The Gaywood Valley Conservation Group met at the RSPB Snettisham car park at the start of the morning of 01.07.19. John who was leading the activity said that people could walk as far as they wanted either just to the seaside or beyond to the lagoons and bird hides.

The lagoons behind the line of beach huts and the sea bank were there solely as a result of man’s activity. During the Second World War they were dug out to provide gravel to improve roads but principally to make landing grounds for the numerous aerodromes in the east of the country. Besides providing large areas of protected freshwater and saline water for birds, the soil on the sides and tops of the banks surrounding the lagoons nearest the sea was shingly, arid and exposed to wind and sea spray and supported a large number of plant species especially adapted to these conditions. Plants that did well in the most arid area were numerous White and Yellow Stonecrop with their round succulent leaves and plants of the Sea spurge with their flattened yellow green leaves. There were also low level plants that could avoid the wind like the White Campion, the yellow flowered Horn Poppies with its succulent leaves, the yellow Birds foot Trefoil, and the yellow Mouse-ear Hawkweed. On the top of the windy ridge of the sea bank it was surprising to see a really tall plant of Mullein with yellow flowers. In the more protected but still arid areas there were large numbers of the tall blue Vipers Bugloss, Oxeye Daisies, Wild Teasel and the waving stems of the yellow Goats Beard. Sharp eyed Jenny was able to identify a truly ancient species of plant the Common Cudweed with its primitive flower head on the side of the exposed path. Also rare was a group of Red Hemp Nettle plants which were found by the side of one of the saline lagoons. In the wind protected areas of the approach path there were even the remains of a Bee orchid and in the same protected area there was a single plant with small yellow flowers of the Nipplewort at the edge of the Bramble dominated hedge. Out of the wind a number of Painted Lady butterflies were seen and single individuals of the darker coloured Ringlet and Meadow Brown butterflies. More numerous were the very delicate damsel flies that chose a sunny and sheltered spot to settle on the ground vegetation. A large tunnel spider came out of its web regularly to eye the damsel flies while attempts were made to photograph them. Both male and female individuals of the Common Blue damselfly were identified but because they rarely settled they were difficult to photograph. One interesting insect was found by Sally on the petals of a Convolvulus flower. This was a male thick thighed flower beetle.
Here it was suggested that really thick legs on the male was attractive to the female flower beetle.

In the first of the hides, Rotary, the small island in view was occupied by Common Terns and Black Headed gulls with a number of Greylag geese threatening to land but they did not. In the two small islands seen from the second hide both were occupied by Black Headed gulls while in the larger of the two there were Black headed gulls and their mature young. These young were either forever demanding food from their weary and disinterested parents, practising flapping their wings, or some actually taking to the water. A group of Canada Geese had settled on this island but chose to remain at the extreme tip to avoid the noisy gulls. Egyptian Geese did land but were tolerated by the gulls except for an occasional irritated peck from one protecting its territory. Otherwise the occupation of the island was harmonious. It was interesting that the small area was essentially dominated by one species. While the site was being observed there were no signs of any threats from larger and possibly predatory gulls, or any raptors that might frighten the smaller gulls. While watching the birds it was interesting to follow the interactions between young and adult birds, between the adults themselves and note the lack of conflict between the adult gulls and the much larger geese. It had been a most enjoyable morning both botanically and ornithologically.