

The Peak District in Spring

Naturetrek Tour Report

20th – 23rd May 2021



Woodland at Wyming Brook



Mountain Hare



Avocets



Pied Flycatcher

Report compiled by Matthew Capper
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Tour participants: Matthew Capper (Leader) and Jason Middleton (Co-leader) with 11 Naturetrek clients.

Day 1

Thursday 20th May

Hathersage and The Upper Derwent Valley

Everyone arrived at the hotel promptly for 2pm and we assembled for a short introductory briefing. Thursday's weather was poor with heavy rain for most of the day and with Friday looking no better, the itinerary was completely re-ordered to give us the best chance of seeing what we hoped to get. This proved to be something of a master stroke, and we stayed drier than we dared hope at the start of the trip.

However, Thursday's rain still had to be faced and we started the tour with a short walk from Leadmill Bridge on the edge of the village where our target – Dipper – was immediately found right beneath the bridge after we pulled up in the vehicles. Alongside it was a Grey Wagtail and a pair of very smart Mandarin Duck. What a way to kick things off! We wandered along the river, taking in the smell of the Wild Garlic and watching the hirundines hunting low over the fields and hearing the first of many Blackcap, Willow Warbler and Chiffchaff over the course of the weekend. Further downstream we were treated to more Dipper with three recently fledged birds giving excellent views.

We returned to the hotel, checked in and assembled for an early dinner. With the planned evening excursion put back to Saturday, we instead stuck to the shelter of the woodland and headed to the Upper Derwent Valley for a short history lesson, learning all about the building of the dams and wandering around the remains of Birchinlee, the village where the Navvies who built the Derwent and Howden dams lived in the early 1900's.

Day 2

Friday 21st May

The Dearne Valley – RSPB Old Moor & RSPB Adwick Washland

Today we decided that the hides at Old Moor would be a sensible option in case the predicted rain came. And whilst it threatened at times, we were surprised and rather relieved to have a dry day. The Dearne Valley is a special place with an amazing history – undergoing a transformation from a blighted, lifeless landscape when the coal industry came to an end to a vibrant chain of wetland reserves of national importance.

We started at Old Moor and were met in the car park by a Barn Owl that was sat out in the open, giving superb views to everyone. After that, we headed to a viewpoint overlooking the reedbeds. Bittern showed three times, but only briefly, allowing most of the group to get something of a view. In contrast the female Marsh Harrier was seen by everyone as it quartered the reeds and headed back to its nest with more nesting material in its talons. Reed Bunting showed on the edge of the reeds and a Reed Warbler was singing its distinctive chattering 'chit chit chit jug jug jug' song.

We enjoyed the Black-headed Gull colony and plenty of wildfowl out on the Mere, then headed to the bird feeders where a male Bullfinch was the star of the show. By now it was time for lunch, and we took advantage of the Old Moor café and their rather nice range of sandwiches and cakes.

Suitably refreshed, our next stop was Adwick Washland, a relatively new reserve that provides excellent close views of a range of wetland birds. En route we added Green Woodpecker, Mistle Thrush and Greenfinch, while Cetti's Warblers sang from deep in cover. But it was the waders that stole the show, especially the Avocets complete with chicks wandering around right next to the path. At the central viewpoint we just stood and soaked up the peace and quiet, broken only by the sound of the birds – Skylarks singing, Redshank piping and Lapwings giving their distinctive 'peewit' call as they tumbled around the sky. We studied a couple of Brown Hare and noted Common Gull and Common Tern before heading along the riverbank back to the car park. Here we were able to enjoy more Whitethroat, a couple of Lesser Whitethroat and a few of the backmarkers watched a Great Spotted Woodpecker.

As we drove back to the Peak District, across the Strines Moors, the rain started and soon became very heavy. We learnt on our return that it had rained all day in the Peaks, so we allowed ourselves a collective moment of smugness at our change of itinerary!

Day 3

Saturday 22nd May

Stanage Edge, Derwent Moors, Wyming Brook & Midhopestones area

A long but very worthwhile day today. We certainly packed in a lot without ever feeling rushed, which was nice. The early risers met at 6am for a pre-breakfast walk in the shadow of Stanage Edge. It was dry but cold and the temperature did seem to be having an effect on the number of birds singing. Even so, there was a reasonable selection with Blackcap, Willow Warbler, Chiffchaff, Song Thrush, Wren and Robin singing all around us. We made our way up the track with Siskin calling overhead, Red Kite circling along the edge and best of all, our first Cuckoo of the trip, calling in the distance.



Our view from Stanage Edge

As we descended back to the car park, we picked out a nice Garden Warbler and then A Pied Flycatcher started up close by. The Cuckoo was now calling a lot closer, and everyone had excellent and prolonged views. Our last good bird was a nice Jay and the Pied Flycatcher finally showed, albeit only to some of the group. And then it was time to jump back into the minibuses and head downhill to the hotel and a fully deserved breakfast.

Our morning was subsequently spent walking from Cutthroat Bridge to Whinstone Lee Tor. It was a superb walk that started with Ring Ouzel from the car park and added plenty more - with Whinchat, Stonechat, Red Grouse, several more Ring Ouzel, a Roe Deer, displaying Curlew, five Raven sat on some rocks and Snipe chipping from the wet flushes. As we approached Whinstone Lee Tor, we were delighted to get excellent views of Mountain Hare, discovering on the way back that there were actually two in close proximity. The view over the Peak District was superb, if a little cloudy!



Some of the group at Whinstone Lee Tor

After a quick toilet stop (and singing Chiffchaff!) we headed to Wyming Brook, close to the edge of Sheffield. Our picnic was a chilly affair, but the walk soon warmed us up and two singing Wood Warbler (our target bird and sadly much in decline locally) along with Treecreeper and singing Goldcrest made for an excellent afternoon. As we returned to the vehicles the sun finally broke through and we watched a pair of Buzzard in the now warm spring sunshine.

The sun continued for our evening excursion and with no wind and clear skies, it made for ideal conditions to view the Snipe drumming away at Upper Midhopstones; the distinctive sound being enjoyed by everyone. We found more Mountain Hare and were even able to see a Brown Hare nearby for comparison – something that does not happen very often. Curlew and Lapwing were also displaying, and Red Grouse were active on the distant moorland. It was incredibly atmospheric, and you got the impression the group could have stayed far longer. However, three Woodcock chasing each other over nearby woodland and a Tawny Owl being mobbed by the local Blackbirds told us it was time to move to our second spot. On arrival the first vehicles saw a Long-eared Owl quartering the moor and flying into the adjacent woodland. Sadly, it had departed by the time the final vehicle pulled up and all we got thereafter was a brief view of one disappearing into the canopy and the ‘squeaky gate’ call of one of the youngsters. Out on the moor, the Red Grouse were still active, giving their classic ‘go-back go-back’ calls as they dropped into the Heather. Curlew were heading over in numbers to feed in the nearby fields, Stonechats were calling nearby and a pair of Cuckoo chased each other from post to post. In fact, the constant ‘cuckooing’ was enough to satiate even the most ardent fan by the end of the night! As night fell, the

Woodcocks began to put on a display, chasing each other round above our heads and finally, the icing on the cake, a churring Nightjar close by to end an excellent day.

Day 4

Sunday 23rd May

Padley Gorge, Eastern Moors

Our last day started with grey skies and the promise of rain later. Our first stop was the beautiful Padley Gorge – a truly wonderful piece of upland Oak and Birch woodland, owned by the National Trust. The trees here are gnarled and twisted, so much so that we expected Elves or an Ent to appear at any moment!



Millstones at Padley

We all walked across Lawrence Field, admiring Stonechat and Tree Pipit along the way and several abandoned millstones in a small quarry. Matthew led a shorter walk back, taking in Cuckoo, a male Pied Flycatcher and a female Whinchat, whilst Jason led the main group down into the woods, enjoying several stunning Pied Flycatcher, Great Spotted Woodpecker, a family party of five Treecreeper and hearing a Redstart. Northern Hairy Wood Ants were evident – a species at the very southern end of its range in Padley.

With people to drop back at the station and others needing to head home early by car, we had a relaxed lunch, allowing people time to explore Hathersage. Those that were left reconvened at 2pm, watching our only Nuthatch of the trip foraging on the bark of a tree at the back of the hotel car park.

The afternoon was spent on the Eastern Moors, an estate owned by the National Park Authority and managed through a ground-breaking partnership between the RSPB and National Trust. Our first stop was Totley Moss where we immediately picked up 15 Red Deer out in the middle of Big Moor. We then made a short hop to Ramsley Reservoir where a pair of feeders hidden in the trees by local ringers were attracting Lesser Redpoll, Siskin, Chaffinch and Goldfinch. We all got great scope views of these and enjoyed nearby Tree Pipit on the fence, Stonechat on the Heather and Reed Bunting singing close by.

Our last stop of the trip was Shillito Wood, where feeders and food scattered on convenient rocks in the car park provided the most incredible spectacle of Yellowhammer, Lesser Redpoll, Siskin, Chaffinch, Reed Bunting, Coal Tit and other small birds - all feeding yards away in full view. At one point it was as if all the finches had lined up, side by side, just as they might in a field guide! We did drag ourselves away and have a short walk, seeing a Red Mason Bee, more Tree Pipits, Lesser Redpolls, Garden Warbler, Willow Warbler and Blackcap but in the end the lure of the feeders was too much, and everyone reassembled back in the car park for a second look! A trio of male Siskin, male Yellowhammer and a superb rosy male Lesser Redpoll lit up a grey afternoon and provided the perfect finale to what had been a wonderful few days together in the Peak District.



Snipe at Upper Midhopestones



Yellowhammer



Cuckoo



Stonechat

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Species Lists

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

	Common name	Scientific name	trip	May			
				20	21	22	23
1	Mute Swan	<i>Cygnus olor</i>	✓		✓		
2	Greylag Goose	<i>Anser anser</i>	✓		✓		
3	Canada Goose	<i>Branta canadensis</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	
4	Shelduck	<i>Tadorna tadorna</i>	✓		✓		
5	Gadwall	<i>Mareca strepera</i>	✓		✓		
6	Mallard	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
7	Northern Shoveler	<i>Spatula clypeata</i>	✓		✓		
8	Eurasian Teal	<i>Anas crecca</i>	✓		✓		
9	Common Pochard	<i>Aythya ferina</i>	✓		✓		
10	Tufted Duck	<i>Aythya fuligula</i>	✓	✓	✓		
11	Mandarin Duck	<i>Aix galericulata</i>	✓	4			
12	Pheasant	<i>Phasianus colchicus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
13	Red Grouse	<i>Lagopus lagopus scotica</i>	✓			✓	
14	Little Grebe	<i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>	✓		1		
15	Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>	✓		✓		
16	Eurasian Bittern	<i>Botaurus stellaris</i>	✓		2		
17	Little Egret	<i>Egretta garzetta</i>	✓		✓		
18	Grey Heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>	✓		✓		
19	Red Kite	<i>Milvus milvus</i>	✓			2	
20	Western Marsh Harrier	<i>Circus aeruginosus</i>	✓		✓		
21	Eurasian Sparrowhawk	<i>Accipiter nisus</i>	✓		✓		
22	Common Buzzard	<i>Buteo buteo</i>	✓		✓	✓	✓
23	Common Kestrel	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>	✓		✓	✓	✓
24	Eurasian Hobby	<i>Falco subbuteo</i>	✓		1		
25	Common Moorhen	<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>	✓		✓		
26	Eurasian Coot	<i>Fulica atra</i>	✓		✓		
27	Eurasian Oystercatcher	<i>Haematopus ostralegus</i>	✓		✓	2	
28	Pied Avocet	<i>Recurvirostra avosetta</i>	✓		40+		
29	Little Ringed Plover	<i>Charadrius dubius</i>	✓		2		
30	Northern Lapwing	<i>Vanellus vanellus</i>	✓		✓	✓	✓
31	Eurasian Woodcock	<i>Scolopax rusticola</i>	✓			5+	
32	Common Snipe	<i>Gallinago gallinago</i>	✓			4+	
33	Eurasian Curlew	<i>Numenius arquata</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
34	Common Redshank	<i>Tringa totanus</i>	✓		✓		
35	Black-headed Gull	<i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i>	✓	✓	✓		
36	Common Gull	<i>Larus canus</i>	✓		1		
37	Lesser Black-backed Gull	<i>Larus fuscus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
38	European Herring Gull	<i>Larus argentatus</i>	✓		✓		7
39	Great Black-backed Gull	<i>Larus marinus</i>	✓	✓			
40	Common Tern	<i>Sterna hirundo</i>	✓		1		
41	Rock Dove / Feral Pigeon	<i>Columba livia</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
42	Stock Dove	<i>Columba oenas</i>	✓		ca.6	2	
43	Common Wood Pigeon	<i>Columba palumbus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
44	Eurasian Collared Dove	<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>	✓			✓	✓
45	Common Cuckoo	<i>Cuculus canorus</i>	✓			4	1
46	Long-eared Owl	<i>Asio otus</i>	✓			1+h	
47	Western Barn Owl	<i>Tyto alba</i>	✓		1		

	Common name	Scientific name	trip	May			
				20	21	22	23
48	Tawny Owl	<i>Strix aluco</i>	✓			1	
49	European Nightjar	<i>Caprimulgus europaeus</i>	✓			h	
50	Common Swift	<i>Apus apus</i>	✓		✓	✓	✓
51	Common Kingfisher	<i>Alcedo athys</i>	✓		1		
52	European Green Woodpecker	<i>Picus viridis</i>	✓		h		
53	Great Spotted Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos major</i>	✓		1		1+h
54	Eurasian Skylark	<i>Alauda arvensis</i>	✓		2	h	✓
55	Sand Martin	<i>Riparia riparia</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	
56	Barn Swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
57	Common House Martin	<i>Delichon urbicum</i>	✓	✓	✓		✓
58	Tree Pipit	<i>Anthus trivialis</i>	✓				5+
59	Meadow Pipit	<i>Anthus pratensis</i>	✓		✓	✓	✓
60	Grey Wagtail	<i>Motacilla cinerea</i>	✓	2		1	1
61	Pied Wagtail	<i>Motacilla alba yarrellii</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
62	White-throated Dipper	<i>Cinclus cinclus</i>	✓	4			
63	Eurasian Wren	<i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
64	Dunnock	<i>Prunella modularis</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
65	European Robin	<i>Erithacus rubecula</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
66	Common Redstart	<i>Phoenicurus phoenicurus</i>	✓				h
67	Whinchat	<i>Saxicola rubetra</i>	✓			2	1
68	European Stonechat	<i>Saxicola torquatus</i>	✓			✓	4+
69	Ring Ouzel	<i>Turdus torquatus</i>	✓			ca. 5	
70	Common Blackbird	<i>Turdus merula</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
71	Song Thrush	<i>Turdus philomelos</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
72	Mistle Thrush	<i>Turdus viscivorus</i>	✓		1	2	1
73	Cetti's Warbler	<i>Cettia cetti</i>	✓		sev h		
74	Sedge Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus schoenobaenus</i>	✓		✓		
75	Eurasian Reed Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus scirpaceus</i>	✓		h		
76	Eurasian Blackcap	<i>Sylvia atricapilla</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
77	Garden Warbler	<i>Sylvia borin</i>	✓			1	1
78	Lesser Whitethroat	<i>Curruca curruca</i>	✓		2		
79	Common Whitethroat	<i>Curruca communis</i>	✓		✓		
80	Wood Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus sibilatrix</i>	✓			2	
81	Common Chiffchaff	<i>Phylloscopus collybita</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
82	Willow Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus trochilus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
83	Goldcrest	<i>Regulus regulus</i>	✓			✓	✓
84	European Pied Flycatcher	<i>Ficedula hypoleuca</i>	✓			1	5+
85	Long-tailed Tit	<i>Aegithalos caudatus</i>	✓		✓	✓	✓
86	Eurasian Blue Tit	<i>Cyanistes caeruleus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
87	Great Tit	<i>Parus major</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
88	Coal Tit	<i>Pariparus ater</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
89	Eurasian Nuthatch	<i>Sitta europaea</i>	✓				1
90	Eurasian Treecreeper	<i>Certhia familiaris</i>	✓			3+	ca.7
91	Eurasian Jay	<i>Garrulus glandarius</i>	✓		1	1	1
92	Eurasian Magpie	<i>Pica pica</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
93	Western Jackdaw	<i>Corvus monedula</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
94	Rook	<i>Corvus frugilegus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
95	Carrion Crow	<i>Corvus corone</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
96	Northern Raven	<i>Corvus corax</i>	✓			5	
97	Common Starling	<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>	✓		✓	✓	✓

	Common name	Scientific name	trip	May			
				20	21	22	23
98	House Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>	✓		✓	✓	✓
99	Common Chaffinch	<i>Fringilla coelebs</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
100	European Greenfinch	<i>Chloris chloris</i>	✓		✓		✓
101	European Goldfinch	<i>Carduelis carduelis</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
102	Eurasian Siskin	<i>Spinus spinus</i>	✓	✓	h	✓	✓
103	Common Linnet	<i>Linaria cannabina</i>	✓		✓	2+	✓
104	Lesser Redpoll	<i>Acanthis cabaret</i>	✓				✓
105	Eurasian Bullfinch	<i>Pyrrhula pyrrhula</i>	✓		1		
106	Yellowhammer	<i>Emberiza citrinella</i>	✓				5+
107	Common Reed Bunting	<i>Emberiza schoeniclus</i>	✓		✓	✓	✓
Mammals							
1	Grey Squirrel	<i>Sciurus carolinensis</i>	✓		✓		✓
2	European Hare	<i>Lepus europaeus</i>	✓		4	1	
3	Mountain Hare	<i>Lepus timidus</i>	✓			5	
4	Rabbit	<i>Oryctolagus cuniculus</i>	✓		✓	✓	✓
5	Roe Deer	<i>Capreolus capreolus</i>	✓			1	
6	Red Deer	<i>Cervus elaphus</i>	✓				15
7	Brown Rat	<i>Rattus norvegicus</i>	✓		1		
Other							
1	Red Mason Bee	<i>Osmia rufa</i>	✓				1
2	Small White Butterfly	<i>Pieris rapae</i>	✓		✓		
3	Northern Hairy Wood Ant	<i>Formica lugubris</i>	✓				✓



Lawrence Field at Padley