



EAST LANCASHIRE ORNITHOLOGIST CLUB

Field Trip Report RSPB Fairburn Ings

Date: 18th April 2026

Participants 12

Sunrise: 05:51

Hightide: na

Weather: 08:00 - Broken clouds, Temperature 9.3°C. Wind 12 mph W

Species Count: 68

Morning

RSPB Fairburn Ings is four miles east of the previously visited RSPB reserve of St Adain's, both of which are situated next to the river Aire and are disused coal mining sites. Nature conservation developed as coal mining declined. Coal mining ceased as recently as 1992.

The group met in the car park in the early morning spring sunshine, with Willow Warbler and Chiffchaff singing, Bullfinch and Dunnock were seen and two Egyptian Geese flew over.

We set off to explore the western side of the reserve. Walking through the wooded area around Pickup Hide and the feeder station we saw the expected common species, with Willow Warbler and Blackcap singing from the trees.

Climbing up the Redshale Trail to the Totem Pole we had breathtaking views over much of the reserve. Looking down into the area known as Big Hole, we could see Tufted Duck, Mallard and Coot.

Walking around the three upper lakes on the Roy Taylor Trail, we saw more ducks including Gadwall and Pochard, and heard Reed Warbler and Bittern in the reedbeds. As we walked along the Trail, we could view the area call The Moat where we saw two Spoonbill, along with a large number of Cormorants in a roost; Grey Herons and Little Egret were present. There were distant

views of two Ringed Plover. Red Kite and Buzzard drifted overhead, and a Sparrowhawk flew in front of us. A Peregrine was also seen flying above us.

Continuing around the Trail we (Nigel) located an elusive, Black-necked Grebe on one of the lakes; these Grebes are more common on the nearby St Aidain's reserve. A Green Woodpecker had been heard calling for some time and it was eventually found (by Glenn) calling from the top of a thin Willow tree. It stayed long enough for us to get good, if distant, views of the bird.

Continuing westwards along the Trail, we entered the scrub area of Arrow Lane with species such as Willow Warbler, Chiffchaff and Blackcap being seen. A Jay was also present but proved elusive. In this area Brimstone, Green-veined White, Orange-tip and Small Tortoiseshell butterflies were seen. Finally, we arrived at the Lin Dike Hide overlooking Spoonbill Flash, giving more views of waterfowl with Redshank, Curlew and Lapwing present. We then retraced our steps back to the visitor centre for lunch. As we walked back past the lakes on the Roy Taylor Trail, we were rewarded with views of a Bittern in flight over the reedbed.

Afternoon

After refreshments, we explored the eastern side of the Reserve. Walking back up the Redshale Trail, we turned left to walk to the Bob Dickens Hide to view the Main Bay.

More ducks were present on the lake, and amongst the many noisy Black-headed Gull on the islands, two Mediterranean Gull were found along with four Avocet.

We had seen very few Hirundines up to this point (a few Swallow and a single House Martin) so it was exciting to watch large numbers of Sand Martin darting above the water catching insects.

We then noticed that Common Tern were arriving, apparently from the east, with nine eventually being seen.

A single male Goldeneye was another surprising find. The last species of the day, a Marsh Harrier, was spotted by Tony as others turned to leaving the Hide.

Continuing eastwards, we paused at the Village Bay viewpoint where we watched a pair of Great-crested Grebe performing their courtship dance.

We continued to Charlie's hide (close to Fairburn Village). It was a pleasant walk through the wooded area by the side of the Aire, but no new species were seen

Returning to the Visitors Centre, we completed our eight-mile exploration of Fairburn Ings. It had been another rewarding (if tiring!) trip out with ELOC and great to see and learn so much by being out with other knowledgeable birdwatchers.

Thanks, as always, to Nigel and Glenn for the planning of the day, and for the company of all those who participated.

Species List

Canada Goose
Greylag Goose
Mute Swan
Egyptian Goose
Shelduck
Shoveler
Gadwall
Wigeon
Mallard
Teal
Pochard
Tufted duck
Goldeneye
Stock Dove
Wood Pigeon
Collared Dove
Moorhen
Coot
Little Grebe
Great Crested Grebe
Black-necked Grebe
Oystercatcher
Avocet
Ringed plover
Lapwing
Curlew
Redshank
Common Tern
Black-headed Gull
Mediterranean Gull
Lesser Back-backed Gull
Cormorant
Spoonbill
Bittern

Little Egret
Grey Heron
Sparrowhawk
Marsh Harrier
Red Kite
Buzzard
Green Woodpecker
Kestrel
Peregrine
Jay
Magpie
Jackdaw
Carrion Crow
Blue Tit
Great Tit
Skylark
Sand martin
Swallow
House Martin
Cetti's Warbler
Long-tailed Tit
Willow warbler
Chiffchaff
Reed Warbler
Blackcap
Wren
Song Thrush
Blackbird
Robin
Dunnock
Chaffinch
Bullfinch
Goldfinch
Reed Bunting