

Norfolk Broads

Spring Wildlife

Mon 21st-Thu 24th May 2018



Trip photos (clockwise from top left): Four-spotted Chaser • Bearded Reedling • Common Swallowtail • Great Egret • © tour leader Gary Elton/Limosa Holidays

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

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Day One

After a very enjoyable evening meal and an opportunity to get to know each other and discuss the trip, we retired to bed full of expectations for the coming days ahead.

Day Two

A short local walk for some of the group before breakfast readied us for our first ample breakfast of the trip, after which we departed for nearby Hickling Broad, where we parked and took the footpath to the Weavers Way. After disembarking, we checked around Potter Heigham churchyard area before heading out along the path. We hadn't gone far before the first Common Crane of the morning appeared, flying high over the distant tree line ahead, a fitting start to the list and almost the first bird we had seen! More tree top action followed as a Hobby appeared over and through the tree line, with the bird disappearing before it or another was found perched on some clear branches of a large tree. Scope views followed and, as we walked closer, the views obviously got even better.

Whilst the sun was out this morning the wind unfortunately was far stronger than we would have liked, though a sheltered area just before we entered some woodland produce our first insects in the shape of Four-spotted Chaser and Hairy Hawker, both dragonflies we were to see regularly throughout the trip. Several Orange tip butterflies also appeared and a smart Shield bug was identified later as a Dock Bug. Walking out on to the Weavers Way itself, we were soon listening to singing Reed and Sedge Warblers and Reed Buntings in amongst the extensive reedbed that stretched ahead of us. We didn't have to wait long for our first Swallowtail either which was to be one of three we were to see this morning, all pristine and presumably fresh emergences.

The small scrape and hide at Rush Hill revealed several pairs of Avocet, Shelduck and Oystercatcher and a mobile flock of Black-tailed Godwits were seen several times in flight over the reeds. Large Red Damselfly and Azure Bluets completed our insect tally for the day as we returned to the minibus. A short drive to nearby marshes at Potter Heigham provided an ideal spot for lunch, but not before a stop at the first pool, which revealed three smart drake Garganey (with a fourth appearing later in the afternoon) and a Common Crane in the fields behind us. We spent a large percentage of the afternoon here, with Common Sandpiper, Ruff, Grey Plover, Ringed Plover, Greenshank, Hobby and two more Cranes among the birds we enjoyed. We finished the afternoon with brief visits to Rollesby and Ormesby Broads, a singing Cetti's Warbler and a Common Sandpiper being the best birds. After dinner in the evening, we headed back along the coast in search of Nightjars. The weather was far from ideal, with a brisk cold Northeasterly wind blowing but, our luck was in, with at least three churring birds heard and glimpses of several in flight had, making our efforts well worthwhile.

Day Three

We awoke to another breezy and rather grey start to the day and after breakfast, we drove the short distance to Sea Palling and then Waxham for a look over the sea. With the wind from the North, we had seabirds in mind but, although Gannets could be seen flying past, they were a long way out! A few Grey Seals were much closer inshore amongst the breakers and closer seabirds included two Fulmars and a Little Tern, while our only auk was a fly-by and too far out to positively identify. Our main destination today was to be the RSPB reserve at Strumpshaw Fen and our arrival there was timed perfectly with the re-appearance of the sun. We spent the next couple of hours walking around the reserve enjoying the birds, butterflies and dragonflies. Birds seen included two Hobbies (one perched), Treecreeper, Marsh Harrier and a Black Swan, the latter a long way from home! Hairy Hawkers and Four-spotted Chasers were numerous and our butterfly list was swelled with species such as Green-veined White, Brimstone, Peacock and Red Admiral.

After lunch, we made the short drive to Buckenham Marshes, crossing a manned level crossing to access the site, a rare experience these days! Both Mistle Thrush and Song Thrush - the only new bird additions - joined the list here, though Avocets and Shelducks were on the large pool at the site and the surrounding marshland revealed the expected Lapwing and Redshank plus Greylag and Canada Geese. Several Chinese Water Deer were also seen, a now regular sighting here with the habitat and conditions perfect for them. We finished the day at Breydon Water where the tidal conditions were good, though the birds were unfortunately a bit sparse. One nice addition was a small flock of Curlew tucked up to avoid the rising tide on the near bank, with a Whimbrel in amongst them offering a nice comparison of the two species side by side.

Day Four

After breakfast and packing we headed off for the grand finale of the holiday, the boat trip at Hickling Broad. Arriving at the Norfolk Wildlife Trust centre slightly early, we decided to walk out to the nearest hide to view the pools in front of it. Two highflying Common Cranes started the ball rolling, coming over us and heading back over the centre, while with the sun out, butterflies and dragonflies were on the wing. Butterflies were particularly noticeable and included another Swallowtail. Viewing the pools from the path, a Great Egret was immediately obvious and, on entering the hide, we could see it was in the company of two of its smaller Little Egret cousins.

Returning to the now open visitor centre, we purchased our tickets and made the walk out to the boat jetty. The boat trip took us out onto the broad itself, giving us an opportunity to visit several areas that are only accessible this way. During the trip, the boatman gave us a run down on the history of the Norfolk Broads, its birds and management over the years, which we all found very interesting. In between, we stopped at two hides overlooking scrapes, though these were disappointingly quiet. We then docked at a small jetty and made a short walk to climb a tower hide. This gave us enviable views out over the woodland canopy to survey the surrounding area. A map in front of us allowed us to orientate ourselves and identify the various landmarks in front of us, while two Hobbies, some vocal Common Cranes and several Marsh Harriers were noted as well. We returned to the boat and, eventually, this morning's departure point, having enjoyed an entertaining morning. The excitement wasn't over though as a tell tale 'pinging' call could be heard coming from the adjacent reedbed. Closure scrutiny revealed not one, but two male Bearded Reedlings, which perched in full view for us for several minutes. We walked back to the centre, briefly visiting another hide *en route* before enjoying lunch and, in some cases, ice creams as well! This concluded the trip as we returned back to the Dairy Barns, where we said our good-byes and started our individual journeys back home.

ANNOTATED LIST OF BIRDS RECORDED
(97 species)

Canada Goose *Branta canadensis*

Noted in small numbers over the first two days.

Greylag Goose *Anser anser*

Noted daily.

Mute Swan *Cygnus olor*

Noted daily at various sites.

Egyptian Goose *Alopochen aegyptiacus*

Several pairs were seen at Hickling Broad and Buckenham Marshes.

Common Shelduck *Tadorna tadorna*

Easily seen at Hickling Broad, Buckenham Marshes and Breydon Water

Garganey *Spatula querquedula*

Four drakes were a nice find at Potter Heigham Marshes.

Northern Shoveler *Spatula clypeata*

Noted daily in small numbers.

Gadwall *Mareca strepera*

Noted daily and seen at all wetland sites visited.

Eurasian Wigeon *Mareca penelope*

Two drakes at Potter Heigham Marshes.

Mallard *Anas platyrhynchos*

Common, seen at all wetland sites visited.

Eurasian Teal *Anas crecca*

Two drakes at Potter Heigham Marshes and a single at Rush Hill Scrape, Hickling Broad.

Common Pochard *Aythya ferina*

Seen at Potter Heigham and Ormesby Broad.

Tufted Duck *Aythya fuligula*

Seen at Rollesby and Ormesby Broads.

Red-legged Partridge *Alectoris rufa*

Recorded daily, largely as were travelled round.

Common Pheasant *Phasianus colchicus*

Recorded daily.

Northern Fulmar *Fulmarus glacialis*

Two offshore at Waxham.

Little Grebe *Tachybaptus ruficollis*

A pair at Potter Heigham Marshes.

Great Crested Grebe *Podiceps cristatus*

Easily seen on the Broads we visited.

Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea*

Several seen daily, again at various sites.

Great Egret *Ardea alba*

One in front of the Cadbury hide at Hickling Broad.

Little Egret *Egretta garzetta*

As above, seen and noted at wetland sites visited.

Northern Gannet *Morus bassanus*

Distant birds offshore at Sea Palling and Waxham.

Great Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo*

Noted on our first day.

Eurasian Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus*

Two seen, along the Weavers Way and at the Nightjar site.

Western Marsh Harrier *Circus aeruginosus*

Regularly seen throughout the trip.

Common Buzzard *Buteo buteo*

Noted daily.

Common Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus*

Noted daily

Eurasian Coot *Fulica atra*

Noted daily

Common Crane *Grus grus*

Eight seen in total, with calling birds heard on several occasions at Hickling Broad.

Eurasian Oystercatcher *Haematopus ostralegus*

Noted daily in small numbers at a variety of sites.

Pied Avocet *Recurvirostra avosetta*

Seen well at Hickling Broad, Potter Heigham and Buckenham Marshes.

Northern Lapwing *Vanellus vanellus*

Recorded daily.

Grey Plover *Pluvialis squatarola*

Just one, at Potter Heigham Marshes.

Common Ringed Plover *Charadrius hiaticula*

Five at Potter Heigham Marshes.

Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus*

A single bird with curlews at Breydon Water.

Eurasian Curlew *Numenius arquata*

At least 10 at Breydon Water.

Black-tailed Godwit *Limosa limosa*

A flock of 54 birds was seen on several occasions at Hickling Broad with the same flock appearing later in the day at Potter Heigham Marshes.

Ruff *Philomachus pugnax*

Two were found in amongst the flock of Black-tailed Godwits at Potter Heigham Marshes.

Common Redshank *Tringa totanus*

Seen at Hickling Broad, Potter Heigham and Breydon Water.

Greenshank *Tringa nebularia*

One at Potter Heigham Marshes

Black-headed Gull *Chroicocephalus ridibundus*

Noted daily.

Common Gull *Larus canus*

Single birds were seen daily, all 1st summer birds.

Great Black-backed Gull *Larus marinus*

Noted on the first two days at or near the coast.

European Herring Gull *Larus argentatus*

Noted daily.

Lesser Black-backed Gull *Larus fuscus*

Noted daily through the trip.

Little Gull *Hydrocoloeus minutus*

Four 1st summer birds were seen well at Titchwell.

Sandwich Tern *Sterna sandvicensis*

Seen distantly offshore from Sea Palling.

Little Tern *Sternula albifrons*

As above, with one bird close in shore at Waxham.

Common Tern *Sterna Hirundo*

Seen daily, with breeding birds at several sites.

Feral Rock Dove *Columba livia*

Seen daily, primarily during our travels.

Stock Dove *Columba oenas*

Noted daily with some nice views had of this under-rated species.

Common Wood Pigeon *Columba palumbus*

Common, seen daily

Eurasian Collared Dove *Streptopelia decaocto*

Noted in and around farms and villages as we travelled around over the three days.

Common Cuckoo *Cuculus canorus*

Heard calling at Strumpshaw Fen, with one seen from the minibus on day three.

European Nightjar *Caprimulgus europaeus*

Three churring and several seen during our 'Nightjar soiree'.

Common Swift *Apus apus*

Noted daily.

European Green Woodpecker *Picus viridis*

Calling birds were heard from the Weavers Way and Strumpshaw Fen.

Common Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus*

Noted daily, generally single, hunting birds.

Eurasian Hobby *Falco subbuteo*

Seen daily, with at least six seen including several perched birds.

Eurasian Jay *Garrulus glandarius*

A heard only along the Weavers Way, Hickling.

Eurasian Magpie *Pica pica*

Seen daily in small numbers.

Western Jackdaw *Coloeus monedula*

Seen daily in both fields and around village rooftops.

Rook *Corvus frugilegus*

Noted daily.

Carrion Crow *Corvus corone*

Small numbers were noted throughout the trip at various sites.

Eurasian Blue Tit *Cyanistes caeruleus*

Birds were encountered daily.

Great Tit *Parus major*

Noted daily in small numbers.

Bearded Reedling *Panurus biarmicus*

Great views were had of two males as we disembarked from the boat at Hickling Broad.

Eurasian Skylark *Alauda arvensis*

Seen and heard daily.

Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica*

Noted throughout the trip.

Common House Martin *Delichon urbicum*

Noted daily.

Cetti's Warbler *Cettia cetti*

Singing birds were noted daily, though unsurprisingly none were seen.

Long-tailed Tit *Aegithalos caudatus*

A family party was seen at Hickling Broad.

Willow Warbler *Phylloscopus trochilus*

Heard and seen along the Weavers Way, Strumpshaw Fen and Hickling Broad.

Common Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus collybita*

Heard and seen daily.

Sedge Warbler *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus*

Singing birds were seen and heard at several sites we visited.

Eurasian Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus scirpaceus*

Heard daily with several seen.

Eurasian Blackcap *Sylvia atricapilla*

Heard and seen throughout the trip, best views at Strumpshaw Fen.

Lesser Whitethroat *Sylvia curruca*

One heard and seen briefly along the Weavers Way.

Common Whitethroat *Sylvia communis*

Seemingly very common and easily seen.

Goldcrest *Regulus regulus*

Heard singing at Strumpshaw Fen.

Eurasian Wren *Troglodytes troglodytes*

Recorded daily at various sites.

Eurasian Treecreeper *Certhia familiaris*

A singing bird was seen well by several members of the group at Strumpshaw Fen.

Common Starling *Sturnus vulgaris*

Seen daily in small numbers.

Common Blackbird *Turdus merula*

Noted daily.

Song Thrush *Turdus philomelos*

A singing bird at Strumpshaw Fen, with another roadside bird seen as we returned from Buckenham Marshes.

Mistle Thrush *Turdus viscivorus*

One seen on the road into Buckenham Marshes.

European Robin *Erithacus rubecula*

As expected, recorded daily.

House Sparrow *Passer domesticus*

Noted daily.

Dunnock *Prunella modularis*

Noted daily.

Pied Wagtail *Motacilla alba yarrellii*

Recorded daily, at various sites.

Meadow Pipit *Anthus pratensis*

A single, calling bird at Waxham.

Common Chaffinch *Fringilla coelebs*

Common, recorded daily.

European Greenfinch *Carduelis chloris*

Noted in small numbers daily

Common Linnet *Carduelis cannabina*

Seen daily in small numbers.

European Goldfinch *Carduelis carduelis*

Again noted daily.

Yellowhammer *Emberiza citrinella*

A smart singing male bird on our first mornings pre breakfast walk.

Common Reed Bunting *Emberiza schoeniclus*

Noted daily and seen well.

Black Swan

One of these smart-looking, Australian swans was at Strumpshaw Fen.

Mammals

Eastern Grey Squirrel *Sciurus carolinensis*
European Rabbit *Oryctolagus cuniculus*
Brown Hare *Lepus europeaus*
Grey Seal *Halichoerus grypus*
Reeves's Muntjac *Muntiacus reevesi*
Red Deer *Cervus elaphus*
Chinese Water Deer *Hydropotes inermis*

Butterflies

Common Swallowtail *Papilio machaon*
Brimstone *Gonepteryx rhamni*
Green-veined White *Pieris napi*
Orange tip *Anthocharis cardamines*
Red Admiral *Vanessa atalanta*
Peacock *Aglais io*
Speckled Wood *Pararge aegeria*

Damsels & Dragons

Banded Demoiselle *Calopteryx splendens*
Large Red Damselfly *Pyrrosoma nymphula*
Azure Bluet *Coenagrion puella*
Common Bluetail *Ischnura elegans*
Hairy Hawker *Brachytron pratense*
Four-spotted Chaser *Libellula quadrimaculata*

Others

Dock Bug *Coreus marginatus*