

The Best of North Wales – A Birdwatching Tour

Naturetrek Tour Report

21st – 26th June 2021



Great White Egret



Guillemot



Razorbill

Report and images by Dan Rouse



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Tour Participants: (Naturetrek tour leader) and six clients.

Day 1

Monday 21st June

The guests arrived late afternoon, with Dan arriving slightly later, before meeting for dinner in the dining room. Short walks were managed along the bridge with our dining table looking directly towards the water allowing for some quick observations, notably Pied Wagtails, Wood Pigeons and Blue Tit, and a Chiffchaff being heard from a few rooms. Having discussed everyone's targets and what they would like to see, the decision was made to pop over to Burton Mere RSPB to see Bittern and Hobby.

Day 2

Tuesday 22nd June

After breakfast, the group made its way to Burton Mere RSPB where we hoped to see Spoonbill, Marsh Harrier and Hobby, with a particular interest in seeing some Bitterns. This site has had a fantastic year for breeding species with many of our targets showing well; it was also only a small change to our existing plan of visiting Dee Estuary. We arrived late morning ready to begin our walk towards the hides. On entering the reserve, we were delighted to see Avocet and Mediterranean Gull; we also saw highlights of Southern Marsh Orchids and Speckled Wood. Moving further into the reserve, we popped into one of the hides: having been told a Bittern was recently seen, we took up position and waited. A little while later we were treated to a Bittern in flight! Other observations from the hide were a lovely summer-plumage Spotted Redshank among large flock of Redshank. Elsewhere on the reserve we observed Marsh Harrier and Spoonbill in flight, and we watched Reed and Sedge Warblers as well as hearing Cetti's Warbler. Arriving at the final hide of the circuit, we watched Little and Great Egrets together, another Spotted Redshank plus Ruff and on our walk back we observed our last target – a Hobby flying overhead!

After our stop for lunch at a delightful Italian small-dish restaurant, we made our way to Rhyl Brickfield Ponds where occasionally unusual birds may be observed. Although we didn't see anything out of the ordinary, we observed Great Crested Grebes with young on their backs, and a large number of Herring and Lesser Black-backed Gulls.

Day 3

Wednesday 23rd June

We headed south on our third day to visit RSPB Ynys Hir. Despite the intermittent rain, we began our search for the woodland birds of our tour: Pied Flycatcher and Redstart. We headed for the coastal trail, watching nest boxes as we went; it was slightly late for Pied Flycatchers and Redstart as majority had already fledged. On reaching the first hide, we saw Lapwing and Oystercatchers on the estuary and over 1,000 Canada Geese! Walking back towards the woodland, we were graced with Goldcrest, Blackcap and Garden Warbler singing. In the dense woodland, we observed more Blackcap, Nuthatch and juvenile Robins. Whilst looking, some of the group managed to get onto a Common Redstart sitting out in the open, before it darted into the woodland not to be seen again.

Moving on from our rather disappointing attempt at seeing Pied Flycatcher, we drove the short distance to Dyfi Osprey Project where we saw singing Reed Bunting and many froglets on our walk towards the observation tower. We were treated to a talk by the staff on the history of the Ospreys at Cors Dyfi and the family tree which was fantastic and very informative! Once we reached the observation tower, upon setting up the scopes we

watched the female Osprey on the nest with the young sitting beside her. Heading back, we enjoyed drying off from the rain and our evening meal at the hotel.

Day 4

Thursday 24th June

With a long day ahead of us, we stocked up from our local favourite bakery and headed towards Llandudno Pier. Our plan was to observe birds on the water but upon setting up we observed large swarms of Compass and Barrel Jellyfish below us in the water. On the water itself were Shag and Cormorant, a great chance to see the differences and features on both. In the distance we could see movements of auks streaming past to their nesting cliffs.

Moving on to Great Orme and seeing thick fog, we decided to swap the plan around and head towards Conwy RSPB and wait the fog to clear. We began our walk around watching a group of Great Egrets feeding on the lakes; other highlights were wildfowl species such as Tufted Duck, Gadwall and Teal. We walked further around the lagoon, passing by groups of Southern Marsh, Early Marsh and Common Spotted Orchids, while on entering our second hide we saw a small group of Bee Orchids. From this hide we witnessed a Red Kite mobbing through the groups of wildfowl. Moving onto the estuary itself, we observed Rock Pipits a nice group of Whimbrel on the shore, plus Great Egret feeding on the estuary.

Our final stop of the longest day was to visit Great Orme. We saw Stonechat, Linnet and Meadow Pipits on the gorse and heather after leaving the car park. This is our first opportunity to see Chough as well as other species special to the area. We watched Kestrels hunting and Buzzard flying overhead, before hearing the iconic call of Chough – we only saw a group briefly in the distance before locating them later on the edge of the cliffs. On our walk towards the location for Great Orme Cotoneaster and Dark-red Helleborine, we watched Great Orme Grayling butterflies and Small Heath. Swallows were hunting in the adjacent fields with corvids moving too. Upon reaching the location for the flowers and battling the heavy wind, we began our search, although not yet finding any we did eventually find some Great Orme Cotoneaster. Our Chough were then perched on the rocky slots of the western end of Great Orme for brief views in the high winds.

Day 5

Friday 25th June

Our penultimate day was another day of wind and rain. We made our first visit to Cemlyn Bay to observe terns on the breeding grounds. Here we had close views of Sandwich, Arctic and Common Terns all feeding together allowing for views of the notable differences. With high tide looming and the possibility of being cut off, we made our way back to the car and onto South Stack RSPB.

The rain and wind made things difficult at first but views of Linnets and Meadow Pipits in the heather were welcome. Walking towards the cliff edges, we came across a family group of Chough taking shelter on the ledges of the cliffs, a total of three adults and two young were seen and a fantastic opportunity for photos. Walking further on the cliff tops towards the lighthouse, we reached the auk colonies with the fantastic spectacle of Guillemots and Razorbills flying around the cliffs, we had good views of both species allowing for the differences to be noted. After lunch, we ventured to the opposite side of the cliffs where we again saw Meadow Pipit and some lovely adult male Linnets in all their pink-plumage glory. Here we saw female and juvenile Peregrines hunting together among the auk colonies much to the delight of guests with their hunting spree a true spectacle.

Day 6

Saturday 26th June

For our final day, we attempted additional sites for Pied Flycatcher, our last remaining target. We tried the Gwydir Forest waterfall first with Nuthatch, Chiffchaff, Willow Warblers, Grey Wagtails all seen, but no Pied Flycatcher.

Our second location was the Ugly House, west of Betws-y-Coed. This location is not only a fantastic building, but a location well-known for its Pied Flycatchers in the surrounding woodlands. We sat and watched the feeders, boxes and tops of woodlands for a length of time with Jay, Great-spotted Woodpeckers, Coal Tit and other small passerines seen. Before giving up, a Pied Flycatcher popped up onto an oak tree with the guests getting a glimpse before it flew overhead and out of sight. A successful end to the tour.

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Checklist

Birds

	Common name	Scientific name	21	22	23	24	25	26
1	Canada Goose	<i>Branta canadensis</i>		X	X	X		
2	Greylag Goose	<i>Anser anser</i>			X	X		
3	Mute Swan	<i>Cygnus olor</i>		X		X	X	
4	Mallard	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>		X	X	X		
5	Eurasian Teal	<i>Anas crecca</i>		X		X		
6	Tufted Duck	<i>Aythya fuligula</i>		X		X		
8	Common Pheasant	<i>Phasianus colchicus</i>			X			
9	Common Swift	<i>Apus apus</i>			X	X	X	X
12	Common Wood Pigeon	<i>Columba palumbus</i>	X	X	X	X	X	X
13	Eurasian Collared Dove	<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>		X				X
15	Common Moorhen	<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>		X	X	X	X	
16	Eurasian Coot	<i>Fulica atra</i>		X	X	X		
17	Little Grebe	<i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>				X		
18	Great Crested Grebe	<i>Podiceps cristatus</i>		X				
19	Eurasian Oystercatcher	<i>Haematopus ostralegus</i>		X	X	X	X	
20	Pied Avocet	<i>Recurvirostra avosetta</i>		X				
21	Northern Lapwing	<i>Vanellus vanellus</i>		X	X	X		
23	Little Ringed Plover	<i>Charadrius dubius</i>		X				
24	Eurasian Whimbrel	<i>Numenius phaeopus</i>				X	X	
25	Eurasian Curlew	<i>Numenius arquata</i>				X		
27	Ruff	<i>Calidris pugnax</i>		X				
31	Common Redshank	<i>Tringa totanus</i>		X	X			
32	Spotted Redshank	<i>Tringa erythropus</i>		X				
33	Black-headed Gull	<i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i>		X		X	X	
34	Mediterranean Gull	<i>Ichthyaeetus melanocephalus</i>		X				
36	Great Black-backed Gull	<i>Larus marinus</i>			X	X	X	
37	European Herring Gull	<i>Larus argentatus</i>	X	X	X	X	X	
38	Lesser Black-backed Gull	<i>Larus fuscus</i>		X		X	X	
40	Sandwich Tern	<i>Thalasseus sandvicencis</i>					X	
41	Common Tern	<i>Sterna hirundo</i>					X	
42	Arctic Tern	<i>Sterna paradisaea</i>					X	
43	Common Guillemot (Murre)	<i>Uria aalge</i>				X	X	
44	Razorbill	<i>Alca torda</i>				X	X	
46	Northern Gannet	<i>Morus bassanus</i>					X	
47	Great Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>				X		
48	European Shag	<i>Phalacrocorax aristotelis</i>				X	X	
49	Eurasian Spoonbill	<i>Platalea leucorodia</i>		X				
50	Eurasian Bittern	<i>Botaurus stellaris</i>		X				

	Common name	Scientific name	21	22	23	24	25	26
51	Grey Heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>		X	X	X		
52	Great Egret	<i>Ardea alba</i>		X		X		
53	Little Egret	<i>Egretta garzetta</i>		X	X	X	X	
54	Western Osprey	<i>Pandion haliaetus</i>			X			
56	Western Marsh Harrier	<i>Circus aeruginosus</i>		X				
57	Red Kite	<i>Milvus milvus</i>				X		
58	Common Buzzard	<i>Buteo buteo</i>		X	X	X	X	X
64	Great Spotted Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos major</i>			X			X
66	Common Kestrel	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>				X		
67	Eurasian Hobby	<i>Falco subbuteo</i>		X				
68	Peregrine Falcon	<i>Falco peregrinus</i>					X	
69	Eurasian Jay	<i>Garrulus glandarius</i>			X	X		X
70	Eurasian Magpie	<i>Pica pica</i>	X	X	X	X	X	
71	Red-billed Chough	<i>Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax</i>				X	X	
72	Western Jackdaw	<i>Corvus monedula</i>	X	X	X	X	X	
74	Carrion Crow	<i>Corvus corone</i>		X	X	X		
79	Eurasian Blue Tit	<i>Cyanistes caeruleus</i>	X	X	X	X		X
80	Great Tit	<i>Parus major</i>		X	X	X		X
82	Sand Martin	<i>Riparia riparia</i>				X		
83	Barn Swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>			X	X		
84	Common House Martin	<i>Delichon urbica</i>			X	X		
85	Long-tailed Tit	<i>Aegithalos caudatus</i>		X				
87	Willow Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus trochilus</i>		X	X		X	X
88	Common Chiffchaff	<i>Phylloscopus collybita</i>	X	X	X	X		X
89	Sedge Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus schoenobaenus</i>		X		X		
90	Eurasian Reed Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus scirpaceus</i>		X				
92	Eurasian Blackcap	<i>Sylvia atricapilla</i>		X	X	X		
93	Garden Warbler	<i>Sylvia borin</i>			X			
95	Common Whitethroat	<i>Curruca communis</i>		X				
96	Goldcrest	<i>Regulus regulus</i>			X			
97	Eurasian Wren	<i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>		X	X	X		X
98	Eurasian Nuthatch	<i>Sitta europaea</i>			X			
100	Common Starling	<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>		X				
101	Common Blackbird	<i>Turdus merula</i>		X	X	X	X	X
102	Song Thrush	<i>Turdus philomelos</i>				X		
105	European Robin	<i>Erithacus rubecula</i>		X	X	X	X	
106	European Pied Flycatcher	<i>Ficedula hypoleuca</i>						X
107	Common Redstart	<i>Phoenicurus phoenicurus</i>			X			
109	European Stonechat	<i>Saxicola rubicola</i>				X		
112	House Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>	X	X	X	X		
113	Dunnock	<i>Prunella modularis</i>	X		X	X		X
116	Pied Wagtail	<i>Motacilla alba yarrellii</i>	X			X	X	X

	Common name	Scientific name	21	22	23	24	25	26
117	Meadow Pipit	<i>Anthus pratensis</i>				X	X	
120	Common Chaffinch	<i>Fringilla coelebs</i>			X			
121	Eurasian Bullfinch	<i>Pyrrhula pyrrhula</i>		X	X			
122	European Greenfinch	<i>Chloris chloris</i>		X		X		
123	Common Linnet	<i>Linaria cannabina</i>				X	X	
125	European Goldfinch	<i>Carduelis carduelis</i>		X	X	X		
128	Common Reed Bunting	<i>Emberiza schoeniclus</i>		X	X			