

Bird Trail 24th September 2017

Blashford Lakes Reserve

The 2017 Bird Trail, run in partnership with the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust, was another great success. We were fortunate with the weather conditions and, of course, our many volunteers, supporting organisations and the groups of young people. Our thanks go to all of these and the adults who gave up their time to bring the groups. Thanks also to Jim Day and HIWWT for jointly organising the day with us and providing an excellent venue and their volunteers, including accredited photographers.



Thank you to all of our Hampshire Ornithological Society volunteers for their help on the day and throughout the year with the organisation of the event, including the British Trust for Ornithology ringers, Graham and Marcus, both HOS members. Volunteers undertook a multitude of tasks. Not only did each group have at least one HOS guide but volunteers supervised road crossings, carried out administration, registration and verification of the bird lists, being a guide in the hide and leading activities including owl pellet dissection, pond dipping, river dipping, moth trap analysis and the bird ringing demonstration.



We are also very grateful to Bird Aware Solent, BTO ringers, Liberty's Owl, Raptor and Reptile Centre, the Natural History Museum and Waders for Real for supporting the day with displays, information and interactive activities and also, to South Downs National Park for providing the wild owl pellets.

We had some excellent prizes thanks to sponsorship from Birds of Poole Harbour, Christchurch Harbour Ornithological Group, Hampshire Swifts, In Focus, Liberty's Owl, Raptor and Reptile Centre, Nutbags and Pearsons of Romsey.

Guided, chaperoned and instructed by HOS volunteers the groups set off at intervals on the route around the nature reserve to identify as many species of bird as they could and collect information on other aspects of nature. Fitting around their bird trail route they also had the opportunity to participate in the activities outlined above.

The winning team – 3rd Ringwood Beavers came top of the leaderboard on the day with over 50 species of birds. They won individual pairs of Opticron Vega binoculars

(courtesy of *In Focus*) as well as individual tickets for each team member and an accompanying adult to join the *Birds of Poole Harbour* Christmas Birdwatching cruise.



Close behind, with 47 species, was Blashford's Young Naturalist group winning family tickets to Liberty's Owl, Raptor and Reptile Centre, and in third place, with 42 species was Titchfield Haven Wildlife Explorers who won themselves a "Nutbags" sunflower heart filled bird feeder and a FSC guide to the Top 50 Garden Birds, courtesy of the *Hampshire Swift* Group.

All entrants were awarded with an embroidered "Bird Trail" camp blanket badge (sponsored by *Christchurch Ornithological Society*) and a certificate (printed by *Pearsons*) signed personally by Chris Packham himself.

Bird highlights this year included goldcrest, wheatear and tits in the hand at the ringing demonstration, and peregrine and kingfisher sightings.

Our appreciation, as ever, goes to Chris Packham, President of HOS who, once again, supported us with his time by personally signing all the certificates in advance and spending over 2 hours with the young people on the day. He is certainly not a president in name only. As he told me in the weeks running up to Bird Trail "if I am in the country I'll be there". Chris is so encouraging to the young people and provides inspiration as a role model in his interactions with them and through his keynote speech. This year the focus of his talk, having only recently returned from Cyprus, concerned the actions being taken to stop the on-going slaughter of songbirds on the island for the restaurant and street market trade. He also supported the youngsters by referring to their activities in Bird Trail, especially the owl pellet dissection. Wild owl pellets are, obviously, the must have present for this Christmas and birthdays to come.

We feel that it is time for another Spring Bird Trail and, in order not to be too close to the 2017 one, are planning for Sunday 28th April, 2019. This does avoid the School Holiday. Please note this in your diary.

Patricia Brown, October 2017