

BIRDWATCHING GROUP VISIT TO RSPB SALTHOLME MONDAY 16 FEBRUARY 2026; report and photo by Andrew Lapworth

The group made our winter visit to the RSPB's flagship nature reserve on Teeside on a bright February day and after days of gloom and rain. Twelve of us enjoyed coffees and cakes in the warm panoramic cafe overlooking the central lake. We saw rather distant flocks of Greylag and Canada Geese and diving Pochards and Tufted Ducks; a small group of Wigeon were grazing on the field. We then checked the feeders with the usual Greenfinches, Goldfinches and Blue and Great Tits before setting off for Saltholme main pools. En route we found a few Barnacle Geese with the Canadas.

We spent an hour or so in the main hide, finding a great variety of birds, including a good set of 8 wader species: Dunlin, Redshank, Curlew, Avocet, Snipe, Black-tailed Godwits, Golden Plover and huge numbers of Lapwings; the latter gave us some spectacular aerial displays of maybe around a thousand birds. The Avocets will probably build in numbers as the season continues and stay to breed; the Lapwings & Curlews will mainly disperse for the hills and dales, as will the Golden Plover. We look forward to seeing them back in Teesdale soon. We also had a good variety of ducks in addition to the usual Mallards: Shovelers spinning-around filter-feeding, Goldeneye and elegant Pintails in the distance; through the 'scopes we made out the intricate *vermiculations* (a dense pattern of fine wavy lines) of the drake Gadwalls.



A Drake **Gadwall**: always worth a close view to see his (word of the trip) *vermiculations*.

A Kestrel hovered in view as we left the hide, and when we got back to the feeders at the visitor centre we saw the usual small flock of dainty Stock Doves. All in all 37 bird species were seen during our short visit.