

Norfolk Broads

The Broads in Spring

Mon 23rd-Thu 26th May 2016



A startling and truly spectacular tour highlight was our close encounter with this fabulous Otter at Hickling Broad © Robinchittenden.co.uk

**Report compiled by tour leader:
Robin Chittenden**

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Tour Leader: Robin Chittenden

with Sheila Bennett, Ann Davey, Geoff Margison, Barbara Payne, Pat & Val Pearson & Maureen Wale.

Horsey

An early morning visit produced an elusive singing Lesser Whitethroat, plus two pairs of Avocet that had chosen a large puddle in a field to nest. A new breeding location! We had fantastically close views of a male Marsh Harrier, hunting a reedy ditch, alongside the road, and later a very close Common Buzzard. A second visit to this area was quite extraordinary with the almost unbelievable sighting of a Stone-curlew close to the road in a sheep field. This was quickly followed by a Cuckoo flying past and then two Common Cranes were spotted feeding in the open.

Barton Broad

Strong northerly winds during our visit didn't help but we had lovely views of a Willow Warbler and Goldcrest and a brief Marsh Tit. From the viewing platform there were a few distant Common Terns and Great Crested Grebes.

Wroxham Broad

We popped in for a few minutes, and it was quiet, with a Common Tern and three Great Crested Grebes.

Ranworth Broad

This broad was busier birdwise. There were several pairs of Common Terns on a breeding platform. Our first Reed Warbler showed and a Cetti's Warbler was in song. In the distance there was a Hobby.

Hickling Broad

We did a circular walk on the south side of Hickling Broad. Along the sheltered lane section was a Common Whitethroat perched in the open. A few Butterflies: Orange-tip and Red Admiral. We came across a smart drake Garganey and a handful of migrant waders: Greenshank, three Dunlin and two Ringed Plover. At the same time a Hobby was spotted scything the air for insects over the nearby wood. Soon it was right above us but rather high, showing its anchor like silhouette.

Moments after enjoying a close singing Sedge Warbler by the Weaver's Way footpath at Hickling Broad we were amazed by an Otter that gambled along the footpath heading towards us. It was completely oblivious to us, even to the sound of camera shutters firing. At the last second it did spot us and veered off into the overgrown ditch, but by then it was a matter of feet away. A once in a life time moment, that left us stunned. The strong northerly winds helped in dispersing our smell away from it. Weather conditions were poor for insects but we did see a Hairy dragonfly and several Four-spotted Chasers. Rush Hill scrape was covered in wildfowl including two Wigeon.

An early morning visit to Hickling Broad seemed very quiet, until just as we were about to leave, a Common Crane flew confidently past us just 50 yards away. Simply breathtaking views.

Our boat trip on the Broad started well with exceptionally close views of a male Bearded Tit followed by two juveniles in the reeds. Swim Coots scrape held a pack of waders that had stopped off to re-fuel on their way north. Best was a Curlew Sandpiper and Little Stint among the Dunlin and (Tundra) Ringed Plover. They were all spooked by a Hobby that cruised low past. A Chinese Water Deer was grazing in the open. Although the water levels at Rush Hill scrape were not favourable for waders there were three Greenshank. The Tower platform gave lovely views towards Horsey of the marshy, reed vista. A Cuckoo flew past and sang as it flew and a distant Common Crane was spotted near Stubb Mill.

Breydon Water

We timed our visit to perfection as the tide was mostly in, leaving just a small area of open mud, where the few remaining waders left, yet to head north to breed, were all congregated: three Whimbrel eight Sanderlings, two Knot, several Curlew and two Bar-tailed Godwits. A Spoonbill was roosting on 'the Lumps' and helpfully showed its bill from time to time.

Strumpshaw Fen RSPB

Birding from the reception centre hide was a little frustrating but eventually most saw a perched Kingfisher, but a couple of juvenile Bearded Tits proved to be more fleeting and elusive. The Fen hide was quiet apart from a Chinese Water Deer seen briefly by the path to it. The Tower hide was more interesting with a pair of Marsh Harrier doing a food pass. A pair of Gadwall with twelve young caused some anxiety as their very recently hatched young were seemly scattered about and uncared for. Tension levels heightened when a Coot, guarding its nest with sitting partner, tried on several occasions to foot-stamp a duckling that had to dive underwater to escape, which it did. Nearby a Cuckoo sang and was 'scoped. Reed, Sedge, Cetti's and Willow Warblers were all singing as we completed the circuit.

Waxham

An early morning look produced several Little Terns, as well as passing Common Scoter, Gannets and a Fulmar.

ANNOTATED LIST OF SPECIES RECORDED**BIRDS****Canada Goose *Branta canadensis***

A couple here and there

Greylag Goose *Anser anser*

Common

Mute Swan *Cygnus olor*

Common

Egyptian Goose *Alopochen aegyptiacus*

Fairly common

Shelduck *Tadorna tadorna*

Common with at least three hundred Breydon Water

Gadwall *Anas strepera*

Fairly common

Eurasian Wigeon *Anas penelope*

Two Hickling Broad

Mallard *Anas platyrhynchos*

Fairly common

Northern Shoveler *Anas clypeata*

Fairly common

Eurasian Teal *Anas crecca*

One Hickling Broad

Common Pochard *Aythya ferina*

Eight Strumpshaw Fen

Tufted Duck *Aythya fuligula*

Six Bowers Marsh and six Strumpshaw Fen

Common Scoter *Melanitta nigra*

About twelve past Waxham

Red-legged Partridge *Alectoris rufa*

Common

Pheasant *Phasianus colchicus*

Very common non-native

Northern Fulmar *Fulmarus glacialis*

One Waxham

Little Grebe *Tachybaptus ruficollis*

One Malthouse Broad

Great Crested Grebe *Podiceps cristatus*

Fairly common

Spoonbill *Platalea leucorodia*

One Breydon Water

Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea*

Fairly common

Little Egret *Egretta garzetta*

Fairly common

Northern Gannet *Morus bassanus*

Six Waxham

Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo*

Fairly common included a flock of twenty-four over Hickling Broad

Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus*

Fairly common

Hobby *Falco subbuteo*

One or two Hickling Broad

Western Marsh Harrier *Circus aeruginosus*

Fairly common

Eurasian Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus*

One over our accommodation and one Strumpshaw Fen

Common Buzzard *Buteo buteo*

Common

Common Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus*

A couple here and there

Eurasian Coot *Fulica atra*

A few here and there

Common Crane *Grus grus*

One or two Hickling Broad and two Horsey

Eurasian Stone-curlew *Burhinus oedicephalus*

One Horsey

Oystercatcher *Haematopus ostralegus*

A few here and there

Avocet *Recurvirostra avosetta*

A few here and there including a bird sitting on a nest Horsey

Northern Lapwing *Vanellus vanellus*

Fairly common

Common Ringed Plover *Charadrius hiaticula*

Two Bowers Marsh and twenty plus Hickling Broad

Bar-tailed Godwit *Limosa lapponica*

Two Breydon Water

Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus*

Three Breydon Water

Eurasian Curlew *Numenius arquata*

About ten Breydon Water

Common Redshank *Tringa totanus*

Fairly common

Common Greenshank *Tringa nebularia*

One Bowers Marsh and five Hickling Broad

Red Knot *Calidris canutus*

Two Breydon Water

Sanderling *Calidris alba*

Eight Breydon Water

Little Stint *Calidris minuta*

One Hickling Broad

Curlew Sandpiper *Calidris ferruginea*

One Hickling Broad

Dunlin *Calidris alpina*

Three Bowers Marsh and two Breydon Water

Black-headed Gull *Chroicocephalus ridibundus*

Common

Great Black-backed Gull *Larus marinus*

One Breydon Water

European Herring Gull *Larus argentatus*

Common Breydon Water

Lesser Black backed Gull *Larus fuscus*

Common

Little Tern *Sternula albifrons*

Ten Waxham

Common Tern *Sterna Hirundo*

Fairly common in the Broads

Feral Pigeon *Columba livia*

Common

Stock Dove *Columba oenas*

Fairly common

Wood Pigeon *Columba palumbus*

Common

Eurasian Collared Dove *Streptopelia decaocto*

Fairly common

Common Cuckoo *Cuculus canorus*

One Horsey, one or two Strumpshaw Fen and one or two Hickling Broad

Common Swift *Apus apus*

Common

Common Kingfisher *Alcedo atthis*

One Strumpshaw Fen

Great Spotted Woodpecker *Dendrocopos major*

One somewhere

Eurasian Jay *Garrulus glandarius*

A couple here and there

Magpie *Pica pica*

Common

Jackdaw *Coloeus monedula*

Common

Rook *Corvus frugilegus*

Common

Carrion Crow *Corvus corone*

Fairly common

Coal Tit *Periparus ater*

One Strumpshaw Fen

Marsh Tit *Poecile palustris*

One Barton Broad

Great Tit *Parus major*

A couple here and there

Blue Tit *Cyanistes caeruleus*

A couple here and there

Bearded Tit *Panurus biarmicus*

Two Strumpshaw Fen and ten Hickling Broad

Sand Martin *Riparia riparia*

Two somewhere

Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica*

Common

House Martin *Delichon urbicum*

Fairly common

Long-tailed Tit *Aegithalos caudatus*

One or two here and there

Skylark *Alauda arvensis*

Fairly common

Cetti's Warbler *Cettia cetti*

Fairly common one seen fairly briefly Strumpshaw Fen

Sedge Warbler *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus*

Fairly common

Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus scirpaceus*

Common

Willow Warbler *Phylloscopus trochilus*

Several in suitable habitats

Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus collybita*

One and twos here and there

Blackcap *Sylvia atricapilla*

Fairly common

Lesser Whitethroat *Sylvia curruca*

One Horsey

Common Whitethroat *Sylvia communis*

Common

Goldcrest *Regulus Regulus*

One Barton Broad

Wren *Troglodytes troglodytes*

Common

Starling *Sturnus vulgaris*

Fairly common

Blackbird *Turdus merula*

Common

Robin *Erithacus rubecula*

Common

House Sparrow *Passer domesticus*

Fairly common

Dunnock *Prunella modularis*

A few seen

Pied Wagtail *Motacilla alba yarrellii*

Common

Chaffinch *Fringilla coelebs*

Very common

Greenfinch *Chloris chloris*

Very local

Goldfinch *Carduelis carduelis*

Common

Linnet *Linaria cannabina*

Common in suitable habitat

Yellowhammer *Emberiza citrinella*

One Bowers Marsh and one at our accommodation

Reed Bunting *Emberiza schoeniclus*

Fairly common

MAMMALS**Grey Seal *Halichoerus grypus*****Rabbit *Oryctolagus cuniculus*****Brown Hare *Lepus europaeus*****Eastern Grey Squirrel *Sciurus carolinensis*****Red Deer *Cervus elaphus*****Muntjac *Muntiacus reevesi*****Chinese Water Deer *Hydropotes inermis*****Common Otter *Lutra lutra*****BUTTERFLIES****Small White *Pieris rapae*****Orange-tip *Anthocharis cardamines*****Red Admiral *Vanessa atalanta*****MOTHS****Plum Tortrix *Hedya pruniana*** The one that looked like bird poo at Barton broad**DRAGONFLIES****Large Red Damselfly *Pyrrhosoma nymphula*****Four-spotted Chaser *Libellula quadrimaculata*****Hairy Dragonfly *Brachytron pratense***