
Favourite Nature Rambles Around Chichester

by David & Lynda Thornley

Conservation and a Short Walk Around the Reed Beds at Fishbourne

It's Easter Sunday and the weather forecast is for sunshine and showers. It's also a work party day for Chichester Wildfowlers at the conservation project on the reed beds by Fishbourne pond. It starts off well enough; although we had torrential rain during the night the strong winds have dried the reeds and they're dry enough to burn after cutting them down.



Dave gets stuck in with the strimmer, we soon have a roaring fire going in the oil drums and we're making good progress doing today's part of the rotational cutting. It couldn't last for long though, we soon had an intense shower but fortunately Helen (The owner) still came out with tea, coffee and biscuits. Such dedication! The upside was that the ducks were moving around in the strong winds, so good to see them; we even had a pair of Canada Geese drop in close by. After that soaking, progress slowed down, but by lunchtime we'd still cleared two significant new areas.

There's always something new to learn from wildfowling who have been at it for decades. How do you tell a female from a male kingfisher? it's got lipstick (a red line below its beak) When do the Brent geese fly back to Siberia? I thought they should have gone by now but they leave on the 25th March and fly back on the 25th October (apparently). Other news was that some bearded tits had been spotted in the reed bed as well as some elvers making their way up the stream.



High tide was at 14:50 so after a spot of lunch, Bonnie (our dog) and I went out for a walk around to see if there would be a tide flight and find out what was going on further down the seawall. To start off with there were several gadwall as well as tufties amongst the mallard on the pond, I suppose its because they prefer fresh water. We heard a Cetti's Warbler close to the reeds but couldn't get to see it unfortunately. At the end of the sea wall where the land juts out there were at least 40 wigeon sheltering in the lee of the land whistling away as only they can. Amongst them was a pintail then another three flew in, such elegant duck. There was also a pair of what looked like grebes of some sort but were too far off to make out for certain.

Making our way back through the fields we had another downpour, the harbour looked quite wild for a time with the boats blown around and disappearing in the rain. It's a smashing little walk and an interesting time of the year to do it, should do it more often!