

# East Yorkshire: Magic of Migration

Naturetrek Tour Report

12th – 15th October 2021



Jack Snipe



Fox



Harbour Porpoise

Report & images by Tim Melling



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Tour participants: Tim Melling & Steven Gater (leaders) with 12 Naturetrek clients

## Day 1

**Tuesday 12th October**

We all met up at 6pm to discuss the programme ahead then enjoyed an evening meal together!

## Day 2

**Wednesday 13th October**

We set off straight after breakfast for a look at the observatory moth traps and were shown a variety of species including Angle Shades, Large Wainscot, Barred Sallow, Red-line Chestnut and Beaded Chestnut. After this the Spurn Observatory warden Paul showed us a Chiffchaff and a Brambling he had just caught and explained what ringing had told us about these and other species. He was a mine of information about ringing and the migration strategies of birds and regaled us all with some interesting ringing stories.

We then visited the canal zone where we had some lovely sightings of both male and female Bearded Tits, while behind us there was a bewildering array of wading birds: Bar-tailed Godwit, Knot, Grey Plover, Dunlin and Redshank, plus Wigeon, Brent Geese and Pink-footed Geese flying past. Continuing on, we also managed to find Turnstone and Purple Sandpiper, neither of which are easy to see at Spurn. After this we had a quick look at the sea and saw Great Northern Divers and three Red-throated Divers, plus Gannets, Guillemots and Razorbills. We then had lunch at the visitor centre before heading up to the Crown and Anchor where yesterday's elusive Western Bonelli's Warbler had been seen. After just a short time the warbler appeared, and everyone managed to see it flitting about in the top of the willows.

Next, we visited Kilnsea Wetlands where we saw several Mediterranean Gulls, Spotted Redshanks, Black-tailed Godwits plus other ducks, waders and gulls. The radio then mentioned that a Jack Snipe was at the small garden pond behind the Observatory, so we headed back there and we were amazed to get brilliant views of it gently bobbing and feeding around a pond the size of a double bed. We had a look for a reported Yellow-browed Warbler in Easington but saw nothing, so we headed to Sammy's Point. Here we saw more waders including Golden, Grey and Ringed Plovers plus two Curlew Sandpipers among the Dunlin. We then decided it was time to call it a day. A fantastic day with Bonelli's Warbler, Bearded Tits and an amazingly obliging Jack Snipe.

## Day 3

**Thursday 14th October**

We started the day at Kilnsea wetlands where we saw the usual gulls, waders and ducks, then headed down to the Canal Scrape where we saw Redwings and Tree Sparrows coming down to drink. We then had our Unimog trip arranged with Andy, who drove us across the breach in the peninsula, and onto Chalk Bank where we enjoyed great views of many Brent Geese and waders pushed close to us by the high tide. There were hundreds of Oystercatchers and good numbers of Sanderling, along with Dunlin, Grey Plovers, Bar-tailed Godwit, Turnstones and Curlews. Here we also saw two Red-breasted Mergansers on the sea. We also saw a few fungi of interest including Blackening Waxcap, and a couple of Common Lizards. There were few migrant songbirds around, just a few Stonechats, so we headed on to the lighthouse. Here we took turns to climb the 145 steps to the very top where we enjoyed fantastic views of the peninsula and surrounding area. But the show was completely stolen by a young vixen that had been named Binks by the Wildlife Trust staff. She was wonderfully confiding and like a faithful dog she remained at our side, especially when we ate our picnics.

We continued on to the point where we watched a Guillemot at close range on the sea, plus fly-by Eider, Common Scoters, Gannets and a Great Northern Diver. Most unexpected was a juvenile Arctic Tern as most of the terns had left. But again, it was mammals that stole the show with half-a-dozen Harbour Porpoises showing well and close, including a mother and calf. We also saw a couple of Grey Seals. Migrants were thin on the ground with the occasional Chiffchaff plus a Northern Wheatear. It was then time to head north again, though we paused to enjoy the Brent Geese again on the way back. We then headed to the visitor centre for a hot drink while a Kestrel posed at really close range just outside the window. A few lucky people also saw another Bearded Tit.

There was time for just one more visit to Kilnsea Wetlands where we enjoyed scores of Pink-footed Geese circling around, plucking up courage to come and land in front of the hide. A Little Owl was really popular, but it was yet another mammal that commanded the attention. Just by the path was a seemingly healthy Field (Short-tailed) Vole that just continued to chew vegetation right out in the open ignoring our presence. This is a difficult mammal to see in Britain, especially to get such a clear, prolonged view, and all agreed that we had never seen one so well before. We then went back to the hotel for our evening meal.

## Day 4

## Friday 15th October

After breakfast we set off to Bempton stopping off in Hornsea to pick up a picnic. The weather was much fresher and breezier today and there had been some overnight rain. We saw large numbers of Pink-footed Geese arriving throughout the journey and one group also saw Whooper Swans. We arrived at Bempton where there were still huge numbers of Gannets flying around but also still a number of unfledged young, including some still covered in down, so a long time to go before fledging. There were very few other seabirds around, though we did see a few Shags and Guillemots. We managed to find a Peregrine perched on the cliffs that flew and returned with a pigeon to eat. Lots of Pink-footed Geese continued to fly around but we also saw several groups of wild Barnacle Geese arriving from the north. There were few songbirds in evidence apart from Stonechat, Linnets, Pipits and Skylarks. After some searching, we managed to find a few Redwings and Chiffchaffs, but the Yellow-browed Warbler remained heard but not seen. We were told by the wardens that there were no migrants reported from Flamborough that day so we decided to lounge around Bempton to see if we could find anything new. A couple of male Yellowhammers were popular but little else, so we decided to head back mid-afternoon to try to avoid the worst of the Friday rush hour. Several people had decided to take their own cars as they were heading straight off afterwards but again, an enjoyable day watching lots of geese and Gannets.

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## Species Lists

Birds (✓=recorded but not counted; H = heard only)

	Common name	Scientific name	October		
			13	14	15
1	Brent Goose	<i>Branta bernicla</i>	x	x	
2	Canada Goose	<i>Branta canadensis</i>			
3	Barnacle Gose	<i>Branta leucopsis</i>			x
4	Greylag Goose	<i>Anser anser</i>	x	x	
5	Pink-footed Goose	<i>Anser brachyrhynchus</i>	x	x	x
6	Mute Swan	<i>Cygnus olor</i>	x	x	
7	Common Shelduck	<i>Tadorna tadorna</i>	x	x	
8	Northern Shoveler	<i>Spatula clypeata</i>	x	x	
9	Gadwall	<i>Mareca strepera</i>	x	x	
10	Eurasian Wigeon	<i>Mareca penelope</i>	x	x	
11	Mallard	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>	x	x	
12	Northern Pintail	<i>Anas acuta</i>	x	x	
13	Eurasian Teal	<i>Anas crecca</i>	x	x	
14	Common Eider	<i>Somateria mollissima</i>		x	
15	Common Scoter	<i>Melanitta nigra</i>		x	
16	Red-breasted Merganser	<i>Mergus serrator</i>		x	
17	Common Pheasant	<i>Phasianus colchicus</i>	x	x	x
18	Feral Pigeon	<i>Columba livia</i>	x	x	x
19	Stock Dove	<i>Columba oenas</i>	x	x	
20	Common Wood Pigeon	<i>Columba palumbus</i>	x	x	x
21	Eurasian Collared Dove	<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>	x	x	x
22	Water Rail	<i>Rallus aquaticus</i>	H		
23	Common Moorhen	<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>	x	x	
24	Little Grebe	<i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>	x	x	
25	Eurasian Oystercatcher	<i>Haematopus ostralegus</i>	x	x	
26	Northern Lapwing	<i>Vanellus vanellus</i>	x	x	x
27	European Golden Plover	<i>Pluvialis apricaria</i>	x		
28	Grey Plover	<i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>	x	x	
29	Common Ringed Plover	<i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>	x		
30	Eurasian Curlew	<i>Numenius arquata</i>	x	x	
31	Bar-tailed Godwit	<i>Limosa lapponica</i>	x	x	
32	Black-tailed Godwit	<i>Limosa limosa</i>	x	x	
33	Ruddy Turnstone	<i>Arenaria interpres</i>	x	x	
34	Red Knot	<i>Calidris canutus</i>	x	x	
35	Sanderling	<i>Calidris alba</i>	x	x	
36	Purple Sandpiper	<i>Calidris maritima</i>	x		
37	Dunlin	<i>Calidris alpina</i>	x	x	
38	Jack Snipe	<i>Lymnocyptes minimus</i>	x		
39	Common Snipe	<i>Gallinago gallinago</i>	x		

	Common name	Scientific name	October		
			13	14	15
40	Common Redshank	<i>Tringa totanus</i>	x	x	
41	Spotted Redshank	<i>Tringa ochruros</i>	x		
42	Black-headed Gull	<i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i>	x	x	x
43	Mediterranean Gull	<i>Ichthyaetus melanocephalus</i>	x	x	
44	Common Gull	<i>Larus canus</i>	x	x	
45	Great Black-backed Gull	<i>Larus marinus</i>	x	x	x
46	European Herring Gull	<i>Larus argentatus</i>	x	x	x
47	Lesser Black-backed Gull	<i>Larus fuscus</i>	x	x	
48	Arctic Tern	<i>Sterna paradisaea</i>		x	
49	Common Guillemot	<i>Uria aalge</i>	x	x	x
50	Razorbill	<i>Alca torda</i>	x		
51	Red-throated Diver	<i>Gavia stellata</i>	x		
52	Great Northern Diver	<i>Gavia immer</i>	x	x	
53	Northern Gannet	<i>Morus bassanus</i>	x	x	x
54	Great Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>	x	x	x
55	European Shag	<i>Phalacrocorax aristotelis</i>			x
56	Grey Heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>	x	x	x
57	Little Egret	<i>Egretta garzetta</i>	x	x	
58	Eurasian Sparrowhawk	<i>Accipiter nisus</i>	x	x	x
59	Common Buzzard	<i>Buteo buteo</i>	x	x	x
60	Little Owl	<i>Athene noctua</i>		x	
61	Great Spotted Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos major</i>			x
62	Common Kestrel	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>	x	x	x
63	Peregrine Falcon	<i>Falco peregrinus</i>			x
64	Eurasian Magpie	<i>Pica pica</i>	x	x	x
65	Western Jackdaw	<i>Corvus monedula</i>	x	x	x
66	Rook	<i>Corvus frugilegus</i>	x		x
67	Carrion Crow	<i>Corvus corone</i>	x	x	x
68	Eurasian Blue Tit	<i>Cyanistes caeruleus</i>	x	x	x
69	Great Tit	<i>Parus major</i>	x	x	x
70	Bearded Tit (Reedling)	<i>Panurus biarmicus</i>	x	x	
71	Eurasian Skylark	<i>Alauda arvensis</i>	x	x	x
72	Common House Martin	<i>Delichon urbicum</i>	x		
73	Western Bonelli's Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus bonelli</i>	x		
74	Common Chiffchaff	<i>Phylloscopus collybita</i>	x	x	x
75	Goldcrest	<i>Regulus regulus</i>	x	x	x
76	Eurasian Wren	<i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>	x	x	x
77	Common Starling	<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>	x	x	x
78	Song Thrush	<i>Turdus philomelos</i>	x	x	x
79	Mistle Thrush	<i>Turdus viscivorus</i>	x		
80	Redwing	<i>Turdus iliacus</i>	x	x	x

	Common name	Scientific name	October		
			13	14	15
81	Common Blackbird	<i>Turdus merula</i>	x	x	x
82	European Robin	<i>Erithacus rubecula</i>	x	x	x
83	European Stonechat	<i>Saxicola torquatus</i>		x	x
84	Northern Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe oenanthe</i>		x	
85	Eurasian Tree Sparrow	<i>Passer montanus</i>		x	x
86	House Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>	x	x	x
87	Dunnock	<i>Prunella modularis</i>	x	x	x
88	Grey Wagtail	<i>Motacilla cinerea</i>	x		
89	Pied Wagtail	<i>Motacilla alba yarrellii</i>	x	x	x
90	Meadow Pipit	<i>Anthus pratensis</i>	x	x	x
91	European Rock Pipit	<i>Anthus petrosus</i>	x	x	x
92	Common Chaffinch	<i>Fringilla coelebs</i>	x	x	x
93	Brambling	<i>Fringilla montifringilla</i>	x	x	
94	European Greenfinch	<i>Cijloris chloris</i>	x	x	x
95	Common Linnet	<i>Linaria cannabina</i>	x	x	x
96	European Goldfinch	<i>Carduelis carduelis</i>	x	x	x
97	Eurasian Siskin	<i>Spinus spinus</i>	x	x	
98	Yellowhammer	<i>Emberiza citrinella</i>			x
99	Common Reed Bunting	<i>Emberiza schoeniclus</i>	x	x	