

U3A BIRDWATCHING GROUP REPORT by Andrew Lapworth

FIELD MEETING TO RSPB LEIGHTON MOSS 19 JUNE 2023

We had a warm and sunny day at this wonderful RSPB wetland reserve in Silverdale at the southern end of the Lake District. Sharing 3 cars to travel there, eight of us enjoyed some



prolonged views of male and female Marsh Harriers hunting low over the reed beds and ditches). We began by climbing the “Skytower” which gives an excellent view over the whole area of the reserve, with its reedbeds (the largest in NW England), with their backdrop of green fields and lush woodlands, as well as more distant limestone-topped hills. From the Skytower we could see the Osprey nest platform with its Great Blacked-back Gull occupants, and we saw lots of Coots with their chicks, Mallards, various Geese and just one very distant and brief Bittern flying to its feeding areas.

On the boardwalks between the various hides we encountered a movement of tiny froglets (we avoided squashing any underfoot!), and we heard the repetitive song of Reed Warblers and the explosive song of Cetti’s Warblers. We had good views of a perched Reed Bunting singing its simple song, and everywhere there were blue damselflies and their larger cousins the Dragonflies. The latter are a main food of the dashing Hobby, but we only saw a very very distant one. In the sunny shrub and wooded areas we enjoyed close views of Speckled-Wood butterflies, patrolling their linear territories. From the hides we watched close Grey Herons hunting in the shallows and saw a few Little Egrets, Cormorants and Little and Great crested Grebes as well as families of Gadwall ducks. In total we logged 25 bird species; alas we neither saw nor heard the elusive Bearded-Tits.

On our return journeys we called in at a nearby disused quarry where Peregrines had been nesting; they were not at home when we called.

Pastel of Leighton Moss by artist John Reaney for the RSPB 1978. Reproduced for the RSPB Calendar 1979 and in RSPB Nature Reserves, 1983.