

FRIENDS OF CROSSNESS NATURE RESERVE BIRD WALK, 19th SEPTEMBER 2019.

Are birdwatchers ever satisfied with the weather? Mid-September, clear blue skies, warm sunshine and fourteen Friends of Crossness Nature reserve joined Karen, Brenda and I for what was promoted as a walk for autumn migrant birds! If only we'd had this weather for the Spring/summer walks we'd be more than happy. However a clear, still night had allowed all migrants to embark on their long, south bound journeys unhindered and without the need for a stopover. A brief view of a flying yellow wagtail was the only real evidence of a "migrant". Not that that deterred or disappointed us. Within minutes of our walk towards the river we were watching families of goldfinches, a lesser whitethroat, two, probably 3 male blackcaps, dunnock, robin, blue tits, great tits and linnets along with many migrant hawk dragonflies.

Two peregrines sat in the shade high up on the Cory RRRF incinerator – they were still there when we left some four hours later. Approaching the river we looked back to view the barn owl peeping out of the box – a view certainly enhanced by the use of telescopes.

With low tide timed for lunchtime we'd hoped for less mud and more birds close to but it turned out to be the other way round. With the sun behind us we did have wonderful views of the redshank, black-tailed godwits (a few still showing some orange plumage), cormorants, grey heron and 100's of black-headed gulls – all adults which generated some discussion and unanswered questions of where the first year birds were? We searched for yellow-legged gulls but only found lesser black-backed. Of course, the loud call of Cetti's warblers provided a background soundtrack to the whole morning and one was briefly seen in the riverside reeds. We searched the ducks, with many teal but fewer mallard and gadwall and two juvenile great crested grebes but not a single shelduck. Are they all in the German Bight/Heligoland on the Waddensea moulting? Just before leaving the river a common sandpiper gave great views for everyone.

Back on the reserve we decided to head for the horse paddocks in the hope of migrants searching for vital food before continuing their journeys – it was not to be. Only a hunting kestrel being mobbed by magpies was of note.

It was much the same story for the Protected Area – with just a mobile tit flock, mostly blue and long-tailed being seen. Karen was able to update on some future works including the site for a new reptile hibernaculum. More migrant hawkers, a few darters, small and green-veined white butterflies, one speckled wood made up the other wildlife seen and then to end the morning two hobbys circled, dived and darted overhead for quite a few minutes – fantastic. Then it was lunchtime – nobody left early.

Thanks Karen for hosting the morning.

Birds seen: Great crested grebe, cormorant, grey heron, Canada geese, gadwall, teal, mallard, kestrel, hobby, peregrine falcon, pheasant, moorhen, coot, black-tailed godwit, redshank, common sandpiper, black-headed gull, lesser black-backed gull, stock dove, woodpigeon, barn owl, green woodpecker (heard), yellow wagtail, wren, dunnock, robin, blackbird, Cetti's warbler, lesser whitethroat, blackcap, chiffchaff, long-tailed tit, blue tit, great tit, magpie, carrion crow, starling, goldfinch, linnet. 39 species seen/heard.