

East Yorkshire: Magic of Migration

Naturetrek Tour Report

7th – 10th September 2021



Little Gull (right)



Clifden Nonpareil



Little Stint & Little Ringed Plover



Whimbrel

Report and images by Tim Melling



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Tour participants: Tim Melling (Leader), with 8 Naturetrek clients.

Day 1

Tuesday 7th September

We all met up at 6pm before dinner to discuss the programme ahead. As the Albatross had been present at Bempton all day we decided to head north tomorrow rather than leave it until the day after as planned. Spurn Bird Observatory also advised that the ringing demonstration would be better the day after as the weather was more conducive to catching migrants. Earlier that afternoon Tim arrived early and took the four early arrivals for a brief visit to Kilnsea wetlands where we saw a variety of waders, gulls and terns.

Day 2

Wednesday 8th September

We were away by 8am and headed off north to Bempton, stopping en route to pick up lunch from a supermarket. Arriving at Bempton we were told that yesterday's Black-browed Albatross had not put in an appearance, and continued its absence throughout the day. But nevertheless, we enjoyed stunning views of some of the 11,000 pairs of Gannets and watched the young Gannets preparing to take their first flights by exercising their wings. Many of Bempton's seabirds had finished breeding and left the cliffs but we managed to see Kittiwakes, Guillemots, Fulmars and Shags, plus the stunning views of 300 foot cliffs. We enjoyed close views of a young male Sparrowhawk hunting the cliff tops, and at lunchtime we watched the many Tree Sparrows on the feeders at the visitor centre.

The Bempton warden confirmed that the hot, windless weather meant that Flamborough Head was devoid of migrants so we then went down to Hornsea Mere where we had close views of several Little Gulls which flew past at close range and perched on the jetties next to Black-headed Gulls giving a good size comparison. There were also a wide variety of ducks plus Snipe and Common Sandpiper. After this we went to Kilnsea wetlands where our timing was perfect as it was just full of amazing birds, many very close, and in perfect light. The tide was at its highest and had pushed many birds off the Humber onto this freshwater pool. At close range we saw Black-tailed and Bar-tailed Godwits, Knot, Dunlin, Little Stints, Ruff, Redshank and Little Ringed Plover. Further back there was a good array of ducks, gulls and waders including a number of Mediterranean Gulls and a German colour-ringed first year Caspian Gull. There were a few dozen Little Egrets and a Spoonbill flew in, but not before a Merlin flew right across in front of us and spooked all the waders. On the way back to the minibus we managed to add Little Owl to the list as it perched on a pile of pallets at a nearby farm. A very productive and enjoyable day.

Day 3

Thursday 9th September

We set off straight after breakfast for a look at the observatory moth traps and were shown a variety of species including Red Underwing, Frosted Orange, Gold Spot, Angle Shades plus a rare and beautiful migrant micro *Palpita vitrealis* also known as Olive Tree Pearl or Jasmine Moth. After this the Spurn Observatory warden Paul showed us a few birds he had caught in the mist nets that morning; Garden Warbler, Blackcap and Willow Warbler. He was a mine of information about ringing and the migration strategies of birds and was an enthusiastic advocate of the science of ringing. After this we paid another visit to Kilnsea wetlands where we added Avocets and Curlew Sandpipers to our list of birds seen here. The changeover of birds here is constant so

it is always worth calling in. We then went to look for our own birds near the centre and quickly found Whinchat, Whitethroat and Lesser Whitethroat. A male Yellow Wagtail also showed really well on a nearby fencepost. Walking along the canal zone gave us great views of a Whimbrel plus Swallows, Sand and House Martins plus about six Swifts, which were unexpected so late in the season. Another brief call in at Kilnsea wetlands added Arctic Terns, and the usual Little Owl was on show again. Sammy's Point was a little quiet though we did enjoy watching the birds being pushed off the estuary by the rising tide, including hundreds of Golden Plover which flew over our heads in many groups.

Day 4

Friday 10th September

The morning started again at Kilnsea wetlands where among the usual gulls, ducks and waders we added Green Sandpiper and saw two juvenile Little Gulls. We also saw Little Ringed Plover again, and the Little Owl was still sitting on the pallet pile by the farm. As we arrived at the Visitor Centre a radio message said there was a Long-tailed Skua off the Blue Bell. We were only a few hundred yards south of the Blue Bell so we headed straight to the coast where amazingly we managed to see the Long-tailed Skua chasing terns. As we watched the Skua slowly moving south we also picked up three Eiders flying south, plus a close flock of Purple Sandpipers, and one or two managed to see a Porpoise surfacing. We then looked at Kilnsea wetlands where a juvenile Water Rail gave really good views although a young Sedge Warbler was less cooperative. In the nearby scrub we watched several Willow Warblers and a beautiful, showy juvenile Whinchat. We then took the Unimog down to Spurn Point where our driver Andy told us all about the history of the headland; How the Admiralty consolidated the point by building a huge chalk bank, and the gun emplacements that guarded the entrance to the Humber. A trip up the lighthouse gave us great views of the point and headland from a different perspective. There weren't many migrants around but we still managed to see a Pied Flycatcher and a few Wheatears and Yellow Wagtails. We went to return the radio and were told they had saved a good moth to show us; A Clifden Nonpareil (*Catocala fraxini*). Greg took it out of the box and let us photograph it, one of the most spectacular and sought-after moths in Britain and only the third to be recorded at Spurn. And just before we left we paid one last visit to Church Field to see some rare Willow Emerald damselflies (*Chalcolestes viridis*). A great way to finish the trip.

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Checklist

Birds

	Common name	Scientific name	Date:			
			7	8	9	10
1	Mute Swan	<i>Cygnus olor</i>	x	x	x	x
2	Greylag Goose	<i>Anser anser</i>	x	x	x	x
3	Canada Goose	<i>Branta canadensis</i>	x	x	x	x
4	Common Shelduck	<i>Tadorna tadorna</i>	x	x	x	x
5	Gadwall	<i>Mareca strepera</i>	x	x		
6	Pintail	<i>Anas acuta</i>	x	x	x	x
7	Eurasian Teal	<i>Anas crecca</i>	x	x	x	x
8	Mallard	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>	x	x	x	x
9	Northern Shoveler	<i>Spatula clypeata</i>		x	x	x
10	Wigeon	<i>Anas penelope</i>	x	x	x	x
11	Tufted Duck	<i>Aythya fuligula</i>		x		
12	Eider	<i>Somateria mollissima</i>				x
13	Common Pheasant	<i>Phasianus colchicus</i>	x	x	x	x
14	Little Grebe	<i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>		x		
15	Fulmar	<i>Fulmarus glacialis</i>		x		
16	Northern Gannet	<i>Morus bassanus</i>		x	x	x
17	Great Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>		x	x	x
18	European Shag	<i>Phalacrocorax aristotelis</i>		x		
19	Little Egret	<i>Egretta garzetta</i>	x	x	x	x
20	Spoonbill	<i>Platalea leucorodia</i>		x	x	
21	Grey Heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>	x		x	x
22	Eurasian Sparrowhawk	<i>Accipiter nisus</i>		x	x	
23	Common Buzzard	<i>Buteo buteo</i>		x	x	x
24	Common Kestrel	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>	x	x	x	x
25	Merlin	<i>Falco columbarius</i>		x		
26	Water Rail	<i>Rallus aquaticus</i>				x
27	Common Moorhen	<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>	x	x	x	x
28	Common Coot	<i>Fulica atra</i>	x	x	x	x
29	Eurasian Oystercatcher	<i>Haematopus ostralegus</i>	x	x	x	x
30	Pied Avocet	<i>Recurvirostra avosetta</i>			x	
31	Little Ringed Plover	<i>Charadrius dubius</i>		x		x
32	Common Ringed Plover	<i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>	x	x	x	x
33	Northern Lapwing	<i>Vanellus vanellus</i>	x			
34	Ruff	<i>Philomachus pugnax</i>	x	x	x	x
35	Grey Plover	<i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>			x	
36	Golden Plover	<i>Pluvialis apricaria</i>			x	x
37	Knot	<i>Calidris canutus</i>	x	x	x	x
38	Purple Sandpiper	<i>Calidris maritima</i>				x

	Common name	Scientific name	Date:			
			7	8	9	10
39	Curlew Sandpiper	<i>Calidris ferruginea</i>			x	
40	Dunlin	<i>Calidris alpina</i>	x	x	x	x
41	Little Stint	<i>Calidris minuta</i>		x		
42	Common Snipe	<i>Gallinago gallinago</i>		x		x
43	Black-tailed Godwit	<i>Limosa limosa</i>	x	x	x	x
44	Bar-tailed Godwit	<i>Limosa lapponica</i>		x		x
45	Whimbrel	<i>Numenius phaeopus</i>			x	
46	Eurasian Curlew	<i>Numenius arquata</i>	x	x	x	x
47	Common Greenshank	<i>Tringa nebularia</i>	x	x	x	x
48	Common Redshank	<i>Tringa totanus</i>	x	x	x	x
49	Spotted Redshank	<i>Tringa erythropus</i>		x		
50	Common Sandpiper	<i>Actitis hypoleucos</i>		x		x
51	Long-tailed Skua	<i>Stercorarius longicaudus</i>				x
52	Kittiwake	<i>Rissa tridactyla</i>		x		
53	Little Gull	<i>Hydrocoloeus minutus</i>		x		x
54	Black-headed Gull	<i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i>	x	x	x	x
55	Lesser Black-backed Gull	<i>Larus fuscus</i>	x	x	x	x
56	Common Gull	<i>Larus canus</i>	x	x	x	x
57	Mediterranean Gull	<i>Larus melanocephalus</i>	x	x	x	x
58	Caspian Gull	<i>Larus cachinnans</i>		x		
59	European Herring Gull	<i>Larus argentatus</i>	x	x	x	x
60	Great Black-backed Gull	<i>Larus marinus</i>	x	x	x	x
61	Sandwich Tern	<i>Sterna sandvicensis</i>	x	x	x	x
62	Common Tern	<i>Sterna hirundo</i>	x	x		x
63	Arctic Tern	<i>Sterna paradisaea</i>			x	x
64	Guillemot	<i>Uria aalge</i>		x		x
65	Puffin	<i>Fratercula arctica</i>				
66	Feral Pigeon	<i>Columba livia</i>	x	x	x	x
67	Common Wood Pigeon	<i>Columba palumbus</i>	x	x	x	x
68	Eurasian Collared Dove	<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>	x	x	x	x
69	Little Owl	<i>Athene noctua</i>		x	x	x
70	Swift	<i>Apus apus</i>			x	
71	Great Spotted Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos major</i>		x		
72	Eurasian Skylark	<i>Alauda arvensis</i>		x		
73	Sand Martin	<i>Riparia riparia</i>			x	
74	Barn Swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>	x	x	x	x
75	House Martin	<i>Delichon urbicum</i>		x	x	x
76	Meadow Pipit	<i>Anthus pratensis</i>	x	x	x	x
77	Eurasian Rock Pipit	<i>Anthus petrosus</i>		x		
78	Grey Wagtail	<i>Motacilla cinerea</i>		x		x
79	Pied Wagtail	<i>Motacilla alba</i>	x	x	x	x

	Common name	Scientific name	Date:			
			7	8	9	10
80	Yellow Wagtail	<i>Motacilla flava</i>	x		x	x
81	Wren	<i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>		x	x	x
82	Duncock	<i>Prunella modularis</i>		x	x	x
83	European Robin	<i>Erithacus rubecula</i>		x	x	x
84	Stonechat	<i>Saxicola torquatus</i>				x
85	Whinchat	<i>Saxicola ruberta</i>			x	x
86	Northern Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe oenanthe</i>	x			x
87	Common Redstart	<i>Phoenicurus phoenicurus</i>			x	
88	Blackbird	<i>Turdus merula</i>		x	x	x
89	Song Thrush	<i>Turdus philomelos</i>		x		
90	Eurasian Blackcap	<i>Sylvia atricapilla</i>			x	
91	Lesser Whitethroat	<i>Sylvia curruca</i>			x	
92	Common Whitethroat	<i>Sylvia communis</i>			x	
93	Garden Warbler	<i>Sylvia borin</i>			x	x
94	Common Chiffchaff	<i>Phylloscopus collybita</i>		x		
95	Willow Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus trochilus</i>			x	x
96	Pied Flycatcher	<i>Ficedula hypoleuca</i>				x
97	Long-tailed Tit	<i>Aegithalos caudatus</i>		x		
98	Blue Tit	<i>Cyanistes caeruleus</i>		x	x	x
99	Great Tit	<i>Parus major</i>		x	x	x
100	Eurasian Magpie	<i>Pica pica</i>	x	x	x	x
101	Western Jackdaw	<i>Corvus monedula</i>	x	x	x	x
102	Rook	<i>Corvus frugilegus</i>	x	x		
103	Carrion Crow	<i>Corvus corone</i>	x	x	x	x
104	Common Starling	<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>	x	x	x	x
105	House Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>	x	x	x	x
106	Tree Sparrow	<i>Passer montanus</i>		x		
107	Chaffinch	<i>Fringilla coelebs</i>		x	x	x
108	European Greenfinch	<i>Carduelis chloris</i>		x	x	x
109	European Goldfinch	<i>Carduelis carduelis</i>	x	x	x	x
110	Linnet	<i>Carduelis cannabina</i>	x	x	x	x
111	Bullfinch	<i>Pyrrhula pyrrhula</i>		x		
112	Yellowhammer	<i>Emberiza citrinella</i>		x	x	
113	Reed Bunting	<i>Emberiza schoeniclus</i>		x	x	x

Other

Common name	Scientific name	Date:			
		7	8	9	10
Mammals					
European Hare	<i>Lepus europaeus</i>			x	
European Rabbit	<i>Oryctolagus cuniculus</i>			x	x
Grey Seal	<i>Halichoerus grypus</i>			x	x
European Roe Deer	<i>Capreolus capreolus</i>	x	x	x	x
Stoat	<i>Mustela erminea</i>			x	
Porpoise	<i>Phocoena phocoena</i>				x