

A Feast of Birds 2nd Jan 2016

When it comes to atoning for the excesses of the festive season there's nothing quite like getting out to stretch your legs in a fresh sea breeze. On the second day of the New Year, fourteen of us did just that, enjoying the sight of a host of birds in the process.

In terms of habitat, the Humberston Fitties area is suitably diverse: water, mud, sand and saltmarsh, but also reeds, open fields, trees and a golf course, not to mention the many gardens attached to the chalets. It was in one of the gardens that we came across a squabbling flock of starlings. They were making short work of someone's Christmas leftovers. There were plenty of house sparrows too in the adjacent bushes. Years ago both of these species were so common as to be hardly worth a mention, but nowadays the populations of both have taken a tumble, so it was nice to see so many.

A receding tide is generally best for viewing waders, so it was surprising to see so many eagerly feeding just an hour before high tide – knot, dunlin, sanderling, curlew and godwit, plus the ever-vociferous oystercatchers, as well as shelducks, cormorants and gulls in the distance.

The edge of the lagoon was brightened up by the toing and froings of a hungry turnstone, while the water itself was covered with ducks including several teal and a shoveler. The familiar frame of a little grebe also showed itself from time to time, between bouts of disappearing into the murky depths in search of a snack. One was actually seen devouring a small fish.

All in all, a feast for the birds, and a feast for the eyes.

Ray Hume
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