

BTO Birdcamp Weekend May 2017 – Ben Moyes

The Nunnery – Saturday Morning

An early start for everyone saw us arriving at the BTO's Nunnery Lakes reserve at 6:30 for a morning of bird ringing, nest recording and bird surveying. Nest recording was led by Dave Leech and Lee Barber, where Ben Moyes and Toby Carter assisted in finding nests for the young birders to look at. Due to the spring conditions we had experienced over the past couple of months, there wasn't a great number of nests present, as birds had nested earlier. However, we did manage to find 2 Willow Warbler nests (both with chicks), a Gadwall nest and a Blackbird nest.



Willow Warbler nest (By Max Hellicar)



Gadwall nest (By Max Hellicar)

The bird ringing session was led by BTO's Justin Walker, and assisted by Max Hellicar and Ben Porter. This was very successful and all of the young birders were able to take away several skills of how to carry out the ringing process, and also obtain close ID skills of some of the birds of the Nunnery Lakes. Some birds ringed included Cetti's Warbler, Sedge Warbler and a Song Thrush.



From L to R - Cetti's Warbler, Sedge Warbler (both by Max Hellicar), and Song Thrush (By Elliot Roberts)

The 3rd activity that the young birders took part in was a Common Bird Census (CBC), carried out by the BTO's Paul Stancliffe, and assisted by David Walsh. This enabled the young birders to be able to not only ID birds by song, but also plot territories on a map, and indicate how the bird was detected.



The Nunnery Lakes Reserve (By Max Hellicar)

Whilst carrying out these activities, some good birds were spotted around the reserve, including a Stone Curlew and several Cuckoo's!



Cuckoo (by Elliott Montieth)



Stone Curlew (By James McCulloch)

Landguard Bird Observatory – Sunday Morning

Sunday morning saw an early morning visit to Landguard Bird Observatory, where we were greeted by Nigel Odin, part of the Landguard Bird Observatory. After some history and background of the site, Nigel opened up the reserve moth trap, and all of the campers were able to obtain close up views of some very special moths. Highlights included Cream Spot Tiger, Small Elephant Hawkmoth, Poplar Hawkmoth and a site first – Beautiful Hooktip!



Beautiful Hooktip (By Ben Moyes)



Small Elephant Hawkmoth (By Ben Moyes)



Poplar Hawkmoth (By Ben Porter)



Cream Spot Tiger (By Ben Porter)

After looking at the moths, we were guided around the reserve, where everyone obtained excellent views of the local Ringed Plovers with young, which were the undoubted highlight bird wise around the reserve.



Ringed Plover (By Ben Moyes)

Hollesley Common – Saturday pre-lunch

A drive further north up the Suffolk Coast took us to the area of Hollesley, and firstly, to Upper Hollesley Common. Here, Ben Moyes and David Walsh led the group to try and find Dartford Warbler, Woodlark and Stonechat, all speciality species of the area. After a lot of patience, we hadn't found a Dartford Warbler, but had had excellent views of Stonechat and a singing Woodlark, and even a bonus Yellow Wagtail flyover! A little later however, David ran back to us saying he had just found a Dartford on the other side of the heath! So we all followed him, and were greeted to great, albeit brief, views of a male Dartford Warbler! Great perseverance from David made this visit very special for most!



Upper Hollesley Common (By Max Hellicar)