



### **Mid-Wales, 24 to 26 January 2014**

Nineteen members enjoyed a weekend's birding in Mid-Wales. We stayed at the Marine Hotel in Aberystwyth and were looked after very well with excellent food and service.

We met on Friday morning at the Arch carpark near Devil's Bridge and a short walk through the forest there was largely devoid of birds but moving down to Hafod carpark on the edge of Cwm Ystwyth, we came across our first Red Kites. We took another short walk down in to the valley where we picked up some common woodland birds plus Common Buzzard and our only winter thrush of the trip, a single Redwing. After lunch we drove down to Cors Caron where we hoped to see wintering Hen Harriers but steady drizzly rain put paid to that. However, highlights here included Lesser Redpoll, Willow Tit, Goosander and Little Egret.

After breakfast on the Saturday morning we drove north to the village of Borth and spent a little time sea-watching but strong winds again hampered the birding and the highlights were two small parties of Common Scoter plus a single Red-throated Diver. Moving on to Ynyslas there were a few more birds, with the highlights being Brent Geese, Grey Plover and undoubtedly the bird of the weekend when Paul found an over-wintering Whimbrel on the saltmarsh - a remarkable find for January. In the afternoon we visited the Kite feeding station at Bwlch Nant yr Arian nr Ponterwyd. However just prior to the meat being dispersed for the birds, the sky darkened followed by thunder, lightning and torrential rain - the Kites certainly didn't want to feed in the rain and we retired, some to the warmth of the visitor centre and others back to the hotel in Aberystwyth. While having a warming brew, the weather cleared a little and the Kites did start coming down. On returning to Aberystwyth a few of us took a walk along a very blustery promenade and picked up Purple Sandpipers and watched the spectacle of thousands of starlings coming into roost under the pier.

We woke up to heavy rain again on Sunday but travelled up to Ynyshir RSPB reserve in hope of better weather. The feeders there were full of birds including Greenfinch, Siskin, Redpoll and Great Spotted Woodpecker. The weather did improve and it only rained when we were under cover in hides and highlights included Kingfisher, distant Peregrine and White-fronted Goose. A stop at Bala Lake on the way home produced a single Great Northern Diver.

We ended up with 78 species over the weekend but it must be the first Mid-Cheshire weekend trip without either Coot or Moorhen. Despite the inclement weather at times, we ended up with a list of good birds and everyone enjoyed their weekend's birding.

Ray Evans

### **Mid-Wales, 23rd - 25th February 2018**

Eighteen members enjoyed a weekend's birding in Mid-Wales. We stayed at the Marine Hotel in Aberystwyth and were looked after very well with excellent food and service.

We met on Friday morning at the Arch carpark near Devil's Bridge but with the strong easterly wind howling decided to move down to Hafod carpark on the edge of Cwm Ystwyth. A few Red Kites had been seen along the way from the cars but here we saw our first 'real' ones when we took a walk down in to the valley, which was a little more sheltered. Further highlights here included Common Buzzard, Sparrowhawk, Raven, Fieldfare, Redwing, Song and Mistle Thrush. After lunch we drove down to Cors Caron and highlights here included Brambling, Nuthatch, Stonechat, Great White Egret, two over-wintering Green Sandpiper, Pintail, Little Egret, Goosander and Grey Wagtail. The cold weather put paid to our birding a little early and we all made our way to the hotel.

After an excellent breakfast on the Saturday morning we drove north to the village of Borth and to

Ynyslas. The strong easterly wind on the exposed beach was biting and quite a few had to return to the cars within a few minutes. It also hampered the birding, but the highlights were Sanderling, Golden Plover, Red-breasted Merganser and undoubtedly the bird of the weekend, the long-staying female King Eider sitting on a sand bar at the mouth of the River Leri. In the afternoon we visited the Kite feeding station at Bwlch Nant yr Arian nr Ponterwyd, where we took lunch. The wind was still blowing quite strongly down the valley but the sun was out. An amazing number of Kites turned up to feed – well in excess of 200. We took a walk around the small lake but there were very few birds in the gusty wind. We had a warming brew in the visitor centre and then returned to the hotel in Aberystwyth. After returning to Aberystwyth, we took a walk along a sheltered, sunny promenade and picked up Purple Sandpiper, Turnstone, Rock Pipit, winter plumaged Red-throated Diver and completed the afternoon by watching the spectacle of thousands of Starlings coming in to roost under the Pier.

After another excellent breakfast, we said our goodbyes to the hotel and travelled up to Ynyshir RSPB reserve near Machynlleth. The feeders there were full of woodland birds including Greenfinch, Siskin and Great Spotted Woodpecker. A walk down to the Marian Mawr hide yielded Bullfinch, Wigeon, Bar-tailed Godwit, Lapwing and Snipe and we then spent a little time at the Domen Las hide overlooking the river which was very productive with Goldeneye, Goosander, male and female Hen Harrier, Marsh Harrier and Red Kite. After lunch back at the carpark, we had a walk through the woodland and highlights included Jay, Raven and a Woodcock for a few members of the group.

We ended up with 85 species over the weekend and although the weather was fine all the time the easterly wind was very cold and biting. We ended up with a list of good birds and everyone enjoyed their weekend's birding. The two spectacles of the feeding Red Kite and the Starling murmuration at Aberystwyth will stay long in the minds.

Ray Evans