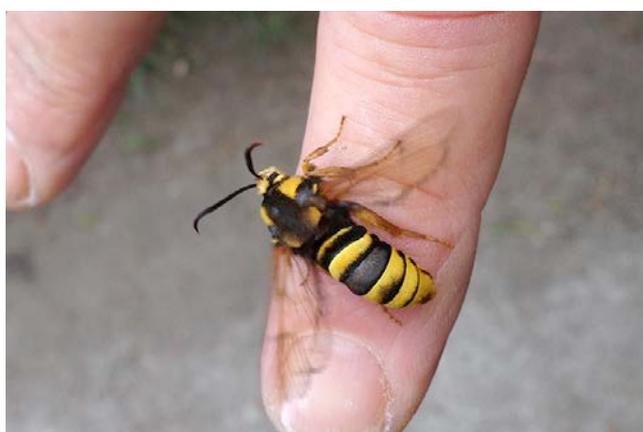


Norfolk & Suffolk

Nightjars, Brecks & Coast

Mon 12th-Fri 16th June 2017



Trip photos (clockwise from top left): Female Blue Chaser • Turtle Dove • Lunar Hornet Moth • Blue Emperor • Eurasian Bittern • European Hare. © tour leader Gary Elton/Limosa Holidays

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

Norfolk & Suffolk | Nightjars, Brecks & Coast

Tour Leader: Gary Elton

Participants : Wenda Badger, John Davies, Jan Dixon, Jill Stern, Phil & Sarah Tanner, Gary Winn, Jean Whithall

Day One

After an enjoyable first evening meal we took advantage of the nice weather and made a short drive to a nearby section of woodland in search of Nightjars. On arrival, several Song Thrushes and Robins could still be heard singing. We disembarked from the bus as the light was fading, walking along a wide sandy track and stopping periodically to listen. A churring Nightjar was heard almost immediately, but seeing these birds at times can prove a tad more challenging. A large bat flying along the woodland edge was identified as a Noctule with several Pipistrelles also noted later. Roding Woodcocks, probably just two individuals, flew regularly over us calling, while a short wait at the top of the track produced our first views of Nightjars with at least two seen.

Day Two

Today started with a pre-breakfast walk, well a drive and a short walk. A singing Wood Warbler had been present in Brandon for the last few weeks and, although there had been no news for a few days, a speculative look wasn't going to do any harm! Unfortunately, there was no sign of the bird, so we had to settle for a pleasant walk with a selection of commoner species, which helped at least to build an appetite for breakfast. Our plan today was a visit to the coast, so after breakfast we boarded the bus and headed north. We stopped en-route at some very picturesque pig fields - there are some, believe it or not, especially with all those cute piglets! Large numbers of noisy corvids and a selection of gulls were the most obvious birds here. Our last stop before reaching the coast was very much a highlight of the day with news of a breeding pair of Montagu's Harriers having filtered through. We arrived at the site and after a tea/coffee break we made our way along the field edge to an elevated viewpoint. Here, good fortune took over, with the male bird choosing that moment to appear, having apparently been absent most of the morning! The bird floated over the fields in front of us, giving the majority of the group some great views. A male Marsh Harrier, several singing Yellowhammers and Whitethroats were also appreciated during our visit.

Our next stop was nearer the coast, with the local farmland producing nice views of two singing Corn Buntings and a pair of Grey Partridges. Lunch at Titchwell in the overflow car park was accompanied by a singing Lesser Whitethroat and a very showy Turtle Dove, the latter always a treat nowadays. A walk through the reserve followed with the expected selection of species on show, several showy Bearded Reedlings, a Ruff with a ruff (albeit a bit tatty), Little Ringed Plover, Red-crested Pochard, Spoonbills and good numbers of Black-tailed Godwits and Avocets amongst the highlights. Looks out over the sea revealed a small raft of Common Scoter and both Little and Sandwich Terns. After our evening meal we again ventured out in search of Nightjars, this time at a different site but, importantly, again successful with several nice views had of birds in flight. The Woodcock were also active, several vocal birds flying over us with one landing briefly on the path in front of us.

Day Three

Pre breakfast this morning saw us returning to the pig fields, hoping the lack of heat and associated haze would make searching the area for our target species, Stone-curlew, a little easier. Conditions were indeed more favourable than the day before and it wasn't long before we found a bird in the bottom corner of one of the fields. The bird seemingly was well aware of us being there, choosing to spend most of the time largely out of view but fortunately choosing to pop out and look in our direction from time to time. Another Grey Partridge was a bonus here too, but time soon ran out and we made a swift return to the hotel for breakfast. After breakfast we drove to Lynford Arboretum where we parked and headed for nearby Lynford Water. A singing Firecrest that showed well for us all was a great start to the walk and was quickly followed by two Hobbies hawking dragonflies over the large, flooded gravel pit. It was a lovely morning and that has to be the excuse for the walk taking twice the time it should have! We walked through the heathy habitat, noting several singing Whitethroats and Blackcaps and it wasn't long before we heard our first Garden Warbler - in fact two or three. Hearing Garden Warblers is one thing (a useful exercise in itself, with Blackcaps singing nearby) but they have an annoying habit of singing slightly below the highest point of a bush and invariably deep in cover! Patience eventually paid off, with us all gaining reasonable views as one bird in particular moved to different song posts. We completed our walk along the edge of the pits, noting large numbers of damselflies over the water with Red-eyed Damselfly and Banded Demoiselles the more notable and several dragonfly species, such as Blue Emperor and Black-tailed Skimmers. A look on the conservation lake revealed a rather tatty eclipse male Mandarin, which caused some initial confusion as to its identity. Back at the minibus, a quick tea/coffee break followed, before we moved on to our next destination.

Cavenham Heath is a large area managed by Natural England, with the majority of access to it closed to the general public during the breeding season. The area's speciality is Stone-curlew, with several breeding pairs present and the design of the site allows for undisturbed viewing of the birds from the main track. The fly in the ointment here though at this time of year is the length of the vegetation. As always, searching was challenging but the site offers a nice lunch stop so we ate lunch and scanned for birds. It wasn't long before we found our first bird and over the course of the next half hour or so we had good views of three birds in total, two of which were reasonably close. A distant Cuckoo perched on a post and a male Stonechat were other welcome additions and after lunch we departed for our last destination of the day, Lackford Lakes. This is a very pleasant little reserve, managed by the Suffolk Wildlife Trust and complete with shop and other useful facilities! A very pleasant walk around the reserve was precluded by some retail therapy, an ice cream and, importantly, nice views of a Kingfisher for several of the group! A slightly convoluted route back to the hotel gave us roadside views of two more Stone-curlews, with a respectable total of six now having been seen during the day.

Day Four

Some of the group rose early in the hope of finding Woodlark before breakfast, a species that had eluded us so far. We made the short drive to an area nearby where the birds were known to breed and made our way out along the forest track, looking and listening as we walked. Several larks could be seen chasing each other at the far end of the clearing, with some clearly skylarks, but one or two warranted closer inspection. Two silent birds, which appeared to be larks, flew over and promptly vanished into cover by the forest edge. Gary went over for a closer look but the birds frustratingly had disappeared completely. Time was ticking by and reluctant we decided we should return to the hotel and meet the rest of the group for breakfast. Literally as the decision was made, the two birds flew up and landed in the trees - Woodlarks!! Both carrying food and clearly local breeding birds, we watched them through the scopes before leaving them in peace.

After breakfast we headed for Lynford Arboretum and walked along the stream and small lake at the lower end of the site. A vocal and showy family of Treecreepers started the visit off with Little Grebe and a family of Grey Wagtails soon added to our list. A walk along the stream edge produced our first Spotted Flycatcher. We stood patiently watching and waiting for the bird to periodically reappear as it flitted through the leaf canopy, blissfully unaware of the two showy birds we were going to see in the garden of the big walled house on the way out! A nice show of Southern Marsh Orchids was a non-avian addition to the morning's activities. With the heat of the day again rising, we chose East Wretham Norfolk Wildlife Trust Reserve as our lunch destination, with the woodland walk offering some shelter from the sun's rays. A pleasant walk followed, which produced the expected woodland species. Several of the group had chosen to return to the hotel for the last remaining hour or so of the day so they were dropped off, while the rest of us went back out to visit a local open area of forest. The visit proved very productive with several singing Tree Pipits seen, one of which was coloured-ringed. Enquiries have revealed it was ringed as a male in April this year, close to where we had seen it. A male Stonechat was active along the pathside fencing and a calling Woodlark did the decent thing and landed close to where we were standing. We were able to find the bird in the telescope, which enabled everyone to have nice views of it.

Day Five

Our last day, so pre-breakfast activities were shelved in favour of a prompt post-breakfast departure. With a slightly shorter day ahead we had opted for a visit to Lakenheath RSPB reserve, in my humble opinion one of their finest reserves. We arrived to find that two moth traps were being inspected, prior to a school visit later in the day. This gave us an opportunity to view the selection of largely colourful moths present (ideal for a school group!) these included Eyed and Large Elephant Hawkmoths, Buff Ermine and Spectacled Moth to name but a few. Passing through the centre we stopped briefly to view the feeders, where an immature Great Spotted Woodpecker was easily seen along with the commoner finches, tits and Reed Bunting. We had been trying to achieve perched views of Whitethroats for Jan over the last few days with limited success so we spent some time as we walked along the main track trying - and eventually succeeding - in doing just that. We arrived at the first covered watch point, sitting and viewing the extensive expanse of water and reed bed in front of us. Cetti's Warblers could be heard singing and it wasn't long before the first Kingfisher was glimpsed, followed by extended scope views of a perched bird on the edge of the reedbed. Distant Hobby and Marsh Harriers were seen, but the highlight here was provided by flight views of one possibly, two, Bitterns. The first flew in low from our right, over the reeds then dropping down and disappearing from view. The second bird appeared from the reedbed and flew back right, hence the thoughts it may have been the same bird. We continued our walk along the main path, enjoying views of the commoner dragonflies and damselflies and a fly over Cuckoo, before arriving at the path junction to the newer hide set in the reedbed. A quick look was deemed an option as we still had a fair walk to the last view point and the hide from past experience was never that productive, but that said you never know! We settled in the hide and, on looking out, the first bird noted was a Bittern, stood motionless right in front of us on the edge of the reeds! An amazing and entertaining 30 minutes followed as the Bittern proceeded to slowly walk through the reeds, on occasions appearing fully in the open as it worked its way round the pool edge. We watched the bird catch two fish, with one being identified from photos as a young pike and

whilst watching it fish and move along the reed edge we commented on its strange swaying motion. Wenda, on our return home, contacted the BTO, whose thoughts were that it swayed to try and blend in with the moving reeds around it or to help judge distance to its prey easier, the former under the circumstances I think would probably be the more feasible. An added bonus at Lakenheath was a wonderful Lunar Hornet Moth, found on the main track.

Time had now flown past, which meant a return walk to the visitor centre for lunch. Views of two nearby hawking Hobbies were welcome and closer inspection of several perched dragonflies revealed them to be Blue Chasers, Lakenheath being a good site to see them at this time of year. Lunch on benches near the car park, was followed by a short walk through the reserve to view the large wash area. Common Terns, Oystercatcher and two very cryptic and at times tricky to see Little Ringed Plovers were the highlights, before we reluctantly returned to the minibus. We headed for the hotel where we said our goodbyes then started our journeys home.

SYSTEMATIC LIST OF SPECIES RECORDED

(Total number of species recorded 112)

Canada Goose *Branta canadensis*

Half a dozen at Titchwell and Lynford Lakes.

Greylag Goose *Anser anser*

Noted at all wetland sites visited.

Mute Swan *Cygnus olor*

Again seen daily at all wetland sites.

Egyptian Goose *Alopochen aegyptiacus*.

Seen daily at five sites in total.

Common Shelduck *Tadorna tadorna*

Small numbers were noted daily at most sites.

Mandarin Duck *Aix galericulata*

A tatty looking eclipse male bird was on Lynford Water.

Gadwall *Anas strepera*

Seen daily in small numbers.

Mallard *Anas platyrhynchos*

Common, seen daily.

Northern Shoveler *Anas clypeata*

Noted at Titchwell and East Wretham.

Eurasian Teal *Anas crecca*

Four Titchwell, two males East Wretham and a pair at Lakenheath.

Red-crested Pochard *Netta rufina*

Eight at Titchwell, that included five males.

Common Pochard *Aythya ferina*

Recorded at Titchwell(3) and Lackford Lakes.

Tufted Duck *Aythya fuligula*

Seen at Titchwell, Lynford and Lackford Lakes.

Common Scoter *Melanitta nigra*

A flock of around 15 birds offshore at Titchwell.

Red-legged Partridge *Alectoris rufa*.

Seen well during the first two days.

Grey Partridge *Perdix perdix*

A roadside pair at Choseley and another, a female at Great Cressingham.

Common Pheasant *Phasianus colchicus*

Noted daily in small numbers.

Little Grebe *Tachybaptus ruficollis*

A pair with young at Lynford Lake and a single bird at East Wretham.

Great Crested Grebe *Podiceps cristatus*

Seen at Lakenheath Fen, Lackford Lakes and Lynford Water.

Eurasian Spoonbill *Platalea leucorodia*

Three were seen distantly by Wenda on Thornham marsh at Titchwell.

Eurasian Bittern *Botaurus stellaris*

Seen twice in flight at Lakenheath plus stunning views of a showy individual from one of the hides.

Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea*

Noted at Lakenheath Fen and Titchwell.

Little Egret *Egretta garzetta*

Surprisingly only seen at Titchwell.

Great Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo*

Seen at Lakenheath Fen, Lackford Lakes and Titchwell.

Eurasian Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus*

Surprisingly scarce with only one seen on our first full day.

Western Marsh Harrier *Circus aeruginosus*

As expected several were seen at Lakenheath Fen and Titchwell.

Montagu's Harrier *Circus pygargus*

A male at breeding site near the coast was a welcome addition.

Common Buzzard *Buteo buteo*

An increasingly common sight in Norfolk with birds seen daily.

Common Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus*

Common, noted at all wetland sites.

Eurasian Coot *Fulica atra*

Noted at all wetland sites.

Eurasian Stone-curlew *Burhinus oedicnemus*

Three seen well at Cavenham Heath, two at a roadside stop and one on a pre-breakfast trip, all on day three.

Eurasian Oystercatcher *Haematopus ostralegus*

Seen daily at various sites.

Pied Avocet *Recurvirostra avosetta*

Numerous and easily seen at Titchwell.

Northern Lapwing *Vanellus vanellus*

Recorded daily at various sites and roadside fields during the trip.

Little Ringed Plover *Charadrius dubius*

One by the path on the freshmarsh at Titchwell.

Eurasian Woodcock *Scolopax rusticola*

Roding birds were seen well on both our evening trips.

Black-tailed Godwit *Limosa limosa*

A hundred or so birds were present on the fresh marsh at Titchwell

Bar-tailed Godwit *Limosa lapponica*

Noted in small numbers on the beach at Titchwell.

Common Redshank *Tringa totanus*

Easily seen at Titchwell.

Ruff *Philomachus pugnax*

A single male complete with ruff was at Titchwell.

Black-headed Gull *Chroicocephalus ridibundus*

Seen daily.

Little Gull *Hydrocoloeus minutus*

Three 1st summer birds on the Fresh marsh at Titchwell RSPB

Mediterranean Gull *Ichthyaeetus melanocephalus*

An increasingly common sight in Norfolk with at least ten present at Titchwell.

European Herring Gull *Larus argentatus*

Noted daily in small numbers.

Lesser Black-backed Gull *Larus fuscus*

As above, seen at a variety of sites.

Sandwich Tern *Thalasseus sandvicensis*

Noted flying offshore from the beach at Titchwell.

Little Tern *Sternula albifrons*

Several were noted offshore from the beach at Titchwell

Common Tern *Sterna hirundo*

Noted at Titchwell, Lynford Water, Lackford Lakes and Lakenheath Fen.

Feral Rock Dove *Columba livia*

Noted daily

Stock Dove *Columba oenas*

Noted daily in small numbers

Common Wood Pigeon *Columba palumbus*

Noted daily and easily seen.

European Turtle Dove *Streptopelia turtur*

Showed very well for everyone over lunch in the Titchwell carpark. Also heard briefly on our pre-morning jaunt to Santon Downham on day four.

Eurasian Collared Dove *Streptopelia decaocto*

Easily seen around suburban areas.

Common Cuckoo *Cuculus canorus*

Heard on three days, with several also seen.

European Nightjar *Caprimulgus europaeus*

Two sites were visited with good views had at both.

Common Swift *Apus apus*

Seen daily.

Common Kingfisher *Alcedo atthis*

One was seen by Gary and Sarah, perched outside the visitor centre at Lackford Lakes, with the rest having to wait until our visit to Lakenheath Fen to see one.

Great Spotted Woodpecker *Dendrocopos major*

Heard at three sites. A juvenile bird on the visitor centre bird feeder at Lakenheath Fen was the only one seen.

European Green Woodpecker *Picus viridis*

Brief views were had of single birds at Lynford Lakes and East Wretham.

Common Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus*

Noted daily.

Eurasian Hobby *Falco subbuteo*

Two at both Lynford Water and Lakenheath Fen.

Eurasian Jay *Garrulus glandarius*

Singles were seen at various sites.

Eurasian Magpie *Pica pica*

Recorded daily in small numbers.

Western Jackdaw *Corvus monedula*

Common and easily seen.

Rook *Corvus frugilegus*

Noted daily in good numbers.

Carrion Crow *Corvus corone*

Seen daily.

Coal Tit *Periparus ater*

Common in the forest, with birds heard and seen regularly.

Eurasian Blue Tit *Cyanistes caeruleus*

Recorded daily

Great Tit *Parus major*

Recorded daily

Bearded Reedling *Panurus biarmicus*

A small flock of four (three males) at Titchwell was seen well by everybody in the path side reeds.

Woodlark *Lullula arborea*

A pair on one of our pre breakfast walks was followed by another later in the day at another nearby site.

Eurasian Skylark *Alauda arvensis*

Seen and heard daily.

Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica*

Seen daily at various sites

Common House Martin *Delichon urbicum*

Seen daily at various sites, mainly around suburban areas.

Cetti's Warbler *Cettia cetti*

Heard at Lakenheath Fen, Titchwell and Lackford Lakes reserves.

Long-tailed Tit *Aegithalos caudatus*

A vocal family party was seen at Titchwell.

Willow Warbler *Phylloscopus trochilus*

Heard and seen daily at several sites.

Common Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus collybita*

Heard daily at various sites, with several seen.

Sedge Warbler *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus*

Seen and heard as expected at Lakenheath Fen and Titchwell.

Eurasian Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus scirpaceus*

As above, seen and heard at both Lakenheath Fen, Titchwell, and Lackford Lakes.

Common Grasshopper Warbler *Locustella naevia*

A reeling bird was heard at Titchwell.

Eurasian Blackcap *Sylvia atricapilla*

Seen and heard daily at suitable sites

Garden Warbler *Sylvia borin*

Heard and seen well at Lynford Water, with another heard at Lakenheath Fen.

Lesser Whitethroat *Sylvia curruca*

Heard and brief seen at Titchwell.

Common Whitethroat *Sylvia communis*

Common and easily seen and heard at suitable sites.

Common Firecrest *Regulus ignicapilla*

A male was seen very well on our first visit to Lynford, with another heard on our second.

Goldcrest *Regulus regulus*

Several were heard and seen at Lynford Arboretum, with others regularly heard in other areas of the forest.

Eurasian Wren *Troglodytes troglodytes*

Seen and heard daily.

Eurasian Nuthatch *Sitta europaea*

Heard at Lynford Arboretum, but unfortunately not seen.

Eurasian Treecreeper *Certhia familiaris*

A family party seen well at Lynford Arboretum with three more at East Wretham.

Common Starling *Sturnus vulgaris*

Common, noted daily.

Common Blackbird *Turdus merula*

Seen daily.

Song Thrush *Turdus philomelos*

Easily heard daily, with several seen.

Mistle Thrush *Turdus viscivorus*

Single birds were seen on three occasions.

Spotted Flycatcher *Muscicapa striata*

Three different individuals at Lynford Arboretum were all seen well.

European Robin *Erithacus rubecula*

Noted daily and easily seen at Titchwell, with particularly tame birds around the car park there.

European Stonechat *Saxicola rubicola*

A male at Cavenham Heath was followed by another in a woodland clearing the following day.

House Sparrow *Passer domesticus*

Noted daily around suburban areas.

Duncock *Prunella modularis*

Recorded daily.

Grey Wagtail *Motacilla cinerea*

A family party of five were seen by the small lake at Lynford Arboretum.

Pied Wagtail *Motacilla alba yarrellii*

Noted daily, with birds easily seen on the fresh marsh at Titchwell.

Meadow Pipit *Anthus pratensis*

Noted at Cavenham Heath and Titchwell.

Tree Pipit *Anthus trivialis*

Singing birds were seen well in two local forest clearings.

Common Chaffinch *Fringilla coelebs*

Seen daily.

Eurasian Bullfinch *Pyrrhula pyrrhula*

A pair were seen at Lackford Lakes.

European Greenfinch *Carduelis chloris*

Seen daily.

Common Linnet *Carduelis cannabina*

Seen in small numbers daily.

European Goldfinch *Carduelis carduelis*

Seen daily at various sites.

Eurasian Siskin *Carduelis spinus*.

Easily seen around the hotel, with others noted at Lynford Arboretum.

Corn Bunting *Emberiza calandra*

Two seen well on wires near Choseley Barns on our way to and from the coast on our first full day.

Yellowhammer *Emberiza citronella*

Seen throughout the trip at various sites.

Common Reed Bunting *Emberiza schoeniclus*

Easily seen and heard at all suitable sites visited.

Mammals

European Rabbit *Oryctolagus cuniculus*
European Hare *Lepus europaeus*
Western Roe Deer *Capreolus capreolus*
Reeves's Muntjac *Muntiacus reevesi*
Eastern Grey Squirrel *Sciurus carolinensis*
Red Fox *Vulpes vulpes*
Stoat *Mustela erminea*
Common Pipistrelle *Pipistrellus pipistrellus*
Common Noctule *Nyctalus noctula*

Butterflies

Brimstone *Gonepteryx rhamni*
Common Blue *Polyommatus icarus*
Comma *Polygonia c-album*
Red Admiral *Vanessa atalanta*
Painted Lady *Vanessa cardui*
Peacock *Aglais io*
Small Tortoiseshell *Aglais urticae*
Speckled Wood *Pararge aegeria*
Small Heath *Coenonympha pamphilus*
Meadow Brown *Maniola jurtina*
Ringlet *Aphantopus hyperantus*
Small/Essex Skipper *Thymelicus sylvestris/lineola*
Large Skipper *Ochlodes venata*

Dragonflies and Damselflies.

Banded Demoiselle *Calopteryx splendens*
Common Bluet *Enallagma cyathigerum*
Azure Bluet *Coenagrion puella*
Common Bluetail *Ischnura elegans*
Large Redeye *Erythromma najas*
Brown Hawker *Aeshna grandis*
Blue Emperor *Anax imperator*
Hairy Hawker *Brachytron pratense*
Four-spotted Chaser *Libellula quadrimaculata*
Blue Chaser *Libellula fulva*
Black-tailed Skimmer *Orthetrum cancellatum*