

## The Hullbridge U3A Bird Watching Group Monthly Report by Roy Simmons



The February meeting was held on the 28<sup>th</sup> February at Blue House Farm, North Fambridge. The weather was bright but overcast and chilly. It was no longer raining but there was a lot of surface water. Of the two options we opted to go onto the reserve. This was a mistake. The field we crossed to the first gate was ankle deep in mud and the first gate was in the middle of a small pond. Discretion prevailed and we retreated back to the carpark and started on the second option which was the path down to the river, and then a walk along the river bank towards Burnham. The track was only a little better than the field, but the river bank was elevated so there

was a muddy pathway. As there was no sun visibility was poor, so, in the most part bird identification was difficult, but photographs were taken and reviewed to make positive identifications. There was a good selection of birds seen; primarily Dark Fronted Brent Geese, some Greylag Geese, Canadian Geese, Avocets, Shell duck, Redshank, Sanderling, Lapwing, Mute Swan, Starling, Carrion Crow, and Rook, plus the usual small birds; Robin, Pied Wagtail, Blue Tit, Great Tit, and Black Birds. We may have seen a Short Eared Owl but there was no photograph to confirm identity.

The only casualty of the day was that, one of our number lost their shoes in the mud which had to be retrieved, and other members got wet feet due to water ingress. Over all we had a good day and we retired to the Ferryboat Inn in North Farnbridge for lunch and a chat.

Our next meeting will be at RSPB Rainham Marshes on the 27<sup>th</sup> March, meeting in the visitor's centre and moving off at 10:00 hrs. This venue has good facilities, and the paths are good for scooters etc. It is some time since we last visited Rainham.

**Important, drivers, please check that your vehicle is compliant with the new ULEZ regulations as the reserve is on the extreme edge of the designated area. Non RSPB members now pay for car parking rather than the previous entry fee, RSPB Members park free, so full cars including a member are more economic.**

Please dress appropriately for the conditions on the day.