

Warblers Galore!

Despite a chilly east wind, this cloudy morning proved very eventful for the dozen or so who were keen enough to make a 6.30 start at Cleethorpes Country Park.

First port of call was that strange redundant building beside the car park (the toilet that never was!). As in previous years, great tits had a nest in the space between the gutter and the downpipe, from which we could hear the cries of the young being fed.

Shortly afterwards we were treated to an amazing mute swan spectacular. Ten of them appeared from nowhere, much to the obvious annoyance of the resident male (whose mate was on her nest). His feathers were – quite literally – well and truly ruffled and he made short work of persuading them all to leave.

As with the coots, the great crested grebes are nesting this year in a spot that makes it easy for all to watch them, and there were still three tufted ducks on the water, as well as a couple of common sandpipers (not at all common here), skirting round the edge of the lake as they paused in their journey to hillier regions far beyond – in Wales or Scotland as like as not.

These were all treasures enough, but at this time of year, the real jewel in the crown of this wonderful nature reserve is the sound (and occasional sight) of that furtive skulking group of birds known as the warblers. And warbling they certainly were, everywhere we went! Chiffchaff, willow warbler, whitethroat, lesser whitethroat, reed warbler, sedge warbler and blackcap too. All were in fine voice, laying claim to their favourite habitat niche, confirming that such tiny creatures can fly such an incredibly long way and *still* have enough energy to pour their hearts out long before most of us are out of bed!

Ray Hume
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