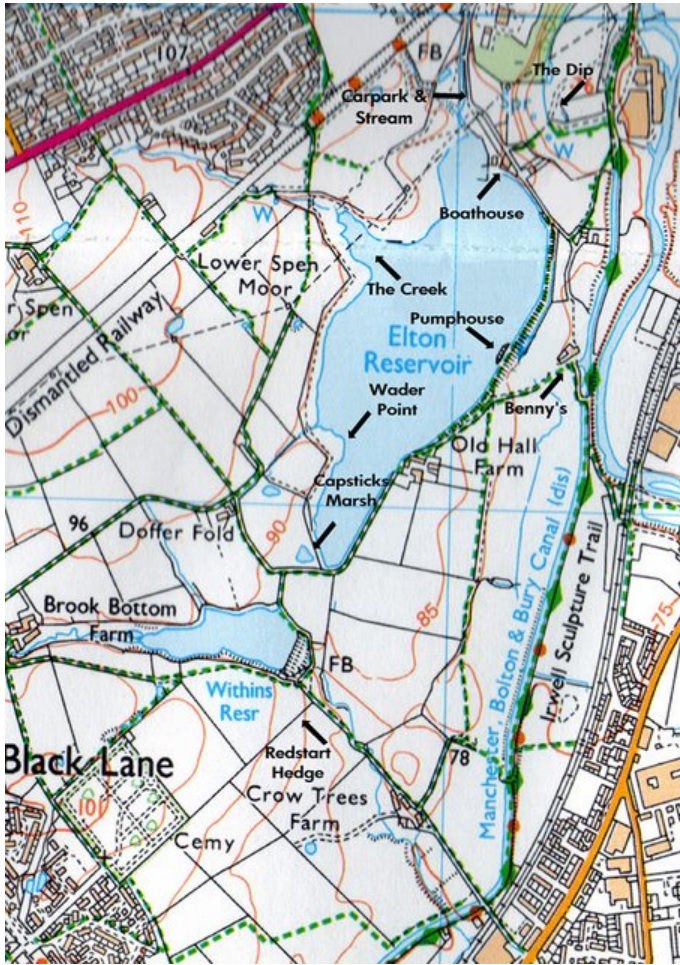


ELTON RESERVOIR

by Simon Warford



Situated just south west of Bury, Elton Reservoir offers a wide range of habitats and has an excellent history of birds and bird watching. Black-eared Wheatear, Lesser Grey Shrike and Kentish Plover remain amongst some of the best birds ever recorded here to date.



Above: Elton Reservoir looking north from Old Hall Farm (photo by Ian McKerchar)

Due to fishing, sailing and dog walkers early morning is by far the best time to visit as shorebirds and water birds are easily disturbed. Sailing usually starts at 10.30am most weekends.

Access to the main car park is signposted off the A58 Bury & Bolton Road opposite the Wellington Pub, turn down Kitchener Street, at the end turn right and then left across a bridge then turning right and follow the road to the car park by the sailing club. The reservoir is most productive for birds during spring and autumn migration when waders and terns are often recorded passing through. Black Terns and Little Gulls have become the reservoir specialities in recent years. May is usually the best time when we get anticyclone weather with associated easterly winds.

The west shoreline between the creek and wader point (see map) is usually the best place to find waders on passage.



Above: 'the creek', once home to a Cinnamon Teal no less! (photo by Ian McKerchar)



Above: 'wader point', devoid of such creatures in this photo! (photo by Ian McKerchar)

Spring is probably the best time for waders with birds such as Turnstone and Sanderling fairly regular and sometimes Wood Sandpiper is recorded. Osprey is a scarce passage bird and in 2006 one spent an hour perched on one of the pylons. Peregrines are also sometimes seen sat on the pylons along with the regular Cormorant flock in winter which can reach up to 30 birds.

The area can be good for passerines in autumn more so than spring. The best areas are the creek, the Dip and the area below adjacent Withins Reservoir which has become very reliable for Lesser Whitethroats and Redstarts especially in the months of August and September. The Dip has become Elton's answer to a migrant trap and is a regular haunt for Spotted Flycatchers. Some of Elton's best birds have been recorded here which include Lesser Grey Shrike and more recently Red-backed Shrike, Hawfinch and Firecrest.



Above: part of 'the dip' (photo by Ian McKerchar)

Winter can produce the occasional scarce Grebe or Diver and a few years ago the reservoir had a long staying Great Northern Diver.

The area of rough fields and farmland between Old Hall Farm and the canal can be of interest which attracts Lapwings, Wagtails, Chats and recently a Little Egret put in a brief appearance. This area once held a Great Grey Shrike which was perching on the telegraph wires reducing the local Reed Bunting population.



Above: the canal (photo by Ian McKerchar)



Above: the rough fields mentioned above (photo by Ian McKerchar)

Withins Reservoir can be less disturbed and can be of occasional interest. This has had Black-necked Grebe and more recently Great Northern Diver.



Above: Withins Reservoir (photo by Ian McKerchar)



Above: the author staring longingly into bushes on the north-west side of Elton during a 2007 autumn 'purple patch'..."there must be a Barred Warbler around here somewhere" (there never was though, not that was found anyway, photo by Ian McKerchar)

Simon Warford, November 2007

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