

The Lakes & Fells – Wildlife of England's North West

Naturetrek Tour Itinerary

Departs

May / June

Focus

Birds, butterflies, botany and general natural history

Grading

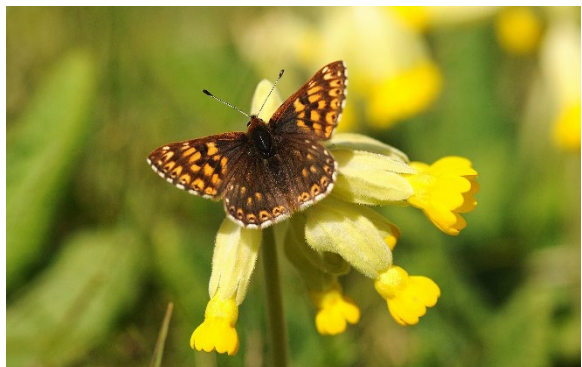
A (easy). All walking will be at a leisurely pace.

Dates and Prices

See www.naturetrek.co.uk (tour code GBR39) or current brochure

Highlights:

- Bittern & Osprey, plus waders, terns & gulls in Morecambe Bay
- Sundews & Bog Rosemary amongst specialist bog flora
- Look for Tree Pipit & Adders in wetland habitats around Morecambe Bay
- Butterfly, Fly, Northern Marsh, Frog, Fragrant & Small White Orchids
- Duke of Burgundy, Large Heath & early High Brown Fritillary all possible
- Avocet, Snipe, Curlew & Oystercatchers among breeding waders
- Merlin, Peregrine & Short-eared Owl
- Search for Red squirrel, Redstarts, Pied Flycatcher & Wood Warbler, Dipper around Haweswater



From top: Morecambe Bay, Bearded Tit, Duke of Burgundy
Images courtesy of David Morris



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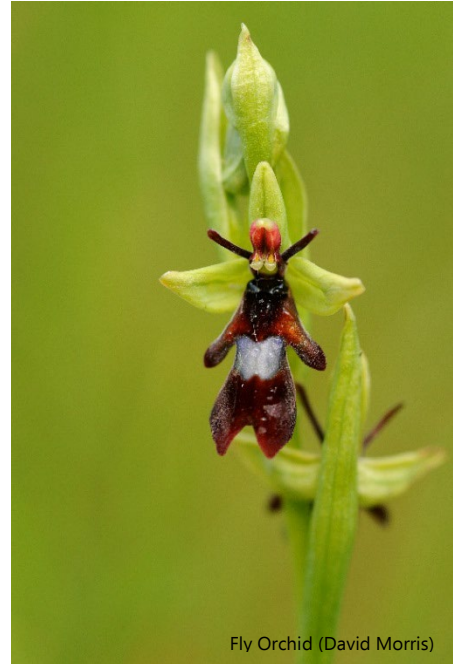
W: www.naturetrek.co.uk

Introduction

From the shores of Morecambe Bay to the moors of the Lakeland fells, this part of North West England is rich in wildlife and a joy for any visiting naturalist. An estuary of international importance, Morecambe Bay straddles the Lancashire and Cumbria border and is at the heart of this foray into North West England. The area is home to some of the UK's most special areas, containing two areas of outstanding natural beauty (AONB's) and the southern tip of the Lake District National Park.

Morecambe Bay's vast mudflats, saltmarshes and dune systems hold breeding waders, terns, gulls and wildfowl and there is even the chance of a Natterjack Toad or breeding Osprey. These coastal habitats then blend into such diverse wetland habitats as flower-rich fens, reed bed and lowland bogs, where specialist species such as sundews, Bog Rosemary, Raft Spider, White-faced Darter, Tree Pipit and Nightjar may be found.

Encircling the Bay is a band of underlying carboniferous limestone that offers limestone pavement, floristically rich pastures and diverse woodlands. Greater and Lesser Butterfly, Fly, Northern Marsh, Frog, Fragrant Orchids and Dark Red Helleborine are to be found here alongside other limestone flora such as Bird's-eye Primrose, Rigid Buckler Fern and the local Lancaster Whitebeam. The area is also well known for its butterflies and, weather permitting, we have a good chance of a late Duke of Burgundy, Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary, Northern Brown Argus, Large Heath, Dark Green Fritillary and possibly an early High Brown Fritillary.



Fly Orchid (David Morris)

Moving a little further inland we encounter the classic mountainous fells of the Eastern Lake District around the RSPB's Haweswater nature reserve. In the diverse woodlands and scrub a good range of breeding migrant warblers may be found, too, along with local specialties such as Marsh Tit and Hawfinch. The edge of the High Fells is home to important populations of breeding waders, with Snipe, Redshank, Lapwing, Curlew and Oystercatcher abundant in the northern pastures and meadows. In the open country we have a chance of a breeding Merlin, Peregrine and Short-eared Owl.... while, in the wooded Naddle valley at Haweswater, we will look for Red Squirrel, Redstarts, Pied Flycatchers and the occasional Wood Warbler may be found, together with Dipper in the uplands streams.

Over the four days we'll visit some of the key habitats and wildlife reserves that this beautiful area has to offer. We'll set off at around 9am from the hotel, returning in time for dinner in the evening. Each day we'll stop at local pubs or cafes for lunch and comfort breaks, but we'll keep the exact programme flexible in order to make the best use of our time and the weather. All of the areas that we intend to visit are within easy driving distance of each other and our hotel.

Itinerary

Please note that the itinerary below offers our planned programme of excursions. However, adverse weather & other local considerations can necessitate some re-ordering of the programme during the course of the tour, though this will always be done to maximise best use of the time and weather conditions available.

Day 1

Kendal

We begin the tour at our hotel in Kendal. We'll meet at around midday (exact timings to be confirmed), leave our luggage safely at the hotel, and have a bite to eat over which we'll discuss the programme for the next 4 days. This afternoon we will make our way to the nearby Roudsea Wood & Mosses National Nature Reserve (managed by Natural England and on the land of Holker Estate) and part to begin our introduction to the wonderful wildlife of this region. Roudsea Wood & Mosses NNR is a beautiful site consisting of four main habitats: coastal saltmarsh, acid woodland, limestone woodland and lowland raised mire. Over 500 plant and 280 fungi species are found in the reserve, including the very rare Large Yellow Sedge, and the endemic Lancaster Whitebeam. The reserve supports over 50 species of breeding birds such as Nightjar, Osprey, Tree Pipit, Woodcock and Marsh Tit. Summer breeders to look out for in the woodland include Willow Warbler, Blackcap and Garden Warbler, and Red Kite and Lapwing may be found on the edge of the reserve.



Whilst we're here, we'll also keep an eye out for the large number of rare and scarce invertebrates found at the site including the Short-winged Conehead Cricket and Bog-bush Cricket. The peat bog pools are home to the spectacular Raft Spider, Adder, and large numbers of dragonflies, such as the Black Darter, breed here. Butterflies found here include the Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary and the Large Heath, whose caterpillars feed on the cotton grasses across the bog. The diverse moth population includes the Barred Tooth-striped, Beautiful Snout and Green Silver-lines and if the conditions have allowed, we'll enjoy the results of a moth trap set up earlier by our tour leader.

We will also spend some time at Roudsea Tarn, a small area of open water and reed bed nestling in the woodland. The tarn attracts breeding Water Rail, Reed Bunting and Sedge Warblers and is occasionally visited by Kingfishers. The reeds and sedges provide a refuge for many insects, including the migrant Hawker Dragonfly and Blue-tailed Damselfly. Grass Snakes can sometimes be spotted swimming across the tarn as they hunt for frogs and toads, and on occasion, Otters swim up Otter Dike from the River Leven.

Day 2

Arnside and Silverdale AONB

After breakfast today we will head over to Leighton Moss RSPB reserve to continue our exploration of the wildlife of Morecambe Bay. Leighton Moss is the largest reed bed in north-west England, and home to breeding Bitterns, Bearded Tits, Avocets and Marsh Harriers, along with other waders and wildfowl. We start our exploration of this wetland oasis by visiting the reed beds at the heart of the reserve using the numerous trails and hides provided. The breeding season will be in full swing with Marsh Harriers busy hunting over the reed beds in order to feed their growing young, Bearded Tits pinging around the paths and with luck we may even catch a glimpse of a Bittern flying over the reeds or hear its distinctive booming call. Not just home to birds, the reed beds at Leighton are also a good place to spot a mammal or two with Otters often feeding on the meres in the day or Red Deer putting in an appearance in front of Jackson or Griesdale hides. The woodland and sensory garden near the visitor centre provides a good opportunity to get a glimpse of a Marsh Tit, Bullfinch or Great Spotted Woodpecker as they come to visit the feeders and provide us with close-up views. Again, we'll hope (weather permitting!) to organise moth trapping for whilst we're here.

After enjoying some delicious locally produced lunch at the reserve's café, we will head towards the Eric Morecambe and Allen Pools on the edge of Morecambe Bay where the Avocets should be obvious along with a good range of other waders and wildfowl. Other species we could expect include Little Egret, Redshank, Black-tailed Godwit, Kingfisher and Osprey. Dragonflies should be abundant with Four-spotted Chaser and Emperor both possible.

After exploring the coastal pools at Leighton we push on into the heart of the Arnside and Silverdale AONB to explore Gait Barrows National Nature Reserve (managed by Natural England). This special site is a rich mosaic of limestone



Pearl-bordered Fritillary (David Shute)

habitats including unique limestone pavement, yew woodland, fen and reed bed. Here we will look for Dark-red Helleborine and other calcareous grassland flora including Rigid Buckler, Limestone and Hard Shield Fern. The birdlife here includes Green Woodpecker, Garden Warbler, Reed Warbler and Blackcap, and butterflies are abundant. We'll be hoping to find Grayling, Pearl-bordered Fritillary, Northern Brown Argus, and Dark Green and High Brown Fritillaries. There's also a very rich fungi flora at Gait Barrows with over 1600 recorded species here, and species like Slowworm can also be found.

Day 3

Haweswater & the Lakes High Fells

The iconic Lake District is well known on the global stage, synonymous with Beatrix Potter and Kendal Mint Cake, but today we will head to the eastern edge of the National Park to explore some of the lesser known but biodiverse habitats around the RSPB's Haweswater reserve. The area is dominated by a central core of high fells and deeply incised valleys, with vast tracts of open fell and moorland. The foothills of the fells are dissected by steep-sided, well-wooded valleys, opening out

into rich green lowlands. We start our exploration of the area by driving through the Shap Fells, stopping to explore a short way on foot to get a good introduction to the birds, plants and butterflies of the area. This gentle amble starts alongside a bubbling mountain beck where Common Sandpiper, Dipper and Grey Wagtail can be expected in the river and Curlew, Cuckoo, Redpoll and Tree Pipit should be found as the woodland gives way to more open habitats. Insects out on the fells should include Golden Ringed Dragonfly, Green Tiger Beetle, Bilberry Bumblebee and Green Hairstreak. A short drive on we enter the rich and diverse Naddle Valley, its steep slopes cloaked in rich ancient Atlantic Oak woodland, rich with birdlife and dripping in ferns, mosses and lichens. A stroll beneath the canopy of veteran trees will see us find Pied and Spotted Flycatchers, Redstart and Wood Warbler. By midday we will enjoy lunch at the nearby Haweswater Hotel with commanding views across the reservoir and bold Red Squirrels that come down to the veranda in search of nutty offerings.

In the early afternoon we will head into the tranquil and scenic Swindale Valley, deeper within the Haweswater reserve to walk alongside the meandering Swindale Beck and through species rich upland hay meadows packed with flowers including Globe Flower, Melancholy Thistle and Ladies Mantles. The swift moving river is home to Dipper and Common Sandpipers and the valley sides, rich in developing woodland and scrub, are home to Redstart, Tree Pipits, Warblers, Cuckoo and Ring Ouzel. From here we will move on to explore the Orton Fells with its underlying limestone geology, giving a rich calcareous upland flora. The roadside verges, specially protected and managed are some of the richest botanically in the whole of the UK featuring a range of charismatic upland meadow species along with a good range of orchids. Within the area we will look for Northern Marsh, Fly, Frog, Fragrant and hopefully Small-white Orchid to add to the trips growing orchid total. After an enjoyable day in the Lakeland fells, we will return to our hotel to enjoy a delicious evening meal and our final night's stay.

Day 4

South Lakes

Staying in Kendal, we're just on the southern tip of the Lake District. On our final morning we'll venture around the South Lakes and Lake District Peninsulas, where we'll not only enjoy the fantastic scenery, but will also be hoping to visit a couple of local reserves in search of more limestone flora and invertebrate species such as Yellow Meadow Ant, Lesser and Greater Butterfly, Fragrant and Frog Orchid, Dark Red Helleborine and Lancaster Whitebeam, along with sites that may yield White-faced Darter, Osprey and Red Squirrel. After a final pub lunch, we'll make our way back to Kendal to collect our belongings, before saying our goodbyes and going our separate ways.

Tour grading

Grade A. There will be some easy walking on this holiday, covering between two and six miles per day, occasionally over some rougher terrain. This will, however, be at a slow pace, and will be interspersed with time spent in hides on some days.

Focus

During this short break we will enjoy all the natural history that the area has to offer, including birds, botany, butterflies, hopefully a few reptiles and perhaps even the odd mammal!

Food & Accommodation Included in the Price

Breakfasts and evening meals are included in the holiday cost beginning with the evening meal on Day 1 and finishing with breakfast on Day 4. Accommodation will be a comfortable hotel in the beautiful town of Kendal, in twin, double or single rooms, all of which are en-suite, within easy reach of the key wildlife sites which we will be visiting during this tour. Those making their way to the start of the tour by train should aim to arrive at Kendal railway station, from which it is less than half a mile to the hotel (taxis are usually available if you don't wish to walk). Lunches, daytime snacks and drinks are not included in the cost of this tour, and so we will stop at local pubs or cafes for lunch and comfort breaks each day.

Weather & Clothing

Whilst we will, of course, hope for a weekend of sunshine, the North West is not renowned for its long periods of dry weather! Packing waterproof and warm clothing and footwear is strongly recommended for any wet days.

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, 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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