



TOUR REPORT
NORFOLK SPRING MIGRATION
1ST – 4TH MAY 2025

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FRIDAY 2ND MAY – *Sunny spells and moderate Northerly winds, 15C*

Despite the switch to a cool northerly wind after three days of warm south-easterlies, we enjoyed an absolutely brilliant spring day's birding today with a group total of 97 species. We kicked off proceedings at Snettisham Coastal Park, walking the seawall northwards to view the wetland habitats of the Wild Ken Hill rewilding project. This would give us a fantastic cross-section of habitats with scrub and reeds one side, and freshwater pools the other, all a stone's throw from The Wash. Summer migrant warblers were in full voice along the walk, with **Sedge Warbler** predominating – they seem to be having an excellent year this year! **Common Whitethroat** was also easily seen and **Chiffchaff** and **Blackcap** were about too. Low over the reeds, about ten **Common Swifts** were feeding, scything low through the air and trying to nab insects that were feeding in the lea of the bushes out of the wind. A couple of **Sand Martins** and the odd **Swallow** were with them, too. On the first significant area of open freshwater, we found five **Wood Sandpipers**, resting on their way to the taiga forests of the Baltic and Russia. **Common Snipe**, **Redshank**, **Lapwing**, **Oystercatcher** and **Avocet** were here too, and our first **Spoonbill** flew by. On the next pool we went one better, with two splendid full summer plumage **Spotted Redshanks** – not a common sight in Spring, these really are the top of the pops when it comes to waders! Not far behind them though is the splendid male **Ruff** – we saw 14 of this species scattered across the site, though only three were males and only one in what you would call fine fettle. A black bird, it sported an amazing magenta coloured neck! On the farthest pools, several hundred **Bar-tailed Godwits** were roosting, pushed off The Wash by the high tide, alongside perhaps two hundred **Oystercatcher**. Some of the godwits were in brick-red breeding dress, and provided a nice compare and contrast with the slightly larger, longer legged and less intensely-coloured **Black-tailed Godwits** feeding next to them. We saw several more **Spoonbills**, enjoyed the rather bizarre sight of a **Red Kite** carrying a fish and then best of all, a lovely **Barn Owl** made two really close passes in beautiful light. A **Grasshopper Warbler** reeled as we started out back along the bank, but we weren't lucky with a sighting. Still, it had been a superb start to the trip.



Barn Owl at Snettisham Coastal Park

Next we had about an hours drive, east across the county to a nice area of heathland where we lunched out of the wind, listening to the wonderful purring song of a **Turtle Dove**. Initially we only saw the bird distantly, but eventually it performed a display flight over us before perching at point blank range – stunning! The songs of Garden and **Willow Warbler**, **Blackcap** and **Chiffchaff** could all be heard here too. Walking out onto the heath proper, we easily found our target bird, which was the **Dartford Warbler**. We enjoyed great close views of a wine-red male, perching right in front of us with the air thick with the coconut-scent of the yellow-flowering gorse. A fine male **Stonechat** and perched **Willow Warbler** were also seen, with a bonus **Green Hairstreak** butterfly seen on the walk back to the van.



Turtle Dove

Back down to the coast now and a visit to Cley Marshes to search for more migrant shorebirds. From Avocet Hide, we could view Simmond's Scrape where we added a pair of mating **Little-ringed Plovers** and a close **Common Sandpiper**. There was more action on Pat's Pool though, viewed from Teal Hide, with a close group of **Black-tailed Godwits** and two speckled **Greenshanks** feeding right outside the hide. Our main target bird was a passage **Temminck's Stint**, and we eventually found it feeding in typical furtive fashion along the muddy edge of one of the islands. It eventually came much closer too, so we could see its mousy plumage with scattered black summer feathers on it's back, and diagnostic yellowish legs. On the adjacent pool, a **Little Stint** was then picked out – distinctly busier in its feeding manner, the rufous edges to some of the upperpart feathers and black legs easily set it apart from it's rarer congener. Several more **Little-ringed Plovers**, another **Wood Sandpiper** and three more **Common Sandpipers** completed the shorebird scene while a very smart breeding-plumaged **Cattle Egret** dropped in and lots of **Sand Martins** were chattering away as they fed low over the pools. Great birding!

To round off the day, we took a stroll down the East Bank. We had the light with us, which made for superb viewing – two more brick-red **Bar-tailed Godwits** and a **Greenshank** were on Pope's Pool, while we also saw **Reed Warbler** and **Reed Bunting** along the walk and had another **Spoonbill** fly

past. At Arnold's Marsh, the passage wader theme continued with a lovely mixed flock of **Dunlin** and *tundrae* **Ringed Plovers**, a fly-through **Whimbrel**, single **Grey Plover** and a superb **Turnstone**. It really had been an exceptional day for number and variety of waders – spring passage can vary tremendously but we had really reaped the rewards of the recent good weather conditions. We headed back along the coast road to Briarfields where we arrived wearily at just after 6pm.



Temminck's Stint on Pat's Pool, Cley

SATURDAY 3RD MAY – *Sunny spells and fresh westerly winds, 14C*

Today we headed south into the Breckland region, for a blockbuster day of birding in the fens and heaths of south-west Norfolk and North-west Suffolk. Our first location was a scrubland site where we hoped to find Nightingales, and despite the cool wind the sun was shining and we soon heard our first bird singing from the depths of the flowering hawthorns – though seeing it would prove a different matter. Over the next hour we heard at least four singing male **Nightingales** but we were almost about to give up on a sighting when we spotted one perched through a narrow gap between two trees. Thankfully it sat there long enough for everyone to get a good scope view! Also at the same spot we had excellent views of a **Garden Warbler** sitting out in the open singing, and on the way back to the car park we picked up a pair of **Yellowhammer** too.

Next we headed to Lakenheath Fen, always a fantastic place to visit in early May. We headed straight down to Joist Fen viewpoint, noting our first Hobbies along the way with two pairs hawking dragonflies right above us. The whole walk was punctuated by the songs of **Reed Warbler**, **Common Whitethroat**, **Sedge Warbler** and **Cetti's Warbler**, and there were plenty of insects on the wing such as the first Hairy Dragonflies and Four-spotted Chasers of the year. A **Cuckoo** perched up briefly but we needn't have worried that not everyone got on it, as we had another cracking view of one down at the viewpoint. As we arrived there, we could see everyone looking at something right down in

front and we were amazed to see a **Bittern**, right out in the open and only a few feet away, stalking through a narrow strip of open reeds! The bird walked right along in front of everyone and then sat in the edge of the reeds to the left, where it caught two fish! We actually stopped watching it – crazy really that there was a **Bittern** sitting in full view and we ended up ignoring it and looking at the Hobbies instead – and my goodness there were a lot of them. There were at least 40 birds hawking over the reedbed, mostly distantly but with small groups occasionally drifting closer. A really amazing sight to see and a real speciality of the reserve at this time of year. We ended with a quick look at the washland, but a cold wind had now set in and there wasn't a huge amount to see there, so we decided to head somewhere a bit warmer.



Cuckoo at Lakenheath

Weeting Heath NWT reserve was only a stone's throw away, and here we hoped to see another Breckland speciality – the **Stone Curlew**. We had fantastic views of a pair from West Hide, with two tiny chicks perfectly camouflaged in the rough grass. **Mistle Thrush** and **Stock Dove** were also seen here, before we made the most of the last couple of hours of the afternoon a bit deeper into Thetford Forest. At the first clearing we checked, we found some warm sunshine and shelter from the wind, and a singing **Tree Pipit** which gave us fantastic views as it foraged on aphids on the newly unfurling leaves of a field maple. We spent a while watching the bird creeping along branches gleaning the tiny insects in the sunshine, a real treat to be able to watch one for such a prolonged period. The next clearing was more open and after flushing another three **Tree Pipits** from the trackside grass there and watching a pair of Stonechats going about their business, we finally heard the fluted cascade of our main target here, the **Woodlark**. We had two birds up in song flight, one on each side of the track – surely one of the best birdsongs in the UK. We just about had time for a really quick look in at Lynford to round off, but we didn't add much there, and so headed back to base.

SUNDAY 4TH MAY – *Sunny spells and a cold northerly wind, 10C*

Not exactly Spring-like weather for the final day of the tour, but we took on the challenge of trying to add some more different species to the trip list, finishing on a very respectable 122 species. Adjacent Titchwell reserve would be the destination for the morning, but boy it was cold as we battled out into the wind along the West Bank path! We saw a few birds around the reedbed pool area on the way down such as **Reed Bunting** and **Pochard**, but we decided to plough straight on down to the beach to have a quick look at the sea and shoreline before coming back with the wind behind us. The sea was actually surprisingly quiet given the onshore wind, but we did pick a single **Little Tern** up battling west and had super views of two pairs of **Sandwich Terns** which flew along the beach. There were quite a lot of Sanderlings on the shoreline too, and some very distant **Common Scoter**, out to the north-west towards the wind farm.

Parrinder Hide afforded some shelter from the wind and here we had good views of **Mediterranean Gull**, another party of **Sandwich Terns**, **Little-ringed Plover**, **Common Sandpiper** and our first **Common Terns**. A female **Marsh Harrier** also gave good views, flushing up the breeding Black-headed Gulls before punting on something on one of the islands. Back around at Island Hide, we saw a couple more **Common Sandpipers**, another **Little-ringed Plover** close to the hide, and admired the 25 or so each of **House Martin** and **Swift** feeding low over the freshmarsh. Heading back towards the VC then, we called in at the reliable roosting **Tawny Owl** and could just about make it out hiding in it's favourite ivy-clad tree – not so easy now the leaves are on the trees!



Greenshank – it was a great few days of passage for waders

Given the weather, we wanted to seek a bit more shelter for the last walk of the trip and so after a circuitous route through the local farmland to check a few spots – noting a nice **Grey Partridge** – we arrived at a rather busy Lady Anne's Drive in time for an early lunch. Four Whimbrel feeding in the fields on the west side were great to see – it has been a decent spring for them so far. We then walked west, through the shelter of Holkham pines in the sunshine, and added a few nice bits along the way out to Joe Jordan hide including **Willow Warbler**, **Goldcrest** and **Treecreeper**. From the new hide, we enjoyed watching the comings and goings of the **Spoonbills** at the colony, with both **Great White Egret** and **Cattle Egret** in the adjacent fields too. The highlight though was the new scrape which held a whopping eleven **Greenshanks** – a good Spring total for any site – and three **Wood Sandpipers**. Given the unfavourable weather for passerine migrants on the tour, a total north of 120 was a great result and we wrapped things up back at Briarfields around 3pm.



Goldcrest at Holkham Pines



Tree Pipit in a Breckland clearing



Dartford Warbler



Bittern – amazing views at Lakenheath!

Many thanks to tour participant Joe Rizzo Naudi for use of his excellent photos in the report

Oriole Birding Tour - Norfolk Spring Migration - 1st to 4th May 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	1	2	3	4
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>		■		
12	Mallard	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>		■	■	■
13	Pintail	<i>Anas acuta</i>				
14	Teal	<i>Anas crecca</i>		■		■
15	Red-crested Pochard	<i>Netta rufina</i>				
16	Pochard	<i>Aythya ferina</i>		■	■	■
17	Tufted Duck	<i>Aythya fuligula</i>		■	■	■
18	Eider	<i>Somateria mollissima</i>				
19	Common Scoter	<i>Melanitta nigra</i>				■
20	Goldeneye	<i>Bucephala clangula</i>				
21	Red-breasted Merganser	<i>Mergus serrator</i>				
22	Red-legged Partridge	<i>Alectoris rufa</i>			■	■
23	Grey Partridge	<i>Perdix perdix</i>				■
24	Pheasant	<i>Phasianus colchicus</i>		■	■	■
25	Red-throated Diver	<i>Gavia stellata</i>				
26	Fulmar	<i>Fulmarus glacialis</i>				
27	Little Grebe	<i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>				■
28	Great Crested Grebe	<i>Podiceps cristatus</i>			■	
29	Spoonbill	<i>Platalea leucorodia</i>		■		■
30	Bittern	<i>Botaurus stellaris</i>			■	
31	Grey Heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>		■	■	■
32	Great White Egret	<i>Ardea alba</i>		■		■
33	Little Egret	<i>Egretta garzetta</i>		■		■
34	Gannet	<i>Morus bassanus</i>				
35	Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>		■	■	■
36	Sparrowhawk	<i>Accipiter nisus</i>				
37	Goshawk	<i>Accipiter gentilis</i>				
38	Marsh Harrier	<i>Circus aeruginosus</i>		■	■	■
39	Hen Harrier	<i>Circus cyaneus</i>				
40	Montagu's Harrier	<i>Circus pygargus</i>				
41	Red Kite	<i>Milvus milvus</i>		■	■	■
42	Buzzard	<i>Buteo buteo</i>		■	■	■
43	Water Rail	<i>Rallus aquaticus</i>				
44	Moorhen	<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>			■	■
45	Coot	<i>Fulica atra</i>		■	■	■

#	Common Name	Scientific Name	1	2	3	4
46	Crane	<i>Grus grus</i>				
47	Stone-curlew	<i>Burhinus oedicephalus</i>			■	
48	Oystercatcher	<i>Haematopus ostralegus</i>		■	■	■
49	Avocet	<i>Recurvirostra avosetta</i>		■	■	■
50	Lapwing	<i>Vanellus vanellus</i>		■	■	■
51	Golden Plover	<i>Pluvialis apricaria</i>				
52	Grey Plover	<i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>		■		
53	Ringed Plover	<i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>		■		■
54	Little Ringed Plover	<i>Charadrius dubius</i>		■		■
55	Whimbrel	<i>Numenius phaeopus</i>		■		■
56	Curlew	<i>Numenius arquata</i>		■	■	
57	Bar-tailed Godwit	<i>Limosa lapponica</i>		■		
58	Black-tailed Godwit	<i>Limosa limosa</i>		■		■
59	Turnstone	<i>Arenaria interpres</i>		■		■
60	Knot	<i>Calidris canutus</i>				
61	Ruff	<i>Calidris pugnax</i>		■		
62	Curlew Sandpiper	<i>Calidris ferruginea</i>				
63	Temminck's Stint	<i>Calidris temminckii</i>		■		
64	Sanderling	<i>Calidris alba</i>				■
65	Dunlin	<i>Calidris alpina</i>		■		
66	Little Stint	<i>Calidris minuta</i>		■		
67	Snipe	<i>Gallinago gallinago</i>		■		
68	Common Sandpiper	<i>Actitis hypoleucos</i>		■		■
69	Green Sandpiper	<i>Tringa ochropus</i>				
70	Redshank	<i>Tringa totanus</i>		■	■	■
71	Wood Sandpiper	<i>Tringa glareola</i>		■		■
72	Spotted Redshank	<i>Tringa erythropus</i>		■		
73	Greenshank	<i>Tringa nebularia</i>		■	■	■
74	Black-headed Gull	<i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i>		■	■	■
75	Mediterranean Gull	<i>Larus melanocephalus</i>		■		■
76	Common Gull	<i>Larus canus</i>		■		■
77	Little Gull	<i>Hydrocoloeus minutus</i>				
78	Great Black-backed Gull	<i>Larus marinus</i>		■		■
79	Herring Gull	<i>Larus argentatus</i>		■	■	■
80	Lesser Black-backed Gull	<i>Larus fuscus</i>		■	■	■
81	Sandwich Tern	<i>Thalasseus sandvicensis</i>		■		■
82	Little Tern	<i>Sternula albifrons</i>				■
83	Common Tern	<i>Sterna hirundo</i>				■
84	Common Guillemot	<i>Uria aalge</i>				
85	Razorbill	<i>Alca torda</i>				
86	Rock Dove (Feral Pigeon)	<i>Columba livia</i>				
87	Stock Dove	<i>Columba oenas</i>		■	■	
88	Woodpigeon	<i>Columba palumbus</i>		■	■	■
89	Turtle Dove	<i>Streptopelia turtur</i>		■		
90	Collared Dove	<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>			■	■
91	Cuckoo	<i>Cuculus canorus</i>			■	
92	Barn Owl	<i>Tyto alba</i>		■		
93	Tawny Owl	<i>Strix aluco</i>				■
94	Little Owl	<i>Athene noctua</i>				

#	Common Name	Scientific Name		1	2	3	4	
95	Short-eared Owl	<i>Asio flammeus</i>						
96	Swift	<i>Apus apus</i>			■	■	■	
97	Kingfisher	<i>Alcedo atthis</i>						
98	Great Spotted Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos major</i>						
99	Green Woodpecker	<i>Picus viridis</i>						
100	Kestrel	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>			■	■	■	
101	Hobby	<i>Falco subbuteo</i>				■		
102	Peregrine	<i>Falco peregrinus</i>			■		■	
103	Jay	<i>Garrulus glandarius</i>						
104	Magpie	<i>Pica pica</i>			■	■	■	
105	Jackdaw	<i>Coloeus monedula</i>			■	■	■	
106	Rook	<i>Corvus frugilegus</i>			■	■	■	
107	Carrion Crow	<i>Corvus corone</i>				■	■	
108	Coal Tit	<i>Periparus ater</i>			■	■	■	
109	Marsh Tit	<i>Poecile palustris</i>						
110	Blue Tit	<i>Cyanistes caeruleus</i>			■	■	■	
111	Great Tit	<i>Parus major</i>				■	■	
112	Bearded Tit	<i>Panurus biarmicus</i>						
113	Woodlark	<i>Lullula arborea</i>				■		
114	Skylark	<i>Alauda arvensis</i>			■	■	H	
115	Swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>			■	■	■	
116	Sand Martin	<i>Riparia riparia</i>			■			
117	House Martin	<i>Delichon urbicum</i>			■	■	■	
118	Cetti's Warbler	<i>Cettia cetti</i>			H	■	H	
119	Long-tailed Tit	<i>Aegithalos caudatus</i>			■	■		
120	Willow Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus trochilus</i>			■		■	
121	Chiffchaff	<i>Phylloscopus collybita</i>			■	■	■	
122	Sedge Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus schoenobaenus</i>			■	■	■	
123	Reed Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus scirpaceus</i>			■	■	■	
124	Grasshopper Warbler	<i>Locustella naevia</i>			H			
125	Blackcap	<i>Sylvia atricapilla</i>			H	■	■	
126	Garden Warbler	<i>Sylvia borin</i>			H	■		
127	Barred Warbler	<i>Sylvia nisoria</i>						
128	Lesser Whitethroat	<i>Sylvia curruca</i>						
129	Whitethroat	<i>Sylvia communis</i>			■	■		
130	Dartford Warbler	<i>Sylvia undata</i>			■			
131	Firecrest	<i>Regulus ignicapilla</i>						
132	Goldcrest	<i>Regulus regulus</i>			H	■	■	
133	Wren	<i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>			■	■	■	
134	Nuthatch	<i>Sitta europaea</i>						
135	Treecreeper	<i>Certhia familiaris</i>					■	
136	Starling	<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>			■	■	■	
137	Ring Ouzel	<i>Turdus torquatus</i>						
138	Blackbird	<i>Turdus merula</i>			■	■	■	
139	Redwing	<i>Turdus iliacus</i>						
140	Song Thrush	<i>Turdus philomelos</i>			■	■		
141	Mistle Thrush	<i>Turdus viscivorus</i>				■		
142	Robin	<i>Erithacus rubecula</i>			■	■	■	

#	Common Name	Scientific Name		1	2	3	4	
143	Redstart	<i>Phoenicurus phoenicurus</i>						
144	Whinchat	<i>Saxicola rubetra</i>						
145	Stonechat	<i>Saxicola rubicola</i>			■	■		
146	Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe oenanthe</i>						
147	House Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>			■			
148	Tree Sparrow	<i>Passer montanus</i>						
149	Dunnoek	<i>Prunella modularis</i>			■		■	
150	Yellow Wagtail	<i>Motacilla flava</i>			■	■		
151	Grey Wagtail	<i>Motacilla cinerea</i>						
152	Pied Wagtail	<i>Motacilla alba</i>			■	■	■	
153	Meadow Pipit	<i>Anthus pratensis</i>			■			
154	Tree Pipit	<i>Anthus trivialis</i>				■		
155	Rock Pipit	<i>Anthus petrosus</i>						
156	Chaffinch	<i>Fringilla coelebs</i>			■	■	■	
157	Brambling	<i>Fringilla montifringilla</i>						
158	Bullfinch	<i>Pyrrhula pyrrhula</i>						
159	Greenfinch	<i>Chloris chloris</i>			■			
160	Linnet	<i>Linaria cannabina</i>			■	■	■	
161	Lesser Redpoll	<i>Acanthis cabaret</i>						
162	Crossbill	<i>Loxia curvirostra</i>						
163	Goldfinch	<i>Carduelis carduelis</i>			■	■	■	
164	Siskin	<i>Spinus spinus</i>				H		
165	Corn Bunting	<i>Emberiza calandra</i>						
166	Yellowhammer	<i>Emberiza citrinella</i>				■	■	
167	Reed Bunting	<i>Emberiza schoeniclus</i>			■		■	
#	ADDITIONAL SPECIES							
168	Cattle Egret				■		■	
169	Common Nightingale					■		