

The Forest of Dean in Spring

Naturetrek Tour Report

4th – 6th June 2025



Spotted Flycatcher



Crossbill



Adder



Pied Flycatcher

Tour report by Matt Meehan



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Tour participants: Matt Meehan and Tom Mabbett (leaders) with eight Naturetrek clients

Day 1

Wednesday 4th June

We all met at the lovely old Speech House Hotel, and after a delicious dinner, we headed out to a nearby glade to listen for Nightjars. It was a cool, breezy evening, and despite the lack of Nightjars, the group had excellent views of roding Woodcock, a classic breeding bird of the Forest of Dean.

Day 2

Thursday 5th June

We spent the morning at RSPB Nagshead, where we took a leisurely walk through this beautiful woodland reserve, dominated by mature oak trees. A singing Garden Warbler and a male Redstart were the highlights here. The weather was not kind, with persistent rain, but we heard several Song Thrushes, a Firecrest, and eventually had brief views of a Pied Flycatcher.

After lunch back at Speech House, where we enjoyed watching the nesting House Martins and Swallows, we headed for Symonds Yat. Here, we had prolonged views of the breeding Peregrines, with three young at the nest. When a Common Buzzard came too close, it was attacked by an adult Peregrine: a spectacular sight! Swifts were zooming overhead, and some of us saw a Kingfisher on the River Wye, hundreds of feet below.

This evening, having met up with Tom, we set off after dinner to look again for Nightjars. As we walked out to a different forest clearing, we enjoyed singing Willow Warblers, Wrens, Robins and Song Thrushes; before too long, we were in position to wait for Nightjars. Soon the distinctive churring sound of a male Nightjar filled the air, and we all cupped our hands behind our ears to amplify this amazing sound. We were delighted when a male Nightjar then flew low over the gorse and ferns close to the path, with enough light to make out the white tail and wing feathers. We had further flight views of at least two more Nightjars, with more churring close by. We also had encounters with the local Woodcocks; on one occasion, two birds chased each other around, flying extremely low and close to where we stood! After a hugely successful outing, we were ready to return to the hotel and our beds.

Day 3

Friday 6th June

There was an optional pre-breakfast walk at 7.00am, the highlights being Spotted Flycatcher and Garden Warbler, as well as singing Greenfinches and Nuthatches.

After breakfast, and with much better weather than previously, we went back to experience Nagshead RSPB in the sunshine. On the way, we visited a local stream and found an adult Dipper with a youngster, though they remained distant. A smart Grey Wagtail was seen well through the scope.

Back at Nagshead, we went on a lovely walk, listening to lots of bird song, including Robin, Blackbird, Goldcrest, Firecrest, Blackcap and Garden Warbler. We eventually managed to find a male Pied Flycatcher, which was high up, feeding a recently-fledged youngster. We remarked that they seemed to have fledged early this year. We also saw a fine male Redstart.

After a good lunch at the Fountain Inn in Parkend, we nipped up to New Fancy View, where Tom found an Adder. We enjoyed fantastic views of a lovely female, basking in the open and clearly gravid: what a special animal! As we were stood watching the Adder, a Weasel came up the path towards us, before dashing into cover.

The rest of the afternoon was spent on a lovely walk through Woorgreens Nature Reserve. We enjoyed the dragonfly pools, with Four-spotted Chaser, Black-tailed Skimmer, Broad-bodied Chaser and Blue Emperor dragonflies. Linnets, Stonechats and Tree Pipits were seen, and around ten Crossbills dropped down to a pool to take a drink, including a distinctive youngster.

To round off an excellent day, we went to Cannop Ponds and enjoyed watching Mandarin Ducks (with ducklings), Little Grebes and Grey Wagtails. Many House Martins were feeding over the water, and we had splendid views of Common Swifts powering low over the water to take insects.

We returned to Speech House to say our farewells, reflecting on a wonderful few days enjoying the best of spring in the Forest of Dean.

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Species lists

Birds

Common name	Scientific name	June 2025		
		4	5	6
Canada Goose	<i>Branta canadensis</i>		✓	
Mute Swan	<i>Cygnus olor</i>			✓
Mandarin Duck	<i>Aix galericulata</i>			✓
Mallard	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>		✓	✓
Tufted Duck	<i>Aythya fuligula</i>			✓
Common Pheasant	<i>Phasianus colchicus</i>			✓
European Nightjar	<i>Caprimulgus europaeus</i>		✓	
Common Swift	<i>Apus apus</i>		✓	✓
Stock Dove	<i>Columba oenas</i>		✓	
Common Wood Pigeon	<i>Columba palumbus</i>		✓	✓
Eurasian Collared Dove	<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>		✓	
Eurasian Coot	<i>Fulica atra</i>			✓
Little Grebe	<i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>			✓
Eurasian Woodcock	<i>Scolopax rusticola</i>	✓	✓	
Black-headed Gull	<i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i>		✓	
Lesser Black-backed Gull	<i>Larus fuscus</i>		✓	✓
Great Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>		✓	✓
Grey Heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>		✓	
Common Buzzard	<i>Buteo buteo</i>		✓	✓
Common Kingfisher	<i>Alcedo atthis</i>		✓	
Great Spotted Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos major</i>			✓
Peregrine Falcon	<i>Falco peregrinus</i>		✓	
Eurasian Jay	<i>Garrulus glandarius</i>		✓	✓
Eurasian Magpie	<i>Pica pica</i>		✓	
Western Jackdaw	<i>Coloeus monedula</i>		✓	
Carrion Crow	<i>Corvus corone</i>		✓	✓
Northern Raven	<i>Corvus corax</i>		✓	✓
Coal Tit	<i>Parus ater</i>		✓	✓
Marsh Tit	<i>Poecile palustris</i>		✓	
Eurasian Blue Tit	<i>Cyanistes caeruleus</i>		✓	✓
Great Tit	<i>Parus major</i>		✓	✓
Barn Swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>		✓	✓
Western House Martin	<i>Delichon urbicum</i>		✓	✓
Long-tailed Tit	<i>Aegithalos caudatus</i>		✓	✓
Willow Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus trochilus</i>			✓
Common Chiffchaff	<i>Phylloscopus collybita</i>		✓	✓
Eurasian Blackcap	<i>Sylvia atricapilla</i>		✓	✓
Garden Warbler	<i>Sylvia borin</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>		✓	✓
Song Thrush	<i>Turdus philomelos</i>		✓	✓
Mistle Thrush	<i>Turdus viscivorus</i>		✓	
Common Blackbird	<i>Turdus merula</i>		✓	✓
Spotted Flycatcher	<i>Muscicapa striata</i>			✓
European Robin	<i>Erithacus rubecula</i>		✓	✓
European Pied Flycatcher	<i>Ficedula hypoleuca</i>		✓	✓
Common Redstart	<i>Phoenicurus phoenicurus</i>		✓	✓

Common name	Scientific name	June 2025		
		4	5	6
European Stonechat	<i>Saxicola rubicola</i>			✓
White-throated Dipper	<i>Cinclus cinclus</i>			✓
House Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>		✓	✓
Dunnock	<i>Prunella modularis</i>			✓
Grey Wagtail	<i>Motacilla cinerea</i>			✓
Pied Wagtail	<i>Motacilla alba yarrellii</i>		✓	✓
Meadow Pipit	<i>Anthus pratensis</i>		✓	
Tree Pipit	<i>Anthus trivialis</i>			✓
Eurasian Chaffinch	<i>Fringilla coelebs</i>		✓	✓
European Greenfinch	<i>Chloris chloris</i>		✓	✓
Common Linnet	<i>Linaria cannabina</i>			✓
Red Crossbill	<i>Loxia curvirostra</i>		✓	✓
European Goldfinch	<i>Carduelis carduelis</i>		✓	✓
Eurasian Siskin	<i>Spinus spinus</i>		✓	✓

Mammals

Common name	Scientific name	June 2025		
		4	5	6
Fallow Deer	<i>Dama dama</i>		✓	
Grey Squirrel	<i>Sciurus carolinensis</i>		✓	✓

Reptiles & amphibians

Common name	Scientific name	June 2025		
		4	5	6
Adder	<i>Vipera berus</i>			✓
Common Lizard	<i>Zootoca vivipara</i>			✓
Common Toad	<i>Bufo bufo</i>			✓

Butterflies

Common name	Scientific name	June 2025		
		4	5	6
Small Tortoiseshell	<i>Aglais urticae</i>			✓
Speckled Wood	<i>Pararge aegeria</i>			✓

Damselflies & dragonflies

Common name	Scientific name	June 2025		
		4	5	6
Blue Emperor	<i>Anax imperator</i>			✓
Four-spotted Chaser	<i>Libellula quadrimaculata</i>			✓
Broad-bodied Chaser	<i>Libellula depressa</i>			✓
Black-tailed Skimmer	<i>Orthetrum cancellatum</i>			✓