

Winter Solstice – Vealand Bridge to Moreton Bridge 21st December 2016

I managed to take this walk on the day of the solstice of 21st December but, to ease parking, I reversed my normal direction. Parking at Vealand Bridge is available for the adjacent Venn Nature Reserve, which is much easier and safer for other road users than squeezing on the verge near Moreton Bridge.

The day was grey and damp but not too cold and I had an invigorating walk of an hour in each direction.

At this time of year the path is leaf covered hiding any muddy patches and all the plants and shrubs are in winter shutdown mode. Nevertheless, Birch was displaying its catkins, Gorse was blooming

When Gorse is out of bloom, kissing is out of season

and a single Red Campion proved that you can always find at least one in bloom in every month.

It was mainly a walk of seeing and hearing birds. The only other sounds were, the faint and distant hum of traffic, the not-so distant and intrusive explosions of gunfire and the occasional intimate sound of trickling water.



Marsh Tit



Buzzard

I noted 21 species of birds – mainly tits and finches but it was good to see a couple of small flocks of Redwing in the fields near Holsworthy Junction. Good also to see the new footbridge across the canal there although not so good to be thwarted from further exploration by the “Private – no public access” sign. The adjacent plantation was being harvested – it will be interesting to see the effects on the habitat and range of species that clearance will bring.



New footbridge across Holsworthy Junction



Wood stacked near the Plantation

No doubt the type of fungus will be affected. Here they are usually wood-rotters – Jelly Ear, Blushing Bracket and Candlesnuff fungi all of which were present today.



Jelly Ear



Blushing Bracket



Candlesnuff Fungus

I managed to see a mammal; a Grey Squirrel ran off near the unkempt area near Moreton Park Farm.

One new sighting to add to the species list was a male Teal which flew off from the open water at Dunsdon Reserve which was otherwise very quiet.