

Birdwalk 25th February 2017

At 8 o'clock on this mild and breezy winter morning just enough of us to make a football team gathered at the Discovery Centre.

There are always plenty of birds hereabouts. Mostly, though, they are not of the kind of much interest to serious birders. Mongrel mallards, naturalised geese and feral pigeons: these are absent from many a bird book. The reason, of course, is that they're not truly wild: you can walk right up to them without as much as ruffling a feather.

So we soon left this motley menagerie behind, and headed for the saltmarsh and the adjacent scrub. Here we encountered reed buntings, which are always pretty easy to see, and which were noticeably more numerous than usual. Later we spotted a couple of dozen finches in a tight flock over the saltmarsh. We ventured out to get a closer look but ended up getting wet feet, which dampened our enthusiasm. We shall therefore never know whether they were linnets or the much rarer twites (or a mixture of the two?). This, of course, is the difference between the likes of us and proper birders!

We weren't the only waders. Away at the distant tideline there must have been thousands, but we had to make do with a just couple of redshanks. Apart from these, we were content to take in the air and saunter along to the sound of twittering goldfinches, wheezing greenfinches and a hint of spring in the form of the humble song of the dunnock.

Another enjoyable amble - far more appropriate for the average age of our group than a game of football!

RH

