



TOUR REPORT
NORFOLK BRECKLAND & COASTAL
22nd – 25th MARCH 2024

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SATURDAY 23RD MARCH - *sunny spells and heavy showers, 7C*

A superb days birding in the Brecks today saw us pull off pretty much a clean sweep of target birds, with Crossbill being the only missing forest special that we tried for but didn't see. Our first stop was only moments away from our hotel, as we started at Lynford Arboretum a little after 0830. The car was already half full even by this time but thankfully we were almost the first ones on site at the gate looking down the so-called 'tunnel' where we hoped the **Hawfinches** would come in to feed and drink. Early mornings is always best and we weren't disappointed, as six birds dropped in quietly to feed (three males and three females). The views were absolutely top-drawer and prolonged too, especially when the added kaleidoscope of **Bramblings** and **Yellowhammers** were added into the mix, feeding around the **Hawfinches** in the leaf litter. A male **Blackcap** came in to the pond to bathe, as did a **Redwing**, and we saw **Treecreeper** and **Nuthatch** too. By the time we were ready to leave the gate, almost fifty people had gathered there!! Thankfully it was much quieter down at the bridge and in the adjacent trees we heard a Firecrest singing. Following the high-pitched staccato trill took us a little off the path to a large holly, where we found the **Firecrest** having a set-to with a **Goldcrest**. It then flew up into the bare branches of the tree above us and was joined by a female, and here it continued to flit around silhouetted and giving sketchy views in and out of the ivy covered trunks. Back up near the car park, we found another male **Firecrest** singing and this one showed sensationally well, gleaning tiny insects from the newly opening buds of a deciduous tree overhanging the road and showing right in front of us in perfect light. What a gorgeous little bird!

Next we headed to an area of the brecks a little further north to look for **Goshawk**, now coming to the end of their annual display period. It was windy with some sunny spells, so pretty good conditions, but things were slow to start with – plenty of buzzards, a superb **Red Kite** feeding on the ground, a party of **Fieldfare** and a flyover **Woodlark** being the best of it. Eventually a **Goshawk** appeared over the woodland in front of us and showed quite well for about five minutes, circling at one point with three Buzzards for a good comparison of size. The bird was a male, being a bit smaller than the Buzzards and with a striking dark ear covert wedge, but the brownish cast to the upperparts suggested it was perhaps not fully adult. Nearby, we called at a wild bird cover crop to look for **Tree Sparrows**, seeing around ten birds in the hedge along with a single **Reed Bunting**.



Mealy Redpoll at Mayday Farm

Next we headed across the border into Suffolk and Mayday Farm, where we hoped to find finch flocks and **Woodlarks**. At the first drinking pond we visited we saw a couple of **Brambling** and **Lesser Redpoll**, and then had brief views of a pair of **Woodlark** on a cultivated strip in one of the clearings. The second drinking pond was more productive and here we had superb views of lots of **Lesser Redpolls**, **Bramblings** and **Siskins**, plus a fine male **Mealy Redpoll** and a pair of **Bullfinch**. Walking back to the van for lunch, we saw the **Woodlarks** again, but this time everyone had time for a good scope view as they foraged quietly on the ground. Despite the biting wind the sun was out and we even saw our first Brimstones of the year!



Stone Curlews at Cavenham Heath

With some top birds in the bag already and lunch well and truly seen off, we delved further into the murky depths of Suffolk next and visited the wonderful Cavenham Heath NNR to have a look for **Stone Curlew** (and a reported Ring Ouzel). The mountain blackbird had done a bunk but we notched a whopping twelve **Stone Curlews** here, with some superb close views and lots of noisy calling too. Add in five smart **Wheatears** bouncing around on the breck, **Curlews** and **Stonechats** and it was a very enjoyable hour that whizzed by for us here. This left the dying embers of the day to head back towards base and call in at FR47 at Weeting, where despite negative news on the long-staying **Great Grey Shrike**, we scored excellent views of the bird in its favoured clearing on arrival and watched it in perfect light under a rising full moon. A top end to a really great days birdwatching.

SUNDAY 24TH MARCH – *Cold day with NW winds and sunny spells, 7C*

Today was our coastal day, and despite cold northerly winds to contend with (not exactly conducive to bird migration!) we enjoyed a solid day. We called in en route north at the cover crop at Helhoughton which had been playing host to a couple of ‘BB’ rarities over the last couple of weeks, though with no sighting of either bird for a while it was more the general spectacle of farmland birds

we were hoping to cash in on today. In the strong wind not much was perching in the hedges but we managed to see a few **Reed Buntings**, **Yellowhammers**, and a couple of **Lesser Redpolls**. Holkham was next up and another bird which hadn't now been reported for a few days (it's that time of year!) was the wintering flock of Shorelarks. We wanted to have a look anyway though and so walked up to the cordon to check if they might still be around. We weren't lucky, but a short seawatch from the dunes did produce a couple of **Velvet Scoters** among the **Common Scoter** flock, and a super view of a 'cronking' **Raven** which flew low over us as we walked back.



Glossy Ibis on Stiffkey Floods

Lady Anne's Drive as usual produced a nice selection of common waterbirds, including **Pintail**, **Great White Egret**, **Brent Geese** and **Snipe**. Our next quest though would be for a couple of 'long-stayers' further east along the coast, the **Glossy Ibis** and **Long-billed Dowitcher**. The latter had been at Cley for the past week or so but just as we were about to head there, we received news that it was actually now at Stiffkey, and on the same flood as the ibis! We arrived there though to be told that all the **Black-tailed Godwits** (and presumably therefore the dowitcher) had flown west just before we arrived. We made do instead with excellent views of the **Glossy Ibis**, present here now since 6th November and seemingly very settled feeding in the shallow pools here. A quick check of the main flood on the way back – and there was the **Long-billed Dowitcher**! It hadn't gone with the godwits after all but was feeding on its own at the far side of the flood and showing pretty well – we even got to see it fly a couple of times and see the white 'cigar' up its back. Pleased with our haul, we returned to the van and headed along to Cley for lunch.

The beach car park was cold and windy so it was an 'indoor lunch' again today, but we did have a pair of **Stonechats** and a male **Wheatear** for company, and some saw an adult **Spoonbill** fly west over the reserve. We then relocated to the Visitor Centre and had a walk out to Daukes Hide, overlooking the two main scrapes. It was fairly quiet here but the **Black-tailed Godwits** feeding on Simmond's Scrape were now starting to obtain some fine summer plumage, and we also picked out

a **Little-ringed Plover** which was feeding along the muddy margins of Pat's Pool. **Marsh Harriers** of course showed brilliantly too, and there were more fine ducks on show close to the hide as well.

East Bank would be our last port of call today then, and now we had wall to wall blue sky and sunshine much like we did late yesterday afternoon. The light was therefore stunning and we just enjoyed looking at the common wildfowl at close range (some gorgeous **Shoveler** and **Gadwall**) and at Arnold's Marsh, a few more waders were added. **Dunlin**, **Ringed Plover** and **Turnstone** were feeding cheek-by-jowl, and again the light was just so superb it felt like it didn't really matter what we saw! An enjoyable day, with two nice scarcities thrown in and we had still kept dry!

MONDAY 25TH MARCH – *Sunny spells and moderate South-easterly winds, 13C*

After an excellent day in the Brecks on our first day, we had not left ourselves too much to do today and so we could take a bit of a 'free hit' exploring the Santon Downham area. The usually regular Lesser Spotted Woodpeckers had not been seen this year, seemingly due mainly to the area being extensively flooded and no access to the area during most of the first half of March. Those who had made it down to the site had not seen or heard any birds so it was not looking good. However, it was a beautiful morning for a walk along the Norfolk side of the Little Ouse river and of course the air was full of the chattering of **Siskins**, buzzing of **Redpolls** and wheezing of **Brambling**, getting ready to make their migratory push across the North Sea back to Scandinavia.



Mandarin

A **Kingfisher** flashed along the river and a **Marsh Tit** was noted, but the rest of the walk down was fairly quiet. We met one other birdwatcher who had drawn a blank with the 'pecker, but we headed down to the far end of the poplars anyway. A pair of **Mandarin** showed brilliantly here, perched up in the trees, and a Stock Dove was peering out of its nest hole. Casually scanning around, all hell broke loose as we then picked up a **Lesser Spotted Woodpecker** distantly right towards the back of the boggy area of poplars! Frustratingly it flew while Ashley was trying to get it in the scope and we weren't sure where it had gone, but thankfully it then began calling a drumming much closer to us. We soon located the bird in the scope, a female, and slightly miraculously everyone in the group got a clear scope view of her as she drummed away on the side of an old poplar. The views lasted a couple of minutes, and then we saw her fly strongly north-west and away towards the distant pines. Wow! The rest of the walk back was tame by comparison, but we did see a nice **Grey Wagtail** and another pair of **Mandarin**. Back near the road, **Siskins** and **Redpolls** were coming to drink, with the odd **Brambling**, from a ditch near the turn to St Helen's Well. A **Firecrest** was even singing in the car park as we returned, so all in all not a bad haul.

Lakenheath would be our final destination of the tour and the chance to add one or two more wetland birds to our list. We started well overlooking the Washland, seeing three fine **Garganey** (two drakes and a female) among the large numbers of other commoner dabbling ducks. **Great Crested Grebes** were added along the river and a **Great White Egret** was seen, while **Cetti's Warblers** sang from cover and a pair of **Stonechats** kept us company along the bank. We didn't see much at New Fen and so pressed on all the way to the Joist Fen viewpoint. We lunched here, and had two brief sightings of pair of **Cranes** flying in the distance, plus a lot of **Marsh Harriers**! A **Bittern** boomed once on the walk back, and three **Sand Martins** – our first of the year – were seen flying distantly off towards Botany Bay. We wrapped things up there, heading back to Brandon station and then the hotel for drop-offs.



Great Grey Shrike at Weeting



Hawfinches

ORIOLE BIRDING NORFOLK BRECKLAND AND COASTAL MARCH 2024

Species order, names and taxonomy follows - Gill, F and D Donsker (Eds). 2018. IOC World Bird List (v 8.1). <http://www.worldbirdnames.org/>

#	Common Name	Scientific name	22	23	24
Anatidae (Ducks, Geese, and Waterfowl)					
1	Brent Goose	<i>Branta bernicla</i>		■	
2	Canada Goose	<i>Branta canadensis</i>		■	■
3	Greylag Goose	<i>Anser anser</i>		■	■
4	Pink-footed Goose	<i>Anser brachyrhynchus</i>		■	
5	Mute Swan	<i>Cygnus olor</i>	■	■	■
6	Egyptian Goose	<i>Alopochen aegyptiaca</i>		■	
7	Shelduck	<i>Tadorna tadorna</i>		■	■
8	Garganey	<i>Spatula querquedula</i>			■
9	Shoveler	<i>Spatula clypeata</i>		■	■
10	Gadwall	<i>Mareca strepera</i>		■	■
11	Wigeon	<i>Mareca penelope</i>		■	■

#	Common Name	Scientific name	22	23	24	
12	Mallard	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>	■	■	■	
13	Pintail	<i>Anas acuta</i>		■		
14	Teal	<i>Anas crecca</i>		■	■	
15	Pochard	<i>Aythya ferina</i>		■	■	
16	Red-crested Pochard	<i>Netta rufina</i>				
17	Tufted Duck	<i>Aythya fuligula</i>		■	■	
18	Eider	<i>Somateria mollissima</i>				
19	Velvet Scoter	<i>Melanitta fusca</i>		■		
20	Common Scoter	<i>Melanitta nigra</i>		■		
21	Long-tailed Duck	<i>Clangula hyemalis</i>				
22	Goldeneye	<i>Bucephala clangula</i>				
23	Red-breasted Merganser	<i>Mergus serrator</i>				
Phasianidae (Pheasants, Grouse, and Allies)						
24	Red-legged Partridge	<i>Alectoris rufa</i>	■	■		
25	Grey Partridge	<i>Perdix perdix</i>				
26	Pheasant	<i>Phasianus colchicus</i>	■	■	■	
Gaviidae and Procellariidae (Divers and Shearwaters)						
28	Red-throated Diver	<i>Gavia stellata</i>				
29	Fulmar	<i>Fulmarus glacialis</i>				
Podicipedidae (Grebes)						
30	Little Grebe	<i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>				
31	Great Crested Grebe	<i>Podiceps cristatus</i>			■	
32	Slavonian Grebe	<i>Podiceps auritus</i>				
Threskiornithidae and Ardeidae (Spoonbills, Herons, Egrets and Bitterns)						
33	Spoonbill	<i>Platalea leucorodia</i>		■		
34	Bittern	<i>Botaurus stellaris</i>				H
35	Grey Heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>		■	■	
36	Little Egret	<i>Egretta garzetta</i>	■	■	■	
Sulidae and Phalacrocoracidae (Gannets, Cormorants and Shags)						
37	Gannet	<i>Morus bassanus</i>				
38	Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>		■	■	
Accipitridae (Hawks, Eagles, and Kites)						
39	Sparrowhawk	<i>Accipiter nisus</i>	■			
40	Goshawk	<i>Accipiter gentilis</i>	■			
41	Marsh Harrier	<i>Circus aeruginosus</i>	■	■	■	
42	Hen Harrier	<i>Circus cyaneus</i>				
43	Red Kite	<i>Milvus milvus</i>	■	■		
44	Rough-legged Buzzard	<i>Buteo lagopus</i>				
45	Buzzard	<i>Buteo buteo</i>	■	■	■	
Rallidae (Rails, Coots and allies)						
46	Water Rail	<i>Rallus aquaticus</i>				
47	Moorhen	<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>		■	■	
48	Coot	<i>Fulica atra</i>		■	■	
Burhinidae, Recurvirostridae and Charadriidae (Thick-knees, Avocets, Plovers and Allies)						

#	Common Name	Scientific name	22	23	24
49	Stone-curlew	<i>Burhinus oedicephalus</i>	■		
50	Oystercatcher	<i>Haematopus ostralegus</i>		■	
51	Avocet	<i>Recurvirostra avosetta</i>		■	
52	Lapwing	<i>Vanellus vanellus</i>	■	■	■
53	Golden Plover	<i>Pluvialis apricaria</i>			
54	Grey Plover	<i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>			
55	Ringed Plover	<i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>		■	
56	Little Ringed Plover	<i>Charadrius dubius</i>		■	
<i>Scolopacidae (Sandpipers and Allies)</i>					
57	Curlew	<i>Numenius arquata</i>	■	■	
58	Bar-tailed Godwit	<i>Limosa lapponica</i>			
59	Black-tailed Godwit	<i>Limosa limosa</i>		■	
60	Turnstone	<i>Arenaria interpres</i>		■	
61	Knot	<i>Calidris canutus</i>			
62	Ruff	<i>Calidris pugnax</i>		■	
63	Sanderling	<i>Calidris alba</i>		■	
64	Dunlin	<i>Calidris alpina</i>		■	
65	Woodcock	<i>Scolopax rusticola</i>			
66	Snipe	<i>Gallinago gallinago</i>		■	
67	Green Sandpiper	<i>Tringa ochropus</i>			
68	Redshank	<i>Tringa totanus</i>		■	■
69	Spotted Redshank	<i>Tringa erythropus</i>			
70	Greenshank	<i>Tringa nebularia</i>			
<i>Laridae (Gulls and Terns)</i>					
71	Black-headed Gull	<i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i>	■	■	■
72	Mediterranean Gull	<i>Larus melanocephalus</i>			
73	Common Gull	<i>Larus canus</i>		■	
74	Little Gull	<i>Hydrocoloeus minutus</i>			
75	Great Black-backed Gull	<i>Larus marinus</i>		■	
76	Herring Gull	<i>Larus argentatus</i>		■	■
77	Lesser Black-backed Gull	<i>Larus fuscus</i>	■	■	
78	Sandwich Tern	<i>Thalasseus sandvicensis</i>			
79	Common Guillemot	<i>Uria aalge</i>			
80	Razorbill	<i>Alca torda</i>			
<i>Columbidae and Cuculidae (Pigeons, Doves and Cuckoos)</i>					
81	Rock Dove (Feral Pigeon)	<i>Columba livia</i>			
82	Stock Dove	<i>Columba oenas</i>	■	■	■
83	Woodpigeon	<i>Columba palumbus</i>	■	■	■
84	Collared Dove	<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>	■	■	■
<i>Tytonidae and Strigidae (Owls)</i>					
85	Barn Owl	<i>Tyto alba</i>			
86	Tawny Owl	<i>Strix aluco</i>			
87	Little Owl	<i>Athene noctua</i>			
88	Short-eared Owl	<i>Asio flammeus</i>			

#	Common Name	Scientific name	22	23	24
Alcedinidae and Picidae (Kingfishers and Woodpeckers)					
89	Kingfisher	<i>Alcedo atthis</i>			■
90	Lesser Spotted Woodpecker	<i>Dryobates minor</i>			■
91	Great Spotted Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos major</i>	■		■
92	Green Woodpecker	<i>Picus viridis</i>			
Falconidae (Falcons)					
93	Kestrel	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>	■	■	■
94	Merlin	<i>Falco columbarius</i>			
95	Peregrine	<i>Falco peregrinus</i>			
Lanidae and Corvidae (Shrikes, Crows, Jays, and Magpies)					
96	Great Grey Shrike	<i>Lanius excubitor</i>	■		
97	Jay	<i>Garrulus glandarius</i>	■		
98	Magpie	<i>Pica pica</i>	■	■	■
99	Jackdaw	<i>Coloeus monedula</i>	■	■	■
100	Rook	<i>Corvus frugilegus</i>	■	■	■
101	Carrion Crow	<i>Corvus corone</i>	■	■	■
Paridae and Panuridae (Tits and Reedlings)					
102	Coal Tit	<i>Periparus ater</i>	■		
103	Marsh Tit	<i>Poecile palustris</i>			■
104	Blue Tit	<i>Cyanistes caeruleus</i>	■	■	■
105	Great Tit	<i>Parus major</i>	■	■	■
106	Bearded Tit	<i>Panurus biarmicus</i>		H	
Alaudidae (Larks)					
107	Woodlark	<i>Lullula arborea</i>	■		
108	Skylark	<i>Alauda arvensis</i>	■	■	■
109	Shore Lark	<i>Eremophila alpestris</i>			
Hirundinidae (Swallows)					
110	Swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>			
111	Sand Martin	<i>Riparia riparia</i>			■
112	House Martin	<i>Delichon urbicum</i>			
Scotocercidae, Aegithalidae and Phylloscopidae (Bush Warblers, Bushtits and Leaf Warblers)					
113	Cetti's Warbler	<i>Cettia cetti</i>		H	H
114	Long-tailed Tit	<i>Aegithalos caudatus</i>	H	■	■
115	Chiffchaff	<i>Phylloscopus collybita</i>	H	H	H
Sylviidae (Sylviid Warblers)					
116	Blackcap	<i>Sylvia atricapilla</i>	■		
117	Dartford Warbler	<i>Sylvia undata</i>			
Regulidae (Kinglets)					
118	Firecrest	<i>Regulus ignicapilla</i>	■		
119	Goldcrest	<i>Regulus regulus</i>	■		■
Troglodytidae, Sittidae and Certhiidae (Wrens, Nuthatches and Treecreepers)					
120	Wren	<i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>	■		■
121	Nuthatch	<i>Sitta europaea</i>	■		H
122	Treecreeper	<i>Certhia familiaris</i>	■		■

#	Common Name	Scientific name	22	23	24
<i>Turdidae and Sturnidae (Thrushes and Starlings)</i>					
123	Starling	<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>	■	■	■
124	Ring Ouzel	<i>Turdus torquatus</i>			
125	Blackbird	<i>Turdus merula</i>	■	■	■
126	Fieldfare	<i>Turdus pilaris</i>	■		
127	Redwing	<i>Turdus iliacus</i>	■		
128	Song Thrush	<i>Turdus philomelos</i>			
129	Mistle Thrush	<i>Turdus viscivorus</i>	■	■	
<i>Muscicapidae (Old World Flycatchers)</i>					
130	Robin	<i>Erithacus rubecula</i>	■	■	■
131	Black Redstart	<i>Phoenicurus ochruros</i>			
132	Stonechat	<i>Saxicola rubicola</i>	■	■	■
133	Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe oenanthe</i>	■	■	
<i>Passeridae (Old World Sparrows)</i>					
134	House Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>			
135	Tree Sparrow	<i>Passer montanus</i>	■		
<i>Prunellidae (Accentors)</i>					
136	Dunnock	<i>Prunella modularis</i>	■		■
<i>Motacillidae (Wagtails and Pipits)</i>					
137	Grey Wagtail	<i>Motacilla cinerea</i>			■
138	Pied Wagtail	<i>Motacilla alba</i>	■	■	
139	Meadow Pipit	<i>Anthus pratensis</i>		■	
140	Rock Pipit	<i>Anthus petrosus</i>			
<i>Fringillidae (Finches)</i>					
141	Chaffinch	<i>Fringilla coelebs</i>	■	■	■
142	Brambling	<i>Fringilla montifringilla</i>	■		■
143	Hawfinch	<i>Coccothraustes coccothraustes</i>	■		
144	Bullfinch	<i>Pyrrhula pyrrhula</i>	■		
145	Greenfinch	<i>Chloris chloris</i>	■	■	■
146	Twite	<i>Linaria flavirostris</i>			
147	Linnet	<i>Linaria cannabina</i>		■	
148	Lesser Redpoll	<i>Acanthis cabaret</i>	■	■	■
149	Crossbill	<i>Loxia curvirostra</i>			
150	Goldfinch	<i>Carduelis carduelis</i>	■	■	■
151	Siskin	<i>Spinus spinus</i>	■		■
<i>Emberizidae (Old World Buntings)</i>					
152	Corn Bunting	<i>Emberiza calandra</i>			
153	Yellowhammer	<i>Emberiza citrinella</i>	■	■	
154	Reed Bunting	<i>Emberiza schoeniclus</i>	■	■	■
155	Snow Bunting	<i>Plectrophenax nivalis</i>			
#	Additional species		22	23	24
1	Mealy Redpoll		■		
2	Great White Egret			■	■
3	Raven			■	

#	Common Name	Scientific name		22	23	24	
4	Long-billed Dowitcher				■		
5	Glossy Ibis				■		
6	Mandarin					■	
7	Common Crane					■	