

Creeks & Saltmarsh Trip (41) 15th December 2022

Isaac Hobby was our skipper for the trip with Keith Metcalf and Nigel Matthews being the two lead spotters. Nigel is a highly experienced birder and is recently retired from the National Park having worked there for fifteen years as Head of Recreation.

Thirty five different species were seen on this glorious, cold but sunny winter morning trip along Keyhaven River and around the creeks and saltmarshes. The trip started well when hearing a single call from a group of 9 *Redwing* passing over the harbour. This was quickly followed by a *Marsh Harrier* flying over the Pans and Avon Water Wetlands.

A couple of small flocks of *Golden Plover* (total 15 birds) flew over the boat as we departed the harbour area. The Keyhaven River tide-line birds included over 300 *Brent Geese*, 600 *Dunlin*, 100 *Black-tailed Godwit*, 15 *Grey Plover* (with their black under-wing patches clearly seen in flight), 10 *Turnstone*, 2 *Ringed Plover*, 4 *Redshank*, 40+ *Lapwing*, 8 *Cormorant*, 12 *Oystercatcher* and 20 *Shelduck*. We also saw a couple of *Little Grebe* diving near some of the moored boats in Keyhaven River.

Soon after departing the harbour, 3 *Spoonbill* were seen as they flew a short distance away from us before settling back down on the muddy edges of one of the small creeks. We have seen them before out on the marshes but not for some time so this was a delightful surprise, especially for Nigel as he was able to add this species to his year-list for 2022 of some 250 birds.

On the mud-banks or flying over the saltmarsh were *Black-headed Gulls* (numerous), 8 *Herring Gulls*, 8 *Little Egrets* seen primarily hunched-up alongside the vegetation which was protected them from the gentle breeze we had on the trip. 12 *Curlew* often heard with their far-carrying 'bubbling/rippling trill' as they flew around the marshes.

At North Point, a pair of *Eider* was seen at close quarters with the male resting on the very end of the Point before slipping gently into the Solent to join the brown female.

Before entering Skivers (one of the narrow creeks) we saw about a dozen *Great Crested Grebe* and at least 8 *Red-breasted Merganser* out in the Solent. As we entered Skivers we had wonderful views of many ducks including; 130+ *Wigeon*, 10 *Pintail*, 80 *Teal*, 5 *Shoveler* and 6 *Mallard*. We were all pleased to see a lone *Kingfisher* as it flew up and across the creeks channel. We also saw what was probably a second bird when we returned to the harbour.

Other birds seen on this trip included; 15 *Mute Swan*, 4 *Rock Pipit*, at least 1 *Raven*, *Starling*, 2 *Skylark* heard and seen flying over us and several *Carrion Crow*.

The next four winter trips are all fully booked with a short waiting list. We do get late cry-offs so if you do wish to be added to the waiting lists, please contact Keith direct at keithmetcalf2022@btinternet.com

Report by: Keith Metcalf



Top Left = 3 Spoonbill out on marshes
Top Right = Dunlin feeding in mud
Bottom Left = Pair of Eider at North Point
Bottom Right = Lone Kingfisher in one of the creeks

All photos by Keith