



Milford Conservation Volunteers

www.milfordconservation.org



Creeks & Saltmarsh Trip (53) Report

10th October 2024

Following several rainy days, we were fortunate that the only shower we encountered started just after we had completed the tour around the saltmarshes. The trip was led by MCV volunteer Keith Metcalf and supported by Richie Ainger from Bird Aware Solent. The dory was skippered by Jason Crane – Hurst Marine CEO was able to take us through some of the smaller shallower creeks using his skippering expertise.

Being the first trip of the year, wintering birds were only just starting to gather, with some of the more regularly seen birds like red-breasted merganser not yet having arrived in any significant numbers. However, it was good to see two of three small gatherings of Brent Geese, Dunlin and Black-tailed Godwit, whose numbers will increase over the next few months.



There was a steady flow of Little Egrets around all areas visited.

During the trip, Richie from Bird Aware Solent (BAS) was able to talk about the important work they do along the Solent, between Chichester Harbour and Milford-on-Sea at the western end of the area. BAS are supported by many local authorities and funded through Natural England, Hampshire & Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust, the RSPB and Chichester Harbour Conservancy. Bird Aware is a tool being used to lessen potential recreational impacts from increased local housing development.

Tens of thousands of birds come to the Solent coast for winter and three Special Protection Areas (SPAs) have been designated for them. A team of rangers visit local

areas where people visit along the coastline and help communities understand the importance of the different bird species and the impacts of any disturbance.



Additional work they undertake is to encourage responsible dog walking and visits to less sensitive parts of the coast.

In spring and summer 2024, Wings Wildlife Heritage and Milford Conservation Volunteers (MCV) monitored breeding 'ground-nesting' birds using Hurst Spit under the guidance of the RSPB. From spring 2025, 6 *additional 'engagement volunteers'* appointed by the Hampshire & Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust will supplement the work that Wings, MCV and BAS undertook this year.

Start looking out for any of the volunteers this winter. They will usually have scopes for you to look at the various birds and will be pleased to show them to you. They will also answer any of your questions about the birdlife at Hurst Spit and surrounding saltmarsh.

Back to Trip (53): Before we had departed from the ferry pontoon, a **Kingfisher** was seen in the harbour. It flashed by so quick that few of us even saw it.

Small batches of **Swallow** were frequently seen flying eastwards before their leap over to the continent to head back to Africa for our winter. Single **Great Crested Grebe** were seen several times but would dive before you could get a good view of them in their winter plumage. **Grey Plover**, **Redshank**, **Dunlin**, **Curlew** and **Black-tailed Godwit** were seen dotted around the muddy fringes of the saltmarsh and one group of 6 **Shelduck** were seen out towards the northern end of Garden Point as we headed towards the Camber and the Castle landing stage.



Above: Grey Plover in winter plumage

Below: Ringed Plover - a 'ground-nesting' bird we are protecting on Hurst Spit



Herewith a list of all the birds we saw during this trip and an estimate of the numbers seen.

Mute Swan	5	Black-tailed Godwit	20
Oystercatcher	10	Black-headed Gull	15
Little Egret	18	Goldfinch (FO)	30
Swallow	30	Canada Goose	18
Gt Crested Grebe	6	Herring Gull	8
Kingfisher	1	Grey Plover	6
Ringed Plover	10	Cormorant	7
Pied Wagtail	1	Kestrel	1
Rock Pipit	1	Shelduck	6
Dunlin	10	Brent Goose	25
Peregrine	1	Mallard (FO)	?
Redshank	6	Grey Heron	1
Turnstone	12	Meadow Pipit	3
Curlew	10		

FO = Flying over

TWO 'GREAT COASTAL BIRDWATCHES'

SATURDAY

26th October from 10am till 11am

Meet: Saltgrass Lane near Cut Bridge at 10am

Join Keith Metcalf and Wings for a one-hour winter 'birdwatch' across Mount Lake & Hurst Spit



Wings will bring scopes and binoculars
You bring a comfy garden chair if needed

The second Great Coastal Birdwatch which has been organised by Bird Aware Solent will take place in the *Bird Hide at Sturt Pond* on:

FRIDAY 1st NOVEMBER BETWEEN 1 and 3pm



Bring the family. We shall have spare binoculars and scopes set up to see the birds using the Pond, Saltmarsh, Scrub and Reedbed.



Richie Ainger
Bird Aware Solent
- Lead Ranger -