

Just 8 of us this morning, but we enjoyed a spot of early winter birdwatching under the big skies and wide horizons of Medmerry. The path from the car park to the reserve is 15 minutes of walking through flat farmland, and the best we could manage were yellowhammers going out (good views) and a green woodpecker and buzzard coming back. There were quite a lot of "noises off" - truncated winter calls of dunnocks, wrens, great tits and skylarks coming from hidden birds in the fields and bushes around.

Once onto the reserve we first turned left, away from the sea, to go to the Easton viewpoint. The landscape here is watery fields and lagoons, looking up Broad Rife for a mile or so to where the sea wall was breached. Here there were a large number of shelduck in the water, a curlew in the field right in front of us, and a marsh harrier flying along the tops of the line of dead poplars to our left.



*Male Yellowhammer*

Turning back on our tracks and heading now towards the sea the habitat is rough grazing pasture, gorse scrub, bushes and reed edged pools. At various points we saw - with good views - reed bunting, more yellowhammers, linnets, stonechat, greenfinch, meadow pipit, pied wagtail and kestrel.



*Birding birding after lunch at the “Periwinkle “*

Just before reaching the sea you pass the Stilt Pools on your right. These pools are more obviously 'RSPB managed', with new wooden structures in place to attract nesting sand martins and fenced off islands in the middle of the pools (for avocets? terns? ringed plovers?). On our arrival the pools had wigeon, teal, a shoveler or two, a lapwing or two, some Canada Geese. Where the pools meet the beach there is the weird and moderately wonderful Periwinkle - a large piece of modern sculpture made from wicker that is like a giant walnut whip. It has space inside for a few people to shelter. Another more vernacular way to describe its shape and colour are used by locals and Medmerry birders, but I hesitate to use the word lest it lower the tone. This bizarrely located structure provided us with a perfect windbreak for our refreshments, and we enjoyed a very pleasant 45 minutes of classic birdwatching: just being in one place, fully present in nature, and watching what develops.



*Linnets*

The tide was rising, and we started to get larger numbers of birds into the fields and pools. Brent geese started arriving in small flocks until 100+ were present in a field for their high tide roost, more lapwings joined the ones already in the pools, a dunlin joined the lapwings, a greenshank was visible in a channel, some redshank in a nearer channel, a flock of 20+ linnets close by - some on a fence line and some just beyond on the ground next to standing water. Right in the distance, on the eastern edge of the reserve, there was a lot of bird activity but only viewable through a scope. Large flocks of ducks and geese arriving, and a marsh harrier (probably the same one as earlier) putting up huge flocks of birds from the distant fields. We tried turning these into golden plover (which were seen in large numbers much closer up on the reccy last week and for which Medmerry is famous at wintertime), but alas they were just starlings.

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*Incoming Brent Geese*