

# Winter in the New Forest

Naturetrek Tour Report

6th – 8th March 2026

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Dartford Warbler



Lesser Spotted Woodpecker



Greenshank



Spotted Redshank

Tour report by Jonathan Mycock

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Tour participants: Jonathan Mycock (leader) with five Naturetrek clients

## Summary

This weekend tour mainly focussed on the birds of the New Forest in Hampshire. A total of 82 bird species was seen or heard in the heathland and woodland habitats, including drumming Lesser Spotted Woodpecker, displaying Dartford Warbler, lots of Stonechats, a few Crossbills, and close views of Firecrest and Marsh Tit. A wide diversity of waders and wildfowl was observed on the coast, including Spoonbill, Eider, Avocet, Spotted Redshank, Greenshank and Bar-tailed Godwit.

### Day 1

**Friday 6th March**

We met in the bar area of the hotel before dinner. Jonathan ran through the itinerary and gave a brief introduction to the area, before we sat down to an enjoyable dinner.

### Day 2

**Saturday 7th March**

Before breakfast, we headed out from the hotel at 6.00am, to Acres Down, north-west of Lyndhurst. The woodlands resounded with birdsong, and we realised that this was probably the first time that we had heard the dawn chorus this year! A male Lesser Spotted Woodpecker arrived on its favourite dead tree and began drumming at 7.10am. Everyone obtained excellent views of this diminutive woodpecker through Jonathan's scope; the sighting lasted for ten minutes before the bird flew off. We returned to the vehicle and dashed back to our hotel for breakfast.

After a hearty feed, we first stopped off at Pig Bush, just down the road, to look for a Great Grey Shrike which had been reported on the previous day. Unfortunately, the shrike proved to be elusive! We then drove back to Acres Down. En route, lots of New Forest ponies were seen grazing close to the road, along with a few cattle and donkeys. We climbed up to the Acres Down ridge and walked to a raptor-watching viewpoint. Unfortunately, the distant wooded ridges were swathed in low cloud, and raptors were distinctly lacking. Ravens flew past frequently, and behind us, a pair of Woodlark alerted us by their two-note calls. Several Meadow Pipits were feeding on the ground, allowing scrutiny of their streaky plumage.

Lunch was taken in The Old Bakery, Beaulieu, which served excellent sandwiches! The Mill Pond in Beaulieu held a few species of waterbird, including Little Egret, Cormorant and Mute Swan.

After lunch, we visited Beaulieu Heath and Shatterford Bottom, near our hotel, where we walked in a clockwise direction toward Denny Wood. The lowland heathland supported lots of Stonechats and Meadow Pipits. Also near the track were a few handsome male Pied Wagtails. At the medieval embankment known as Bishops Dyke, a Dartford Warbler was heard singing and then gave brief but good views, along with one or two females.

Near the pool, a male Reed Bunting was seen briefly, while in the distance a few Crossbills were spotted in a tree-top: then one or two flew overhead, calling loudly. Near the train station, a brightly-coloured male Bullfinch was seen feeding on dry blackberry seeds along the fence.

## Day 3

## Sunday 8th March

Before breakfast, we headed through Lyndhurst again, and this time headed north to the Bolderwood Area. The groves of Holly here held several Marsh Tits, and a pair of Firecrests, which gave quite close, if rather brief views. Unfortunately, we could not manage to locate any Hawfinches at this known location, partly due to the foggy conditions, but we had several Chaffinches and a group of Pied Wagtails feeding on the lawn.

After checking out of the hotel, we drove down to Lyminster on the Hampshire coast, opposite the Isle of Wight. Along the harbour shoreline, we observed feeding Brent Geese, Oystercatchers, Curlews, Turnstones and Grey Plovers. Reedbeds and hedgerows adjacent to the footpath held singing Cetti's Warbler and Blackcap, although both remained elusive. A Chiffchaff was seen, however, feeding low down in some reeds.

On the seaward side of the marshes, we spotted a solitary Bar-tailed Godwit roosting with other waders, and a flock of twenty Eiders, which were loafing on an island close to the tideline. On the tidal pools we picked out two Great Crested Grebes, which dived continually in pursuit of small fish.

Normandy Marsh held many Wigeons, Teals and Gadwalls, together with a few handsome Shelducks. Single Spotted Redshanks and Greenshanks were feeding in proximity, along with several Common Redshanks, allowing careful comparison of bill shape and leg length, key features in identifying the "shanks". We hurried along the embankment and down some leafy lanes to our lunch spot at the Chequers Inn. Afterwards, we completed our circular walk back to the Lyminster Marina car park, spotting Common Gull and several Roe Deer in the fields. We then returned to our hotel, where we completed the checklist over a pot of tea. Everyone had had a thoroughly enjoyable weekend in the New Forest in late winter.

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## Species lists

Birds (H=heard only)

I = Introduced	Common name	Scientific name	March 2026		
			6	7	8
	Brent Goose	<i>Branta bernicla</i>			✓
	Canada Goose - I	<i>Branta canadensis</i>		✓	✓
	Mute Swan	<i>Cygnus olor</i>		✓	✓
	Egyptian Goose - I	<i>Alopochen aegyptiaca</i>			✓
	Common Shelduck	<i>Tadorna tadorna</i>			✓
	Gadwall	<i>Mareca strepera</i>			✓
	Eurasian Wigeon	<i>Mareca penelope</i>			✓
	Mallard	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>		✓	✓
	Eurasian Teal	<i>Anas crecca</i>			✓
	Tufted Duck	<i>Aythya fuligula</i>			✓
	Common Eider	<i>Somateria mollissima</i>			✓
	Common Pheasant - I	<i>Phasianus colchicus</i>		H	✓
	Stock Dove	<i>Columba oenas</i>		✓	
	Common Wood Pigeon	<i>Columba palumbus</i>	✓	✓	✓
	Eurasian Collared Dove	<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>		✓	✓
	Water Rail	<i>Rallus aquaticus</i>		H	H
	Common Moorhen	<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>		H	H
	Eurasian Coot	<i>Fulica atra</i>		✓	
	Great Crested Grebe	<i>Podiceps cristatus</i>			✓
	Eurasian Oystercatcher	<i>Haematopus ostralegus</i>			✓
	Pied Avocet	<i>Recurvirostra avosetta</i>			✓
	Grey Plover	<i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>			✓
	Common Ringed Plover	<i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>			✓
	Northern Lapwing	<i>Vanellus vanellus</i>			✓
	Eurasian Curlew	<i>Numenius arquata</i>		H	✓
	Bar-tailed Godwit	<i>Limosa lapponica</i>			✓
	Black-tailed Godwit	<i>Limosa limosa</i>			✓
	Common Redshank	<i>Tringa totanus</i>			✓
	Spotted Redshank	<i>Tringa erythropus</i>			✓
	Common Greenshank	<i>Tringa nebularia</i>			✓
	Ruddy Turnstone	<i>Arenaria interpres</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>			✓
	Great Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>			✓
	Eurasian Spoonbill	<i>Platalea leucorodia</i>			✓
	Little Egret	<i>Egretta garzetta</i>			✓
	Grey Heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>			✓
	Lesser Spotted Woodpecker	<i>Dryobates minor</i>		✓	
	Great Spotted Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos major</i>		H	
	European Green Woodpecker	<i>Picus viridis</i>			H
	Eurasian Magpie	<i>Pica pica</i>	✓	✓	✓
	Western Jackdaw	<i>Coloeus monedula</i>		✓	H
	Rook	<i>Corvus frugilegus</i>		✓	✓
	Carrion Crow	<i>Corvus corone</i>		✓	✓

I = Introduced	Common name	Scientific name	March 2026		
			6	7	8
	Northern Raven	<i>Corvus corax</i>		✓	✓
	Coal Tit	<i>Periparus ater</i>		✓	✓
	Marsh Tit	<i>Poecile palustris</i>		✓	✓
	Eurasian Blue Tit	<i>Cyanistes caeruleus</i>		✓	✓
	Great Tit	<i>Parus major</i>		✓	✓
	Woodlark	<i>Lullula arborea</i>		✓	
	Eurasian Skylark	<i>Alauda arvensis</i>		✓	
	Cetti's Warbler	<i>Cettia cetti</i>			H
	Long-tailed Tit	<i>Aegithalos caudatus</i>		✓	
	Common Chiffchaff	<i>Phylloscopus collybita</i>		✓	✓
	Eurasian Blackcap	<i>Sylvia atricapilla</i>			H
	Dartford Warbler	<i>Curruca undata</i>		✓	
	Common Firecrest	<i>Regulus ignicapilla</i>		✓	✓
	Goldcrest	<i>Regulus regulus</i>		✓	
	Eurasian Wren	<i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>	✓	✓	✓
	Eurasian Nuthatch	<i>Sitta europaea</i>		H	
	Eurasian Treecreeper	<i>Certhia familiaris</i>		✓	
	Common Starling	<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>		✓	✓
	Song Thrush	<i>Turdus philomelos</i>		✓	
	Mistle Thrush	<i>Turdus viscivorus</i>		✓	
	Redwing	<i>Turdus iliacus</i>		✓	
	Common Blackbird	<i>Turdus merula</i>	✓	✓	✓
	European Robin	<i>Erithacus rubecula</i>	✓	✓	✓
	European Stonechat	<i>Saxicola rubicola</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>		✓	✓
	Eurasian Bullfinch	<i>Pyrrhula pyrrhula</i>		✓	✓
	European Greenfinch	<i>Chloris chloris</i>			✓
	Red Crossbill	<i>Loxia curvirostra</i>		✓	✓
	European Goldfinch	<i>Carduelis carduelis</i>		✓	✓
	Eurasian Siskin	<i>Spinus spinus</i>		✓	
	Common Reed Bunting	<i>Emberiza schoeniclus</i>			✓