

## Creeks & Saltmarsh Trips (42) 25th & (43) 27th February 2023

Isaac Hobby was our skipper for the two trips with Keith Metcalf leading on Saturday 25th and Monday 27th February. The weather for both trips was dry, with light winds on both sessions. Monday's trip was undertaken in bright sunshine which made the trip all the better.

Here are the lists of birds recorded for each trip (not in order of sightings)

<u>Saturdays Trip</u>	
Cormorant (1)	Little Egret (3)
Brent Goose (600)	Mute Swan (2)
Shelduck (25)	Mallard (2)
Teal (1)	Gadwall (2)
Wigeon (4)	Oystercatcher (18)
Red-breasted Merganser (12)	
Ringed Plover (3)	Grey Plover (8)
Turnstone (20)	Dunlin (1,000)
Knot (200)	Redshank (8)
Black-tailed Godwit (30)	Curlew (10)
Mediterranean Gull (1 Heard only)	
Black-headed Gull (10)	Herring Gull (10)
Lesser Black-backed Gull (1)	
Rock Pipit (1)	Carrion Crow (1)
Pied Wagtail (1)	
<u>26 species</u>	

<u>Mondays Trip</u>	
Little Grebe (1)	Cormorant (6)
Great Crested Grebe (5)	Little Egret (4)
Spoonbill (1)	Brent Goose (500)
Mute Swan (3)	Shelduck (30)
Mallard (2)	Teal (10)
Eider (2m + 1f)	Buzzard (1)
Red-breasted Merganser (14)	
Marsh Harrier (2)	Kestrel (1)
Oystercatcher (15)	Ringed Plover (1)
Grey Plover (12)	Turnstone (18)
Dunlin (300)	Knot (500)
Redshank (14)	Curlew (20)
Black-tailed Godwit (50)	Herring Gull (5)
Lesser Black-backed (1)	Black-headed (20)
Great Black-backed Gull (5)	
Common Gull (1)	Woodpigeon (5)
Rock Pipit (1)	Starling (16)
Carrion Crow (2)	Raven (1)
<u>34 species</u>	

*Brent Geese* and *Dunlin* were well dispersed across the whole marsh, with maybe a few less Brent's recorded on the second trip. (Dunlin below in a small group).



Trippers from both sessions had really good sightings of *Knot*, although the birds were in quite different areas on each of the two days. Comparatively large flocks of Knot were seen

on both days. On the Saturday, the Knott gathered with Dunlin outside the entrance to *Skivers Creek*. We asked skipper Isaac to reverse the boat to get a little closer to the main thronk which he managed to do without disturbing the birds.

The light was poor for photography (that's my excuse anyway) but I managed to capture a few Knot mixed in with the smaller Dunlin in the photo below.



On the Saturday, some of the Knot took flight and I managed to capture the smaller of the two groups in the photograph below. The 'photo-count' below shows **132** individual birds.





***Redshank & Knot – photo courtesy of Steve Laycock***

The second much larger group of Knott, flew east around the coast and I would estimate that there were some 350-400 birds in that group alone.

***Shelduck*** were numerous on both days and there was evidence of some of them pairing up for the breeding season. The male is on the left in the photo below showing his distinct red bulge on the top of his beak in front of his eye. The slightly smaller female is to the right.



***Red-breasted Mergansers*** (photo below) were much in evidence in small groups on both days. This pair swam close to our boat. (Female leading the male).



The following records were made on the Monday Creeks and Saltmarsh trip (43).



***Male Red-breasted Merganser sitting up to get a better view before taking off***  
***The 2 photos above courtesy of Steve Laycock***

Monday's trip produced good numbers of ***Grey Plover*** across the whole saltmarsh area, often feeding individually or in small groups of up to four birds. Keith pointed out that in flight; Grey Plover shows a distinct black marking under their wings. Steve Laycock captured this beautifully in the following photograph.



***Common Gulls*** are sometimes overlooked in large gatherings of mixed gulls, but when seen alongside ***Herring*** or ***Black-headed Gulls*** their size is quite obvious with them being about mid-size between their two gull cousins. A Common Gull sits with 3 Black-headed Gulls.



Adult Common Gulls have a yellow beak with a dark band around the top and bottom mandibles and have greenish/yellow legs. Herring Gulls also have a mark on its beak, but this is a red spot on the under mandible only which juveniles peck at when wanting to be fed.



*Lovely photo of a Common Gull seen out on the marshes on Monday taken by Steve*

As we rounded *North Point* and headed back towards the marshes, two male *Eider* were spotted on the distant mud-banks. Isaac, our skipper, headed towards the birds and a female was also then seen standing nearby but had at a distance, blended completely into the brown muddy area it was standing on.



Even though we were a good hundred metres away, the three ducks decided to head south-eastwards and out onto the Solent. Steve was able to capture one of the males in flight in the excellent photo below.



Above *Skivers Creek*, we saw a male ***Marsh Harrier*** quartering the marshes looking for his mid-morning snack. We also saw a second bird away over the Iley Point area.



***Male Marsh Harrier taken from the boat over Skivers Creek – courtesy of Steve***

As we headed back along *Skivers* towards *Keyhaven Harbour*, we saw a very long distant **Raven** way out on the marshes. Other than the odd couple of **Carrion Crow**, the Raven was the only other corvid we saw out on the marsh.



A lone **Spoonbill** (the first seen at the western end of the Keyhaven/Lymington nature reserve for some weeks) showing its unforgettable ‘spoon’ bill. The bird was an adult showing its black bill with a yellow/orange tip. (Spoonbill photos below by Steve Laycock)





Arriving back safely at Hurst Castle ferry terminal, we encountered our last new bird of the morning session, a lone **Rock Pipit** feeding at the side of the pontoon.



#### **Acknowledgements:**

**Sincere thanks to Steve Laycock for his excellent photography.**

**The 'oof' photographs ('Out of Focus') photos will be the ones I took!!!**

**Photos should not be copied without the express permission of the photographers ©**

**And thanks to our Skipper; Isaac Hobby for getting us around safely and back again.**