

Seabird Safari - Mike Bloomfield

July is not the best time to venture out to see lots of bird species which is why many birders switch their interests towards butterflies and/or dragonflies. However, at this time of year, rarities do turn up and most are still sporting their breeding plumage. Recent Yorkshire sightings include a Greater Sand Plover on the beach near Easington, an adult Rose-coloured Starling at Flamborough Head and an Audouin's Gull in Sheffield. Unfortunately, all these opportunities had disappeared by the 25th when Richard 'Chuck' Butler and I had arranged a day of birding.

My seabird list for the year was not very impressive, so a visit to RSPB Bempton was a possibility for at least part of the day. However, an extremely rare gull had been spotted a few days earlier at Scaling Dam but it disappeared, leaving many twitchers disappointed; some hardy souls hanging around for many hours in the hope it would return. It did, as luck would have it, on the evening of the 24th and back at Scaling Dam so it was an opportunity not to be missed.

So off we set, despite the fact that there was no early morning news until we were about 45 minutes away when positive news came out, but I was still doubtful it would stick around until we arrived. Surprisingly, there was still room for us in the hide but, to our relief, the Franklin's Gull was still there although it was in sleeping mode on a grassy spit directly in front of the hide. The black head, white eye crescents and occasional glimpses of a short deep red bill was all we were able to make out. Our patience was rewarded after almost an hour when it stirred, giving great views as it came to the water's



Franklin's Gull at Scaling Dam



Kittiwake



Fulmar

edge for a drink and brush up. The hide began to fill so we vacated our places and headed for Bempton. Apparently it flew off 10 minutes after we left - lucky, or what, and yet 'another lifer for Chuck', oh and me too!

At Bempton, it was clear that Razorbills and Guillemots had left the cliffs leaving just a few stragglers. Gannets, Kittiwakes and Puffins appeared to have had a good breeding season although the RSPB counting data was not yet processed but here are some pictures from a most enjoyable trip.



Razorbill



Gannet

A House Martin Story with a happy ending sent by Cameron Wilson

"Hello Cam. Remember the House Martin chick we saved four years ago. Well I now have an update. Last week my neighbour came knocking at 6:30am holding a box containing three tiny House Martin chicks, much younger than the one from 2014. He said the nest had come down in the night, presumably caused by the long hot spell we've had, and could we take them in like before. Of course being a soft touch where animals are concerned my wife said yes.

Anyway, I got home that day to find that after reading up on the internet Sarah and the neighbour had fashioned together a makeshift nest out of bit of foam in his garage, put the chicks in and fastened it up under the gutter where the original nest was. The only problem was the parent birds, by now, were nowhere to be seen.

As evening approached, and getting concerned by now I had an idea. I stood beneath the nest and played at loud volume, a sound recording of the tweeting chicks I'd made earlier on my phone, over and over. Within about 15 minutes the parent birds were on the scene frantically trying to find a way into the new 'nest' (the neighbour had made an entrance hole at the wrong side of the 'nest'). They eventually found a way in and we breathed a sigh of relief!

A week later and I've been observing the parent birds coming and going like nothing had happened. A happy ending I think you'll agree! cheers, Simon"