

Long Tailed Tits and narrow waisted trousers

The problem with being of slim build is that there is nowhere to hide an ever expanding waistline. I'm currently shaped like one of those fishing floats that are long and thin with a large bulge in the middle. It took a wedding in the autumn to force me to pull my head out of the sand when I realised that none of my trousers that were remotely suitable for such an occasion could actually be buttoned around my waist. Two

months on and I am finally getting round to doing something about it.

Now that I am able to walk a reasonable distance again without any significant pain there is no excuse so it was out again this morning for my regular two mile march around the streets and into the countryside as the sun struggled to get out of bed. The route I took today is about fifty percent main road, thirty percent housing estate and twenty percent country lane. It's fine for getting a little bit of exercise but not brilliant for scenery or

bird watching so I don't usually bother to take a camera or binoculars. It's more a case of head down and quick march while I mentally run through my wardrobe of narrow waisted trousers and try to summon up the purpose to walk faster and harder. This morning was different though and an abject lesson in stopping to smell the metaphorical roses and regret leaving the binoculars at home.

For a start it was cold but blissfully calm after several days of windy weather and the sky was magically lit by a reluctant

winter sun. We may have turned the seasonal corner now that we have passed the solstice but the sun is like a sulky teenager at this time of year. It unenthusiastically peers over the horizon and attempts to perform its daily duties whilst barely leaving its bed. It doesn't get up any earlier either for the next few weeks; it just goes to bed a bit later but those extra few minutes of daylight are already filling me with anticipation of what is round the corner. There were other early signs of a change too; a Robin and a Dunnock were singing

enthusiastically as if nobody had mentioned to them that spring is still a good few months away.



What a cutie. The Long Tailed Tit.

(Photo by Craig Smith)

Along the short stretch of country lane a Long Tailed Tit caught my eye as it flew into the bushes

next to me and as I looked around for more (they usually come in small flocks) my eye was caught by the frenetic and constant movement of a pair of Gold Crests.



The Gold Crest. (Photo by Tairi and
Irene Pixdaus.com)

These are stunning little birds with their brilliant black and yellow head stripe and they are a

joy to watch as they acrobatically search for small grubs and eggs in the nooks and crannies of trees and shrubs. They are constantly on the move prompting the question of whether they might not need quite so much food if they ever sat still for a minute or two. They are actually quite common, similar in winter numbers to Robins but being Britain's smallest bird and rarely appearing out in the open, lots of people have never seen one. The final birdy treat was provided by a Blue Tit that flew past my face so close that I actually heard its wing beats.

The last stretch of the walk is through a housing estate and back to the main road. It didn't mean there was nothing to see though. Starlings, Blackbirds, Gulls and a flock of Gold Finches all added colour and sound to the otherwise dull scenery while the sky continued to flaunt its silvery winter splendour.



Winter sky and a chance to find out
where the birds nest.

Oh and I nearly forgot; I saw
sixty seven pigeons as well.

As I walked the final stretch to
home my thoughts turned back to
those frantically busy Gold Crests
and I realised where I might be

going wrong. I've never seen an overweight Gold Crest you see and come to think of it; I've never seen one slumped in a chair drinking beer either. I'm not planning to start doing acrobatics in the bushes but maybe less beer and more walking might go some way to alleviating the problem of a wardrobe full of trousers that don't fit me.