

# The Best of Rutland's Wildlife

## Naturetrek Tour Itinerary

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### Outline itinerary

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| <b>Day 1</b>   | Arrive Rutland  |
| <b>Day 2/4</b> | Visit Rutland Water and several local nature reserves |

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### Departs

June

### Dates and Prices

See website (tour code GBR235)

### Grading

A. Easy day walks & optional morning excursions.

### Focus

Birds and general natural history

### Highlights

- Chance to watch Ospreys, including at the nest and potentially fishing over the reservoir.
- Look for Black Hairstreak - one of Britain's rarest butterflies.
- Wide range of bird species, including breeding waterfowl and other water birds. Late Spring passage may include a selection of waders such as Wood Sandpiper or Ruff.
- Search for orchids such as Man, Frog, Bee, Fragrant and Pyramidal.
- Led by expert naturalist guide



Images from top: Osprey, Black Hairstreak & Little Egret



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## Introduction

Rutland will need no introduction to the many thousands of nature enthusiasts who visit Bird Fair every year. It is the smallest of the historical English counties but there is so much more to the area than just Rutland Water. This gentle rolling landscape in the heart of England is largely dominated by Jurassic limestones and this has a significant influence on the habitats and associated species.

On this short break, we will explore some of the area's best nature reserves from our base, close to the north shore of Rutland Water. The Barnsdale Lodge Hotel is steeped in over 250 years of history and individually-furnished rooms overlook either the beautiful Rutland landscape or the picturesque courtyard. The hotel provides fine dining, using many ingredients sourced from produce found in the local area and their own vegetable and herb gardens. Rutland may have recently lost its status as the last English County to not have a McDonalds restaurant, but rest assured, we will be steering well clear on this trip!

We have timed the tour for mid-June, which should coincide with the flight period of the Black Hairstreak Butterfly, arguably, one of Britain's hardest to find butterflies and largely restricted to just a handful of sites between Oxford and Peterborough. It is also the peak period for many flowering plants and Barnack Hills and Holes, just over the border in Cambridgeshire is rightly famous for its range of Orchid species.

Whilst the main spring migration will be largely over, June is still excellent at Rutland Water and anything could turn up if we are lucky. The reservoir and associated nature reserve consistently deliver the highest annual bird diversity of any inland UK site and it is possible to amass an enviable list in just a single day. The breeding season will be in full swing and the woodlands will be alive with bird song. All being well, the famous Osprey nest at Manton Bay will contain well developed chicks and with eight pairs of Osprey in the wider area in 2020, we hope to catch up with these birds fishing over the reservoir.



## Itinerary

*The programme for the tour will be kept flexible, in order to make best use of the prevailing weather conditions and to maximise our chances of seeing key species. Our leaders will make decisions on the day as to exactly where we will go. However, the itinerary below offers an illustration of our planned programme of excursions*

### Day 1

### Arrive Barnsdale

Your tour leaders will meet you at the lovely Barnsdale Lodge Hotel in the early evening for a short introductory chat outlining the programme for the coming three days, information about the area and some of the wildlife that we will hope to see. There are options for a pick up and drop off at Oakham Railway Station if you wish to coordinate with us - please let us know at the time of booking.

### Day 2

### Glaphorn and Rutland Water

If the weather is kind, there will be an optional pre-breakfast excursion to Rutland Water, maybe to look for a fishing Osprey or possibly a hunting Otter. After breakfast we will head south for half an hour into Northamptonshire to Glaphorn Cow Pastures. This reserve, managed by the Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire and Northamptonshire Wildlife Trust, is one of the best sites in the Country for the rare Black Hairstreak Butterfly. A mix of dense Blackthorn scrub and bramble provides the perfect mix of habitat and we will look for the adults as they flit through the glades, stopping periodically on bramble flowers. Woodland birds such as Nuthatch and Blackcap should also be prevalent and there may be flowers such as Common Spotted Orchid.



Garganey

We will pick up lunch, possibly in nearby Oundle and then head for the Lyndon nature reserve on the south side of Rutland Water for the rest of the afternoon. Our main target here will be the Osprey nest in Manton Bay. By mid-June, the chicks should be well grown and we should hopefully get intimate views of family life. Reed and Sedge Warblers will be singing from reedbeds and the woodland and hedgerows will be alive with the sounds of Chiffchaffs, Blackcaps and Garden Warblers. If

there is time we might take a stroll through some of the woodlands on the South shore before heading back to the hotel to freshen up before dinner.

### Day 3

### Rutland Water

Rutland Water is without doubt, one of the premier birding sites in the whole of the UK. The wide range of habitats, alongside the pull of the UK's largest reservoir, means that a large range of species can be expected today. We will keep things flexible in order to react to sightings and news

through the day but will probably start with another optional pre-breakfast wander for those that would like to come.

Depending on sightings, it is likely that we will head to the Eggleton Reserve and spend the day exploring the various hides and trails that the reserve has to offer. There will be plenty to see and the sound of the gull and tern colony will be a constant backdrop. Wildfowl will be busy breeding and there may be a smart Garganey in amongst the many ducks or possibly a passage Common Scoter out on the main lake. Black Tern are often present, waders may include Ruff or Wood Sandpiper and there might be a Hobby or two hawking for dragonflies over one of the lagoons. We should find more than enough to occupy us on the main reserve but if not, there are plenty of other spots around the reservoir and we might pop round to the North Arm to eat our lunch or have a cup of tea later in the afternoon. Here we may bump into one of the scarcer heron species such as a Great Egret in amongst the Little Egrets and Grey Herons.

## Day 4

## Barnack Hills and Holes

This morning we will head to Barnack Hills and Holes, close to the town of Stamford. Once a mediaeval quarry, this 50-acre National Nature Reserve is home to half of Cambridgeshire's remaining limestone grassland. Here, we will focus our time on butterflies and orchids. It will probably be a little early for the Chalkhill Blue's but Marbled White, Brown Argus and Green Hairstreak should be on the wing.



Green Hairstreak

June is a good time to hopefully find some of the orchid species and we will look for Frog, Man, Fragrant and Pyramidal Orchids along with other flowers such as rockrose and wild thyme. With luck we may also come across the brown spikes of Knapweed Broomrape, a parasitic plant which takes its food from the roots of greater knapweed.

After an action-packed few days, the tour will conclude back at the hotel in time for people to make their return journeys home. There will also be the option to make a return drop for those who arranged it to nearby Oakham Railway Station.

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## Tour Grading

A. There will be easy walking on this holiday, covering between three and five miles per day, at a slow birdwatching pace, on largely flat ground, interspersed with some time spent in hides. Some areas may be muddy underfoot. We will spend the majority of our time during the day birdwatching and as we do so we will be on the lookout for any interesting wildlife along with appreciating the views and beauty of the area. This tour is suitable for birdwatchers and naturalists of all abilities.



## Accommodation & Food

We will be staying at the Barnsdale Lodge Hotel, a 3-star historic hotel situated just to the north of Rutland Water. All the rooms are en-suite and the hotel boasts a superb restaurant that sources local, seasonal ingredients.

The holiday cost includes accommodation on a half board basis (breakfast and evening meals), starting with dinner on Day 1 and finishing with breakfast on Day 4. Lunches are not included, but there will be opportunities on each day to purchase sandwiches, etc from local shops or cafes. Please bring with you any snacks or drinks that you want during the rest of the day.

## Weather

June is generally a kind month for weather but participants should be prepared for all eventualities from heavy rain to warm summer sunshine! We hope for the latter, but cold, wet conditions can occur.

## Clothing & Equipment

Warm and waterproof clothing and footwear are essential. Waterproof jacket and trousers should be brought with you. Several thinner layers, as opposed to one thick layer, are the best way to keep warm, and can be removed if the temperature increases.

We would recommend that all tour participants bring a pair of binoculars with them. A scope would be useful for birdwatching at Rutland Water as well. A day pack for carrying items and a re-fillable water bottle should be brought with you.

## Joining the Tour

You can arrive at Barnsdale Lodge at any time from 2pm and your leader will meet you at 6pm in the bar area for an introduction followed by dinner. If you wish to join the tour by train, we can pick you up at Oakham train station at 3pm and drop you there again at no later than 6pm on the final day. Please let us know if you are intending to arrive by train and would like to be picked up.

## Inclusions / Exclusions

The following costs are included in the price of the holiday:

- Accommodation on half board basis
- Minibus transportation to locations visited
- All guiding
- Excursion costs or entrance fees associated with planned activities

The following costs are **not** included and should be budgeted for:

- Lunches
- Drinks
- Any other personal spending e.g. souvenirs
- Activities not included in the tour

## Extending Your Holiday

If you wish to extend your stay in the area, we would be very happy to book extra nights at the hotel for you. The nearby towns of Stamford, Oakham and Uppingham are all full of historic charm. Stamford, in particular, has long been regarded as one of England's finest towns with 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century stone buildings, old timber-framed buildings and five medieval parish churches. It has over 600 listed buildings, representing around half of all the listed buildings in Lincolnshire.

## How to book your place

In order to book your place on this holiday, please give us a call on 01962 733051 with a credit or debit card, book online at [www.naturetrek.co.uk](http://www.naturetrek.co.uk), or alternatively complete and post the booking form at the back of our main Naturetrek brochure, together with a deposit of 20% of the holiday cost plus any room supplements if required. If you do not have a copy of the brochure, please call us on 01962 733051 or request one via our website. Please stipulate any special requirements, for example extension requests, at the time of booking.

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