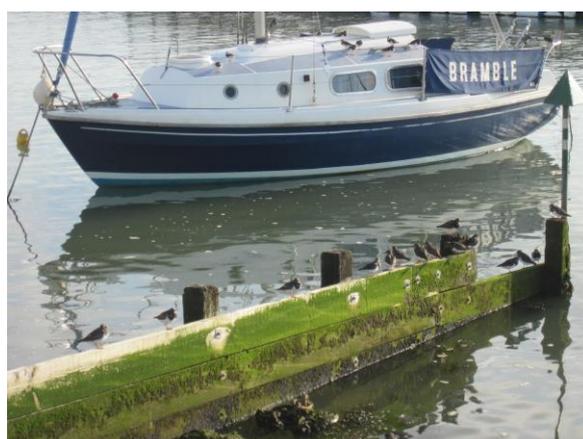
Marion adds:

We'd only been to Titchfield Haven once before – in 2009 – and some of us wondered why it had taken 6 years for us to return. The sunshine helped!

Highlights for me included the close sunlit views of the Stonechat and indeed Jays we saw from the Meadow Hide. I was also delighted to see two Water Rail from the first hide we came to, the Suffern Hide, ... and then another couple of sightings later in the day. Plus views of Snipe.

Flying flocks of waders are always impressive. We were about to move on when I noticed a flock of waders fly up. I was pleased to be able to identify the Lapwings but Andrew said there were also Golden Plover. He was just explaining how to distinguish one from the other when the smaller birds gathered and veered off leaving us with two distinct flocks to compare and contrast as they banked and wheeled around in the sunshine.

Some of us, as ever on these birding trips, ensured we broke away from the main party in time to return to the visitor centre for refreshments and a bit of shopping. And we still had time for a last look at the Turnstones, having now, with the tide in, abandoned turning stones in favour of higher perches.



We had reached the reserve by 10.30am – even with a 20-minute break at motorway services half way. On board entertainment included information sheets and announcements about Titchfield Haven and about forthcoming MBS events, a bumper bag of Fairtrade snacks from Traidcraft for sale – notably Liberation Nuts this National Nut Day and the raffle – with a 2nd prize of Fairtrade nuts in addition to the main prize of a voucher for an MBS coach trip. We left sunny Titchfield Haven at 4 and were back at Euston by 6.30pm well content with our day out.

This was our first trip of the new Sept16 – June17 MBS season and the first to offer PayPal payment in addition to the traditional form, cheque and stamped addressed envelope system. There were a few glitches we'll need to work on and it was a bit scary to have a half-empty coach a week or so ahead and then wondering if we'd end up overbooked with last minute calls. Sadly, some people were not able to join us on the day but the coach felt quite full with 36 of us. We were pleased to meet again MBS coach regulars and also to welcome newcomers and some who'd been out with us once before years ago... We hope they will return. Next trip 5th November to Minsmere.