

Norfolk – Autumn in the Broads

Naturetrek Tour Report

26th – 28th September 2021

Tour report by Kevin Elsby



Naturetrek

Mingledown Barn

Wolf's Lane

Chawton

Alton

Hampshire

GU34 3HJ

UK

T: +44 (0)1962 733051

E: info@naturetrek.co.uk

W: www.naturetrek.co.uk

Tour participants: Kevin Elsby (Leader) with seven Naturetrek clients

Day 1

Sunday 26th September

The seven clients in the group met with Kevin, at 4pm at the delightful Dairy Barns near Waxham in the north Norfolk Broads. Many of us had tales of having to avoid blocked roads or difficulties finding fuel for our vehicles, due to panic buying of fuel due to a shortage of delivery drivers.

However, we soon put this behind us as we settled in for our stay. After a welcome by our hostess, Hannah, followed by a welcome cup of tea or coffee and some delicious home made cake, we ventured out on our first excursion.

Dairy Farm has access to a private track just opposite the premises, which leads deep into the grazing marshes of the Broads. This is a private area and normally out of bounds to visitors, so we were indeed privileged to be able to visit.

Our main target this afternoon was to see Common Cranes. Over the last 40 years or so, numbers of this scarce British breeding bird have gradually increased in Broadland, but normally the birdwatcher gets a fleeting glimpse as the birds fly to roost in the evening, dropping into thick vegetation out of sight.

We were lucky in this pursuit, as no less than 14 Cranes were found. We also found a flock of twittering Linnets, including some splendid males still with a rosy-pink hue on the breast. A single Goldfinch was resting on a barbed-wire fence. A pair of Mute Swans was visible in the distance swimming on the water of the narrow channel, and many Stock Doves were in the area. It is likely that this species uses the two run-down old wind pumps as a breeding site.

A couple of Kestrels were hovering, pointed towards the wind, in pursuit of a meal and at one point we witnessed one of them being chased very closely by a Carrion Crow. We also spotted a Kingfisher as it zoomed past us flying along the water channel. As the afternoon progressed, we heard the distinctive call of a Green Sandpiper and watched it as it flew along the marsh. This is likely to be a migrant bird, moving south to warmer wintering areas, passing through Norfolk on its way from breeding grounds much further north in Europe.

We retraced our steps and carried on to the main coast road and parked at Brograve Farm, another regular place to see Cranes. We were to be disappointed, though, but did have great views of over 1000 newly arrived Pink-footed Geese in a large field nearby. We also picked out a single Barnacle Goose in the flock. This is quite likely to be a genuine wild bird as it was consorting with the Pink-feet. At one point, a single Muntjac Deer was seen. On our way back to Dairy Barn we saw two or three Common Buzzards in the increasing blustery wind.

It had been a great start to the trip!

Day 2

Monday 27th September

After breakfast we set off for Strumpshaw RSPB reserve in the southern half of the Norfolk Broads.

After checking onto the reserve reception, we started to make our way around the reserve, calling initially at Fen Hide. Reed strimming was taking place here, so we moved on to Fen Hide, arriving just in time to avoid a heavy downpour of rain in the very windy conditions. Luckily the wind was from the south and we were facing north in the hide and had great views of many Greylag Geese and ducks including Teal, Shoveler, Gadwall, Mallard and Wigeon. A single Dabchick was present, and a Heron upset the Greylags for a time.

Eventually we worked our way back to the reception centre and ate our lunch there, while birds visiting the bird feeder included a Marsh Tit – never an easy bird to find these days/

We then moved on to Hickling NWT reserve for the afternoon in continuing blustery weather. The sun had come out, though, and it was at least dry. It was, though nonetheless, very hard to see or hear any birds due to the conditions. We did hear the very brief call of Bearded Tit and Water Rail, but these were among the highlights.

Driving back to Dairy Barns we had another drive along the track and spotted some more Cranes, as well as a few Mediterranean Gulls in a mixed gull flock on a stubble field.

Day 3

Tuesday 28th September

We took a walk this morning out to the coast and along the Norfolk Coastal Path. We managed to find a couple of Stonechats, a Chiffchaff and several Meadow Pipits and Swallows passing through, before climbing over the dunes to the beach. By now the weather was lovely – warm sun, no breeze and calm sea. There were numerous Grey Seals hauled out on the beach (mainly females) with several larger bulls swimming in the surf near the water's edge.

Out to sea we saw two Red-throated Divers, including one reasonably close adult showing the red throat. A single Guillemot was also swimming nearby, and several recently fledged Gannets were passing along the coast.

On our way back to the vehicle, where we had lunch, Kevin narrowly missed treading on a male Adder which slithered across the sandy path.

Later we had one more visit to the track near Dairy Barn and were rewarded with excellent views of two young Whinchats, another Stonechat and a Wheatear.

All in all it had been a very successful end to the tour and there were lots of happy faces when we returned to the Dairy Farm where we said our goodbyes.

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Checklists

Birds

	Common name	Scientific name	Spetember		
			26	27	28
Our tour checklist follows the names and taxonomy (including species order) of the International Ornithological Congress list of the birds of the world (version 11.2, July 2021) which seems destined to become the global standard in future. The species included are based on those thought most likely to be recorded together with what has been seen on previous tours					
1	Barnacle Goose	<i>Branta leucopsis</i>	1	1	
2	Greylag Goose	<i>Anser anser</i>		200	
3	Pink-footed Goose	<i>Anser brachyrhynchus</i>	1000	1200	1000
4	Egyptian Goose	<i>Alopochen aegyptiaca</i>			5
5	Mute Swan	<i>Cygnus olor</i>	2	25	2
6	Northern Shoveler	<i>Spatula clypeata</i>		50	
7	Gadwall	<i>Mareca strepera</i>		20	
8	Eurasian Wigeon	<i>Mareca penelope</i>		2	
9	Mallard	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>		30	
10	Eurasian Teal	<i>Anas crecca</i>		25	
11	Common Pheasant	<i>Phasianus colchicus</i>	6	5	1
12	Stock Dove	<i>Columba oenas</i>	5	10	3
13	Common Wood Pigeon	<i>Columba palumbus</i>	30		6
14	Water Rail	<i>Rallus aquaticus</i>		1	
15	Common Moorhen	<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>		2	
16	Eurasian Coot	<i>Fulica atra</i>		3	
17	Common Crane	<i>Grus grus</i>	14	17	11
18	Little Grebe	<i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>		1	
19	Northern Lapwing	<i>Vanellus vanellus</i>	60		1
20	Green Sandpiper	<i>Tringa ochropus</i>	1		
21	Black-headed Gull	<i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i>	10	10	10
22	Mediterranean Gull	<i>Ichthyaetus melanocephalus</i>	20	20	5
23	Lesser Black-backed Gull	<i>Larus fuscus</i>	1		
24	European Herring Gull	<i>Larus argentatus</i>	10	2	3
25	Common Guillemot	<i>Uria aalge</i>			1
26	Red-throated Diver	<i>Gavia stellata</i>			2
27	Northern Gannet	<i>Morus bassanus</i>			10
28	Great Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>	3	3	3
29	Grey Heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>	1	2	1
30	Little Egret	<i>Egretta garzetta</i>	1	1	
31	Eurasian Sparrowhawk	<i>Accipiter nisus</i>	1		
32	Western Marsh Harrier	<i>Circus aeruginosus</i>		4	1
33	Hen Harrier	<i>Circus cyaneus</i>			1
34	Red Kite	<i>Milvus milvus</i>	1		
35	Common Buzzard	<i>Buteo buteo</i>	3	3	1
36	Common Kingfisher	<i>Alcedo atthis</i>	1		
37	Great Spotted Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos major</i>		1	
38	Common Kestrel	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>	3	1	1
39	Eurasian Hobby	<i>Falco subbuteo</i>	1		
40	Eurasian Jay	<i>Garrulus glandarius</i>		1	
41	Eurasian Magpie	<i>Pica pica</i>	1	1	4

	Common name	Scientific name	Spetember		
			26	27	28
42	Western Jackdaw	<i>Coloeus monedula</i>	20	20	6
43	Rook	<i>Corvus frugilegus</i>	20		20
44	Carrion Crow	<i>Corvus corone</i>	2	2	
45	Marsh Tit	<i>Poecile palustris</i>		1	
46	Eurasian Blue Tit	<i>Cyanistes caeruleus</i>		3	1
47	Great Tit	<i>Parus major</i>		2	
48	Bearded Tit	<i>Panurus biarmicus</i>		2	
49	Barn Swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>		5	10
50	Cetti's Warbler	<i>Cettia cetti</i>		2	
51	Common Chiffchaff	<i>Phylloscopus collybita</i>		1	1
52	Goldcrest	<i>Regulus regulus</i>		1	
53	Eurasian Wren	<i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>		2	1
54	Common Starling	<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>	50	40	20
55	Common Blackbird	<i>Turdus merula</i>		1	1
56	European Robin	<i>Erithacus rubecula</i>	1	1	1
57	Whinchat	<i>Saxicola rubetra</i>			2
58	European Stonechat	<i>Saxicola rubicola</i>		2	1
59	Dunnock	<i>Prunella modularis</i>			1
60	Pied Wagtail	<i>Motacilla alba yarrellii</i>	2	1	2
61	Meadow Pipit	<i>Anthus pratensis</i>	1		4
62	Common Chaffinch	<i>Fringilla coelebs</i>	1	1	
63	European Greenfinch	<i>Chloris chloris</i>		2	
64	Common Linnet	<i>Linaria cannabina</i>	30	20	10
65	European Goldfinch	<i>Carduelis carduelis</i>	30		1
1	Reeve's Muntjac	<i>Muntiacus reevesi</i>	1		
2	Red Deer	<i>Cervus elaphus</i>	1		
3	Adder	<i>Vipera berus</i>			1
4	Ruddy Darter	<i>Sympetrum sanguineum</i>	1		
5	Red Admiral	<i>Vanessa atalanta</i>	1	1	1