

The Peak District in Spring

Naturetrek Tour Report

19th - 22nd May 2022



Pied Flycatcher



Red-headed Cardinal beetle



Green Hairstreak



Avocets

Report and images compiled by Matthew Capper



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Summary

Spring had definitely sprung on our Peak District trip this year. Everywhere had that fresh green hue and the summer migrants were out in force. We enjoyed a superb range of scenery and some truly memorable wildlife encounters. From Dippers on the River Derwent, two Wood Warblers singing against each other, a Ring Ouzel right in front of us and Pied Flycatcher views you could only dream of, the woodlands and moors of the Peak District did not disappoint. On top of that, we enjoyed a total contrast at the wetland reserves of the Dearne Valley, complete with Black-necked Grebes, Garganey, Marsh Harrier and Avocets at point blank range. Nothing though will beat the first evening with drumming Snipe, churring Nightjar, roding Woodcock and incredible views of two Long-eared Owl chicks with the adult quartering the moorland behind them. Amazing!

Day 1

Thursday 19th May

Hathersage and Midhope area

We met up at 2pm in warm sunshine, making quick introductions to allow ourselves a short introductory walk before checking in at 4pm.

It was a beautiful afternoon and we started at Leadmill Bridge where a Dipper showed immediately beneath the bridge. Another torpedoed its way upstream and a Grey Wagtail showed briefly for a lucky few. This was very much target achieved but no one would accept the suggestion that we simply jump straight back into the mini bus and call it quits right there! Oh well, nice try! So instead we wandered along the river for an hour or two, pottering along in typical Naturetrek fashion and getting to know each other. We watched a couple of pairs of Mandarin Duck and found more Dipper – including an adult feeding a couple of recently fledged young. Warblers were singing away and we enjoyed a relative abundance of Swifts, Swallows and House Martins - not something that happens everywhere these days. A Sparrowhawk made lazy circles above us in the clear blue sky. On the walk back, we added a couple of Treecreepers to the one we had seen on the way out and heard a Spotted Flycatcher.

After we had checked in, we took an hour or so to freshen up before meeting for an early dinner to facilitate our evening excursion. We headed out across the moors, taking in views over Strines and the upland reservoirs, eventually arriving at a spot overlooking rough pasture and heather dominated moorland. Several Snipe were drumming overhead, circling around us and rising and falling as if on an unseen roller coaster. A family party of Mistle Thrush were a delight along with a Lapwing that was brooding a couple of small fluffy chicks. Curlews added their bubbling calls to the backdrop and patient scanning of the moors revealed several Red Grouse and at least three of England's only population of Mountain Hare. This was definitely a selection to savour.

We weren't in any way finished though and drove a mile or so down the road to our second stop where a Cuckoo serenaded us as Red Grouse and Stonechat flew around in front of us. As the evening drew in, Woodcock was the next good bird with at least a couple roding in wide circuits over the woodland and then we heard the distinctive 'squeaky gate' call of young Long-eared Owl, something that raised our excitement levels somewhat. This proved to be well founded as we had the most incredible encounter with two chicks sat on the heather and roadside wall respectively. Everyone got to look at them through the scope and we had one of the

adults flying back and forth every few minutes out onto the moor, dropping in to, we assumed, cache food. We still weren't finished and followed that up with a churring Nightjar flying down the road in front of us and landing on the fence. It was now nearly dark and we agreed we'd not be able to top that so made our way back to the hotel. And whilst it didn't top it, the final icing on the cake was a Barn Owl that landed a couple of times on a dry-stone wall for us. Considering we had only started at 2pm, we had certainly packed in a great first day.



Juvenile Long-eared Owl

Day 2

Friday 20th May

Derwent Moors, Wyming Brook, Snake Summit, Upper Derwent Valley

We started the day with a quick trip to the bakery in Hathersage before heading to Cutthroat Bridge and the large layby. As we started our walk we could hear a Ring Ouzel but it didn't show itself. Instead we had to wait until we had climbed up from the bridge before we came face to face with one singing at the top of a tree, allowing everyone to get a scope filling view. On route we had taken in a small patch of woodland where we got brief views of a male Redstart and a Spotted Flycatcher. More accessible were the calling Siskins and the singing Willow Warblers and Song Thrush.

The walk to Whinstone lee Tor allowed us to talk about moorland management for grouse and debate some of the associated issues. We also looked at some of the characteristics plants and saw a range of species such as Meadow Pipit, Red Grouse, Northern Eggar caterpillars, Skylark and several Stonechat. Once we got to Derwent Edge we took a while to enjoy the view and could see a Cuckoo in a tree beneath us. Nearby was another Ring Ouzel that flew up to join it, allowing us the unusual sight of both of them in the same scope view.

On our way back, we worked very hard to find a Wheatear and a Whinchat. We eventually succeeded with the former but the latter seem to be disappearing from even their once regular haunts and we didn't manage to catch

up with one at all during the trip. Our Ring Ouzel was still around though, giving everyone a final chance to see what had been



Northern Eggar caterpillar

We had a picnic lunch overlooking the Rivelin Dams reservoirs. There were a few birds about – Canada Goose, Mallard, Great Crested Grebe and a couple of Herons in one of the pines. Lunch completed, we walked up the path into Wyming Brook, adding a few woodland birds such Blackcap and Coal Tit and soon hearing the distant trill of a Wood Warbler. There was one singing uphill from us and another further on at the junction of the two paths. We couldn't get brilliant views of either but did have two Goldcrests displaying to each other. Seeing one bird part its feathers to reveal the bright fiery crown that gives it its name was a huge thrill and a first for several.

We followed the path uphill, allowing us to look back over the canopy. Our first Wood Warbler was now singing off against another on the other side of the path and with perseverance, we all got a good view, taking in the distinctive shiver as the bird sang its 'spinning coin' song.

Our next stop was a slight contrast to the morning's moorland walk. This time we walked a short part of the Pennine Way, taking in the blanket bog habitat and learning a little about how fragile it is and how the habitat has been restored recently. A couple of Ravens were hanging about and there were plenty of Red Grouse. We only managed to hear Golden Plover but the best bird was a diminutive Dunlin in summer plumage; such a treat to see one up on the high tops, away from the more normal coastal mudflats.

We ended the day with a bit of a history lesson, visiting the Upper Derwent Valley and the site of Birchinlee Village. Now a peaceful beech woodland, over 100 years ago it housed the workers that built the Derwent and Howden Dams. We walked round the remains, learning a little of the Navvies and the lives they led. There were a few birds about, the best of which was a Common Sandpiper that was wandering along the shore, just north of Howden Dam.

Day 3

Saturday 21st May

Stanage Edge & The Dearne Valley – Broomhill Flash, Old Moor and Adwick Washland

Most of us were up for six for a pre-breakfast walk beneath Stanage Edge. It was a cool but nice morning and we wandered from the car park up to the woodland beneath the edge. Here we enjoyed views back over the Hope Valley and stood to listen to the bird song. Song Thrush, Garden Warbler, Blackcap, Robin, Willow Warbler, Cuckoo and Blackbird were the most prominent. We added Siskin overhead and picked out a Spotted Flycatcher on the edge of the wood. We looped back round to the mini bus, hearing a Pied Flycatcher but failing to pick it out. However, a movement at the back of some trees revealed a nice female Redstart and even better, her mate, a stunning male bird sat in the open on top of a bike rack of all places. We all had superb views as it dropped to the ground and flew back up on to a fence post, repeating this several times.

After breakfast we headed back north through the Peaks, picking up a range of moorland birds on the way. We arrived in the Dearne Valley and diverted to a spot for Little Owl. Sadly, there was no one at home but we did hear both Whitethroat and Lesser Whitethroat – a nice comparison and the former showed well on a telegraph wire. Just down the road we called in at Broomhill Flash. Here the star birds were a pair of stunning Black-necked Grebes, right in front of the hide. Alongside them, we added a range of other wetland birds and plenty of hirundines hawking over the water.

Our next stop, was RSPB Old Moor. We checked in and used the facilities before wandering out to the reedbeds, learning a little of the amazing history of the site along the way and adding Reed and Sedge warbler and Reed bunting. A pair of Stock Doves were using one of the boxes and a male Peregrine was sat on one of the pylons, plucking some prey, allowing us all to get extended views through the telescope.

We slowly made our way down to Wath Ings and back, enjoying a male Marsh Harrier over the reeds, Buzzards over the old pit top and Avocet and Dunlin on the wader scrape – the latter a complete contrast to the one the day before up on the tops. Our best bird was a drake Garganey in all its spring glory. They are stunning birds and always a treat to see. The gull colony was in full swing and the raucous calls were a constant backdrop to the morning.

The feeders near the centre were empty so no sign of a Bullfinch - our target bird here. Being the former reserve manager has its perks though and magically, they were filled as we were having lunch, allowing us to revisit them before we left and bingo – there was a stunning male Bullfinch, right in the open.

RSPB Adwick is a relatively new reserve and already has a great diversity. Redshank, Lapwing and Avocet breed in good numbers and there were lots of Coot and Moorhen chicks too. The sound of Skylarks filled the air and it was nice to stand at the viewpoint in the centre of the site and just soak it all in. Nigel, one of the regular birders, arrived and told us he had Grey Partridge at the far end of the reserve. This was a much desired 'bogey bird' for one of the group so we headed down there for a look. Of course, we didn't see them. One day Peter, one day..! With the afternoon now slipping away, we walked back to the car park, stopping to add a Black-tailed Godwit and failing to see Little Owl at our second site of the day. Never mind, there were several Brown Hares to enjoy and add to the Mountain Hares of the first evening.

We got back to the hotel in good time to freshen up and enjoy another lovely evening meal, reflecting on a great days birding that had added over thirty new birds to the trip list!

Day 4

Sunday 22nd May

Padley Gorge, Eastern Moors

Our last day was another warm and sunny one. We drove up out of Hathersage and parked up at Surprise View. Here, we decamped and walked down across Lawrence Field, enjoying close views of singing Tree Pipit and a pair of Stonechats. Cuckoo was calling – a bird we had seen or heard on every day of the trip. On the edge of the woodland we stopped near a nest box and picked up the sound of a singing Pied Flycatcher. It remained elusive for a few minutes but eventually flew out onto a prominent branch and proceeded to give us the most amazing views. Everyone was able to watch it singing through the scope and it stayed so long, we zoomed in and everyone came back round for seconds! What a stunning bird.

We walked down through the woods, a truly special environment that we thoroughly enjoyed. We had more views of several Pied Flycatcher and could hear more. A Treecreeper family showed extremely well and a Wood Warbler sang once in the distance. We diverted onto a side track to try and track down a Redstart for the one remaining member of the group who had missed the birds on the Saturday. We heard one singing and managed to track it down. But despite our efforts, it wouldn't show for everyone. Another Pied Flycatcher did sit in the open though, allowing us to get more views and to show a couple of other birders.

Grey Wagtail was a bird that had been seen briefly a few times but had never shown well for all of the group. So it was nice to get excellent views of a pair as we walked out of the woodland. A Dipper shot through following the stream north and our attention was drawn to a movement in the grass. A Bank Vole was moving its young between two clumps of vegetation and we saw it run back and forth a couple of times.

The path back to the car park is a sunken trackway and the bilberry and gorse here is in a sun trap. We therefore found several lovely Green Hairstreak butterflies – this is a great spot for them. Also along here were a couple of Common Heath moths. We had seen a few on the Friday but the male and female were side by side, showing the colour variation between the two. Also of note was a striking Red-headed Cardinal Beetle. We had a little time to spare and so made a snap decision to drive up to Higger Tor, walking up to the gritstone edge to enjoy the panoramic views. Two Red Deer were sat in a field near the road, their heads and newly emerging antlers sticking up out of the long grass.

We had a relaxed lunch in Hathersage, allowing two of the group to make a necessary early getaway. Those of us that remained headed over to the Eastern Moors for the afternoon. We staked out a hidden feeder used by the local ringing group. Goldfinches, Lesser Redpoll and Siskin all showed well for us and Reed Bunting were singing nearby in the wetland edge. Our next stop should also have brought us some feeders and a range of birds but instead there were signs saying that due to an outbreak of trichomonosis all the feeders had been taken in the day before. We had one more look for a Little Owl but again without success. And so we headed down to some moorland/woodland fringe where Tree Pipits were singing, Redpolls were buzzing overhead and a Yellowhammer was singing the distinctive 'little bit of bread and no cheese' song in the distance.

We did our best to find an Adder but had no joy. However, three Common Lizard and a Four-spotted Chaser dragonfly were nice compensation. As we left, a Willow Warbler shot out of a clump of grass and we all had a privileged glimpse of its eggs in a well camouflaged nest on the ground. We saw three more Red Deer on the way back and the two from earlier were still sat lazing the afternoon away in the long grass. And then it was back to the hotel and time to say our goodbyes. We'd had some lovely weather, some truly memorable wildlife experiences and enjoyed each other's company immensely. Just what a Naturetrek trip is all about.



Four-spotted Chaser

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Species Lists

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

	Common name	Scientific name	May 2022			
			19	20	21	22
1	Mute Swan	<i>Cygnus olor</i>			✓	
2	Greylag Goose	<i>Anser anser</i>			✓	
3	Greater 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	Garganey	<i>Spatula querquedula</i>			1	
9	Pochard	<i>Aythya ferina</i>			✓	
10	Tufted Duck	<i>Aythya fuligula</i>		1	✓	
11	Mandarin Duck	<i>Aix galericulata</i>	6			
12	Red-legged Partridge	<i>Alectoris rufa</i>			✓	
13	Pheasant	<i>Phasianus colchicus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓
14	Red Grouse	<i>Lagopus lagopus scotica</i>	✓	✓	✓	1
15	Little Grebe	<i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>			✓	
16	Black-necked Grebe	<i>Podiceps nigricollis</i>			2	
17	Great Crested Grebe	<i>Podiceps cristatus</i>		2	✓	
18	Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>			✓	
19	Little Egret	<i>Egretta garzetta</i>			✓	
20	Grey Heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>	✓	✓	✓	
21	Marsh Harrier	<i>Circus aeruginosus</i>			1	
22	Sparrowhawk	<i>Accipiter nisus</i>	1			
23	Common Buzzard	<i>Buteo buteo</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓
24	Kestrel	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓
25	Peregrine	<i>Falco peregrinus</i>			1	
26	Moorhen	<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>		✓	✓	
27	Coot	<i>Fulica atra</i>			✓	
28	Oystercatcher	<i>Haematopus ostralegus</i>			✓	
29	Avocet	<i>Precurvirostra avosetta</i>			✓	
30	Little Ringed Plover	<i>Charadrius dubius</i>			✓	
31	Lapwing	<i>Vanellus vanellus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓
32	Woodcock	<i>Scolopax rusticola</i>	✓			
33	Snipe	<i>Gallinago gallinago</i>	✓	h		
34	Curlew	<i>Numenius arquata</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓
35	Common Sandpiper	<i>Actitis hypoleucos</i>		1		
36	Redshank	<i>Tringa totanus</i>			✓	
37	Black-headed Gull	<i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i>			✓	
38	Common Gull	<i>Larus canus</i>			1	
39	Lesser Black-backed Gull	<i>Larus fuscus</i>			✓	✓
40	Herring Gull	<i>Larus argentatus</i>	✓		✓	
41	Common Tern	<i>Sterna hirundo</i>			✓	
42	Rock Dove / Feral Pigeon	<i>Columba livia</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓
43	Stock Dove	<i>Columba oenas</i>	1		✓	
44	Woodpigeon	<i>Columba palumbus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓
45	Collared Dove	<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓
46	Cuckoo	<i>Cuculus canorus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓
47	Long-eared Owl	<i>Asio otus</i>	3			

			May 2022			
			19	20	21	22
48	Barn Owl	<i>Tyto alba</i>	1			
49	Tawny Owl	<i>Strix aluco</i>	h			
50	Nightjar	<i>Caprimulgus europaeus</i>	✓			
51	Swift	<i>Apus apus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓
52	Great Spotted Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos major</i>			3	1
53	Skylark	<i>Alauda arvensis</i>		1	✓	
54	Sand Martin	<i>Riparia riparia</i>		1	✓	
55	Swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓
56	House Martin	<i>Delichon urbicum</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓
57	Tree Pipit	<i>Anthus trivialis</i>			h	✓
58	Meadow Pipit	<i>Anthus pratensis</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓
59	Grey Wagtail	<i>Motacilla cinerea</i>	✓			3
60	Pied Wagtail	<i>Motacilla alba</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓
61	Dipper	<i>Cinclus cinclus</i>	✓			1
62	Wren	<i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓
63	Dunnock	<i>Prunella modularis</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓
64	Robin	<i>Erithacus rubecula</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓
65	Redstart	<i>Phoenicurus phoenicurus</i>		1	2	2
66	Stonechat	<i>Saxicola rubicola</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓
67	Ring Ouzel	<i>Turdus torquatus</i>		✓		
68	Blackbird	<i>Turdus merula</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓
69	Song Thrush	<i>Turdus philomelos</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓
70	Mistle Thrush	<i>Turdus viscivorus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓
71	Cetti's Warbler	<i>Cettia cetti</i>		h		
72	Sedge Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus schoenobaenus</i>		✓		
73	Reed Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus scirpaceus</i>		✓		
74	Blackcap	<i>Sylvia atricapilla</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓
75	Garden Warbler	<i>Sylvia borin</i>			✓	✓
76	Lesser Whitethroat	<i>Curruca curruca</i>			✓	
77	Whitethroat	<i>Curruca communis</i>			✓	✓
78	Wood Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus sibilatrix</i>		3		h
79	Chiffchaff	<i>Phylloscopus collybita</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓
80	Willow Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus trochilus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓
81	Goldcrest	<i>Regulus regulus</i>	✓	✓		
82	Pied Flycatcher	<i>Ficedula hypoleuca</i>			h	6+
83	Long-tailed Tit	<i>Aegithalos caudatus</i>	✓		✓	
84	Blue Tit	<i>Cyanistes caeruleus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓
85	Great Tit	<i>Parus major</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓
86	Coal Tit	<i>Periparus ater</i>		✓		✓
87	Treecreeper	<i>Certhia familiaris</i>	✓			3
88	Jay	<i>Garrulus glandarius</i>	✓			
89	Magpie	<i>Pica pica</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓
90	Jackdaw	<i>Coloeus monedula</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓
91	Rook	<i>Corvus frugilegus</i>		✓	✓	
92	Carrion Crow	<i>Corvus corone</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓
93	Raven	<i>Corvus corax</i>		2+		
94	Starling	<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓
95	House Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓
96	Chaffinch	<i>Fringilla coelebs</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓
97	Greenfinch	<i>Chloris chloris</i>	✓		✓	✓
98	Goldfinch	<i>Carduelis carduelis</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓

			May 2022			
	Common name	Scientific name	19	20	21	22
99	Siskin	<i>Spinus spinus</i>	✓	h	✓	✓
100	Linnet	<i>Linaria cannabina</i>	✓	h	✓	✓
101	Lesser Redpoll	<i>Acanthis cabaret</i>				✓
102	Bullfinch	<i>Pyrrhula pyrrhula</i>			1	
103	Yellowhammer	<i>Emberiza citrinella</i>				✓
104	Reed Bunting	<i>Emberiza schoeniclus</i>		1	✓	✓

Mammals

			May 2022			
	Common name	Scientific name	19	20	21	22
1	Grey Squirrel	<i>Sciurus carolinensis</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓
2	European Hare	<i>Lepus europaeus</i>			✓	
3	Mountain Hare	<i>Lepus timidus</i>	3			
4	Rabbit	<i>Oryctolagus cuniculus</i>	✓		✓	✓
5	Red Deer	<i>Cervus elaphus</i>				4
6	Bank Vole	<i>Myodes glareolus</i>				3

Other species

			May 2022			
	Common name	Scientific name	19	20	21	22
1	Common Lizard	<i>Zootoca vivipara</i>				3
2	Four-spotted Chaser	<i>Libellula quadrimaculata</i>				1
3	Northern Eggar	<i>Lasiocampa quercus</i>		✓		
4	Small White Butterfly	<i>Pieris rapae</i>			✓	✓
5	Brimstone	<i>Gonepteryx rhamni</i>	✓		✓	
6	Speckled Wood	<i>Pararge aegeria</i>	✓		✓	
7	Orange Tip	<i>Anthocharis cardamines</i>	✓		✓	✓
8	Red Admiral	<i>Vanessa atalanta</i>			✓	
9	Small Tortoiseshell	<i>Aglais urticae</i>	✓			✓
10	Green Hairstreak	<i>Callophrys rubi</i>				6+
11	Red Headed Cardinal	<i>Pyrochroa serraticornis</i>			✓	
12	Northern Hairy Wood Ant	<i>Formica lugubris</i>				✓
13	Oil Beetle	<i>Meloe sp.</i>		✓		