

East Yorkshire: The Magic of Migration

Naturetrek Tour Report

22nd – 25th September 2025

Tour report by David Spivack



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Tour participants: David Spivack (leader) with eight Naturetrek clients

Day 1

Monday 22nd September

Arriving from far and wide at the lovely Dunedin Country House Hotel in the late afternoon, we met as a group in the bar area for tea and coffee and all introduced ourselves. We then headed to the dining room at 7.00pm for a delicious meal before, during which we went through the itinerary for the following three days.

Day 2

Tuesday 23rd September

Spurn area

After meeting for a filling breakfast at 7.30am and with a sunny sky with just a few fluffy clouds, we departed the hotel at 8.30am for our first full day in the Spurn Point area. However, before we had even left the car park we started the tour list, with a fly over Woodpigeon and a Coal Tit in the hotel's conifers, along with a Wren and Robin added soon after. On the way to Spurn we saw Roe Deer, Grey Heron, Pheasant and Jackdaw, while we were treated to our first views of newly-arrived Pink-footed Geese.

Our first stop was the Yorkshire Wildlife Trust Discovery Centre, where we ordered our lunch for later. As we parked, a pair of Stonechats made an appearance, while Meadow Pipits flew overhead. We then left the YWT centre, crossed the road and headed down the grassy path towards the viewing screen overlooking the Humber Estuary. Along the way, we again saw Stonechat, while Wrens were heard singing along the path. With the sun behind us we arrived at the viewing screen and were not disappointed at the birds we saw. Our first were six young Gannets flying along the estuary, plus a wide range of waders. These included large numbers of Ringed Plovers and Golden Plovers, the latter of which put on spectacular aerial displays. Other waders included Bar-tailed Godwit, Dunlin, Sanderling, Curlew, Knot and a small number of Grey Plovers. Along the shoreline, Little Egrets hunted for food, and Swallows and the occasional House Martin flew past us, heading slowly south on migration.

After a wonderful birding session overlooking the Humber, we then headed for the sea-watching hide, in bright sunshine. Here, we added a few species to the day list, including Red-throated Diver and a flock of around 35 Common Scoters, along with the odd Grey Seal. After a relaxing time sea-watching we then headed to the excellent YWT Spurn visitor centre for a good lunch, via the Canal Scrape hide where, after some searching, we located a single Jack Snipe amongst the newly-cut reeds.

After lunch, we once again crossed the road and headed north along the cliff path, which took us to Beacon Lane. With hedges along each side and in warm sunshine, we saw a number of small birds including Robin, Blue Tit, Long-tailed Tits and an elusive Goldcrest. A welcome break was then taken at the Beacon Lane shelter, where a Stoat put in a brief showing for some of the group, while a single Brent Goose flew north low over the sea. We then headed to Beacon Pond via the First World War sound mirror; we saw a number of Reed Buntings and Linnets.

Heading past the sound mirror, we made our way to the bird feeding station, where we were treated to good views of a mixed flock of Tree Sparrows, Greenfinches, Goldfinches and Reed Buntings, with the odd Starling for good measure. A little further on, we viewed Beacon Pond (the area where Little Terns nest in the summer), where we

saw three more Little Egrets, Grey Herons, Shovelers, Teals, and single Kestrels and Stock Doves on the adjacent fields.

We then turned around and headed back towards the YWT Centre and car park via the Canal Bank, walking along the banks of the Humber Estuary. With a wonderful watery sky and distant views across the Humber, we viewed a range of waders feeding on the mud, and got closer views of Little Egret, Mallard, and large numbers of Shelducks. Our first Wheatear was also seen flitting from post to post in Well Field.

With a great first day's birding under our belt and a wide range of species seen, we headed back to the hotel for a superb evening meal, after which we ran through the day's sightings.

Day 3

Wednesday 24th September

Flamborough Head and Bempton Cliffs

Our second full day took us an hour or so north to the very different terrain of Flamborough Head. and the RSPB reserve at Bempton Cliffs. We arrived in the lighthouse car park in sunshine, although it was breezy. Once assembled, we headed past the lighthouse and along the northern path of the headland to view the sea, and an area known as the "Bay Brambles". From here, we saw our first seabirds; these included Gannets, which are always wonderful to see. In addition, we saw Herring Gulls on the sea, along with a few Cormorants diving for fish, while on the beach a Little Egret hunted in the rock pools. We were then treated to an amazing display by around 25 Common Bottle-nosed Dolphins, which swam past the northern side of the headland, heading north. The occasional dolphin leaped clear of the sea: wonderful. As we walked along the road and past the chalk tower, the occasional Swallow and House Martin flew overhead, while in the hedgerows House Sparrows, Blue Tits and three Goldfinches were seen.

A short walk along the road took us past the historic chalk tower, before we headed down the Old Fall Hedge footpath, eventually leading us to the southern clifftop of Flamborough Head, via Old Fall Wood. This walk along Old Fall Hedge can be a magnet for birds just arriving on migration. On this occasion, however, it turned out to be rather quiet, with only Blue Tits, a single Robin and a few distant Swallows. Over the ploughed field we saw a single Kestrel, along with Skylarks, Woodpigeons and Carrion Crows. Old Fall Wood was also very quiet, with just a single Robin providing company. We left the wood and headed towards the clifftop, via a flock of around forty Herring Gulls feeding in the adjacent stubble field.

Once at the clifftop, we headed back towards the headland and the car park. Our cliff top walk provided views of Little Egret, Oystercatcher, further Gannets and Cormorants, while a Curlew was also heard; at sea we saw the occasional Grey Seal "bottling". As we approached the headland, we saw Fulmars sailing past with their stiff-winged flight, and the first Grey Seal hauled out on the flat rocks below. As we got to the headland at least 250 or more Grey Seals could be seen and heard: a truly wonderful sight. Further out to sea, we saw Red-throated Divers fishing, while nine Common Scoter treated us to a low fly-past, heading south. The walk ended with a Blackcap in the hedgerow near the car park.

We then boarded our minibus for the 15-minute drive to the RSPB reserve at Bempton Cliffs, where we had lunch in the café. After lunch we strolled the reserve paths and down to the viewing platforms to the southern end

of the reserve. Here, we were treated to wonderful views of Tree Sparrows: this is now a scarce bird in many parts of the UK, but in the Bempton area numbers are holding up. Also, we caught up with Pheasant, Blackbird, Great and Blue Tits, Dunnock, Chaffinch, Stonechat, Robin and Woodpigeon, while two lucky members of the group saw Peregrine and Arctic Skua.

We headed down to the clifftop path, where from the various viewing platforms we watched hundreds of Gannets, both in the air and on the cliffs, a few of the latter still with unfledged young. On the sea there was the odd Guillemot, while the occasional Great Black-backed Gull and Fulmar quartered the clifftop. On our walk we saw flocks of Jackdaws, along with Feral Pigeons and Herring Gulls feeding in the ploughed fields.

After another great (and dry) day in the field, we headed back to the hotel for another lovely meal and a review of the day.

Day 4

Thursday 25th September

Spurn area

Our final day of the tour started dry, sunny and with a light breeze as we headed from the hotel back to the Spurn area. After parking in the Crown and Anchor car park, we headed to the Spurn Bird Observatory ringing station, where we met Paul, the observatory warden. Paul gave us a wonderful introduction to the site and to the importance of ringing, before going on his rounds to check the nets: we were not to be disappointed. During the morning, we saw a number of birds being ringed, including Redpoll, Goldcrest, Redwing, Song Thrush and Robin. We also added Raven to the tour list: this is an uncommon species at Spurn.

We then headed back to the YWT centre to park, and headed back for our second look across the Humber from the viewing screen, where we were once again treated to a wide selection of birds including Knot, Golden, Grey and Ringed Plovers, Dunlin, Sanderling, Curlew, Bar-tailed Godwit and Little Egret; Meadow Pipits, Swallows and the occasional House Martin flew past, generally in a southern direction. The route back to the YWT centre for lunch took us via the seawatching hide, where we saw the occasional Grey Seal, along with a few young Gannets and a single Red-throated Diver. Meadow Pipits continued to fly overhead, as did two Grey Wagtails, and Stonechats were seen flitting from post to post.

After a short walk, we arrived at the visitor centre for lunch, after which we once again boarded the minibus for the short drive to Sammy's Point. This area has a few horse paddocks and a number of rough grassland fields that are always worth a look, while the Humber is on the other side of the seawall. Here, we were once again treated to large flocks of newly-arrived Pink-footed Geese, plus two Buzzards and a Kestrel. The rough grassland also yielded a single Whinchat and two more Stonechats, along with a low-flying Sparrowhawk.

We then headed to our last birding site, "The Outstrays" a newly-created coastal habitat designed to replace areas of the estuary being lost to flood management works or port development. From a new viewing screen, we looked out across the large area of wetlands and saw a range of birds, including our first Avocets, great views of a male Marsh Harrier, two Mediterranean Gulls, and brief and distant Great Egret. We also had large numbers of Black-headed Gulls and a few Herring Gulls, while Redshanks, Bar-tailed Godwits, Ringed Plovers and Dunlins fed in the water and muddy margins. The rough grassland between the car park and the viewing screen provided

us with views of a number Linnets and Goldfinches. The tour was drawing to a close; as we left “The Outstrays” we all agreed that we had had a great few days on the East Yorkshire coast. We headed back to the hotel where we said our goodbyes.

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Species lists

Birds

Common name	Scientific name	September 2025		
		23	24	25
Brent Goose	<i>Branta bernicla</i>	✓		
Pink-footed Goose	<i>Anser brachyrhynchus</i>	✓	✓	✓
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>	✓		✓
Eurasian Teal	<i>Anas crecca</i>	✓		✓
Common Scoter	<i>Melanitta nigra</i>	✓		✓
Common Pheasant	<i>Phasianus colchicus</i>	✓	✓	✓
Red-legged Partridge	<i>Alectoris rufa</i>	✓		✓
Feral Pigeon	<i>Columba livia</i>		✓	
Common Wood Pigeon	<i>Columba palumbus</i>	✓	✓	✓
Eurasian Collared Dove	<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>		✓	✓
Common Moorhen	<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>			✓
Little Grebe	<i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>	✓		
Eurasian Oystercatcher	<i>Haematopus ostralegus</i>	✓	✓	✓
Pied Avocet	<i>Recurvirostra avosetta</i>			✓
Grey Plover	<i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>	✓		✓
European Golden Plover	<i>Pluvialis apricaria</i>	✓		✓
Common Ringed Plover	<i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>	✓		✓
Eurasian Curlew	<i>Numenius arquata</i>	✓	✓	✓
Bar-tailed Godwit	<i>Limosa lapponica</i>	✓		✓
Jack Snipe	<i>Lymnocyrtus minimus</i>	✓		
Common Redshank	<i>Tringa totanus</i>	✓		✓
Red Knot	<i>Calidris canutus</i>	✓		✓
Sanderling	<i>Calidris alba</i>	✓		✓
Dunlin	<i>Calidris alpina</i>	✓		✓
Black-headed Gull	<i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i>	✓	✓	✓
Mediterranean Gull	<i>Ichthyaetus melanocephalus</i>			✓
European Herring Gull	<i>Larus argentatus</i>	✓	✓	✓
Great Black-backed Gull	<i>Larus marinus</i>	✓	✓	✓
Arctic Skua	<i>Stercorarius parasiticus</i>		✓	
Guillemot	<i>Uria aalge</i>		✓	
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>		✓	✓

Common name	Scientific name	September 2025		
		23	24	25
Little Egret	<i>Egretta garzetta</i>	✓	✓	✓
Grey Heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>	✓	✓	
Eurasian Sparrowhawk	<i>Accipiter nisus</i>			✓
Western Marsh Harrier	<i>Circus aeruginosus</i>			✓
Common Buzzard	<i>Buteo buteo</i>		✓	✓
Great Spotted Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos major</i>	✓		✓
Common Kestrel	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>	✓	✓	✓
Peregrine Falcon	<i>Falco peregrinus</i>		✓	
Eurasian Magpie	<i>Pica pica</i>	✓	✓	✓
Western Jackdaw	<i>Coloeus monedula</i>	✓	✓	✓
Rook	<i>Corvus frugilegus</i>	✓	✓	✓
Carrion Crow	<i>Corvus corone</i>	✓	✓	✓
Northern Raven	<i>Corvus corax</i>			✓
Coal Tit	<i>Parus ater</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>	✓	✓	✓
Western House Martin	<i>Delichon urbicum</i>	✓	✓	✓
Long-tailed Tit	<i>Aegithalos caudatus</i>	✓		
Eurasian Blackcap	<i>Sylvia atricapilla</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>		✓	✓
Fieldfare	<i>Turdus pilaris</i>		✓	
European Robin	<i>Erithacus rubecula</i>	✓	✓	✓
Whinchat	<i>Saxicola rubetra</i>			✓
European Stonechat	<i>Saxicola rubicola</i>	✓	✓	✓
Northern Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe oenanthe</i>	✓		
Eurasian Tree Sparrow	<i>Passer montanus</i>	✓	✓	
House Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>		✓	✓
Dunnock	<i>Prunella modularis</i>		✓	✓
Western Yellow Wagtail	<i>Motacilla flava</i>	✓		
Grey Wagtail	<i>Motacilla cinerea</i>			✓
Pied Wagtail	<i>Motacilla alba</i>		✓	
Meadow Pipit	<i>Anthus pratensis</i>	✓	✓	✓
Eurasian Chaffinch	<i>Fringilla coelebs</i>		✓	
European Greenfinch	<i>Chloris chloris</i>	✓		

		September 2025		
Common name	Scientific name	23	24	25
Common Linnet	<i>Linaria cannabina</i>	✓	✓	✓
Redpoll	<i>Acanthis flammea</i>			✓
European Goldfinch	<i>Carduelis carduelis</i>	✓	✓	✓
Common Reed Bunting	<i>Emberiza schoeniclus</i>	✓	✓	✓

Mammals

		September 2025		
Common name	Scientific name	23	24	25
European Rabbit	<i>Oryctolagus cuniculus</i>	✓		✓
European Hare	<i>Lepus europaeus</i>	✓	✓	✓
Common Bottlenose Dolphin	<i>Tursiops truncatus</i>		✓	
Western Roe Deer	<i>Capreolus capreolus</i>	✓	✓	✓
Grey Seal	<i>Halichoerus grypus</i>	✓	✓	✓
Stoat	<i>Mustela erminea</i>	✓		