

# Norfolk in Winter

Naturetrek Tour Report

6th – 8th March 2026

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Fulmars



Black-tailed Godwit



Wigeon



Great Northern Diver

Tour report by Brian Small

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Tour participants: Brian Small (leader) with six Naturetrek clients

## Summary

Old Hunstanton is a great base for a winter tour to North Norfolk, with many key localities close at hand: Titchwell, Holme and Snettisham. Wells, Holkham, and Stiffkey are also only a short drive away. Despite some chilly March weather, we headed out with enthusiasm and made the most of our time in the field, seeing a fine array of species, including many highlights: a feeding Great Northern Diver in Wells Harbour; Spoonbills, many White-fronted Geese and a lovely Treecreeper at Holkham; three Glossy Ibises and Cattle Egret at Stiffkey; Mediterranean Gulls, and Scaup and Black-necked Grebe at Titchwell. Also, there were thousands of shorebirds and three Tundra Bean Geese at Snettisham, plus a distant Merlin at Stiffkey Marshes.

## Day 1

Friday 6th March

### Arrival at Old Hunstanton & Titchwell RSPB

Having arrived at the Caley Hotel, Hunstanton, and following a quick meet up, we made use of the remaining daylight by heading to Titchwell RSPB. Along the boardwalk to Fen Hide, we watched a roosting rufous-morph Tawny Owl deep within the foliage in ivy-clad tree, while on the freshmarsh we saw many (325+) Mediterranean Gulls, a couple of Ruff, s Rock Pipits, and enjoyed a flypast by an immature Peregrine Falcon which buzzed the flocks of wildfowl a couple of times.

Also present was the usual array of ducks: Gadwall, Pochard, Pintail, Shoveler and Teal, with Wigeon perhaps the most numerous and showing at very close range. A tight group of Avocets sat among bathing gulls, and a noisy flock of Lapwing stood 'peewit'ing on the bund with a small group of lovely Golden Plovers. These plovers would occasionally all wheel up and back down, spooked by something unseen or imaginary. As Marsh Harriers, Brent Geese and Cormorants flew about, we ended with a Water Rail by the track, and a Firecrest by the reserve centre.

## Day 2

Saturday 7th March

### Hunstanton cliffs, Holkham, Wells Harbour, North Point pools & Stiffkey

A pre-breakfast visit to Holkham cliffs and mudflats was quite chilly, yet provided us with good views of Fulmars, both flying about and on the cliffs. On the flats were many waders: they were mostly Oystercatchers, but there were also Curlews, Bar-tailed Godwits, Sanderlings and Redshanks.

After breakfast, we drove east towards Wells-next-the-Sea, pausing to buy lunch at Burnham Deepdale, and to Holkham, where we made another roadside stop to look across the western floods. At least six Spoonbills were perched in the trees, and several Grey Herons, Lapwings and wildfowl fed about the pools; the first of many White-fronted Geese were discovered before many more flew in from inland fields. Having parked at the southern end of Lady Anne's Drive, we walked north, checking the fields and finding over twenty Pink-footed Geese and some smart Snipes and Black-tailed Godwits for our efforts. Many close Wigeons and Egyptian Geese fed in the fields. Then we walked west, picking up Treecreeper, Coal Tit and Goldcrest.

At Wells Wood and Lifeboat Station, we had a quick check of the harbour before lunch, and were lucky in finding a Great Northern Diver feeding in the channel, plus Bar-tailed Godwit, hundreds of Knots, Turnstone, Red-breasted Merganser and Ringed Plover; four Harbour Seals lazed on the flats. After lunch, some went back to see the diver again, watching at close range as it dived, surfacing with a crab or two. Just east of Wells, we checked out North Point pools, where a good number of bathing gulls included Lesser Black-backed, and there were also Avocets. But most enjoyable were the Marsh Harriers that perched on various posts. Looking west, we found a couple of Cattle Egrets, and two Hares ran about the fields.

We ended our day at Stiffkey, where we first tried the western floods for some reported Glossy Ibises, but were only successful in seeing Greenfinch, Great Spotted Woodpecker and Stock Dove. A second roll of the dice at the eastern floods was more successful, with three Glossy Ibises present, plus displaying Lapwing and many wildfowl. Back at the van, a nice male Marsh Harrier with a red wing tag ('43') sat in the field.

Having parked at the campsite and walked west a short distance, we scanned the saltmarsh for an hour or so. It was a waiting game, but as the sun finally emerged and lit the landscape, we found a distant Merlin perched on a *Suaeda* bush, which was sadly flushed by a bait-digger; we refound it a little later, at even greater distance. Some fine Brent Geese flew about, but raptors were few, and just as any warmth left in the day drained away, we departed back to the hotel.

## Day 3

## Sunday 8th March

### Holme NOA, Snettisham Beach, Ken Hill & Titchwell

Our day started with a pre-breakfast visit to Holme, and a short walk on the Peddar's Way to watch over the saltings and fields. Early morning mist cleared a little to allow us views of several Marsh Harriers, Stonechat, Linnet and displaying Meadow Pipits. From the dunes, we walked onto the beach, where small groups of Turnstones flicked through the sand and seaweed, Sanderlings scuttled along the shore, and territorial Ringed Plovers songflighted over the shingle.

After breakfast, we headed south to Snettisham Beach, walking south along the shore of The Wash and the line of beach huts. As the tide fell, we saw thousands of wheeling waders, including many Knots, Bar-tailed and Black-tailed Godwits, Curlews, Avocets and Oystercatchers, with Little Grebe, a young male Goldeneye and Tufted Ducks on the pits. In the bushes and on the shore, many Linnets and Goldfinches formed tight flocks, and a couple of Chiffchaffs called and flicked from bramble to buckthorn.

Lunch was eaten and a coffee taken at Titchwell, followed by a walk out to the sea. The usual culprits were still on the marshes en route, while a Greater Scaup was seen diving on the Tidal Pool with Tufted Ducks and Pochards. On the beach, Sanderlings scurried about the surf with Dunlins, Bar-tailed Godwits and Oystercatchers, but after careful scanning and views of Great Crested Grebe, Red-breasted Merganser and flocks of Common Scoters heading west well offshore, we finally found the reported Black-necked Grebe: phew!

On our way back to the van, we again checked Parrinder hide for close views of Ruff and Mediterranean Gulls, then detoured for a final look at two Tawny Owls still in the ivy, and an equally enjoyable Song Thrush. It was a fitting way to end the tour.

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## Species lists

Birds (H=heard only)

I=Introduced	Common name	Scientific name	March 2026		
			6	7	8
	Brent Goose	<i>Branta bernicla</i>	✓	✓	✓
	Canada Goose - I	<i>Branta canadensis</i>	✓	✓	✓
	Barnacle Goose	<i>Branta leucopsis</i>		✓	
	Greylag Goose	<i>Anser anser</i>	✓	✓	✓
	Pink-footed Goose	<i>Anser brachyrhynchus</i>		22	
	Tundra Bean Goose	<i>Anser serrirostris</i>			3
	Greater White-fronted Goose	<i>Anser albifrons</i>		600+	100+
	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>	✓	✓	✓
	Gadwall	<i>Mareca strepera</i>	✓	✓	✓
	Eurasian Wigeon	<i>Mareca penelope</i>	✓	✓	✓
	Mallard	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>	✓	✓	✓
	Northern Pintail	<i>Anas acuta</i>	2	✓	✓
	Eurasian Teal	<i>Anas crecca</i>	✓	✓	✓
	Common Pochard	<i>Aythya ferina</i>	40+		✓
	Tufted Duck	<i>Aythya fuligula</i>	15	2	✓
	Greater Scaup	<i>Aythya marila</i>	1		1
	Common Scoter	<i>Melanitta nigra</i>			✓
	Common Goldeneye	<i>Bucephala clangula</i>			1
	Red-breasted Merganser	<i>Mergus serrator</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>		✓	✓
	Common Wood Pigeon	<i>Columba palumbus</i>	✓	✓	✓
	Eurasian Collared Dove	<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>		2	
	Water Rail	<i>Rallus aquaticus</i>	1		
	Common Moorhen	<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>	✓	✓	✓
	Eurasian Coot	<i>Fulica atra</i>	✓	✓	✓
	Little Grebe	<i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>	✓	✓	✓
	Great Crested Grebe	<i>Podiceps cristatus</i>		✓	✓
	Black-necked Grebe	<i>Podiceps nigricollis</i>			1
	Eurasian Oystercatcher	<i>Haematopus ostralegus</i>	2	✓	✓
	Pied Avocet	<i>Recurvirostra avosetta</i>	30	✓	✓
	Grey Plover	<i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>		✓	✓
	European Golden Plover	<i>Pluvialis apricaria</i>	✓		✓
	Common Ringed Plover	<i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>		✓	✓
	Northern Lapwing	<i>Vanellus vanellus</i>	✓	✓	✓
	Eurasian Curlew	<i>Numenius arquata</i>	✓	✓	✓
	Bar-tailed Godwit	<i>Limosa lapponica</i>		✓	✓
	Black-tailed Godwit	<i>Limosa limosa</i>		✓	✓
	Common Snipe	<i>Gallinago gallinago</i>		✓	✓
	Common Greenshank	<i>Tringa nebularia</i>			1

I=Introduced	Common name	Scientific name	March 2026		
			6	7	8
	Ruddy Turnstone	<i>Arenaria interpres</i>		✓	✓
	Red Knot	<i>Calidris canutus</i>		✓	✓
	Ruff	<i>Calidris pugnax</i>	2		2
	Sanderling	<i>Calidris alba</i>		✓	✓
	Dunlin	<i>Calidris alpina</i>		✓	✓
	Black-headed Gull	<i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i>	✓	✓	✓
	Mediterranean Gull	<i>Ichthyæetus melanocephalus</i>	375		105
	Common Gull	<i>Larus canus</i>	✓	✓	✓
	European Herring Gull	<i>Larus argentatus</i>	✓	✓	✓
	Great Black-backed Gull	<i>Larus marinus</i>		✓	
	Lesser Black-backed Gull	<i>Larus fuscus</i>		2	
	Great Northern Diver	<i>Gavia immer</i>		1	
	Northern Fulmar	<i>Fulmarus glacialis</i>		15+	
	Great Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>	✓	✓	✓
	Glossy Ibis	<i>Plegadis falcinellus</i>		3	
	Eurasian Spoonbill	<i>Platalea leucorodia</i>		6	
	Little Egret	<i>Egretta garzetta</i>	✓	✓	✓
	Great Egret	<i>Ardea alba</i>		4	2
	Western Cattle Egret	<i>Ardea ibis</i>		3	
	Grey Heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>		✓	✓
	Eurasian Sparrowhawk	<i>Accipiter nisus</i>		1	1
	Western Marsh Harrier	<i>Circus aeruginosus</i>	✓	✓	✓
	Red Kite	<i>Milvus milvus</i>		✓	✓
	Common Buzzard	<i>Buteo buteo</i>		✓	✓
	Tawny Owl	<i>Strix aluco</i>	1	2	2
	Great Spotted Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos major</i>		4	
	Common Kestrel	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>		3	
	Merlin	<i>Falco columbarius</i>		1	
	Peregrine Falcon	<i>Falco peregrinus</i>	1		
	Eurasian Jay	<i>Garrulus glandarius</i>		✓	✓
	Eurasian Magpie	<i>Pica pica</i>	✓	✓	✓
	Western Jackdaw	<i>Coloeus monedula</i>	✓	✓	✓
	Rook	<i>Corvus frugilegus</i>		2	
	Carrion Crow	<i>Corvus corone</i>	✓	✓	✓
	Coal Tit	<i>Periparus ater</i>		✓	
	Eurasian Blue Tit	<i>Cyanistes caeruleus</i>	✓	✓	✓
	Great Tit	<i>Parus major</i>	✓	✓	✓
	Eurasian Skylark	<i>Alauda arvensis</i>		✓	✓
	Cetti's Warbler	<i>Cettia cetti</i>	H	H	H
	Long-tailed Tit	<i>Aegithalos caudatus</i>	✓	✓	✓
	Common Chiffchaff	<i>Phylloscopus collybita</i>		✓	✓
	Common Firecrest	<i>Regulus ignicapilla</i>	1		
	Goldcrest	<i>Regulus regulus</i>		5+	3
	Eurasian Wren	<i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>	✓	✓	✓
	Eurasian Treecreeper	<i>Certhia familiaris</i>		1	
	Common Starling	<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>	✓	✓	✓
	Song Thrush	<i>Turdus philomelos</i>			1
	Mistle Thrush	<i>Turdus viscivorus</i>		2	3

I=Introduced	Common name	Scientific name	March 2026		
			6	7	8
	Common Blackbird	<i>Turdus merula</i>	✓	✓	✓
	Fieldfare	<i>Turdus pilaris</i>			1
	European Robin	<i>Erithacus rubecula</i>	✓	✓	✓
	House Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>		✓	✓
	Duncock	<i>Prunella modularis</i>	✓	✓	✓
	Grey Wagtail	<i>Motacilla cinerea</i>		1	1
	Pied Wagtail	<i>Motacilla alba</i>		1	
	Meadow Pipit	<i>Anthus pratensis</i>		✓	✓
	European Rock Pipit	<i>Anthus petrosus</i>	2		1
	Eurasian Chaffinch	<i>Fringilla coelebs</i>	✓	✓	✓
	European Greenfinch	<i>Chloris chloris</i>		✓	✓
	Common Linnet	<i>Linaria cannabina</i>	✓	✓	✓
	European Goldfinch	<i>Carduelis carduelis</i>	✓	✓	✓
	Eurasian Siskin	<i>Spinus spinus</i>	10		2
	Common Reed Bunting	<i>Emberiza schoeniclus</i>	1		5

## Mammals

Common name	Scientific name
European Rabbit - I	<i>Oryctolagus cuniculus</i>
European Hare - I	<i>Lepus europaeus</i>
Eastern Grey Squirrel - I	<i>Sciurus carolinensis</i>
Reeves's Muntjac - I	<i>Muntiacus reevesi</i>
Red Deer	<i>Cervus elaphus</i>
Chinese Water Deer - I	<i>Hydropotes inermis</i>
Harbour Seal	<i>Phoca vitulina</i>