

Walthamstow Wetlands MBS Local Outing Sat 17/3/18

With a yellow warning for snow and ice and a “breezy” forecast, we were pleasantly surprised to find ourselves a group of 10 for this month’s Local Outing. There had indeed been some snow early morning but it wasn’t really settling except on grass. The weather could have been worse ... but it was certainly COLD!

It was our first official MBS visit to the new LWT reserve which opened to the general public (as opposed to fishermen and birdwatchers with permits) last autumn. Years ago, we did visit the Walthamstow Reservoirs but for many of us it was the first time we’d seen the Visitor Centre with its welcome café, loos and shop.

Joyce and Gaye were our joint leaders. They’d done a recce on the previous Thursday – in fine weather when there were lots of small birds in the bushes near the centre. From the viewing balcony we did see, on or near the feeders, Chaffinch, Great Tit, Long-tailed Tit, Dunnock and Wren. We also saw Robin and Blue Tit but, for the most part, the birds were keeping under cover and we were too cold to linger looking for them.

We did stop a while near the seed tray where a Little Bunting has been reported daily for some time. It had been seen about an hour earlier and someone was periodically chasing off Canada and Greylag Geese in the hope it would return... more on that later...

Sharyn was, however, able to photograph a Reed Bunting on this first visit and a few people saw a small group of Linnets as we left this spot.



There was a bitterly cold wind while we walked on the higher level alongside the East Warwick Reservoir. We went as far as we could go towards the currently closed Coppermill Tower, glad to take steps down to a lower slightly more sheltered area. It was here near Touchstone No 6 The Roundhouse that we saw Blackbird and Song Thrush. We returned to the Visitor Centre via a path between other Reservoirs. We found it too cold to count birds and no one was willing to stop with Steve to check out an elusive Little Grebe which might have been...

We did see Pied Wagtail, Grey Heron, Shoveler, Pochard, Mallard, Tufted Duck, Little Grebe, Great Crested Grebe, Coot, Moorhen and Mute Swan. Among the mostly Black-headed Gulls, we identified some Herring, Lesser and Great Black-backed Gulls. There were Canada and Greylag Geese and fewer but very noticeable Egyptian Geese, notably one pair on a nest high up in the heronry. One grassless “ghost island” with bare trees reminded me that it was probably here that I first saw inland Cormorants in any great number. I thought that, on this occasion, we’d only noticed the odd pair but Catherine’s photo of “the Cormorant nesting site” reveals a few more! Other birds seen were Crows, Wood Pigeons, Parakeets and one Magpie.



Just after midday, we were already back at the Visitor Centre. As we entered the café – to warm up and have lunch or cuppa + cake – we saw through the window a Great Spotted Woodpecker on a tree near the feeders. Sharyn also added Goldfinch to our list of small birds.

After some discussion, despite the warning it would be even colder, all 10 of us went across Ferry Lane to the Reservoirs beyond the Maynard Entrance. You can see how choppy the waters were.



It was at the top of this mound that Gaye took a picture of half the group which she posted on Facebook in the evening.



Frances took a slightly different combination of "intrepid MBS folk".



We didn't spend long on this side of the reserve but we did add Teal and a pair of Gadwall to our list.

Back at Ferry Lane the group split up, some going home. We later discovered by Tweet that Steve and John had disappeared into The Ferryboat by an open fire!

Joyce, Gaye, Linda and I returned to the seed tray for one final look for the Little Bunting – and this time we were in luck! In the evening I found a Tweet from Shaun Ferguson @sferguk which had fortunately been re-tweeted by LWT: I haven't been that cold in ages, couldn't feel my toes or hands but we stuck it out for the main prize! Showed twice in 4.5hrs 1st time for 10sec but enough for me to ID it and then the 2nd it showed beautifully at 14:00 today.

This was one of his pictures showing all 3 birds we saw: Linnet, Little Bunting and Reed Bunting.



I responded: So pleased [@WildLondon](#) retweeted these pics by [@sferguk](#) - 4 lucky [@BirdsMBS](#) members were present when they were taken. The full group of 10 on our Local Outing to [@E17Wetlands](#) had missed the Little Bunting in the morning but 4 of us paid a return visit just at the right time.

And Shaun replied: Aaahhh I'm so glad you ladies came back AT THE RIGHT TIME for a 2nd look. I believe it was a lifer for one of you too congrats. Here's the vid BTW, that's you all chatting in the background! Lol. https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=8&v=BeqQfdmVI40

I think I recognised Gaye's laugh and on 2nd viewing heard myself mention Reed Buntings.



Frances commented that the thought of warmth outweighed pursuing the possibility of seeing the Scaup but seeing Shaun's photos of the Scaup on Reservoir 4, I'm convinced we did see it - showing more white than the surrounding Tufted Duck.

We didn't see the Goldeneye, Sand Martin, Green Sandpiper, Red Kite, Wheatear or Water Rail reported the day before but I think we all enjoyed our visit in spite of the bitter cold weather. Especially those of us who saw the Little Bunting!