

Yorkshire Coast & Moors

Naturetrek Tour Report

8 - 11 July 2014



Northern Gannet by Phil Aylen



Red Grouse by Phil Aylen



2014 Naturetrek Group photo by Alan Miller



Guillemot by Phil Aylen

Report compiled by Alan Miller
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Summary:

Yorkshire has some wonderful scenery and wildlife and seven tour participants spent four days enjoying the sights and sounds of the Yorkshire Coast and Moors. We had some memorable sightings including close encounters with Puffins, Razorbills, Guillemots and Gannets on the immensely impressive cliffs at Bempton; we were captivated by Red Grouse and Golden Plover, both with chicks, on moors covered in purple heather; we had an impressive array of sightings including Adder, Common Lizard, Grey and Common Seals and Roe Deer.

After a busy day in the field (and some late evenings), we were able to retire to a friendly hotel where we were looked after very well and we enjoyed a variety of delicious meals. The group members all got on very well, helping each other and sharing experiences. It was a great UK tour where the time flew by and ended all too soon.

Day 1

Tuesday 8th July

Arrival at Wykeham

Weather: Overcast but warm and still. Some late afternoon hazy sunshine. Afternoon high 19 Deg.C

Members of the group arrived during the afternoon at our tour hotel, the charming Downe Arms Country Inn in the hamlet of Wykeham, a few miles west of Scarborough. Alan made a couple of journeys to Scarborough Railway Station to meet guests arriving by train whilst others arrived by car. By 4pm most had reached the hotel and were settled into their rooms.

As it was a pleasant afternoon Alan took the earlier arrivals to the raptor viewpoint in Wykeham Forest for an hour's viewing. As we drove to the car park we passed Blackbird, Mistle Thrush and Pheasant and left the vehicle to the sound of a nearby Chiffchaff with its characteristic song. At the viewpoint we saw lots of Woodpigeons, numerous sitting in the tops of trees below us. It wasn't long before there was a call of 'raptor' and a distant Common Buzzard was spotted. Other birds seen included; Swift, Swallow, Herring Gull and Carrion Crow. Phil had spotted a Ringlet butterfly in the rough ground in front. Alan went to get a closer look and found an Adder curled up on a path in a sheltered spot. It stayed long enough for the group to get a good view before it slithered away and disappeared into the undergrowth. After an interesting introduction to local wildlife we returned to the hotel.

We met at 7pm for dinner where the last two members, Anne and Jude, joined the group. We were also joined by Aruna who had brought her parents, Elvira and Om, to Scarborough to join the tour and she was also staying at the hotel. We were slightly sidetracked when a moth was found inside the window near us which was carefully identified as a Marbled Beauty. We then enjoyed our first evening meal before adjourning to the Park Room where Alan gave a short illustrated talk on the areas we were to visit in the next few days and some of the species we were likely to see. With the prospect of some pre-breakfast birding we adjourned for the night looking forward to what the next day would bring.

Day 2

Wednesday 9th July

Yorkshire Coast - Bempton, Flamborough and Filey

Weather: Cloudy but dry with a very strong North-easterly wind, especially in the afternoon. High 18 Deg.C

Most of the group met at 7am in the hotel car park where birds were active and sightings included Goldfinch, House Martin, Swift and Jackdaw whilst we listened to Wren, Chaffinch and Blackcap. Alan took the group into Wykeham Forest for some pre-breakfast birding. Nearing the ridge we became aware of the wind that was to become a feature of the day as it strengthened to almost gale force in the afternoon. We had no sooner started to scan than two Common Buzzards came into view. We spotted some common birds including Robin, Great Tit and Chaffinch but our attention was caught by a Roe Deer as it wandered across the road nearby. On the return to the hotel we stopped for a Yellowhammer perched on the wall next to the road, and we passed a Common Whitethroat.

After a hearty breakfast we all met at 9am to head for the coast, an outing many were looking forward to. First stop was the RSPB Reserve at Bempton Cliffs. We were greeted by lots of Tree Sparrows on the Visitor Centre roof. As we made our way to the cliff path we could see seabirds rising on thermals and our pace quickened. Despite the wind which made using optics a little difficult we had super views of hundreds of seabirds including Puffins, Guillemots, Razorbills and Kittiwakes. The star for some was the magnificent Gannets dancing in the wind as they thermalled past at eye level. We went as far as the Bartlett Nab viewpoint before turning around and on the return getting a second look at the cliffs.

Pleased with our sightings so far we moved on to Flamborough Lighthouse. We left the vehicle in the car park and walked out to the headland. Here we were slightly lower than at Bempton and birds were streaming by the point, mainly heading north. We added new birds including Great Cormorant, Shag, Great Black-backed Gull, Meadow Pipit and Corn Bunting. Also in the surf and difficult to see in the swell we found a Common Seal which added interest to the stop. The morning had flown by (as were the birds in the wind) and as it was lunchtime we adjourned to Headlands Cafe next to the lighthouse for refreshments before driving to Filey.

Our first afternoon stop was Filey Dams Reserve where we spent a pleasant couple of hours. Being a short way from the coast it was slightly less windy and the reserve held a good range of things for us to see. New bird sightings included Mute Swan, Canada Goose, Greylag Goose, Grey Heron, Tufted Duck, Little Grebe, Sand Martin, Lesser Black-backed Gull and Teal. From the second hide we could see into the Owl Box and were captivated by a pair of young Barn Owls who looked almost ready to fledge.

We kept seeing one on the lip of the opening stretching its neck and wings and we willed it to fly so we could witness its first flight but unfortunately it kept returning into the box. Other things of note included Blue-tailed Damsels and a Common Wave moth.

3.45pm saw us at Filey Country Park. As we arrived we had a fleeting glimpse of a Peregrine. With the tide 'in' the lower Brigg was covered by the sea. We walked along Carr Naze, the top of the Brigg, checking the southern side which was sheltered from the wind and quite calm. We were rewarded with views of Common Scoter and Eider Ducks, together with several Grey Seals which were very close to the shore. All too soon it was time to return to our hotel but not before spotting a Sparrowhawk as we left the Country Park.

We met at 6.45pm for our evening meeting and first log call following which we enjoyed a fine three course meal. After dinner, Alan took the group back into Wykeham Forest with the aim of looking for Nightjar. There was still a stiff, cool wind and a lack of insects on the wing, consequently no night birds were found but we did see Brown Hare, Roe Deer, Brown Rat and Common Toad. Also Pipistrelle Bats identified by Alan's Bat detector. We returned to the hotel at 11pm and retired to bed after a full day of activities.

Day 3

Thursday 10th July

North York Moors National Park

Weather: Heavy cloud cover with cool NE wind. Mainly dry. High 14 Deg.C

Breakfast was at 8am after which we set off for a day in and around the North Yorkshire Moors National Park. Initially we looped past the Raptor Watch-point near the hotel checking the forest and farmland before driving west to Pickering and then turned north towards Stape. At first we followed the line of the North York Moors Railway out of Pickering and crossed an area of farmland before we came to the start of the heather moor. Unfortunately the weather wasn't being kind to us but it was dry so we stopped twice where streams crossed the road to explore. Our best finds were Kestrel, Tree Pipit, Common Whitethroat, Common Wave moth, and a Bilberry Bumblebee.

As we continued over Wheeldale Moor we were beginning to think our luck had deserted us when there was a call of 'Grouse' from Phil. We came to a stop and spent some time watching a number of Red Grouse including a mother with 5 young. It was amazing how spirits had been raised! Continuing on we spotted Lapwing, Whinchat and Northern Wheatear and heard Curlew with its characteristic flight song. Another call was heard which wasn't immediately recognised. We stopped and found a Golden Plover chick close to the vehicle. We then found the source of the call as we watched its parent at the opposite side of the road calling frantically.

We ate our picnic lunch on the moors before driving to Goathland to use the facilities. Whilst the group were interested to learn about Goathland and its connection to the TV program 'Heartbeat', and the Railway Station being Hogwarts Station in the Harry Potter movies, we decided it was not the sort of day to spend looking at the memorabilia and we saw the sights from the vehicle before heading to Fen Bog Nature Reserve. One of the specialities here are butterflies but the cold and the wind hampered us. We did see Ringlet and a number of grass moths before we found lots of newly emerged Five-spot Burnet moths together with cocoons with empty pupal cases on plant stems. We also found a Common Lizard and a minute micro-moth *Argyresthia goedartella* which, when examined under a magnifying glass was beautifully marked with a shiny bronze sheen.

Next we headed south towards Pickering and turned onto the Forest Drive through Dalby Forest exiting back into Langdale. We made our final stop here to look over Troutdale and back towards the raptor view point we had visited on the first day. We spent an hour here being entertained by a family of Common Whitethroats with young in an adjacent bush being fed by parents, and feeding spare apples from our picnic to two horses in the field next to us. Unfortunately the skies only contained Woodpigeons, Carrion Crows and Herring Gulls so nearing 5pm we started to head back to our hotel. As we left the valley a few drops of rain began to fall and a Kestrel passed over the vehicle carrying some small prey.

Our route back took us along Forge Valley so we stopped at the birdwatchers' car park where there are feed tables on the surrounding fence and spent a pleasant 15 minutes watching Chaffinch, Robin and Coal Tit using the tables, a Jay in the trees behind, and 2 Grey Squirrels around a peanut feeder attached to a tree. A pleasant end to the day and we arrived back at our hotel at 5.30pm. We met for our last evening meeting and log call at 6.45pm. Once we had recorded the day's sightings Alan thanked all the group members for their enthusiasm, for all joining in and making it a pleasurable trip. We were joined at our last evening dinner by Duncan, Elvira and Om's Grandson.

After an enjoyable meal we checked the weather and the rain had stopped and the wind eased so we decided we should have one last try for Nightjar. Four members accompanied Alan back to the forest clearing. As night fell a bird was seen to rise from the vegetation and shortly afterwards a Woodcock flew overhead. A couple of times a Tawny Owl was heard to hoot but alas, no Nightjar. Once the light had gone we made our way back to the hotel and to bed.

Day 4

Friday 11th July

Wykeham Raptor Watch-point and Departure

Weather: After overnight rain dry with hazy sunshine and a light breeze. High 18 Deg.C

Alan found a Bee Moth in his room which he showed to the group at breakfast before letting it make a bid for freedom at the front door. We breakfasted at 8am then said our 'goodbyes' to Elvira and Om as they were staying to see their family. The rest of the group packed their bags, said their thanks to the hotel staff, and then met at 9.30am to set off for the morning. We had decided that the best thing to do on our last day was to try and see more raptors. We therefore headed to the Raptor Watch-point, making a stop at Highwood Brow en route. As we walked to the viewing area we found a dead shrew on the track and listened to Coal Tit and Crossbill in the trees.

At the watch-point we settled in for some serious raptor watching. The conditions were much better than the first visit with a lighter breeze and some warmth in the air. This meant that insects were active all around us and we recorded a selection of bees and hoverflies, saw numerous Ringlet butterflies and added Small Skipper to our list. We also saw two Common Lizards and again saw the Adder. In the trees behind we saw Siskin and Goldcrest, and a Bullfinch was heard wheezing. Initially our raptor count was two Common Buzzards displaying well in front of us, a Kestrel flying close by at eye level, and looking down we saw a Sparrowhawk low over some treetops.

Just as our departure time was nearing, a raptor was spotted quite a distant away. It was identified as a Goshawk but as we were watching it and talking about it, it became evident that people were looking at two different birds. Eventually the other was identified as a Honey Buzzard. It would have been nice for the group to have had better views but the two birds disappeared from view not to be seen again.

As it neared 1pm it was time to head for the Railway Station. Anne had departed by car a little earlier, Jude said her farewells before departing in her car, and the last few set off for Scarborough. Driving down from the watch-point there was one more treat in store as we watched a Common Buzzard being mobbed by a Kestrel over the vehicle. We reached Scarborough Railway Station at 1.30pm and Tanya, Jem and Phil said their farewells before leaving to catch trains home.

The group had seen many new and interesting things during their time in Yorkshire. The weather could have been kinder. With the strong wind birds and butterflies had been a challenge, especially on the Moors, but on the positive side we hadn't got wet and had enjoyed a super break in a lovely part of the country with true Yorkshire hospitality. Thanks must go to all members of the group for joining in, sharing knowledge, helping one another and making it another wonderful Naturetrek tour.

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Species List

Birds (✓ = recorded but not counted; H = heard only)

	Common name	Scientific name	July			
			8	9	10	11
1	Red Grouse	<i>Lagopus lagopus scotica</i>			9	
2	Common Pheasant	<i>Phasianus colchicus</i>	2	1	6	1
3	Greylag Goose	<i>Anser anser</i>		2		
4	Canada Goose	<i>Branta canadensis</i>		1		
5	Mute Swan	<i>Cygnus olor</i>		2		
6	Mallard	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>		20	5	
7	Eurasian Teal	<i>Anas crecca</i>		6		
8	Tufted Duck	<i>Aythya fuligula</i>		7		
9	Common Eider	<i>Somateria mollissima</i>		5		
10	Common Scoter	<i>Melanitta nigra</i>		9		
11	Northern Fulmar	<i>Fulmarus glacialis</i>		5		
12	Little Grebe	<i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>		1		
13	Grey Heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>		2		
14	Northern Gannet	<i>Morus bassanus</i>		500+		
15	European Shag	<i>Phalacrocorax aristotelis</i>		3		
16	Great Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>		6		
17	European Honey Buzzard	<i>Pernis apivorus</i>				1
18	Eurasian Sparrowhawk	<i>Accipiter nisus</i>		1		1
19	Northern Goshawk	<i>Accipiter gentilis</i>				1
20	Common Buzzard	<i>Buteo buteo</i>	1	2	H	4
21	Common Kestrel	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>			2	2
22	Peregrine Falcon	<i>Falco peregrinus</i>		1		
23	Common Moorhen	<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>		8		
24	Eurasian Coot	<i>Fulica atra</i>		6		
25	Northern Lapwing	<i>Vanellus vanellus</i>			4	
26	European Golden Plover	<i>Pluvialis apricaria</i>			4	
27	Eurasian Woodcock	<i>Scolopax rusticola</i>			1	
28	Eurasian Curlew	<i>Numenius arquata</i>			H	
29	Black-legged Kittiwake	<i>Rissa tridactyla</i>		500+		
30	Black-headed Gull	<i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i>		7	4	
31	Great Black-backed Gull	<i>Larus marinus</i>		1		
32	European Herring Gull	<i>Larus argentatus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓
33	Lesser Black-backed Gull	<i>Larus fuscus</i>		2		
34	Common Guillemot	<i>Uria aalge</i>		300+		
35	Razorbill	<i>Alca torda</i>		300+		
36	Atlantic Puffin	<i>Fratercula arctica</i>		50+		
37	Rock (Feral) Dove	<i>Columba livia</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓
38	Stock Dove	<i>Columba oenas</i>		2	3	
39	Common Wood Pigeon	<i>Columba palumbus</i>	30+	50+	50+	30+
40	Eurasian Collared Dove	<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>	1	2	2	2
41	Western Barn Owl	<i>Tyto alba</i>		2		
42	Tawny Owl	<i>Strix aluco</i>			H	
43	Common Swift	<i>Apus apus</i>	20+	10	2	4
44	Eurasian Jay	<i>Garrulus glandarius</i>			3	
45	Eurasian Magpie	<i>Pica pica</i>		6	1	
46	Western Jackdaw	<i>Coloeus monedula</i>		10	6	
47	Rook	<i>Corvus frugilegus</i>		2	10	

	Common name	Scientific name	July			
			8	9	10	11
48	Carrion Crow	<i>Corvus corone</i>	10	30	30	15
49	Coal Tit	<i>Parus ater</i>		1	1	H
50	Great Tit	<i>Parus major</i>		1	2	
51	Eurasian Blue Tit	<i>Cyanistes caeruleus</i>			3	
52	Eurasian Skylark	<i>Alauda arvensis</i>	1	2	1	
53	Sand Martin	<i>Riparia riparia</i>		6		
54	Barn Swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>	20+	20+	20+	15+
55	Common House Martin	<i>Delichon urbicum</i>	6	18	10	5
56	Common Chiffchaff	<i>Phylloscopus collybita</i>	H	H	1	H
57	Eurasian Blackcap	<i>Sylvia atricapilla</i>		H	H	H
58	Common Whitethroat	<i>Sylvia communis</i>		1	5	1
59	Goldcrest	<i>Regulus regulus</i>				2
60	Eurasian Wren	<i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>		H	3	2
61	Common Starling	<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>		6	1	
62	Common Blackbird	<i>Turdus merula</i>	4	8	10	8
63	Song Thrush	<i>Turdus philomelos</i>		1	2	
64	Mistle Thrush	<i>Turdus viscivorus</i>	1			1
65	European Robin	<i>Erithacus rubecula</i>	1	1	2	1
66	Whinchat	<i>Saxicola rubetra</i>			2	
67	Northern Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe oenanthe</i>			1	
68	House Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>		✓	✓	✓
69	Eurasian Tree Sparrow	<i>Passer montanus</i>		20		
70	Dunnock	<i>Prunella modularis</i>		H		
71	Pied Wagtail	<i>Motacilla alba</i>		2	1	1
72	Meadow Pipit	<i>Anthus pratensis</i>		3	10	
73	Tree Pipit	<i>Anthus trivialis</i>			2	1
74	Common Chaffinch	<i>Fringilla coelebs</i>	1	2	12	2
75	European Greenfinch	<i>Chloris chloris</i>	1	2	4	
76	Eurasian Siskin	<i>Carduelis spinus</i>				1
77	European Goldfinch	<i>Carduelis carduelis</i>	1	2	6	
78	Common Linnet	<i>Carduelis cannabina</i>	2	3	5	
79	Eurasian Bullfinch	<i>Pyrrhula pyrrhula</i>				H
80	Corn Bunting	<i>Emberiza calandra</i>		1		
81	Yellowhammer	<i>Emberiza citrinella</i>		1	1	2

Mammals

1	Rabbit	<i>Oryctolagus cuniculus</i>	✓	✓		
2	European Roe Deer	<i>Capreolus capreolus</i>		✓		
3	Grey Seal	<i>Halichoerus grypus</i>		✓		
4	Harbour (Common) Seal	<i>Phoca vitulina</i>		✓		
5	European (Brown) Hare	<i>Lepus europaeus</i>		✓		
6	Brown Rat	<i>Rattus norvegicus</i>		✓		
7	Common Pipistrelle Bat	<i>Pipistrellus pipistrellus</i>		✓		
8	Grey Squirrel	<i>Sciurus carolinensis</i>			✓	

Reptiles & Amphibians

1	Adder	<i>Vipera berus</i>	✓			✓
2	Common Lizard	<i>Zootoca vivipara</i>			✓	✓
3	Common Toad	<i>Bufo bufo</i>		✓		

	Common name	Scientific name	July			
			8	9	10	11

Butterflies

1	Ringlet	<i>Aphantopus hyperantus</i>	✓	✓		✓
2	Small Skipper	<i>Thymelicus sylvestris</i>				✓

Moths

1	Marbled Beauty	<i>Cryphia domestica</i>	✓			
2	Common Wave	<i>Cabera exanthemata</i>		✓	✓	
3	Five-spot Burnet	<i>Zygaena trifolii</i>		✓	✓	
4	Six-spot Burnet	<i>Zygaena filipendulae</i>			✓	
5	Barred Yellow	<i>Cidaria fulvata</i>		✓		
6	Silver-ground Carpet	<i>Xanthorhoe montanata</i>			✓	
7	Crambid Grass Moth	<i>Catoptria margaritella</i>			✓	
8	Crambid Grass Moth	<i>Agriphila tristella</i>			✓	
9	Argyresthid Micro	<i>Argyresthia goedartella</i>			✓	
10	Bee Moth	<i>Aphomia sociella</i>				✓

Damselflies

1	Blue-tailed Damselfly	<i>Ischnura elegans</i>		✓		
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Bees

1	White-tailed Bumblebee	<i>Bombus lucorum</i>	✓			✓
2	Common Carder	<i>Bombus pascuorum</i>		✓		✓
3	Bilberry Bumblebee	<i>Bombus monticola</i>			✓	

Hoverflies

1	Marmalade Hoverfly	<i>Episyrphus balteatus</i>				✓
2	(white band on abdomen)	<i>Volucella pellucens</i>				✓

Scorpion Flies

1	Scorpion fly sp.					✓
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Soldier Beetles

1	Bloodsucker	<i>Rhagonycha fulva</i>			✓	
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Grasshoppers

1	Common Green Grasshopper	<i>Omocestus viridulus</i>			✓	
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