



EAST LANCASHIRE ORNITHOLOGIST CLUB

Field Trip Report Hilbre Island

Date: 12th September 2026

Participants: 18

Sunrise: 06:42

Hightide: 12:31

Weather: 08:30 Overcast clouds, Temperature 17.1°C. Wind 10 mph SW (Gusting to 30 mph)

Species Count: 34

Hilbre Island is situated off the Wirral coast, at the mouth of the Dee estuary, and is only accessible at low tide.

Once on the island you must remain there until the tide retreats sufficiently, this is until about three hours after hightide.

The island has a long established bird observatory, as well as buildings related to its history plus a few privately owned properties.

This was to be the most challenging trip the group had tackled, as it required a two mile walk across the exposed Dee Estuary, and then remaining on Hilbre Island for approximately 6 hours before returning.

The group met at the carpark near West Kirby Marina. We set off as a Raven flew overhead. Our route was to take us across the sands to behind Little Eye, before turning towards Middle Eye and finally reaching Hilbre Island.

There were strong blustery South Westerly Winds, and the threat of rain was in the air. Keeping hats on was a challenge, and the opportunity for bird watching was limited. We watched as Herring Gull flew up to drop shellfish onto the rocks.

As the rain arrived, we hurried to reach the relative shelter of Middle Eye. Once on this small island, we took advantage of the shelter it provided and looked at the birds on its leeward side. Little Egret and Cormorant were present along with various Gulls and Waders including Redshank,

Bar-tailed Godwit, Oystercatcher, Dunlin, Ringed Plover, Turnstone, Curlew and a single Whimbrel. A few Sandwich Tern were seen and then five Little Tern dropped in.

The rain abated slightly and it was time to quickly walk across the rocks to Hilbre Island before the tide cut the island off. Looking back at Middle Eye we watched as huge numbers of Oystercatcher came to roost. A Swift flew overhead as we reached the ramp to the Hilbre Island.

We hurried to the Island Shelter (provided by the Friends of Hilbre Island) for a rest, and to wait for the rain to stop. The rain passed by mid-day, but the wind remained blustery. We now explored the island, and it was apparent that we were the only people on Hilbre that day.

On the sea, there good views of Common Scoter and Eider, and a Gannet was also seen; Grey seals kept their eye on us.

There were few small birds, but five Willow Warbler were found sheltering in some bushes along with a Robin and a Wren. One Wheatear and a few Meadow Pipit were seen and four Swallow flew through. Pied Wagtail were present on the shore.

Our attention was drawn towards the Oystercatcher roost on Middle Eye, as we noticed hundreds of birds taking to the air. We scanned the sky to pick out a circling Peregrine Falcon which then swooped down.

Several Rock Pipit were seen, the majority of which were ringed. Subsequently, Nigel found this was because of an on-going project studying the Rock Pipits on Hilbre Island.

[A Wirral birders blog: Rock Pipit colour ringing project Hilbre](#)

By 3pm it was time to return to West Kirby. Fortunately, the weather was kinder as we retraced our route with the wind less gusty and no rain.

The walk back allowed views of a group of Brent Goose (Light-bellied) that some of us had missed on the walk out. It was a tired group that finally arrived back at the carpark.

For many of us this was a 'bucket list' destination. Though the number of species was not large, it was a fabulous day out and will live long in the memory. The company of this friendly and knowledgeable group of people makes these trips a real treat.

Many thanks to Nigel for his meticulous planning, including notifying the Coast Guard of our plans, and to Glen for his support in ensuring yet another successful trip.

Species List

Brent Goose
Eider
Common Scoter
Oystercatcher
Ringed Plover
Whimbrel
Curlew
Bar-tailed Godwit
Redshank
Turnstone
Dunlin
Little Tern
Sandwich Tern
Black-headed Gull
Herring Gull
Great Black-backed Gull
Lesser Black-backed Gull
Gannet
Cormorant
Shag
Little Egret
Grey Heron
Swift
Peregrine
Raven
Swallow
Willow Warbler
Wren
Blackbird
Robin
Wheatear
Pied Wagtail
Meadow Pipit
Rock Pipit