



TOUR REPORT
CORNWALL AUTUMN MIGRATION
17TH – 23RD OCTOBER 2021

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Sunday 17th October

With the group having assembled after checking in to our accommodation at Bosaverne St Just, we boarded the minibus to head off for an afternoons birding, our destination the Hayle Estuary. Our first port of call was the section called the Carnsew Basin and after parking we walked out over the small bridge to take an anticlockwise route around the edge of the area. Several Gulls could be seen ahead of us and closer inspection revealed Great Black-backed and Herring with an adult Mediterranean Gull accompanying them. We continued round but it was obvious the high tide had reduced the birds in the area, with a hoped for Semi-palmated Sandpiper looking unlikely. As we turned the next corner it was clear there were a few birders around and they were concentrating on a small flock of Dunlin on the shoreline and a closer look revealed our hoped for species in amongst them!



Roosting Semi-palmated Sandpiper in amongst the Dunlin.

The bird was reluctant to do anything but sleep it seemed, though it did fortunately put its head up briefly a few times. It transpired we'd got there just in time as an inconsiderate dog owner complete with dog preceded to walk in front of the assembled birders and flush the all birds! The birds were watched circling round trying to find somewhere else to settle with the smaller Semi-P clearly visible amongst the flock. They did eventually resettle but unfortunately in amongst some larger rocks and with the sun behind them. The Semi-P was in a position that made it virtually impossible for us to see from where we were so we decided to be grateful for the views we'd had and maybe wait for some better views another day. Three Ringed Plover on the distant far bank, a flyover Rock Pipit and Grey Wagtail concluded our visit here and we returned back to the bus and onto our next stop at another part of the Hayle at Copperhouse Creek.

We viewed the area from a small car park that was ideally position to see the birds gathered on the remaining areas of high ground and shallower water. Large numbers of Canada Geese and Wigeon were immediately obvious, with a few Teal noted amongst them. Shorebirds included two Greenshanks, several Bar-tailed Godwits and larger numbers of Redshanks.

Our last stop of the afternoon was RSPB managed part of the Hayle at Lalent Water and Ryan's Field where larger numbers of birds were present. These were mainly gulls, including at least ten Mediterranean Gulls, ducks and wading species, which included Curlew, Bar-tailed Godwit, Grey Plover and seven Greenshank. A Grey wagtail landed briefly on a nearby rock and a Sparrowhawk did its characteristic flap, flap glide high above us. The highlight here though was arguably a Kingfisher first seen by Audrey as it shot over the water and then picked out again sat on the edge of a large bare bush allowing some nice scope views.

The end of a productive afternoon, rounded off as it turned out with a mouthwatering Sunday roast served that evening back at our accommodation.

Monday 18th October

We woke to heavy rain as predicted and on checking the forecast it was clear things were unlikely to get much better with fog also forecast once the rain eased! Unperturbed we set off for our first stop of the day, Drift Reservoir. We set off from the bus fully kitted up in our waterproofs taking the path down the bank to join the footpath that runs along the shore edge. We scanned the open water periodically noted distant gulls, a single Great Crested Grebe, several Little Grebes and then our hoped for species here Black-necked Grebe.



Black-necked Grebe

We moved closer and gained good views of the bird as it dived just offshore from us, though it was clearly aware of our presence as it re surfaced each time slightly further round in an attempt to stay ahead of us. Four Tufted Duck accompanied a small flock of around a dozen Mallard, and in the willows that lined the path we noted several Redwing, a Great-spotted Woodpecker and a male Bullfinch. A Stonechat was on show on the top of the ferns that lined part of the route, several raucous Jays were heard and a small flock of eleven Siskin flew over calling. Before we returned to the bus we paused briefly to view the outlet at the base of the dam with a Kingfisher heard, then briefly seen flying along it.

Our next stop was Polgigga, where we walked out along a private tarmacked road lined with predominantly willow scrub. The area was well sheltered but seemingly quiet, with just Robins present in any sort of number. The odd calling Chiffchaff was noted and a Great Spotted Woodpecker was found clinging to the side of a telegraph pole. We scanned several open fields, though only the first hundred or so yards were viewable due to the fog with two Pheasant, new for the trip list, the best we could manage. We then reached the bottom of the road that then turned into a graded track, following it for a while towards Nanjizal Valley. The fog now had seemingly got worse and carrying on seemed somewhat pointless, so we started back along the route we had just come. As we rejoined the Tarmac road a crest could be heard calling nearby, a somewhat strident call and Firecrest was suspected. After some patient searching its identity was confirmed as such and whilst trying to gain better views it became apparent there was actually two birds present. We spent awhile all trying to get everyone decent views of the birds, which to large degree we all did. We carried on our walk eventually returning back to the bus and then lunch, with a surprise addition there, a brief calling Nuthatch.

After lunch we headed back through Penzance and onto the coast, our destination the RSPB reserve at Marizion. After a frustrating ten minutes trying to sort out the payment for the car park and pausing to admire a confiding Rock Pipit, we finally made our way along the main road. A small flock of seven Turnstone was on the beach and an adult Mediterranean Gull was seen flying over the road en-route to entering the reserve. We spent the next hour and half walking around the area, which again proved frustratingly quiet and foggy! A few Moorhens, two vocal Cetti's Warblers and mixed tit flock, which contained a Chiffchaff, two Bullfinch and a very brief Firecrest the best we could manage. As we returned back to the road a pair of obliging Stonechats showed well on some nearby brambles. We paused again to look along the beach and out to sea noting large numbers of gulls feeding just offshore, which included another Mediterranean Gull, plus several Gannets, just visible distantly in the gloom.

With the day nearly done we drove back towards the guesthouse making one more stop at Kenidjack Valley and the area around the sewage works, a Chiffchaff and a rather fed up looking roosting Buzzard the best we could manage which signalled the end of the day and a return back to our base at Bosaverne.

Tuesday 19th October

We woke again to the sound of rain on the window, though fortunately relatively short lived, and after breakfast we headed off to nearby Cot Valley. We parked the bus and headed along the higher path circumnavigating the nearby houses. We dropped back down stopping to view some feeders in a nearby garden, noting Goldfinch, Blue, Great and our first Coal Tit, and a Great Spotted Woodpecker was heard calling. After which we joined the path taking us alongside the stream running down at the base of the valley towards the sea. Several small mixed tit flocks were encountered, though searching through them revealed nothing more exciting than Chiffchaff and Goldcrest. As we approached the sea two Choughs flew over calling and a Kestrel was found perched on a cliff side rock. Looking out from the cove Gannets could be seen flying past through the murk, and a Shag was found sat on the sea relatively close in. We then walked back to the bus and after a quick tea/coffee break we headed on to another valley, Kenidjack.

We enjoyed another pleasant walk, but again a Chiffchaff around the Sewage works and Goldcrest in a mixed Tit flock were the best birds we encountered. As we were approaching the mouth of the valley the fog was closing in and the rain was also starting, so we returned back up the path to the bus and lunch.

The forecast for the afternoon was heavy rain, so with this in mind we decided to head inland to St Stithians Reservoir, with the intention of utilizing the hides there. The fog was still evident as we started our journey, which briefly cleared but then returned at its heaviest as we approached our destination, not what we'd envisaged! Visibility was appalling and although we visited both hides and the edge of the reservoir we could see very little, most birds reduced to just grey shapes. The exceptions were two groups of Snipe, several Lapwing and a few Blue and Great Tits visiting the feeders in front of one of the hides.

We decided we had no choice but to head back towards our base, planning a return to the Hayle Estuary on the way. We stopped first at Copperhouse creek viewing again from the car park and noting a similar range of species as our previous visit, which included at least three Greenshank, eight Bar-tailed Godwits and a Grey Plover. We drove onto the Carnsew Basin but on arrival it was clear the tide was on the way in and there were no areas of dry land left. The rain was falling again so we decided to head to the hide at the Ryan's Field which was to prove a good move with the rising tide having driven most of the areas wading birds there.

At least thirty Dunlin were feeding actively on the pools at the rear of the mud in front of us, and closer inspection revealed the Semi-palmated Sandpiper amongst them. Two Greenshank and a dozen Redshanks were also on the mud and searching the flooded largely grass area nearby, we could see larger numbers of Curlew, Bar-tailed Godwit, Redshank and Grey Plover. A juvenile Curlew Sandpiper was also discovered there, as was a Black-tailed Godwit, both new birds for the trip. The rain had stopped so we decided to check the main estuary, which proved productive with two Shelducks and seven Sandwich Terns again new additions for us.

Wednesday 20th October

An encouraging start to the day today, with amazingly even small patches of blue sky visible! The wind direction was forecast as SW with a reasonable strength, so our first stop was Porthgwarra. We walked west a short way on arrival to try and reduce the glare from the sun that had poked through, an encouraging start weather wise at least! It didn't last long though, with the first rain squall appearing literally minutes after we'd sat down! We persevered, but sea passage was nowhere as productive as we'd hoped. Gannets and Shags constantly moved passed heading east, a Bonxie was seen by Ted and a second by Gary, but little else was noted. We walked up to the Coast watch station gaining views of several fairly distant Choughs before returning back to the car park noting Rock and Meadow Pipits en-route plus a pair of Stonechats. A stop to view a garden feeder gave us some commoner species for the day including Goldfinch and Chaffinch and at least two Chiffchaffs were noted. A walk along the entrance road to the car park area and nearby field scrub revealed a Goldcrest as a new bird for the day but little else. We headed off to our next destination and as we drove Gary noted some cows in a nearby field that appeared to have a deer sitting in amongst them. Amazingly on checking it transpired there was a stag Red Deer complete with an impressive set of antlers indeed sat in with them, bizarre!

Our next destination was Sennen Cove, where on parking it was decided it was time for lunch. Our position looked out into the Cove and whilst we ate we noted at least one Mediterranean Gull pass by and fifteen or so Shags on the rocks in front of us, plus some vocal Choughs overhead. A dark Phase Arctic Skua was a bonus, heading south past us out of the cove.

After lunch we headed off along the coastal path towards Lands End. A pleasant walk out, bird wise a Wheatear, several Stonechat and a Buzzard were the highlights. We arrived at Lands end and finally achieved close views of Chough, with two birds relatively approachable and clearly used to visitors there.



Colour ringed Chough at Lands End

Another Wheatear was discovered nearby, along with a Raven perched nicely out on a rock for us, and then at that the point it went horribly wrong! The rain had started and as we walked it got heavier and heavier, making seeing any birds highly unlikely! We eventually arrived back at the bus and it was decided to head back to the B&B and see what the weather did for the remainder of the day, as to whether it was worth venturing out again. Although the heavy rain did stop the wind was still strong, and heavy showers persisted for the rest of the afternoon, so drying our clothes and bags and showering early for dinner, was considered to be the best use of time!

Thursday 21st October

The forecast today was far more encouraging with no sign of any rain and the wind switching round to the North. With this in mind we decided to do another sea watch to start the day, our choice of site this time Pendeen. Arriving at the site, we were met by a pair of calling Chough then we made our way down the walled parameter of the lighthouse and joined a dozen or so other birders looking out to sea. It was immediate apparent that large numbers of birds were passing by below us with Gannets and auks immediately obvious. Closer inspection revealed both Razorbill and Guillemots, seemingly in similar numbers. The number of auks was impressive with a count made of 500 passing a minute, which would support the thought there were thousands, if not tens of thousands, seen going past during the time we were there. Gannets, Shags and Kittiwakes were relatively numerous too, but the only 'different bird' we could find was an adult Mediterranean Gull.

Our next stop was a return visit to St Stithians Reservoir with us viewing from the side of the reservoir first before moving round to the hides. Although we could now see the birds on the reservoir there wasn't anything too unexpected, and no sign of two Spotted Redshanks that had been present for the previous few days. We returned back to the bus bumping into the "Warden" of the site. He said he'd see the birds earlier and they would almost certainly now be in a channel viewable from a bridle path further a short way around the reservoir. He then proceeded to list a series of rares he'd seen in the channel over the preceding years and then gave a series of directions to the site. We started questioning the accuracy of the instructions when the entrance that was 'just round the bend' proved to be a bit more than that and the walk out to the channel itself was around a mile long! On top of that there was no sign of the birds, a Ringed Plover and a Little Grebe the best we could dig out! We hurried back to the bus and headed off to Church Cove on the Lizard, our next stop and lunch. Lunch was followed by a walk around the area and down to the cove, a Grey wagtail, three Chiffchaffs some distant Med Gulls on the sea the most noteworthy birds, and Common Darter and Small Tortoiseshell joined the insect list.

We moved on, parking on the green at Lizard village before walking out towards the coast. Two Swallows appeared over the nearby houses, an encouraging start and we were soon enjoying views of our next additions there of Black redstarts, one a stunning adult male.



Male Black Redstart

We continued our walk noting the first of at least six Stonechats we were to see during our walk. Arriving at the coastal path we enjoyed some more views of five Chough, seemingly equally as approachable as the ones the previous day along with several more or the same Swallows. Celia then spotted a raptor flying towards us, reasonably high so the first thought was a Kestrel but as it approached it was clear it was shorter tailed, a Merlin! It shot over us, losing height and then quickly disappearing distantly from view, thoughts were it was female based on its size. We returned back to the bus and with the afternoon disappearing rapidly our thoughts were to head back to the B&B.

We could manage one more stop though, a short one at the Boating Lake at Helston, which historically can have some of the commoner species or even surprise ones to boost the trip list. We walked to the lake and started scanning. The first surprise here was a brown duck pointed out by Ted, with closer inspection revealing a male Ferruginous Duck. Though of questionable origin it was still a nice surprise. Next was a Cattle Egret pointed out this time by Richard, looking totally out of place sitting on one of the islands in the centre of the small lake. We then walked round the lake noting Coots and Tufted Ducks amongst the wildfowl and gulls, along with single drake Shoveler and Gadwall.



Cattle Egret

Friday 22nd October

Amazingly we woke to another fine day, well no rain or wind at least! A few birds were passing over whilst we loaded the bus, mainly finches and a calling Greenfinch, a new bird for the trip. A return visit to Sennen was the first stop of the day with our plan to get there before the majority of other people arrived. We pulled into an empty car park, so an encouraging start, and made our way up the path in search of our target bird, Snow Bunting. We climbed the steps then continued up the remainder of the slope, then a bird flew up off the path calling, success! a Snow Bunting! The bird

settled literally 10ft in front of us, joined by a second, giving us some great views and photo opportunities.



Snow Buntings

Pleased with our success we returned to the car park noting several Choughs and a Raven overhead, and Shags and Mediterranean Gulls in the harbour.

Our next stop was another valley, Nanquidno, and as we climbed out the bus birds were immediately obviously nearby including small numbers of Chaffinch, Meadow Pipit and Skylark. A Sparrowhawk flew through, flushing all the birds as we started our walk. Our route took us out along the main path, with us taking the left hand fork at the end of the track to head off out towards the coastal path.

Choughs were noted in good numbers as we walked along, with a noisy group of twenty-one flying over us at one point. We noted several Stonechats as we walked plus small numbers of Gannets and mixed auk flocks distantly off shore. We continued our loop climbing onto a high point to view the area before dropping down and finding a somewhat interesting stepping stone path through a marshy grass area, which lead through a kissing gate with the track then taking us back to the bus. A brief chat with a friend of Gary's gave us directions to a interesting aberrant Stonechat Gary thought the group would be keen to see, and after a short drive we were viewing the bird. It transpired it was a very smart individual, with a white throat and supercillium, nothing like anything any of us had ever seen before.



Abberant Stonechat

Our next stop was St Gothian's Sands LNR, with lunch undertaken on arrival. We then took a walk out onto the reserve, which is basically a small lake with an island positioned just inside the dunes. A small flock of gulls were the first birds noted, with two Mediterranean gulls picked out along with a 1st CY Common Gull, a new one for the trip list with another addition, Water Rail, heard calling. Little Grebes easily reached double figures and Tufted Ducks and Coots were also seen. A quick look at the sea was followed by our return to the bus, with a flock of around 350 Golden Plovers watched rising up into the sky distantly over nearby farmland.

A return visit to Drift reservoir followed next, as we were literally driving past it en-route to the last stop of the day, with the plan to view the reservoir using telescopes from the dam wall. The light was excellent and we managed to re-find the Black-necked Grebe plus two bonus birds in the form of a Great White Egret and a Green Sandpiper.

Our last stop of the day was an area of moorland and open fields near the airport, where we'd been told there maybe some Short-eared Owls hunting late afternoon. We found a high viewpoint and proceeded to scan the area and it wasn't long before the first Owl appeared quickly followed by a second.

We watched them for a while before taking a track that would take us closer to the birds where again we watched them hunting and interacting. A Sparrowhawk flew by and at three Kestrels were noted and with the time ticking away we returned back to the car park. As we watched the owls again from there it became apparent there were now actually four birds in total! As we left the car park and drove onto the road the final treat was perched owl right by the roadside, a fitting finale to a successful day.

Saturday 23rd October

Our last morning and as previous days a plan had been forged and explained over dinner the night before, which Gary promptly changed first thing the next morning! In his defence though, we had only had a Plan A when we finished dinner the night before and it was only the arrival of a text later that eve from a friend saying an un-identified Shrike had been found near Pendeen that set thoughts on a different route. By the morning though this had been upgraded to a Brown Shrike and with news only just been released we were on our way hoping to beat the crowds. We arrived at Pendeen the sight of several randomly parked cars signalling we were getting close to the bird. We parked and joined a dozen or so birders viewing the bird from a field gateway. The bird was fortunately on show, albeit a bit distantly, at the back of the field but we all managed acceptable views of it. The bird then flew into the next field with the majority of birders moving position to try and see it, we stayed put, a good move, with the bird once again reappearing before disappearing again. With time against us if we wanted to go elsewhere we decided we were satisfied with what we had seen and slipped off before things got any busier.



Brown Shrike!

We spent the remainder of the morning at Cot Valley, where we had another nice, though not overly productive walk, noting several vocal Choughs, a mobile tit flock which we seemingly/presumably bumped into twice, the second time noting at least at least six Goldcrests and a Chiffchaff accompanying them. We revisited the garden feeders, which produced better views of a Coal tit, which signaled the end of our walk as we returned back to the bus. This also signaled the end of the trip and we headed back to the Guesthouse where we collected bags, loaded the vehicles, said our goodbyes and started our respective journeys home.



The Group

Trip Species List

Greylag Goose	<i>Anser anser</i>
Canada Goose	<i>Branta canadensis</i>
Mute Swan	<i>Cygnus olor</i>
Common Shelduck	<i>Tadorna tadorna</i>
Northern Shoveler	<i>Spatula clypeata</i>
Gadwall	<i>Mareca strepera</i>
Eurasian Wigeon	<i>Mareca penelope</i>
Mallard	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>
Eurasian Teal	<i>Anas crecca</i>
Tufted Duck	<i>Aythya fuligula</i>
Common Pheasant	<i>Phasianus colchicus</i>
Little Grebe	<i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>
Great Crested Grebe	<i>Podiceps cristatus</i>
Black-necked Grebe	<i>Podiceps nigricollis</i>
Northern Gannet	<i>Morus bassanus</i>
Great Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>
European Shag	<i>Phalacrocorax aristotelis</i>
Grey Heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>
Great Egret	<i>Casmerodius albus</i>
Cattle Egret	<i>Bubulcus ibis</i>
Little Egret	<i>Egretta garzetta</i>
Eurasian Sparrowhawk	<i>Accipiter nisus</i>

Common Buzzard	<i>Buteo buteo</i>
Water Rail	<i>Rallus aquaticus</i>
Common Moorhen	<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>
Eurasian Coot	<i>Fulica atra</i>
Eurasian Oystercatcher	<i>Haematopus ostralegus</i>
Grey Plover	<i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>
European Golden Plover	<i>Pluvialis apricaria</i>
Northern Lapwing	<i>Vanellus vanellus</i>
Common Ringed Plover	<i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>
Eurasian Curlew	<i>Numenius arquata</i>
Bar-tailed Godwit	<i>Limosa lapponica</i>
Black-tailed Godwit	<i>Limosa limosa</i>
Ruddy Turnstone	<i>Arenaria interpres</i>
Dunlin	<i>Calidris alpina</i>
Curlew sandpiper	<i>Calidris ferruginea</i>
Semipalmated Sandpiper	<i>Calidris pusilla</i>
Common Snipe	<i>Gallinago gallinago</i>
Common Greenshank	<i>Tringa nebularia</i>
Common Redshank	<i>Tringa totanus</i>
Green Sandpiper	<i>Tringa ochropus</i>
Great Skua	<i>Stercorarius skua</i>
Arctic Skua	<i>Stercorarius parasiticus</i>
Common Guillemot	<i>Uria aalge</i>
Razorbill	<i>Alca torda</i>
Black-legged Kittiwake	<i>Rissa tridactyla</i>
Black-headed Gull	<i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i>
Mediterranean Gull	<i>Ichthyaeetus melanocephalus</i>
Common Gull	<i>Larus canus</i>
Herring Gull	<i>Larus argentatus</i>
Lesser Black-backed Gull	<i>Larus fuscus</i>
Great Black-backed Gull	<i>Larus marinus</i>
Sandwich Tern	<i>Thalasseus sandvicensis</i>
Rock Dove (Feral Pigeon)	<i>Columba livia</i>
Common Woodpigeon	<i>Columba palumbus</i>
Collared Dove	<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>
Short-eared Owl	<i>Asio flammeus</i>
Common Kingfisher	<i>Alcedo atthis</i>
Great Spotted Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos major</i>
Common Kestrel	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>
Merlin	<i>Falco columbarius</i>
Eurasian Jay	<i>Garrulus glandarius</i>
Common Magpie	<i>Pica pica</i>
Red-billed Chough	<i>Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax</i>
Eurasian Jackdaw	<i>Corvus monedula</i>
Rook	<i>Corvus frugilegus</i>
Carrion Crow	<i>Corvus corone</i>

Common Raven	<i>Corvus corax</i>
Eurasian Skylark	<i>Alauda arvensis</i>
Barn Swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>
Coal Tit	<i>Parus ater</i>
Eurasian Blue Tit	<i>Cyanistes caeruleus</i>
Great Tit	<i>Parus major</i>
Long-tailed Tit	<i>Aegithalos caudatus</i>
Eurasian Nuthatch	<i>Sitta europaea</i>
Brown Shrike	<i>Lanius cristatus</i>
Eurasian Wren	<i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>
Goldcrest	<i>Regulus regulus</i>
Firecrest	<i>Regulus ignicapilla</i>
Cetti's Warbler	<i>Cettia cetti</i>
Common Chiffchaff	<i>Phylloscopus collybita</i>
European Robin	<i>Erithacus rubecula</i>
Black Redstart	<i>Phoenicurus ochruros</i>
European Stonechat	<i>Saxicola rubicola</i>
Northern Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe oenanthe</i>
Eurasian Blackbird	<i>Turdus merula</i>
Redwing	<i>Turdus iliacus</i>
Song Thrush	<i>Turdus philomelos</i>
Common Starling	<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>
Dunnock	<i>Prunella modularis</i>
Grey Wagtail	<i>Motacilla cinerea</i>
Pied Wagtail	<i>Motacilla alba</i>
Meadow Pipit	<i>Anthus pratensis</i>
Rock Pipit	<i>Anthus petrosus</i>
Common Chaffinch	<i>Fringilla coelebs</i>
Eurasian Bullfinch	<i>Pyrrhula pyrrhula</i>
European Greenfinch	<i>Chloris chloris</i>
Common Linnet	<i>Linaria cannabina</i>
European Goldfinch	<i>Carduelis carduelis</i>
Eurasian Siskin	<i>Spinus spinus</i>
House Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>
Snow Bunting	<i>Plectrophenax nivalis</i>

Ferruginous Duck	<i>Aythya nyroca</i>
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Red Deer
 Rabbit
 Fox
 Squirrel
 Brown Rat

Red Admiral
 Speckled Wood

Small Tortoiseshell

Common Darter

COVER PHOTO

Short-eared Owl by Frances Hinden