

Bird Watching on Staines Moor

Tuesday 17th September

We were pleased to find that the moor had dried up significantly after the very hot summer. It was a sunny but quite blustery morning.

While we were waiting to start, Geoff had spotted two Jays in the trees opposite.

Three Buzzards were soaring above. Later we saw one hovering with slower wing beats than Kestrels. Later on we did see a Kestrel hovering too, travelling a great distance between hovers. A Moorhen was swimming along the river.

The most enjoyable part of the walk for me was seeing all the House Martins, Sand Martins and Swallows swooping backwards and forwards in search of insects. Our RSPB friends helped us distinguish between the birds. The Martins are smaller and chunkier than the Swallows, with blue-black upper parts and a tell-tale white rump. Swallows have a red throat and a distinctive long, forked tail.

There were also flocks of Linnets flying from one group of brambles to another. Fortunately, one male did perch on a branch for a while so we could see its distinctive crimson chest. (An obscure fact useful for quizzers: - A flock of Linnets is called a *parcel*.) Flocks of Goldfinches were also seen, as well as many Starlings flitting in the bramble bushes.

There were occasional sightings of Meadow Pipits, and the loud call of a Cetti's Warbler was heard.

The horses on our walk were very friendly including one "pied horse"!

We spent a while looking at a Green Woodpecker searching for insects in the grass.

Sadly, I missed some of these birds– but a couple of Sparrowhawks were seen and a wren calling in the bushes.

Just as we were leaving two Stock Doves were seen flying along the trees. It seems that Stock Dove populations have been steadily increasing thanks to a ban of a pesticide in the 1970s.