

# Norfolk in Winter

Naturetrek Tour Report

9th – 11th February 2024

---

Tour report by John Williamson

---



Naturetrek Mingledown Barn Wolf's Lane Chawton Alton Hampshire GU34 3HJ UK

T: +44 (0)1962 733051

E: [info@naturetrek.co.uk](mailto:info@naturetrek.co.uk)

W: [www.naturetrek.co.uk](http://www.naturetrek.co.uk)

Tour participants: Mike Crewe & John Williamson (leaders) with 12 Naturetrek Clients.

## Day 1

## Friday 9th February

After checking in to our rooms at the Le Strange Arms Hotel we decided to take a short drive to Titchwell Marsh RSPB and take a walk along the raised floodwall between the RSPB visitor centre and the beach.

Fortunately, the torrential rain had abated in time for our arrival and we were able to search through the bushes around the visitor centre, where we encountered a mixed flock containing several tit species and a Common Chiffchaff.

From here we ventured along the raised floodwall overlooking the lagoons, where we enjoyed excellent telescope views of a single Spoonbill which commenced feeding soon after our arrival. Waders on the freshmarsh included 325 Northern Lapwing, 800 Golden Plover, Eurasian Curlew and Common Redshank, as well as five Pied Avocets.

Wildfowl included a lovely group of six Northern Pintail with three superb males in full breeding plumage among them. Also noted were Eurasian Wigeon, Eurasian Teal, Mallard, Tufted Duck, Common Pochard and Common Shelduck. At least six Cetti's Warblers were producing bursts of their strident song along the floodwall. Geese included around 2000 Pink-footed Geese, 350 Dark-bellied Brent Geese, plus the usual local Canada and Greylag Goose flock.

A number of Little Egrets and at least 25 Western Marsh Harriers were seen entering the tree and reedbed roosts, while several Great Cormorants adorned the nearby trees and a Eurasian Woodcock emerged from cover, heading out to feed on the grazing marsh at dusk.

Mammals included a single Reeve's Muntjac and up to seven Chinese Water Deer.

We returned to the hotel in time for the party to settle into their rooms before dinner was taken at 19.00.

## Day 2

## Saturday 10th February

Prior to leaving the hotel, we made a pre-breakfast excursion to Old Hunstanton beach, where had excellent views of around 20 Northern Fulmar over the sea off the hotel car park, where Red-throated Diver and Red-breasted Merganser were also seen passing. Waders on the beach were primarily Eurasian Oystercatcher.

Following a puncture on one of our vehicles, we made a slightly delayed drive along the coast, arriving at Holkham NNR at 10.15, where we enjoyed very close views of hundreds of Eurasian Wigeon, Northern Shoveler, Eurasian Teal with a few Northern Lapwing, Common Redshank and Eurasian Curlew, a group of 15 Ruff and three Common Snipe, with Western Marsh Harriers and Common Buzzards soaring overhead. Pink-footed, Dark-bellied Brent, Greylag, Canada and Egyptian Geese were all present on the grazing marsh.

We then wandered down to the beach and had prolonged views of 1,500 Common Scoter, with two Velvet Scoter and two Common Eider. Also on the sea were Red-breasted Merganser and Great Crested Grebe. By now the beach was rather busy, but among the small number of waders present were a few Sanderlings. A pair of European Stonechat entertained us in the marram grass on the edge of the coastal dunes.

After we left the beach, we headed back to the National Nature Reserve and to the Washington hide to overlook the grazing marsh, where we saw two Great Egrets and had extremely distant views of three Ravens. More Pink-footed Geese were roosting on the grazing marsh in front of the hide.

We then headed west from Holkham along the A149 coast road, and made a brief stop at Burnham Norton, where we had good views of eight Western Cattle Egret in the horse paddocks beside the road, before heading on to Holme Marsh NWT. En route we encountered another group of four Western Cattle Egrets in Holme village.

On the beach at Holme we encountered many more waders than we had previously on the trip. Large numbers of Eurasian Oystercatcher were accompanied by 50 Bar-tailed Godwit, 150 Dunlin, 40 Sanderling, 25 Ruddy Turnstone, 20 Red Knot and, unusually, two Purple Sandpipers.

New mammals recorded during the day included Grey Seal, Brown Hare and European Rabbit.

As light began to fail we headed back to the hotel for our evening meal at 19.00

## Day 3

## Sunday 11th February

A more leisurely departure this morning saw us arrive at Cley at 09.15 where we enjoyed close views of four Little Egrets and two Great Egrets feeding around Cley Sluice marsh, accompanied by several hundred Black-headed and Common Gulls feeding on earthworms flushed out by the flood water in the meadows. Nearby, several Eurasian Curlews and a mixed flock of Rooks and Western Jackdaws probed at the soil in a drier area of grazing marsh.

We then drove the short distance to Cley Marsh NWT. Here we walked out to Bishop's Hide and had wonderful views of dabbling ducks, with especially close views of delightful drakes of Eurasian Teal, Eurasian Wigeon, Gadwall, Northern Shoveler and Common Shelduck. Waders present included 60 Pied Avocet, five Black-tailed Godwit and a single Ruff. Also present were Dunlin and Common Snipe. Marsh Harriers were a constant feature, often disturbing the feeding or loafing duck.

We then walked much of the famous Cley East Bank, where we had good views of a party of Northern Pintail up-ending on the Sea Pool, before stopping frequently and listening for Bearded Tits on the return walk. Birding was now much more challenging as the chill wind picked up, tempting us to seek more cover on the lower ground.

By now a sizeable flock of 450 Dark-bellied Brent Geese had now amassed on Cley Eye field and we 'scoped them at distance before retiring for lunch at the Visitor Centre. A Little Grebe was in the Skirts ditch as we entered the Visitor Centre car park.

After lunch we drove to Cley Eye car park to scan through the geese at much closer range, before departing west again to look for finch and bunting flocks along the back roads to Choseley. We were able to see Grey Partridge, Red-legged Partridge and 20 Stock Doves along the way, before we encountered a 150-strong flock of Common Linnets and a few European Goldfinches.

Close to Choseley we were able to watch the amazing spectacle of c.5000 Pink-footed Geese feeding on a recently harvested sugar beet field. Walking the country lanes, we were able to see many Chinese Water Deer and Brown Hare feeding on the arable land in the late afternoon sun as we watched the only Fieldfare of the trip, and eventually unearthed a Yellowhammer.

We then headed back to Old Hunstanton to return to the clients' vehicles for 17.00, before departing for home, with a total of 101 bird species and seven mammals recorded.

## 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](http://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](http://www.facebook.com/naturetrekwildlifeholidays)



[www.twitter.com/naturetrektours](http://www.twitter.com/naturetrektours)



[www.instagram.com/naturetrek\\_wildlife\\_holidays](http://www.instagram.com/naturetrek_wildlife_holidays)

## Species lists

Birds (H = Heard only, I = Introduced)

Common name	Scientific name	February 2024		
		9	10	11
Brent Goose	<i>Branta bernicla</i>	350	150	450
Canada Goose - I	<i>Branta canadensis</i>	✓	✓	
Greylag Goose	<i>Anser anser</i>	✓	✓	✓
Pink-footed Goose	<i>Anser brachyrhynchus</i>	2000	✓	✓
Greater White-fronted Goose	<i>Anser albifrons</i>			1
Mute Swan	<i>Cygnus olor</i>		✓	✓
Egyptian Goose - I	<i>Alopochen aegyptiaca</i>		✓	✓
Common Shelduck	<i>Tadorna tadorna</i>	✓	✓	✓
Northern Shoveler	<i>Spatula clypeata</i>	4	✓	✓
Gadwall	<i>Mareca strepera</i>		✓	✓
Eurasian Wigeon	<i>Mareca penelope</i>	✓	✓	✓
Mallard	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>	✓	✓	✓
Northern Pintail	<i>Anas acuta</i>	6		15
Eurasian Teal	<i>Anas crecca</i>	✓	✓	✓
Common Pochard	<i>Aythya ferina</i>	✓		
Tufted Duck	<i>Aythya fuligula</i>	✓	✓	
Common Eider	<i>Somateria mollissima</i>		2	
Velvet Scoter	<i>Melanitta fusca</i>		2	
Common Scoter	<i>Melanitta nigra</i>		1500	
Red-breasted Merganser	<i>Mergus serrator</i>		✓	✓
Grey Partridge	<i>Perdix perdix</i>		✓	✓
Common Pheasant - I	<i>Phasianus colchicus</i>	✓	✓	
Red-legged Partridge - I	<i>Alectoris rufa</i>		✓	✓
Feral Rock Dove	<i>Columba livia</i>		✓	
Stock Dove	<i>Columba oenas</i>			20
Common Wood Pigeon	<i>Columba palumbus</i>	✓	✓	✓
Eurasian Collared Dove	<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>	✓	✓	✓

Common name	Scientific name	February 2024		
		9	10	11
Common Moorhen	<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>	✓	✓	✓
Eurasian Coot	<i>Fulica atra</i>	✓	✓	✓
Little Grebe	<i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>		3	2
Great Crested Grebe	<i>Podiceps cristatus</i>		✓	
Eurasian Oystercatcher	<i>Haematopus ostralegus</i>	✓	460	✓
Pied Avocet	<i>Recurvirostra avosetta</i>	5		60
Northern Lapwing	<i>Vanellus vanellus</i>	325	✓	✓
European Golden Plover	<i>Pluvialis apricaria</i>	800		
Grey Plover	<i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>		12	
Common Ringed Plover	<i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>		2	
Eurasian Curlew	<i>Numenius arquata</i>	✓	✓	
Bar-tailed Godwit	<i>Limosa lapponica</i>		✓	
Black-tailed Godwit	<i>Limosa limosa</i>			5
Ruddy Turnstone	<i>Arenaria interpres</i>		25	
Red Knot	<i>Calidris canutus</i>		20	
Ruff	<i>Calidris pugnax</i>		15	1
Sanderling	<i>Calidris alba</i>		40	
Dunlin	<i>Calidris alpina</i>		150	✓
Purple Sandpiper	<i>Calidris maritima</i>		2	
Eurasian Woodcock	<i>Scolopax rusticola</i>	1		
Common Snipe	<i>Gallinago gallinago</i>		3	✓
Common Redshank	<i>Tringa totanus</i>	✓	✓	✓
Black-headed Gull	<i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i>	✓	✓	✓
Common Gull	<i>Larus canus</i>	✓	✓	✓
Great Black-backed Gull	<i>Larus marinus</i>		✓	✓
European Herring Gull	<i>Larus argentatus</i>	✓	✓	✓
Lesser Black-backed Gull	<i>Larus fuscus</i>			1
Red-throated Diver	<i>Gavia stellata</i>		✓	
Northern Fulmar	<i>Fulmarus glacialis</i>		20	✓
Great Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>	✓	✓	✓
Eurasian Spoonbill	<i>Platalea leucorodia</i>	1		
Western Cattle Egret	<i>Bubulcus ibis</i>		12	
Grey Heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>	✓	✓	✓
Great Egret	<i>Ardea alba</i>		2	2
Little Egret	<i>Egretta garzetta</i>	5	4	5
Eurasian Sparrowhawk	<i>Accipiter nisus</i>			1
Western Marsh Harrier	<i>Circus aeruginosus</i>	25	✓	6
Red Kite	<i>Milvus milvus</i>	✓	✓	✓
Common Buzzard	<i>Buteo buteo</i>	✓	✓	✓
Great Spotted Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos major</i>	✓	✓	2
Common Kestrel	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>		✓	✓
Eurasian Jay	<i>Garrulus glandarius</i>			✓
Eurasian Magpie	<i>Pica pica</i>	20		✓
Western Jackdaw	<i>Coloeus monedula</i>		✓	✓
Rook	<i>Corvus frugilegus</i>		✓	✓
Carrion Crow	<i>Corvus corone</i>		✓	✓
Raven	<i>Corvus corax</i>		3	
Coal Tit	<i>Parus ater</i>		✓	

Common name	Scientific name	February 2024		
		9	10	11
Eurasian Blue Tit	<i>Cyanistes caeruleus</i>	✓	✓	✓
Great Tit	<i>Parus major</i>	✓	✓	✓
Bearded Reedling	<i>Panurus biarmicus</i>			H
Eurasian Skylark	<i>Alauda arvensis</i>		✓	✓
Cetti's Warbler	<i>Cettia cetti</i>	6	✓	✓
Long-tailed Tit	<i>Aegithalos caudatus</i>	✓	✓	✓
Common Chiffchaff	<i>Phylloscopus collybita</i>	1		
Goldcrest	<i>Regulus regulus</i>	✓	✓	
Eurasian Wren	<i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>	✓	✓	✓
Eurasian Treecreeper	<i>Certhia familiaris</i>		H	
Common Starling	<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>	✓	✓	✓
Song Thrush	<i>Turdus philomelos</i>	✓	✓	✓
Mistle Thrush	<i>Turdus viscivorus</i>		✓	
Redwing	<i>Turdus iliacus</i>			✓
Common Blackbird	<i>Turdus merula</i>	✓	✓	
Fieldfare	<i>Turdus pilaris</i>			✓
European Robin	<i>Erithacus rubecula</i>	✓	✓	
European Stonechat	<i>Saxicola rubicola</i>		✓	
House Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>		✓	✓
Dunnock	<i>Prunella modularis</i>		✓	✓
Pied Wagtail	<i>Motacilla alba</i>	✓		✓
Meadow Pipit	<i>Anthus pratensis</i>		✓	✓
European Rock Pipit	<i>Anthus petrosus</i>		✓	
Common Chaffinch	<i>Fringilla coelebs</i>	✓	✓	✓
Common Linnet	<i>Linaria cannabina</i>	✓	✓	150
European Goldfinch	<i>Carduelis carduelis</i>	✓	✓	✓
Yellowhammer	<i>Emberiza citrinella</i>			✓
Common Reed Bunting	<i>Emberiza schoeniclus</i>	✓	✓	

## Mammals

Common name	Scientific name	February 2024		
		9	10	11
Grey Seal	<i>Halichoerus grypus</i>		✓	
Chinese Water Deer - I	<i>Hydropotes inermis</i>	7	✓	9
Reeves' Muntjac - I	<i>Muntiacus reevesi</i>	✓	✓	✓
European Hare - I	<i>Lepus europaeus</i>		✓	✓
European Rabbit - I	<i>Oryctolagus cuniculus</i>		✓	
Eastern Grey Squirrel - I	<i>Sciurus carolinensis</i>	✓	✓	✓