

Northumberland & the Farne Islands

Naturetrek Tour Report

2nd – 7th June 2026



Arctic Tern



Bottlenose Dolphin



Rosy Starling



Common Sandpiper

Tour report by Mark Whittingham



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Tour participants: Mark Whittingham and Alan Tilmouth (leaders) with thirteen Naturetrek clients

Day 1

Tuesday 2nd June

Half the group were picked up by Alan at the train station, and the other half came in their own transport to Druridge Pools and were met by Mark. These sedgy and reedy pools are overlooked by three hides, and both groups enjoyed good views of wildfowl and waders and their chicks. Of particular note were a breeding-plumaged Curlew Sandpiper, and Black-tailed Godwits. A male Mandarin was with the more usual Shovelers, Gadwalls, Teals, Pochards, Tufted Ducks and others. On the way back to the hotel, we braved an oncoming thunderstorm and popped in to Low Newton-by-the-Sea, where we had good scope views of an adult Rosy Starling feeding on the sea wrack with around a hundred Common Starlings. We saw about a dozen Avocets and five Ringed Plovers at the scrape. We just made it back to the cars/vans as the deluge began.

Back at the hotel, we dried off and then met for a chat, before doing the log while seated for a pleasant meal. Plans for the next day were outlined, and the highlights of the day debated.

Day 2

Wednesday 3rd June

With rain forecast for most of the day, we set off with some trepidation to Holy Island. Luckily the weather held off, and we only had a couple of showers to contend with. We started on the causeway, and the group all got on to an Osprey flying around, and occasionally hovering over the water. A Peregrine was visible for long enough for the whole group to see it in the telescope and admire this powerful raptor. On the island itself, the first stop was at The Snook, where we visited 'Vera's' House, and saw some typical dune birds and a few flowers, including both Northern Marsh Orchid and Pyramidal Orchid. We also saw a Cucumber Green Spider, likely *Araniella cucurbitina*. Good views of two Roe Deer out on the sands, and a first-year Black Guillemot off the Heugh in the village were other highlights. Some of the group were keen to explore St Mary's Church and the Priory, and enjoyed visiting and learning about these historic sites. We sought out local cafés for lunch, before making the most of good photo opportunities of Lindisfarne Castle. We returned to the hotel via Budle Bay, before more persistent rain set in, which signalled our return to the hotel.

We met at 6.00pm for the log and a chat in the private guest lounge, before moving to the restaurant for our evening meal at 6.30pm. The planned excursion for Nightjars was put off due to the wind and rain, and plans were hatched for the following day. Thursday now became Cheviot day with everyone crossed their fingers for decent weather.

Day 3

Thursday 4th June

An optional early morning walk to the coast from the hotel was enjoyed by most of the group. A highlight was a good view of Grasshopper Warbler perched up for everyone to see, and also views of Hare and a range of coastal species including Gannet and Guillemot, with a smattering of passerines including Sedge Warbler and Whitethroat.

After a chatty breakfast, we headed to Harthope Valley near Wooler for some upland wildlife. Our first stop was by the bridge at the Carey Burn, where we saw a fine Dipper perched on a rock, before it disappeared under the bridge to its nest. A Red Kite showed nicely above the ridge by the Burn, and was seen well before the rain began!

We drove further up the valley, and stopped at the parking area close to Langleeford Farm. A Spotted Flycatcher and a Stonechat family showed well, and although we could hear a Cuckoo, we could not see it despite our best efforts. We turned up the hill to follow the Hawsen Burn, and via a few steeper sections of the wide footpath we made our way steadily higher. Lots of good views of Red Grouse families were had, plus a pair of Wheatears and several Buzzards. The rain came in squally showers, and we picked up a Whinchat in the bracken: it probably had a nest nearby. Despite a thorough search of an area known to have Ring Ouzels breeding this year, we failed to spot one.

Lunch at the Ingram Valley café was most welcome, as was the respite from the showers. A pair of Spotted Flycatchers gave superb views in the churchyard, perching on the gravestones and allowing close views from the wall overlooking the churchyard. Our picnic lunch was enlivened by Chaffinches, and Blue and Great Tits coming to our tables to scavenge what they could of our lunch. A party of Long-tailed Tits was heard nearby, and Swifts zoomed overhead while we enjoyed our sandwiches, pasties, hot drinks and cakes from the café. An explore further up the Ingram yielded excellent prolonged views of a pair of Common Sandpipers, among other more standard fare.

We headed back to the hotel via Hedgeley Pits, where we saw Little Ringed Plovers, a splendid summer-plumaged Dunlin, and an assortment of wildfowl.

After arriving back at the hotel for evening meal, we made a quick turnaround to do the log before dinner was served. Despite the showers, everyone agreed the day had been both productive and very enjoyable.

Day 4

Friday 5th June

A leisurely breakfast was followed by a short drive down the coast to Seahouses to catch the 10.15am sailing around the Farne Islands. Despite some choppy conditions, the Serenity catamaran coped well, and provided firm support for birding across the sea to the Farne Islands.

We enjoyed amazingly close views of breeding Razorbills, Guillemots, Puffins and Shags: the boat was able to access the inlets around the islands for eye-level views of the nesting birds, which carried on their daily activities oblivious to our presence. A few bridled Guillemots were picked out from the far more numerous 'standard' Guillemots. This morph shows a white eye-ring and a curved white stripe extending back from the eye. The further north you travel towards the Arctic, the more this form is encountered.

We also saw both Comb and Moon Jellyfishes in good numbers, with one of the latter carefully extracted from the water by one of the crew to show to the group. The outer islands afforded excellent close views of Grey Seals, including a larger male among the smaller females. The return to Seahouses harbour was interrupted by a pod of Bottlenose Dolphins swimming close to the boat: the boat slowed to a halt and drifted alongside the animals. At one point, members of the pod were swimming and surfacing within a couple of metres of the boat. Cameras were clicking all over the boat: some could not focus close enough, such was the proximity of these marine beasts.

Lunch was successfully sourced, and the group sat together on the seats overlooking the harbour to enjoy their food. The accompanying Starlings were eager for us to share our lunch as they perched nearby.

The afternoon boat trip retracted our steps to some parts of the islands, but also allowed for a landing on Inner Farne. Arctic Terns were defending their nests by pecking at people's heads along some parts of the path, but this was just a short stretch, and most of the island was not accompanied by the coarse 'kirrick' of terns near heads. A lone Gannet carrying some small bunches of nesting material looked a little confused surrounded by auks and Kittiwakes, but perhaps it was the pioneer of a new colony on the Farnes.

After a day at sea, we headed back to the hotel to do the bird log, before tucking into a well-earned supper and exchanging tales from a fun day. The weather had held out (we had had no rain) and the sun had even showed for more than the few minutes this time.

Day 5

Saturday 6th June

A sharp get-away to catch the 8.00am sailing around Coquet Island was helped by the hotel sorting out an early breakfast for the group. We set off to the island on a calm sea and in drizzle, and were rewarded by exceptionally close views of multiple Roseate Terns on the jetty and outer rocks of Coquet. The pink flush of the breast, combined with the pure white underparts, pearly grey upperparts, long black bill and red legs combined to present a lovely image. We were able to compare the Roseate Terns with nearby Common, Arctic and Sandwich Terns, to grasp the differences between the species in real time, with excellent views. We continued around the island: close views of Grey Seals and a couple of fly-by Manx Shearwaters were the highlights.

While consuming a tea/coffee and second breakfast back at Amble harbour, we were able to watch a daytime flying Barn Owl quartering the dunes on the other side of the Coquet Estuary, and a surprise Mediterranean Gull flew by. We moved further up the estuary on the falling tide, and were able to pick out five Knots and two Sanderlings among a flock of around a hundred Ringed Plovers.

We moved on to East Chevington next, where we had great views of two pairs of Marsh Harriers, and singing Cetti's and Reed Warblers. We headed north to Hauxley for lunch, and some more new birds for the trip included Egyptian Goose. Then we drove to Long Nanny for our last stop of the day. It was very special to have excellent views of the long-staying American Black Tern on its nest, surrounded by Arctic Terns. We followed up with prolonged scope views of Little Tern, including courtship behaviour, to mean we finished the day with six different tern species under our belts.

Day 6

Sunday 7th June

After breakfast, we paid a visit to Monk's House Pool for a look at the waterbirds: the usual suspects were on view, and Sand Martins skimmed over the water. We then took a short walk around the Howick garden area, the highlights of which were a Nuthatch and two Hummingbird Hawk-moths. The train-bound guests then departed in one van to the station, via a stop at the wetlands along the coast, and added Whooper Swan and Tree Sparrow to the trip list. The drivers followed the other van to a café for lunch, and the last bird added to the list was a Jay, spotted from the window of the café by two of the guests. The consensus was that everyone had enjoyed the trip very much, and we had a lot of outstanding memories to take home.

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Species lists

Birds (H=heard only)

I = Introduced		June 2026					
Common name	Scientific name	2	3	4	5	6	7
Canada Goose - I	<i>Branta canadensis</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Greylag Goose	<i>Anser anser</i>	✓		✓		✓	✓
Mute Swan	<i>Cygnus olor</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Whooper Swan	<i>Cygnus cygnus</i>						✓
Egyptian Goose - I	<i>Alopochen aegyptiaca</i>					✓	
Common Shelduck	<i>Tadorna tadorna</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Mandarin Duck	<i>Aix galericulata</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 Pochard	<i>Aythya ferina</i>	✓					
Tufted Duck	<i>Aythya fuligula</i>	✓		✓		✓	✓
Common Eider	<i>Somateria mollissima</i>	✓	✓		✓	✓	
Goosander	<i>Mergus merganser</i>		✓	✓		✓	
Red Grouse	<i>Lagopus scotica</i>			✓			
Common Pheasant - I	<i>Phasianus colchicus</i>	✓		✓		✓	
Red-legged Partridge - I	<i>Alectoris rufa</i>			✓			
Common Swift	<i>Apus apus</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	
Common Cuckoo	<i>Cuculus canorus</i>			H		✓	
Feral Rock Dove	<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>	✓	✓			✓	✓
Eurasian Coot	<i>Fulica atra</i>	✓		✓		✓	✓
Little Grebe	<i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>			✓			
Great Crested Grebe	<i>Podiceps cristatus</i>					✓	
Eurasian Oystercatcher	<i>Haematopus ostralegus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Pied Avocet	<i>Recurvirostra avosetta</i>	✓				✓	
Common Ringed Plover	<i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>	✓	✓		✓	✓	
Little Ringed Plover	<i>Charadrius dubius</i>			✓			
Northern Lapwing	<i>Vanellus vanellus</i>	✓		✓		✓	✓
Eurasian Curlew	<i>Numenius arquata</i>	✓	✓	✓		✓	
Black-tailed Godwit	<i>Limosa limosa</i>	✓					
Common Sandpiper	<i>Actitis hypoleucos</i>			✓			
Common Redshank	<i>Tringa totanus</i>	✓		✓			
Red Knot	<i>Calidris canutus</i>					✓	
Curlew Sandpiper	<i>Calidris ferruginea</i>	✓					
Sanderling	<i>Calidris alba</i>					✓	
Dunlin	<i>Calidris alpina</i>			✓		✓	
Little Tern	<i>Sternula albifrons</i>		✓			✓	
American Black Tern	<i>Chlidonias surinamensis</i>					✓	
Arctic Tern	<i>Sterna paradisaea</i>		✓		✓	✓	
Common Tern	<i>Sterna hirundo</i>					✓	
Roseate Tern	<i>Sterna dougallii</i>					✓	
Sandwich Tern	<i>Thalasseus sandvicensis</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	
Black-legged Kittiwake	<i>Rissa tridactyla</i>				✓	✓	
Black-headed Gull	<i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

I = Introduced		June 2026					
Common name	Scientific name	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mediterranean Gull	<i>Ichthyaeetus melanocephalus</i>					✓	
Common Gull	<i>Larus canus</i>	✓					
European Herring Gull	<i>Larus argentatus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Great Black-backed Gull	<i>Larus marinus</i>	✓	✓			✓	
Lesser Black-backed Gull	<i>Larus fuscus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Atlantic Puffin	<i>Fratercula arctica</i>				✓	✓	
Black Guillemot	<i>Cepphus grylle</i>		✓				
Razorbill	<i>Alca torda</i>				✓	✓	
Common Guillemot	<i>Uria aalge</i>			✓	✓	✓	
Northern Fulmar	<i>Fulmarus glacialis</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	
Manx Shearwater	<i>Puffinus puffinus</i>				✓	✓	
Northern Gannet	<i>Morus bassanus</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	
Great Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
European Shag	<i>Gulosus aristotelis</i>				✓	✓	
Little Egret	<i>Egretta garzetta</i>	✓	✓			✓	
Grey Heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
Osprey	<i>Pandion haliaetus</i>		✓				
Eurasian Sparrowhawk	<i>Accipiter nisus</i>					✓	
Western Marsh Harrier	<i>Circus aeruginosus</i>					✓	
Common Buzzard	<i>Buteo buteo</i>			✓		✓	
Western Barn Owl	<i>Tyto alba</i>					✓	
Common Kestrel	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
Peregrine Falcon	<i>Falco peregrinus</i>		✓				
Eurasian Jay	<i>Garrulus glandarius</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>		✓	✓		✓	✓
Sand Martin	<i>Riparia riparia</i>		✓	✓		✓	✓
Barn Swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Western House Martin	<i>Delichon urbicum</i>	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
Cetti's Warbler	<i>Cettia cetti</i>					H	
Long-tailed Tit	<i>Aegithalos caudatus</i>			H			
Willow Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus trochilus</i>	H	✓	✓		✓	✓
Common Chiffchaff	<i>Phylloscopus collybita</i>			✓		✓	✓
Sedge Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus schoenobaenus</i>	✓		✓		✓	
Common Reed Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus scirpaceus</i>					✓	
Common Grasshopper Warbler	<i>Locustella naevia</i>			✓			
Eurasian Blackcap	<i>Sylvia atricapilla</i>		H			✓	✓
Common Whitethroat	<i>Curruca communis</i>	✓	H	✓			
Eurasian Wren	<i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>		✓	✓			✓
Eurasian Nuthatch	<i>Sitta europaea</i>						✓
Rosy Starling	<i>Pastor roseus</i>	✓					
Common Starling	<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Song Thrush	<i>Turdus philomelos</i>			✓		H	✓
Mistle Thrush	<i>Turdus viscivorus</i>			✓			
Common Blackbird	<i>Turdus merula</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Spotted Flycatcher	<i>Muscicapa striata</i>			✓			
European Robin	<i>Erithacus rubecula</i>	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
Common Redstart	<i>Phoenicurus phoenicurus</i>			✓			
Whinchat	<i>Saxicola rubetra</i>			✓			

I = Introduced		June 2026					
Common name	Scientific name	2	3	4	5	6	7
European Stonechat	<i>Saxicola rubicola</i>	✓		✓		✓	
Northern Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe oenanthe</i>			✓			
White-throated Dipper	<i>Cinclus cinclus</i>			✓			
Eurasian Tree Sparrow	<i>Passer montanus</i>						✓
House Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Dunnock	<i>Prunella modularis</i>		✓	✓		H	✓
Pied Wagtail	<i>Motacilla alba yarrellii</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Meadow Pipit	<i>Anthus pratensis</i>		✓	✓		✓	✓
European Rock Pipit	<i>Anthus petrosus</i>		✓		✓	✓	
Eurasian Chaffinch	<i>Fringilla coelebs</i>	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
Eurasian Bullfinch	<i>Pyrrhula pyrrhula</i>					✓	
European Greenfinch	<i>Chloris chloris</i>						H
Common Linnet	<i>Linaria cannabina</i>		✓	✓		✓	✓
European Goldfinch	<i>Carduelis carduelis</i>	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
Yellowhammer	<i>Emberiza citrinella</i>					✓	
Common Reed Bunting	<i>Emberiza schoeniclus</i>	H	✓	✓		✓	

Mammals

I = Introduced		June 2026					
Common name	Scientific name	2	3	4	5	6	7
European Rabbit	<i>Oryctolagus cuniculus</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	
European Hare	<i>Lepus europaeus</i>			✓			
Eastern Grey Squirrel - I	<i>Sciurus carolinensis</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>					✓	

Butterflies

		June 2026					
Common name	Scientific name	2	3	4	5	6	7
Small White	<i>Pieris rapae</i>			✓			
Green-veined White	<i>Pieris napi</i>			✓			
Common Orange-tip	<i>Anthocharis cardamines</i>	✓					
Painted Lady	<i>Vanessa cardui</i>			✓		✓	
Red Admiral	<i>Vanessa atalanta</i>			✓	✓		
Speckled Wood	<i>Pararge aegeria</i>					✓	

Moths

L=larva		June 2026					
Common name	Scientific name	2	3	4	5	6	7
Six-spot Burnet	<i>Zygaena filipendulae</i>					L	
Hummingbird Hawk-moth	<i>Macroglossum stellatarum</i>						✓
Brimstone Moth	<i>Opisthoptis luteolata</i>					✓	

Beetles

Common name	Scientific name
Black Clock Beetle	<i>Pterostichus madidus</i>
Green Tiger Beetle	<i>Cicindela campestris</i>
Woodland Dor Beetle	<i>Anoplotrupes stercorosus</i>

Jellies

Common name	Scientific name
Moon Jellyfish	<i>Aurelia aurita</i>
a comb jellyfish	<i>Beroe</i> sp.

Orchids

Common name	Scientific name
Pyramidal Orchid	<i>Anacamptis pyramidalis</i>
Northern Marsh Orchid	<i>Dactylorhiza purpurella</i>
Bee Orchid	<i>Ophrys apifera</i>