



TOUR REPORT
NORFOLK BRECKLAND & COASTAL
16TH – 19TH MARCH 2025

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17TH MARCH – *Sunny intervals in a moderate easterly breeze. Cool. 9c*

We began this morning at Lynford Arboretum. It had rained overnight and there was a dank, cold feel to proceedings. Driving into the Arboretum we heard a high-pitched call and pulling over we heard a Firecrest. It was high in the trees against the light so not the best views but at least we were off the mark. Our hopes of a quiet start in this busy location were dashed as workmen were working near the car park creating a lot of noise. We heard another Firecrest but could not locate it because of the hubbub. We walked to the “tunnel” to see what was about. It was fairly busy with Chaffinches and several bright Yellowhammers, but that was about it.

We decided to walk to Lynford Water to see if it was any quieter here. Our hopes were dashed as there were numerous dogwalkers with several hounds off the lead. We took a quick look on the lake but there was nothing to excite us, so we decided to cut our losses and leave. On the way out we stopped where we had seen the Firecrest earlier. This time it performed well, and we enjoyed good views as it flitted in an ivy-covered tree.

Raptors were our next target, and we drove to a likely looking spot with a good view all around. We did not have long to wait before we spotted a distant bird circling in the sky. It was a Goshawk. Everybody could see it, but it was a little far away. We did not have long to wait before another bird got up, much closer. She was a large female and gave good views, particularly when she was joined by two males. Despite the dreary conditions she began to display with deliberate, deep wing beats to the attendant males. The two males did not spar, so perhaps it was the dominant male plus one of last year’s birds? It is not often that Goshawks outnumber Buzzards in the sky, but they did today!



Goshawk

Whilst waiting for raptors we scanned a couple of ploughed fields. One of them held a Stone Curlew, standing stock still as they often do during the day. Nice to see but a little distant. Even better was to come when we spotted a *Charadrius* plover alongside an ephemeral pool in the field next to the van.

It was mega distant but with care we could see that it was a Little Ringed Plover and had a mate. There have been very few records of this species so far this spring in the county, so it was great to connect on such an early date. What a productive stop it had been. Onwards!

Moving on we stopped by a pig field and after a scan we found a pair of Stone Curlews. They were moving about, in amongst some pigs but were quite close. With a bit of care, we were able to leave the van and watch them through a scope without disturbing the birds. Excellent views without any of the heat haze that comes later in the Spring.



Stone Curlew

It was now time for lunch, which we took back at Lynford. Another Firecrest was the highlight whilst eating our sandwiches. It flew over the van and dropped in a holly bush to feed in front of us. A pair of Treecreepers and some noisy Nuthatches added to the scene.

Our target after lunch was Hawfinch. They have been thin on the ground in the Brecks this season and we knew they would need some time. Once in position overlooking the paddocks we began our vigil. The day was cheering up and the sun was starting to shine. Lots of Siskins were dashing about in the trees behind us and Coal Tits were calling regularly. In front of us Buzzards began to rise and display. Shortly after a Goshawk came into view and gave good views as it spiralled away. A little later a couple of Sparrowhawks rose from the trees and began to soar. It was good to be able to contrast their structure and jiz with the views we had had of their larger cousins.

Right on cue a male Hawfinch popped up on a distant pine. Despite the range the views were good as the light was excellent. It didn't stay up for long, quickly dropping back into the trees. Job done! We ended the day driving further into the forest looking for Woodlark. Despite the day being bright it wasn't to be, and we satisfied ourselves watching a large flock of common finches. A quiet end to what had been a very birdy day.

MARCH 18TH - sunny all day, still cool in a moderate SE breeze. 9c

It was a trip to the north coast today. Although there had been a frost overnight it soon thawed, and it was wall to wall sunshine as we drove north. Holkham was to be our first stop. Pausing on the coast road to allow a large agricultural vehicle to pass we saw that the Spoonbill colony was active with several birds perched. Parking on Lady Ann's Drive we scanned the fields either side and could see that the number of wintering ducks were rapidly thinning out. Wigeon were the most numerous of what remained, and we picked out a couple of female Pintails.

Walking out onto the beach we were surprised to find that we virtually had the place to ourselves. We quickly reached the cordon and found the Shorelark flock immediately. With strong sunshine behind we had stunning views which improved as the birds moved closer to us. We watched them for a long time in reverential silence before moving on.



Shorelark

From the dunes we spotted a distant raft of probably one thousand Common Scoter. They were not easy to see on a choppy sea and could not pick much out beyond a drake Goldeneye and a few Great Crested Grebes. A couple of Red-throated Divers flew west distantly, and three Red-breasted Mergansers flew past close in.

It was breezy on the dune tops, so we were pleased to regain the sanctuary of the woods as we walked back in. We decided to continue our walk going further west to the still new, splendidly appointed Joe Jordan hide. From here we enjoyed a panoramic view over the Iron Age hillfort. Spoonbills were flying about in the colony and there were many breeding plumaged Cormorants with them. Some two hundred Russian White-fronted Geese were spread across the hillfort, feeding quietly. It will not be long before they head east to breed, so enjoy them whilst you can. Thirty Avocets were feeding in a pool, and two Great Egrets completed the roll call.

After lunch in the van, we headed into Wells for a pitstop. This was a good move as we saw a Barn Owl hunting around the Freeman Street car park and watched it successfully take a vole.

Driving further west we stopped east of Stiffkey for the long-staying Glossy Ibis. This was feeding in the open and we enjoyed good views albeit against the sun. Walking further east we spotted the seven Lesser White-fronted Geese that have been in the Stiffkey valley for several weeks now. The birds are from a Swedish reintroduction scheme and so will not be accepted as wild but nevertheless it was lovely to see this enigmatic visitor.

We decided to end the day looking for harriers at Warham Greens. We were soon in position and once again had the place to ourselves. Watching a smart Marsh Harrier a male Hen Harrier ghosted into view and gave corking views as he flew west. Not long afterwards a female Hen Harrier began hunting distantly over the saltmarsh. After one low pass she flushed another harrier. As it rose, we could see that it was the star bird, the wintering female Pallid Harrier. Its rakish build evident when compared with the Hen. Success! A couple of adult Spoonbills gave excellent close views. The session was completed by a Peregrine Falcon flying in fast and low, flushing lots of birds. Inexplicably it locked onto a Cormorant and made a serious effort to bring it down. It seemed to us that it was trying to bite off more than it could possibly hope to chew. In the event it broke off the chase and disappeared low west. Despite the still strong sun it was cold in a stiff easterly, so we took the hint to leave and headed home. It had been another fantastically bird filled day.



Song Thrush

MARCH 19TH – *Warm and sunny all. Southerly breeze. 17c.*

We had an early breakfast as we intended to go to Santon Downham to try for Lesser Spotted Woodpecker along the river. There had been a frost overnight, but it was sunny and warmed very quickly. Reaching the Little Ouse, we saw three Mandarin ducks fly from the river: two males chasing a female into the woods. The colours of this most handsome of ducks positively glowed in the gin clear early morning light. Walking along the riverbank we soon heard our first Chiffchaffs and Siskins.

A Great Spotted Woodpecker drummed, and another flew onto a nearby tree. We spent an hour looking for our target, but we had no luck. Not a huge surprise given an almost complete dearth of sightings this year. The Lesser Spotted Woodpecker is now hanging by a thread as a breeding species in Norfolk. Grim times given the recent loss of Willow Tit from the same woods too. Walking back, we consoled ourselves with a smart Grey Wagtail and a Kingfisher sped upstream calling.

We moved on to look for Woodlarks. We chose a favourite spot and within ten steps heard the sweet, melancholic call of the species. It took us a while to find it in a stand of trees but then picked it out as it sang strongly. Eventually it took flight and flew down, presumably to its mate hidden on the breck. A Stonechat was added to our list here.

Next up was another forest ride looking for Crossbills. By now it was very warm and time for coats to be discarded. The ride was heavy with bird call and song, particularly Coal Tits and Goldcrests.

Arriving at a stand of mature Scots Pine we heard the telltale "Chip" call of Crossbill high in the canopy. Sadly, after a few seconds the calling ceased and despite repositioning we could not find the birds.

Walking on we reached a large open clearing. High in the sky three Buzzards were thermalling and mewing as they went. More distantly we picked up a Goshawk drifting away and out of view. The walk back to the van produced yet another Goshawk. This time an immature bird lifting from a pine close to the track. Lovely views of a species we have seen very well on this tour. It is great to know that this magnificent raptor is thriving in the county.



Woodlark

We drove further into the forest and after lunch alongside a fragrantly blossomed Blackthorn we took another walk to look for more Woodlarks. There were many Chaffinches, Goldfinches and Linnets about, but it was hard to listen for Woodlarks given the din created by the many USAF jets passing over patrolling the turbulent Breckland skies. Notwithstanding the background noise we did hear and then see a Woodlark song flying above us. He dropped onto a tree stump and gave excellent views. He was joined by his mate, and they dropped to the floor feeding amongst some forestry brush. Mission accomplished.

We finished the trip with another visit to Lynford. We spent some time watching the “tunnel”. A few male Yellowhammers dropped into feed and a pair of Siskins graced us with their presence. By now the day was very warm and there was a somnolent air to proceedings. We decided to draw stumps. A low-key end to another rewarding trip to the Brecks. Many great birds with an enthusiastic and convivial group to enjoy them with.



Yellowhammer



Grey Wagtail

Many thanks to Sue Westoby for use of her photographs in this report

ORIOLE BIRDING NORFOLK BRECKLAND AND COASTAL MARCH 2025

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	17	18	19
Anatidae (Ducks, Geese, and Waterfowl)					
1	Brent Goose	<i>Branta bernicla</i>		x	
2	Canada Goose	<i>Branta canadensis</i>			x
3	Greylag Goose	<i>Anser anser</i>	x	x	x
4	Pink-footed Goose	<i>Anser brachyrhynchus</i>			
5	Mute Swan	<i>Cygnus olor</i>	x	x	x
6	Egyptian Goose	<i>Alopochen aegyptiaca</i>	x	x	x
7	Shelduck	<i>Tadorna tadorna</i>	x	x	x
8	Garganey	<i>Spatula querquedula</i>			
9	Shoveler	<i>Spatula clypeata</i>		x	
10	Gadwall	<i>Mareca strepera</i>		x	
11	Wigeon	<i>Mareca penelope</i>		x	
12	Mallard	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>	x	x	x
13	Pintail	<i>Anas acuta</i>		x	
14	Teal	<i>Anas crecca</i>		x	
15	Pochard	<i>Aythya ferina</i>			
16	Red-crested Pochard	<i>Netta rufina</i>			
17	Tufted Duck	<i>Aythya fuligula</i>	x	x	
18	Eider	<i>Somateria mollissima</i>			
19	Velvet Scoter	<i>Melanitta fusca</i>			
20	Common Scoter	<i>Melanitta nigra</i>		x	
21	Long-tailed Duck	<i>Clangula hyemalis</i>			
22	Goldeneye	<i>Bucephala clangula</i>		x	
23	Red-breasted Merganser	<i>Mergus serrator</i>		x	
Phasianidae (Pheasants, Grouse, and Allies)					
24	Red-legged Partridge	<i>Alectoris rufa</i>	x	x	x
25	Grey Partridge	<i>Perdix perdix</i>			
26	Pheasant	<i>Phasianus colchicus</i>	x	x	x
Gaviidae and Procellariidae (Divers and Shearwaters)					
28	Red-throated Diver	<i>Gavia stellata</i>		x	
29	Fulmar	<i>Fulmarus glacialis</i>			
Podicipedidae (Grebes)					
30	Little Grebe	<i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>	h	x	

#	Common Name	Scientific name	17	18	19
31	Great Crested Grebe	<i>Podiceps cristatus</i>		x	
32	Slavonian Grebe	<i>Podiceps auritus</i>			
<i>Threskiornithidae and Ardeidae (Spoonbills, Herons, Egrets and Bitterns)</i>					
33	Spoonbill	<i>Platalea leucorodia</i>		x	
34	Bittern	<i>Botaurus stellaris</i>			
35	Grey Heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>		x	
36	Little Egret	<i>Egretta garzetta</i>		x	
<i>Sulidae and Phalacrocoracidae (Gannets, Cormorants and Shags)</i>					
37	Gannet	<i>Morus bassanus</i>			
38	Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>		x	
<i>Accipitridae (Hawks, Eagles, and Kites)</i>					
39	Sparrowhawk	<i>Accipiter nisus</i>	x		
40	Goshawk	<i>Accipiter gentilis</i>	x		x
41	Marsh Harrier	<i>Circus aeruginosus</i>		x	
42	Hen Harrier	<i>Circus cyaneus</i>		x	
43	Red Kite	<i>Milvus milvus</i>	x	x	x
44	Rough-legged Buzzard	<i>Buteo lagopus</i>			
45	Buzzard	<i>Buteo buteo</i>	x	x	x
<i>Rallidae (Rails, Coots and allies)</i>					
46	Water Rail	<i>Rallus aquaticus</i>			
47	Moorhen	<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>	x	x	
48	Coot	<i>Fulica atra</i>	x	x	
<i>Burhinidae, Recurvirostridae and Charadriidae (Thick-knees, Avocets, Plovers and Allies)</i>					
49	Stone-curlew	<i>Burhinus oedicnemus</i>	x		
50	Oystercatcher	<i>Haematopus ostralegus</i>	x	x	
51	Avocet	<i>Recurvirostra avosetta</i>		x	
52	Lapwing	<i>Vanellus vanellus</i>	x	x	x
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>	x		
<i>Scolopacidae (Sandpipers and Allies)</i>					
57	Curlew	<i>Numenius arquata</i>		x	
58	Bar-tailed Godwit	<i>Limosa lapponica</i>			
59	Black-tailed Godwit	<i>Limosa limosa</i>		x	
60	Turnstone	<i>Arenaria interpres</i>			
61	Knot	<i>Calidris canutus</i>			
62	Ruff	<i>Calidris pugnax</i>			
63	Sanderling	<i>Calidris alba</i>		x	
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>		x	

#	Common Name	Scientific name	17	18	19
69	Spotted Redshank	<i>Tringa erythropus</i>			
70	Greenshank	<i>Tringa nebularia</i>			
Laridae (Gulls and Terns)					
71	Black-headed Gull	<i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i>	x	x	x
72	Mediterranean Gull	<i>Larus melanocephalus</i>			
73	Common Gull	<i>Larus canus</i>		x	
74	Little Gull	<i>Hydrocoloeus minutus</i>			
75	Great Black-backed Gull	<i>Larus marinus</i>			
76	Herring Gull	<i>Larus argentatus</i>		x	
77	Lesser Black-backed Gull	<i>Larus fuscus</i>	x		
78	Sandwich Tern	<i>Thalasseus sandvicensis</i>			
79	Common Guillemot	<i>Uria aalge</i>			
80	Razorbill	<i>Alca torda</i>			
Columbidae and Cuculidae (Pigeons, Doves and Cuckoos)					
81	Rock Dove (Feral Pigeon)	<i>Columba livia</i>	x	x	
82	Stock Dove	<i>Columba oenas</i>	x	x	x
83	Woodpigeon	<i>Columba palumbus</i>	x	x	x
84	Collared Dove	<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>	x		
Tytonidae and Strigidae (Owls)					
85	Barn Owl	<i>Tyto alba</i>		x	
86	Tawny Owl	<i>Strix aluco</i>			
87	Little Owl	<i>Athene noctua</i>			
88	Short-eared Owl	<i>Asio flammeus</i>			
Alcedinidae and Picidae (Kingfishers and Woodpeckers)					
89	Kingfisher	<i>Alcedo atthis</i>			x
90	Lesser Spotted Woodpecker	<i>Dryobates minor</i>			
91	Great Spotted Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos major</i>			x
92	Green Woodpecker	<i>Picus viridis</i>	h		
Falconidae (Falcons)					
93	Kestrel	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>	x	x	x
94	Merlin	<i>Falco columbarius</i>			
95	Peregrine	<i>Falco peregrinus</i>		x	
Lanidae and Corvidae (Shrikes, Crows, Jays, and Magpies)					
96	Great Grey Shrike	<i>Lanius excubitor</i>			
97	Jay	<i>Garrulus glandarius</i>	x	x	x
98	Magpie	<i>Pica pica</i>	x	x	x
99	Jackdaw	<i>Coloeus monedula</i>	x	x	x
100	Rook	<i>Corvus frugilegus</i>	x	x	x
101	Carrion Crow	<i>Corvus corone</i>	x	x	x
Paridae and Panuridae (Tits and Reedlings)					
102	Coal Tit	<i>Periparus ater</i>	x	h	x
103	Marsh Tit	<i>Poecile palustris</i>			
104	Blue Tit	<i>Cyanistes caeruleus</i>	x	x	x
105	Great Tit	<i>Parus major</i>	x	x	x

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106	Bearded Tit	<i>Panurus biarmicus</i>			
	<i>Alaudidae (Larks)</i>				
107	Woodlark	<i>Lullula arborea</i>			x
108	Skylark	<i>Alauda arvensis</i>	x	x	x
109	Shore Lark	<i>Eremophila alpestris</i>		x	
	<i>Hirundinidae (Swallows)</i>				
110	Swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>			
111	Sand Martin	<i>Riparia riparia</i>			
112	House Martin	<i>Delichon urbicum</i>			
	<i>Scotocercidae, Aegithalidae and Phylloscopidae (Bush Warblers, Bushtits and Leaf Warblers)</i>				
113	Cetti's Warbler	<i>Cettia cetti</i>		h	h
114	Long-tailed Tit	<i>Aegithalos caudatus</i>	x	x	x
115	Chiffchaff	<i>Phylloscopus collybita</i>	h	h	x
	<i>Sylviidae (Sylviid Warblers)</i>				
116	Blackcap	<i>Sylvia atricapilla</i>			
117	Dartford Warbler	<i>Sylvia undata</i>			
	<i>Regulidae (Kinglets)</i>				
118	Firecrest	<i>Regulus ignicapilla</i>	x		
119	Goldcrest	<i>Regulus regulus</i>	x	x	x
	<i>Troglodytidae, Sittidae and Certhiidae (Wrens, Nuthatches and Treecreepers)</i>				
120	Wren	<i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>	x	x	x
121	Nuthatch	<i>Sitta europaea</i>	x		x
122	Treecreeper	<i>Certhia familiaris</i>	x		
	<i>Turdidae and Sturnidae (Thrushes and Starlings)</i>				
123	Starling	<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>	x	x	x
124	Ring Ouzel	<i>Turdus torquatus</i>			
125	Blackbird	<i>Turdus merula</i>	x	x	x
126	Fieldfare	<i>Turdus pilaris</i>			
127	Redwing	<i>Turdus iliacus</i>	x		
128	Song Thrush	<i>Turdus philomelos</i>	x		x
129	Mistle Thrush	<i>Turdus viscivorus</i>	x		h
	<i>Muscicapidae (Old World Flycatchers)</i>				
130	Robin	<i>Erithacus rubecula</i>	x		x
131	Black Redstart	<i>Phoenicurus ochruros</i>			
132	Stonechat	<i>Saxicola rubicola</i>		x	x
133	Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe oenanthe</i>			
	<i>Passeridae (Old World Sparrows)</i>				
134	House Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>	x		
135	Tree Sparrow	<i>Passer montanus</i>			
	<i>Prunellidae (Accentors)</i>				
136	Dunnock	<i>Prunella modularis</i>	x	x	x
	<i>Motacillidae (Wagtails and Pipits)</i>				
137	Grey Wagtail	<i>Motacilla cinerea</i>			x
138	Pied Wagtail	<i>Motacilla alba</i>	x	x	x

#	Common Name	Scientific name	17	18	19
139	Meadow Pipit	<i>Anthus pratensis</i>		x	
140	Rock Pipit	<i>Anthus petrosus</i>		x	
	<i>Fringillidae (Finches)</i>				
141	Chaffinch	<i>Fringilla coelebs</i>	x	x	x
142	Brambling	<i>Fringilla montifringilla</i>			
143	Hawfinch	<i>Coccothraustes coccothraustes</i>	x		
144	Bullfinch	<i>Pyrrhula pyrrhula</i>			
145	Greenfinch	<i>Chloris chloris</i>	x	x	x
146	Twite	<i>Linaria flavirostris</i>			
147	Linnet	<i>Linaria cannabina</i>	x	x	x
148	Lesser Redpoll	<i>Acanthis cabaret</i>			
149	Crossbill	<i>Loxia curvirostra</i>			h
150	Goldfinch	<i>Carduelis carduelis</i>	x		x
151	Siskin	<i>Spinus spinus</i>	x		x
	<i>Emberizidae (Old World Buntings)</i>				
152	Corn Bunting	<i>Emberiza calandra</i>			
153	Yellowhammer	<i>Emberiza citrinella</i>	x		x
154	Reed Bunting	<i>Emberiza schoeniclus</i>		x	
155	Snow Bunting	<i>Plectrophenax nivalis</i>			
	ADDITIONAL SPECIES				
	Pallid Harrier	<i>Circus macrourus</i>		x	
	Glossy Ibis	<i>Plegadis falcinellus</i>		x	
	Lesser White-fronted Goose	<i>Anser erythropus</i>		x	
#	Other Wildlife		17	18	19
1	Muntjac		x	x	
2	Roe Deer		x		
3	Rabbit		x	x	x
4	Hare		x	x	x
5	Bronze Carabid Ground Beetle		x		
6	Chinese Water Deer			x	
7	Brimstone				x
8	Red Admiral				x