

2015 Spring Equinox – Moreton Park Bridge to Vealand 20th March

Overnight the temperature had dropped to 3°C. The morning was cold, bright and slightly misty but soon cleared so that the sun was exposed. I did not want to lose the birds during the twilight of the eclipse so waited until it the umbra had passed.

Arriving at the start of our equinoctial walk, we began

in a cool dim tunnel under the overhanging trees. The last few Starling were still about and the aqueduct here contained shallow water and emerging Hemlock Water Dropwort. Water continued almost all the way to Dunsdon Reserve thanks to the hard work of the volunteers who cut, remove and burn the encroaching willow.

Although not so apparent on the outward walk, on the return leg thanks to the climbing sun, Lesser Celandines were open and very common together with Dog's Mercury and emergent leaves of Ransoms.

The autumn fungi persisted and we saw Blushing Bracket, Scarlet Elf Cup and Turkey Tail along the path.

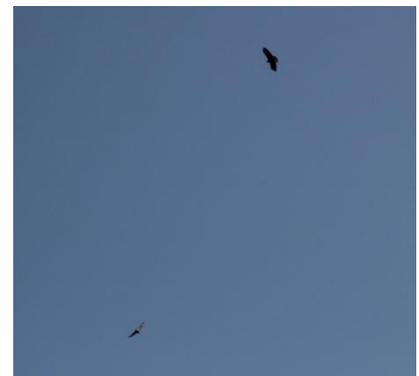
Birds were more heard than seen – Chiffchaff calling out their eponymous song, but sightings there were of this and other birds. Of note was the sight and sound of Goldcrest near Puckland and the distant drumming of a Woodpecker in Dunsdon Reserve. Here another sense was stimulated with the smell of the recent swaling (burning) of the Culm meadows essential to good management of this rare habitat. In the newly watered section of the canal, as the sun warmed the water, were aquatic invertebrates; Pondskaters, Whirligig Beetles and Backswimmers.

A sure sign of summer were the pairs of birds; a pair of Buzzards soaring over Dunsdon and a pair of Mallard setting up home on the canal there.

We always stop and sit opposite the Holsworthy Branch where there is a new interpretation board. The view has improved now that trimming of the vegetation has been undertaken and water birds abundant on the long narrow pond formed there.



Mallard Drake at Dunsdon



Pair of Buzzards



Swaling



Goldcrest



Holsworthy Branch