

The Tories have so much to learn from geese

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I always wondered why people got up well before dawn to go birdwatching. And then this morning I was dragged to Holkham by 6.30 to be there before sunrise.

Why? To see the pink foot geese that roost there overnight as they head off to the fields for the day to feed.

It was absurdly warm at 6.30: 15 degrees feels wrong at that time of the morning in October.

I could not resist a photo before the geese appeared.

When they did I was hooked to the sky. I am not sure how many geese we saw. Many thousands would definitely be right - sometimes that many seeming to be in the air together as they headed off, some to the south and others to the east, right over our heads. I have read about this before now, and have seen it at dusk, but at dawn it was a different sight to behold.

Also seen were greylags (of course), marsh harrier, kestrel, heron and more, whilst a Cetti's warbler was out early, but was not seen (also, of course). The rest were more ordinary, like wren and robin. But it was well worth while.

The breakfast break (now) almost feels like lunch.

But as important was our reflection on geese. Just a couple of facts are interesting. Pink foots are the archetypal goose for flying in a skein (the V shaped formation, which is, however, usually a bit lopsided). The lead bird is not an alpha, or a male. They just take it in turn to do the hard work, which the leading bird does. They work cooperatively, readily swapping roles, frequently.

And if for any reason a bird needs to drop out of the skein and go to the ground two others group in the skein drop out with it, staying with it until it can return or it is clear it cannot survive. Again, community is apparent.

The conclusion from that discussion was that the Tories have a lot to learn from pink foot geese. They seem to have so much better a sense of society than that party does.

Now, it's Americano time, and then there is more birding to do.

