

Norfolk Coast

North Norfolk in Autumn

Fri 14th-Mon 17th September 2018



Golden Plover are a regular feature of Norfolk's coastal marshes in autumn and winter © Brian Small/Limosa Holidays

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

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Day 1 – Friday, September 14th 2018

First stop was Norwich station to pick up those coming to Norfolk by train. We were then soon heading towards Old Hunstanton and our hotel for the weekend. Beyond Docketing we saw our first Brown Hares. We arrived in plenty of time for a fabulous early evening supper at the hotel.

Day 2 – Saturday, September 15th 2018

Before breakfast, for those that felt inclined, we scanned The Wash and watched for any visible migration. There were hordes of Bar-tailed Godwits and a continual passage out of The Wash of Eurasian Oystercatchers as they were pushed out by the incoming tide. A little later there was a reverse movement of Northern Gannets and a distant Great Skua flying into The Wash as the water levels rose. Anne spotted what turned out to be our only Northern Wheatear of the long weekend. It helpfully perched right next to us. The brisk southwesterly winds we experienced throughout the weekend would not encourage the arrival of passerine migrants from the east.

Our first stop after a scrumptious breakfast was Titchwell. We spent most of the morning exploring the east side. Anne spotted a Eurasian Bittern flying and happily everyone got on to it. At the viewing screen were two juvenile Red-crested Pochards, several Common Pochards, a couple of Little Grebes and a solitary Tufted Duck. The most captivating sight were four Bearded Reedlings that repeatedly climbed up the Common Reed stems right by the Autumn Trail. Above, nineteen Pink-footed Geese flew over high, south-east, calling as they went, having arrived direct from Iceland or from stop over points in Lancashire or Scotland.

After a picnic lunch we headed along the main path towards the beach. We spent a relaxed time watching the waders from Island hide, including a juvenile Curlew Sandpiper, which often fed alongside a Dunlin for direct comparison. There were many Ruff, of all sorts of sizes and plumages, some right by the hide. A Eurasian Hobby passed over stirring things up. From Parinder Hide, John spotted a Eurasian Spoonbill flying over and there were several Grey Plover, some still nearly in full summer plumage. Offshore was quiet, a distant Arctic Skua being the highlight. Heading back, a flock of European Golden Plovers dropped in on the Freshmarsh for a quick brush-up. Taking the back road to our hotel we stopped off at a farmland reservoir and found six Red-crested Pochard there.

Day 3 – Sunday, September 16th 2018

Pre-breakfast we headed to Holme reserve where our luck was in. In quick succession a Western Barn Owl was seen briefly, followed by a Eurasian Bittern that pitched into some Common Reeds and then a Cetti's Warbler had the audacity to perch in full view. Our first stop after breakfast was at Stiffkey Fen. Having negotiated the rather overgrown footpath and unnecessary stile, we were soon peering over the vegetation at a roost of 40 Eurasian Spoonbills. These birds were from the breeding colony at Holkham and must be the largest flock in the UK. An adult that flew in was immediately besieged by one of its begging young, which ended up chasing it around the scrap for several minutes. As it was high tide there were more waders than normal with twelve Common Greenshank, three Green Sandpipers and a Spotted Redshank among the throngs. A dozen or so Northern Pintail were the only ones we saw during the weekend.

Heading for Cley we had the joy of a Eurasian Hobby pass over us as we ate our picnic. At Snipes Marsh were three Common Snipe plus two manically feeding Spotted Redshank plus a Green Sandpiper and somewhat more discrete Water Rail. Visiting the hides at Cley provided the biggest surprise of the weekend when the Eurasian Teal & Black-tailed Godwit suddenly looked a bit nervous. A quick scan revealed an Otter foraging near them. The Godwits frantically mobbed the Otter before it ran over the bank and out of view, pursued by a couple of Lapwings...fantastic.

A quick scan of the fields and saltings at Warham Greens produced several European Golden Plover, but little else. At Holkham Freshmarsh we watched a Eurasian Hobby catching Migrant Hawkmoths right above our heads. More distant was a Great Egret, which rather antisocially walked out of view. A few hundred Pink-footed Geese had already arrived to winter.

Day 4 – Monday, September 17th 2018

We popped down again to the local reserve at Holme in the hope of a repeat performance of the previous morning's luck. It was a joy to watch the marsh slowly wake up with perhaps the highlight being a few very close

Marsh Harriers and a Chinese Water Deer. But we had no luck with owls or bitterns.

After breakfast a scan off Old Hunstanton revealed an Arctic Skua and two rather distant Red-throated Divers. We then headed to the Choseley area and found three Yellowhammers, a Red Kite, plus many European Golden Plover & Ruff in a recently tilled field. At Brancaster Staithe we were treated to fabulous views of a feeding Eurasian Spoonbill right by the minibus. A scan of the harbour revealed in total three Eurasian Spoonbills, plus a crowd of Ruddy Turnstones and another Red Kite circled over. We consumed our picnic, with warm sunshine on our backs, as we scanned the marsh at Titchwell. The two Red-crested Pochards were still on show but could we find any of the wished-for European Turtle Doves? We then had our tea and coffee stop overlooking Thornham Harbour. A Eurasian Hobby was watched pursuing a small wader, which managed to evade capture.

Birds

(Total species 102)

Canada Goose *Branta canadensis*

One Titchwell and twenty Cley Marsh

Bar-headed Goose *Anser indicus*

Four Holkham Freshmarsh

Greylag Goose *Anser anser*

Common

Pink-footed Goose *Anser brachyrhynchus*

About one hundred and eighty Titchwell and up to four hundred in the area of Holkham Freshmarsh

Mute Swan *Cygnus olor*

A few here and there

Egyptian Goose *Alopochen aegyptiaca*

A few here and there

Common Shelduck *Tadorna tadorna*

Small numbers along the coast

Northern Shoveler *Anas clypeata*

A few at suitable sites

Gadwall *Anas strepera*

Fairly common

Eurasian Wigeon *Anas penelope*

Thirty plus Titchwell and several Cley Marsh

Mallard *Anas platyrhynchos*

Common

Northern Pintail *Anas acuta*

Twelve Stiffkey Fen

Eurasian Teal *Anas crecca*

Very common

Red-crested Pochard *Netta rufina*

Two Titchwell and six near Choseley

Common Pochard *Aythya ferina*

Ten Titchwell

Tufted Duck *Aythya fuligula*

A few Titchwell and one Cley Marsh

Common Scoter *Melanitta nigra*

Six past Old Hunstanton

Red-legged Partridge *Alectoris rufa*

A few here and there

Grey Partridge *Perdix perdix*

Three west of Burnham Market

Common Pheasant *Phasianus colchicus*

Plentiful

Red-throated Diver *Gavia stellata*

Two off Old Hunstanton

Little Grebe *Tachybaptus ruficollis*

Three Titchwell, two Holme and four Cley Marsh

Great Crested Grebe *Podiceps cristatus*

Two Old Hunstanton

Eurasian Bittern *Botaurus stellaris*

One Titchwell and one Holme

Eurasian Spoonbill *Platalea leucorodia*

One Titchwell, forty Stiffkey Fen, three Brancaster Staithe and two Thornham Harbour

Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea*

Ones and twos here and there

Great Egret *Ardea alba*

One Holkham

Little Egret *Egretta garzetta*

Common

Northern Gannet *Morus bassanus*

Up to twenty-five past Old Hunstanton

Great Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo*

Widespread and common

Eurasian Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus*

One Wells and one Holme

Western Marsh Harrier *Circus aeruginosus*

Common over marsh and farmland

Red Kite *Milvus milvus*

One Choseley, one Holkham Freshmarsh and one Brancaster Staithe

Common Buzzard *Buteo buteo*

Fairly common

Water Rail *Rallus aquaticus*

One Holme

Common Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus*

A few here and there

Eurasian Coot *Fulica atra*

A few here and there

European Oystercatcher *Haematopus ostralegus*

Very common

Pied Avocet *Recurvirostra avosetta*

ten Titchwell and three Cley Marsh

Northern Lapwing *Vanellus vanellus*

Several here and there

European Golden Plover *Pluvialis apricaria*

About one hundred and fifty Titchwell and others seen Cley Marsh and Warham Greens

Grey Plover *Pluvialis squatarola*

Twelve Titchwell

Common Ringed Plover *Charadrius hiaticula*

Two Titchwell and ten Cley Marsh

Eurasian Curlew *Numenius arquata*

Common

Bar-tailed Godwit *Limosa lapponica*

Thousands Old Hunstanton

Black-tailed Godwit *Limosa limosa*

Fairly common

Ruddy Turnstone *Arenaria interpres*

Four Titchwell and ten Brancaster Staithe

Ruff *Philomachus pugnax*

Fifty plus Titchwell, about fifteen Stiffkey Fen & Cley

Curlew Sandpiper *Calidris ferruginea*

One Titchwell

Sanderling *Calidris alba*

A few Titchwell

Dunlin *Calidris alpina*

Six Titchwell and twelve Cley Marsh

Common Snipe *Gallinago gallinago*

Five Titchwell, two Stiffkey Fen and nine Cley

Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos*

One Titchwell

Green Sandpiper *Tringa ochropus*

Four Stiffkey Fen and one Titchwell

Common Redshank *Tringa totanus*

Small numbers

Spotted Redshank *Tringa erythropus*

One Stiffkey Fen and five Cley Marsh

Common Greenshank *Tringa nebularia*

Twelve Stiffkey Fen and one Brancaster Staithe

Black-headed Gull *Chroicocephalus ridibundus*

Common

Mediterranean gull *Ichthyaetus melanocephalus*

Two past Old Hunstanton

Common Gull *Larus canus*

Fairly common

Great Black-backed Gull *Larus marinus*

A few here and there

European Herring Gull *Larus argentatus*

Common

Lesser Black-backed Gull *Larus fuscus*

Fairly common

Sandwich Tern *Thalasseus sandvicensis*

Up to thirty Old Hunstanton, three Titchwell and five off Cley

Common Tern *Sterna hirundo*

Two Titchwell and five Old Hunstanton

Great Skua *Stercorarius skua*

One Old Hunstanton

Arctic Skua *Stercorarius parasiticus*

One Titchwell and one Old Hunstanton

Feral Rock Dove *Columba livia*

Common

Stock Dove *Columba oenas*

One Cley Marsh Stiffkey and eight east of Ringstead

Common Wood Pigeon *Columba palumbus*

Common

Eurasian Collared Dove *Streptopelia decaocto*

A few here and there

Western Barn Owl *Tyto alba*

One Holme

Great Spotted Woodpecker *Dendrocopos major*

One Titchwell

Common Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus*

Fairly common

Eurasian Hobby *Falco subbuteo*

One Titchwell, one Cley Marsh, one Holkham Freshmarsh and one Thornham Harbour

Eurasian Magpie *Pica pica*

Fairly common

Western Jackdaw *Coloeus monedula*

Common

Rook *Corvus frugilegus*

A few flocks

Carrion Crow *Corvus corone*

A few here and there

Eurasian Blue Tit *Cyanistes caeruleus*

Ones and twos here and there

Great Tit *Parus major*

Ones and twos here and there

Bearded Reedling *Panurus biarmicus*

Fourteen Titchwell

Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica*

Several seen

Common House Martin *Delichon urbicum*

Several seen

Cetti's Warbler *Cettia cetti*

One heard Titchwell and one seen Holme

Long-tailed Tit *Aegithalos caudatus*

A few flocks

Common Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus collybita*

Three seen

Eurasian Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus scirpaceus*

One Holme

Eurasian Wren *Troglodytes troglodytes*

A couple heard

Common Starling *Sturnus vulgaris*

Fairly common

Common Blackbird *Turdus merula*

Ones and twos here and there

European Robin *Erithacus rubecula*

A few here and there

Northern Wheatear *Oenanthe oenanthe*

One Old Hunstanton

House Sparrow *Passer domesticus*

Three Old Hunstanton

Duncock *Prunella modularis*

A few here and there

Pied Wagtail *Motacilla alba*

Small numbers here and there

Meadow Pipit *Anthus pratensis*

Small numbers scattered about

Common Chaffinch *Fringilla coelebs*

A few here and there

European Greenfinch *Chloris chloris*

Up to eight Titchwell

Common Linnet *Linaria cannabina*

Fairly common

European Goldfinch *Carduelis carduelis*

Several here and there

Yellowhammer *Emberiza citrinella*

Three near Choseley

Common Reed Bunting *Emberiza schoeniclus*

One near Choseley

Mammals*(Total species 8)*European Hare *Lepus europaeus*European Rabbit *Oryctolagus cuniculus*Eurasian Otter *Lutra lutra*Grey Seal *Halichoerus grypus*Common Seal *Phoca vitulina*Reeves's Muntjac *Muntiacus reevesi*Chinese Water Deer *Hydropotes inermis*Fallow Deer *Dama dama***Butterflies***(Total species 7)*Large White *Pieris brassicae*Small White *Artogeia rapae*Red Admiral *Vanessa atalanta*Peacock *Aglais io*Painted Lady *Vanessa cardui*Comma *Polygonia c-album*Speckled Wood *Pararge aegeria***Dragonflies***(Total species 3)*Migrant Hawker *Aeshna mixta*Banded Demoiselle *Calopteryx splendens*Common Darter *Sympetrum striolatum*