

## Some West Sussex birding for the Wednesday Crew

There have been some terrific vagrants in Sussex in the past week or so....most are difficult to see in difficult places so I haven't even attempted them. However, I couldn't keep away from some and I'm not alone. Our Wednesday crew, consisting of Sue P, Sue W, Dot, Alan and me trundled over to Shopham Bridge (near to Stopham). Only in rural England could two such unlikely place names exist within 5 miles of each other. Anyway we manage to locate the correct one and to our delight saw the very watchable **red-backed shrike** showing off his stuff in a river valley. He flew between hedge, dead tree, bramble patch and elder bush, each time perching for all to see, each time giving a fine view in the morning sunshine. What a delightful and obliging bird. Plenty of **whitethroat** here too and a distant **buzzard**.

Onwards to the nearby Burton Mill Pond where Sue W first hears **firecrest** and as we sit eating our lunch I locate him in a fir tree. We are delighted to watch him preening on a branch. I never knew they could stay so still for so long (but not long enough for a picture), his fiery bright orange crown iridescent in the now hot afternoon sun. At the pond a **kingfisher** fishes and we watch him catch two silvery fish, each time disappearing into the reeds. **Swifts** and **swallows** hawk and **sedg and reed warblers** are heard and seen.

Pulborough Brooks is on our way home, a spoonbill has been seen over the past few days.....wonder if it's still around. The path down is full of baby birds; a spaced out **nuthatch** chick clings for dear life to a branch, a noisy **great spotted woodpecker** chick on the point of fledging pokes out of a tree hole, a **greenfinch** family go about their business, **blackcap** parents busily feed their young family and so it goes. At least two **nightingales** are heard but we don't see them.

At Jupps View we soon see the **spoonbill**, bill tucked up asleep. We linger here long enough for him to wake up, we ID it as an adult, and he begins spooning for his food doing just what we want him to do. Then mega highlight of the day! A **white stork!** WOW!....a lifer for me. As far as we know it hadn't been seen until now and it's a feather in the cap for Dot for finding it! We watch it for perhaps 10 minutes; it takes to the air, lands briefly and takes off again. It soars, gaining height, round and round as it thermals ever higher and higher and then drifts off to the north. Woooooo! Plenty of duck and goose families around today; a **shelduck** family giving great views. A group of 4 **black-tailed godwit** are the wader highlights.

Walking around the reserve it's getting late now but a few more treats are in store. A perched **hobby**; we get good views and see its beautiful face and we watch him preening on a post, ever alert and watchful. One more star of the day, Sue P points out a flyby **peregrine** just as we're leaving.

Another good days birding. Thanks for doing the driving Alan.

5 June 2008

Joanne Chattaway