

# BWA Spring Event



One of the reasons I joined the BWA was to be able to attend events such as this, my first time and I was not disappointed!



The open weekend took place over Saturday the 18th and Sunday 19th of May. It was great to meet other members.

Day one was hosted by Dave and Pauline Smith, at their beautifully renovated family farm house, in the small village of Long Riston. Dave has a lovely collection and quite diverse in nature including various sea ducks, teal, whistlers and geese, to mention just a few.



Dave took us round his collection which demonstrated how you can really maximise your space and have a great collection. With careful thought, care and consideration on who shares what enclosure with who, you can keep an interesting selection of birds. Although early in the main breeding season, there were plenty of young about, and the children loved seeing the Ne-Ne and Maned Geese goslings up close!

There were many birds on eggs including European Goldeneye and Smew.

The hospitality was excellent ...you are always on to a winner with Bucks Fizz!

During the day there were various informative talks in Dave's incubator/band practice room. Sam Russell guided us on pest control and long-standing member David Thompson from Charnwood Milling explained a little background to the business and just what goes into our feeds. Johnpaul Houston's vision for a new zoo for Manchester is becoming a reality and Kane Brides' adventures in conservation really inspired. Phoebe Vaughan was engaging and the subject of breeding kept us all captivated.



There was a common thread with all these presentations; interesting, enthusiastic, expert knowledge, practical advice and of course little bleeps from the incubators when the eggs turned.

With the raffle and more hospitality, the day drew to a close around six and we made the twenty minute drive to the Premier Inn in Hull where many were staying. After a swift wash-and-brush-up we found ourselves on a walking tour of Hull as a group and then we sat down to tapas. This was a new experience for a few, but enjoyed by all and the banter and conversations carried on well into the night for some.



On day two we were just ten minutes down the road at Smith's Nurseries, hosted by father and son team Steve and Charlie Hardcastle, with their respective wives Sylvia and Kate.

Here we had VIP access with the premises, a normally busy specialist pet shop being closed to the public for our visit. The commercial enterprise extends to more than 15 acres and is truly impressive. The day began with coffees and time to look round the store and the lovely landscaped enclosures at the rear with such highlights as Harlequin Ducks, African Pygmy geese and Avocets to name a few.

I picked up on lots of great rearing tips when Charlie showed us the rearing room. Practical and they obviously work well. At this time of year they were full of ducklings, goslings and even cranes in their first few days of life.

Moving out we were shown the acres of breeding enclosures and rearing pens. There was so much to see. Various species of cranes and swans were very impressive. Steve and Charlie shared their encyclopaedic knowledge as they showed us round this extensive collection.



The hospitality continued and an army of people ensured we had an outstanding lunch and then later tea, sat on straw bales amongst llamas, muntjac deer and wallabies. A quick thank you to those who provided prizes for the raffles on both days, raising funds for the BWA and Laysan Duck Project.

It always good to see other people's collections you pick up so many ideas to take away with you, this weekend was no exception.

I know that those who attended will join me in thanking all the hosts and their families for all their hard work organising and holding what was a fantastic weekend.

Next one - September 14th Wedderburn Waterfowl. The date is in my diary!



*Words by Simon Hasted*