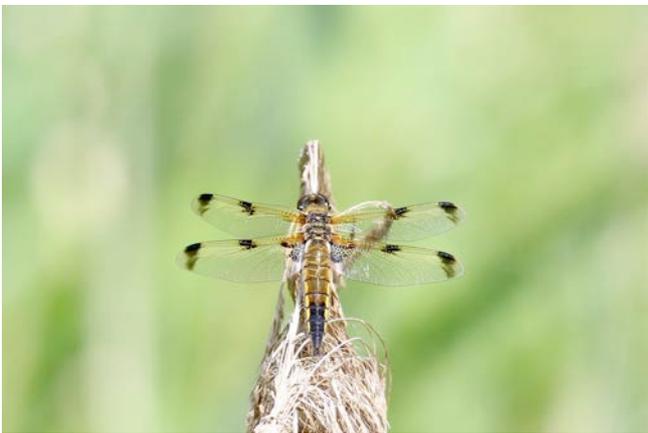


Norfolk & Suffolk Nightjars, Brecks & Coast

Mon 11th-Fri 15th June 2018



Trip photos (clockwise from top left): Grey Wagtail • Reed Bunting • Pied Avocet • Four-spotted Chaser. © tour participant Tony Garner

**Report compiled by tour leader:
Gary Elton**

Norfolk & Suffolk | Nightjars, Brecks & Coast

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Day One

After a very enjoyable evening meal and a chance to get to know each other, we made the first of our trips out to look for Nightjars. Arriving at the site we could hear a Nightjar as soon as we disembarked from the minibus, an encouraging start! A calling Woodcock flew over us in the fading light as we walked along the entrance track. After a short wait, the Nightjar was heard churring again - and relatively close by. After a short wait it took flight and was seen by all; it then proceeded to churr from several visible perches before giving us all some great, prolonged views.

Day Two

We started this morning with a short drive and a pre-breakfast walk at nearby Lynford Arboretum, though our first birds of note, Siskins, were around the hotel car park. On arriving at the arboretum, a singing Firecrest could be heard, though it unsurprisingly remained hidden from view. Other birds seen included a Grey wagtail, Nuthatch, several Great Spotted Woodpeckers and a family of Marsh Tits. After breakfast we headed off to a local, cleared area of forest, hoping to find some of the speciality species of the area. The walk down the forest track enabled us to pick up, albeit as heard only, birds such as Cuckoo, Green Woodpecker and both Garden and Willow Warblers. Our first bird of note was a perched Tree Pipit, unfortunately distant but clearly discernable through the scope. Yellowhammer, Whitethroat and Goldcrest were more confiding, as was a perched Woodlark that allowed us to get closer and closer, with scope-filling views enjoyed by all! A perched Hobby was disturbed as we walked along, appearing several times before disappearing off and a Red Admiral started our butterfly list off.

A comfort stop at Santon Downham was followed by a brief visit to the local churchyard, where the hoped-for species failed to materialise but a surprise in the form of a recently fledged Grey Wagtail with its parents, was a joy to watch. Lunch was taken at Cavenheath Heath, which up until this visit had been a reliable site for Stone-curlew. A combination of ideal growing weather during the spring and a virus that has virtually wiped out the rabbits in and around the Brecks, meant the grass was extremely long and made picking birds out virtually impossible. We still managed a reasonable spread of birds though, which included a smart male Stonechat, Meadow pipit, Linnet and Red-legged Partridge with Green Woodpecker, Curlew and Woodlark all heard. Two Red Deer were also seen, their large size apparent even though they were a fair distance off. Our final destination today was the Suffolk Wildlife Trust reserve at Lackford Lakes where, as always, we were made to feel very welcome. We enjoyed a leisurely walk around the reserve, visiting the hides that overlook the lakes and scrape. Species seen included Willow and Reed Warbler, Chiffchaff, Teal and Oystercatcher, with Sedge and Cetti's Warbler heard and a Bullfinch seen flying over and calling. After dinner, a few of us ventured out again in search of Nightjars, visiting a different site from the evening before. On arrival, we were greeted by a calling Cuckoo, a Woodcock flew over and, although at least two Nightjars were heard, none were seen.

Day Three

Pre-breakfast this morning took us on a local search for Stone-curlews after yesterday's blank for the species. Once again, long grass caused us problems at our first stop, though we did at least hear a Stone-curlew! Mistle Thrush, Roe Deer and Brown Hares were noted, after which we quickly moved to a second site. A Tree Sparrow on a roadside wire with several others in the hedgerow below was a nice addition as we drove along. Our second site, some pig fields, fortunately didn't suffer with long grass, though on first inspection no Stone-curlews could be seen. Then we got lucky, with two birds appearing over the pens and flying towards us, presumably disturbed by a farmhand and vehicle. The birds appeared to land close by but, despite searching, we couldn't re-find them. We turned to walk back to the minibus to be met by a third bird, which flew straight at and over us!

We returned for breakfast, pleased with our success, after which we headed off to our first main stop of the day, Lakenheath RSPB reserve. Our visit here was, as always, filled with noteworthy sightings, which today included at least five Bitterns, six Hobbies (all viewable in the air together), eight Marsh Harriers, a hovering Kingfisher, Garden Warbler, a good selection of insects and a swimming Grass Snake! The walk coupled with the rising heat took its toll on some of the group; Gary returned to the car park and after gaining permission from the staff, collected the minibus, which enabled us to have lunch at the first watch point before driving back to the centre. A return visit to Santon Downham, this time to walk along the river, was this afternoon's plan, the trees offering a degree of shade and relief from the sun. Banded Demoiselles lined the route, dancing above the reeds and sedges in impressive numbers, while a bee nest by the path was an impressive sight. Birdwise, another Grey Wagtail, Yellowhammer, Reed Bunting and a female Mandarin with four young were the highlights.

Returning to the bus we made a short ride to another section of the river where we stood on the bridge over it. Here we watched pairs of Grey and Pied Wagtails, the latter with a nest under the bridge, another female Mandarin, this time with seven young, plus our second swimming Grass Snake of the trip. A brief return to Lynford Arboretum was our last afternoon stop, though the timing of our visit and the afternoon heat produced little of note other than a singing Treecreeper. An after dinner visit to our first Nightjar site concluded the day where, once again, the Nightjar performed well for us with a female present and several Woodcock also seen.

Day Four

Our pre-breakfast this morning took us back to last night's Nightjar site where we enjoyed views of Willow Warbler, Yellowhammer and Linnet, while hearing Cuckoo, Chiffchaff and Garden Warbler. Our main destination today was the North

Norfolk coast, with a stop *en route* at Abbey Farm, which has a small hide overlooking a section of river. Red Kites featured strongly, with one seen at this site and a further three noted as we travelled. Holme and Thornham Harbour provided us with Avocet, Curlew, Ringed Plover and Redshank, before we headed for Titchwell RSPB reserve. Here, we had lunch before heading out onto the reserve. We walked around the Fen Trail, re-joining the main path where we stopped at the Island Hide before walking on to the sea, then returning to view the fresh marsh from Parinder hide. As expected we enjoyed good views of lots of birds, one highlight a small flock of four drake Red-crested Pochard, admittedly of some questionable origin but impressive all the same.

Gulls featured strongly, seemingly and confusingly not everyone's favourite species! Personally, I think the adult Mediterranean Gulls - of which there are now plenty nesting at the site - take some beating, though the dozen, diminutive 1st-summer Little Gulls ran a close second. Other birds on the fresh marsh included three species of tern - Sandwich, Little and Common - while waders included several Little and Common Ringed Plovers, Dunlin and two Ruffs, the latter birds in full breeding plumage, complete with impressive ruffs!

Day Five

With an early walk option forgone this morning, we were able to depart promptly after breakfast. The NWT reserve at Weeting Heath was our plan for the morning, hoping again for more Stone-curlews. We arrived at the reserve and made our way along the path towards the small hide. On opening the shutters, it was clear that even this location was encountering the same problems with the grass and finding Stone-curlews was probably going to prove just as frustrating. The 'birding gods' were smiling on us this morning though, with two birds deciding to stand up almost immediately in the grass in front of us. One dropped back to the ground quickly but the second stayed in view, allowing nice views. Pleased with our success, we decided to explore the rest of the reserve and a short walk along the path towards some feeders gave us our second bonus of the morning, a Spotted Flycatcher. The bird perched nicely for us at the path edge, again allowing us all nice views. The feeding site was attracting a nice selection of species, which included Yellowhammer and Marsh Tit, giving Tony some nice photo opportunities.

We left the hide to hear the distinct 'chipping' call of a Crossbill. The birds were high in the tree canopy and views were unfortunately restricted to the birds flying off. We continued our walk, passing through an area of woodland to emerge on the edge of a clearing. Two singing Tree Pipits, one of which was relatively close, plus both Garden and Willow Warblers were heard and seen, after which we returned to the minibus, adding a pair of Curlew to the day list near the feeding site. Lunch and coffee were a priority before we finished with a short walk to view the open expanse of water at Lynford. Numerous damselflies were noted over the water in the early afternoon sun, being joined by their bigger cousins, Blue Emperor and Black-tailed Skimmer. Butterflies also featured strongly with Common Blue, Comma, Green-veined White and Small Heath all noted as new additions to the trip.

Time was slipping away and it was time to return to the hotel where we all said our goodbyes and started our journeys home.

SYSTEMATIC LIST OF SPECIES RECORDED

(Total number of species recorded- 113)

Canada Goose *Branta canadensis*

Seen at Lynford Lake, Cavenham Heath and Titchwell RSPB.

Greylag Goose *Anser anser*

Seen daily with small numbers Lynford Water, Lackford Lakes, Lakenheath Fen and Holme.

Pink-footed Goose *Anser brachyrhynchus*

Two, one injured bird, were at Titchwell RSPB

Mute Swan *Cygnus olor*

Seen as expected at Lakenheath RSPB, Lackford Lakes, Lynford Water and Titchwell RSPB.

Egyptian Goose *Alopochen aegyptiacus*

Pairs with young at Lackford Lakes and the Pig fields at Great Cressingham.

Common Shelduck *Tadorna tadorna*

Noted in the Pig fields at Great Cressingham, Lackford Lakes and our day at the coast.

Mandarin Duck *Aix galericulata*

Pairs along the river at Santon Downham had seven and four young respectively.

Northern Shoveler *Spatula clypeata*

Easily seen at Titchwell.

Gadwall *Anas strepera*

Noted at Lackford Lakes, Lakenheath Fen, Titchwell and Holme.

Mallard *Anas platyrhynchos*

Common, seen daily.

Eurasian Teal *Anas crecca*

Five at Lackford Lakes and around twenty at Titchwell RSPB.

Red-crested Pochard *Netta rufina*

Four splendid looking males and a female at Titchwell RSPB

Common Pochard *Aythya ferina*

A male at Lackford Lakes, a female with young at Titchwell and a female at Holme.

Tufted Duck *Aythya fuligula*

Seen daily at the wetland sites we visited .

Red-legged Partridge *Alectoris rufa*

Roadside birds were noted daily.

Common Pheasant *Phasianus colchicus*

Noted daily.

Little Grebe *Tachybaptus ruficollis*

Heard at Lakenheath Fen with two seen at Titchwell RSPB.

Great Crested Grebe *Podiceps cristatus*

Noted daily at the Wetland sites we visited.

Eurasian Spoonbill *Platalea leucorodia*

One was seen by Peter at Titchwell RSPB, enough said!

Eurasian Bittern *Botaurus stellaris*

A very successful visit for us to Lakenheath Fen, with five Bittern sightings during the mornings visit.

Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea*

At least one at Lakenheath Fen, with other singles at Great Massingham, Holme and Titchwell RSPB.

Little Egret *Egretta garzetta*

Singles at Lackford Lakes and Thornham.

Great Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo*

Noted at Lakenheath Fen, Lackford Lakes and at the coast .

Eurasian Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus*

One seen over the forest clearing near Santon Downham.

Western Marsh Harrier *Circus aeruginosus*

At least eight at Lakenheath Fen and ten at Titchwell RSPB.

Red Kite *Milvus milvus*

Four seen on our last full day.

Common Buzzard *Buteo buteo*

Roadside birds were seen daily.

Common Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus*

Noted daily in all suitable habitat.

Eurasian Coot *Fulica atra*

As above, noted daily in all suitable habitat.

Eurasian Stone-Curlew *Burhinus oedichnemus*

Three on the pig fields on our second morning and two at Weeting Heath.

Eurasian Oystercatcher *Haematopus ostralegus*

Noted throughout the trip in small numbers.

Pied Avocet *Recurvirostra avosetta*

Easily seen at Holme and Titchwell RSPB.

Northern Lapwing *Vanellus vanellus*

Noted daily.

Common Ringed Plover *Charadrius hiaticula*

Several distant birds at Thornham Harbour were followed by closer birds at Titchwell RSPB.

Little Ringed Plover *Charadrius dubius*

Two confiding birds at Titchwell RSPB

Eurasian Curlew *Numenius arquata*

A calling bird on our first full day, was followed two at Thornham Harbour then two more at Weeting Heath.

Bar-tailed Godwit *Limosa lapponica*

Around fifty on the fresh marsh at Titchwell

Black-tailed Godwit *Limosa limosa*

A similar number again at Titchwell offered a nice comparison with the above species.

Ruff *Calidris pugnax*

Two smart looking summer plumage birds complete with ruffs were on the freshmarsh at Titchwell.

Dunlin *Calidris alpina*

Six summer plumage birds on the fresh marsh and six more over the sea at Titchwell RSPB

Eurasian Woodcock *Scolopax rusticola*

Roding birds were seen well on our three evening visits to local forestry clearings.

Common Redshank *Tringa totanus*

Easily seen on our visit to the coast.

Black-headed Gull *Chroicocephalus ridibundus*

Noted daily.

Little Gull *Hydrocoloeus minutus*

Twelve first summer birds were counted on the fresh marsh at Titchwell RSPB.

Mediterranean Gull *Ichthyaetus melanocephalus*

Easily seen at Titchwell where they are breeding now in healthy numbers on the large fenced in island.

Common Gull *Larus canus*

At least two 1st summer birds again on the fresh marsh at Titchwell RSPB.

Great Black-backed Gull *Larus marinus*

Two were noted at Holme.

European Herring Gull *Larus argentatus*

Noted at the coast.

Lesser Black-backed Gull *Larus fuscus*

Noted daily.

Sandwich Tern *Thalasseus sandvicensis*

Good views of two in front of the Parrinder hide at Titchwell, with several distant birds noted offshore.

Little Tern *Sternula albifrons*

As above at least two on the fresh marsh at Titchwell, with distant birds offshore.

Common Tern *Sterna Hirundo*

Same again, two on the fresh marsh and others distantly offshore.

Feral Rock Dove *Columba livia*

Recorded daily.

Stock Dove *Columba oenas*

Seen well at numerous sites.

Common Wood Pigeon *Columba palumbus*

Noted daily and easily seen.

Eurasian Collared Dove *Streptopelia decaocto*

Easily seen around suburban areas.

Common Cuckoo *Cuculus canorus*

Heard every day, with birds seen well by the group at Lakenheath Fen.

European Nightjar *Caprimulgus europaeus*

A churring male was seen extremely well on two visits to a local forest clearing, with a female also seen briefly on the last visit. A visit to another plantation produced two churring birds but unfortunately none were seen.

Common Kingfisher *Alcedo atthis*

Great views were had of a fishing bird at Lakenheath Fen.

Great Spotted Woodpecker *Dendrocopos major*

Seen or heard on three days.

European Green Woodpecker *Picus viridis*

Calling birds were heard on two days.

Common Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus*

Noted daily.

Eurasian Hobby *Falco subbuteo*

One over a forest clearing on our first full day was followed by at least six, and some great views, at Lakenheath Fen.

Eurasian Jay *Garrulus glandarius*

Surprisingly only one seen at Lakenheath Fen.

Eurasian Magpie *Pica pica*

Recorded daily.

Western Jackdaw *Corvus monedula*

Common and easily seen.

Rook *Corvus frugilegus*

Noted daily at various sites.

Carrion Crow *Corvus corone*

Noted daily in small numbers.

Coal Tit *Periparus ater*

Easily seen and constantly heard in suitable woodland habitat.

Marsh Tit *Poecile palustris*

Family parties were seen at Lynford Aboretum and Lackford Lakes.

Eurasian Blue Tit *Cyanistes caeruleus*

Recorded daily

Great Tit *Parus major*

Recorded daily

Woodlark *Lullula arborea*

A confiding perched bird was enjoyed by us all on our first full days birding, with a distant singing bird also heard at Cavenham Heath.

Eurasian Skylark *Alauda arvensis*

Heard daily with several seen..

Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica*

Noted daily throughout the trip.

Common House Martin *Delichon urbicum*

Noted daily around urban areas.

Cetti's Warbler *Cettia cetti*

Heard at Lakenheath Fen and Lackford Lakes.

Long-tailed Tit *Aegithalos caudatus*

Recorded daily.

Willow Warbler *Phylloscopus trochilus*

Seen and heard most days with some nice views had.

Common Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus collybita*

Seen and heard daily.

Sedge Warbler *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus*

Recorded at Lackford Lakes and Titchwell RSPB

Eurasian Reed Warbler

As expected seen and heard at Lackford Lakes, Lakenheath Fen and Titchwell RSPB

Eurasian Blackcap *Sylvia atricapilla*

Heard daily with several seen.

Garden Warbler *Sylvia borin*

Heard daily with one seen well at Lakenheath Fen.

Common Whitethroat *Sylvia communis*

Noted daily with nice views had at Lakenheath Fen.

Common Firecrest *Regulus ignicapilla*

Heard singing on several occasions around the car park at Lynford Arboretum.

Goldcrest *Regulus regulus*

Several heard with one seen particularly well on our first full day.

Eurasian Wren *Troglodytes troglodytes*

Seen and heard daily.

Eurasian Nuthatch *Sitta europaea*

Seen well at Lynford Arboretum and Santon Downham.

Eurasian Treecreeper *Certhia familiaris*

Heard on both visits to Lynford Arboretum but unfortunately not seen.

Common Starling *Sturnus vulgaris*

Noted daily.

Eurasian Blackbird *Turdus merula*

Seen and heard daily.

Song Thrush *Turdus philomelos*

Heard and seen daily especially around the hotel.

Mistle Thrush *Turdus viscivorus*

Birds were seen on three of the four days of the trip.

Spotted Flycatcher *Muscicapa striata*

A nice showy individual was seen at Weeting Heath.

European Robin *Erithacus rubecula*

Common, seen daily

European Stonechat *Saxicola rubicola*

A smart male was seen on our first full day at Cavenham Heath.

House Sparrow *Passer domesticus*

Noted daily around suburban areas, including the hotel.

Eurasian Tree Sparrow *Passer montanus*

Several on first full day, in hedgerows near some local pig fields.

Dunnock *Prunella modularis*

Recorded daily.

Grey Wagtail *Motacilla cinerea*

Seen well at Lynford Arebortum and Santon Downham.

Pied Wagtail *Motacilla alba yarrellii*

Noted daily.

Meadow Pipit *Anthus pratensis*

Seen and heard at Cavenham Heath, Holmen and Titchwell RSPB

Tree Pipit *Anthus trivialis*

A single at a local forest clearing on day one was followed by two at Weeting Heath on our last day.

Common Chaffinch *Fringilla coelebs*

Common, Seen daily.

Eurasian Bullfinch *Pyrrhula pyrrhula*

One briefly at Lackford Lakes

European Greenfinch *Chloris chloris*

Seen daily, particularly easy to see and hear around the hotel.

Common Linnet *Linaria cannabina*

Recorded daily in small numbers.

Common Crossbil *Loxia curvirostra*

At least two vocal birds at Weeting Heath were a nice surprise.

European Goldfinch *Carduelis carduelis*

Seen daily at various sites.

Eurasian Siskin *Spinus spinus*.

Seen well, daily around the hotel and at Lynford Arboretum.

Yellowhammer *Emberiza citrinella*

Noted daily, with some smart males seen.

Common Reed Bunting *Emberiza schoeniclus*

Seen at Lakenheath Fen, Lackford Lakes, Holme and Titchwell.

Butterflies

Green-veined White *Pieris napi*
Brimstone *Gonepteryx rhamni*
Orange Tip *Anthocharis cardamines*
Common Blue *Polyommatus icarus*
Red Admiral *Vanessa atalanta*
Painted Lady *Vanessa cardui*
Small Tortoiseshell *Aglais urticae*
Speckled Wood *Pararge aegeria*
Meadow Brown *Maniola jurtina*
Northern Comma *Polygonia c-album*
Small Heath *Coenonympha pamphilus*
Large Skipper *Ochlodes sylvanus*

Damsels and Dragons

Banded Demoiselle *Calopteryx splendens*
Common Bluet *Enallagma cyathigerum*
Azure Bluet *Coenagrion puella*
Common Red-eye *Erythromma najas*
Common Bluetail *Ischnura elegans*
Blue Emperor *Anax imperator*
Four-spotted Chaser *Libellula quadrimaculata*
Broad-bodied Chaser *Libellula depressa*
Black-tailed Skimmer *Orthetrum cancellatum*

Mammals

Eastern Grey Squirrel *Sciurus carolinensis*
Brown Hare *Lepus europaeus*
European Rabbit *Oryctolagus cuniculus*
Stoat *Mustela erminea*
Red Deer *Cervus elaphus*
Western Roe Deer *Capreolus capreolus*