South–West Scotland 21-23 January 2025

Our first holiday of the year was to Dumfries, Scotland and we visited three reserves on the Solway Firth. This is one of Britain's largest estuaries and is of international importance for wildfowl and waders. It consists of large areas of saltmarsh, bog, wet grassland and farmland.

We left Lincoln at 8 am with 25 members and headed for Campfield Marsh in Cumbria on the English side of the Solway Firth. We had a break at a Farm Shop on the A66 and arrived at the reserve at 1 pm. In the trees and bushes near the Visitor Centre we saw Rooks, Jackdaws, House Sparrows, Tree Sparrows, Chaffinches, a Pied Wagtail, Woodpigeon, Blackbird, Blue Tit, Great Tit and Reed Bunting.

We then went along the track towards Bowness Common and at the first hide overlooking the wet meadows we spotted a Little Egret, Curlew, Black-tailed Godwit, Redshank, Ruff, Grey Heron, Common Snipe and Lapwings. Also there were Canada Geese, Greylag Geese, Mallards, Wigeons, Shovelers, Pintails, Gadwalls and Teals. On the grass banks we found Redwings, a Mistle Thrush, Starlings and Carrion Crows. Further along the track a Robin, Pheasant, Sparrowhawk, Great Spotted Woodpecker and Common Buzzard were seen and we had a great view of a male Stonechat. We then returned to the main road where we could view the Solway Firth. The tide was a very long way out but we managed to find a Red-breasted Merganser, Goldeneye, Common Gull, two Great Black-backed Gulls, Black-headed Gulls, Herring Gulls, Oystercatchers, Shelducks and Dunlins. A large skein of Pink-footed Geese came over and we had a good view of a Peregrine Falcon flying over the beach. A Stock Dove was spotted in a nearby tree and one person reported the sighting of a male Bullfinch further down the road.

Soon it was time to go to our hotel in Dumfries but shortly after setting off a Barn Owl was spotted quartering a field on the road side. What a superb ending to a lovely day.

On the second day we went to RSPB Mersehead which is on the Solway Firth approximately 17 miles from Dumfries. On arrival we went to the feeding station where saw Tree and House Sparrows, Chaffinches, Goldfinches, a Greenfinch, Coal Tit, Blue Tit, Great Tit and Dunnock. We then set off along the Wetland Trail where we found a male Bullfinch, Wren, Robin, Dunnock, Yellowhammer and Linnets.



The white Barnacle Goose at Mersehead

This reserve attracts thousands of Barnacle Geese and we were soon viewing large flocks of them in the fields. One of the flocks also contained a white Barnacle Goose. We saw the same wildfowl as the previous day with the addition of a Mute Swan and Greylag Geese. A Great White Egret, female Marsh Harrier and Red Kite, also new birds, were spotted and we again saw a Peregrine Falcon. Further along the Wetland Trail we came to a picnic area and we had excellent views of Siskin, Nuthatch, Goldcrest, and Treecreeper. Other birds seen were Meadow Pipits, Skylarks, Curlews, Lapwings, Magpies, Pheasants, Rooks, Carrion Crows, a Little Egret, Grey Heron, Herring Gull and Song Thrush.

On the final day we left the hotel and went to Caerlaverock Wetland Centre which is also on the Solway Firth. It was a dismal, wet day but we did see some new birds such as Collared Doves, Little Grebe, Water Rail, Moorhen, Kingfisher, Merlin and Whooper Swans, which are fed daily. The same wildfowl were there and also Redshanks, Little Egrets, Blackbirds, Great Tits, Chaffinches, Tree Sparrows, a Robin, Dunnock, Greenfinch, Common Snipe and Common Buzzard.

In view of the weather we left early and arrived back in Lincoln at approximately 7.50 pm. We had a great time, the weather was good, apart from the final day and we saw 78 bird species. Our thanks go to Geoff and Graham for organising the holiday and to our driver Keith.

Ray Daniels
RSPB Lincoln Local Group

Far Ings Nature Reserve – 16 February 2025

Our first field trip this year was to Far Ings Nature Reserve which is on the Humber Bank. It is managed by Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust and it consists of a chain of flooded clay pits and extensive reedbeds. There were 47 people on the coach and the weather was dry but cold.

We alighted from the coach and before we split up into our small groups two Marsh Harriers were spotted flying above Pursuit Pit and a Kestrel was hovering above the car park. In the trees and bushes near the car park there were Chaffinches, Blue Tits, Great Tits, Woodpigeons, Carrion Crows, a Blackbird, Magpie and Robin. On the water we saw a Cormorant and Mallards. Our group then headed for Barton Reedbed to see if we could find a Bearded Tit. We managed to see a male and female in the reeds and there were Goldfinches, Dunnocks, a Song Thrush and Wren in the trees and bushes. Three Curlews also flew over.



Roe Deer taken at Far Ings

We then walked along the Humber Bank and on the shore we saw Redshanks, Wigeons, Gadwalls, two Whooper Swans and a Common Gull. When we arrived at Ness Pit we re-entered the Reserve and from the various hides we spotted Greylag Geese, Canada Geese, Mute Swans, Goldeneyes, Teals, Shovelers, Tufted Ducks, Pochards, Great Crested Grebes, Little Grebes, Coots and Moorhens.

Other birds seen by some members of the group were a Green Woodpecker, Bittern, Water Rail, Grey Heron, Goldcrest, Bullfinch, Treecreeper and Reed Bunting. This brought our total bird species for the day to 44. Some Ro Deer and an Otter were also spotted.

Ray Daniels
RSPB Lincoln Local Group

Cley Marshes NWT – 16 March 2025

Our day trip in March was to Cley Marsh in Norfolk and 31 people were on the coach. The reserve is owned by the Norfolk Wildlife Trust and is comprised of extensive reedbeds, pools, scrapes and grazing meadows. It also has an excellent Visitor Centre and café which overlook the reserve.

Firstly we went to the observation balcony at the centre where we were able to view part of the reserve. In the car park there were Goldfinches, Blackbirds, a Dunnock, Robin, and Woodpigeon. From the balcony we saw a Marsh Harrier quartering the reedbed and on and around the pools we spotted Shelducks, Shovelers, Wigeons, Gadwalls, Teals and Lapwings. Some White-fronted Geese were also spotted on the far side of the reeds so we made our way to the three hides in the reedbeds to get a better view. They were soon found with the telescopes and were identified as Lesser White-fronted Geese which was a first for many of the group. We also saw a Grey Heron, Ruff, Turnstone, Little Egret, Common Snipe, Pied Wagtail, Common Gull, Starlings, Mute Swans and Mallards.



Spoonbill taken at Cley Marshes

We then went to the East Bank and on the way a Spoonbill dropped into one of the pools. Several Curlews and Brent Geese were flying over he marsh and a Moorhen and Little Grebe were seen in one of the drains. A Common Buzzard was spotted above the distant woodlands and some of us managed to get a glimpse of a very well hidden Jack Snipe in the reeds. Other birds added to the list were Pintails, Pochards, Cormorants, Black-headed Gulls, Carrion Crows, an Egyptian Goose, Barnacle Goose, Crane and Skylark. Some Brown Hares and a Common Lizard were also seen by a few of the group. The total number of bird species seen by the group was 46.

Ray Daniels
RSPB Lincoln Local Group

RSPB Old Moor – 13 April 2025

In April 36 members of our group went to the RSPB Reserve of Old Moor which is located in the Dearne Valley near Doncaster. It consists of lakes, damp grassland, copses and reedbeds and there are excellent visitor-friendly facilities. Unfortunately, we arrived later than planned but the weather was dry with sunny periods and we had a very enjoyable day.

After visiting the café and facilities we went on the Green Lane Loop where there are five hides overlooking the Mere and pools. In the trees and bushes alongside the footpath Blackcaps, Chiffchaffs, Robins and Wrens were singing and the unmistakeable sound of a Cetti's Warbler was heard. From the various hides we saw Black-headed Gulls, Pochards, Mallards, Tufted Ducks, Shovelers, Teals, Gadwalls, Goosanders, Shelducks, Greylag Geese, Canada Geese and Mute Swans. The waders spotted were Redshanks, Oystercatchers, Lapwings and a close view of a Common Snipe. Other water birds seen were Coots, Moorhens, a pair of Great Crested Grebes and a Little Grebe. There was also the possible sighting of a Black-necked Grebe but it was too far away to make a positive identification.



Redshank

We also saw a Kestrel, Marsh Harrier, Cormorant, Herring Gull, Lesser Black-backed Gull, Grey Heron, Pied Wagtail, Pheasant and Starlings. We then made our way to the Discovery Trail and stopped at the Feeding Station on the way. Here we found Great Tits, Blue Tits, Greenfinches, Goldfinches, Chaffinches, a Dunnock, Robin, male Bullfinch and male Reed Bunting. We then went to the Bittern Hide which overlooks the reedbeds and a Marsh Harrier was quartering the reeds. Sand Martins were also flying over the water and a Little Egret was spotted among the reeds. A few House Martins were seen and a Common Buzzard was flying above the trees.

Other birds seen throughout the day were Jackdaws, Woodpigeons, Carrion Crows, Magpies, Rooks, a Stock Dove, Grey Wagtail, Great Spotted Woodpecker and Willow Warbler. A Bittern was booming and one person caught a glimpse of it flying. This brought our total species seen to 54.

Ray Daniels
RSPB Lincoln Local Group

RSPB The Lodge, Sandy, Bedfordshire - 11 May 2025

Thirty-six members and students left Lincoln to visit the Lodge nature reserve at Sandy on a lovely, warm sunny morning. The Lodge contains the RSPB Headquarters buildings, and the group had a sighting of these as our coach traversed the site before parking up.

The nature reserve consists of the largest area of heathland in Bedfordshire, extensive of both deciduous and conifer woodland and former quarries. There are also some small pools. Close to the main entrance there are the RSPB shop, café, toilets and information point.

The group then split up into smaller groups, some heading immediately to the café where there was an extensive range of teas, coffees and delicious cakes. The small party I was with decided to forgo this pleasure until later in the day!



Spotted Flycatcher

We first visited the information point where a very helpful staff member told us what had been seen on the reserve. She pointed out where ravens were nesting in a tall tree about 200 metres from where we were standing. Almost immediately we looked up at the sound of 'Croink, Croink' to see one of the Ravens flying above us! This was followed by seeing a Red Kite and Buzzard soaring above us. We were then told

that a Spotted Flycatcher had been seen earlier in some oak trees close to the bridleway through the site so we headed off to see if we could find it. We were very fortunate that a local, very helpful, birder had located the whereabouts of the bird and was scanning the canopy to try and locate it. The oak tree foliage was very dense, so it was very difficult to get onto the bird, but first one and later all of our party managed to see the bird. To most of us this was the bird of the day. This was closely followed by a sighting through the tree canopy of our first Hobby of the day.

After this successful morning it was time for a return to the café for some very welcome coffee and cake/scone or ice creams! Suitably refreshed, we set out in the afternoon for two of the main trails over the Heathland and through the woodland. We had a chorus of warblers throughout the walk with many Chiffchaffs, Blackcaps, Garden Warblers, Whitethroats and a single Willow Warbler being heard but rarely seen. Also seen were a succession of Red Kites, another Hobby, a Sparrowhawk, a Kestrel and a pair of Sand Martins.

Return to the car park allowed us to identify some of the smaller tits and finches whilst enjoying a welcome rest after a very warm day. Return was at 5.30 pm after a great day's birding.

During the day we saw or heard the following birds: Jackdaw, Canada Goose, Greylag Goose, Goldfinch, Robin, Blackcap, Red Kite, Chiffchaff, Carrion Crow, Whitethroat, Buzzard, Raven, Garden Warbler, Great Tit, Chaffinch, Wren, Green Woodpecker, Stock Dove, Hobby, Pheasant, Rook, Sand Martin, Kestrel, Goldcrest, Sparrowhawk, Blue Tit, Great Spotted Woodpecker, Woodpigeon, Spotted Flycatcher, Blackbird, Willow Warbler and Mistle Thrush.

Thanks to Geoff, Graham and Roger for organising an excellent day's birding.

Pete Dryburgh
RSPB Lincoln Local Group

Three Counties Tour – June 2025

In June 29 people from our Group went on a four-day holiday to Somerset. We visited Avalon Marshes, Seaton Wetlands, Ham Wall Nature Reserve and Langford Lakes. We left Lincoln at approximately 7.50 am and despite a delay of an hour on the M5 we arrived at Avalon Marshes Centre at 2.05 pm. This is part of the Somerset Levels and consists of lakes, reedbeds, fens and woodland. It is steeped in history and parts of the Neolithic Sweet Track, the oldest man-made route way in Britain, still exist on the Reserve.

It was raining and we decided to visit the hide overlooking the Decoy Lake. The woodlands gave some shelter and we heard and saw Goldfinches, Chiffchaffs, Willow Warblers, Blackcaps, Robins and Blackbirds. On and around the lake we saw Mute Swans, a Black Swan, Mallards, Coots, Great Crested Grebes, Greylag Geese and a Great White Egret. Swifts were flying around and we also spotted a Cuckoo, Red Kite, Sparrowhawk and two Common Buzzards. Other birds seen were a Pied Wagtail, Jay, Pheasant, Magpie, Carrion Crows, House Sparrows and Long-tailed Tits. A Water Rail was also heard and after a pleasant couple of hours we returned to the coach and made our way to the Shrubbery Hotel at Ilminster.

The next day, Thursday, was a lovely sunny day and we went to Seaton Wetlands on the Devon coast. This reserve consists of marshland and reedbeds alongside the River Axe. Also, the Seaton Tramway runs alongside the River Axe and a day ticket was included so we were able to use the tram throughout the day to visit various parts of the reserve and the lovely town of Colyton. There are five hides and 4km of trails throughout the reserve and we saw many different birds from those seen the day before. On the river there were Oystercatchers, Cormorants, Herring Gulls, Black-headed Gulls, Lesser Black-backed Gulls, Mallards, Shelducks, Mute Swans, Greylag Geese, Canada Geese, a Cattle Egret and Little Egrets. On various parts of the reserve, we found Swallows, House



Sand Martins feeding young at Seaton Wetlands
man-made Sand Martin bank

Martins, Chaffinches, Grey Herons, Avocets, Moorhens, Reed Warblers, Reed Buntings, Blue Tits, Jackdaws, Meadow Pipits, Dunnocks, Redshanks, Starlings, Woodpigeons and a wall with Sand Martin nests. Along the river near Colyford a Grey Wagtail, Dipper and Kingfisher were spotted and a Treecreeper was seen on an adjacent tree.

On Friday we returned to the Somerset Levels but this time we visited Ham Wall. On previous visits to this reserve, we have seen many Bitterns but on this occasion they did not fly. It was very windy and this could have been the reason but we did hear one booming and some people had a brief glimpse of a bird in the reeds. We did see a Hobby and we had good views of Marsh Harriers hunting over the reedbeds. We also spotted Black-tailed Godwits, Lapwings, Gadwalls, Pochards, Chaffinches, a Little Grebe, Great Crested Grebe, Water Rail, Great Spotted Woodpecker, Jay and Garden Warbler. One person also saw a Grass Snake.

On our final day, Saturday, we vacated our hotel and set off for Lincoln but on the way home we stopped at Langford Lakes Nature Reserve near Salisbury. This is a Wiltshire Wildlife Trust Reserve and it is located in the Wyle Valley between Salisbury and Warminster. There are five hides overlooking the lakes and we visited all of them. Most of the birds seen were the same as the previous three days but there were a few new ones to add to our list. They included two Common Terns, a Spotted Flycatcher, Stock Dove, Little Ringed Plover, Tufted Ducks and Common Whitethroats. This brought our total bird species seen during the four days to 74.

We had a wonderful four days and stayed at a very good hotel. The weather was fair and our thanks go to our trip leaders, Geoff, Jane and Graham for organising the holiday and looking after us all. We must also thank our wonderful driver, Keith, for safely taking us to some difficult places.

Ray Daniels
RSPB Lincoln Local Group

North Cave Wetlands, 14 September 2025

The group, consisting of 24 members and 5 students, left Lincoln at 9 am and arrived at the reserve around 10.30. Unfortunately, there were no Wildlife Trust personnel on site, and no provision had been made for our coach. This meant our driver had to leave the site and return at 3 pm to pick us up because the access road was narrow and had been partially blocked by parked cars. However, this was the only blip in a good day of birding.

North Cave Reserve is located west of Hull and north of the Humber. It is managed by Yorkshire Wildlife Trust. The site has been developed from worked-out sand and gravel workings and continues to expand as the gravel workings progress. The site is large, being some 56 hectares in area and there is an abundance of hides and viewing screens. A circular trail runs around the perimeter of the original section of the reserve on which there are four hides. The extension is accessed by stoned paths and there are two hides as well as plenty of additional viewpoints. The on-site facilities are limited, consisting simply of three toilet cabins. However, there is popular Butty Van on site until 2.30 pm and many members partook of the goodies in the van: bacon butties etc!

Opposite the Butty van is a covered seating area with extensive views over the first lake. The view was dominated by hundreds of Greylag Geese making it difficult to pick out other wildfowl and waders, but we still managed to identify most of them. It was also splendid to see the sky over all the lakes teeming with Hirundines, all three being present in considerable numbers: Swallows, Sand Martins and House Martins. Apart from a large flock of Lapwings it proved difficult to spot other waders, but we did eventually see a Greenshank, an Oystercatcher, a Green Sandpiper, a Common Sandpiper, 8 Curlew, 5 Snipe and, for most people the birds of the day, two Little Stints.



Mike Langman (rspb-images.com)

Little Stint

The weather forecast for the day was quite grim but it stayed fine until almost 3 o'clock. We were heading for the coach when a local birder stopped our party and kindly pointed out a Whinchat and Stonechat on a nearby fence. For some, it was the first Whinchat sighting of the year and but for him we would not have been aware of it.

The group's total sightings number for the day was 52, again a very good total for a day out. For those interested in the sightings, here is the bird list.

Greylag Goose, Lapwing, Little Grebe, Great Crested Grebe, Mallard, Cormorant, Shoveler, Egyptian Goose, Moorhen, Kestrel, Feral Pigeon, Woodpigeon, Magpie, Carrion Crow, Teal, Starling, Sand Martin, Swallow, House Martin, Little Egret, Grey Heron, Snipe, Green Woodpecker, Mute Swan, Tufted Duck, Gadwall, Coot, Chiffchaff, Reed Bunting, Blue Tit, Great Tit, Black-headed Gull, Cetti's Warbler, Goldfinch, Green Sandpiper, Bittern, Pheasant, Oystercatcher, Red Kite, Buzzard, Water Rail, Common Sandpiper, Curlew, Lesser Black-Backed Gull, Shelduck, Greenshank, Linnet, Pochard, Little Stint, Robin, Whinchat, Stonechat, and Little Owl.

Pete Dryburgh
RSPB Lincoln Local Group

Rye Meads and Walthamstow Wetlands – October 2025

Our field trip in October was a two-day event with an overnight stop at Harlow in Essex. This enabled us to travel further afield and visit two reserves. There were 29 people on board and we left Lincoln at approximately 8.20 am and arrived at Walthamstow Wetlands in East London at 12.10 pm. The reserve is adjacent to the River Lee and covers 211 hectares. It is part of the Lee Valley and is a vital habitat for birds, bats and reptiles.

The first bird we saw was a Ring-necked Parakeet in the trees near the car park. They were quite common on this reserve and could be heard calling throughout the day. We visited two of the reservoirs and explored a small area of woodland and open water where a Kingfisher was seen flying across the lake. On the water there were Tufted Ducks, Mallards, Pochards, Gadwalls, Wigeons, Canada Geese, Greylag Geese, Mute Swans and an Egyptian Goose. Also on the open water we saw Cormorants, Coots, Moorhens, Great Crested Grebes, Little Grebes, Black-headed Gulls, Lesser Black-backed Gulls and Herring Gulls. Other birds spotted were Magpies, Carrion Crows, Starlings, Chiffchaffs, Chaffinches, two Little Egrets, a Pied Wagtail, Robin and Great Spotted Woodpecker.

On the second day we went to Rye Meads near Hoddesdon, Hertfordshire which is jointly managed by the RSPB and Hertfordshire and Middlesex Wildlife Trust. The reserve is 58.5 hectares and is a Biological Site of Special Scientific Interest. It includes reedbeds, open water, wet meadows, carr woodlands and a scrape. We visited all the hides and we saw the same bird species as the day before. However there were 19 new ones as follows:



Kingfisher taken at Rye Meads

We had distant views of two Red Kites, a Kestrel, Common Buzzard, Peregrine Falcon and a Sparrowhawk. Other birds seen were Goldfinches, Grey Herons, Lapwings, Common Snipe, Stock Doves, Woodpigeons, Redwings, Teals, Blue Tits, Great Tits, Two Green Sandpipers, a Grey Wagtail, Jay and Water Rail. This brought our total species seen by the group to 48. We also saw a Fox skulking in the reeds which eventually came out in the open.

This was a very enjoyable trip. We had excellent weather and a good hotel and our thanks go to Geoff and Jane for organising it and looking after us. Thanks also to our driver Jonathan for the safe and pleasant journeys.

Ray Daniels
RSPB Lincoln Local Group

Rutland Water – 16 November 2025

In November we went to the Anglian Water Birdwatching Centre at Egleton which is located on the west side of Rutland Water. It consists of three lagoons, scrub and deciduous woodlands, ancient meadows and reedbeds. We arrived at 10 am approximately and it was dry with a very cold wind. We visited most of the 20 hides and we saw a total of 52 bird species as follows:

Mute Swans, a Whooper Swan, Canada Geese, Pink-footed Geese, Greylag Geese, 2 Egyptian Geese, Shovelers, Mallards, Wigeons, Teals, Tufted Ducks, Gadwalls, Pintails, 1 Pochard.

Lapwings, Golden Plovers, 1 Common Snipe, Dunlins, 1 Green Sandpiper.

Little Egrets, 1 Great White Egret, 1 Grey Heron, 2 Great Crested Grebes, Moorhens, Coots, Cormorants, 3 Great Black-backed Gulls, Black-headed Gulls, Common Gulls.

3 Red Kites, 1 Kestrel, 1 Marsh Harrier.



Great White Egret at Rutland Water

Pheasants, Jackdaws, Carrion Crows, Magpies, Woodpigeons, Blackbirds, 1 Redwing, Starlings, Great Tits, Blue Tits, Long-tailed Tits, Chaffinches, Greenfinches, Goldfinches, 1 Wren, 1 Robin, 1 Blackcap, 1 Pied Wagtail, Goldcrests.

We left the reserve at 4 pm and despite the cold wind we had an enjoyable day.

Ray Daniels
RSPB Lincoln Local Group

Potteric Carr – 14 December 2025

Our final field trip of the year was to Potteric Carr near Doncaster. This is a Yorkshire Wildlife Trust Reserve and it is a complex of subsidence and artificial pools, drainage dykes and wetlands with large areas of reeds. Also there are areas of woodland and grassland, 14 hides and 6 miles of marked trails.

It was a dry day with a cool wind and an occasional glimpse of the sun. We first of all visited the excellent Visitor Centre and café and then set off to explore the reserve. We managed to visit most of the hides and on the way round we spotted Blue Tits, Great Tits, Robins, Blackbirds, Redwings, a Goldcrest, Rooks, Carrion Crows, Jackdaws, Magpies and Woodpigeons. On the various marshes and scrapes we saw Black-headed Gulls, Coots, Mallards, two Mandarin Ducks, Mute Swans, Greylag Geese and Canada Geese. However, it was not until we reached the Decoy Lake hide that we found more species of wildfowl and water birds. They included Tufted Ducks, Pochards, Teals, Wigeons, Gadwalls, Shovelers, a Little Grebe, two Great Crested Grebes and a Grey Heron.



Goldcrest

Other birds seen were Cormorants, a Lesser Black-backed Gull, Great Black-backed Gull, Common Buzzard, Common Snipe, Sparrowhawk, Kestrel, Marsh Harrier, Jay, Wren, Song Thrush, Coal Tit, Long-tailed Tits, Goldfinches, Chaffinches, Lesser Redpolls and Siskins. This brought the total species of birds seen to 44.

Ray Daniels
RSPB Lincoln Local Group