

Warbler Walk 7th May 2016

Despite a cool and misty start to the day, a dozen or so regular birders met at 7 am for our first birdwalk of the year at Cleethorpes Country Park.

A willow warbler was the first songster we noticed, its delicate shimmering voice echoing across the car park as we assembled. Shortly afterwards we had some good clear views of him holding forth from the top of a young tree in an area of grassy tussocks. Later we heard both reed and sedge warblers as well as common whitethroat, and there was also a fine performance from a song thrush and a second willow warbler. The cheery twitterings of goldfinch and linnet were among others we came across.

The warblers are a challenging group. Many are virtually impossible to see as they deliver their inventive tunes from deep inside some bushy hideout. Their plumage is so nondescript that even when you do manage to get a glimpse it's never that easy to identify them.

We therefore need to familiarise ourselves with their songs, which are, unfortunately, only heard for a few short weeks each year between mid-April and early June – not long to attune your ears to such beguiling sounds.

Whilst we're bemoaning the difficulties they present, perhaps we should spare a thought for the hazards these tiny birds themselves have to face in order to find their way back here each spring, flying unaided as they do all the way from the heart of Africa. Now that's something that really *does* call for an over-used superlative such as "awesome" or "absolutely fantastic"!

Ray Hume
8th May 2016

