

After a wonderful RSPB Avocet cruise in brilliant sunshine on the River Exe in January, organized by John Broomhead, some of us may have wondered whether the Taw could compete. Well a few weeks later, it could and did. Led by Rob Jutsum, 26 members took a sunny walk along the Tarka Trail from Pottington to Heanton on 8th February and had a very successful and enjoyable trip. They saw and identified over 40 bird species under Rob's patient and helpful guidance.



First and possibly best to show was a female Goosander, sometimes tricky to distinguish from the female Red breasted Merganser. Timed to perfection, the trip took advantage of the falling tide to catch waves of waders flying in synchronization before alighting on the fresh muddy fringes. Dunlin were the most numerous, several hundred busily probing the mud interspersed by the occasional Sanderling, Grey & Ringed Plovers and several Black & Bar-tailed Godwits. Flocks of Golden Plover and Lapwing took to the air before settling on the emerging sand banks to rest, while the Dark-bellied Brent Geese fed on the saltmarsh behind them.

Shortly before arriving at the Tarka Inn for lunch four Pintail were sighted at close range which were enjoyed by all.

One of the most heartening features was the enthusiasm of Coastwise members, equipped with a growing number of telescopes & binoculars, guide books in hand, as they shared the pleasures of bird watching with one another.