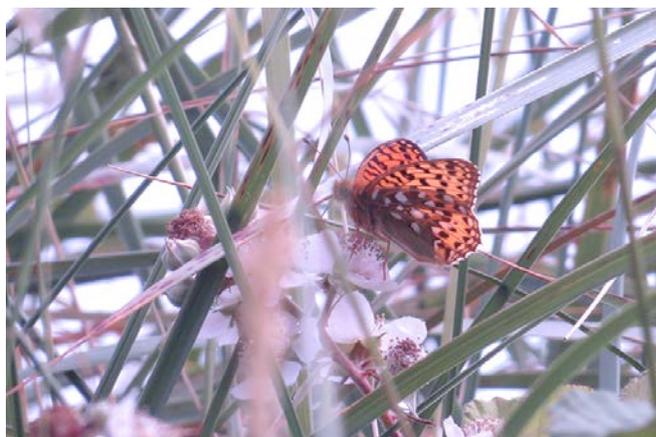


Norfolk Broads

Summer Wildlife

Mon 2nd-Thu 5th July 2018



Trip photos (clockwise from top left): Purple Hairstreak • Blue Hawker • Small Skipper • Hickling scrape • Dark Green Fritillary • Blue Chaser • © tour leader Gary Elton/Limosa Holidays

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

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Tour Leader: Gary Elton

Day One

After a very enjoyable evening meal, the trip started in a somewhat unconventional way with a short drive to 'Limosa HQ' to see some Barn Owl chicks being ringed in the nest box in the Limosa garden. We arrived at the house meeting Chris and Barbara, then collected a ladder and headed down the garden to the box. Chris and Gary lifted the ladder up the tree and Gary climbed up, returning a short while later with two Barn Owl chicks. As expected the birds were at different ages, but both seemingly doing well and at suitable size for ringing. The rings were placed on the bird's legs then Gary climbed the ladder and returned the birds safely to the box. We returned to the house spending a while chatting before making the short drive back to the Dairy Barns.

Day Two

With the temperature in the UK having soared to close to record levels over the preceding weeks and showing no sign of abating, it was decided that an earlier start and a longer pre-breakfast outing would be a better use of our time, especially as the chosen destination, Potter Heigham Marshes, involved a reasonable walk. A bumpy drive in along the main entrance track, soon gave us views of the stretches of water that make up the marsh. Unfortunately the pathside vegetation had grown up considerably, with any worthwhile views restricted to a gateway we could pull up in. Avocets, Lapwings and various ducks were visible, plus several smaller waders, which on closer inspection were identified as Green Sandpipers. We parked at the end of the track and continued the circuit to view the main areas of water, the light and sun behind us enabling perfect viewing conditions. The walk round gave a selection of species, singing Reed and Sedge Warblers, overflying hirundines and a selection of wildfowl. A group of three Little Egrets kept a first-summer Spoonbill company, the latter's black wingtips clearly visible, while elsewhere on the scrape there were up to eight breeding-plumaged Ruff, one or two being particularly smart. Other birds noted included three Dunlin, two Greenshanks and a Little Ringed Plover and, as we returned to the minibus, several butterflies were already on the wing, hopefully a good omen for our hoped-for Swallowtails later in the day! A short burst of Cetti's Warbler song accompanied our departure as we headed back to the Dairy Barns for breakfast.

After breakfast and a short stop at Tesco for milk, we headed to Potter Heigham. We parked near the church, taking the path out to join the Weavers Way where it runs along the southern edge of Hickling Broad. Insects were clearly going to feature today, with several Brown Hawkers and Ringlets along the field edge. Whilst we were pausing to look at these, a rapidly flying object caught Gary's eye and closer inspection as it hovered around some nearby flowers revealed its identity as a Humming-bird Hawk-moth! A short woodland walk followed and both disappointingly and somewhat surprisingly, there were no signs of any Speckled Woods. By consolation, a small butterfly noted on the ground near the path was found to be a Purple Hairstreak! More good views and photo opportunities followed and we continued on through the trees to join the Weavers Way, seeing two White Admirals flitting around a clump of pathside honeysuckle. Our walk along here was both productive and pleasant, the highlight undoubtedly our first Swallowtails of the trip. We continued past the scrape (Rush Hill) and hide, pausing a few minutes to check it out. Although there were people working on the scrape, a summer-plumaged Curlew Sandpiper was a welcome, albeit distant, addition for us, with several more Ruff and Avocet present, too. Lunch was taken at the end of the track with a view out over the pasture and marshes we had visited earlier in the day. Several Marsh Harriers and Grey Herons were noted and the walk back along the path to the minibus produced several more Swallowtails and a brief Kingfisher in the channel in front of the hide. We returned to the Dairy Barns for a siesta prior to the log and dinner, with a further trip out planned later in the day for Nightjars.

After dinner and a quick check on the football score (England were winning at that point!), we set off in search of Nightjars. We arrived at the site, walking out from the edge of the village and as usual arriving much earlier than needed! With time on our hands we settled down and waited, with Gary checking his phone to find England were drawing and we were now down to penalties!! A short while later the first Nightjar started to churr and soon after a female bird drifted across, literally right in front of us! Some great views followed with at least four males and two females present. Our walk back produced several bats; with Gary's bat detector identifying them as Common Pipistrelles and a check on the phone revealed England had won the penalty shoot out, a perfect end to a very successful evening.

Day Three

With the plans for the day being mainly insect-dominated today and the late finish the night before, we opted for breakfast as soon as we could rather than a pre-breakfast walk. After breakfast we headed off along the coast making our first stop to view the sea at Waxham. Looking out from our elevated viewpoint we quickly added a few new species, namely Great Black-backed and Herring Gulls, Sandwich and Little Terns and a solitary Guillemot, found resting on the sea. Returning to the minibus we continued to our next stop Horsey gap, where we parked and walked out along the lower track. Small Skipper was our first new butterfly addition, quickly followed by another in the form of Small Heath. Dark Green Fritillary was our hoped-for species here and it wasn't long before we found our first ones flying around the brambles. Birds also featured, with a nice male Stonechat, a family of Whitethroats and pair of Linnets all choosing to settle in the same bush! A quick look at sea produced seven distant Gannets and taking a route back through the dunes we suddenly discovered where all the Fritillaries were! We stood in the centre of a large, south facing bank of grassed dune, realising that they were everywhere around us!

Pleased with our success we made the relatively short drive down to Breydon water. Walking out along the path under the bridge to stand in the shade and viewing the estuary. Timing-wise we weren't far off perfect, but unfortunately the rising heat meant distant birds were shimmering and distorted with the heat. We could comfortably identify most though, the more numerous being Shelduck, Curlew and Black-tailed Godwits. A return trip across country took us to Strumpshaw Fen RSPB reserve, where we took lunch behind the small screen overlooking the pool in front of the visitor centre. The Black Swan, as always, looked totally out of place on the pool, the arrival of a Kingfisher appreciated far more, with the bird settling down to hunt and successfully catching four fish whilst we watched. After lunch, a White Admiral started the walk off, followed by the first Speckled Woods then the hoped-for species, Silver-washed Fritillary, although their appearance was repeatedly frustratingly brief. A confiding immature male Blue Hawker by the path was a smart addition and a Grass Snake swimming across a small woodland pool was the most surprising.

A calling Treecreeper refused to show itself as we emerged from the wood and followed the path running along the water channels at the edge of the meadow. The first Green-eyed Hawker appeared and patrolled up and down in front of us, along with several Four-spotted Chasers, while a recently emerged Common Spreadwing on a nearby piece of vegetation was a bonus. We continued to the Tower hide where sifting through the untidy array of ducks attaining their eclipse plumage we managed to find a pair of Garganey, the male still having some remnants of its summer finery! Whilst searching through these, a bird poking around in the reed edge behind the ducks caught our attention and closer inspection revealed it to be a juvenile Water Rail, very much an unexpected bonus! We returned to the visitor centre, encountering a rather inquisitive Blue Hawker *en route*, though when I say we, it was more Jenny it seem to have a fascination for! Collecting Georgie, we walked back to the minibus, stopping to check the small dragonfly pool where another Green-eyed Hawker performed nicely.

Day Four

We started our last day as yesterday, opting for an early breakfast then heading straight off to the Norfolk Wildlife Trust's Hickling Broad Reserve. On arrival, we walked out to the nearest hide, pausing to look at the dragonfly pools. As we did so, two birds flashed by and into the reeds, Bearded Reedlings! With one, a female, perching up in full view for us before the pair took off again together. We walked onto the hide and opening the viewing flaps we found a Great Egret and three Little Egrets on show on the pool in front of us. Two Carrion Crows also drew our attention with one looking a good candidate for Hooded Crow. Seemingly well enough marked, though on making enquiries local thinking it appears is that the bird is not clean enough for a pure bird and has been present at the site for a while.

A boat trip was planned for this morning so we headed back to the visitor centre to buy our tickets before walking out to join the boat. An enjoyable couple of hours were spent travelling around the broad, stopping first at another scrape named 'Swim Coots' complete with a hide and an area only publicly accessible by boat. A similar collection of Waders, Ruff, Avocet, Black-tailed Godwit and Redshank were seen, though the birds were much closer than on our previous views. A Swallowtail flew through as we sat watching and the selection of geese on show included four feral Barnacle Geese. We continued on our journey, with the boatman giving us a very interesting rundown on the history of the broad and people who had lived there. A visit to the tower hide was also included in the trip, poking out through the tree canopy and giving us amazing views over the broad and surrounding countryside. Our position in the treetops enabled us to also check the treetops for Purple Hairstreaks, with several seen and some nice views had of perched individuals. Returning to the jetty, we walked back, stopping to have lunch in the Secker Hide. This, it transpired, was a good move with a soaring Common Crane picked up on the horizon. Green-eyed Hawks were also now very active with several individuals encountered as we returned to the visitor centre. The morning and day had passed by so we reluctantly headed back to the Dairy Barns where we said our goodbyes and started our respective journeys home.

SYSTEMATIC LIST OF SPECIES RECORDED

(Total number of species recorded-96)

Canada Goose *Branta canadensis*

Easily seen at Potter Heigham Marshes and Hickling Broad.

Greylag Goose *Anser anser*

Easily seen and noted daily.

Mute Swan *Cygnus olor*

Seen daily with large numbers, around 200, non-breeding birds on Hickling Broad.

Egyptian Goose *Alopochen aegyptiacus*

Seen at Potter Heigham Marshes and Hickling Broad.

Common Shelduck *Tadorna tadorna*

Distant birds numbering several hundred, were seen at Breydon Water with several family parties also at Hickling Broad.

Garganey *Spatula querquedula*

An eclipse pair were seen from the Tower hide at Strumpshaw Fen.

Northern Shoveler *Spatula clypeata*

As above, eclipse birds were seen from the Tower hide at Strumpshaw Fen.

Gadwall *Anas strepera*

Noted daily, primarily at Potter Heigham Marshes, Strumpshaw Fen and Hickling Broad.

Mallard *Anas platyrhynchos*

Common, seen daily.

Eurasian Teal *Anas crecca*

Ten at Potter Heigham Marshes and 15 at Strumpshaw Fen.

Common Pochard *Aythya ferina*

A pair were noted at Potter Heigham Marshes.

Tufted Duck *Aythya fuligula*

Easily seen at Potter Heigham Marshes.

Common Pheasant *Phasianus colchicus*

Noted daily.

Little Grebe *Tachybaptus ruficollis*

Two at Potter Heigham Marshes were the only ones noted.

Great Crested Grebe *Podiceps cristatus*

Noted daily at the wetland sites we visited, with several family parties seen.

Eurasian Spoonbill *Platalea leucorodia*

A single, second calendar year bird, at Potter Heigham Marshes

Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea*

A maximum of four seen daily.

Great Egret *Ardea alba*

Two in flight during our walk along the Weaves Way with one also seen well from the Cadbury Hide at Hickling.

Little Egret *Egretta garzetta*

Seen daily with at least ten at Potter Heigham Marshes.

Northern Gannet *Morus bassanus*

A group of seven (five adults) heading east offshore at Waxham.

Great Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo*

Noted daily

Eurasian Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus*

One was seen from the Visitor Centre at Strumpshaw Fen carrying prey.

Western Marsh Harrier *Circus aeruginosus*

Seen daily, with closer views at Strumpshaw Fen.

Common Buzzard *Buteo buteo*

Surprisingly two on our last day were the only ones seen.

Water Rail *Rallus aquaticus*

A nice surprise with an almost fully-grown juvenile seen from the Tower Hide at Strumpshaw Fen.

Common Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus*

Noted daily in all suitable habitat.

Eurasian Coot *Fulica atra*

As above, noted daily in all suitable habitat.

Common Crane *Grus grus*

A distant flying bird at Hickling Broad from the Secker Hide as we walked back from the boat was a welcome trip addition.

Eurasian Oystercatcher *Haematopus ostralegus*

Several at Potter Heigham Marshes, with larger numbers at Breydon Water.

Pied Avocet *Recurvirostra avosetta*

Easily seen at Potter Heigham Marshes and on the scrapes at Hickling Broad.

Northern Lapwing *Vanellus vanellus*

Noted daily.

Little Ringed Plover *Charadrius dubius*

One at Potter Heigham Marshes.

Eurasian Curlew *Numenius arquata*

Around 50 were along the shore edge at Breydon Water.

Black-tailed Godwit *Limosa limosa*

Around 60 were at Potter Heigham, the majority in summer plumage. Distant birds were seen at Breydon Water and around 20 gave us great views on 'Swim Coots', Hickling Broad.

Ruff *Calidris pugnax*

Moulting male birds were seen at Potter Heigham (8), on Rush Hill scrape viewable from the Weavers way on the same day (3) and 'Swim Coots' viewed on our boat trip on the last day (5).

Curlew Sandpiper *Calidris ferruginea*

A breeding-plumaged individual was seen, frustratingly distantly, on Rush Hill Scrape, Hickling from the Weavers Way.

Dunlin *Calidris alpina*

Three adult birds early morning at Potter Heigham Marshes.

Green Sandpiper *Tringa ochropus*

Four on a trackside pool at Potter Heigham Marshes.

Common Redshank *Tringa totanus*

Noted daily in small numbers at all wetland sites visited.

Common Greenshank *Tringa nebularia*

Two early on our first morning at Potter Heigham Marshes with another later in the day on Rush Hill Scrape.

Black-headed Gull *Chroicocephalus ridibundus*

Noted daily.

Common Gull *Larus canus*

An adult and first-summer birds were on Rush Hill Scrape, with a first-summer bird along the shoreline at Waxham.

Great Black-backed Gull *Larus marinus*

Noted offshore at Waxham and Horsey.

European Herring Gull *Larus argentatus*

Noted offshore at Waxham and Horsey.

Lesser Black-backed Gull *Larus fuscus*

Noted daily in small numbers.

Sandwich Tern *Thalasseus sandvicensis*

Three offshore at Waxham.

Little Tern *Sternula albifrons*

A group of four offshore at Waxham.

Common Tern *Sterna hirundo*

Seen daily with best views during the boat trip.

Common Guillemot *Uria aalge*

One sat offshore on the sea at Waxham showed well for us.

Feral Rock Dove *Columba livia*

Recorded daily.

Stock Dove *Columba oenas*

Seen daily.

Common Wood Pigeon *Columba palumbus*

Noted daily and easily seen.

Eurasian Collared Dove *Streptopelia decaocto*

Easily seen around suburban areas.

Western Barn Owl *Tyto alba*

An evening trip to Limosa HQ saw two Barn Owl chicks successfully ringed, with an adult seen the following morning as we returned from Potter Heigham Marshes.

European Nightjar *Caprimulgus europaeus*

A successful evening trip to see this species resulted in at least four males heard and both male and female birds seen extremely well, which included one singing, perched bird.

Common Swift *Apus apus*

Seen daily.

Common Kingfisher *Alcedo atthis*

One briefly from the Weavers Way hide and great views of a fishing bird at Strumshaw Fen.

Great Spotted Woodpecker *Dendrocopos major*

Heard on two dates.

Common Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus*

Noted daily.

Eurasian Jay *Garrulus glandarius*

One briefly at Strumshaw Fen and two at Hickling Broad.

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, with a 'Hooded Crow' candidate noted at Hickling Broad.

Eurasian Blue Tit *Cyanistes caeruleus*

Noted at Strumshaw Fen and Hickling Broad.

Great Tit *Parus major*

Recorded daily.

Bearded Reedling *Panurus biarmicus*

A pair was seen well as we walked to the Cadbury Hide at Hickling Broad.

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 Potter Heigham Marshes and surprisingly the only one recorded.

Long-tailed Tit *Aegithalos caudatus*

Noisy family parties at Potter Heigham Church and Hickling Broad.

Willow Warbler *Phylloscopus trochilus*

One seen well as we walked from Potter Heigham Church to the Weavers Way.

Common Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus collybita*

Seen and heard daily.

Sedge Warbler *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus*

Recorded daily, with nice views had of singing birds at Potter Heigham Marshes.

Eurasian Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus scirpaceus*

Heard daily with several seen.

Common Grasshopper Warbler *Locustella naevia*

Heard briefly reeling from the hide along the Weavers Way.

Eurasian Blackcap *Sylvia atricapilla*

Heard daily with at least one seen.

Common Whitethroat *Sylvia communis*

A singing bird at Potter Heigham Marshes was followed by good views of an obliging family group at Horsey.

Eurasian Wren *Troglodytes troglodytes*

Seen and heard daily.

Eurasian Treecreeper *Certhia familiaris*

A calling bird at Strumpshaw Fen unfortunately couldn't be located.

Common Starling *Sturnus vulgaris*

Noted daily.

Eurasian Blackbird *Turdus merula*

Seen and heard daily.

Song Thrush *Turdus philomelos*

One briefly in the churchyard at Potter Heigham.

Mistle Thrush *Turdus viscivorus*

At least one noisy bird around the car park at Strumpshaw Fen.

European Robin *Erithacus rubecula*

Common, seen daily

European Stonechat *Saxicola rubicola*

A smart male in the same bush as the Whitethroats and Linnets at Horsey.

House Sparrow *Passer domesticus*

Noted daily.

Duncock *Prunella modularis*

Recorded daily.

Pied Wagtail *Motacilla alba yarrellii*

Noted daily.

Common Chaffinch *Fringilla coelebs*

Common, seen daily.

European Greenfinch *Chloris chloris*

Seen and heard daily.

Common Linnet *Linaria cannabina*

Nice views of several birds at Horsey.

European Goldfinch *Carduelis carduelis*

Seen daily at various sites.

Yellowhammer *Emberiza citrinella*

Noted daily, with some smart males seen.

Common Reed Bunting *Emberiza schoeniclus*

Seen and heard daily as expected.

Escapes

Black Swan *Cygnus atratus*

Barnacle Goose *Branta leucopsis*

Butterflies

Common Swallowtail *Papilio machaon*

Large white *Pieris brassicae*

Small White *Pieris rapae*

Green-veined White *Pieris napi*

Purple Hairstreak *Favonius quercus*

White Admiral *Limenitis camilla*

Northern Comma *Polygonia c-album*

Red Admiral *Vanessa atalanta*

Painted Lady *Vanessa cardui*

Small Tortoiseshell *Aglais urticae*

Silver washed Fritillary *Argynnis paphia*

Dark Green Fritillary *Argynnis aglaja*

Common Meadow Brown *Maniola jurtina*

Common Ringlet *Aphantopus hyperantus*

Northern Gatekeeper *Pyronia tithonus*

Small Heath *Coenonympha pamphilus*

Speckled Wood *Pararge aegeria*

Essex Skipper *Thymelicus lineola*

Small Skipper *Thymelicus sylvanus*

Large Skipper *Ochlodes sylvanus*

Moths

Hummingbird Hawk-moth *Macroglossum stellatarum*
Narrow-bordered five-spot Burnet *Zygaena lonicerae*
Silver Y *Autographa gamma*

Damselfly and Dragonflies

Banded Demoiselle *Calopteryx splendens*
Common Spreadwing *Lestes sponsa*
Common Bluetail *Ischnura elegans*
Common Bluet *Enallagma cyathigerum*
Azure Bluet *Coenagrion puella*
Large Redeye *Erythromma najas*
Green-eyed Hawker *Aeshna isoceles*
Brown Hawker *Aeshna grandis*
Blue Hawker *Aeshna cyanea*
Blue Emperor *Anax imperator*
Four-spotted Chaser *Libellula quadrimaculata*
Broad-bodied Chaser *Libellula depressa*
Blue Chaser *Libellula fulva*
Black-tailed Skimmer *Orthetrum cancellatum*
Ruddy Darter *Sympetrum sanguineum*
Common Darter *Sympetrum striolatum*

Mammals

Eastern Grey Squirrel *Sciurus carolinensis*
European Rabbit *Oryctolagus cuniculus*
Brown Hare *Lepus europaeus*
Common Pipistrelle *Pipistrellus pipistrellus*
Stoat *Mustela erminea*
Grey Seal *Halichoerus grypus*
Reeves's Muntjac *Muntiacus reevesi*
Chinese Water Deer *Hydropotes inermis*