



TOUR REPORT
NORFOLK
5TH – 8TH MAY 2022

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FRIDAY 6TH MAY – *Fine weather in a SW breeze, 18C*

Our first target today was the small trip of **Dotterel** that have been present for a couple of weeks just NE of Ringstead. Walking along Greenbank we soon spotted a smart **Northern Wheatear** in a field alongside the track. He showed pretty well whilst feeding in the short vegetation. In the hedges there were several singing **Common Whitethroats** and **Yellowhammers**, the former periodically song flighting over us. A **Mediterranean Gull** flew over high, picked up by its distinctive kiaow call. We soon arrived at the field finding that the **Dotterels** were now just two in number (there having been as many as seven in recent days). No matter, there was a smart brightly coloured female with a more subdued toned male for comparison. Being early in the day the birds were active and easy to see. Even better there was no heat haze often the bane of the **Dotterel** watcher in Norfolk in spring. We spent twenty minutes watching the birds with the white supercilia of the birds positively gleaming as the sun was behind us. A cracking start!

Regaining the van we drove towards the coast, managing several more Yellowhammers along the way and a brief **Corn Bunting** perched on a wire but flushed by a passing car before all could see it. Heading east on the coast road we dropped into North Point pools. In comparison with recent years, they were quiet, but we managed **Little Ringed Plover** and a summer plumaged Dunlin before we were interrupted by a couple of birders who told us that earlier that morning they had found a Pectoral Sandpiper on pools just west of Wells. We quickly retraced our steps and began scanning the well vegetated pools. Unfortunately, there was no sign of the Pec but good compensation in the form of a **Wood Sandpiper** being harried by a **Greenshank** together with half a dozen male Ruff displaying various colour combinations in their breeding finery.

Continuing east we arrived at Blakeney Quay to search for the **Red-breasted Goose** that has now been present since January in the company of **Dark-bellied Brent Geese**. It won't be long before these birds are leaving for their breeding grounds in Arctic Russia, so we were keen not to miss the boat. Initially, there was no sign of any geese on the saltmarsh, but then about 100 birds flew from a creek and there in the throng was the Red-breast! The white flank stripe standing out alongside that unique chestnut-red, black and white head and neck pattern. The birds dropped quite distantly but after a few minutes our quarry took off alone and flew strongly towards us landing much closer in a smaller group of Brents. Often obscured in longer vegetation we did, with patience, manage good views. In the midst of the excitement we picked out a **Pale-bellied Brent**, although it is fair to say that the subtleties of this scarce form were rather lost on the group, given the more obvious charms of the *Branta ruficollis*!

We continued east to Cley and ate lunch by the East Bank, entertained by a passing **Cuckoo**, flyover **Spoonbill** and an altercation between two carloads of birders regarding parking etiquette! The walk out to the coast was accompanied by singing Reed Warblers and Sedge Warblers, although we only managed views of the latter. There was good variety of waders on show including *Islandica* **Black-tailed Godwits**, a stonking male **Bar-tailed Godwit**, three summer plumaged Turnstones, Curlew, **Whimbrel**, Ringed and **Little Ringed Plovers**. A bright male **Yellow Wagtail** suddenly appeared out of the long grass which was a bonus. On the way back we spotted a **Hobby**. The bird was high in the sky and looking towards the sun we couldn't see any plumage detail, but the scythe shaped wings and thin tailed appearance left no doubt over the identification of the "flying anchor".

As we reached the car park a local birder very kindly made the effort to come across and tell us about two **Whinchats**, he had found just across the road from the visitor centre. Sure enough they were there and we watched two females fly-catching from a five barred gate. Described as common spring migrants sadly this is no longer the case, and these fabulous birds are now quite tricky to connect with on the north coast.

To finish up we decided on a change of pace and headed to a local heath. By now the clouds were rolling in and it felt like a thunderstorm might not be far away. In the car park we heard a **Garden Warbler** singing strongly in a tree above our van, but despite our best efforts we couldn't lay eyes on the blighter! Walking out on the heath we soon heard singing **Woodlark** and had a brief view of (presumably) two males having a territorial dust-up. Yellowhammers, Linnets and Stonechats were ever present but then we heard the distant scratchy rattling song of a **Dartford Warbler**. We looked across and saw the bird song flighting. It repeated this and we managed a brief scope view but in truth the views were tantalising. Staying on the main path we worked our way around the heath. We were stopped in our tracks by a bird dust bathing on the path ahead. Not a sparrow but a **Woodlark**, a turn up for the books! Walking on we heard a few snatches of song and then a scolding call just in front of us. Time passed and we waited. Then, not 20 yards away a male **Dartford** hopped onto a gorse bush and began singing. It was so close we could even see the white spotting around the throat. Corking views and a lifer for some, not a bad way to end the day!!



Dartford Warbler by tour participant Sonja Herz, 6th May

SATURDAY 7TH MAY – *Sunny spells, mod NE wind, 16C*

Given heavy overnight rain and the wind direction we made the decision to keep away from the coast today and head down to the Brecks to look for summer migrants. It proved a good choice and once again we saw some great birds. At our first site we could hear **Nightingale** singing before we got out of the van. It was close by and with a careful approach we saw it briefly perched in a bush before it flicked out. Although it continued singing strongly it took a while to nail down some satisfactory views. Eventually, we could see all the key features including the pale eye-ring and warm red brown tail. Although the plumage has a subtle rather than obvious charm it's always a crowd favourite because of its powerful and beautiful song. Whilst waiting for better views of the **Nightingale** we were entertained by a chorus of other warblers including the ubiquitous Common Whitethroat, the flute-like Willow Warbler and several **Garden Warblers**. The latter are also expert

skulkers, but we managed good views in the end. Another bonus was a purring **Turtle Dove**, our first of the year, and these days it's a relief to know that they have made it back for the summer. Close by we found a pair of **Stone Curlews** that copulated before settling down in longer grass. A pair of **Grey Partridge** were for most a welcome addition to the year list.

As ever the day was marching on, so we took a drive to RSPB Lakenheath. It is a huge reserve, and we didn't have time to cover it all today. We started at the Hockwold Washes and were soon watching a smart male **Garganey** feeding quietly in the marginal vegetation. We added two more birds to our total including a female and spent some time studying her understated but diagnostic features. There were lots of commoner ducks and waders on the flood but a fly through **Whimbrel** was a surprise. As we walked along the flood bank another first for the year was a brace of **Swifts** that flew north and into Norfolk. Common Terns were fishing the river and gave some excellent views.

We spent the rest of our time around the New Fen viewpoint. After a cloudy and windy spell, the day was warming up and we enjoyed close views of at least six **Hobbies** as they hawked for insects above the reedbed. At close range we could see the orange red "trousers", moustachial stripe and heavily streaked breast on several birds. We could hear booming Bitterns but never managed a view. Surprisingly, that was also the case with **Cuckoo**; we heard a couple, but they were not as plentiful as they usually are here. Perhaps the cool conditions were the reason?

After eating a late lunch, we left and headed north to explore another forest site. We chose a forest ride bordered by a recently felled plantation. On the walk out we heard a singing **Firecrest** in a tall pine but our main target here was **Tree Pipit**. After a while we spied a Pipit in a distant tree, but it was against the sun, so the views weren't fantastic. We moved position and after a few minutes the bird sang. This was more like it! It became more active, and we were treated to several song-flights. Typically, the birds start in a tall tree and then parachute down on flexed wings and dangling legs to a different perch. This individual followed the script. Not easy to study at height the bird eventually settled atop a pine sapling, and it was then we could properly work through the features of another subtlety plumaged but popular (with our group) bird. We headed back to the van pleased with our efforts and convinced we had earned a stiff pre-dinner drink!

SUNDAY 8TH MAY - *Sunny and dry, but cool in a fresh NE wind. Max temp 14c*

It was back to the north coast today and our first destination was Burnham Overy Dunes. The walk out was productive with commoner warblers including Blackcap, Chiffchaff and Common Whitethroat seen well before we saw the first of many Sedge Warblers. There were a few **Whimbrels** and Curlews about and as they fed together, they offered a good opportunity for a comparison of their structural and plumage differences. Climbing onto the seawall we were greeted with a good spread of waders on the mud below us including about 50 *Islandica* **Black-tailed Godwits** in various stages of plumage developments including some handsome males. They were initially flighty but soon settled to feed. It won't be long before they are off to Iceland to breed. Three more Whimbrels were with them and offered point blank views. Probably best of all were two **Grey Plovers**, one in its silver, black and white breeding dress. With the sun behind us the Plover positively shone. Naming a bird after its winter plumage rather than its spring finery is an injustice: why isn't it called a Silver Plover? Whatever the name, this is a high Arctic breeder and is the last of our non-breeding waders to leave, probably not until the end of May, so still plenty of time to enjoy them.

Reaching the Boardwalk Bushes, we heard the distinctive scratchy rattle of a **Lesser Whitethroat** coming from deep within an apple tree. Surprisingly this was the first we had encountered on the

trip, so we wanted to see it! With patience the bird popped up and we enjoyed excellent views. We decided to walk to Gun Hill and, on the way, watched a female **Northern Wheatear** feeding on the short turf. Other than a thin trickle of Swallows west the dunes were quiet today and the undoubted birding highlight was the **Little Terns** plunge diving in the Overy channel with a couple of Common Terns milling about too. It isn't all about the birds though and standing on Gun Hill with the sun on our backs and the wind in our hair we enjoyed a magnificent 360-degree view: Norfolk at its best! We returned to the van, ate lunch in the sun and then it was off to Titchwell for the afternoon. It was still windy, and the beach path was a blustery challenge. We enjoyed seeing the breeding Reed and Sedge Warblers but couldn't get eyes on any Bearded Tits despite hearing them "pinging" strongly in the reed bed. Grateful for the cover the Island Hide offered we watched a pair of **Little Ringed Plovers** feeding on an islet occupied by nesting Avocets. The latter are extremely territorial and were quick to chase the LRPs if they ventured too close. **Mediterranean Gulls** don't appear to be breeding at Titchwell this year and although we heard them overhead, we could only find a single adult on the Fresh marsh. With black hood, bloodred bill and pale grey mantle this really is a handsome gull! Moving round to the Parrinder Hide we picked out a **Temminck's Stint**. This species generally arrives in Norfolk at the end of the first week in May and this individual had been about for a couple of days the precursor to half a dozen that were reported on the north coast today. We watched it for a good while as it fed surreptitiously (in typical fashion) around a small muddy puddle. There weren't many other passage waders on show, but we enjoyed good views of **Common Sandpiper**, Dunlin, Ringed Plover and two spanking **Ruddy Turnstones**. A few **Sandwich Terns** were loafing on the marsh and Common and **Little Terns** fishing over it.

We walked to the beach and added half a dozen overworking Sanderling to the trip list. Time was ticking by, so we had to return to the car park to say our farewells. A first winter **Little Gull** being the final bird of a very productive and convivial tour.

#	Common Name	Scientific Name		5	6	7	8
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>			▪	▪	▪
46	Crane	<i>Grus grus</i>					
47	Stone-curlew	<i>Burhinus oedichnemus</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>					▪
#	Common Name	Scientific Name		5	6	7	8
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>			H		•
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>				H	
90	Collared Dove	<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>			•	•	•
91	Cuckoo	<i>Cuculus canorus</i>			•	H	
92	Barn Owl	<i>Tyto alba</i>					
93	Tawny Owl	<i>Strix aluco</i>					
94	Little Owl	<i>Athene noctua</i>					
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>			•		
#	Common Name	Scientific Name		5	6	7	8
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>					H
113	Woodlark	<i>Lullula arborea</i>				•	•
114	Skylark	<i>Alauda arvensis</i>			•	•	•
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>			H	•	

121	Chiffchaff	<i>Phylloscopus collybita</i>			▪	▪	▪
122	Sedge Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus schoenobaenus</i>			▪	▪	▪
123	Reed Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus scirpaceus</i>			H	▪	▪
124	Grasshopper Warbler	<i>Locustella naevia</i>					
125	Blackcap	<i>Sylvia atricapilla</i>			▪	▪	▪
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>				H	
132	Goldcrest	<i>Regulus regulus</i>				▪	
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>			▪	▪	
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	Dunnock	<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>			▪	▪	▪
#	Common Name	Scientific Name		5	6	7	8
164	Siskin	<i>Spinus spinus</i>				▪	
165	Corn Bunting	<i>Emberiza calandra</i>			▪		
166	Yellowhammer	<i>Emberiza citrinella</i>			▪		
167	Reed Bunting	<i>Emberiza schoeniclus</i>					▪
	ADDITIONAL SPECIES						

