

The Birds of Brandenburg & Berlin

Naturetrek Tour Report

4 - 8 October 2019



Bean and White-fronted Geese by John Swainson



River near Linum by Andy Smith



Great Bustards by John Swainson

Report compiled by Andy Smith
Photos courtesy of John Swainson and Andy Smith



Naturetrek

Mingledown Barn

Wolf's Lane

Chawton

Alton

Hampshire

GU34 3HJ

UK

T: +44 (0)1962 733051

E: info@naturetrek.co.uk

W: www.naturetrek.co.uk

Tour participants: Andy Smith (Leader) with six Naturetrek clients

Day 1

Friday 4th October

We arrived at Berlin Tegel Airport in the mid-afternoon and after collecting our minibus we headed off through the Berlin traffic. Soon enough we were clear of the city and out into the open, rolling Brandenburg countryside. As we travelled through the closing stages of the afternoon we noted several Common Buzzards and Roe Deer out in the fields and saw our first flocks of Cranes and Bean Geese; a taste of things to come! We arrived at our comfortable guest house in the quiet little village of Semlin just before dark and after settling in we enjoyed our first hearty German dinner together.

Day 2

Saturday 5th October

After breakfast we headed off westwards towards the famous Gulpe See. We drove through a pleasant patchwork of open arable and pasture fields, areas of mixed woodland and picturesque villages. The countryside seemed full of wildlife and we made several stops en-route. A large flock of geese feeding in some roadside fields turned out to include good numbers of all three common local species, Tundra Bean, Siberian White-fronted and Greylag and we were able to compare them all and appreciate their diagnostic features. A little later a group of over 250 Cranes in another field gave us our first good look at these amazing birds on the ground. Other notable sightings along the way included a couple of Red Kites, several Common Buzzards and Ravens, a few Jays and the only Marsh Harrier of the trip.

At the Gulpe See we walked along the shore and visited a couple of large open hides and saw lots more geese, dozens of Great Egrets, a range of ducks including a number of Common Pochard and three mighty White-tailed Eagles, initially perched together in a distant tree and then on the wing harassing the wildfowl – very exciting! We ate our picnic lunch in the sunny lee of a pine copse where we found Crested and Marsh Tits, Nuthatch, Short-toed Treecreeper and Great Spotted Woodpecker. After lunch we walked from the old wooden windmill at Preitzen towards the eastern end of the lake and stumbled upon a lovely Great Grey Shrike in some horse paddocks backing on to the shoreline reed-beds. The bird was actively hunting, flying out from perches on fence posts and willows to hover over the grass before dropping down to take small prey, probably grasshoppers (which were abundant around us). Pleased with this superb little encounter we returned to the bus and began the drive across country to Linum.

We stopped for a pair of Black Redstarts in one village and some very welcome afternoon coffee in another and made it to Linum in perfect time for the arrival of the Cranes. We joined the assembled group of people just as the birds started to come in and over the next hour or so we were treated to one of the most wonderful wildlife spectacles we had ever experienced as wave after wave of these mighty birds came bugling in to join the increasing throng. At times the sky was full of them and the sight and the sound was fantastic! Looking out across the distant fields you could see a carpet of grey as thousands of the birds stood around preparing for the night. Amazingly, amongst such vast numbers, the birds were all invariably in family units within the group, no matter how big the flock; a pair of adults with one, two, or very occasionally three, rusty headed youngsters. Through the clamour of the adult birds trumpeting calls we could sometimes pick out the high pitched wheezy squeaks of the juveniles.

Eventually, as the light failed we returned to the bus and headed back to Semlin. A Tawny Owl cruising across the road ahead of us finished a long but hugely rewarding day.

Day 3

Sunday 6th October

The early mist burned off as we travelled into Bustard country and at our first stop near the hamlet of Senzke we enjoyed immediate success with the amazing sight of 36 huge Great Bustards, virtually all mature males, about 300 yards from the road in the middle of a winter rape field. Wow! They seemed unconcerned by us and we had superb views of these majestic birds as they moved sedately across the field feeding on the foliage and whatever else they could find. Tearing ourselves away we moved on toward the village of Buschow and found another flock, this time of 39 birds, mostly females and young males. These too were unconcerned by us and we were able to have a further good look in perfect light conditions and really appreciate what handsome and impressive birds they are. A short walk here brought a nice little range of passerines too, including Yellowhammer, Tree Sparrow, Skylark, Meadow Pipit and Stonechat.

We stopped for our picnic lunch by a hide near the village of Garlitz in the heart of Bustard country where the star bird was a superb Rough-legged Buzzard which hunted all around us during our stay. After this we drove on towards the Gulpe See area again noting a White-tailed Eagle en-route and finished the afternoon in the wide open meadowland between the villages of Gulpe and Parey. From a hide here we had some great close up views of a mixed goose flock which included two smart Barnacle Geese and at least one Taiga Bean. Here too were a number of Coypu, interesting to see despite their exotic origin. A little further on a Great Grey Shrike appeared and as we were watching it a female Hen Harrier flew into view and proceeded to hunt its way up and down the field margin behind the Shrike – very nice! Happy with this, we drove back to Semlin and concluded another thoroughly enjoyable day.

Day 4

Monday 7th October

This morning we headed eastwards towards Linum making a number of short stops en-route. At the end of the morning we arrived at the River Rhin near the village of Linumhorst. A Fox out hunting voles in a meadow was a nice sighting, as was a Kingfisher flashing along a drainage ditch. The riparian woodland here, full of big old poplars and alders and wheezing with Siskins, promised woodpeckers so we were happy to stop for our picnic. Sure enough, within moments a Lesser Spotted Woodpecker called nearby and some of us enjoyed brief views of it before it disappeared. A Green Woodpecker called in the distance too and then, excitingly, a Black Woodpecker. It called several times as we ate our lunch but never close and I don't think anyone entertained great hopes of seeing it. Then, just as we were driving away it flew across the track in front of us and landed in a tall poplar. We rapidly got out of the bus, approached carefully and were able to watch the bird for some time as it sat preening in full view – lovely!

We spent the rest of the afternoon at the nearby Linum fishponds. Highlights here were an another White-tailed Eagle, three surprise Ferruginous Ducks, a flock of vocal Penduline Tits, a solitary Willow Tit and tens of thousands of geese which regularly erupted into the air with much noise and spectacle. At the end of the afternoon we returned to the Crane viewing area and watched the Cranes coming into roost again. They were later this afternoon, perhaps because it was a brighter evening but nonetheless spectacular and provided a fitting finale to the day.

Day 5

Tuesday 8th October

After breakfast and a short walk along the lake shore at Semlin during which we saw a close Great Grey Shrike we set off for Tegel airport. We arrived in good time and after saying our goodbyes to those in the group who were staying on in the Berlin area for a few days we proceeded to the check-in. Everything went smoothly and we arrived safely back at Heathrow on time a couple of hours later. It had been a great trip!

Receive our e-newsletter

Join the Naturetrek e-mailing list and be the first to hear about new tours, additional departures and new dates, tour reports and special offers. Visit www.naturetrek.co.uk to sign up.

Social Media

We're social! Follow us on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram and be the first to hear about the launch of new tours, offers and exciting sightings and photos from our recently returned holidays.



www.facebook.com/naturetrekwildlifeholidays



www.twitter.com/naturetrektours



www.instagram.com/naturetrek_wildlife_holidays



Common Cranes by John Swainson

Species Lists

Birds (✓=recorded but not counted; h = heard only)

| | Common name | Scientific name | October | | | | |
|----|-----------------------------|-------------------------------------|---------|--------|-------|--------|-----|
| | | | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
| 1 | Taiga Bean Goose | <i>Anser fabalis fabalis</i> | | | 1 | | |
| 2 | Tundra Bean Goose | <i>Anser fabalis rossicus</i> | 50 | 1000's | 100's | 1000's | 100 |
| 3 | Greylag Goose | <i>Anser anser</i> | | 1000's | 100's | 1000's | |
| 4 | Greater White-fronted Goose | <i>Anser albifrons</i> | | 100's | 100's | 1000's | |
| 5 | Barnacle Goose | <i>Branta leucopsis</i> | | | 2 | | |
| 6 | Mute Swan | <i>Cygnus olor</i> | | 10 | 5 | 8 | 6 |
| 7 | Ruddy Shelduck | <i>Tadorna ferruginea</i> | | 1 | | | |
| 8 | Northern Shoveler | <i>Spatula clypeata</i> | | 1 | | | |
| 9 | Gadwall | <i>Mareca strepera</i> | | 3 | 2 | 40 | |
| 10 | Eurasian Wigeon | <i>Mareca penelope</i> | | 50 | 30 | 30 | |
| 11 | Mallard | <i>Anas platyrhynchos</i> | | 4 | 15 | 50 | |
| 12 | Northern Pintail | <i>Anas acuta</i> | | 2 | | 1 | |
| 13 | Eurasian Teal | <i>Anas crecca</i> | | 30 | | 2 | |
| 14 | Common Pochard | <i>Aythya ferina</i> | | 10 | | 3 | |
| 15 | Tufted Duck | <i>Aythya fuligula</i> | | | | 3 | |
| 16 | Ferruginous Duck | <i>Aythya nyroca</i> | | | | 3 | |
| 17 | Little Grebe | <i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i> | | | | 5 | |
| 18 | Great Crested Grebe | <i>Podiceps cristatus</i> | | 20 | | 2 | 2 |
| 19 | Grey Heron | <i>Ardea cinerea</i> | | 8 | 1 | 5 | 1 |
| 20 | Great Egret | <i>Ardea alba</i> | | 50 | 5 | 8 | |
| 21 | Great Cormorant | <i>Phalacrocorax carbo sinensis</i> | | 30 | 60 | 120 | 3 |
| 22 | Eurasian Sparrowhawk | <i>Accipiter nisus</i> | | 1 | 2 | 1 | |
| 23 | Western Marsh Harrier | <i>Circus aeruginosus</i> | | 1 | | | |
| 24 | Hen Harrier | <i>Circus cyaneus</i> | | | 1 | | |
| 25 | Red Kite | <i>Milvus milvus</i> | | 3 | 8 | 4 | |
| 26 | White-tailed Eagle | <i>Haliaeetus albicilla</i> | | 5 | 1 | 1 | |
| 27 | Rough-legged Buzzard | <i>Buteo lagopus</i> | | | 1 | | |
| 28 | Common Buzzard | <i>Buteo buteo</i> | 10 | 20 | 20 | 12 | 2 |
| 29 | Great Bustard | <i>Otis tarda</i> | | | 76 | | |
| 30 | Eurasian Coot | <i>Fulica atra</i> | | 60 | 40 | 25 | |
| 31 | Common Crane | <i>Grus grus</i> | 50 | 1000's | 250+ | 1000's | |
| 32 | Northern Lapwing | <i>Vanellus vanellus</i> | | 500 | 50 | 10 | |
| 33 | Grey Plover | <i>Pluvialis squatarola</i> | | 1 | | | |
| 34 | Eurasian Curlew | <i>Numenius arquata</i> | | 1h | | | |
| 35 | Dunlin | <i>Calidris alpina</i> | | 1 | | | |
| 36 | Common Snipe | <i>Gallinago gallinago</i> | | | 1 | | |
| 37 | Black-headed Gull | <i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i> | | 25 | | 10 | 2 |
| 38 | Common Gull | <i>Larus canus</i> | | | | | 2 |
| 39 | European Herring Gull | <i>Larus argentatus</i> | | 25 | | | 1 |
| 40 | Yellow-legged Gull | <i>Larus michahellis</i> | | 1 | | | |
| 41 | Stock Dove | <i>Columba oenas</i> | | 1 | | | |
| 42 | Common Wood Pigeon | <i>Columba palumbus</i> | 10 | 100's | 5 | 50 | |
| 43 | Eurasian Collared Dove | <i>Streptopelia decaocto</i> | 1 | 6 | | 5 | |
| 44 | Tawny Owl | <i>Strix aluco</i> | | 1 | | | |
| 45 | Kingfisher | <i>Alcedo atthis</i> | | 1 | | 3 | |
| 46 | Lesser Spotted Woodpecker | <i>Dryobates minor</i> | | | | 2 | |
| 47 | Great Spotted Woodpecker | <i>Dendrocopos major</i> | | 1+1h | 1+1h | 1h | |

| | Common name | Scientific name | October | | | | |
|----|---------------------------|---------------------------------|---------|--------|-------|--------|-------|
| | | | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
| 48 | Black Woodpecker | <i>Dryocopus martius</i> | | | 1 | 1 | |
| 49 | European Green Woodpecker | <i>Picus viridis</i> | | 1 | 2h | 2 | |
| 50 | Common Kestrel | <i>Falco tinnunculus</i> | | 5 | 10 | 8 | 1 |
| 51 | Great Grey Shrike | <i>Lanius excubitor</i> | | 1 | 1 | | 1 |
| 52 | Eurasian Jay | <i>Garrulus glandarius</i> | | 20 | 15 | 12 | 2 |
| 53 | Eurasian Magpie | <i>Pica pica</i> | | 10 | 10 | 8 | 2 |
| 54 | Western Jackdaw | <i>Coloeus monedula</i> | | 50 | 15 | 50 | |
| 55 | Hooded Crow | <i>Corvus cornix</i> | 25 | 150+ | 100+ | 50 | 6 |
| 56 | Northern Raven | <i>Corvus corax</i> | | 20 | 10 | 8 | 3 |
| 57 | Coal Tit | <i>Parus ater</i> | | 1+2h | | | |
| 58 | European Crested Tit | <i>Lophophanes cristatus</i> | | 2+1h | 1h | 1 | |
| 59 | Marsh Tit | <i>Poecile palustris</i> | | 1 | 3 | 3 | |
| 60 | Willow Tit | <i>Poecile montanus</i> | | | | 1 | |
| 61 | Eurasian Blue Tit | <i>Cyanistes caeruleus</i> | | 5 | 10 | 12 | |
| 62 | Great Tit | <i>Parus major</i> | | 8 | 12 | 15 | 2 |
| 63 | Penduline Tit | <i>Remiz pendulinus</i> | | | | 7+3h | |
| 64 | Bearded Reedling | <i>Panurus biarmicus</i> | | | | 3h | |
| 65 | Eurasian Skylark | <i>Alauda arvensis</i> | | 15 | 20 | 2 | |
| 66 | Long-tailed Tit | <i>Aegithalos caudatus</i> | | | | 8 | |
| 67 | Barn Swallow | <i>Hirundo rustica</i> | | 10 | 25 | 30 | |
| 68 | Eurasian Blackcap | <i>Sylvia atricapilla</i> | | | | 1 | |
| 69 | Common Chiffchaff | <i>Phylloscopus collybita</i> | | 3 | 4 | 2 | |
| 70 | Goldcrest | <i>Regulus regulus</i> | | | 2 | 2 | |
| 71 | Eurasian Wren | <i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i> | | | | 1+3h | 1h |
| 72 | Eurasian Nuthatch | <i>Sitta europaea</i> | | 2 | 1 | 3 | 1h |
| 73 | Eurasian Treecreeper | <i>Certhia familiaris</i> | | | | 2h | |
| 74 | Short-toed Treecreeper | <i>Certhia brachydactyla</i> | | 2+1h | | 1h | |
| 75 | Common Starling | <i>Sturnus vulgaris</i> | | 1000's | 100's | 1000's | 100's |
| 76 | Common Blackbird | <i>Turdus merula</i> | | 2 | 8 | 5 | 1 |
| 77 | Fieldfare | <i>Turdus pilaris</i> | | 1 | | | |
| 78 | Redwing | <i>Turdus iliacus</i> | | | | 5 | |
| 79 | Song Thrush | <i>Turdus philomelos</i> | | 2 | 1 | 4 | |
| 80 | Mistle Thrush | <i>Turdus viscivorus</i> | | | 1 | | |
| 81 | European Robin | <i>Erithacus rubecula</i> | | 3 | 1 | 5 | 1 |
| 82 | Black Redstart | <i>Phoenicurus ochuros</i> | | 4 | 6 | 1 | |
| 83 | European Stonechat | <i>Saxicola rubicola</i> | | | 3 | | |
| 84 | House Sparrow | <i>Passer domesticus</i> | | 20 | 30 | 50 | 10 |
| 85 | Eurasian Tree Sparrow | <i>Passer montanus</i> | | 15 | 30 | 100+ | |
| 86 | White Wagtail | <i>Motacilla alba</i> | | 10 | 5 | | |
| 87 | Meadow Pipit | <i>Anthus pratensis</i> | | 5 | 20 | 6 | |
| 88 | Tree Pipit | <i>Anthus trivialis</i> | | 1 | | | |
| 89 | Common Chaffinch | <i>Fringilla coelebs</i> | | 12 | 20 | 12 | 20 |
| 90 | Brambling | <i>Fringilla montifringilla</i> | | 1h | | | |
| 91 | European Greenfinch | <i>Chloris chloris</i> | | 8 | 4 | | |
| 92 | Common Linnet | <i>Linaria cannabina</i> | | 15 | 50 | | |
| 93 | Red Crossbill | <i>Loxia curvirostra</i> | | | 1h | | |
| 94 | European Goldfinch | <i>Carduelis carduelis</i> | | 1 | | 1 | 1 |
| 95 | European Siskin | <i>Spinus spinus</i> | | 3 | | 50 | |
| 96 | Corn Bunting | <i>Emberiza calandra</i> | 50 | | 1 | | |
| 97 | Yellowhammer | <i>Emberiza citrinella</i> | | 10 | 30 | | |
| 98 | Common Reed Bunting | <i>Emberiza schoeniclus</i> | | 1h | 1 | 8 | |

Mammals

Red Squirrel, *Sciurus vulgaris*

Coypu, *Myocastor coypus*

Roe Deer, *Capreolus capreolus*

Red Fox, *Vulpes vulpes*

Muskrat, *Ondatra zibethicus*

European Hare, *Lepus europaeus*

Butterflies

Small White, *Pieris rapae*

Red Admiral, *Vanessa atalanta*

Clouded Yellow, *Colias croceus*

Small Tortoiseshell, *Aglais urticae*

Dragonflies

Migrant Hawker, *Aeshna mixta*

Common Darter, *Sympetrum striolatum*



Geese! by John Swainson