

# The Forest of Dean

Naturetrek Tour Report

13th – 15th March 2020

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Wild Boar



Mandarin Duck



Siskin



Common Crossbill

Report compiled by Tom Mabbett  
Images by Lee Slater



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Tour participants: Tom Mabbett (Leader) with six Naturetrek clients.

## Summary

We enjoyed a wildlife-filled weekend in the wonderful Forest of Dean with many of the specialities seen very well. We had great views and numbers of Hawfinch, close-up Crossbill, Siskin and Redpoll, Dipper and Peregrines, and Goshawk were seen displaying over the vast woodland. Great numbers of common woodland birds were enjoyed, with many coming very close for seed, including many, many Nuthatches! Wild Boar, Fallow Deer and Badger made up the mammal highlights, with a sounder of eight Wild Boar in the daytime a particular highlight.

## Day 1

## Friday 13th March

I met up with the group at 6.30pm and, after an introduction and delicious dinner, we headed out with the spotlight to see what we could find. Touring the roads not far from base, we had great views of Fallow Deer, with around 25 seen, a Fox and eventually found a cracking Wild Boar. A very large one too! We glimpsed two Tawny Owls too, before getting back to the hotel where a small herd of Fallow Deer were on the field.

## Day 2

## Saturday 14th March

We headed out at 6.45am and went down to Parkend as our first port of call. Three Hawfinch were soon seen dropping into lime trees and, getting into position, we managed to get some nice views. There was a lot of calling and we were delighted with a great start. Treecreepers and Nuthatches were enjoyed too, and after a short walk at Parkend Church, we returned to the hotel. From the hotel car park, we enjoyed a pair of Mandarin prospecting a nest site mid-way up a large oak.

After breakfast we were out again, and first had a look over the field from the hotel car park. Around 40 Redwing were seen worming and, surprisingly, a cracking Hawfinch was hopping around with them! Another was seen briefly calling in the top of an oak and we decided to walk around woodland near to the hotel to try and see where they were heading. With calls soon loud and clear, we ended up finding a super flock of around 15 birds and had some lovely scope views.

After throwing some seed on a feeding log nearby, we enjoyed lots of the common woodland birds with tits and close-up Nuthatches, before heading to Crabtree Hill for a walk. We enjoyed a great walk here heading up onto the glade here. The weather was up and down, but as the rain eased, we had some super sightings. At least four Stonechat were seen and, out of nowhere, the wintering Great Grey Shrike popped up and we had some wonderful scope-filling views and witnessed some great behaviour. The bird was seen hovering and then we had super views of it eating a lizard!

Siskins and a couple of Crossbill flew over as we made our way back, with Long-tailed Tits and Jay also seen. A flock of around 10 Hawfinch flew over shortly before we reached the minibus.

With the sun out, we headed up to New Fancy View to enjoy this special view of the forest. Two cracking male Bullfinches showed very well on the walk up and three different Goshawk were seen from here and, although a little distant, we all managed to see some display flight. A pair of super Crossbills then landed close in front of us giving exceptional views. On the way to lunch, we stopped suddenly and turned around as a sounder of eight Wild Boar were seen rooting around close to the road. We had excellent prolonged views from the minibus before they moved away.

After lunch we tried without luck to see Dipper behind the pub and had a brief stop on the way to Brierley, again putting some seed down. There was a wonderful response here, with birds piling in to the seed including a super male Siskin.

The afternoon, sadly, saw poor weather set in and was rather gloomy which didn't help the birding. We did see a Goshawk at the start of the walk, drifting over the ridge here, and had a small mixed flock of Siskin and Redpoll before heading back to the hotel via Cannop ponds where we had close views of Mandarins and a Little Grebe was new for the weekend.

After another great dinner Lee and I went out for a drive again to see what we could find. We didn't get far before noticing a lot of Toads were migrating, trying to get into Cannop Ponds. Many had been hit, sadly, but we saved around 40 before carrying on, and were then rewarded with super views of a Badger.

## Day 3

## Sunday 15th March

Some of us headed out at 7am, before breakfast, and headed down to a nearby old railway line for a walk alongside a river. We had excellent views of a Dipper here, and Marsh Tit was also noted.

After breakfast we headed out but, sadly again, the weather was not on our side. We toggled up and went for a walk around Nagshead RSPB reserve. We enjoyed this wonderful ancient woodland, noting Goldcrest and a very brief Hawfinch, but the rain started to fall hard and we returned to the minibus.

We walked again by the river, but no Dipper this time; instead, two Marsh Tits came to the seed, giving really close views. Despite the rain falling hard, some of us had a look at Woorgreens Lake, where a single Goosander was enjoyed, along with Teal, and a Snipe was flushed. A flock of Siskins was seen and we had excellent views of four Redpoll feeding in an Alder, some with a lovely pink wash coming through. We were soaked, but it had been a productive time.

After lunch the weather really improved, and we headed to Symonds Yat in the sun! Nearby, just across into Herefordshire, we had a short stop where we enjoyed two cracking Little Owls with Skylarks singing and a field covered in Common Gulls.

At the viewpoint we had great views of the Peregrine pair, and at one point a third bird powered low over us. Awesome birds. Lots of Buzzards were soaring with Ravens too, and on the river below there was a pair of Goosander.

Heading back to the minibus, a Raven gave a great flyby and perched for a bit, sadly not enough in the open for Sean to get a photo, and we decided to finish the weekend watching over New Fancy. We looked for Adders here, but sadly, it was just too cool for them to be out. However, we enjoyed another distant Goshawk and even better views of a stunning male Crossbill glowing in the sun.

As the weather again turned, we headed back to the hotel, ran through the list again and said our farewells.

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## Species Lists

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

	Common name	Scientific name	Trip	March		
				13	14	15
1	Red-legged Partridge	<i>Alectoris rufa</i>	✓			✓
2	Common Pheasant	<i>Phasianus colchicus</i>	✓		✓	✓
3	Canada Goose	<i>Branta canadensis</i>	✓		✓	✓
4	Greylag Goose	<i>Anser anser</i>	✓		✓	✓
5	Mute Swan	<i>Cygnus olor</i>	✓		✓	✓
6	Mandarin Duck	<i>Aix galericulata</i>	✓		✓	✓
7	Mallard	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>	✓		✓	✓
8	Eurasian Teal	<i>Anas crecca</i>	✓			✓
9	Tufted Duck	<i>Aythya fuligula</i>	✓		✓	
10	Common Merganser (Goosander)	<i>Mergus merganser</i>	✓			✓
11	Feral Pigeon	<i>Columba livia domestica</i>	✓			✓
12	Stock Dove	<i>Columba oenas</i>	✓		✓	✓
13	Common Wood Pigeon	<i>Columba palumbus</i>	✓		✓	✓
14	Eurasian Collared Dove	<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>	✓		✓	✓
15	Common Moorhen	<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>	✓		✓	✓
16	Eurasian Coot	<i>Fulica atra</i>	✓	H	✓	
17	Little Grebe	<i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>	✓		✓	
18	Common Snipe	<i>Gallinago gallinago</i>	✓			✓
19	Mew (Common) Gull	<i>Larus canus</i>	✓			✓
20	European Herring Gull	<i>Larus argentatus</i>	✓		✓	
21	Lesser Black-backed Gull	<i>Larus fuscus</i>	✓		✓	✓
22	Great Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>	✓			✓
23	Grey Heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>	✓		✓	✓
24	Northern Goshawk	<i>Accipiter gentilis</i>	✓		✓	✓
25	Common Buzzard	<i>Buteo buteo</i>	✓		✓	✓
26	Tawny Owl	<i>Strix aluco</i>	✓	✓		H
27	Little Owl	<i>Athene noctua</i>	✓			2
28	Great Spotted Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos major</i>	✓		✓	✓

	Common name	Scientific name	Trip	March		
				13	14	15
29	European Green Woodpecker	<i>Picus viridis</i>	✓		✓	
30	Peregrine Falcon	<i>Falco peregrinus</i>	✓			✓
31	Great Grey Shrike	<i>Lanius exubitor</i>	✓		✓	
32	Eurasian Jay	<i>Garrulus glandarius</i>	✓		✓	✓
33	Eurasian Magpie	<i>Pica pica</i>	✓		✓	✓
34	Western Jackdaw	<i>Coloeus monedula</i>	✓		✓	✓
35	Carrion Crow	<i>Corvus corone</i>	✓		✓	✓
36	Northern Raven	<i>Corvus corax</i>	✓		✓	✓
37	Coal Tit	<i>Parus ater</i>	✓		✓	✓
38	Marsh Tit	<i>Poecile palustris</i>	✓			✓
39	Eurasian Blue Tit	<i>Cyanistes caeruleus</i>	✓		✓	✓
40	Great Tit	<i>Parus major</i>	✓		✓	✓
41	Eurasian Skylark	<i>Alauda arvensis</i>	✓			✓
42	Long-tailed Tit	<i>Aegithalos caudatus</i>	✓		✓	✓
43	Goldcrest	<i>Regulus regulus</i>	✓		H	✓
44	Eurasian Wren	<i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>	✓		✓	✓
45	Eurasian Nuthatch	<i>Sitta europaea</i>	✓		✓	✓
46	Eurasian Treecreeper	<i>Certhia familiaris</i>	✓		✓	✓
47	Common Starling	<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>	✓		✓	✓
48	Common Blackbird	<i>Turdus merula</i>	✓		✓	✓
49	Redwing	<i>Turdus iliacus</i>	✓		✓	✓
50	Song Thrush	<i>Turdus philomelos</i>	✓		✓	✓
51	Mistle Thrush	<i>Turdus viscivorus</i>	✓		✓	✓
52	European Robin	<i>Erithacus rubecula</i>	✓		✓	✓
53	European Stonechat	<i>Saxicola rubicola</i>	✓		✓	
54	White-throated Dipper	<i>Cinclus cinclus</i>	✓			✓
55	House Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>	✓		✓	✓
56	Dunnock	<i>Prunella modularis</i>	✓		✓	✓
57	Grey Wagtail	<i>Motacilla cinerea</i>	✓		✓	✓
58	Pied Wagtail	<i>Motacilla alba yarrellii</i>	✓		✓	✓
59	Meadow Pipit	<i>Anthus pratensis</i>	✓		✓	✓
60	Common Chaffinch	<i>Fringilla coelebs</i>	✓		✓	✓
61	Hawfinch	<i>Coccothraustes coccothraustes</i>	✓		c25	4
62	Eurasian Bullfinch	<i>Pyrrhula pyrrhula</i>	✓		✓	H
63	European Greenfinch	<i>Chloris chloris</i>	✓		✓	✓
64	Common Linnet	<i>Linaria cannabina</i>	✓			✓
65	Lesser Redpoll	<i>Acanthis cabaret</i>	✓		✓	✓
66	Red Crossbill	<i>Loxia curvirostra</i>	✓		✓	✓
67	European Goldfinch	<i>Carduelis carduelis</i>	✓		✓	✓
68	Eurasian Siskin	<i>Spinus spinus</i>	✓		✓	✓

## Mammals

	Common name	Scientific name	Trip	13	14	15
1	Fallow Deer	<i>Dama dama</i>		c20	✓	✓
2	Wild Boar	<i>Sus scrofa</i>		1	8	
3	European Badger	<i>Meles meles</i>			1	
4	Red Fox	<i>Vulpes vulpes</i>		1	1	1
5	Grey Squirrel	<i>Sciurus carolinensis</i>			✓	✓
6	Toad	<i>Bufa bufa</i>			c50	