



Kent, 17th - 20th May

Eighteen members enjoyed a weekend's birding in Kent. We stayed at The Evenhill in Littlebourne, some 3 miles outside Canterbury, where we were well looked after by Frederick and all his friendly staff.

We met late on the Thursday morning at Paxton Pits near Huntingdon in Cambridgeshire and highlights here included Garden Warbler, Swift, Hobby, Red Kite and Kingfisher and we also heard Nightingale, Green Woodpecker and Cuckoo. After some lunch we made our way down the A1 and back to the M25 motorway to travel south to Kent. After checking in at the hotel we then drove the short distance to Margate where we had excellent views of Ring-necked Parakeet at Northdown Park and we spent a short while on the cold windy seafront at Foreness Point where the highlights were Gannet, Sandwich Tern and Kittiwake. After getting back to our accommodation we had a lovely meal at the pub.

After an excellent breakfast the group travelled to Stodmarsh NNR close by and eventually convened at the carpark, some later than others due to a 'dodgy post-code' so they said. The highlights included brief views of Nightingale, Marsh Harrier, Bearded Tit, Common Sandpiper, Greater Spotted Woodpecker, Cuckoo and Hobby. We then drove down to Pegwell Bay Country Park, had our lunch and birding highlights included Whitethroat, Linnet, Grey Plover and Sanderling. We then returned to Grove Ferry NNR, which is the north-east end of the reserve in the Stour Valley next to Stodmarsh. Highlights included Hobby, Turtle Dove (in flight) and excellent views of a Lesser Whitethroat, which normally skulk in hedgerows. We all had our evening meal again at the pub restaurant.

A few hardy souls ventured out before breakfast on the Saturday to Seaton Gravel Pits close by and highlights included Sparrowhawk, Ring-necked Parakeet, Kestrel with Nightingale and Cuckoo heard. Another hearty cooked breakfast was the order of the day, and we then set off down to the south coast to Dungeness. Highlights here were Stonechat, Gannet, Arctic and Common Tern, Wheatear and Denise with her sharp eyes spotted a Black Redstart in the power station compound. We also saw a very tame Fox and Harbour Porpoise. Moving to Dungeness RSPB reserve, we ate our lunch in the sunshine and birding highlights included Egyptian Goose, Greenshank, Common and Little Gull, Marsh Harrier and Yellow Wagtail. A quick search for a reported Hoopoe was unsuccessful.

We then travelled the few miles over the border into East Sussex and Rye Harbour Nature Reserve where there were many highlights including the bird of the trip, a Terek Sandpiper (a first for the society). Other highlights included Avocet, Curlew Sandpiper, Grey Plover, Little Ringed Plover, Ringed Plover, Bar-tailed Godwit, Mediterranean Gull, Knot and Little Tern. On our return to the hotel, a few of us ate at the restaurant.

After our last excellent breakfast and saying our goodbyes to our host and the staff we travelled north to Oare Marshes, near Faversham, a Kent Wildlife Trust reserve on the Swale. We birded around the East Flood first, losing a few members along the way who were moving on further afield. We were accompanied by the sound of the ubiquitous Marsh Frog. Birding highlights included Yellow Wagtail, Cetti's Warbler, Black Tailed Godwit, Avocet, Little Egret, Mediterranean Gull, Green Woodpecker, Stock Dove and excellent perched views of Turtle Dove. After a late lunch we left for our journey home.

We ended up with 102 species over the weekend. The weather was pretty good most of the time, our accommodation was excellent and everyone enjoyed their weekend's birding together with good company.

Ray Evans