

NATURETREK DAY WALK REPORT



Suffolk: Shingle Street, Upper Hollesley Common, Hollesley Marshes and Boyton Marshes (Guide: David Walsh)

Friday 16th February 2024

Highlights

- **Singing Woodlarks and Dartford Warblers on Upper Hollesley Common**
- **Bewick's Swans, Ruff and Spoonbills at Hollesley Marshes**
- **Close Great White Egrets along the Ore river**
- **'Russian' White-fronted Geese at Boyton Marshes**
- **Avocets heading to roost along the Butley river**
- **Magnificent Short-eared Owls to round things off superbly!**

We met at Shingle Street at 9am as planned, and had a pleasant hour-long stroll, heading down the road to the allotments and returning along the beach. This area tends to be birdier in migration periods, so unsurprisingly today it was relatively quiet, but we had splendid views of a male Marsh Harrier and listened to a number of resident species singing in the morning sunshine. Three Hares were spotted in the meadows. We noted the 'shell trail' and looked up its origins.

A remarkably warm and sunny late winter morning helped us see Upper Hollesley Common at its very best. First, a Mistle Thrush sang loudly but remained hidden; we saw another later.

A resplendent male Yellowhammer was more co-operative. We had two specific targets here and were very successful, with multiple sightings of both Woodlark and Dartford Warbler; both species were seen through the scope! We saw Woodlarks feeding along the path, then singing high in the air and from a perch. A male Dartford Warbler sat up for ages, giving snatches of song; we had several subsequent sightings.



Feeling very chuffed, we headed on to Hollesley Marshes only to find the car park virtually full and extremely wet which made life rather more difficult than usual.....

After a well-deserved coffee break, we headed to the river wall and walked north along the Ore with the scrape to our left. From a convenient vantage point we found a group of four Bewick's Swans, three Ruff, a variety of dabbling ducks and had several views of Great White Egret. As a bonus, by changing our position slightly we found two Spoonbills. It really was very birdy here today!



After a leisurely lunch in the sunshine, interrupted by a lovely flock of Golden Plover over the scrape, we drove to Boyton and parked up at the top of the hill. There was time to enjoy the panoramic view with Burrow Hill to our left, and Havergate Island in front of Orfordness, before we walked down the track and onto the marsh. From the gate to our right we had excellent scope views of around 70 'Russian' White-fronted Geese; Suffolk holds impressive numbers of this scarce winter visitor each year.

Having reached the Butley river we turned left. There was a sizeable flock of Curlew to our left and during the course of the afternoon we saw Redshanks and Avocets along the river, the latter mainly in flight heading to roost on the incoming tide. A inquisitive female Bearded Tit gave good views in the reedy ditch. A first for me was seeing (and hearing) swimmers at the Ferry!



I was confident that by being patient we would see a Short-eared Owl and hoped it would show at reasonable range. Eventually one appeared over the far hill, soon followed by a second. The birds sparred for a while before one briefly landed on a post. It then flew straight towards us and across the marsh, a magical sight to live long in the memory. We wandered back to the cars delighted with our exceptionally productive and enjoyable day on the south-east Suffolk coast.



CHECKLISTS OF BIRDS NOTED (H = heard only)

SHINGLE STREET (complete list)

Mute Swan (<i>Cygnus olor</i>)	Goldcrest (<i>Regulus regulus</i>)
Common Woodpigeon (<i>Columba palumbus</i>)	Eurasian Wren (<i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>)
Black-headed Gull (<i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i>)	Common Starling (<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>)
Herring Gull (<i>Larus argentatus</i>)	Eurasian Blackbird (<i>Turdus merula</i>)
Lesser Black-backed Gull (<i>Larus fuscus</i>)	European Robin (<i>Erithacus rubecula</i>)
Western Marsh Harrier (<i>Circus aeruginosus</i>)	European Stonechat (<i>Saxicola rubicola</i>)
Common Kestrel (<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>)	Dunnock (<i>Prunella modularis</i>)
Common Magpie (<i>Pica pica</i>)	House Sparrow (<i>Passer domesticus</i>)
Rook (<i>Corvus frugilegus</i>)	Meadow Pipit (<i>Anthus pratensis</i>)
Carrion Crow (<i>Corvus corone</i>)	Common Chaffinch (<i>Fringilla coelebs</i>)
Eurasian Blue Tit (<i>Cyanistes caeruleus</i>)	European Greenfinch (<i>Chloris chloris</i>)
Great Tit (<i>Parus major</i>)	Common Linnet (<i>Linaria cannabina</i>)
Eurasian Skylark (<i>Alauda arvensis</i>)	European Goldfinch (<i>Carduelis carduelis</i>)
Cetti's Warbler (<i>Cettia cetti</i>)	H

UPPER HOLLESLEY COMMON (additional species only)

Common Pheasant (<i>Phasianus colchicus</i>)	Long-tailed Tit (<i>Aegithalos caudatus</i>)
Common Buzzard (<i>Buteo buteo</i>)	Dartford Warbler (<i>Curruca undata</i>)
Eurasian Jay (<i>Garrulus glandarius</i>)	Mistle Thrush (<i>Turdus viscivorus</i>)
Coal Tit (<i>Periparus ater</i>)	Yellowhammer (<i>Emberiza citrinella</i>)
Woodlark (<i>Lullula arborea</i>)	

HOLLESLEY MARSHES (additional species only)

Greylag Goose (<i>Anser anser</i>)	European Golden Plover (<i>Pluvialis apricaria</i>)
Bewick's Swan (<i>Cygnus columbianus</i>)	Common Snipe (<i>Gallinago gallinago</i>)
Common Shelduck (<i>Tadorna tadorna</i>)	Common Redshank (<i>Tringa totanus</i>)
Northern Shoveler (<i>Spatula clypeata</i>)	Ruff (<i>Calidris pugnax</i>)
Gadwall (<i>Mareca strepera</i>)	Common Gull (<i>Larus canus</i>)
Eurasian Wigeon (<i>Mareca penelope</i>)	Great Black-backed Gull (<i>Larus marinus</i>)
Mallard (<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>)	Little Egret (<i>Egretta garzetta</i>)
Northern Pintail (<i>Anas acuta</i>)	Great White Egret (<i>Ardea alba</i>)
Eurasian Teal (<i>Anas crecca</i>)	Grey Heron (<i>Ardea cinerea</i>)
Tufted Duck (<i>Aythya fuligula</i>)	Eurasian Spoonbill (<i>Platalea leucorodia</i>)
Eurasian Coot (<i>Fulica atra</i>)	Common Reed Bunting (<i>Emberiza schoeniclus</i>)
Eurasian Oystercatcher (<i>Haematopus ostralegus</i>)	

BOYTON MARSHES (additional species only)

Greater White-fronted Goose (<i>Anser albifrons</i>)	Northern Lapwing (<i>Vanellus vanellus</i>)
Canada Goose (<i>Branta canadensis</i>)	Eurasian Curlew (<i>Numenius arquata</i>)
Egyptian Goose (<i>Alopochen aegyptiaca</i>)	Great Cormorant (<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>)
Stock Dove (<i>Columba oenas</i>)	Short-eared Owl (<i>Asio flammeus</i>)
Water Rail (<i>Rallus aquaticus</i>)	H Eurasian Jackdaw (<i>Corvus monedula</i>)
Common Moorhen (<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>)	Bearded Tit (<i>Panurus biarmicus</i>)
Pied Avocet (<i>Recurvirostra avosetta</i>)	



Photo credits:

Woodlark, Dartford Warbler, Upper Hollesley Common, Bewick's Swans, Butley river, Short-eared Owl – Alan Smith

White-fronted Geese, Bearded Tit, Great White Egret – Meurig Garbutt