

The Great British Bird Race - Kent

Naturetrek Tour Report

28th – 30th January 2026



Red-flanked Bluetail

Tour report by Andy Warren



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

Participants: Andy Warren (leader) with five Naturetrek clients

Day 1

Wednesday 28th January

After collecting two clients from Faversham rail station, we met up with the other three at The White Horse in Boughton-under-Blean. After a quick change, we set off for Hunters Lodge near Crookham Hill, at the extreme western edge of Kent.

Arriving at exactly 2.00pm in bright, sunny conditions with no wind, we squelched our way into the woodland in search of the wintering Red-flanked Bluetail, which had been present for several weeks. I thought we would have the place to ourselves, but a dozen or so other birders were wandering round, with a couple having seen the bird shortly before we pulled up.

Rather than stand and wait, we explored some of the small paths, connecting with Goldcrest, Nuthatch, Blue, Great, Long-tailed and Coal Tits (the latter only heard), and a lovely male Firecrest which proceeded to follow us around.

Back at the bluetail spot, the bird suddenly appeared and we all got onto it, although for some it was rather a brief view as it flicked through the vegetation. A Great Spotted Woodpecker showed as we left the site.

A short drive found us at Bough Beech Reservoir in glorious sunshine, but becoming increasingly cold. Wildfowl initially included Canada Goose, Mallard, Teal, Gadwall, Wigeon, Tufted Duck and Pochard, but as the afternoon wore on we spotted secretive Mandarins, and then a redhead Goosander. Great Crested Grebes, Cormorants, Grey Herons, Coots and gulls added to the list, along with overflying Fieldfare and Buzzard, and roosting Stock Doves and Woodpigeons. A lovely male Kingfisher shone like a gemstone against the backdrop of brown bushes he was perched in. There was surprisingly no Moorhen. A Marsh Tit calling in the distance was seen by some, but not enough of us, and it had to be recorded as heard only, as did a Green Woodpecker.

As night fell, we stood next to a wood where Woodcock were supposed to fly out to feed in the fields, but we had no luck, and saw just a few Fallow Deer. We returned to The White Horse for dinner at 7.00pm.

Day total = 39

Day 2

Thursday 29th January

Breakfast was at 7.00am, and we were on the road by 7.45am. The first port of call was Faversham Creek and the sewage treatment works. It was a cold and frosty start, but overcast, slightly misty and rather dull. Lots of Pied Wagtails, a couple of Grey Wagtails flying past, and a few gulls were the starters, followed by a singing Cetti's Warbler in reeds along a small watercourse. About ten or so Chiffchaffs were flitting through the bushes, with a Siberian Chiffchaff also noted, although this was unfortunately not countable as a full species. Two cracking male Firecrests foraging together were a bonus, but there was no sign of either the Pallas's Warbler or the Blackcap which had been present just a few days earlier.

Turning to the nearby creek, which was close to high tide, Oystercatchers, Redshanks and a Greenshank were waiting for the water level to drop, while Meadow Pipits and at least two or three Water Pipits were flying around. A distant Green Woodpecker was observed flying up to a tree.

From Faversham we went over to Stodmarsh, calling first at a minor road which looked out over Collard's Lake. Here, a Slavonian Grebe was overwintering, and we soon spotted it, albeit distantly. Several Little and Cattle Egrets were feeding among cows in an adjacent field, and Red Kites flew over.

On the main part of the reserve, we noted large numbers of ducks, including Shovelers new for the list, and then, unexpectedly, a Green Sandpiper. There were no Bearded Tits in the reeds, and squealing Water Rails were only heard. Siskins in the Alders were not accompanied by Redpolls as they had been the weekend before, but two very accommodating Treecreepers and a Green Woodpecker were welcome additions. We still saw no Moorhens, although we did hear a couple.

By now the wind was picking up, and it was blowing strongly from the east as we reached Foreness Point. Ring-necked Parakeets had been noted as we drove through Margate, and from the headland, sheltering behind some buildings, we counted five Eiders, numerous Shags, a passing Fulmar, several Red-throated Divers, both Razorbills and Guillemots, and new waders including Purple Sandpiper, Turnstone, Curlew, Grey and Ringed Plovers and Dunlin. Kestrel and a pair of Stonechats were noted in the grassland.

From Margate we went to Sheppey. At Leysdown-on-Sea, the tide was miles out, and it was too windy to see anything properly, so we opted for Shellness, where the expected Short-eared Owl and Hen Harrier were sadly absent. Distant Marsh Harriers, Greylag and White-fronted Geese, and a flypast Corn Bunting added to the day's tally, but there was little else, so we headed off to the Capel Fleet raptor watchpoint. We had to reverse along the lane to a layby when two large tractors came through, but this allowed us to spot several Red-legged Partridges which we wouldn't have seen otherwise.

It was getting late by the time we pulled up at the watchpoint, and surprisingly it was all locked up. Several Marsh Harriers flew past, but there was no Hen Harrier or other raptors. A murmuration of Starlings put on quite a show, and as we were just about to leave a Barn Owl flew past.

Back at Boughton-under-Blean, we drove to the far end of the village to the edge of some woodland, to try our luck with Tawny Owls. Although they returned calls to my mimicry, they did not appear, and it was another case of heard only. We enjoyed dinner and went to bed after a long, exciting day in the field.

Day total of new species = 53

Running total = 92 species

Day 3

Friday 30th January

It rained quite heavily during the night, and it was still raining as we breakfasted; it continued wet when we disembarked at the local churchyard. Our targets here were Jay and Greenfinch, and although we saw two Jays, we only heard a Greenfinch. Song Thrush was new for the list.

From Boughton-under-Blean we drove to Oare Marshes, and an unforgettable experience. Pausing briefly in the layby next to the main pool bathed in sunshine, we added Pintail, Mute Swan and Lapwing. Parking at the end of the lane, we looked out over the river, which was at full high tide. Brent Geese were feeding in the flooded saltmarsh, while Oystercatchers and a small flock of Avocets were resting rather distantly at the water's edge.

Waders were very thin on the ground due to the high water levels, and we had to search for the high tide roosts. These were very distant, but flocks of Knots and Dunlins including Grey Plovers and Black-tailed Godwits were counted. A far-off flock of Golden Plovers flew past, and then a Peregrine was spotted hunting along the estuary. Small groups of Shelducks were dotted around the area. Several white blobs on the opposite side at Elmley turned out to be a Great White Egret and two Spoonbills, with two more Spoonbills seen in flight on our side of the river. As we turned back to the marshes, a Common Snipe flew past, with several Linnets, Water Pipits, Rock Pipits and Skylarks also noted. A Water Rail was heard but not seen. As we drove off, we stopped again at the layby. As we pulled up, a Bittern suddenly flew up out of the adjacent ditch and stood on the grass bank just a couple of metres away from the van! It paused for a moment, stretching its head right up and then flew off across the marsh to a section of reedbed. We were all amazed, and I don't think any of us will get such a close view again. Wow!

From Oare. We made a cross-country drive to Romney Marsh and Ashentree Lane. Here we soon connected with the wintering Bewick's Swan flock, but had a real surprise when a client noticed some nearby grey geese. These turned out to be four Tundra Bean Geese and three Pink-footed Geese! Lots of gulls including Lesser Black-backed and Common were feeding in the fields, with flocks of Fieldfares and a few Redwings in the hedgerows. Two Sparrowhawks were observed, and at last we saw a Moorhen.

Time was against us as we drove down to Dungeness, so the stint in the hide overlooking the ARC Pit was brief. Goldeneye was the target, and these were quickly bagged. Unbelievably, the main reserve was closed for a movie shoot and we were not allowed in, so we spent the last hour overlooking The Patch, a warm water outfall off the nuclear power station. It was very windy, but we were able to shelter behind the seawatching hide (which was also locked).

A few Gannets, several Kittiwakes, more Guillemots and Red-throated Divers flew past, while two first winter Caspian Gulls stood on the shingle next to Great Black-backed and Herring Gulls. Surprisingly no Mediterranean Gulls were present, and no mergansers or scoters.

And that was it. At 2.00pm sharp we stopped looking and adjourned to a local café for coffee and cakes, and a final count up.

Day total of new species = 30

Grand total = 122 species (5 heard only)

Likely or somewhat likely species missed were: Whooper Swan, Hen Harrier, Merlin, Grey Partridge, Bar-tailed Godwit, Ruff, Sanderling, Spotted Redshank, Woodcock, Mediterranean Gull, Little Owl, Short-eared Owl, Mistle Thrush, Blackcap, Bearded Tit, Raven, Bullfinch, Brambling, Redpoll, Tree Sparrow and Yellowhammer. On the 29th, other birders saw Black-throated and Great Northern Divers and Little Gulls off Foreland, Greater Scaup at Stodmarsh, Black Redstart and Snow Bunting at Reculver, and Goshawk at Bough Beech. With more time I'm sure we could have connected with some of the above, and perhaps Common Scoters and Red-breasted Merganser, and maybe even the overwintering Lesser Whitethroat at Lydd. But 122 was still a very respectable total!

Receive our e-newsletter

Join the Naturetrek email list and be the first to hear about new tours, additional departures and new dates, tour reports and special offers.

naturetrek.co.uk/e-newsletter-signup

Scan to
sign up!



Social Media

We're social! Follow us on Instagram, Facebook, Bluesky and X and be the first to hear about the launch of new tours, offers, exciting sightings and photos from our recently returned holidays.



[instagram.com/naturetrek_wildlife_holidays](https://www.instagram.com/naturetrek_wildlife_holidays)



[facebook.com/naturetrekwildlifeholidays](https://www.facebook.com/naturetrekwildlifeholidays)



naturetrek.bsky.social



x.com/naturetrektours (formerly Twitter)

Species lists

Birds (H=heard only)

Common name	Scientific name	January 2026		
		28	29	30
Brent Goose	<i>Branta bernicla</i>			✓
Canada Goose	<i>Branta canadensis</i>	✓		
Greylag Goose	<i>Anser anser</i>		✓	✓
Pink-footed Goose	<i>Anser brachyrhynchus</i>			✓
Tundra Bean Goose	<i>Anser serrirostris</i>			✓
Greater White-fronted Goose	<i>Anser albifrons</i>		✓	
Mute Swan	<i>Cygnus olor</i>			✓
Bewick's Swan	<i>Cygnus columbianus</i>			✓
Egyptian Goose	<i>Alopochen aegyptiaca</i>		✓	✓
Common Shelduck	<i>Tadorna tadorna</i>		✓	✓
Mandarin Duck	<i>Aix galericulata</i>	✓		
Northern Shoveler	<i>Spatula clypeata</i>		✓	✓
Gadwall	<i>Mareca strepera</i>	✓	✓	✓
Eurasian Wigeon	<i>Mareca penelope</i>	✓	✓	✓
Mallard	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>	✓	✓	✓
Northern Pintail	<i>Anas acuta</i>			✓
Eurasian Teal	<i>Anas crecca</i>	✓	✓	✓
Common Pochard	<i>Aythya ferina</i>	✓	✓	✓
Tufted Duck	<i>Aythya fuligula</i>	✓	✓	✓
Common Eider	<i>Somateria mollissima</i>		✓	✓
Common Goldeneye	<i>Bucephala clangula</i>			✓
Goosander	<i>Mergus merganser</i>	✓		
Common Pheasant	<i>Phasianus colchicus</i>	✓	✓	✓
Red-legged Partridge	<i>Alectoris rufa</i>		✓	
Rock Dove	<i>Columba livia</i>	✓	✓	✓
Stock Dove	<i>Columba oenas</i>	✓	✓	
Common Wood Pigeon	<i>Columba palumbus</i>	✓	✓	✓
Eurasian Collared Dove	<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>		✓	✓
Water Rail	<i>Rallus aquaticus</i>		H	H
Common Moorhen	<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>		H	✓
Eurasian Coot	<i>Fulica atra</i>	✓	✓	✓
Little Grebe	<i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>		✓	✓
Great Crested Grebe	<i>Podiceps cristatus</i>	✓	✓	✓
Slavonian Grebe	<i>Podiceps auritus</i>		✓	
Eurasian Oystercatcher	<i>Haematopus ostralegus</i>		✓	✓
Pied Avocet	<i>Recurvirostra avosetta</i>			✓
Grey Plover	<i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>		✓	✓
European Golden Plover	<i>Pluvialis apricaria</i>			✓
Common Ringed Plover	<i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>		✓	
Northern Lapwing	<i>Vanellus vanellus</i>			✓
Eurasian Curlew	<i>Numenius arquata</i>		✓	✓
Black-tailed Godwit	<i>Limosa limosa</i>			✓
Common Snipe	<i>Gallinago gallinago</i>			✓
Green Sandpiper	<i>Tringa ochropus</i>		✓	
Common Redshank	<i>Tringa totanus</i>		✓	✓
Common Greenshank	<i>Tringa nebularia</i>		✓	
Ruddy Turnstone	<i>Arenaria interpres</i>		✓	✓
Red Knot	<i>Calidris canutus</i>			✓
Dunlin	<i>Calidris alpina</i>		✓	✓
Purple Sandpiper	<i>Calidris maritima</i>		✓	

Common name	Scientific name	January 2026		
		28	29	30
Black-legged Kittiwake	<i>Rissa tridactyla</i>			✓
Black-headed Gull	<i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i>	✓	✓	✓
Common Gull	<i>Larus canus</i>		✓	✓
Caspian Gull	<i>Larus cachinnans</i>			✓
European Herring Gull	<i>Larus argentatus</i>		✓	✓
Great Black-backed Gull	<i>Larus marinus</i>		✓	✓
Lesser Black-backed Gull	<i>Larus fuscus</i>			✓
Razorbill	<i>Alca torda</i>		✓	
Common Guillemot	<i>Uria aalge</i>		✓	✓
Red-throated Diver	<i>Gavia stellata</i>		✓	✓
Northern Fulmar	<i>Fulmarus glacialis</i>		✓	
Northern Gannet	<i>Morus bassanus</i>			✓
Great Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>	✓	✓	✓
European Shag	<i>Gulosus aristotelis</i>		✓	
Eurasian Spoonbill	<i>Platalea leucorodia</i>			✓
Eurasian Bittern	<i>Botaurus stellaris</i>			✓
Little Egret	<i>Egretta garzetta</i>		✓	✓
Great Egret	<i>Ardea alba</i>			✓
Western Cattle Egret	<i>Ardea ibis</i>		✓	✓
Grey Heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>	✓		✓
Eurasian Sparrowhawk	<i>Accipiter nisus</i>			✓
Western Marsh Harrier	<i>Circus aeruginosus</i>		✓	✓
Red Kite	<i>Milvus milvus</i>		✓	✓
Common Buzzard	<i>Buteo buteo</i>	✓	✓	✓
Western Barn Owl	<i>Tyto alba</i>		✓	
Tawny Owl	<i>Strix aluco</i>		H	
Common Kingfisher	<i>Alcedo atthis</i>	✓		
Great Spotted Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos major</i>	✓		
European Green Woodpecker	<i>Picus viridis</i>	H	✓	H
Common Kestrel	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>		✓	✓
Peregrine Falcon	<i>Falco peregrinus</i>			✓
Rose-ringed Parakeet	<i>Psittacula krameri</i>		✓	
Eurasian Jay	<i>Garrulus glandarius</i>			✓
Eurasian Magpie	<i>Pica pica</i>	✓	✓	✓
Western Jackdaw	<i>Coloeus monedula</i>	✓	✓	✓
Rook	<i>Corvus frugilegus</i>	H	✓	✓
Carrion Crow	<i>Corvus corone</i>	✓	✓	✓
Coal Tit	<i>Pariparus ater</i>	H		
Marsh Tit	<i>Poecile palustris</i>	H		
Eurasian Blue Tit	<i>Cyanistes caeruleus</i>	✓	✓	✓
Great Tit	<i>Parus major</i>	✓	✓	✓
Eurasian Skylark	<i>Alauda arvensis</i>			✓
Cetti's Warbler	<i>Cettia cetti</i>		✓	✓
Long-tailed Tit	<i>Aegithalos caudatus</i>	✓	✓	
Common Chiffchaff	<i>Phylloscopus collybita</i>		✓	
Common Firecrest	<i>Regulus ignicapilla</i>	✓	✓	
Goldcrest	<i>Regulus regulus</i>	✓	✓	
Eurasian Wren	<i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>		✓	
Eurasian Nuthatch	<i>Sitta europaea</i>	✓		
Eurasian Treecreeper	<i>Certhia familiaris</i>		✓	
Common Starling	<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>		✓	✓
Song Thrush	<i>Turdus philomelos</i>	H	✓	✓
Redwing	<i>Turdus iliacus</i>		✓	✓
Common Blackbird	<i>Turdus merula</i>	✓	✓	✓

Common name	Scientific name	January 2026		
		28	29	30
Fieldfare	<i>Turdus pilaris</i>	✓	✓	✓
European Robin	<i>Erithacus rubecula</i>	✓	✓	✓
Red-flanked Bluetail	<i>Tarsiger cyanurus</i>	✓		
European Stonechat	<i>Saxicola rubicola</i>		✓	
House Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>		✓	✓
Dunnock	<i>Prunella modularis</i>	✓	✓	
Grey Wagtail	<i>Motacilla cinerea</i>		✓	
Pied Wagtail	<i>Motacilla alba</i>		✓	✓
Meadow Pipit	<i>Anthus pratensis</i>		✓	✓
Water Pipit	<i>Anthus spinoletta</i>		✓	
European Rock Pipit	<i>Anthus petrosus</i>			✓
Eurasian Chaffinch	<i>Fringilla coelebs</i>	H	✓	✓
European Greenfinch	<i>Chloris chloris</i>			H
Common Linnet	<i>Linaria cannabina</i>			✓
European Goldfinch	<i>Carduelis carduelis</i>		✓	
Eurasian Siskin	<i>Spinus spinus</i>		✓	
Corn Bunting	<i>Emberiza calandra</i>		✓	
Common Reed Bunting	<i>Emberiza schoeniclus</i>		✓	