

Beachy Head (Day Trip)

Naturetrek Tour Report

27th August 2021



Honey-buzzard

Report and images by Matt Eade



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Tour Participants: Matt Eade (Naturetrek tour leader) and three clients.

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Matt met three clients at Birling Gap on a sunny and still autumnal morning. Without leaving the car park, we had already seen a couple of Wheatears and many hirundines flying over heading purposefully eastwards. Walking up the lane to a small pine plantation, small flocks of Yellow Wagtails went over and the odd Willow Warbler was also seen. Autumn's Lady's Tresses were also scattered along this path.

At the pines, we had prolonged views of a Lesser Whitethroat, Common Whitethroats and more Willow Warblers.

As we walked east towards the hotel, a glance skywards led to the discovery of a superb adult female Honey-buzzard! This migratory raptor was amazing to see and we watched her fly low and east until out of sight – by far the highlight of the morning.

The fresh northerly wind kept other migrants low, so we headed to the Old Trapping Area – an isolated area of bushes further up the headland – and enjoyed watching a Pied Flycatcher. This autumn has been exceptional again for this species and are always a pleasure to watch.

As we returned back towards the start point taking a slightly different path, Kestrels and Sparrowhawks were seen, as well as many Stonechats, and thankfully, two Whinchats.

At the wood, Spotted Flycatchers showed very well and the butterflies were particularly abundant, with many Adonis, Chalk Hill and Common Blues found, whilst several Migrant Hawks were also hawking the treeline.

It had been a superb six hours on this famous migration headland, with countless highlights seen along the way.

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