

Winter in the New Forest

Naturetrek Tour Report

28 February – 1 March 2020



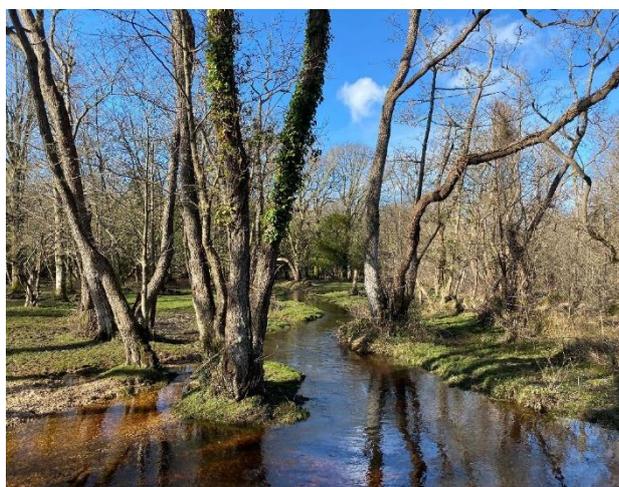
Little Grebe



Scarlet Elf Cap



Wild Daffodils



Ancient Woodland

Report and photos compiled by Jon Stokes



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Tour Participants : Jon Stokes (Leader) with eight Naturetrek clients

Day 1

Friday 28 February

The trip started with the group gathering in the hotel, settling down immediately for an excellent dinner and a good 'getting to know you' conversation. After dinner, we had a discussion about the history and ecology of the New Forest, and the group's aspirations for the weekend. Top of this year's "shopping list" were Hawfinch and Goshawk. Then we retired to our beds and began to look forward to our birding tomorrow, but wondering just how stormy the weather would be as there is a named storm coming in tomorrow!

Day 2

Saturday 29 February

Despite a poor overnight forecast, the day actually dawned bright and clear, but a bit chilly and after breakfast we set off for our first stop of the day - Denny Wood. Here on fenceposts Nuthatches, Marsh Tits, Great Spotted Woodpeckers and other common forest birds gathered to feed. Around us Stock Doves called amongst the trees and a few Jackdaws flew around.

Then we walked through holly pollards where, stopping at a spot overlooking a vista of trees and heathland, we found at least four Goshawks in the air displaying, which were joined in the air by a few Buzzards, a Raven, Stock Doves and a group of four Hawfinch.

Then, travelling across the Forest, we stopped in the woods at Mark's Ash, where amongst the trees we found a flock of Chaffinch, but the Tawny Owl wasn't in its roosting tree. As we headed towards lunch, we spotted a fine specimen of a rare fungus – the Beeswax Bracket (*Ganoderma pfeifferi*) in an ancient and ornamental beech tree.

After a good pub lunch, we went to the coast where the wind had picked up and had become a very strong and cold north westerly. Here on the marshes there were thousands of birds, with Brent Geese, Shelduck and Wigeon being the most common. Hiding from the wind, there were Golden Plover and five Ruff on the marshes, whilst on the lagoons there were Great Crested and Little Grebes and as we departed, we spotted a Water Pipit feeding amongst the Wigeon.

From here we went to look for a Hoopoe that had been present in the Forest for a month, but as the late afternoon drew in, we couldn't find it in the increasing darkness. As we set off back to the hotel for dinner, this was when the day's plans went wrong as we developed a puncture, which meant the van was undriveable.

Pulling onto a Forest car park, we called for help from the AA, but it took an hour or more for help to arrive. Having played I Spy and done tree quizzes, the cold began to seep into the group, so a taxi was summoned to take folk back to the hotel and dinner. The leader and two of the group stayed for another hour with the van, until help finally arrived and the vehicle was loaded onto a transporter and driven away, with the last two clients joining the others back at the hotel for dinner. Not the way the afternoon was supposed to end, but nevertheless an entertaining if chilly end to the day.

Day 3

Sunday 1 March

To everyone's surprise, the storm didn't impact us overnight as had been promised, and the morning dawned bright and clear. As we left the hotel, we spotted a pair of Roe Deer, before heading for an area of Alder Carr woodland where we hoped to find Lesser Spotted Woodpeckers. As we walked down to the trees, a Woodcock flew off and overhead a pair of Grey Wagtails flew away. By the riverside a

Kingfisher called, then we waited to see if a Lesser Spot would show. Unfortunately they didn't, but over the next 15 minutes we could hear the drumming of two or more individuals in neighbouring trees, but we simply couldn't see one.

Leaving the woods, on an area of open grassland we had a mixed flock of Redwing and Mistle Thrush, plus Song Thrush and Blackbird for good measure - providing great views of these appropriately wintery visitors.

Our next stop was a supermarket to gather some sandwiches for lunch, and then we parked up adjacent to an area of ancient woodland. Walking through the trees, Siskin called overhead and a Buzzard flew through the trees, landed and showed itself off to all. Clearing the edge of the woodland we looked over an area of heathland, where a Great Grey Shrike had been reported. A wait revealed no sign, and we were just about to leave when it flew up to the top of an adjacent tree. Over the next 30 minutes, it showed well as it flew around hunting for food, before eventually disappearing again behind a woodland fringe.

Lunch alongside the Ornamental drive yielded a couple of Red Admirals in the strengthening spring sunshine, followed by an ice cream from the van – showing spring really is on the way.

Our next stop was Blashford Lakes, where on the way to our first hide, we found Scarlet Elf Cups – stunning red late winter fungi, growing close to Wild Daffodils which were already in bloom. From our first hide we encountered a Caspian Gull, a striking Kingfisher, a Little Grebe so close that it was almost in the hide with us, plus lots of the more common ducks and geese from a winter gravel pit.

From the Woodland hide, Marsh Tits and Coal Tits were abundant, along with a wide assortment of common woodland birds and some more superb Great Spotted Woodpeckers. Then we continued on, out to the heath for Dartford Warblers, but tragically the wind kept them out of sight so eventually we gave up and headed home.

This ended the weekend and despite the winds, we had some great birds and good company and food. What more can you ask from a winter weekend?

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Species Lists

Birds (✓ = recorded but not counted; H = heard only)

		Scientific name	February		March
			28	29	1
1	Little Egret	<i>Egretta garzetta</i>		✓	
2	Grey Heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>		✓	
3	Mute Swan	<i>Cygnus olor</i>		✓	✓
4	Canada Goose	<i>Branta canadensis</i>			✓
5	Brent Goose	<i>Branta bernicla</i>		✓	✓
6	Common Shelduck	<i>Tadorna tadorna</i>		✓	✓
7	Northern Shoveler	<i>Spatula clypeata</i>		✓	
8	Gadwall	<i>Mareca strepera</i>		✓	✓
9	Eurasian Wigeon	<i>Mareca penelope</i>		✓	✓
10	Mallard	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>		✓	✓
11	Northern Pintail	<i>Anas acuta</i>		✓	
12	Common Pochard	<i>Aythya ferina</i>			✓
13	Little Grebe	<i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>		✓	✓
14	Great Crested Grebe	<i>Podiceps cristatus</i>		✓	✓
15	Great Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>		✓	✓
16	Northern Goshawk	<i>Accipiter gentilis</i>		✓	
17	Common Buzzard	<i>Buteo buteo</i>		✓	✓
18	Eurasian Coot	<i>Fulica atra</i>		✓	✓
19	Common Moorhen	<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>		✓	✓
20	Northern Lapwing	<i>Vanellus vanellus</i>		✓	
21	Eurasian Curlew	<i>Numenius arquata</i>		✓	
22	Eurasian Oystercatcher	<i>Haematopus ostralegus</i>		✓	
23	Common Redshank	<i>Tringa totanus</i>		✓	
24	Dunlin	<i>Calidris alpina</i>		✓	
25	Red Knot	<i>Calidris canutus</i>		✓	
26	Ruff	<i>Calidris pugnax</i>			✓
27	Golden Plover	<i>Pluvialis apricaria</i>		✓	
27	Ruff	<i>Calidris pugnax</i>			✓
28	Black-headed Gull	<i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i>		✓	✓
29	Herring Gull	<i>Larus argentatus</i>		✓	✓
30	Common Wood Pigeon	<i>Columba palumbus</i>		✓	✓
31	Feral Pigeon	<i>Columba livia feral</i>		✓	✓
32	Stock Dove	<i>Columba oenas</i>		✓	✓
33	Kingfisher	<i>Alcedo atthis</i>			✓
34	Green Woodpecker	<i>Picus viridis</i>		H	
35	Lesser Spotted Woodpecker	<i>Dryobates minor</i>			H
36	Great Spotted Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos major</i>		✓	✓
37	Eurasian Skylark	<i>Alauda arvensis</i>		✓	✓
38	Water Pipit	<i>Anthus spinoletta</i>			✓
39	Grey Wagtail	<i>Motacilla cinerea</i>		✓	

40	Eurasian Wren	<i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>			✓
41	Dunnock	<i>Prunella modularis</i>			✓
42	European Robin	<i>Erithacus rubecula</i>		✓	
43	Common Blackbird	<i>Turdus merula</i>		✓	✓
44	Song Thrush	<i>Turdus philomelos</i>			✓
45	Redwing	<i>Turdus iliacus</i>		✓	✓
46	Mistle Thrush	<i>Turdus viscivorus</i>			✓
47	Eurasian Skylark	<i>Alauda arvensis</i>		✓	✓
48	Great Grey Shrike	<i>Lanius excubitor</i>			✓
49	Eurasian Blue Tit	<i>Cyanistes caeruleus</i>		✓	✓
50	Great Tit	<i>Parus major</i>		✓	✓
51	Coal Tit	<i>Parus ater</i>		✓	✓
52	Marsh Tit	<i>Poecile palustris</i>		✓	✓
53	Long-tailed Tit	<i>Aegithalos caudatus</i>			✓
54	Goldcrest	<i>Regulus regulus</i>		✓	✓
55	Eurasian Treecreeper	<i>Certhia familiaris</i>		✓	
56	Eurasian Nuthatch	<i>Sitta europaea</i>		✓	✓
57	Common Starling	<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>		✓	✓
58	Eurasian Magpie	<i>Pica pica</i>		✓	✓
59	Western Jackdaw	<i>Coloeus monedula</i>		✓	✓
60	Carrion Crow	<i>Corvus corone</i>		✓	✓
61	Rook	<i>Corvus frugilegus</i>		✓	✓
62	House Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>		✓	✓
63	Common Chaffinch	<i>Fringilla coelebs</i>		✓	✓
64	Eurasian Siskin	<i>Spinus spinus</i>			H
65	European Greenfinch	<i>Chloris chloris</i>		✓	✓
66	Hawfinch	<i>Coccothraustes coccothraustes</i>		✓	
67	European Goldfinch	<i>Carduelis carduelis</i>		✓	
68	Common Linnet	<i>Acanthis cannabina</i>		✓	

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