

# The New Forest

Naturetrek Tour Report

9th - 11th May 2025

---



Firecrest



Nightjar



Kestrel



Broad-bodied Chaser

Tour report by Simon Woolley, photos by Colin Hocking

---



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: Simon Woolley (leader) with eight Naturetrek clients

## Summary

With fine and warm weather throughout, nicely tempered by a cool breeze at times, this was a truly glorious weekend in the New Forest at arguably its most gorgeous time of year. The woods were full of bird song, the trees were almost in full, youthful leaf, the heaths were coming alive, and we saw a large majority of the special local species we might reasonably have expected. A particular highlight was an outstanding Nightjar encounter, but we also enjoyed time with the iconic Dartford Warbler, plus Firecrests aplenty, Cuckoos, Redstarts and more, and even a certain very scarce butterfly at the close of the tour!

## Day 1

**Friday 9th May**

The group convened at the hotel in Lyndhurst at 6.30pm, and enjoyed a meal together from 7.00pm, getting to know each other and sharing wildlife and travel stories. At 8.30pm, we boarded the van and set off into the gathering dusk, heading for Broomy Plain, in the far west of the Forest. On arrival, we soon saw a roding Woodcock and heard several Tawny Owls, and almost at once heard snatches of Nightjars churring in the twilight. We walked a short distance from the car park, and waited. We soon had several short glimpses of a displaying male at close range! But things were about to get much, much better. Simon managed to spotlight a male flying past, and it pitched on a low fencepost. We had decent views of it perched, albeit some way off, and then approached, keeping it in the beam. At about ten meters away, we stopped, and the bird posed fantastically for us. He even started feeding flycatcher-style from the post, returning again and again and showing off his white wing and tail patches. We enjoyed a brilliant few minutes with this fabulous bird, before leaving him in peace for the night. What a great start to the tour.

## Day 2

**Saturday 10th May**

After breakfast, we set off shortly before 8.30am, and headed to Acres Down, just north-west of Lyndhurst. We stayed down in the woods to start with, and made a leisurely loop through broadleaves, then conifers, and then out into a large clearing. We did well: a sharp-eyed client spotted a Treecreeper nest, and we watched the parents coming and going for a while. All the commoner birds were 'in full throat' (Blackbird, Song Thrush, Robin, Wren and so on...and Blackcap, Willow Warbler and Chiffchaff soon joined in). It didn't take long for us to find Stock Dove and a smart displaying Firecrest too. The latter came right down to take a close look at us: this would be the first of about four we would find over the course of the weekend. In short order, we heard a couple of Cuckoos, and soon located one on a bare tree, albeit at some distance. Tree Pipit and Redstart, both singing, gave themselves up to the scope in similar style in the clearing.

Very pleased with our initial circuit, we walked back to the car park and climbed up the (not too steep) hill to the top of Acres Down itself. Passerine activity was limited, but we did see a pair of Stonechats, and some Swallows and House Martins were feeding over the heath. But of course our main focus was on 'bigger' things, so we started scanning! We saw numerous Common Buzzards, and a Kestrel, and a single Honey Buzzard briefly soared over the most distant woods. That was frustrating: not everyone got onto it, and the views were, frankly, poor. Never mind: one for another time! It was lunch time, and we repaired to the Green Dragon at Brook for beer and sandwiches, both of which were excellent.

Our last destination for the day was up in the far north of the Forest, at Telegraph Hill and Islands Thorn Inclosure. We spent a good hour out on the open heath, again scanning and seeing (Common) Buzzards, plus Mistle Thrush, some frustratingly rapid flyover Hawfinches, Tree Pipit, a whole family of Stonechats, and Linnets. But the star here was undoubtedly Dartford Warbler. A singing male gave us a real run-around in dense gorse (and windy conditions), but eventually gave himself up and showed well for us all. A truly iconic New Forest goal had been achieved.

In the woods, we enjoyed the dense soundscape of birdsong, and learned lots about the history, management and commoning culture of the Forest. Botanical treats were frequent, with Bluebells, Butcher's Broom, Wood Sorrel (delicious), Tormentil, Yellow Pimpernel and others. Hawfinches again only zipped over at speed as we re-emerged onto the heath.

We had had a long and sunny day, and it was time to retreat for a freshen up, and drinks and dinner.

## Day 3

## Sunday 11th May

For the hardy (which was most of the group, to be fair!), we set off at 6.30am for an early shift in the area of Bolderwood and Highland Water. Again, the sheer wall of bird song was at times overwhelming, but soon we were all picking out the various expected species. We found an active Coal Tit nest, and located a Goldcrest sparring with a Firecrest. Very unusually, we heard a Nightjar churring in broad daylight, too! We emerged from the woods at the Bolderwood car-park, where we enjoyed the tame Chaffinches and Pied Wagtails, and latched on to a small group of flyover Crossbills. A fledgling Raven croaked dissonantly in the woods as we walked down to the platform to watch a couple of Fallow Deer in the meadow, ahead of a return to Lyndhurst for a deserved, slap-up breakfast at 9.30am.

We set off once more at 10.30am, did a spot of picnic shopping in Lyndhurst, and headed south-east across open heath and mire to the Pig Bush area. Here, we took a substantial walk through truly beautiful ancient woodlands, serenaded by Cuckoos, Redstarts, Blackcaps and many more as we meandered through a fairytale landscape. A pair of Stock Doves showed themselves exceptionally well. Out on the heath, a surprise Red Kite drifted by (scarce in the Forest), and we saw both Meadow and Tree Pipits, and more Stonechats. A Large Red Damselfly was added to the odonata list – we had seen a brief Beautiful Demoiselle earlier.

We said goodbye to two clients who needed to leave a little early at this point, and drove south through the Beaulieu estate, past the Mill Pond and Hatchet Pond, and across Beaulieu Heath to Standing Hat, near Brockenhurst. Here, we took a leisurely lunch, watching a Starling family with a demanding youngster. With the afternoon progressing, we took our final walk around Pignal Inclosure. Bird activity was a little low, but we did succeed in seeing the very localised and threatened Pearl-bordered Fritillary, along with Speckled Wood, and a Broad-bordered Chaser dragonfly.

With an excellent selection of New Forest specialities in the bag, and memories of stunning landscapes and habitats in truly wonderful weather in our minds, we returned to the hotel at about 4.30pm, and said our farewells after a truly enjoyable weekend with a lovely group of people.



Stonechats

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



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



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

## Species lists

Birds (H = Heard only)

Common name	Scientific name	May 2025		
		9	10	11
Mallard	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>			✓
European Nightjar	<i>Caprimulgus europaeus</i>	✓		H
Common Swift	<i>Apus apus</i>		✓	
Common Cuckoo	<i>Cuculus canorus</i>	✓	✓	✓
Feral Pigeon	<i>Columba livia</i>		✓	✓
Stock Dove	<i>Columba oenas</i>		✓	✓
Common Wood Pigeon	<i>Columba palumbus</i>		✓	✓
Eurasian Collared Dove	<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>			✓
Eurasian Woodcock	<i>Scolopax rusticola</i>	✓		
Black-headed Gull	<i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i>		✓	

Common name	Scientific name	May 2025		
		9	10	11
European Herring Gull	<i>Larus argentatus</i>		✓	✓
European Honey Buzzard	<i>Pernis apivorus</i>		✓	
Red Kite	<i>Milvus milvus</i>			✓
Common Buzzard	<i>Buteo buteo</i>		✓	✓
Tawny Owl	<i>Strix aluco</i>	H		
Great Spotted Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos major</i>		✓	✓
Common Kestrel	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>		✓	✓
Eurasian Jay	<i>Garrulus glandarius</i>		H	
Eurasian Magpie	<i>Pica pica</i>		✓	✓
Western Jackdaw	<i>Coloeus monedula</i>		✓	✓
Carrion Crow	<i>Corvus corone</i>		✓	✓
Northern Raven	<i>Corvus corax</i>			H
Coal Tit	<i>Parus ater</i>			✓
Eurasian Blue Tit	<i>Cyanistes caeruleus</i>		✓	✓
Great Tit	<i>Parus major</i>		✓	✓
Barn Swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>		✓	✓
Western House Martin	<i>Delichon urbicum</i>		✓	✓
Willow Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus trochilus</i>		✓	✓
Common Chiffchaff	<i>Phylloscopus collybita</i>		H	✓
Eurasian Blackcap	<i>Sylvia atricapilla</i>		H	✓
Dartford Warbler	<i>Curruca undata</i>		✓	
Common Firecrest	<i>Regulus ignicapilla</i>		✓	✓
Goldcrest	<i>Regulus regulus</i>			✓
Eurasian Wren	<i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>		✓	✓
Eurasian Treecreeper	<i>Certhia familiaris</i>		✓	✓
Common Starling	<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>			✓
Song Thrush	<i>Turdus philomelos</i>		✓	✓
Mistle Thrush	<i>Turdus viscivorus</i>		✓	✓
Common Blackbird	<i>Turdus merula</i>		✓	✓
European Robin	<i>Erithacus rubecula</i>		✓	✓
Common Redstart	<i>Phoenicurus phoenicurus</i>		✓	✓
European Stonechat	<i>Saxicola rubicola</i>		✓	✓
Dunnock	<i>Prunella modularis</i>		✓	
White (Pied) Wagtail	<i>Motacilla alba</i>		✓	
Meadow Pipit	<i>Anthus pratensis</i>		✓	✓
Tree Pipit	<i>Anthus trivialis</i>		✓	✓
Eurasian Chaffinch	<i>Fringilla coelebs</i>		✓	✓
Hawfinch	<i>Coccothraustes coccothraustes</i>		✓	
European Greenfinch	<i>Chloris chloris</i>		✓	
Common Linnet	<i>Linaria cannabina</i>		✓	✓
Red Crossbill	<i>Loxia curvirostra</i>			✓
European Goldfinch	<i>Carduelis carduelis</i>		✓	✓

## Others

Common name	Scientific name	May 2025		
		9	10	11
<b>Mammals</b>				
Rabbit	<i>Oryctolagus cuniculus</i>	✓		
Fallow Deer	<i>Dama dama</i>	✓	✓	
Roe Deer	<i>Capreolus capreolus</i>		✓	
Grey Squirrel	<i>Sciurus carolinensis</i>		✓	
<b>Butterflies</b>				
Brimstone	<i>Gonepteryx rhamni</i>		✓	✓
Speckled Wood	<i>Pararge aegeria</i>		✓	✓
Red Admiral	<i>Vanessa atalanta</i>		✓	
Pearl-bordered Fritillary	<i>Boloria euphrosyne</i>			✓
<b>Dragonflies/damselflies</b>				
Large Red Damselfly	<i>Pyrrhosoma nymphula</i>			✓
Beautiful Demoiselle	<i>Calopteryx virgo</i>			✓
Broad-bodied Chaser	<i>Libellula depressa</i>			✓