

For the Love of Birds

A flock of ardent bird-lovers gathered at Thorpe Park for a blustery walk around the Fitties on Valentine's Day.

This area has a lot more to offer wildlife than you might expect – and certainly more than most parts of what we call the 'countryside'. Apart from the wetland habitats, there are plenty of native trees of several species and a variety of ages, and the gardens of some of the properties are a welcome source of food for everyday birds.

The main shorebirds of note on this occasion were a tight-packed flock of golden plovers, resting at the water's edge (until disturbed, as usual, by a free running dog). There were also a couple of dozen or so of turnstones and sanderlings – the latter racing like olympic athletes along the shore, their white plumage glinting attractively in the bright sunshine.

Because of the large number of people (over twenty) on this walk we decided to split into two separate groups. This was of benefit to the group I was not in, as they managed to spot great spotted woodpecker, tree creeper and siskin! Never mind! Our love affair with birds is kept alive by the simplest of pleasures: the bittersweet winter song of the robin, a glimpse of a longtailed tit, a dancing charm of twittering goldfinches. The fact that we may have seen such things many times before doesn't diminish the lifelong joy they bring.

Ray Hume
14/02/16

