

Norfolk Broads

Tue 19th - Fri 22nd June 2012



Our June tours to the Norfolk Broads are timed to coincide with the peak period for Swallowtail... and we got it spot on this year! © Kevin Elsby/www.wildlifeontheweb.co.uk

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

Trip Diary

Tour Leader: Gary Elton

with Jon Reveley, Shelagh Ross and Gwyneth Taylor

Tuesday 19th June

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 days ahead.

Wednesday 20th June

We woke to a misty start to the day, though the sun quickly burned through, producing a fine day. A pre-breakfast short drive was followed by a short walk, which produced a selection of commoner birds including several singing Whitethroat and sightings of Yellowhammer and Marsh Harrier. More unusual birds included a calling fly-over Yellow Wagtail and an elusive singing Grasshopper Warbler.

We returned to our accommodation for breakfast, after which we made the short drive to the village of Potter Heigham, where we parked and walked out to the south end of Hickling Broad. The walk took us long the edge of several crop fields, before we entered an area of woodland from which we emerged to view the broad. Several stops helped to identify dragonflies and damselflies, which included large numbers of Black-tailed skimmers and Azure Bluets. Eventually, we arrived to view the broad, scanning the reed tops for small birds: Reed Bunting and Sedge Warbler could be seen and heard, and to our delight several Swallowtail Butterflies, though several would not do justice to the numbers found. A presumed recent hatching meant at least six of these magnificent butterflies were on view every time the reed tops were scanned; viewing these gave us bonus sightings of several Bearded Tits flying across the reed bed.

We walked along the bank side path enjoying views of several Marsh Harriers and Hobbies, the later at times coming reasonably close. Swallowtails were on show throughout our walk, flying at times alongside and past us as we walked along. The path-side ditch gave us nice, albeit flight views of several Norfolk (Green-eyed) Hawker, another Broads speciality, and several of the commoner Large Red Damsels. From the small viewing hide, which over-looked a large area of open water, we found several noisy Common Terns, Mute Swan, Shelduck and two Redshank on the small muddy edge. A singing Cetti's Warbler, several Reed Warblers and a Cuckoo, the latter seen briefly by John, were noted, before we turned and walked back along the path to the minibus.

A short drive took us to the coast for lunch at Horsey Corner and a short walk along the dunes. The lower more sheltered part of the walk produced a tatty female Stonechat found by Gwyneth, which was followed by a contrastingly fresh juvenile bird whilst a large Blue Emperor patrolled a path side pool. We crossed the dunes to view the beach and sea noting a fly by Little Tern, several Oystercatchers and a single Turnstone and Ringed Plover on a nearby sandbar. Our last destination of the day was Barton Broad, the largest broad in the Ant valley, with an impressive boardwalk that winds its way through bank-side vegetation, finally allowing a view out across the open water of the broad. At least 35 Great Crested Grebes were counted along with similar numbers of Greylag and Canada Geese on the water.

After our evening meal we again ventured out to Winterton Dunes in search of Nightjars. On arrival, we walked through the dunes listening to singing Skylarks, which even with the light starting to fade seemed reluctant to stop singing. The evening was unfortunately surprisingly chilly, and the wind had also increased to a stiff breeze and we stood patiently waiting for the birds to start churring. Unfortunately, the birds remained silent and we eventually decided to return back to the minibus. Just as we were leaving a distant bird was heard, which was briefly joined by a second, with the darkness now falling this was to be our only encounter.

Thursday 21st June

After last night's late finish and heavy rain predicted for the following day, we decided to forgo our early morning walk. Unsurprisingly, we woke to a dry morning, though to be fair as we departed from the hotel the rain had started to fall. Our first destination today was the Norfolk Wildlife Trust Reserve at Hickling, which gave us a limited amount of shelter in the several hides. New birds for the trip included a fly over Lesser Redpoll, a pair of Shoveler, a noisy family party of Long-tailed Tits and several Meadow Pipits. By the time we had completed the walk and returned to the car park the rain had stopped and after lunch we drove on to our next destination, Breydon Water, stopping briefly *en route* to view Rollesby and Ormesby Broads, which are separated by the main road and viewable from a small car park.

Arriving at Breydon Water, we walked a short distance along the footpath to view the estuary. Although fairly distant there were a large number of gulls and waders to be seen, with Herring Gulls, Curlew and Oystercatcher immediately identified. A single Common Gull was noted; as we scanned we saw several Sandwich Terns, Avocet and Ringed Plovers. Our final destination of the day was a short walk along one of the lesser known areas along the edge of the Ant Marshes. The walk took us along and through a small area of woodland before exiting onto the edge of the fen. Reed, Sedge and Cetti's Warblers were heard and several Marsh Harriers were seen. At times the sun was trying to reappear which led to some insect activity with large numbers of Azure Bluets noted, and bonus sightings in the form of a single Swallowtail, which came and settled within feet of us, and a patrolling Norfolk Hawker.

Friday 22nd June

Our early morning walk today took us back to search again for the nearby Grasshopper Warbler, though unfortunately there was no sign - the now windy conditions were far from ideal. After breakfast we headed off for our destination for the morning, Strumpshaw Fen RSPB reserve. We spent the next few hours walking around the well marked paths, with several hides giving good views out over the extensive reed beds. Marsh Harriers were on show constantly and several Reed, Sedge and Cetti's Warblers were heard, and the open areas of water held a selection of the commoner wildfowl.

Returning to the main hide/visitor centre we gained good views of a perched Kingfisher, which was a nice finale to the trip. We had our lunch then made the journey back to the hotel to say our goodbyes and start our journeys back home.

Gary Elton

ANNOTATED LIST OF BIRDS RECORDED

(a total of 89 species recorded by the group)

Pheasant *Phasianus colchicus*

Noted daily.

Greylag Goose *Anser anser*

Noted daily.

Canada Goose *Branta canadensis*

Noted daily in small numbers.

Mute Swan *Cygnus olor*

Seen daily, at various sites.

Egyptian Goose *Alopochen aegyptiacus*

One and two were seen daily.

Shelduck *Tadorna tadorna*

A pair at Hickling broad were followed by large numbers at Breydon Water.

Gadwall *Anas strepera*

Several were noted at Hickling Broad, with 50 + seen at Strumpshaw Fen.

Mallard *Anas platyrhynchos*

Common, noted daily.

Shoveler *Anas clypeata*

A pair at Hickling broad were followed by six at Strumpshaw Fen.

Teal *Anas crecca*

A flock of 15 in flight at Hickling broad were the only ones seen.

Pochard *Aythya ferina*

A pair at Hickling Broad, were followed by six at Rollesby Broad.

Tufted Duck *Aythya fuligula*

Seen at both Hickling and Rollesby Broads (six) and a pair at Strumshaw Fen.

Great Crested Grebe *Podiceps cristatus*

Seen daily, with large numbers, 35, counted at Barton Broad.

Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea*

Recorded daily.

Little Egret *Egretta garzetta*

Noted on both visits to Hickling, with a single bird also seen at Breydon Water.

Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo*

Recorded daily with larger numbers at Breydon Water.

Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus*

Several were seen daily as we travelled around.

Hobby *Falco subbuteo*

Good views were had of up to six birds at Hickling Broad, with further singles in the afternoon at Barton Broad and *en route* the following day.

Marsh Harrier *Circus aeruginosus*

Seen at Hickling and Strumshaw Fen, up to ten birds present at each site.

Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus*

Road side bird was seen by Gwyneth on 21st

Buzzard *Buteo buteo*

A single bird was seen from the hotel grounds on 20th.

Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus*

Recorded daily in small numbers.

Coot *Fulica atra*

Noted daily.

Oystercatcher *Haematops ostralegus*

Six at Horsey on the beach, were followed by larger numbers at Breydon Water.

Avocet *Recurvirostra avosetta*

Three sleeping birds were found at Breydon Water.

Lapwing *Vanellus vanellus*

Easily seen, with several young birds also noted.

Ringed Plover *Charadrius hiaticula*

A single bird seen at Horsey with ten noted at Breydon Water.

Black-tailed Godwit *Limosa limosa*

A flock of at least fifty birds were seen at Breydon Water.

Bar-tailed Godwit *Limosa lapponica*

Six were seen at Breydon Water.

Curlew *Numenius arquata*

A calling bird was seen at Hickling Broad, with large numbers noted at Breydon Water.

Redshank *Tringa totanus*

Two in front of the hide at Hickling on our first day were followed by larger numbers at Breydon Water.

Turnstone *Arenaria interpres*

A single on the beach at Horsey was the only one seen.

Black-headed Gull *Chroicocephalus ridibundus*

Common, easily seen each day.

Common Gull *Larus canus*

A single bird at Breydon Water was the only one seen.

Great Black-backed Gull *Larus marinus*

Noted at Horsey, and easily seen at Breydon Water.

Herring Gull *Larus argentatus*

Recorded daily at most sites visited.

Lesser Black-backed Gull *Larus fuscus*

Noted daily in small numbers.

Little Tern *Sterna albifrons*

A single bird at Horsey was the only one seen.

Sandwich Tern *Sterna sandvicensis*

Four birds were seen at Breydon Water.

Common Tern *Sterna hirundo*

Seen daily at all suitable sites visited.

Feral Pigeon / Rock Dove *Columba livia*

Noted daily.

Stock Dove *Columba oenas*

A singing bird at Hickling Broad was followed by a roadside bird on 21st.

Woodpigeon *Columba palumbus*

Noted daily and easily seen.

Collared Dove *Streptopelia decaocto*

Easily seen around suburban areas.

Cuckoo *Cuculus canorus*

A single bird was seen by John at Hickling Broad

Nightjar *Caprimulgus europaeus*

Two churring birds were heard at Winterton on the evening of 20th.

Swit *Apus apus*

Recorded daily.

Kingfisher *Alcedo atthis*

The last bird of the trip, with one showing well at Strumpshaw Fen.

Green Woodpecker *Picus viridis*

A calling bird was heard several times at Horsey Corner.

Jay *Garrulus glandarius*

Several were noted daily.

Maggie *Pica pica*

As above, noted daily.

Jackdaw *Corvus monedula*

Common and easily seen.

Rook *Corvus frugilegus*

Noted daily in good numbers.

Carrion Crow *Corvus corone*

Recorded daily, though in smaller numbers than the above species.

Great Tit *Parus major*

A family party was seen on the afternoon of 21st in woodland by the Ant marshes.

Blue Tit *Cyanistes caeruleus*

Several family parties were noted during the trip.

Sand Martin *Riparia riparia*

A solitary bird was seen at Horsey Corner.

Swallow *Hirundo rustica*

Easily seen and noted daily.

House Martin *Delichon urbicum*

Several were seen around suburban areas during the three days.

Long-tailed Tit *Aegithalos caudatus*

A family party was seen at Hickling Broad on 21st

Skylark *Alauda arvensis*

Seen and heard daily.

Cetti's Warbler *Cettia cetti*

Several were heard at both Hickling Broad and Ant Marshes.

Grasshopper Warbler *Locustella naevia*

A reeling bird was heard on our first prebreakfast walk.

Sedge Warbler *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus*

Recorded daily, with nice views had of a singing bird at Hickling Broad.

Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus scirpaceus*

Recorded daily at all suitable sites.

Willow warbler *Phylloscopus trochilus*

Recorded daily.

Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus collybita*

As above, recorded daily.

Blackcap *Sylvia atricapilla*

Recorded daily.

Common Whitethroat *Sylvia communis*

Seen and heard daily.

Bearded Tit *Panurus biarmicus*

Several birds were seen flying over the reedbed at Hickling Broad.

Wren *Troglodytes troglodytes*

Recorded daily.

Starling *Sturnus vulgaris*

Noted at a variety of sites during the three days.

Blackbird *Turdus merula*

Seen daily.

Song Thrush *Turdus philomelos*

Several were heard singing on the first two days with a single bird seen on 21st.

Robin *Erithacus rubecula*

Seen daily at a variety of sites.

Stonechat *Saxicola rubicola*

An adult female and recently fledged young bird were seen at Horsey Corner.

House Sparrow *Passer domesticus*

Noted daily around suburban areas.

Duncock *Prunella modularis*

Recorded daily.

Yellow Wagtail *Motacilla flava*

A calling fly-over bird was seen on our first pre-breakfast walk.

Pied Wagtail *Motacilla alba yarrellii*

Singles were noted at Horsey Corner and Hickling Broad.

Meadow Pipit *Anthus pratensis*

Several were seen on our second visit to Hickling Broad.

Chaffinch *Fringilla coelebs*

Seen and heard daily in good numbers.

Greenfinch *Chloris chloris*

Seen daily in small numbers.

Lesser Redpoll *Acanthis cabaret*

A calling bird flew over us near the visitor centre at Hickling Broad.

Goldfinch *Carduelis carduelis*

Common, seen daily.

Linnet *Linaria cannabina*

Noted daily in small numbers.

Bullfinch *Pyrrhula pyrrhula*

Single males were seen on our first pre breakfast walk and at Barton Broad, with another heard locally on our last day.

Yellowhammer *Emberiza citronella*

Several were seen and heard during the three days.

Reed Bunting *Emberiza schoeniclus*

Easily heard and seen and all suitable sites visited.

MAMMALS

European Rabbit *Oryctolagus cuniculus*

European Hare *Lepus europaeus*

Eastern Grey Squirrel *Sciurus carolinensis*

BUTTERFLIES

Swallowtail *Papilio machaon*

Common Blue *Polyommatus icarus*

Red Admiral *Vanessa atalanta*

Speckled Wood *Pararge aegeria*

Small Heath *Coenonympha pamphilus*

Small White *Pieris rapae*

DRAGONFLIES AND DAMSELFLIES

Large Red Damsel *Pyrrhosoma nymphula*

Azure Bluet *Coenagrion puella*

Common Blue-tail *Ischnura elegans*

Norfolk [Green-eyed] Hawker *Aeshna isocetes*

Blue Emporer *Anax imperator*

Black-tailed Skimmer *Orthetrum cancellatum*