

Larks and Buntings

The area around Marshfield just north of Bath is both unspectacular and ornithologically unpromising and yet once again gave a group of Club members an excellent day. As in previous years we parked by the barn in Rushmead Lane and although we were forced to move late morning (or have our cars fenced in the field by the farmer!!) this meant we saw another area only a short distance away off Down Road. Both sites gave plenty to see. The specialities are the Corn Buntings and Yellowhammers and we saw many of both – probably over a 100 of the latter. At one point we had a flock perched in a small tree still bearing (very yellow) apples which caused both amusement and bemusement as to which were birds and which were fruit. Skylarks sang throughout and we also noted some small groups suggesting both resident birds and winter visitors. Stonechat, a species we seem to see everywhere these days, showed well including on a ploughed field using the ridges as vantage points. Winter thrushes (Redwing and Fieldfare) were still around in numbers and we did note a large flock of Golden Plover (c300) although they were very distant. Similar numbers of Common Gull (these days not so common) were much closer and a great sight. A pair of Ravens added to the corvid count – a huge count if you added up the large flock of feeding Rooks. These, and every thing else, flushed when we what we were 99% certain was a Merlin flashed through. All of this in an area of farmland, stone walls and bits of woodland – apparently nothing special. We ended the day at the small stream where the Red-Flanked Bluetail had been a few years ago – and had good views of a Treecreeper and Grey Heron. Another good day for the Club.