

Pyewipe Birdwalk

The word 'pyewipe' is an old-fashioned Lincolnshire term for the peewit, which is another name for the lapwing or green plover. Apparently these birds once bred round here in such profusion that people could make good money collecting and selling their eggs.

How times change! We had expected to find lots of wading birds here this morning but, although the receding tide was beckoning, we saw next to none. Where had they all gone? Had they found better fare somewhere else on the vast Humber estuary? Was it too early (or too late) in the year to catch the large flocks that are often seen here? Or had they all been spooked by the local peregrine falcon? Who can say?

Whatever the reason, we had to be content with seeing good numbers of shelduck, their striking plumage showing well in the early morning sunshine, plus a couple of curlews and a redshank. There were other species about such as goldfinch, chaffinch, reed bunting and singing robin, as well as a single kestrel; but best bit was right at the end, as we were returning to our cars along the main road. A nearby open-fronted warehouse was filled to the gunnels with rubbish from the adjacent household refuse site. Here we saw lots of gulls of several species and plenty of swallows and house martins, presumably feeding on insects from the rotting waste.

Although there is still plenty of attractive habitat in this area and large flocks of birds are often seen hereabouts, it was sadly ironic that on this occasion birds were commonest where there was nothing to see but the detritus from the throwaway world of our own species.

Ray Hume
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