

NATURETREK DAY WALK REPORT



Suffolk: Dunwich, Westleton and Minsmere (Guide: David Walsh)

Friday 4th July 2025

Highlights

- **A rare Red-veined Darter near the beach car park**
- **Spoonbills and Avocets on the Dunwich shore pools**
- **Ringed Plovers along the beach and Common Scoters offshore**
- **A surprise White-letter Hairstreak by the Dingle path**
- **Five Great White Egrets together on Sandymount pool**
- **Dartford Warblers and Stone Curlews on the heath**
- **Silver-washed Fritillaries and White Admirals in the Minsmere woods**

We met at 9am in the beach car park at Dunwich; the weather was set fair, sunny and warm with a gentle sea breeze. We hadn't gone far when dragonflies over a pool caught our attention. One was a Red-veined Darter, a migrant and a good find. It disappeared all too soon but we had better looks at an Emperor which had predated a Large White butterfly. A Skylark posed nicely in front of us whilst a Reed Bunting sang from an open perch.



The Yellow Horned Poppies provided colour on the shingle ridge then a Grayling hid itself before we dropped down to walk along the beach for a while. After a mile or so we scrambled back up and found a group of Spoonbills, a real bonus; the birds were distant but we had decent views through the scope. On a closer shore pool we found Avocets complete with small young; fingers crossed they survive over the coming weeks. A little further on we spotted Ringed Plovers in the fenced area; the birds were remarkably well camouflaged.

We paused to enjoy a pack of 100 Common Scoters offshore, then headed inland. Soon we turned left; there were lots of butterflies on the flowers, most skippers and whites for us to study and compare. I certainly wasn't expecting to find a diminutive White-letter Hairstreak! It was fully focussed on nectaring from a patch of Creeping Thistles so allowed prolonged observations. This is a scarce and local species in Suffolk and normally seen high up in elm trees, so we were very fortunate.

Having pottered along the track and up into the woods, we stopped at a spot allowing a panoramic view north to Westwood Marshes. Marsh Harriers showed nicely over the reeds, whilst the pool in front of us held Great White and Little Egrets alongside the Konik ponies.

The woods were typically quiet, although we were pleased to find a Norfolk Hawker, so we made haste on our anticlockwise loop, eventually reaching the village then the café where we enjoyed a well-earned lunch.

At 2pm we set off in our cars. I planned to visit three areas, all close by and with minimal driving and walking. The first was an area of heather and gorse where I hoped to find Dartford

Warblers and Stonechats and, all things considered, we had very respectable views; the warblers are easy to see in spring but not in midsummer. We also found a couple of Silver-studded Blue butterflies, another local speciality. This area was previously a farm field but the 'arable reversion' over the last twenty years has recreated some wonderful heathland. This was also the case at our second spot, grassland hosting a pair of Stone Curlews and their recently fledged young; the birds were more active than I had expected, another bonus!

Our final destination was the woodland trail in the Minsmere reserve. We didn't have to go far before encountering multiple Silver-washed Fritillaries and White Admirals; the views were amazing! An inquisitive Marsh Tit was the pick of a bird flock passing through, before we decided to declare. It had been a remarkably productive day out, surpassing all expectations, with so many highlights. The variety of habitats in a small area had to be seen to be believed.



CHECKLISTS OF BIRDS (H = heard only)

DUNWICH (complete list)

Greylag Goose (<i>Anser anser</i>)	Western Marsh Harrier (<i>Circus aeruginosus</i>)	
Mute Swan (<i>Cygnus olor</i>)	Eurasian Green Woodpecker (<i>Picus viridis</i>)	
Common Shelduck (<i>Tadorna tadorna</i>)	Common Kestrel (<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>)	
Mallard (<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>)	Common Magpie (<i>Pica pica</i>)	
Common Scoter (<i>Melanitta nigra</i>)	Carriion Crow (<i>Corvus corone</i>)	
Stock Dove (<i>Columba oenas</i>)	Coal Tit (<i>Periparus ater</i>)	
Common Woodpigeon (<i>Columba palumbus</i>)	Eurasian Skylark (<i>Alauda arvensis</i>)	
Collared Dove (<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>)	Sedge Warbler (<i>Acrocephalus schoenobaenus</i>)	H

Eurasian Coot (*Fulica atra*)
Pied Avocet (*Recurvirostra avosetta*)
Eurasian Oystercatcher (*Haematopus ostralegus*)
Common Ringed Plover (*Charadrius hiaticula*)
Northern Lapwing (*Vanellus vanellus*)
Common Redshank (*Tringa totanus*)
Black-headed Gull (*Chroicocephalus ridibundus*)
Great Cormorant (*Phalacrocorax carbo*)
Eurasian Spoonbill (*Platalea leucorodia*)
Little Egret (*Egretta garzetta*)
Great White Egret (*Ardea alba*)
Grey Heron (*Ardea cinerea*)

WESTLETON HEATH (additional species only)

Rook (*Corvus frugilegus*)
Dartford Warbler (*Curruca undata*)

MINSMERE (additional species only)

Stone-curlew (*Burhinus oedipnemus*)
Marsh Tit (*Poecile palustris*)
Eurasian Blue Tit (*Cyanistes caeruleus*)

BUTTERFLIES (complete list)

Small Skipper
Essex Skipper
Large White
Small White
White-letter Hairstreak
Small Copper
Silver-studded Blue
Common Blue
White Admiral
Red Admiral

DRAGONFLIES (complete list)

Banded Demoiselle
Norfolk Hawker
Emperor Dragonfly
Four-spotted Chaser

Common Reed Warbler (*Acrocephalus scirpaceus*)
Barn Swallow (*Hirundo rustica*)
Western House Martin (*Delichon urbicum*)
Common Chiffchaff (*Phylloscopus collybita*)
Cetti's Warbler (*Cettia cetti*) H
Eurasian Blackcap (*Sylvia atricapilla*) H
Eurasian Wren (*Troglodytes troglodytes*)
House Sparrow (*Passer domesticus*)
Pied Wagtail (*Motacilla alba yarrellii*)
European Goldfinch (*Carduelis carduelis*)
Common Reed Bunting (*Emberiza schoeniclus*)

European Stonechat (*Saxicola rubicola*)

Great Tit (*Parus major*)
Long-tailed Tit (*Aegithalos caudatus*)

Peacock
Comma
Silver-washed Fritillary
Speckled Wood
Grayling
Gatekeeper
Meadow Brown
Small Heath
Ringlet

Black-tailed Skimmer
Ruddy Darter
Red-veined Darter









Photos:

White-letter Hairstreak

Yellow Horned Poppies along the beach

Heather and gorse on Westleton Heath

Konik ponies and egrets on Sandymount pool

Skylark

Distant Spoonbills

Camouflaged Ringed Plover

Female Silver-studded Blue

Female Silver-washed Fritillary

White Admiral