

The Great British Bird Race - Gloucestershire

Naturetrek Tour Report

28th – 30th January 2026



Jack Snipe



Tundra Bean, Pink-footed and Barnacle Geese



Reed Bunting



Bramblings

Tour report and photos by Tom Mabbett



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Tour participants: Tom Mabbett (leader) with four Naturetrek clients.

Summary

It was superb three days of birds around Gloucestershire, covering the Forest of Dean, The Cotswolds and the Severn Vale at Slimbridge WWT. A total of 105 species were recorded from 2pm Wednesday to 2pm Friday with many highlights that we duly spent time appreciating. A special flock of Brambling, Hen Harrier, Black-necked Grebe, Barn Owl, Hawfinches, Goshawk, Tundra Bean and White-fronted Geese, Jack Snipe and skies, fields and lakes full of waders and wildfowl were just some of the standout species and experiences. We enjoyed a lot of great birds, saw some mammals too with Wild Boar a highlight and had a lot of fun along the way.

Day 1

Wednesday 28th January

With early check in arranged for this tour, we all met at 1.30pm in the Speech House car park in the Forest of Dean and after introductions and an outline to the tour, we drove the short distance to Parkend and got in position for the start of the race which began at 2pm. As we waited for 2pm to arrive (which seemed to take an eternity) a Mistle Thrush sang away from the top of a lime tree and at 1.58 two Hawfinches flew low overhead! Thankfully the Mistle Thrush kept singing and was the first bird on the list as two finally arrived and we stood here for around 20 minutes, adding around 20 Greenfinch, Siskin, Nuthatch, Chaffinch and Buzzard. Another Hawfinch was in flight but only for some. Thankfully as we walked into Parkend, three Hawfinch were perched in a rather distant larch tree but gave us all good, scoped views of this impressive finch. A Stock Dove and Raven flew over and we ticked some noisy House Sparrows. An excellent start.

Moving on to Cannop Ponds, we put seed down and enjoyed close views of Nuthatch, Coal, Great, Blue and a lovely Marsh Tit. Little Grebe, Mandarin, smart Goosanders, Grey Wagtail, Grey Heron and a cracking female Kingfisher were all enjoyed as the list ticked along nicely.

We then ended the day with a walk past Woorgreens Lake and on to Crabtree Hill. Here the highlight was a flock of 16 Redpoll in a silver birch and a few Linnet, with Song Thrush singing away at various spots. Fifteen Goosander and six Mandarin were on the lake and we heard a Jay - a species which would prove to elude us the rest of the tour! We watched over the lake as darkness fell and then took the very short drive back to the hotel.

After a delicious three course dinner and a recap of where we had been and the species seen, we went back out for a night drive. On the field at the Speech House we had two Woodcock, probing the wet field and on the drive we saw two groups of Wild Boar with one large animal seen close to the road! Around 20 Fallow Deer were also seen. What an excellent and exciting drive. The total bird species stood at 42 by the close of play.

Day 2

Thursday 29th January

We enjoyed a delicious hot breakfast and by 8.15am were outside enjoying birds once more. Just over the car park we had a very low flyover by two cracking calling Hawfinch and a male posed beautifully in the scope at close range. The field was covered in Redwing and a few Mistle Thrush and a super Goshawk flew low overhead. A Pied Wagtail was new for the list. What a start! We stopped at Speech House woodland car park, with only Goldcrest new here and then we were on our way to the Cotswolds.

The first stop was near the village of Hazleton and despite the heavy freezing fog we had amazing views of around 50 Brambling feeding on seed and at least four Corn Bunting. Many of the males were in almost full breeding plumage and it made for a spectacular sight. We travelled on, seeing flocks of Fieldfare, two Stonechat and some Red-legged Partridges, before making our way to a nearby lake in the Cotswold water park. Here we quickly found the Black-necked Grebe that had been there for a few days. It was with a Little Grebe and gave a great comparison.

We then visited pit 114 which was covered in ducks making it a very impressive sight indeed. Big numbers of Pochard, around 30 Red-crested Pochard, Shoveler, Wigeon, Teal, Pintail and two Goldeneye were new. We left just before a team arrived to fence us in on the viewing area! At nearby pit 125 we added Cetti's Warbler which performed by flying across right in front of us. A Reed Bunting fed for ages on a reed head and was a real favourite.

Carrying on, we paused to finally see Long-tailed Tits and after a bit of a wait, had super views of a cracking Hen Harrier! Cotswold birding at its finest! We then finished with some flyover Yellowhammers and brilliant views of a Barn Owl hunting right in front of us. What a bird to end the day with and such great views. It was then back to the hotel for a delicious meal and recap of the day. We were up to 80 species so far and the target to reach 100 was on!

Day 3

Friday 30th January

After a hearty breakfast we were raring to go in the car park at 8.15. The plan today was to head to Slimbridge WWT. Before leaving we had a short 30 minutes in the forest and had cracking views of a lovely Treecreeper.

With no sign of a Jay or Great Spotted Woodpecker we headed off to Slimbridge. On the way we dropped in to Newnham for a very short stop for a chance of Ring-necked Parakeet. Just as we were turning to leave, a Parakeet flew in! Excellent. A brief stop to look over the River Severn soon after added Common Gull and also a distant Great Black-backed Gull. We were ticking along very nicely.

Arriving into Slimbridge we stopped just short on the approach road to scan a field of egrets. At least three Little Egrets were in with around 14 Cattle. At Slimbridge we quickly added Bewick's Swan, a pair of Oystercatcher and Avocet and we then went to the hide where a Jack Snipe had been reported and added this little beauty to our total. A raft of waders followed with Dunlin, Redshank, Ruff and Black-tailed Godwit. A Marsh Harrier flew through and we admired the thousands of birds here. Skies full of Lapwing and Golden Plover, carpets of Wigeon, Teal, Shoveler and single White-fronted Goose. We headed on to the Estuary Tower which gives amazing views out towards the River Severn. This area "The Dumbles" is prime grazing ground for geese and here we quickly saw 12 Tundra Bean Geese, a very unusual sight here and part of the recent influx. There was also a Pink-footed Goose and Barnacle Geese all added to the list. A cracking Peregrine was also seen.

We grabbed some lunch and checked some other hides enjoying more Avocet, closer White-fronted Geese but the new species were drying up somewhat. We then went back to the Tack Piece where so many birds were and on the way finally saw a lovely male Blackcap. Tacking to give itself away and in gentle sub-song. We had realised thanks to Hilary we had overlooked looking carefully for Curlew earlier and with some careful scanning finally found one. A Great White Egret also flew on to the list as the final species. We ended the race on the top of the Estuary Tower scanning for any final species and enjoying the vast number of birds here. It was a brilliant sight.

As 2pm hit, the race came to a close and we had seen 105 species (and heard a Jay)! We enjoyed brilliant close views of the Bean Geese, White-fronts and Pink-footed Goose from here before heading back to the hotel.

It had been a brilliant race. We had seen an amazing array of birds and had a lot of fun along the way. Although it was a race, we spent time watching birds and learning as well, making sure we didn't move on too quickly, particularly from the star species, of which there were many. 105 species placed us 3rd overall only behind Norfolk and Kent! The full results being, Norfolk 120, Kent 115, Glos 105, Somerset 97, Highland 94, Cornwall 94, Hampshire 86 and Northumberland 83. The total species across all counties: 172. As well as the birds we also saw some mammals with the Wild Boar being the highlight mammal wise.



Slimbridge scene with Wigeon, Shelduck and Bewick's Swans

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Species lists

Birds (H = Heard only)

| Common name | Scientific name | January 2026 | | |
|----------------------|-------------------------------|--------------|-----|-----|
| | | 28 | 29 | 30 |
| Canada Goose | <i>Branta canadensis</i> | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Barnacle Goose | <i>Branta leucopsis</i> | | | ✓ |
| Greylag Goose | <i>Anser anser</i> | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Pink-footed Goose | <i>Anser brachyrhynchus</i> | | | 1 |
| Tundra Bean Goose | <i>Anser serrirostris</i> | | | 12 |
| White-fronted Goose | <i>Anser albifrons</i> | | | c15 |
| Mute Swan | <i>Cygnus olor</i> | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Bewick's Swan | <i>Cygnus columbianus</i> | | | ✓ |
| Shelduck | <i>Tadorna tadorna</i> | ✓ | | |
| Mandarin Duck | <i>Aix galericulata</i> | 9 | | |
| Shoveler | <i>Spatula clypeata</i> | | ✓ | ✓ |
| Gadwall | <i>Mareca strepera</i> | | ✓ | ✓ |
| Wigeon | <i>Mareca penelope</i> | | ✓ | ✓ |
| Mallard | <i>Anas platyrhynchos</i> | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Pintail | <i>Anas acuta</i> | | ✓ | ✓ |
| Teal | <i>Anas crecca</i> | | ✓ | ✓ |
| Red-crested Pochard | <i>Netta rufina</i> | | c30 | |
| Pochard | <i>Aythya ferina</i> | | ✓ | ✓ |
| Tufted Duck | <i>Aythya fuligula</i> | | ✓ | ✓ |
| Goldeneye | <i>Bucephala clangula</i> | | 2 | |
| Goosander | <i>Mergus merganser</i> | 18 | 2 | |
| Pheasant | <i>Phasianus colchicus</i> | | ✓ | |
| Red-legged Partridge | <i>Alectoris rufa</i> | | ✓ | |
| Rock Dove | <i>Columba livia</i> | | ✓ | ✓ |
| Stock Dove | <i>Columba oenas</i> | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Woodpigeon | <i>Columba palumbus</i> | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Collared Dove | <i>Streptopelia decaocto</i> | ✓ | | |
| Moorhen | <i>Gallinula chloropus</i> | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Coot | <i>Fulica atra</i> | | ✓ | ✓ |
| Common Crane | <i>Grus grus</i> | | | ✓ |
| Little Grebe | <i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i> | ✓ | ✓ | |
| Great Crested Grebe | <i>Podiceps cristatus</i> | | ✓ | |
| Black-necked Grebe | <i>Podiceps nigricollis</i> | | 1 | |
| Oystercatcher | <i>Haematopus ostralegus</i> | | | 2 |
| Avocet | <i>Recurvirostra avosetta</i> | | | c70 |
| Golden Plover | <i>Pluvialis apricaria</i> | | | ✓ |
| Lapwing | <i>Vanellus vanellus</i> | | ✓ | ✓ |
| Curlew | <i>Numenius arquata</i> | | | ✓ |
| Black-tailed Godwit | <i>Limosa limosa</i> | | | ✓ |
| Jack Snipe | <i>Lymnocyptes minimus</i> | | | 1 |
| Woodcock | <i>Scolopax rusticola</i> | 2 | | |

| Common name | Scientific name | January 2026 | | |
|--------------------------|-----------------------------------|--------------|----|----|
| | | 28 | 29 | 30 |
| Redshank | <i>Tringa totanus</i> | | | ✓ |
| Ruff | <i>Calidris pugnax</i> | | | ✓ |
| Dunlin | <i>Calidris alpina</i> | | | ✓ |
| Black-headed Gull | <i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i> | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Common Gull | <i>Larus canus</i> | | | ✓ |
| Herring Gull | <i>Larus argentatus</i> | ✓ | | ✓ |
| Great Black-backed Gull | <i>Larus marinus</i> | | | ✓ |
| Lesser Black-backed Gull | <i>Larus fuscus</i> | ✓ | | |
| Cormorant | <i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i> | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Little Egret | <i>Egretta garzetta</i> | | | ✓ |
| Great White Egret | <i>Ardea alba</i> | | | ✓ |
| Cattle Egret | <i>Ardea ibis</i> | | 1 | ✓ |
| Grey Heron | <i>Ardea cinerea</i> | ✓ | | ✓ |
| Goshawk | <i>Astur gentilis</i> | | 1 | |
| Marsh Harrier | <i>Circus aeruginosus</i> | | | ✓ |
| Hen Harrier | <i>Circus cyaneus</i> | | 1 | |
| Red Kite | <i>Milvus milvus</i> | | ✓ | |
| Buzzard | <i>Buteo buteo</i> | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Barn Owl | <i>Tyto alba</i> | | ✓ | |
| Kingfisher | <i>Alcedo atthis</i> | 1 | | |
| Kestrel | <i>Falco tinnunculus</i> | | ✓ | ✓ |
| Peregrine | <i>Falco peregrinus</i> | | | ✓ |
| Ring-necked Parakeet | <i>Psittacula krameri</i> | | | ✓ |
| Jay | <i>Garrulus glandarius</i> | H | | |
| Magpie | <i>Pica pica</i> | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Jackdaw | <i>Coloeus monedula</i> | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Rook | <i>Corvus frugilegus</i> | | ✓ | ✓ |
| Carrion Crow | <i>Corvus corone</i> | ✓ | ✓ | |
| Raven | <i>Corvus corax</i> | ✓ | ✓ | |
| Coal Tit | <i>Pariparus ater</i> | ✓ | ✓ | |
| Marsh Tit | <i>Poecile palustris</i> | 1 | | |
| Blue Tit | <i>Cyanistes caeruleus</i> | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Great Tit | <i>Parus major</i> | ✓ | | ✓ |
| Skylark | <i>Alauda arvensis</i> | | ✓ | |
| Cetti's Warbler | <i>Cettia cetti</i> | | ✓ | H |
| Long-tailed Tit | <i>Aegithalos caudatus</i> | | ✓ | |
| Blackcap | <i>Sylvia atricapilla</i> | | | ✓ |
| Goldcrest | <i>Regulus regulus</i> | H | ✓ | ✓ |
| Wren | <i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i> | ✓ | | ✓ |
| Nuthatch | <i>Sitta europaea</i> | ✓ | | |
| Treecreeper | <i>Certhia familiaris</i> | H | | ✓ |
| Starling | <i>Sturnus vulgaris</i> | | ✓ | ✓ |
| Song Thrush | <i>Turdus philomelos</i> | ✓ | | ✓ |
| Mistle Thrush | <i>Turdus viscivorus</i> | ✓ | | ✓ |

| Common name | Scientific name | January 2026 | | |
|---------------|--------------------------------------|--------------|-----|----|
| | | 28 | 29 | 30 |
| Redwing | <i>Turdus iliacus</i> | | ✓ | ✓ |
| Blackbird | <i>Turdus merula</i> | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Fieldfare | <i>Turdus pilaris</i> | | ✓ | |
| Robin | <i>Erithacus rubecula</i> | ✓ | | ✓ |
| 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> | | ✓ | |
| Chaffinch | <i>Fringilla coelebs</i> | ✓ | | ✓ |
| Brambling | <i>Fringilla montifringilla</i> | | c50 | |
| Hawfinch | <i>Coccothraustes coccothraustes</i> | 5 | 2 | |
| Greenfinch | <i>Chloris chloris</i> | c20 | c6 | |
| Linnet | <i>Linaria cannabina</i> | ✓ | ✓ | |
| Redpoll | <i>Acanthis flammea</i> | 16 | | |
| Goldfinch | <i>Carduelis carduelis</i> | ✓ | | ✓ |
| Siskin | <i>Spinus spinus</i> | ✓ | | ✓ |
| Corn Bunting | <i>Emberiza calandra</i> | | 4 | |
| Yellowhammer | <i>Emberiza citrinella</i> | | ✓ | |
| Reed Bunting | <i>Emberiza schoeniclus</i> | | 1 | |

Mammals

| Common name | Scientific name |
|---------------|-----------------------------|
| Wild Boar | <i>Sus scrofa</i> |
| Fallow Deer | <i>Dama dama</i> |
| Muntjac Deer | <i>Muntiacus reevesi</i> |
| Roe Deer | <i>Capreolus capreolus</i> |
| Brown Hare | <i>Lepus europaeus</i> |
| Grey Squirrel | <i>Sciurus carolinensis</i> |