



TOUR REPORT
NORFOLK SPRING MIGRATION
11th-14th April 2024

www.oriolobirding.com

info@oriolobirding.com

Thursday 11th April

The group arrived at Briarfield's and checked in at various times during the afternoon, then collected as a group just before dinner to meet with Gary. He ran through the plans for the days ahead, after which he left the group to get to know each other better over dinner.

Friday 12th April

Gary collected the group shortly after breakfast with the plans for the day, to head along the eastern edge of the North Norfolk coast. Our first stop was a brief look in at nearby Brancaster Staithe which gave us our first Brent geese and Shelduck and a distant Marsh Harrier. We headed along the coast road where our next stop was Burnham Overy Staithe. Our plans were to quickly change though as the large car park was underwater due to the mornings high tide. A short drive took us to an alternative roadside parking spot, where we took another route to walk down to the seawall, with the aim to walk out to the coastal dunes. Birding started almost immediately, with us adding a host of commoner species to our list and our first butterfly, a fresh-looking Holly Blue.



A pristine Holly Blue Butterfly

Our route took us between several large, flooded fields with the path bordered by scrub and reeds. The later produced some welcome spring sounds in the form of singing warblers with Willow and Sedge Warblers the most appreciated.

The fields and pools contained a mixed of ducks and geese, with species such as Teal, Gadwall and Wigeon soon found, along with several Avocets and Redshanks. A solitary Pink-footed goose was picked out amongst the Greylags present, and some distant Egrets were identified as Cattle. We joined the seawall eventually to then head into the dunes, noting a Great Egret and two Spoonbills as we walked along. In the dunes Meadow Pipits and Linnets were easily seen, with two Northern Wheatears found accompanying one small flock. Three Sand Martins flew past, which were the fore runners of several others we were to see during the day, and a Sparrowhawk flew past in typical 'stealth' mode. With us now having reached

the end of the dunes, Gary suggested he went back the way we'd come to collect the van and meet the group further along the pine belt, which would shorten the walk for them considerably. This all went as planned, with the group adding two late Fieldfares to their lists as they took a brief respite in the large, elevated hide that overlooks the marsh.

Lunch followed at the Norfolk Wildlife Reserve Centre at Cley after which we walked out onto the reserve itself and the three hides in the centre of the reserve. Highlights seen from the central hide included at least three Ruff and a displaying pair of Little Ringed Plovers, with at least two other individual birds noted nearby. Around forty Black-tailed Godwits plus the long staying Long-billed Dowitcher were on view Infront of us, which acted as a useful comparison between the two species, with the Dowitchers smaller size immediately obvious. Avocets were easily seen too, plus a selection of duck species, a solitary Curlew and around twenty Dunlin with some well on the way to acquiring their breeding plumage. We swapped hides to find a Common Snipe feeding right in front of the hide which gave some nice close views.



We enjoyed some great views of this Common Snipe in front of the hide.

A Merlin flew past, fast, and low, sweeping up in classic fashion in an attempt to catch a Meadow Pipit, before heading off empty handed. The walk back to the bus revealed a singing Reed Warbler and a calling Bearded Reedling, but unfortunately both remained hidden from view.

Our last stop of the day was a nearby heath, where a small population of Dartford Warblers are known to be in residence. We did manage to see a Dartford Warbler, a male, though the views were rather brief with the bird preferring to sing quietly from the centre of the bush and out of view. We had better luck with a pair of Woodlark, with brief snatches of song found to be coming from the ground nearby. The birds were located and watched through the telescope as they walked around in the grass.

Saturday 13th April

Gary met the group once again after breakfast after which we headed off in a southerly direction with our destination for the day Thetford Forest and the Breckland part of the county. A slight detour took us through some local farmland, where noted out first Eurasian Curlews, Yellowhammers and Kestrel. Our first planned stop was another area of farmland close to some pig fields to search for Stone Curlew. We met with no success on the Stone Curlew front, though as consolation we noted several singing Skylarks, a male Wheatear, Stock Dove and two Tree Sparrows, which perched nicely for us on some nearby telephone wires. Our next stop a short drive away and a layby overlooking a large expanse of woodland, with birds of prey being our main target here. Common Buzzards were easily seen, around a dozen in total, along with several Red Kites, at least one Sparrowhawk, with a hovering Kestrel completing the set. A pair of Mistle Thrushes were seen running around in the furrows of the nearby field, and a group of seven Oystercatchers were easy to see as they flew noisily around in front of us. Our next stop was Lynford Arboretum, where we made use of the facilities now available there, before checking out the small feeding area at the back of the walled house. The area was relatively quiet, but there was clearly some seed left on the ground, and it wasn't long before we'd noted a female Brambling and at least three Yellowhammers dropping in to feed. We set off again in the bus, this time to the nearby NWT reserve at Weeting Heath. The reserve is renowned for its breeding Stone Curlews and that was our hoped-for target here. We needn't have worried though as a bird was sat hunkered down on its nesting scrape, just in front of the hide and a scan of the remaining area revealed two more, though both disappeared quickly from view.



Stone Curlew at Weeting Heath.

Lunch followed before we were off once again, this time to a large area of scrub a short distance from Lakenheath village. Climbing out the bus it was clear that even though the time of day was far from ideal from a bird song perspective there was still plenty to be heard. Most obvious were Blackcaps, along with several Willow warblers. We set along the road that runs along the edge of the scrub, with a pair of calling Redpoll surprising us as they flew over. We didn't get far before we heard our first Nightingale, a species we'd hope to connect with. It transpired there were at least five birds singing and calling alongside the road as we walked along. Seeing them though was a tad more challenging and only one of the group managed a glimpsed view.

Our last stop of the day was the RSPB reserve of Lakenheath Fen, where we visited the washland area before heading on to the first of the watchpoints, which overlooks one of the large reedbeds. The washland area gave a typical spread of wetland species, which included a selection of ducks we'd seen the previous day, such as Wigeon, Teal, Tufted Duck, Shoveler, Gadwall and Shelduck. Two Great-crested Grebes were a new trip addition to the trip list and a non-avian addition was an Otter, which surfaced briefly before disappearing again, presumably back into the nearby reeds. We didn't have much time left for the watchpoint, but we'd achieved special dispensation to drive there, and we sat for fifteen minutes overlooking the large reedbed. This resulted in us seeing at least four Marsh Harriers and another pair of Great-crested Grebes. We sat watching a pair of Mute Swans, which were clearly interested in each other, and whilst doing this we were treated to the sound of a booming Bittern which was heard on several occasions. A pair of noisy Little Grebes nearby were found to be feeding a fully grown chick. It seemed incredibly early for them to have young, let alone the youngster being the size it was, and enquires revealed it was at least two weeks old.



Adult Little Grebe with its well grown youngster.

Sunday 14th April

Our final day together, and after breakfast and checking out of the rooms, we headed off with our route today taking us west along the coast and our first stop the village of Snettisham. On arrival we took a footpath along the side of a churchyard, to head out into open countryside. Ring Ouzel was the species we were hoping to see, with a several having been reported in the area. It was a pleasant morning, so a nice walk, with several Red Kites noted along the way, along with singing Song Thrush and Lesser Whitethroat. We arrived at the area where the Ring Ouzels had been reported, but we'd clearly timed our visit wrong, with no sign of any of the birds. In consolation though we picked out a pair of Grey Partridges which are always a welcome addition, and the nearby hedgerow contained a healthy number of Yellowhammers. We eventually admitted defeat and headed back down the path pausing to enjoy views of a Woodlark perched out on some telegraph wires. As we neared the end of the path the loud distinct sharp tacking call of a Ring Ouzel was heard, and we stood waiting hoping the bird would appear. Suddenly it was there, out on the edge of the nearby field, have dropped down from some nearby bushes. A smart male bird and we enjoyed some great views of it as it searched the area for food.

Our next destination was Holme dunes where we walked out along the seawall heading towards the Norfolk wildlife Trust Visitors centre where we were planning to have lunch. The beach area was busy with people and dogs, but a small flock of Oystercatcher and Sanderling had somehow found an undisturbed section to settle in. A look out over the sea produced two Red-breasted Mergansers flying west just a short distance offshore. As we continued, the high-pitched reeling song of a Grasshopper Warbler was heard nearby, and as luck would have it, the bird on this occasion was sat up in full view on top of a small bush.

After lunch we headed onto nearby Thornham Harbour where a look along the harbour creek revealed several Redshank along with a very grey looking, Grey Plover.



This smart Drake Garganey was appreciated on the small pool at Thornham harbour.

We walked up onto the seawall checking a small pool off to our left. Several Black-tailed Godwits and Teal were there largely asleep on grass edges and a pair of silhouetted small ducks on the water transpired to be a pair of Garganey, with the drake looking particularly smart.

We returned to the bus driving out alongside a section of the tidal creek enjoying the added surprise of finding a Spoonbill there. Our last destination of the day, and the trip, was the RSPB reserve at Titchwell, with time dictating that on arrival we head straight along the coastal path to look out over the fresh marsh. As we passed the reed fringed pools along the way, the calls of Bearded Reedlings could be heard close by, and as we stopped to look one flew out and over the top of the reeds. A second followed with this one dropping into the reeds just in front of us to then appear in full view at the base of the reeds, a smart male, giving us all some great views. The fresh marsh was alive with birds, though the bulk at a first glance were Black-headed Gulls sat out on the islands. Our time here was limited, but we quickly picked out several Mediterranean Gulls in amongst their commoner cousins. Avocets and Black-tailed Godwits were also easily seen and a search along the edges of the islands revealed both Turnstone and Common Sandpiper. The trip had now drawn to a close and we returned to the bus for Gary to return the group to the hotel, where we said our goodbyes to then start our journeys home.

Oriole Birding Tour - Norfolk Spring Migration - 11th - 14th April 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		11	12	13	14	
1	Brent Goose	<i>Branta bernicla</i>		x		x		
2	Canada Goose	<i>Branta canadensis</i>		x	x	x		
3	Greylag Goose	<i>Anser anser</i>		x	x	x		
4	Pink-footed Goose	<i>Anser brachyrhynchus</i>		x				
5	Mute Swan	<i>Cygnus olor</i>		x	x	x		
6	Egyptian Goose	<i>Alopochen aegyptiaca</i>		x				
7	Shelduck	<i>Tadorna tadorna</i>		x	x	x		
8	Garganey	<i>Spatula querquedula</i>				x		
9	Shoveler	<i>Spatula clypeata</i>		x	x	x		
10	Gadwall	<i>Mareca strepera</i>		x	x	x		
11	Wigeon	<i>Mareca penelope</i>		x	x	x		
12	Mallard	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>		x	x	x		
13	Teal	<i>Anas crecca</i>		x	x	x		
14	Pochard	<i>Aythya ferina</i>		x		x		
15	Tufted Duck	<i>Aythya fuligula</i>		x	x	x		
16	Red-breasted Merganser	<i>Mergus serrator</i>				x		
17	Red-legged Partridge	<i>Alectoris rufa</i>		x	x	x		
18	Grey Partridge	<i>Perdix perdix</i>				x		
19	Pheasant	<i>Phasianus colchicus</i>		x	x	x		
20	Fulmar	<i>Fulmarus glacialis</i>				x		
21	Little Grebe	<i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>		x	x			
22	Great Crested Grebe	<i>Podiceps cristatus</i>			x	x		
23	Spoonbill	<i>Platalea leucorodia</i>		x		x		

#	Common Name	Scientific Name		11	12	13	14	
24	Bittern	<i>Botaurus stellaris</i>			H			
25	Grey Heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>		x	x	x		
26	Great White Egret	<i>Ardea alba</i>		x	x			
27	Little Egret	<i>Egretta garzetta</i>		x		x		
28	Cattle Egret	<i>Bubulcus ibis</i>		x				
29	Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>		x	x	x		
30	Sparrowhawk	<i>Accipiter nisus</i>		x	x			
31	Marsh Harrier	<i>Circus aeruginosus</i>		x	x	x		
32	Red Kite	<i>Milvus milvus</i>		x	x	x		
33	Buzzard	<i>Buteo buteo</i>		x	x	x		
34	Moorhen	<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>		x	x	x		
35	Coot	<i>Fulica atra</i>		x	x	x		
36	Stone-curlew	<i>Burhinus oediconemus</i>			x			
37	Oystercatcher	<i>Haematopus ostralegus</i>		x	x	x		
38	Avocet	<i>Recurvirostra avosetta</i>		x		x		
39	Lapwing	<i>Vanellus vanellus</i>		x	x	x		
40	Grey Plover	<i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>				x		
41	Little Ringed Plover	<i>Charadrius dubius</i>		x				
42	Curlew	<i>Numenius arquata</i>		x	x	x		
43	Black-tailed Godwit	<i>Limosa limosa</i>		x		x		
44	Turnstone	<i>Arenaria interpres</i>				x		
45	Ruff	<i>Calidris pugnax</i>		x				
46	Sanderling	<i>Calidris alba</i>				x		
47	Dunlin	<i>Calidris alpina</i>		x				
48	Snipe	<i>Gallinago gallinago</i>		x				
49	Common Sandpiper	<i>Actitis hypoleucos</i>				x		
50	Redshank	<i>Tringa totanus</i>		x	x	x		
51	Black-headed Gull	<i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i>		x	x	x		
52	Mediterranean Gull	<i>Larus melanocephalus</i>		x		x		
53	Common Gull	<i>Larus canus</i>		x				
54	Great Black-backed Gull	<i>Larus marinus</i>		x				
55	Herring Gull	<i>Larus argentatus</i>		x	x	x		
56	Lesser Black-backed Gull	<i>Larus fuscus</i>			x			
57	Rock Dove (Feral Pigeon)	<i>Columba livia</i>		x	x	x		
58	Stock Dove	<i>Columba oenas</i>			x			
59	Woodpigeon	<i>Columba palumbus</i>		x	x	x		
60	Collared Dove	<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>		x	x	x		
61	Green Woodpecker	<i>Picus viridis</i>		H	H	H		
62	Kestrel	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>			x	x		
63	Merlin	<i>Falco columbarius</i>		x				
64	Jay	<i>Garrulus glandarius</i>			x			
65	Magpie	<i>Pica pica</i>		x	x	x		
66	Jackdaw	<i>Coloeus monedula</i>		x	x	x		
67	Rook	<i>Corvus frugilegus</i>		x	x	x		
68	Carrion Crow	<i>Corvus corone</i>		x	x	x		
69	Coal Tit	<i>Parus ater</i>			x			
70	Blue Tit	<i>Cyanistes caeruleus</i>		x	x	x		
71	Great Tit	<i>Parus major</i>		x	x	x		
72	Bearded Tit	<i>Panurus biarmicus</i>		H		x		

#	Common Name	Scientific Name		11	12	13	14	
73	Woodlark	<i>Lullula arborea</i>		x	H	x		
74	Skylark	<i>Alauda arvensis</i>		x	x	x		
75	Swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>		LO	x	x		
76	Sand Martin	<i>Riparia riparia</i>		x	x			
77	Cetti's Warbler	<i>Cettia cetti</i>		x	H	H		
78	Long-tailed Tit	<i>Aegithalos caudatus</i>		x				
79	Willow Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus trochilus</i>		x	x	H		
80	Chiffchaff	<i>Phylloscopus collybita</i>		x	x	x		
81	Sedge Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus schoenobaenus</i>		x		x		
82	Reed Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus scirpaceus</i>		H	H	H		
83	Grasshopper Warbler	<i>Locustella naevia</i>				x		
84	Blackcap	<i>Sylvia atricapilla</i>		H	x	x		
85	Lesser Whitethroat	<i>Sylvia curruca</i>				H		
86	Whitethroat	<i>Sylvia communis</i>			x			
87	Dartford Warbler	<i>Sylvia undata</i>		x				
88	Goldcrest	<i>Regulus regulus</i>			H	H		
89	Wren	<i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>		H	x	x		
90	Nuthatch	<i>Sitta europaea</i>			H			
91	Starling	<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>		x	x	x		
92	Ring Ouzel	<i>Turdus torquatus</i>				x		
93	Blackbird	<i>Turdus merula</i>		x	x	x		
94	Song Thrush	<i>Turdus philomelos</i>			x	H		
95	Fieldfare	<i>Turdus pilaris</i>		x				
96	Mistle Thrush	<i>Turdus viscivorus</i>				x		
97	Robin	<i>Erithacus rubecula</i>		x	x	x		
98	Nightingale	<i>Luscinia megarhynchos</i>			x			
99	Stonechat	<i>Saxicola rubicola</i>				x		
100	Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe oenanthe</i>		x	x			
101	House Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>		x		x		
102	Tree Sparrow	<i>Passer montanus</i>			x			
103	Duncock	<i>Prunella modularis</i>		x	x	x		
104	Yellow Wagtail	<i>Motacilla flava</i>		x				
105	Pied Wagtail	<i>Motacilla alba</i>		x	x	x		
106	Meadow Pipit	<i>Anthus pratensis</i>		x		x		
107	Chaffinch	<i>Fringilla coelebs</i>		x	x	x		
108	Brambling	<i>Fringilla montifringilla</i>			x			
109	Greenfinch	<i>Chloris chloris</i>		x	x	x		
110	Linnet	<i>Linaria cannabina</i>		x	x	x		
111	Lesser Redpoll	<i>Acanthis cabaret</i>			x			
112	Crossbill	<i>Loxia curvirostra</i>						
113	Goldfinch	<i>Carduelis carduelis</i>		x	x	x		
114	Siskin	<i>Spinus spinus</i>		x	x			
115	Yellowhammer	<i>Emberiza citrinella</i>		x	x	x		
116	Reed Bunting	<i>Emberiza schoeniclus</i>		x	x	x		
#	OTHER WILDLIFE			11	12	13	14	
1	Holly Blue							
2	Peacock							

#	Common Name	Scientific Name		11	12	13	14	
3	Orange-tip							
4	Small White							
5	Speckled Wood							
6	Brimnstone							
7	Green-veined White							
1	Rabbit							
2	Hare							
3	Chinese Water Deer							
4	Roe deer							
5	Reeve's Muntjac							
6	Grey Squirrel							
7	Otter							