

RSPB Titchwell & Roydon Common

6th April 2025

Our visit to **RSPB Titchwell** coincided with the long period of dry and sunny spring weather we have all been enjoying recently. We rendezvoused in the car park where we were joined by a very friendly *Blackbird* and *Robin*, who are obviously well accustomed to hand delivered crumbs. But as we had nothing to offer them we were unsuccessful in an attempt to come to the hand with a few decoy scraps from the ground. They are no fools! Our plan for the morning was to make our way through the tress in the direction of the Freshwater Marsh, where there were two hides. On route there were distant *Marsh Harriers* and while we were stopped I admired some fresh looking plants growing alongside the path and inquired if anyone know the name of the plant. The answer came back from Kathy that these were (see photo). It was quite abundant and after a short debate within the group a more knowledgeable bird watcher confirmed the identity and also informed us on how the plant was originally introduced by the Romans and how it was edible. I was impressed with his knowledge until we move on another twenty feet where we found a RSPB notice board with all the details. I now realise he had just read the board a few minutes earlier. We were treated to the songs of Chiffchaffs and Blackcaps from the trees.



When we emerged from the trees, we were more exposed to the rather cold wind coming off the North Sea. This did not stop the first *Swallow* of the summer from putting in an appearance. We were pleased to reach the shelter of the first hide. Here we could scan the numerous birds in relative comfort. The most unusual bird we could see were *Mediterranean Gulls*. They are very similar to the more common *Black-headed Gulls*, but once you get your eye in they do stand out. For a better look we made our way around to the Parrinder Hide. Here we found a *Little-ringed Plover* which is another summer migrant that had recently arrived. Another challenge was the sighting from a helpful birder about two *Sandwich Terns*. They were roosting in a group of gulls and were surprisingly difficult to pick out. Another interesting sighting was a *Muntjac Deer* out in the middle of the lagoon on a narrow dividing bank.



Before starting the return, we had a look over the Volunteer Marsh where we had a tip that a *Whimbrel* had been seen earlier. Sure enough we quickly found a suitable bird in the long grass, which unfortunately made observation difficult, along with another that was clearly a *Curlew*. Only after later reflection I now regret not looking at the candidate Whimbrel to confirm the presence of the distinctive head markings rather than just the bill shape. I now think it could have been a *Curlew*.

We diverted from the path directly to the visitor centre and joined the board walk. This was a good decision as we were treated to the sighting of the day. A *Bittern* in flight, battling in the brisk wind to make headway, resulting in a longer viewing opportunity. We stopped at the Ivy covered tree that is the home of a *Tawny Owl*. We could see approximately a quarter of it, the rest was obscured by the Ivy!



After lunch we decided to relocate for the afternoon and headed inland to **Roydon Common**, close to the Kings Lynn Hospital. This is a location where it is possible to stumble upon a migrant *Ring Ouzel* at this time of year as they make their way to the North. We were not successful, but rather annoyingly there was a report from the exact area we searched just two days later. The unique habitat of a common does limit the range of species found there, but they can be interesting. We certainly found a number of *Stonechats* and *Linnet*s. In the sky there were *Marsh Harriers*, *Red Kites*, *Kestrels* and *Common Buzzards*. We also noted some *Cowslips* and *Violets* as well. Towards the end we detected a distant *Mistle Thrush* and as we were watching it a pair of *Yellowhammers* appeared directly behind it. Roydon Common was a new location not previously visited by the members of the group and I feel they enjoyed the walk here.