

Norfolk:

Spring & Summer Breaks

Mon 12th-Fri 16th July 2010



*Photos (clockwise from top): A rare sight indeed, this superb **Nightjar** was photographed in broad daylight, roosting beside a track in Theford Forest! © Gary Elton • **Spotted Flycatcher** has declined as a breeding species in recent years, so it was good to find a family party at East Barsham churchyard © kind permission Peter Tapsell • Norfolk is a stronghold for the **Barn Owl**, a species regularly seen on our birding breaks throughout the year © Gary Elton*

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

Trip Diary

Tour Leader: Gary Elton

with James Camden, Judy and Henry Slomka, Stephen Everett, Ray Fox and Mary Simmons

The group arrived safely and, after an enjoyable meal at our North Norfolk hotel, we all retired to bed full of anticipation for the coming three days ahead.

As has become somewhat customary, next morning saw early risers starting the trip with a brief sea watch from the back of the hotel - a practice which continued over the coming days, with a good selection of the commoner seabirds and waders noted.

With a full three days birding ahead of us, we were able to visit a selection of sites both along the coast and inland, which was to give us a broad spread of classic Norfolk species. Day 1 saw us remaining on the coast, and visiting nearby Titchwell RSPB reserve. This is a destination we would normally leave until the afternoon due to the sun's position over the fresh marsh, but as there was almost total cloud cover and with the tide being at its highest we went there first. This was to prove beneficial, with the freshmarsh as usual having a good selection of birds on it. The highlights here were an adult Buff-breasted Sandpiper (!) and a fly over Spoonbill, though the commoner species such as Spotted Redshank and Ruff, which were still largely in summer plumage, took some beating! Large numbers Icelandic Black-tailed Godwits, along with Whimbrel, Avocet and Greenshank were also noted. A full morning's visit concluded with a walk down to the beach, adding more of the commoner shorebirds to the list, by which time lunch was becoming over due. Lunch was followed by a brief visit to nearby Thornham Harbour, after which we moved inland hoping to view some of Britain's rarest breeding birds. The birds in question were Montagu's Harriers and, after a brief wait the female was seen (with a return trip the next day, giving us great views of the male carrying in food). Holkham Meols and freshmarsh was to be the last destination of the afternoon, producing brief views of Kingfisher, plus Barn Owl, two Green Sandpipers and two Firecrests. After dinner we ventured out again, searching for Nightjars. A visit to local heathland resulted in at least three birds heard, with one splendid bird choosing to 'churr' in full view from a nearby telegraph pole! Another Barn Owl was seen, along with both Muntjac and Roe Deer.

Day 2, and an inland location, heading first to the RSPB reserve of Lakenheath Fen, an area of agricultural land that has been successfully returned to a large wetland, with extensive reed beds that once again hold a wealth of breeding species. Numerous Marsh Harriers were seen, as well as several Green Sandpipers, a brief Hobby and a Bittern, the latter being seen in flight. Good numbers of dragonflies and butterflies were also on the wing. Lunch at nearby Weeting Heath was followed with a walk out to the hides, where a pair of Stone-curlews were watched tending their single offspring. After this we drove around several of the tracks that run through nearby Thetford Forest, in search of woodland species, although the increasing wind strength made this difficult. One of the joys of birding is not knowing what you will see next... and nearly running over a sleeping Nightjar in the road isn't something you do everyday! Fortunately, having seen it before we did, we were able to reverse back up the track a safe distance, and then savour fantastic views of this usually elusive crepuscular species! Pleased with our success, we made our way back to the coast stopping to add Tree Sparrow and a second brief Hobby.

Waking to an increasingly strengthening wind the next day, we decided to head inland again this morning, to further explore Thetford Forest and hopefully gain some shelter from the wind. This met with mixed success on the birding front, our earlier stops proving largely unsuccessful with six 'fly over' Crossbills being the only notable highlight. However, our final stop, at Lynford Arboretum, was more sheltered, and Marsh Tit and Treecreeper were seen well, with several flyover Siskin and Crossbills also noted. Returning to the coast, a speculative stop for Grey Partridge proved successful, and a nice family party of Spotted Flycatchers also showed well for us in an East Barsham Graveyard. We arrived at Cley NWT reserve shortly after one o'clock. After stopping at the visitor centre, we had lunch at the beach car park, then took a short walk out to the hide over looking North Scrape. A good selection of largely summer plumaged waders greeted us, along with a flock of eleven Spoonbills, mostly asleep, on one of the distant islands. A search through the gulls produced a fine summer plumaged adult Yellow-legged Gull, with other large gull species present nearby useful for comparison. We returned to the visitor center and ventured out to the pools and hides in the centre of the reserve, enjoying once again a good selection of birds, including instructive views of both Ringed and Little Ringed Plovers.

With an excellent 122 species under our belts, the trip concluded after a hearty breakfast on the Friday morning.

Gary Elton

ANNOTATED LIST OF BIRDS RECORDED
(Total number of species recorded by the group 122)

Red-legged Partridge *Alectoris rufa*

Two were seen on 13th, with nine more noted on 15th.

Grey Partridge *Perdix perdix*

A pair were recorded near East Barsham on 15th.

Pheasant *Phasianus colchicus*

Recorded daily.

Greylag Goose *Anser anser*

Noted at all wetland sites visited.

Canada Goose *Branta canadensis*

Two were noted at Titchwell on 13th, with larger numbers seen at Lynford on 15th.

Mute Swan *Cygnus olor*

Seen daily, with family parties noted at all wetland sites visited, larger numbers 50+ were seen at Lakenheath Fen.

Egyptian Goose *Alopochen aegyptiacus*

Surprisingly only recorded at Titchwell.

Shelduck *Tadorna tadorna*

Recorded at all coastal wetland sites.

Gadwall *Anas strepera*

Noted daily in small numbers, at wetland sites visited.

Wigeon *Anas penelope*

Three were seen at Titchwell on 13th, with at least six seen at Cley on 15th

Mallard *Anas platyrhynchos*

Common, seen at all wetland sites

Shoveler *Anas clypeata*

Several were noted at Titchwell and Cley

Common Teal *Anas crecca*

As above, noted at Titchwell and Cley

Pochard *Aythya ferina*

Five were seen from the Washington hide at Holkham, as we over looked the pool on the fresh marsh.

Red-crested Pochard *Netta rufina*

A female bird was seen on the small path side pool at Titchwell.

Tufted Duck *Aythya fuligula*

Noted daily in small numbers at a variety of wetland sites.

Common Scoter *Melanitta nigra*

Seen daily on early morning sea watches, with 12 on 13th, 4 on 14th and 15 on 15th.

Fulmar *Fulmarus glacialis*

Noted daily flying along the shoreline at Hunstanton

Little Grebe *Tachybaptus ruficollis*

Several were seen at Titchwell and Holkham Freshmarsh.

Great Crested Grebe *Podiceps cristatus*

Breeding birds were seen at Titchwell and Lakenheath Fen.

Spoonbill *Platalea leucorodia*

Our first was a fly over bird at Titchwell on 13th, followed by eleven more at Cley on 15th.

Bittern *Botaurus stellaris*

One was seen briefly in flight from the watchpoint at Lakenheath on 15th.

Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea*

Noted daily in small numbers

Little Egret *Egretta garzetta*

Noted at Titchwell, Holkham and Cley

Gannet *Morus bassanus*

Small numbers were seen daily during our early morning sea watches.

Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo*

Recorded daily in small numbers

Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus*

Recorded daily, with most being roadside birds

Hobby *Falco subbuteo*

Three were seen, all briefly, at Titchwell, Lakenheath and Great Cressingham.

Marsh Harrier *Circus aeruginosus*

Recorded daily, with numerous young birds seen.

Montagu's Harrier *Circus pygargus*

Seen on two occasions, with the female noted on our first visit on 13th, followed by the male on 14th.

Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus*

Noted on two occasions, Lakenheath (2) on 14th and outside the hotel on 15th.

Common Buzzard *Buteo buteo*

Three were seen at North Creake on 13th, and one seen en route on 14th.

Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus*

Common, recorded daily

Coot *Fulica atra*

Common, recorded daily

Stone-curlew *Burhinus oedicephalus*

Two adult birds were watched tending their young at Weeting Heath NWT reserve.

Oystercatcher *Haematopus ostralegus*

Common, seen daily

Avocet *Recurvirostra avosetta*

Seen easily and well at Titchwell, Holkham Freshmarsh and Cley.

Lapwing *Vanellus vanellus*

Seen at various sites throughout trip

Grey Plover *Pluvialis squatarola*

Noted on the first mornings sea watch, with a further three more seen later in the day at Thornham Harbour.

Ringed Plover *Charadrius hiaticula*

Noted on the beach at Hunstanton and Titchwell, with four at Cley seen well alongside Little Ringed Plovers.

Little Ringed Plover *Charadrius dubius*

A single was seen at Titchwell on 13th, with eight seen alongside Ringed Plovers at Cley.

Common Snipe *Gallinago gallinago*

Two were seen at Titchwell on 13th, with three noted at Cley on 15th

Black-tailed Godwit *Limosa limosa*

Seen in good numbers at Titchwell and Cley, with a large percentage of the birds at this time of year originating from the Icelandic population.

Bar-tailed Godwit *Limosa lapponica*

Seen in small numbers on the beach at Titchwell and Hunstanton.

Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus*

Seen daily, with three at Titchwell, two at Weeting Heath and two at Cley.

Curlew *Numenius arquata*

Recorded daily in small numbers.

Spotted Redshank *Tringa erythropus*

Eighteen were seen at Titchwell on 13th, with five at Cley on 15th, with virtually all the birds still in breeding plumage.

Redshank *Tringa totanus*

Common, recorded in all suitable habitat

Greenshank *Tringa nebularia*

Three were seen at Titchwell and seven at Cley.

Green Sandpiper *Tringa ochropus*

Singles were seen at Holkham freshmarsh and Cley, with four seen at Lakenheath Fen.

Turnstone *Arenaria interpres*

Five were seen roosting on the edge of the freshmarsh at Titchwell on 13th

Knot *Calidris canutus*

Seen daily, with a roosting flock on the beach at Titchwell holding good numbers of brick red summer plumaged birds.

Dunlin *Calidris alpina*

Summer plumage birds were noted in small numbers at Cley and Titchwell.

Ruff *Philomachus pugnax*

An estimated 20+ birds, the majority in breeding plumage, were seen at both Titchwell and Cley.

Buff-breasted Sandpiper *Tryngites subruficollis*

An adult bird showed well for us on the freshmarsh at Titchwell.

Black-headed Gull *Chroicocephalus ridibundus*

Seen daily, at a variety of sites.

Mediterranean Gull *Ichthyaetus melanocephalus*

An adult bird was seen flying over the visitor centre at Cley on 15th

Common Gull *Larus canus*

Noted daily in small numbers.

Great Black-backed Gull *Larus marinus*

Recorded daily in small numbers at various coastal locations.

Herring Gull *Larus argentatus*

Recorded daily at a variety of coastal locations

Yellow-legged Gull *Larus michaehellis*

An adult bird was found in amongst roosting gulls on the North Scrape at Cley.

Lesser Black backed Gull *Larus fuscus*

Recorded daily in small numbers

Little Tern *Sternula albifrons*

Several were noted at Cley, Titchwell and Hunstanton

Sandwich Tern *Sterna sandvicensis*

Noted daily at various coastal sites.

Common Tern *Sterna hirundo*

Seen at all coastal sites visited.

Feral Rock Dove *Columba livia*

Noted daily

Stock Dove *Columba oenas*

Several were seen over the three days.

Woodpigeon *Columba palumbus*

Seemingly everywhere!

Turtle Dove *Streptopelia turtur*

Only one was recorded, a bird in flight at North Creake.

Collared Dove *Streptopelia decaocto*

Common, seen daily

Barn Owl *Tyto alba*

Three were seen, all on the first day, at Thornham, Holkham freshmarsh and Dersingham Bog.

Nightjar *Caprimulgus europaeus*

Three churring birds were heard during our evening excursion, with one choosing to sit on a telegraph pole allowing us good scope views. A surprise the following day came in the form of a bird roosting - in broad daylight - on a forest track in the Brecks.

Swift *Apus apus*

Common, seen daily

Kingfisher *Alcedo atthis*

One was seen in flight at Holkham Freshmarsh on 13th.

Great Spotted Woodpecker *Dendrocopos major*

Recorded at three sites, but unfortunately only heard.

Green Woodpecker *Picus viridis*

Heard and seen at Lakenheath Fen on 14th.

Jay *Garrulus glandarius*

Noted daily, with at least six seen on 14th.

Magpie *Pica pica*

Seen daily in small numbers

Jackdaw *Coloeus monedula*

Common, seen daily primarily in roadside flocks

Rook *Corvus frugilegus*

Common, seen daily in roadside flocks

Carrion Crow *Corvus corone*

Small numbers were noted throughout the trip at various sites

Marsh Tit *Poecile palustris*

Two were seen at Lynford Arboretum on 15th

Coal Tit *Periparus ater*

Seen and heard daily.

Great Tit *Parus major*

Recorded daily during the trip

Blue Tit *Cyanistes caeruleus*

As above, recorded daily.

Sand Martin *Riparia riparia*

Several were noted at Titchwell and Lakenheath Fen

Swallow *Hirundo rustica*

Common, seen daily

House Martin *Delichon urbicum*

Common, seen daily, including several nesting under the eaves at the front of the hotel.

Long-tailed Tit *Aegithalos caudatus*

Recorded daily, with a noteworthy flock of c20 birds seen outside the hotel on the 14th.

Skylark *Alauda arvensis*

Seen and heard daily over farmland fields in good numbers

Cetti's Warbler *Cettia cetti*

Heard at Titchwell, Holkham Freshmarsh and Lakenheath Fen.

Grasshopper Warbler *Locustella naevia*

A reeling bird was heard at Lakenheath Fen, but unfortunately not seen.

Sedge Warbler *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus*

Recorded daily in suitable habitat

Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus scirpaceus*

As above, recorded daily in suitable habitat

Willow Warbler *Phylloscopus trochilus*

A singing bird was heard briefly in Thetford Forest on 14th.

Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus collybita*

Heard daily at various sites, with one seen well at East Barsham.

Blackcap *Sylvia atricapilla*

Heard daily, with brief views had of several birds.

Common Whitethroat *Sylvia communis*

Heard daily, with several seen at Lakenheath Fen and Holkham Freshmarsh.

Bearded Tit *Panurus biarmicus*

Young birds were watched feeding at the base of the reeds from the Island Hide at Titchwell, with several heard at Lakenheath Fen and Cley.

Firecrest *Regulus ignicapilla*

Two were seen well at Holkham Meols on 13th.

Goldcrest *Regulus regulus*

Seen alongside the above species, with several others recorded in Thetford Forest and the Brecks.

Wren *Troglodytes troglodytes*

Recorded daily in small numbers

Nuthatch *Sitta europaea*

Two were heard and seen during our visit to the Brecks on 14th.

Treecreeper *Certhia familiaris*

One was seen well at Lynford Arboretum

Starling *Sturnus vulgaris*

Common, recorded daily

Blackbird *Turdus merula*

Common, recorded daily

Song Thrush *Turdus philomelos*

Heard at Titchwell and seen well at Lakenheath Fen.

Mistle Thrush *Turdus viscivorus*

Several were seen as we travelled around, with two seen well in a roadside field on 15th.

Robin *Erithacus rubecula*

Seen and heard daily

Spotted Flycatcher *Muscicapa striata*

A family party was watched perching on gravestones at an East Barsham churchyard on 15th.

House Sparrow *Passer domesticus*

Noted daily

Tree Sparrow *Passer montanus*

At least ten were seen alongside their commoner cousins on and around farm buildings on our journey back from the Brecks on 14th

Dunnock *Prunella modularis*

Noted daily

Yellow Wagtail *Motacilla flava*

Two were heard and seen briefly at Choseley Drying Barns.

Pied Wagtail *Motacilla alba yarrellii*

Recorded daily.

Meadow Pipit *Anthus pratensis*

Noted at a variety of sites, with best views had of birds on the fence posts at Cley.

Chaffinch *Fringilla coelebs*

Common, recorded daily.

Greenfinch *Carduelis chloris*

Recorded daily, in small numbers.

Siskin *Carduelis spinus*

Heard and seen during our visit to Lynford Aboretum.

Goldfinch *Carduelis carduelis*

Small numbers were recorded at a variety of sites during the three days.

Linnet *Carduelis cannabina*

Noted daily at a variety of sites.

Common Crossbill *Loxia curvirostra*

A flock of twenty calling birds over flew the hotel on the morning of 14th, with further birds recorded at Santon Downham (6) and Lynford Aboretum (3) on 15th.

Corn Bunting *Emberiza calandra*

A singing bird was seen well perched on telegraph wires at Choseley on 15th.

Yellowhammer *Emberiza citrinella*

Easily seen and recorded daily.

Reed Bunting *Emberiza schoeniclus*

Heard and seen regularly at all wetland sites visited.

MAMMALS

European Rabbit *Oryctolagus cuniculus*

Brown Hare *Lepus europaeus*

Weasel *Mustela nivalis*

Muntjac *Muntiacus muntjak*

Roe Deer *Capreolus capreolus*

Grey Seal *Halichoerus grypus*

Common Pipistrelle *Pipistrellus pipistrellus*

BUTTERFLIES

Small Skipper *Thymelicus sylvestris*

Large White *Pieris brassicae*

Small White *Artogeia rapae*

Red Admiral *Vanessa atalanta*

Small Tortoiseshell *Aglais urticae*

Comma *Polygonia c-album*

Peacock *Inachis io*

Speckled Wood *Pararge aegeria*

Gatekeeper *Pyronia tithonus*

Meadow Brown *Maniola jurtina*

Ringlet *Aphantopus hyperantus*

DRAGONFLIES

Brown Hawker *Aeshna grandis*

Black-tailed Skimmer *Orthetrum cancellatum*

Ruddy Darter *Sympetrum sanguineum*