

Bird Watching at Thorpe Park on Tuesday 16th January 2024

There was a good turn-out for this popular walk around Thorpe Park lakes on a very cold, but sunny morning. Everyone was well wrapped up as advised by Peter! We were met by Andy Plumbly who had opened the gate and issued us with high viz vests because of some traffic on the site.

While waiting to begin, a Robin was spotted hopping around the car park. There were also some flying around the frozen lake, together with a Blackbird and a Chaffinch in the trees. The Chaffinch was later joined by some Long-tailed Tits and in the taller trees at the opposite end of the lake were a couple of Wood Pigeons .

While we were standing looking over the lake, we were very pleased to see several Lapwings flying overhead. In the tops of the alder trees Siskins were seen flitting about.

We spent a long time looking at all the water birds on the lake as there were so many! With the help of the telescopes for clarification I am now better abler to distinguish the various water fowl. We saw a large flock of Tufted Ducks with a couple of Pochard swimming alongside them. There were Teal, Wigeon and Gadwall. As the Gadwall were quite close it was lovely to see their beautiful colouring, which, from a distance, just looks a dull brown.

A Cormorant seemed to be following a regular route from one end of the lake to the other. Whether it was the same one or not we can't be sure as later on a huge number were seen gathered together on a raft.

At the far end of the lake a couple of Great Crested Grebes were seen doing a courtship display. We later got an even better view in front of us. They seemed to perform a sequence of head bobs and shakes before going off in different directions. Sadly, there didn't seem to be any weed for them to offer to each other

There were several gulls in the lake most of which were Black-headed but a Common Gull and a Herring Gull were also seen. A Magpie also flew overhead.

We then had some more excitement as Geoff had spotted several Snipe at the margin of the lake in the distance all huddled together. We certainly would not have been able to see them without the benefit of the telescopes and Ron and Geoff's expertise in knowing where to look. They were usually to be found pecking around in the mud at the edge of the reeds, but this had been submerged with the rising water levels recently. There was also a single Grey Heron on the bank, easily spotted from afar as a white blob.

A strange call, rather like a pig squealing was heard which was a Water Rail, not to be seen however.

We turned round the corner to have a look at the other lake and we pleased to see a Shoveler sleeping at the foot of some branches hanging in the lake. Moving back again an Egret must have been disturbed by us, as it flew off away from the lake.

We were also able to get a closer view of the latest Thorpe Park rollercoaster. – Hyperia , at 72 metres tall it will be the UK's tallest and fastest ride!

The alder trees on the right-hand side of the path proved to be haven for lots of little birds such as Siskin and a Goldcrest. There seemed to be several Tree Creepers moving up and down from one tree to another. Another highlight of our morning however was seeing a couple of Redpoll. At the top of the alder were a couple of Siskin and also two other birds which we thought at first were also Siskin. The red colour we thought at first was the effect of the bright sunlight, but on closer inspection the bright red colour on its head and breast confirmed that it was a Redpoll.

Finally, a little Wren appeared flitting in the undergrowth – to end a lovely, peaceful morning in the outdoors summed up by this lovely poem sent to me by Sue

“The Peace of Wild Things”

“When despair for the world grows in me and I wake in the night at the least sound in fear of what my life and my children’s lives may be.

I go and lie down where the wood drake rests in his beauty on the water, and the great heron feeds.

I come into the peace of wild things who do not tax their lives with forethought of grief. I come into the presence of still water.

And I feel above me the day-blind stars waiting with their light. For a time, I rest in the grace of the world, and I am free.”

Wendell Berry

We had a lovely morning, Barbara.



The happy band



Gadwall



Cormorant



Redpoll



Great Crested Grebe

Photographs by Lorna Walding