

Yesterday was the solstice, and after a couple of days of brilliant light, it was a bit dull, with a light northerly wind, which did not stop us getting out birdwatching at [WWT Welney](#), our most regular spot at present.

One pleasure of knowing the place quite well is being able to explain it to others, who are usually keen to learn what they are looking at.

Yesterday, the most obvious duck to be seen was the pochard, which is nationally on the red list as an endangered bird, but of which Welney has large numbers in winter. This is the male:



And this is the duller female, who are much less often seen, as most of them winter in Spain, returning to the breeding grounds only after the males have built several nests to impress them, meaning the males do not migrate so far, so they can get back earlier:



And then, as is one of the pleasures of birdwatching, you search through several hundred birds and find an oddity, like this:



I know it's not a great shot, but what looks like a pochard in front is not what it seems, as is apparent when comparing it with the similarly posed male behind it. It is actually a male cross between a pochard and a [ferruginous duck](#), which is very much browner, hence the odd colouring. It was fun to point that one out.

It was not all ducks, though. Walking to the north of the reserve, there was this male stonechat:



They are almost always seen in pairs, and we saw the female on Saturday, but yesterday, only the male put in an appearance, posed as usual near the top of a tree, but it still took me by surprise, so that was a phone shot.

Time spent birdwatching is when I am most relaxed, and when many ideas also emerge. I admit having Welney nearby is a real privilege, as is knowing the place quite well, and enjoying the company of many of the people who make the place work, the coffee shop included.

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