

# East Yorkshire – The Magic of Migration

Naturetrek Tour Report

11th – 14th October 2022

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Reed Bunting



Harbour Seal



Small Copper



Goldcrest

Tour report compiled by Stuart Taylor. Photos courtesy of Alan Skull

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Tour Participants: Stuart Taylor (Leader) with eight Naturetrek clients.

## Day 1

**Tuesday 11th October**

It was late afternoon by the time the whole group had met in luxurious hotel accommodation in Patrington. Darkness was creeping in which left no time to look for birds outside although an attempt at listening for Owls or Redwings was not successful. Compensation was had in the form of a wonderful three course meal, and arrangements made for an early breakfast the following day.

## Day 2

**Wednesday 12th October**

It was a generally cloudy day with a fairly strong southerly breeze not being ideal for an East Coast site at this time of year. Unperturbed we ventured out as we had arranged for a ringing demonstration at Kilnsea, at the top of the Spurn Peninsula.

The site at Spurn where the Heligoland trap is located is not accessible to the general public and so it was a treat to be allowed in and see what bird ringing is about. Paul, the site manager greeted the group and within seconds of our arrival, was showing us a Goldcrest that had just been caught in a mist net. Incredible to think that this tiny little bird had just crossed the North Sea having fed almost entirely on insects prior to its journey South. Other birds trapped during our time here were another Goldcrest and a Goldfinch. Both little beauties when seen in the field, but views in the hand were something else. A theme seemed to be emerging as overhead, a group of Golden Plover headed south.

After a loo stop, we visited Kilnsea Wetlands which was heaving with birds. Most obvious among the wildfowl were numerous Teal and Wigeon, but then we spotted about 14 elegant Pintail coming into the pool. It was noted that on arrival, the first thing these birds did was drink. They had either travelled a long way or had been somewhere much saltier.

Black-tailed Godwit, Dunlin and smaller numbers of Knot and a couple of Greenshank slept and preened whilst waiting for the tide to go back out. One or two Swallows seemed to be in more of a hurry than the waders and wildfowl, and didn't hang around.

After a visit to the Canal Scrape hide where some of the group saw an elusive Water Rail, one of the group, showed Stuart a photograph he'd taken and asked what it was? A Water Pipit! A good bird here, but by the time the hide was visited again the bird was gone.

Lunch in the discovery centre was disrupted by the sight of one or two Bearded Tits outside the window, despite the wind now blowing strongly. This species doesn't like windy conditions and no sooner seen, than they hunkered down again in the shelter of the reeds.

The afternoon consisted of a trip to the lighthouse and Point in the Unimog, an old German military vehicle designed for coping with sandy beaches and similar obstacles. Small numbers of Brent Geese were seen feeding and resting along the coast being freshly arrived from further north. Their numbers will build up as the season

progresses. A couple of probable Black Redstarts perched fleetingly on an old wall but failed to show themselves again, whilst a small number of Sanderlings, ran about on the beach like little white clockwork toys.

Some local volunteers were using their newly acquired brush-cutter skills, to open up paths through the area's thick sea buckthorn in the dunes. Unfortunately, this and the now very strong southerly wind meant that birds were becoming elusive and remained at single Blackbird and Chiffchaff. By the time Sammy's Point was reached, the wind was making it difficult to keep the tripods still and the decision was made to return to the hotel in plenty of time for dinner.

## Day 3

Thursday 13th October

A slight northerly breeze brought sunshine and cloud.

During breakfast, it became apparent that some of the group had heard the local Tawny Owls calling in the night.

When the meal had been eaten and everyone was ready, we boarded the minibus and headed north, round the outside of Bridlington and on to Bempton Cliffs RSPB Reserve. Tree Sparrows were very noticeable around the feeders and scrubby areas, which was nice as they have disappeared from some of the old haunts where some clients used to see them. Although the cliffs were largely deserted, a couple of Gannet chicks were on nests and being tended to by their parents. A walk around the fields and scrub turned up the odd Chiffchaff, Whitethroat and Goldcrest but the bird seen by everyone was the single Whooper Swan in fields by the car park. This bird looked tired and had been seen the previous day at Thornwick Pool.

This was our next destination and we soon realised what driving skills are needed to park a fairly large minibus in a fairly small car park! Walking down to the hide a probable Ring Ouzel flew into some Bramble bushes but could not be relocated. There were a large number of Blackbirds in the area, and these were thought to be continental birds on their way south. Wigeon and Teal were seen from the hide, but the Water Rail and Kingfisher present were only heard.

The rest of the afternoon was spent at a very crowded Flamborough Head. Three coach loads of school children on field outings, and a crane lifting items up to the top of the lighthouse meant that the site was very busy. Still there was room for everyone to enjoy themselves and a look out to sea revealed four Little Gulls fluttering by and four Arctic Terns even further out. It was easier to see the Red-throated Divers, a small number of which were either on the sea or flying by. It could be that some of these birds had already arrived at their winter destination.

Loads of Grey Seals loafed about on the offshore rocks and although they looked clumsy on land, they were expert swimmers. A nearby field had become temporary home for a long-staying Merlin and so we walked around the clifftop path and into its favoured area. The little falcon refused to make an appearance for us, but the patch of nearby feathers made us think that it was probably having its dinner somewhere nearby. Big flocks of Linnets and Goldfinches were seen in flight and sometimes perched up giving the group nice views out in the open. A Greenfinch with them was a reminder of times gone by, when this little bird was much more common.

It had been a long day with plenty of walking and so everyone was ready for their evening meals back at the hotel.

## Day 4

## Friday 14th October

No-one heard the owls in the night, although Greylag and Pink Footed Geese and Redwings replaced their nocturnal noises.

After the final breakfast as a group, everyone moved their vehicles to another car park to make room for a wedding which was taking place at the hotel the next day. The minibus met them there and then the short journey was made back to the Spurn area where the last day was spent.

The weather was a mixture of sunshine and cloud, but still with the southerly breeze - not ideal at this time of year. There were still birds to be found and we were soon parked in the car park for Kilnsea Wetlands again. To start with we ignored the hide and made our way up the hill to the "Listening Dish Bushes". A Barred Warbler had spent several days here and was proving to be very elusive sometimes popping up for just a few moments a day. Maybe the nice weather had encouraged it to move on as it wasn't seen on this day?

Whilst waiting though, we saw a number of birds on Kilnsea Wetlands not previously seen and these included Snipe, Spotted Redshank, and most surprisingly, Lapwing. The most beautiful of all though, were the Mediterranean Gulls with their brilliant white plumage.

Lunch was eaten at the Discovery Centre and the nearby bushes searched for birds which were moving through in the nice weather. These included Chiffchaff, Whitethroat and a couple more Goldcrests. Every clump of bushes seemed to have a Stonechat in it.

To round off the trip, we went to view the mudflats at Sammy's Point where there were many waders, with Curlew easy to pick out with their long decurved beaks and the Grey Plover with their sparkling grey plumage and black "armpits".

Despite the weather being "Too Nice" at times, there were plenty of birds to see and everyone went away having had a very good few days birding on Yorkshire's East Coast.

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## Species lists

Birds (H = Heard only)

I=Introduced	Common name	Scientific name	October 2022		
			12	13	14
	Brent Goose	<i>Branta bernicla</i>	✓		✓
	Greylag Goose	<i>Anser anser</i>	✓		✓
	Pink-footed Goose	<i>Anser brachyrhynchus</i>			✓
	Mute Swan	<i>Cygnus olor</i>	2		2
	Whooper Swan	<i>Cygnus cygnus</i>		1	
	Common Shelduck	<i>Tadorna tadorna</i>	✓		✓
	Northern Shoveler	<i>Spatula clypeata</i>	✓		✓
	Eurasian Wigeon	<i>Mareca penelope</i>	✓		✓
	Mallard	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>	✓		✓
	Northern Pintail	<i>Anas acuta</i>	✓		✓
	Eurasian Teal	<i>Anas crecca</i>	✓	✓	✓
	Common Pheasant - I	<i>Phasianus colchicus</i>	✓	✓	✓
	Stock Dove	<i>Columba oenas</i>		2	✓
	Common Wood Pigeon	<i>Columba palumbus</i>	✓	✓	✓
	Eurasian Collared Dove	<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>	✓	✓	✓
	Water Rail	<i>Rallus aquaticus</i>	1	H	
	Common Moorhen	<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>	✓	✓	✓
	Little Grebe	<i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>	✓		✓
	Eurasian Oystercatcher	<i>Haematopus ostralegus</i>		13	✓
	Pied Avocet	<i>Recurvirostra avosetta</i>	✓		✓
	Northern Lapwing	<i>Vanellus vanellus</i>			✓
	European Golden Plover	<i>Pluvialis apricaria</i>	✓		
	Grey Plover	<i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>	✓		✓
	Common Ringed Plover	<i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>			✓

I=Introduced	Common name	Scientific name	October 2022		
			12	13	14
	Eurasian Curlew	<i>Numenius arquata</i>	✓		✓
	Bar-tailed Godwit	<i>Limosa lapponica</i>			✓
	Black-tailed Godwit	<i>Limosa limosa</i>	✓		✓
	Red Knot	<i>Calidris canutus</i>	✓		✓
	Ruff	<i>Calidris pugnax</i>	✓		✓
	Sanderling	<i>Calidris alba</i>	2		
	Dunlin	<i>Calidris alpina</i>	✓		✓
	Common Snipe	<i>Gallinago gallinago</i>			1
	Spotted Redshank	<i>Tringa erythropus</i>			1
	Common Redshank	<i>Tringa totanus</i>	✓	✓	✓
	Common Greenshank	<i>Tringa nebularia</i>	1		4
	Black-legged Kittiwake	<i>Rissa tridactyla</i>		✓	
	Black-headed Gull	<i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i>	✓	✓	✓
	Little Gull	<i>Hydrocoloeus minutus</i>	✓	✓	✓
	Mediterranean Gull	<i>Ichthyaetus melanocephalus</i>	✓		✓
	Common Gull	<i>Larus canus</i>	✓	✓	
	Great Black-backed Gull	<i>Larus marinus</i>	✓	✓	✓
	European Herring Gull	<i>Larus argentatus</i>	✓	✓	✓
	Lesser Black-backed Gull	<i>Larus fuscus</i>	1		
	Arctic Tern	<i>Sterna paradisaea</i>		4	
	Razorbill	<i>Alca torda</i>		3	
	Red-throated Diver	<i>Gavia stellata</i>		✓	
	Northern Fulmar	<i>Fulmarus glacialis</i>		✓	
	Northern Gannet	<i>Morus bassanus</i>		✓	
	Great Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>	✓	✓	✓
	European Shag	<i>Gulosus aristotelis</i>		✓	
	Grey Heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>	✓	✓	✓
	Little Egret	<i>Egretta garzetta</i>	✓	✓	✓
	Eurasian Sparrowhawk	<i>Accipiter nisus</i>	1		
	Common Buzzard	<i>Buteo buteo</i>		✓	
	Western Barn Owl	<i>Tyto alba</i>		1	
	Tawny Owl	<i>Strix aluco</i>		H	
	Common Kingfisher	<i>Alcedo atthis</i>		H	
	Common Kestrel	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>	✓	✓	✓
	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>	✓	✓	✓
	Barn Swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>	5		
	Bearded Tit	<i>Panurus biarmicus</i>	1		

I=Introduced	Common name	Scientific name	October 2022		
			12	13	14
	Common Chiffchaff	<i>Phylloscopus collybita</i>	✓	✓	✓
	Common Whitethroat	<i>Curruca communis</i>	✓	✓	✓
	Common Firecrest	<i>Regulus ignicapilla</i>			
	Goldcrest	<i>Regulus regulus</i>	✓	✓	✓
	Eurasian Wren	<i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>	✓	✓	✓
	Common Starling	<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>	✓	✓	✓
	Song Thrush	<i>Turdus philomelos</i>	✓		
	Redwing	<i>Turdus iliacus</i>	✓	✓	✓
	Common Blackbird	<i>Turdus merula</i>	✓	✓	✓
	Ring Ouzel	<i>Turdus torquatus</i>		1	
	European Robin	<i>Erithacus rubecula</i>	✓	✓	✓
	Black Redstart	<i>Phoenicurus ochruros</i>	1		
	European Stonechat	<i>Saxicola rubicola</i>	✓	✓	✓
	Northern Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe oenanthe</i>	2		
	Eurasian Tree Sparrow	<i>Passer montanus</i>		✓	
	House Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>	✓	✓	✓
	Dunnock	<i>Prunella modularis</i>	✓	✓	✓
	Pied Wagtail	<i>Motacilla alba</i>	✓	✓	✓
	Meadow Pipit	<i>Anthus pratensis</i>	✓	✓	✓
	Water Pipit	<i>Anthus spinoletta</i>	1		
	Common Chaffinch	<i>Fringilla coelebs</i>		✓	✓
	European Greenfinch	<i>Chloris chloris</i>		1	
	Common Linnet	<i>Linaria cannabina</i>	✓	✓	✓
	European Goldfinch	<i>Carduelis carduelis</i>	✓	✓	✓
	Common Reed Bunting	<i>Emberiza schoeniclus</i>	✓	✓	✓

## Mammals

Common name	Scientific name	October 2022		
		12	13	14
Grey Seal	<i>Halichoerus grypus</i>		✓	
Harbour Seal	<i>Phoca vitulina</i>		✓	
European Roe Deer	<i>Capreolus capreolus</i>	✓		✓