

North West blast

Having once again missed out on seeing Ring Ouzel passing through the Island during the spring migration I was starting to give up hope of ever seeing one. While I was moaning about this to a birder friend she said that she'd tried several times to see them in Yorkshire but had dipped every time. God knows how since they are easy to see there! ;). I didn't think anymore of it until a few days later when she suggested a quick daytrip to England to try for Ring Ouzel. The idea was great but at the time I wasn't a big traveller, so I decided to give it a miss. After being nagged relentlessly about it for weeks, I finally gave in, mainly to shut her up, and figured out a plan. After researching it I found out that the nearest place to Heysham to see Ring Ouzel was Haweswater in the Lake District. The Ferry times meant that we couldn't get up there early enough on the same day, so in the end we had to go on the evening ferry and stop at Haweswater overnight to be able to go for Ring Ouzel 1st thing. We decided on the overnight ferry on the way back, so with the extra time in the afternoon we could pop into Leighton Moss on the way down to try for Bearded Tit, another bird both of us had failed to see despite many attempts.

Friday 27th May

This was my 1st ever trip away where I was to be the driver and as Wendy can't drive the heat was on. Not surprisingly I was slightly nervous but you know what they say, "No pain, no gain!" Having picked Wendy up after we'd both finished work we waited at the Sea Terminal to board and get going. She'd had no time for tea, so had brought it with her, well kind of, it was vegetarian Sushi! Bleurghhhhhh! We tried to get some sleep during the crossing but it didn't work and we stayed awake for the duration. Booo!

Saturday 28th May

After a smooth crossing, excluding Wendy's overly chilled out attitude towards Steam Packet instructions, we headed up to Haweswater in the dark. On the narrow winding roads to the lake we spotted several bats, some of which looked like Pipistrelle but some were much larger. Neither of us had the knowledge to say what they were though. Wendy then briefly saw an Owl flying across the road, which was brown, so had to be either Tawny or Long-eared but she wasn't sure which. That was a shame as Tawny would've been her first lifer of the trip. A bit further on she shrieked in my ear, "Stop!" and jumped out the car. I was thinking, "Uh oh, my driving skills have resulted in vomit again!" but then I noticed she was actually trying to usher a **Hedgehog** out of the road. Thinking back on it though, it was far more likely to have been her poncey tea than my driving if she had been sick :P. Still, it was nice to see our first mammal of the trip, which was quickly followed by a tiny **Shrew** darting across the road, then a **Hare** jumping clean over a roadside wall.

When we arrived at the car park to the lake it was totally dark but we weren't alone, as there was a large camper van already parked up there. Having not slept on the boat we wriggled into our sleeping bags, reclined the car seats and tried again to get some sleep before our ridiculously early start. After only a couple of hours we woke up at 5am and as forecasted it was overcast and raining. It was also still quite dark and the car was steamed up, so we couldn't see anything out of the windows. We had no idea what the place looked like, so we climbed out to stretch our legs and get

our bearings. The area looked amazing and was definitely a lovely place to be, especially at that time of the day.



Haweswater

The rain was a bit annoying but it didn't deter us, especially Wendy who was out with her camping stove dealing with her coffee addiction straight away while I staggered around in a daze. Suddenly I was snapped out of it by Wendy screaming "**FOX!**" I grabbed my camera and attempted to follow her horrific directions. "It's there on the grass!" We were surrounded by grass! Luckily I managed to work out where she meant just in time to see the arse of the fox disappear over the wall.....Urrghhhhh. This was Wendy's 1st lifer of the trip, which was far better than her usual road kill sightings, so it was a great start to the day for her. Before I could switch back off she spotted it again running up the hill to the left of the car park. Even though it was 5.20am, so my reactions were pretty slow, and it was raining I somehow managed to grab a sharp enough long distant record shot....Phew!



Fox

After that bit of excitement we got our gear together to walk up to the Eagle Watchpoint, as apparently there's a single Golden Eagle hanging around there. The walk round the lake and up the hill was probably only a mile and a half in distance if that, so not too taxing for the early hours.

All the way round we had to keep our eyes on the mountain to the left of the path, as that's where I'd read the Ring Ouzels had been seen. Unfortunately the last sighting I'd found had been from 2 years ago but we were still hopeful :-\.

First off I spotted a **Great-crested Grebe** on the water, which was met by a 2nd bird and they started their impressive display. Very cool to see. We then heard a call we recognised, from the previous month, on the Isle of Man and we spotted 2x **Common Sandpiper** flying low over the water and at the waters edge was a **Grey Heron**. In the plantation by the car park we could hear some of the more common stuff including **Wren**, **Willow Warbler**, **Robin** and **Chaffinch**. As we carried on up the path I heard a song I didn't recognise at all and I had to really scratch my head. I'd made sure I'd revised all the potential songs and calls of the birds possible to see on the trip before we'd gone away but this one threw me completely. Suddenly I spotted a bird doing the song in a parachute display. I was just about to go for a Tree Pipit (even though I'd learnt the song of a Tree Pipit and this didn't sound like that) but when I had a look of the bird through my bins it all became obvious. It was a **Northern Wheatear** and even though I've seen hundreds of them migrating through my local patch, I've never seen one on its breeding grounds and therefore not heard its song. We'd obviously walked into a very good habitat, as there were a lot of songs going off. The next one I heard was another weird one. I found the culprit quite quickly, this time on the top of a tree, and it was a nice male **Common Redstart**. I quickly got Wendy onto the bird and she was very pleased, as this was lifer number 2 for her. I was a bit miffed though, as the song wasn't the same as what I'd learnt... weird. A cracking looking bird though. I didn't get a shot of that bird but further along the path I got this one of another male.



Common Redstart

As we rounded the corner to go up the valley I was looking up at the top of the mountain on the left when I spotted a dark bird fly across and land on the corner of a crag. I got very excited and said, "I think I've got a Ring Ouzel" but just as I said those words the bird on the corner of the crag all of sudden looked light and I realised it was a Wheatear.....Doh! I got a bit of abuse off Wendy for that but I was (and still am) confused, as the bird I'd initially seen was definitely dark and bigger than a Wheatear. I didn't have time to ponder though, as nearly straight away a Pipit flew past us and landed nearby. A quick check confirmed this as a **Tree Pipit**, which was Wendy's 3rd lifer already. A **Meadow Pipit** was seen next, so we had a nice comparison of the two birds. While I was permanently staring at the slope on the left, Wendy had been looking at the water and had found a female **Goosander** with 3 young on her back, so I snatched a very very distant record shot.



Goosander and chicks

Another sight neither of us had ever had before and also on the water was a group of **Greylag and Canada Geese**. Further out in the water there was an Island, which had a **Lesser Black-backed Gull** colony on it.

We reached the Watch-point at about 6.45am and nearby a **Siskin** flew into the trees and there were a few **Carriion Crows** about. There was absolutely no chance of seeing the Eagle, as the clouds were so low they were covering the top of the valley, but a **Common Buzzard**, **Common Kestrel** and **Raven** did make a flypast. There was nothing, unusual calling or singing, so Wendy and I resorted to methodically scanning the slope on the left for the next two hours, in the rain. It was literally like trying to find a needle in a haystack, although I reckon that would be easier! Whilst scanning I spotted some Deer about a billion miles away but try as I might, with super clear pinpoint directions I couldn't get Wendy onto them.....Urrghhhh. In the end I had to take a photo so she could look at it and work out where they were from that! This is the photo and having initially thought there were only 3 Deer it turned out that, on inspection of the photo there was another 2 further to the left.



Red Deer

We assumed they were **Red Deer** but they could have been Antelope for all we knew at that distance. After two hours our enthusiasm had completely gone, so I took a pic of the nice scenery looking back at Haweswater and we headed back.



Watchpoint view

On the way back down I put forward the idea of walking up the path to the left of the car park, as I'd read in a book that on that walk Ring Ouzels are sometimes seen on the slopes to the left. All of a sudden the weather quickly changed and the sun started to appear and it was really strong. I felt my face start to burn instantly and stupidly I hadn't put any sun cream on, as there hadn't been any sun forecast until much later in the day. When we got back to the car I lashed on the sun cream but was feeling way too hot to move let alone go up the steep (for me) path.

As I was planning what to do next I saw two official looking people walking nearby, so I egged Wendy on to go and ask them about Ring Ouzel. I didn't think for a second that she would but amazingly she turned round and shouted, "Oi!" over to them and went running over.....Hahaha. After a few minutes she came back looking a bit flustered but I quickly worked out why when I saw that one of the wardens was a young German guy with longish blond hair. I fully expected her to have been drooling so much that his words would've gone in one ear and out the other but to her credit she rattled off all the details. He'd told her that our best bet was up at Small Water, which was up the path I was thinking about going on next. We looked up there and my guess was that it was at least 1300ft up :O! I sat in the car wondering if we could make it and handed the decision over to Wendy. This turned out to be a bad move, as she's dreadful at making decisions, so she sat on the fence and left it down to me. I was already knackered and burnt but I thought that seeing as we'd travelled all that way we'd have to at least give it a go, so I found my 2nd wind and off we went. The worst case scenario would be that if we couldn't make it we'd just turn round and come back.....sorted.

I'd estimated that we'd get up there in under 2 hours but we made amazing progress (for two unfit slackers) and apart from one minor hitch, when Wendy nearly got blown off the hill by a freak gust, we made it in 45 minutes! I don't think she appreciated me laughing my head off at that though :P. I'd hoped that Small Water was actually small, as its name suggests, but it was flipping massive and again we had huge slopes to scan.



Small Water

Nevertheless scan we did and Wendy spotted a grey Pipit flying past and landing on the near shore. I hadn't expected a **Rock Pipit** here at all but that's exactly what it was (very weird) and a **Grey Wagtail** flew in from the stream, which was far more likely. After scanning for ages I went off for a wander and crossed a stream to take a photo looking back down the valley at Haweswater. You don't get the sense of the height in the photo but trust me we were well high up!



Looking down from Small Water

As I got up I suddenly realised that I couldn't get back over the stream.....Erk! There were no easy places to cross from that side....Uh oh! There was nothing else for it but to attempt a 'no run up' long jump, so with camera and bins in hand I launched myself like a Gazelle, beautifully floating across the stream. Just as I reached the other side I plummeted like a stone and my right foot just caught the grassy edge. I then felt myself going backwards into the stream, so had to fling myself forward and landed flat on my face! I looked up out of the grass to see that luckily I'd subconsciously kept my bins and camera up in the air... Skillz! Doubly lucky for me was that I was well hidden from Wendy's view because if she'd seen me I'd have never lived it down.....Excellent! :). I staggered back to where Wendy was and asked if there'd been any sign but I think she replied with how many Ring Ouzels she wanted to see.



Wendy

After that distraction it was back to scanning again. Suddenly we heard a very unusual call, like a constant loud solo whistle.

“Peep peep peep peep.” Hmmmm, actually that doesn’t sound anything like the call. Try as we might we couldn’t locate where it was coming from and all we knew was that it was on the back right slope about 200yds away. The corrie was creating weird harmonics and we couldn’t pinpoint the position of the call at all. I listened again to the Ring Ouzel songs and calls I had on my iphone and none of them sounded anything like it, so that was dismissed. The call was so strong that for it to have been anything smaller just wouldn’t make sense. We thought about walking to that slope but we were both completely pooped from the hard walk up the hill, so we quickly forgot about the idea.

After probably another 20 minutes of having the mystery call doing our heads in we decided we’d have to give up. The elusive Ring Ouzel had defeated us once again :(It was bitterly disappointing but we couldn’t be too upset really, as we’d put in as much effort as was physically possible, so you can’t say we didn’t try.

Wendy flew back down the path (probably smelling her next coffee) whereas I struggled down it like an old man. By now my joints were giving up, how I didn’t end up rolling down the 1000ft I don’t know. I think I’m genetically modified for car birding :). Back at the car park it was now lunchtime and we’d originally planned to be at Leighton Moss by then but that wasn’t too important. The plan had enough room for flexibility but if we’d booked for the afternoon Ferry we’d have been goofed.

After a lovely lunch of crisps, chocolate and Lucozade for me and Wendy had made another coffee and eaten her cheese and coleslaw bap, we moved off down to the dam side of Haweswater. Down there were some nice little woods where Chris had assured me was really good for the Woodland birds you get in England. Several of

them would be Lifers for Wendy so our enthusiasm picked up again. Getting out of the car we instantly heard a **Cuckoo** calling in a far off copse. A nice bird to put on the trip list but I knew it would be near impossible to see, which was a downer for Wendy as she'd never seen Cuckoo. We hung about for a few minutes in case it flew across the field but it didn't, so we moved off into the woods.

I'd looked at the map and noticed that we could take a path around the base of the dam, which would take us back round to the car.....Perfect. Straight away we heard a Chaffinch like call and I knew from my revising that Pied Flycatchers had such a call, so I was practically positive it was one. We scanned the trees in the direction of the call and then heard the calls of Chaffinches to compare it with. This near enough confirmed to me this bird was a Pied Fly but I wanted to see it to be absolutely sure. After several minutes of trying we still couldn't pin it down, so we decided to move on and try again when we got back. Near enough straight away Wendy shouted in a hushed voice "STOP STOP THERE THERE THERE!" I was like, "Ehhh?" She then said, "**Red Squirrel**" and despite her directions (:P) I spotted it. Absolutely brilliant! I've only ever seen Red Squirrels at Formby and although they are wild it feels a bit unnatural. Here it felt perfect and we had a good view too but unfortunately it ran off up a tree before I could get a photo. A few more steps into the wood and Wendy spotted a Flycatcher. "Here we go!" I thought, only for it to be a **Spotted Flycatcher**. Doh! A few weeks ago we'd had 9 Spot Flies in one day on the Island, so we'd filled our boots with them and were desperate to see a Pied Fly. This would've been another lifer for Wendy too. Further on we had another Spot Fly and another. I couldn't believe it. Then I heard a call I recognise and called, "**Nuthatch!**" Sure enough a Nuthatch flew in and landed on a tree, right in front of us. It then moved across to a small hole in the trunk and we saw some little mouths appear! Cool a Nuthatch nest! Neither of us had ever seen a Nuthatch nest before, so even though we weren't getting lifers it was still another interesting sighting.

As we reached the end of the path we found the track and walked down it, ending up in one of the weirdest hamlets I've ever seen. About 10 small bungalows lined the track and many of the people living there were standing outside their house watching us walk through. I felt really uneasy and quietly muttered, "Ding a ding a ding a ding a dingggg" which I think is from Deliverance, if not I associate that tune with people getting murdered in a Hick town :). Flying around this hamlet were loads of **House Martins** and **Swallows** and I couldn't help but wonder if they were feeding off the flies from the rotting corpses murdered by the hamlet folk. Hmmmmmmmm.....possibly not :P. We were receiving some very weird looks as well but finally realised why, as at the end of the track was an open gate, with a sign saying, "Private! No Entry." Dohhhh! The hamlet people were probably just wondering what we were doing and didn't actually want to kill us at all.... silly me! I tried to blame the stupid map but I think I'd got track and public track mixed up. It was a shame though, as I'm sure the track route would have been brilliant. Anyway we had to turn round and walk past the hamlet folk again but luckily I spotted another footpath so we quickly scuttled off down it. This led back to the original footpath but we didn't spot anything different until we got back to the original potential Pied Fly area. Again it was calling but this time out by the road. We went over and Wendy said, "It's just a Chaffinch!" I laughed and said, "Yeah right, don't be a plank." She quickly followed it up with, "No really, it's a Chaffinch, right above us." I looked and sure enough there was a Chaffinch doing a call nothing like all the

other Chaffinches in the area. Ehhhh what was that all about? Now doubly embarrassed by two back to back mistakes I suggested that we walked round the road back towards Haweswater, as Wendy had seen a footpath sign saying 'Dam' when we drove past. Maybe that would get us in into the smart woodland we could see from the road?

Driving down the road on the way to the Dam I suddenly heard a weird call but recognised it straight away as a **Green Woodpecker**. It was calling from a wood about 150yds back from the road and Wendy was desperate to see this bird, so we tried really hard to pin it down. Just like the Cuckoo, these are really tricky to spot and just like the Cuckoo we failed, which was yet another disappointment. After our great start it wasn't going so well anymore. Just to put the icing on the cake Wendy had obviously dreamt about the footpath sign, as there wasn't one, so we'd walked there for nothing. Hahaha. Back at the car we realised what we hadn't managed to see what we should've AND that they would've both been lifers for Wendy. The 1st was Wood Warbler, which I hadn't even heard a song from, and (Grrrrrrrr) Pied Flycatcher. These were practically guaranteed by Chris before we came but I reckoned that it was because they aren't as prolific as they used to be in the 60's, when Chris was birding in England ;). It was now about 2.30pm and we'd already been birding for 9 hours and Wendy had 3 Lifers with two more close but no cigars. I'd expected more lifers for her by the time we'd left Haweswater but there was nothing we could do about it, it was time to leave.

We arrived at Leighton moss at 3.30pm and originally we were going to go straight to the Eric Morecambe Hide. It was so late by then that we decided to go to the main reserve, as we didn't know what time it shut. Lucky enough it was open till dusk, which was exactly what we were looking for. Last time I was there I'd seen a Marsh Tit coming to the feeder outside the shop and this would've been a lifer for Wendy but the feeders looked pretty dead. Nothing of any note was appearing. Oh dear...the one lifer I'd guaranteed was Marsh Tit..... Ooops! As we were about to move off down the track I realised that the display of feeders at the shop window were actually feeders and not ones for sale. Seconds after realising this, a **Marsh Tit** landed on one of them. I pointed it out to Wendy but for some weird reason she didn't see it..... Ehhh? We hung around and luckily enough it came back and this time she got it. Phew! Lifer number 4 for her. We had a quick look at the feeding station down the track but this was also dead, so we came away with only **Pheasant**, **Moorhen** and **Rabbit** :-\.

We carried on to the first hide, which is called Lillian's Hide. The seats were nice and comfy in there but all that was viewable was a breeding colony of very loud and rowdy **Black-headed Gulls**. This must be a recent thing, as I didn't remember seeing Black headed gulls there before let alone a breeding colony. I checked through them just in case of a Med Gull but there wasn't one, so after noting the millions of **Swifts** we moved on. Moving along the path I heard a song, which I haven't heard in a long time. I called it to Wendy but the little **** questioned me! Maybe she was still remembering the 'Pied Fly incident' so I had to explain to her why it was what it was by doing an impression. Instead of putting her mind at ease it just resulted in making her crack up with laughter, as I obviously sounded and looked like a complete idiot. Thank god no one else came along the path! The bird in question was a **Reed Warbler** but we couldn't pick it out of the Reeds. Even though this

would've been a lifer for Wendy I wasn't worried, as I was sure we'd see one sooner or later.

Next up was the Tim Jackson Hide and straight away we had a bad feeling about it, there was no one else in there and it was obvious as to why. There was **Gadwall**, **Shoveler** and a **Teal** but that was it. We were just thinking about making a move when we made a last minute decision to sit by the side window to see if the singing Reed Warbler would appear. After a few minutes of calling the hide every name under the sun and replying to some texts asking us how it was going, to which the reply was, "Pretty poo!" everything turned on it's head in a flash. We suddenly heard, "Ping ping ping ping." Before I could even say what I thought it was the bird flew in and landed probably 10ft from the hide. In our complete excitement we both just about managed to spit out, "**BEARDED TIT!**" Wendy went for her bins in a flash but I was far too excited for that and sort of grabbed Wendy's arm and shook it as I flailed about in a hysterical fit. This knocked her bins out of her hand and at that moment the bird dived into the reeds never to be seen again.....Whoops! Even so, this bird made up for missing out on the Ring Ouzel. Wendy and I had separately put far more time into trying to see Bearded Tit in the past than Ring Ouzel. It was a lifer for both of us and the view had been fantastic. I apologised to Tim Jackson Hide and it went from the worst hide ever to the best hide ever in the blink of an eye! We waited to see if the bird would reappear but it didn't, so we moved on to the Griesdale Hide.

On the way we again heard, "Ping ping ping" and Wendy, understandingly giving me a very wide berth, picked out another male Bearded Tit deep in the reeds! Unbelievable. They were like buses! Further on the walk I heard another Reed Warbler but again couldn't spot it. I carried on and through one of the gaps in the reeds I spotted a Reed Warbler out in the open. My instant reaction was to lift the camera but I quickly remembered that Wendy had never actually seen one. I turned to point her in the right direction but she was still down the path trying to see the other one. I urgently ushered her to the gap and she finally got her bins on the bird for a really good view of a Reed Warbler.....lifer number 6. This was more like it.

At the Griesdale Hide we finally saw a **Marsh Harrier** at the back of the reserve but it never came close, which was a shame. There was also **Coot**, another pile of Black-headed Gulls and at the back of the pool about 100 **Black-tailed Godwits**. I nearly didn't even mention them, as we get them during most autumns in the Isle of Man but when I did Wendy said, "Oooooo 1st time I've seen them!" I had no idea that was a lifer and number 7 at that. Not much else happened and by then it was 4.30pm, so we decided to move round to the coastal hides then go back later to finish off at the public hides.

Round at the coastal hides we started off in Allen Hide. I knew there'd been some birds there recently that would be good to see, if they were still there, so I set about trying to find them. Whilst scanning we picked up **Shelduck**, **Redshank**, **Oystercatcher** and Wendy saw her 1st ever **Avocet**.



Avocet

Lifer number 8! Suddenly double figures were on the cards!! About the same time I was looking over on the Eric Morecambe Pool from the Allen Hide. I was 99% positive I could see one of the target birds but as I was umming and arring Wendy said, "Isn't this one here?" I had a look in the Allen Pool and sure enough there was a **Little Gull**. The bird I'd watched in the other pool flew over and was also one. In the end there were 3 flying about. Brilliant! Unfortunately, they never came close but I did get a record shot of two of them. This was only the 3rd time I'd seen Little Gull and it was lifer number 9 for Wendy.



Little Gulls

We then moved around to Eric Morecambe Hide in the hope we would get a closer view of the Little Gulls. On the way we picked up a **Sedge Warbler** and **Dunnock**. Round at the Eric Morecambe Hide we had more distant views of the Little Gulls, which eventually flew off towards Morecambe Bay.....Doh. While we were there Wendy spotted a lone **Wigeon**, which was a bit unusual being so late in the year. They'd certainly all left the Isle of Man a long time ago.

The question now was how to get Wendy into double figures? After going through several candidates we settled on Bullfinch as the target. I was pretty sure I'd seen Bullfinch at the far end of the public causeway several years ago, so we headed back to the main reserve. It was now about 7pm and we'd been birding for 14 hours solid but both of us were still feeling absolutely fine. Even with only a couple of hours sleep the night before and having climbed a near mountain in those 14 hours. Totally crazy! Back at Leighton Moss we decided to have another look at the feeding station down the track. As we walked up to it I thought to myself, "Weird, I wonder why this place doesn't get Bullfinch?" At the feeding station the same things were about again but some **Greenfinches** had decided to put in an appearance. I spotted a feeder further back that I hadn't seen before, so concentrated on that. Suddenly Wendy nearly burst my eardrum with a shriek in what I can only presume was a foreign language because I didn't understand her! Several times she tried to get her words out but in the end she just laughed out, "IN THE BOX!" I looked at the table with a cage guard on it and there was a stunning male **Bullfinch**! Brilliant. The greedy thing just sat there gobbling up the seed. Lifer number 10! Double figures... Wooooo excellent! We still carried on round to the public causeway, as that's supposed to be THE place for Bearded Tit. Not that we needed to see them we were just being greedy. Probably about 50yds onto the causeway we heard the now familiar 'ping ping ping ping' and quickly spotted 2 female Bearded Tits pretty close

to the path. Try as I might I couldn't get a clear shot through the reeds but at least I finally got a shot of our Lifer.



Bearded Tit

We then moved onto the Public Hide, where we'd decided not to carry on further and just stay there. A **Pochard** came close and in the low evening light it looked quite nice so I got a pic.



Pochard

Also a Greylag Goose came past, obviously a plastic, but I got a pic of that too.



Greylag Goose

While I was playing about taking boring pics I suddenly heard a, "Booom." Even though I haven't heard it for over 10 years I instantly said, "**Bittern!**" Nevertheless, I did a quick check against the Birdguide sounds in my iphone but wierdly the call was different, so I started doubting myself. We thought that maybe a Red Deer could possibly make a similar noise too. Later on we overheard some people talking about the Bittern booming and when she got back home Wendy checked on the RSPB website and the sound was identical, so that confirmed it. I need a new Birdguides app on my phone I think! We did keep an eye out in case it flew out of the reeds, as it would have been a great lifer for Wendy but it never appeared. Shame.

The light was fading fast, so we headed back to the very comfy Lillians Hide. There seem to be more Marsh Harrier activity there, as there was a bird in the sky every few minutes. We saw one in the distance catch something, possibly a vole of some sort, it then flew back where a female appeared out of the reeds and they did an aerial food swap! Very smart! We'd noticed that the Marsh Harriers were keeping well away from the Black-headed Gull colony, until one female went straight over.



Marsh Harrier

Cue massive kick off from the Gulls as the Harrier was mobbed like mental but amazingly she wasn't bothered at all. At one point she turned upside down with her talons out, which seemed to scare the Gulls off sufficiently. I don't think it fancied being supper and with that we ended our day.

The trip list stood at 79, which we thought was quite impressive for a quick day trip. Wendy had come away with 10 lifers in total and I had 1, but it was a very special one. Nipping across for a specific species and seeing other things while we were there worked really well and was very enjoyable. I'll definitely be doing it again with the only difference next time being to go for longer and to get some proper sleep, as it's now 2 days later and I still haven't recovered :).

Trip list

Great crested Grebe	Swallow
Cormorant	Rock Pipit
Bittern (heard only)	Meadow Pipit
Little Egret	Tree Pipit
Grey Heron	Pied Wagtail
Mute Swan	Grey Wagtail
Greylag Goose	Wren
Canada Goose	Dunnock
Shelduck	Robin
Mallard	Redstart
Gadwall	Wheatear
Shoveler	Song Thrush
Wigeon	Blackbird
Teal	Blackcap (heard only)
Pochard	Sedge Warbler

Tufted Duck	Reed Warbler
Goosander	Willow Warbler
Marsh Harrier	Chiff Chaff
Common Buzzard	Spotted Flycatcher
Common Kestrel	Great Tit
Common Pheasant	Coal Tit
Moorhen	Blue Tit
Coot	Marsh Tit
Oystercatcher	Bearded Tit
Avocet	Nuthatch
Lapwing	Magpie
Common Sandpiper	Jackdaw
Common Redshank	Rook
Black-tailed Godwit	Carrion Crow
Black-headed Gull	Raven
Herring Gull	Starling
Lesser Black-backed Gull	Chaffinch
Great Black-backed Gull	Goldfinch
Little Gull	Greenfinch
Feral Pigeon	Siskin
Wood Pigeon	Bullfinch
Collared Dove	Reed Bunting
Cuckoo (heard only)	
Swift	
Green Woodpecker (heard only)	
Skylark	
House Martin	