

WBC - Bawdsey Hall

September 7th 2014

Only a handful of WBC trip stalwarts made the almost transcontinental journey down to Bawdsey Hall on Sunday 7th September; perhaps the 8am start influenced others, but they missed a treat.



Imagine you could go back to being a kid, and could design the 'best garden in the world'.....

Wouldn't it have ponds, and woods, and paths that wander off out of sight, and rough bits, and big views, and owls, and badgers, and – and – and.....

Well, that's what Dave Hermon's got here. He runs it as a B&B (although that description definitely understates it) , with guided wildlife walks, camera traps, moth traps and has a range of environments to work with, including fantastic skylines looking over the Deben valley and on to Felixstowe docks. I would imagine Springwatch's city-bound fans would love it!

Any escapee garden shed gets converted into a hide, and these are strategically placed to cover the variety of possibilities on offer. But how he manages to get anything done, I don't know. If I had the place, I'd constantly be off to 'check' something.....for a couple of hours at least.... Matthew Deans had been down there from an early hour emptying moth traps, and that was how the day started, with the first of several cups of tea kindly provided by Dave and his partner Rosie.

Matthew traps here regularly, and reported it as a top spot for *Convolvulus Hawk Moth*, although none had turned up this particular night. Picks of the bunch were Lunar Yellow Underwing, Ruby Tiger, Old Lady, Centre-barred Sallow and the migrant Rusty Dot Pearl.



Lunar Yellow Underwing

The Lunar Yellow Underwing in particular is worth noting, as it is only found in East Anglia and Salisbury Plain. Although not rare, it is very range-restricted.

For those used to the route-march approach to WBC trips, this one was very different, very mellow and very relaxed. Nets had been set in the gardens of the hall, with a ringing station set up on the patio. The small number of us enabled a detailed look at this fascinating and vitally-important process, particularly when a Treecreeper turned up in the nets later in the morning.

All the walks at Bawdsey are easy-access trails, and we explored the lot, including the woodland walk that leads to a hide overlooking a coastal field and allowing for a bit of sea-watching. (A full species list is included with this report, as is a picture of Dave's Buzzard feeding station, with what's left of the road-kill dinner)

Although at this time of year the range of species had dropped, this is also a great site for dragonflies and damselflies. A late bonus of the morning was the discovery of a small colony of Willow Emeralds on one of Dave's ponds, with two in tandem, planning for the next generation.....

Thanks from all of us who attended to Dave and Rosie for the great hospitality (particularly tea and bacon rolls!) and to Dave's dad Paul, and the guided tour of the vintage car collection, many of whom have starred in feature films, stage shows and musicals. Also, thanks to Steve for the patient explanation of the finer points of ringing, particularly as he had spent half the summer doing exactly the same at Minsmere.....

To finish the trip off, a reduced number of us headed to the coastal pools at East Lane, where we picked up a number of Wheatears with their bags packed, Marsh Harrier, Buzzards, several Little Grebes, Wigeon (welcome back, mates!) and Clouded Yellow butterflies, which finished the morning on a real high.

I don't know this patch of the south Suffolk coast particularly well, but made a vow on the road back to make more of an effort to correct this. Just a look at a map of the area just north of Felixstowe shows what there is to explore round here. Perhaps a weekend break at Bawdsey Hall might be a good start.....

For more information on Bawdsey Hall, check [http://
www.bawdseyhall.co.uk/](http://www.bawdseyhall.co.uk/)