

# Norfolk in Autumn

Naturetrek Tour Report

16th – 18th September 2025

---



Marsh Harriers



Glossy Ibis flock



Golden Plover



Pink-footed Geese

Tour report by John Williamson, photos by Cliff Spooner

---



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: John Williamson (leader) with seven Naturetrek clients

## Day 1

## Tuesday 16th September

The group assembled at the Le Strange Arms Hotel at Hunstanton at 3.00pm for a briefing to lay out the plans for the next couple of days. The brisk wind was abating somewhat and sunshine warmed the air as we made a brief visit to the carpark at the rear of the hotel to look out over the sea, where we found a group of Sandwich Terns roosting on the beach with around 250 Oystercatchers and a single Bar-tailed Godwit. A Manx Shearwater flew past very close inshore as more Sandwich Terns headed east.

At 3.45pm we headed off to RSPB Titchwell for the remainder of the afternoon. As we walked up the west bank towards the freshmarsh we heard a Chiffchaff, and two Common Terns flew west, before we were treated to a group of eight Glossy Ibises flying west very close to us. A group of four Pintail was feeding in one of the ditches, along with a Pochard and a Tufted Duck. We continued to the freshmarsh, which was very well populated with waders, including a splendid juvenile Red-necked Phalarope, a Little Stint, and five very close juvenile Curlew Sandpipers. Other waders roosting or feeding on the lagoons included Greenshank, Redshank, Common Sandpiper, Little Ringed Plover, Ringed Plover, Snipe, 11 Golden Plovers, 25 Avocets, 30 Dunlins, 35 Ruffs, 75 Lapwings and 375 Black-tailed Godwits.

Other interesting birds on the freshmarsh included Great and Little Egrets, a fly-by Kingfisher, two Egyptian Geese and six Spoonbills which flew over the west bank. A Water Rail squealed from the reedy fringe, and the vegetation on the islands on the freshmarsh held Whinchat, Sedge Warbler and Goldfinch, while around 80 Linnets circled the adjacent Thornham saltmarsh; two Kestrels and three Marsh Harriers were hunting, and a Short-eared Owl was hunkered down into the sea purslane before flying off towards Thornham harbour.

Satisfied with an excellent late afternoon outing, we headed back to Hunstanton, where a Fulmar soared over the hotel and back out to sea as we returned for dinner at 6.00pm.

## Day 2

## Wednesday 17th September

A wet and windy start to the day saw the group decide not to venture out early, but a short seawatch from 7.00am from the hotel carpark added a few more species for the trip. A Great Crested Grebe was on the sea along with a number of Black-headed, Common and Herring Gulls, while two Fulmars flew west and a small number of Curlews, Bar-tailed Godwits and Oystercatchers fed along the shoreline. A single Grey Plover flew west with a Little Egret, and 20 Black-tailed Godwits and two Sanderlings dropped in to feed on the beach. Passerines around the car park included a single Jay, and two Goldfinches fed in the nearby bushes.

Following breakfast at 8.00am we headed to NWT Cley Marshes; on the journey, a Stoat crossed the road in front of us. We headed to the cover of the central hides, where we were able to watch waders on the scrapes; these included a Curlew Sandpiper, Avocets, two Redshanks, six Dunlins and 38 Black-tailed Godwits. Also on the scrapes were small numbers of Wigeon, Shoveler, Gadwall, Teal and Mallard, and a resting group of 30 Pink-footed Geese, freshly arrived from their Icelandic breeding grounds. A group of four juvenile Marsh Harriers performed admirably for us at close range, sparring with each other low over the reedbed. Also flying over the

scrapes were a Swift, a House Martin, three Sand Martins and several Swallows. In the distance, we could see the occasional Gannet passing along the beach, just beyond the shingle ridge.

With the weather worsening again and the café at NWT Cley very busy, we decided to take cover in the Red Lion at Stiffkey for lunch. After lunch, the weather improved and patches of sunshine brought out several Red Kites and Common Buzzards on the journey west to RSPB Snettisham. En route, we stopped briefly at Choseley, where we recorded Red-legged Partridges and Pheasants on the farmland, with a flock of 50 Golden Plover and a large Woodpigeon flock containing several Stock Doves. Here, we also enjoyed fleeting views of a number of Brown Hares.

On arrival at RSPB Snettisham, the rain had ceased and the skies had cleared, but the very strong south-westerly wind made viewing conditions extremely difficult. We managed to see around 200 Bar-tailed Godwits roosting on the mud, with 600 Oystercatchers and around 100 Knot. Further south, about 130 Curlew were hunkered down on the mud against the raging wind, but we decided against heading further south given that the height of the tide would not be pushing the roosting waders into the pits behind the seawall. On the return journey, a single Little Egret restlessly attempted to find an area of water sheltered enough to be able to feed, with little joy.

Returning to Old Hunstanton, we stopped again in the Choseley area, where we had excellent views of more Brown Hares and around 130 Red-legged Partridge in several large coveys. All day long, small birds were difficult to find in the rain and strong wind, so we decided upon an early return to the hotel at 5.30pm.

A brief look at the sea again at Old Hunstanton produced two Great Crested Grebes and around 120 Bar-tailed Godwits feeding on the shoreline, with six Turnstones, 15 Curlews, 20 Sanderlings and 35 Ringed Plovers. Around 400 Oystercatchers were roosting on the beach, with 30 Knot, and two each of Common and Sandwich Terns.

## Day 3

## Thursday 18th September

Another pre-breakfast seawatch from Old Hunstanton at 7.00am proved more productive: birds were clearly on the move following the high winds of the previous day. A number of Gannets passed west and around 130 Sandwich Terns were also seen, a couple of which were harassed by an Arctic Skua. Small numbers of Knots, Dunlins, Grey Plovers and Black-tailed Godwits flew west into the Wash, and the beach was alive with feeding waders lit in glorious morning light: c.400 Oystercatcher, c.60 Bar-tailed Godwits, c.200 Redshanks and 20 Sanderlings were present, along with a few Little Egrets. A small group of ten Knots roosted on the foreshore. Two small groups of Common Scoter flew east, and a few Great Crested Grebes were once again on the sea. In addition, small numbers of passerines and hirundines were arriving from the sea, including two Skylarks, 25 Meadow Pipits and three Swallows.

A post-breakfast visit to RSPB Titchwell allowed time to explore the areas of the reserve not visited on the first evening. A number of secretive Cetti's Warblers burst forth with their strident song from the reedbed edges, and a Chiffchaff, Spotted Flycatcher, Goldcrest, two Song Thrushes and a few Blue, Great and Long-tailed Tits were present along the boardwalk and in the bushes at the east end of the car park. Excellent views of three Little Grebes and a Great Egret were had at Patsy's reedbed pool. A few House Martins and Swallows hawked over the pool, while the Little Stint and at least one Curlew Sandpiper were still present on the east pool on the freshmarsh, along

with a few Dunlins and Ruffs, but generally wader numbers were down on the first evening. A Red Kite and a couple of Marsh Harriers hunted over the adjacent saltmarsh.

From the Island Hide, a Green Sandpiper and an elusive, but finally showy, Water Rail kept the group entertained. Two Spoonbills flew west over the freshmarsh, and Avocets and Black-tailed Godwits fed close to the hide. Later, two Little Ringed Plovers were watched at close range on the freshmarsh from the Parrinder Hide, as were Meadow and Rock Pipits, and a lovely group of Linnets bathing in the water.

Post lunch, a brief visit to Thornham harbour proved quite fruitful in a gathering wind. A flock of ten Cattle Egrets attended the grazing herd on the adjacent NWT Holme Dunes grazing marsh, where more recently-arrived Meadow Pipits and around 40 Linnets fed in the lee of the seawall and hugged the ground in the short vegetation on the grazing marsh. A single Whimbrel called evocatively from the grassland, where around twenty Curlew also fed. On our return to the vehicle, good views of a Greenshank were had in Thornham Creek, to conclude a successful final day of the trip.

The group returned to Old Hunstanton and the clients' vehicles at 4.00pm

## Receive our e-newsletter

Join the Naturetrek email list and be the first to hear about new tours, additional departures and new dates, tour reports and special offers.

[naturetrek.co.uk/e-newsletter-signup](https://naturetrek.co.uk/e-newsletter-signup)

Scan to  
sign up!



## Social Media

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



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



[facebook.com/naturetrekwildlifeholidays](https://facebook.com/naturetrekwildlifeholidays)



[naturetrek.bsky.social](https://naturetrek.bsky.social)



[x.com/naturetrektours](https://x.com/naturetrektours) (formerly Twitter)

## Species lists

### Birds

I=Introduced		September 2025		
Common name	Scientific name	16	17	18
Canada Goose	<i>Branta canadensis</i>	1	✓	
Greylag Goose	<i>Anser anser</i>	✓	✓	✓
Pink-footed Goose	<i>Anser brachyrhynchus</i>		30	
Mute Swan	<i>Cygnus olor</i>	✓	✓	✓
Egyptian Goose	<i>Alopochen aegyptiaca</i>	2		4
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>	4		
Eurasian Teal	<i>Anas crecca</i>	✓	✓	✓
Common Pochard	<i>Aythya ferina</i>	1		
Tufted Duck	<i>Aythya fuligula</i>	1	✓	
Common Scoter	<i>Melanitta nigra</i>			16
Common Pheasant - I	<i>Phasianus colchicus</i>		✓	✓
Red-legged Partridge - I	<i>Alectoris rufa</i>		130	
Common Swift	<i>Apus apus</i>		1	
Feral Pigeon	<i>Columba livia</i>	✓	✓	✓
Stock Dove	<i>Columba oenas</i>		30	✓
Common Wood Pigeon	<i>Columba palumbus</i>	✓	✓	✓
Eurasian Collared Dove	<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>		✓	
Water Rail	<i>Rallus aquaticus</i>	1		1
Common Moorhen	<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>	✓	✓	✓
Eurasian Coot	<i>Fulica atra</i>	✓		✓
Little Grebe	<i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>			3
Great Crested Grebe	<i>Podiceps cristatus</i>		3	4
Eurasian Oystercatcher	<i>Haematopus ostralegus</i>	250	1000	400
Pied Avocet	<i>Recurvirostra avosetta</i>	35	✓	✓
Grey Plover	<i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>		1	12
European Golden Plover	<i>Pluvialis apricaria</i>	11	50	
Common Ringed Plover	<i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>	✓	35	✓
Little Ringed Plover	<i>Charadrius dubius</i>	1		
Northern Lapwing	<i>Vanellus vanellus</i>	75	✓	✓
Eurasian Whimbrel	<i>Numenius phaeopus</i>			1
Eurasian Curlew	<i>Numenius arquata</i>		135	45
Bar-tailed Godwit	<i>Limosa lapponica</i>	✓	350	60
Black-tailed Godwit	<i>Limosa limosa</i>	375	38	45
Common Snipe	<i>Gallinago gallinago</i>	✓	✓	✓
Common Sandpiper	<i>Actitis hypoleucos</i>	1		
Green Sandpiper	<i>Tringa ochropus</i>			1
Common Redshank	<i>Tringa totanus</i>	✓	✓	✓
Common Greenshank	<i>Tringa nebularia</i>	1		1
Ruddy Turnstone	<i>Arenaria interpres</i>		1	
Red Knot	<i>Calidris canutus</i>		130	10
Ruff	<i>Calidris pugnax</i>	35		4
Curlew Sandpiper	<i>Calidris ferruginea</i>	5	1	1
Sanderling	<i>Calidris alba</i>		22	20
Dunlin	<i>Calidris alpina</i>	30	✓	10
Little Stint	<i>Calidris minuta</i>	1		1

I=Introduced		September 2025		
Common name	Scientific name	16	17	18
Common Tern	<i>Sterna hirundo</i>	2	2	1
Sandwich Tern	<i>Thalasseus sandvicensis</i>	15	2	130
Black-headed Gull	<i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i>	✓	✓	✓
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>	✓	✓	
Arctic Skua	<i>Stercorarius parasiticus</i>			1
Red-throated Diver	<i>Gavia stellata</i>			2
Northern Fulmar	<i>Fulmarus glacialis</i>	1	3	
Manx Shearwater	<i>Puffinus puffinus</i>	1		
Northern Gannet	<i>Morus bassanus</i>		✓	✓
Great Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>	✓	✓	✓
Glossy Ibis	<i>Plegadis falcinellus</i>	8		
Eurasian Spoonbill	<i>Platalea leucorodia</i>	6		2
Little Egret	<i>Egretta garzetta</i>	2	✓	8
Great Egret	<i>Ardea alba</i>	1		2
Western Cattle Egret	<i>Ardea ibis</i>			10
Grey Heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>	✓	✓	✓
Western Marsh Harrier	<i>Circus aeruginosus</i>	3	6	2
Red Kite	<i>Milvus milvus</i>		6	✓
Common Buzzard	<i>Buteo buteo</i>		✓	✓
Short-eared Owl	<i>Asio flammeus</i>	1		
Common Kingfisher	<i>Alcedo atthis</i>	1		
Common Kestrel	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>	2	✓	✓
Eurasian Jay	<i>Garrulus glandarius</i>		1	
Eurasian Magpie	<i>Pica pica</i>	✓	✓	✓
Western Jackdaw	<i>Coloeus monedula</i>	✓	✓	✓
Rook	<i>Corvus frugilegus</i>		✓	
Carrion Crow	<i>Corvus corone</i>		✓	✓
Eurasian Blue Tit	<i>Cyanistes caeruleus</i>		✓	✓
Great Tit	<i>Parus major</i>		✓	✓
Eurasian Skylark	<i>Alauda arvensis</i>			2
Sand Martin	<i>Riparia riparia</i>		3	
Barn Swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>	2	✓	✓
Western House Martin	<i>Delichon urbicum</i>		2	6
Cetti's Warbler	<i>Cettia cetti</i>			5
Long-tailed Tit	<i>Aegithalos caudatus</i>			✓
Common Chiffchaff	<i>Phylloscopus collybita</i>	1	1	2
Sedge Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus schoenobaenus</i>	1		
Goldcrest	<i>Regulus regulus</i>			1
Eurasian Wren	<i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>	✓	✓	✓
Common Starling	<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>	✓	✓	✓
Song Thrush	<i>Turdus philomelos</i>			2
Common Blackbird	<i>Turdus merula</i>	✓	✓	✓
Spotted Flycatcher	<i>Muscicapa striata</i>			1
European Robin	<i>Erithacus rubecula</i>	✓	✓	✓
Whinchat	<i>Saxicola rubetra</i>	1		
House Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>		✓	
Dunnock	<i>Prunella modularis</i>	✓	✓	✓
Pied Wagtail	<i>Motacilla alba</i>	✓	✓	✓
Meadow Pipit	<i>Anthus pratensis</i>			35
European Rock Pipit	<i>Anthus petrosus</i>			1
Eurasian Chaffinch	<i>Fringilla coelebs</i>	✓	✓	✓

I=Introduced		September 2025		
Common name	Scientific name	16	17	18
Common Linnet	<i>Linaria cannabina</i>	50		65
European Goldfinch	<i>Carduelis carduelis</i>	✓	✓	✓

## Mammals

		September 2025		
Common name	Scientific name	16	17	18
Chinese Water Deer	<i>Hydropotes inermis</i>	5		
Muntjac	<i>Muntiacus reeves</i>			1
European Rabbit	<i>Halichoerus grypus</i>		✓	✓
European Hare	<i>Lepus europaeus</i>		✓	
Grey Squirrel	<i>Sciurus carolinensis</i>		1	
Stoat	<i>Mustela erminea</i>		1	

## Butterflies

		September 2025		
Common name	Scientific name	16	17	18
Large White	<i>Pieris brassicae</i>	✓	✓	✓
Small Copper	<i>Lycaena phlaeas</i>			1
Red Admiral	<i>Vanessa atalanta</i>	1		
Speckled Wood	<i>Pararge aegeria</i>		1	
Wall Brown	<i>Lasiommata megera</i>			2

## Dragonflies

		September 2025		
Common name	Scientific name	16	17	18
Migrant Hawker	<i>Aeshna mixta</i>	1	1	✓
Common Darter	<i>Sympetrum striolatum</i>			✓