

East Yorkshire: The Magic of Migration

Naturetrek Tour Report

7th – 10th October 2025

Tour report by David Spivack



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

Day 1

Tuesday 7th October

Arrival

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

Day 2

Wednesday 8th October

Spurn area

After meeting for a filling breakfast at 7.30am and with a sunny sky with 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 Starlings, along with a calling Wren. On the way to Spurn we saw a family of Moorhens by the roadside pond, Roe Deer in the fields, Pheasant and Jackdaw, and we were treated to our first views of newly arrived Pink-footed Geese.

After parking in the Crown and Achour car park, we briefly saw a Great Spotted Woodpecker, and then headed to the Spurn Bird Observatory ringing station where we met Paul, one of Spurn Bird Observatory expert ringers. 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, Goldfinch, Song Thrush, Dunnock, Willow Warbler and two Blackcaps. While at the ringing station, we had a better view of the Great Spotted Woodpecker (on a telegraph pole), which is an uncommon species for Spurn. Two moth species had been caught in the moth trap: Square Spot Rustic and Lesser Yellow Underwing.

Having ordered lunch at the Yorkshire Wildlife Trust centre, we crossed the road and headed down the grassy path towards the viewing screen overlooking the Humber Estuary. Here, we saw Stonechats, while Wrens called in the scrub and small flocks of Linnet perched on the phone wires. With the sun behind us and thus in the perfect position, we arrived at the viewing screen and were not disappointed at the birds we saw. Our first birds were a range of waders on the estuary. These included Ringed, Grey and Golden Plovers, Dunlin, Curlew and Knot. Along the shoreline, Little Egrets hunted for food.

After our birding session overlooking the Humber, we headed for the seawatching hide in bright sunshine. Here we saw the odd Grey Seal, along with three young Gannets, but overall it was rather quiet. As we headed along Big Hedge, we watched six Stonechats feeding along the fence line, a single Robin and two Blue Tits.

After a relaxing time seawatching we then headed back to the excellent YWT Spurn visitor centre for good lunch. After lunch, we crossed the road and headed north along the cliff path, which took us to Beacon Lane. On the way we added two Little Grebes to the list on Beacon Pool. With hedges along each side of the lane and in warm sunshine we saw a number of small birds including Robin, Blue Tit, Stock Dove and an elusive calling Goldcrest,

which some of the group saw. A welcome break was taken at the Beacon Lane shelter, where we saw another group of Pink-footed Geese and Roe Deer in the fields, along with Yellowhammer and Reed Bunting.

We then headed to Beacon Pond via the First World War sound mirror, where we again saw a mixed flock of Reed Bunting, Linnet and Yellowhammer. At the bird feeding station we were treated to good views of a small mixed flock of Tree Sparrows, Greenfinches, Goldfinches and Reed Buntings. A little further on we viewed Beacon Ponds (the area Little Terns nest in season), where we saw three more Little Egrets, Grey Heron, Shoveler, Teal, flocks of Wigeon, a single Kestrel and up to fourteen Little Grebes.

We turned around and headed back towards the YWT Centre, via the road through Kilnsea Village, and then the Canal Bank Walk 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, numbers of Shelduck, two Grey Plovers, Ringed Plover, a single Whimbrel and three newly-arrived Redwings in the nearby hedge.

With a great first day's birding completed 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

Thursday 9th October

Flamborough Head and Bempton Cliffs

Our second full day took us an hour or so north, towards the very different terrain of Flamborough Head and the RSPB reserve at Bempton Cliffs. We arrived in lighthouse car park in sunshine and a breeze. 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, which included Gannets: they are always wonderful to see. In addition, we saw Herring Gulls on the sea trailing behind a local fishing boat, along with a few Cormorants diving for fish, while on the beach a Little Egret hunted in the rock pools. As we walked along the road and past the chalk tower, House Sparrows, Blue Tits and various flocks of Starlings were in the hedgerows.

A short walk along the road took us past the historic chalk tower, and we crossed the road and headed down the Old Fall Hedge footpath, which that would eventually lead us to the southern clifftop of Flamborough Head, via New Fall Wood. This walk can be a magnet for birds just arriving on migration. On this occasion, however, it turned out to be rather quiet, with only Blue Tit, a single Robin and a small flock of Long-tailed Tits. Over the ploughed field we saw a single Sparrowhawk, along with a small number of Skylarks, Wood Pigeons and Carrion Crows. New Fall Wood was also very quiet, with just a few calling birds, including Robin, Goldcrest a couple of Chaffinches. We left the wood and headed towards the clifftop, via a flock of around forty Herring Gulls feeding in the adjacent stubble.

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, and the occasional Curlew was seen on the shoreline. Along the coast path we saw small number of Linnets, a flock of around ten Goldfinches, and a single Roe Deer feeding along the edge of the gorse. Out at sea, we saw the occasional Grey Seal "bottling", but as we approached the headland, we could see large numbers of them hauled out on the flat rocks below: always a wonderful thing to

see. We were then treated to an amazing display by around twenty-five Common Bottlenose Dolphins which swam slowly south past the headland, the occasional one leaping clear of the sea: amazing.

We headed back to the lighthouse car park and boarded our minibus for the fifteen-minute drive to the RSPB reserve at Bempton Cliffs, where we had lunch in the café. Between Bempton Village and the visitor centre, we were treated to close views of a slow-flying female Hen Harrier hunting close to the mini bus, which was an unexpected bonus.

After lunch, we the strolled the reserve's paths and went down to the viewing platforms at the southern end of the reserve. Here, we were treated to wonderful views of Tree Sparrows, a scarce bird now in many parts of the UK, but whose numbers are holding up in the Bempton area. We also caught up with Pheasant, Blackbird, Moorhen at the feeding station area, plus Great and Blue Tits, Dunnock, Chaffinch, Robin and Wood Pigeon.

From the various viewing platforms on the clifftop path we watched a number of Gannets, both in the air and on the cliffs; at one stop there were six young Gannets still on the cliffs, along with several adults. The occasional Great Black-backed Gull quartered the clifftop, as did the ever-present Herring Gulls. We saw flocks of Jackdaws, along with feeding Feral Pigeons and Herring Gulls, 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

Friday 10th October

Spurn area

After another filling breakfast, we headed back to the YWT Spurn centre to park, and then headed for our second look across the Humber from the viewing screen. We were once again treated to a selection of birds including Knot, Golden Plover overhead, Ringed Plover, Dunlin, Curlew, Mallard, Shelduck, six Brent Geese and Little Egrets feeding along the shoreline. A large flock of Oystercatchers was also roosting on the shoreline of the "washover". Two Ravens headed north, and Meadow Pipits, four Swallows and occasional Linnets and Siskins flew overhead. The route back along the road to the YWT centre for lunch took us via the small roadside pond, where we saw a male Blackcap.

We made the short drive to our last birding site, "The Outstrays", a newly-created coastal habitat replacing other areas of the estuary that are being lost as a result of flood management or port development. From a new viewing screen, we looked out across the large area of wetlands, and saw a range of birds including distant views of a two Marsh Harriers and two Peregrines perched on branches by the old sea wall. This area also gave us views of around forty Little Egrets and six Buzzards, although these were also at some distance.

The occasional Dunlin also fed in the water and muddy margins, while two Kestrels were also seen perched on fenceposts. The area close to the car park and the viewing screen, with its rough grassland, also provided us with a number of Linnets and Goldfinches. The tour was drawing to a close, and as we left "The Outstrays" and headed for lunch at the YWT visitor centre, we all agreed that it had been a great few days on the East Yorkshire coast.

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Species lists

Birds

Common name	Scientific name	October 2025		
		8	9	10
Brent Goose	<i>Branta bernicla</i>			✓
Pink-footed Goose	<i>Anser brachyrhynchus</i>	✓	✓	✓
Mute Swan	<i>Cygnus olor</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 Pheasant	<i>Phasianus colchicus</i>	✓	✓	✓
Feral Pigeon	<i>Columba livia</i>		✓	
Stock Dove	<i>Columba oenas</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>		✓	✓
Grey Plover	<i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>	✓		✓
European Golden Plover	<i>Pluvialis apricaria</i>	✓		✓
Common Ringed Plover	<i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>	✓		✓
Eurasian Whimbrel	<i>Numenius phaeopus</i>	✓		
Eurasian Curlew	<i>Numenius arquata</i>	✓	✓	✓
Common Redshank	<i>Tringa totanus</i>	✓		✓
Red Knot	<i>Calidris canutus</i>	✓		✓
Dunlin	<i>Calidris alpina</i>	✓		✓
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>	✓	✓	✓
Northern Gannet	<i>Morus bassanus</i>	✓	✓	✓
Great Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>	✓	✓	✓
Little Egret	<i>Egretta garzetta</i>	✓	✓	✓
Grey Heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>	✓	✓	✓
Eurasian Sparrowhawk	<i>Accipiter nisus</i>		✓	
Hen Harrier	<i>Circus cyaneus</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>			✓
Eurasian Blue Tit	<i>Cyanistes caeruleus</i>	✓	✓	✓
Great Tit	<i>Parus major</i>	✓		✓

Common name	Scientific name	October 2025		
		8	9	10
Eurasian Skylark	<i>Alauda arvensis</i>		✓	✓
Barn Swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>			✓
Cetti's Warbler	<i>Cettia cetti</i>	✓		
Long-tailed Tit	<i>Aegithalos caudatus</i>		✓	
Willow Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus trochilus</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>		✓	
European Robin	<i>Erithacus rubecula</i>	✓	✓	✓
European Stonechat	<i>Saxicola rubicola</i>	✓		✓
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>	✓	✓	✓
Eurasian Chaffinch	<i>Fringilla coelebs</i>		✓	
European Greenfinch	<i>Chloris chloris</i>	✓		
Common Linnet	<i>Linaria cannabina</i>	✓	✓	✓
Redpoll	<i>Acanthis flammea</i>	✓		✓
European Goldfinch	<i>Carduelis carduelis</i>	✓	✓	✓
Eurasian Siskin	<i>Spinus spinus</i>			✓
Yellowhammer	<i>Emberiza citrinella</i>	✓		
Common Reed Bunting	<i>Emberiza schoeniclus</i>	✓		✓

Mammals

Common name	Scientific name	October 2025		
		8	9	10
Mammals				
Common Bottlenose Dolphin	<i>Tursiops truncatus</i>		✓	
Western Roe Deer	<i>Capreolus capreolus</i>	✓	✓	✓
Grey Seal	<i>Halichoerus grypus</i>	✓	✓	✓

Butterflies & moths

Common name	Scientific name	October 2025		
		8	9	10
Red Admiral	<i>Vanessa atalanta</i>	✓	✓	✓
Lesser Yellow Underwing	<i>Noctua comes</i>	✓		
Square Spot Rustic	<i>Xestia xanthographa</i>	✓		