



TOUR REPORT

Cornwall Autumn 13th – 19th Oct 2024

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Sunday 13th October

We assembled as a group at our accommodation, on the outskirts of St just , with enough time remaining off the afternoon to head out to do some birding. The Hayle Estuary was our chosen destination with our arrival at Ryan's Field, a small RSPB reserve timed perfectly with the high tide. Positioned adjacent to the Estuary, the high tide pushes birds up onto the field where a large hide gives a good vista out over the site. As soon as we arrived, we were pointed in the direction of a Kingfisher, perched on the edge of a nearby bush, always a welcome and appreciated addition. This was quickly followed by a Spoonbill which in typical fashion was sat fast asleep though it did choose to move around and feed later during our visit.



The sleeping Spoonbill, alongside a marginally more active Little Egret.

A large flock of Canada Geese were immediately obvious too, and a search through them revealed a solitary Pink-footed Goose. Curlews and Bar-tailed Godwits were visible on the grass and feeding in the channels and the mix of gulls loafing on the muddy pool in front of us included several Mediterranean Gulls.

We crossed over the main road to view the Estuary itself where on arrival it was clear there were plenty of birds to see. Large numbers of gulls included all six of the commoner species and searching through the feeding Wigeon and Teal revealed at least three Pintail. Two Rock Pipits were found feeding on the nearby shoreline and two Greenshank were noted along the more distant bank. Bar-tailed Godwit and Redshank were also noted nearby along with several Dunlin, though viewing was made difficult with them largely feeding in the longer grass. We returned over the road, hearing a Water Rail calling as we walked along the edge of Ryan's field to return to the bus.

We had time for one more stop, to a nearby estuarian area called Copperhouse Creek. Viewing here is from one of the town carparks, which gave us a good view across the area several more Greenshanks were found and new birds seen included a flock of ten Black-tailed Godwits, and single Green Sandpiper, Grey and Ringed Plovers.

Monday 14th October

As we gathered at the bus this morning after breakfast, it was clear the weather was somewhat at odds with the somewhat cheerier forecast we'd been expecting! We set off hoping heading east to the Lizard Peninsula would leave the rain and fog behind us. We headed initial to Lizard village, where we parked on the green and made use of the nearby facilities with a nearby Black Redstart being unfortunately a leader only addition. Our first destination of the day was to be the nearby car park at Kynance Cove, with us planning a walk out along the coastal path to the next Cove called Soapy Cove. The reason, to search for a Red-flanked Bluetail that had been found in a garden there. We set off along the coastal path noting our first Choughs along the way, and after a somewhat challenging walk largely from a terrain perspective, we arrived at the site. There were several birders there already who unfortunately said they had seen no sign of the bird, so we set about searching. Initially things didn't look too encouraging, with several Robins and the odd Dunnock the best we could find. Then one of the birders we had previously met started waving at us, we rushed back to find he'd seen the bird. We waited and initially there was no sign, then it appeared, but briefly, which meant we all saw it but not satisfactorily. We had several more glimpsed views over the next ten minutes, and we wondered if we were going to get any better views. We needn't have worried though as after a while the bird became more visible and bolder, appearing regularly in view along the dry-stone wall around the garden and dropping down on the floor on occasion to feed too.



We finally had some great views of this Red-flanked Bluetail.

We returned to the bus, noting a calling flyover Grey Wagtail, several Stonechats and a Raven along the way. We then headed back to the village green at the Lizard for lunch. Another target bird today was a Rose-coloured Starling and after lunch we walked along

one of the nearby lanes to an area it had been reported in. Initially there was no sign, then several groups of Starlings appeared, dropping down into one of the gardens. As we watched the birds feeding alongside the local House Sparrows the Rose-coloured suddenly appeared nearby on top of a short piece of fencing. A pale juvenile bird, looking somewhat out of place amongst its much darker cousins.



The juvenile Rose-coloured Starling

We returned to the bus, noting two more Choughs overhead, before heading off to our next stop, Goonhilly Downs. We headed to the Downs following news of a very confiding Lapland Bunting that had been seen feeding along one of the foot paths there. We walked out along the path and as we approached the area the bird was reportedly in; we could see a dog walker appearing in the distance and heading towards us. We quickly checked the path ahead of him, finding the bird feeding as we'd hoped on the ground. The dog walker saw us looking and to his credit stopped, so as not to disturb the bird. We needn't have worried though as when he did eventually walk past and disturb it, the bird returned straight back onto the path. We moved closer and enjoyed some exceptional views of it as it fed on the ground some twenty yards in front of us. We had time for one last stop before we had to head back, nearby Church Cove our chosen destination. The intention being to have a speculatively look for any migrant passerines in the area. We walked around the small Churchyard and then along the lane to the cove itself, but it was very quiet, three Chiffchaffs the best we could muster. Nearby a Common Buzzard was watched hunting for worms on a recently tilled field, and several Gannets and Shags were noted offshore.

Tuesday 15th October

With fog again enveloping the area around the guest house this morning, we headed off to our first planned stop of the day, Porthgwarra, hoping things would improve. Fortunately, they did, and on arrival as we walked from the bus towards the cove, a quick glance with binoculars revealed a healthy number of seabirds moving offshore. Telescopes were quickly erected, and an impromptu sea watch was underway. Gannets were immediately obvious, but it didn't take long to notice several Cory's Shearwaters amongst them. We spent the next twenty minutes or so watching them, with dozens of Cory's noted, with our mornings total, following several other looks out to sea, resulted in over a hundred birds seen. The views were varied, from distant to relatively close in, but the structure and flight pattern of the species made their identity straightforward. Smaller Manx Shearwaters were also seen, though in low numbers, and several fast-moving groups of Kittiwakes noted too. We headed up the path coastal path next, up onto the higher ground above the bay, seeing and getting nice views of Red-billed Chough and Raven as we walked along.



We had some nice views of Chough this morning.

Several Stonechats were visible, sat out on the nearby gorse and heather and the appearance of a Northern Wheatear nearby was also a welcome trip addition. We took a return route down the side of the valley to the car park, noting a perched Great Spotted Woodpecker on one of the telegraph poles along the way. After dropping off telescopes at the bus, we spent some time walking along the roadside looking into the adjacent trees and gardens. We didn't find too much of note, the best undoubtedly two Firecrests, but whilst seen well enough to be identified, most views were fleetingly brief. A short drive next took us to nearby Polgigga, where we walked along a private road, eventually ending up at the top of Nanjizal Valley. Our walk was pleasant enough, but again we struggled for the smaller birds, with half a dozen Chiffchaffs and a couple of Goldcrests, most of which were only heard, the best we manage along the well wooded

roadside. A male Great Spotted Woodpecker did show well though, in some dead trees by a big farmhouse, and several Swallows were seen flying overhead.



The male Great-spotted Woodpecker, it's red nape clearly visible.

Both Marsh Harrier and Sparrowhawk appeared as well, as did two more Ravens. We arrived back at the bus just in time as a few spots of the rain were now in the air, and after a brief deliberation, it was decided to spend the rest of the afternoon at Drift Reservoir. A small hide there would offer us some shelter if the rain got heavier and we hoped our walk out to get to it would remain dry. We had timed it perfectly, with the heavier rain starting just as we got settled in. We then spent the next forty minutes or so searching for birds on what initially, appeared to be a fairly bird less environment. The exception to this was the flock of mixed gulls loafing on the water in front of us and several Cormorants. As is often the case the more you look the more you find, and we'd soon added a few new trip birds. These came in the form of Great-crested and Little Grebes, Tufted Duck, Gadwall and Jay. A flock of around eighty Canada Geese on the nearby hillside on closer scrutiny were found to contain another lone Pink-footed Goose, our second of the trip, following on from the one we'd seen at Hayle on Sunday.

Wednesday 16th October

With the day forecast to be largely wet, with rain at a biblical level, it was a welcome surprise to find it dry and clear when we left shortly after breakfast. We decided to make the most of the dry start and head to nearby Kenidjack Valley. We parked opposite the small water treatment plant, but with work being carried out there, the birds had clearly been encouraged to move elsewhere! Unperturbed we set off to walk the length of the valley down to the sea. Our mornings birding was both rewarding and frustrating, the frustrating part being two Firecrests and a Yellow-browed Warbler, with both species giving no more than very brief poor views, in a dense area of vegetation near the donkey

paddocks they'd taken up residence in. The rewarding parts were a nice selection and views of commoner species, such as Chiffchaff, Blackcap, Song Thrush and Goldcrest. A Green Woodpecker appeared in full view on the top of a telegraph pole, another brief view but seen well by a percentage of the group. Arguably the best of the morning though was a Peregrine, found perched on an offshore rocky outcrop as we looked out over the sea from the end of the valley. As we returned to the bus, a chance meeting with some people Gary knew, resulted in being told of the whereabouts of two more Yellow-browed Warblers near the campsite at Kelynack. We decided to head there to eat our lunch and see if the birds appeared. Initially there was no sign, but then one of the birds was heard to call, eventually appearing in view at the base of some willows. This resulted in most of the group seeing it, but again not very well, a start at least and we stood waiting hoping it would reappear. As we waited a tit flock moved through, largely Long-tailed tits, dragging with them the inevitable Chiffchaff and Goldcrest. Then a small bird appeared in the upper branches of a willow tree by the road, a Yellow-browed Warbler! This one, to our relief, decided to feed for a while, moving around in full view and enabling us all to see it well.



Finally, the decent view of a Yellow-browed Warbler that we'd all been hoping for.

With still no sign of any rain we set off next to Hayle where we made a brief stop to look at the estuary from the car park of a nearby pub. The tide was totally out and birds distant, though we still managed to note a good selection of the expected commoner species. A short drive North found us arriving at our next destination of the day, St Gothian's Sands LNR. The attraction here is a large freshwater pool, Godrevy Pool, which is nestled behind the beach and dunes, which has historically meant anything could turn up at any time, so is always worth a visit. There were no surprises today, but a Kingfisher as always was much appreciated, and Coot and Tufted Duck were the 'best of the rest'. We set off again to what it transpired would be the last destination of the day Stithians Reservoir. The rain finally started just as we arrived, though with two hides at

the site we managed to stay dry. Birdwise it was somewhat disappointing, with the water levels surprisingly low in front of the first hide that overlooked the nearest arm of the reservoir. This resulted in two Mediterranean Gulls and single Curlew, Great Crested grebe and Little Egret being the best birds we could find. The second hide was marginally more productive, with another Kingfisher and two Great white Egrets the best we found there. We had planned one more stop in nearby Helston, but a combination of the heavy traffic and deteriorating weather saw us turning back and onto the guesthouse to ready for the evening.

Thursday 17th October

Surprisingly, as predicted, we woke to a fine and clear morning weatherwise, with us choosing to start the day with a visit to Pendeen Lighthouse for some sea watching. The wind direction was wrong, but our hope was there would at least be some seabirds moving past the headland. Gannets were obvious to see on our arrival and we settled down behind the wall by the lighthouse, to see what else was passing by. It was rather quiet and unsurprisingly without the wind to push the birds closer, viewing was challenging. Regular flocks of auks came past, most too far out to identify confidently, but closer in birds revealed both Guillemot and Razorbill present. With little else apparent we decided to cut our losses and head onto Porthgwarra, where an Eastern, probably Siberian, Stonechat had been discovered. We arrived at the site and headed straight up the hill to find a small group of birders watching the bird. We quickly got on it, snatching a quick look in telescopes before it took off and headed over the nearby cottages and out onto the wider expanse of heather behind us. We then spent a good half an hour searching for it, noting several Common Stonechats and the previous visits Wheatear, before it reappeared close by us. We then enjoyed great views of it perched up in the bright morning sun, and at one stage watched feeding on caterpillars.



We enjoyed nice views of this first winter male Eastern 'Siberian' Stonechat.

We then headed back to the bus, taking a route out across the valley, looping back to walk alongside the trees nestled in the lower part of the valley. This resulted in us once again finding the Great Spotted Woodpecker clinging to the side of one of the telegraph poles, but also finally, a good, prolonged view of a Firecrest, found in one of the path side trees. Lunch followed next, with some of us choosing to spend the time looking out once again over the sea. This proved a good move with several Cory's Shearwaters still visible, once again offering a rare opportunity to see these birds in flat calm conditions from the British mainland. After lunch we took a short drive onto nearby Porthcurno in the hope of finding something of interest there. This wasn't to be the case, although there was seemingly plenty of activity, with species such as Chaffinch and a variety of tits easily seen but also several Chiffchaff and Goldcrest. A message revealed that a Glossy Ibis was present at Godrevy Pool and although we'd been there yesterday, we felt it was worth a revisit. Unfortunately, we arrived fifteen minutes too late, with the bird having been flushed by Canada Geese and seen to head off high southeast. We walked down to the pool anyway but there was nothing to add from the day before, although on returning to the bus a sharp-eyed member of the group spotted some small geese in a distant field. A telescope was trained on them, and their identity revealed as Barnacle, as always, their providence is questionable, but a good find all the same. Our last stop at the day was at the Chapel Carn Brae, the first, or last depending on your view, hill in Cornwall. The hill gives a good vista out over the rough fields and extensive heather moorland nearby which is a traditional spot for wintering Short-eared Owls. We hadn't heard any of owls but felt it was worth a shot. Unfortunately, none appeared and the best bird we could find was a distant, female type, Marsh Harrier.

Friday 18th October

With a bird news posting the previous evening, saying the Glossy Ibis had returned to Godrevy Pool, we hoped it would be a case of third time lucky as we returned there once again this morning. Unfortunately, this wasn't to be the case with no sign of the bird on our arrival. As before though we decided to walk around the pool and check the nearby beach and shoreline too. Though with so many dogwalkers and a few surfers already on the beach, shorebirds were non-existent and a selection of gulls, including a handful of Mediterranean, the only birds present. The pool once again revealed a similar range of species as the previous visit, the most exciting being twenty or so Curlews and a Kingfisher. Our next destination was Marazion Marsh, and we set off firstly to look at the beach with the plan then being to then look at the reserve itself. The weather had now taken a turn for the worst, with strong wind and fine misty rain, and after gaining nothing more than a selection of gulls on the beach, we decided that the nearby café would make a suitable refuge while we waited for the rain to pass. The rain eventually eased and viewing improved, so we set off to look out over the reserve from the road. Prior to the trip Gary and I borrowed a thermal imaging camera, and with several areas of cut reed in front of us and on an initial glance no birds apparently on it, it was an ideal opportunity to try it out. The camera revealed there were in fact five birds on the cut reed

area and a more intense sweep with the telescope revealed them all to be well hidden Common Snipe.



Two of the cryptically hidden Common Snipe.

A useful exercise and clearly a useful tool, though the jury is still out as to whether the high cost of the camera would make it a worthwhile purchase. We continued our walk, encountering several more Snipe, both vocal Cetti's Warbler and Water Rail, and another new bird for the trip Reed Bunting. Returning to the bus we set off next for Cot Valley, though as we left Penzance a thick fog descended around us. With Cot chosen as our destination to avoid the southerly wind, we hoped the valley would also give us some respite from the fog. This it transpired was to be the case, and we enjoyed a very pleasant walk along and down the valley. Bird wise it was disappointingly quiet, four Chough, two Rock Pipits and single Chiffchaff and Grey wagtail, the best we could muster. With only an hour or so left of the day, we opted for a return visit to Kendijack to make the most of our remaining time. Again, things were quiet, Grey Heron and Grey Wagtail the only birds of note.

Saturday 19th October

Our last morning saw us heading off to nearby Sennen Cove for a walk out along the coastal path to Land's End, then taking a more inland route to return to the bus. It was a lovely morning, and we felt pleased we'd chosen this morning to for the walk rather than the day before. Large numbers of Corvids noisily spiralled up and around the cliff edges, the majority Jackdaws and Carrion Crows, though both Red-billed Chough and Raven were also noted in amongst them. Gannets and Shags were regularly seen offshore, but we noted little else as we walked along, and we arrived at Land's End for a photo opportunity and to use the facilities. The walk back took us along a well walked

and generous inland path, with us encountering a small selection of bushes and scrub along the way. This resulted in a few more birds, a few Song Thrushes and Blackbirds, Goldfinch and Linnet and a solitary Northern Wheatear. The morning had flown past, and after a look out over the bay on our arrival at the bus, we then returned to the Guesthouse, where we said our good-byes and then started our individual journey's back home.



The group at Land's End, with Longships Lighthouse also visible in the background.

ORIOLE BIRDING CORNWALL AUTUMN MIGRATION OCTOBER 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	13	14	15	16	17	18	19
1	Canada Goose	<i>Branta canadensis</i>	X		X	X	X	X	
2	Common Shelduck	<i>Tadorna tadorna</i>	X			X			
3	Gadwall	<i>Mareca strepera</i>			X	X			
4	Eurasian Wigeon	<i>Mareca penelope</i>	X			X			
5	Mallard	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>	X		X	X	X	X	
6	Northern Pintail	<i>Anas acuta</i>	X						
7	Eurasian Teal	<i>Anas crecca</i>	X			X	X	X	

#	Common name	Scientific name		13	14	15	16	17	18	19	
8	Tufted Duck	<i>Aythya fuligula</i>				X	X	X	X		
9	Common Pheasant	<i>Phasianus colchicus</i>			X	X	X				
10	Little Grebe	<i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>				X	X	X	X		
11	Great Crested Grebe	<i>Podiceps cristatus</i>				X	X				
12	Manx Shearwater	<i>Puffinus puffinus</i>				X					
13	Northern Gannet	<i>Morus bassanus</i>			X	X	X	X	X	X	
14	Great Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>		X		X	X		X		
15	European Shag	<i>Phalacrocorax aristotelis</i>			X	X	X	X	X	X	
16	Grey Heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>		X	X				X	X	
17	Little Egret	<i>Egretta garzetta</i>		X			X				
18	Eurasian Sparrowhawk	<i>Accipiter nisus</i>			X	X	X	X			
19	Common Buzzard	<i>Buteo buteo</i>		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
20	Water Rail	<i>Rallus aquaticus</i>		H			H		H		
21	Common Moorhen	<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>				X	X	X	X		
22	Eurasian Coot	<i>Fulica atra</i>					X	X	X		
23	Eurasian Oystercatcher	<i>Haematopus ostralegus</i>		X			X	X	X	X	
24	Grey Plover	<i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>		X							
25	Northern Lapwing	<i>Vanellus vanellus</i>		X			X				
26	Common Ringed Plover	<i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>		X							
27	Eurasian Curlew	<i>Numenius arquata</i>		X			X	X	X	X	
28	Bar-tailed Godwit	<i>Limosa lapponica</i>		X			X				
29	Black-tailed Godwit	<i>Limosa limosa</i>		X							
30	Dunlin	<i>Calidris alpina</i>		X			X				
31	Common Snipe	<i>Gallinago gallinago</i>							X		
32	Common Greenshank	<i>Tringa nebularia</i>		X							
33	Common Redshank	<i>Tringa totanus</i>		X							
34	Common Guillemot	<i>Uria aalge</i>						X			
35	Razorbill	<i>Alca torda</i>						X			
36	Black-legged Kittiwake	<i>Rissa tridactyla</i>				X		X			
37	Black-headed Gull	<i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i>		X	X	X	X	X	X		
38	Mediterranean Gull	<i>Ichthyaetus melanocephalus</i>		X			X	X	X		
39	Common Gull	<i>Larus canus</i>		X							
40	Herring Gull	<i>Larus argentatus</i>		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
41	Lesser Black-backed Gull	<i>Larus fuscus</i>		X	X	X	X			X	
42	Great Black-backed Gull	<i>Larus marinus</i>		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
43	Rock Dove (Feral Pigeon)	<i>Columba livia</i>		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
44	Common Woodpigeon	<i>Columba palumbus</i>		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
45	Collared Dove	<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>			X	X	X	X	X	X	
46	Common Kingfisher	<i>Alcedo atthis</i>		X			X		X		
47	Great Spotted Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos major</i>				X	X	X			
48	Green Woodpecker	<i>Picus viridis</i>					X				

#	Common name	Scientific name		13	14	15	16	17	18	19	
49	Common Kestrel	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>		X	X	X	X	X	X		
50	Merlin	<i>Falco columbarius</i>						LO			
51	Peregrine Falcon	<i>Falco peregrinus</i>					X				
52	Eurasian Jay	<i>Garrulus glandarius</i>				X		X			
53	Common Magpie	<i>Pica pica</i>		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
54	Red-billed Chough	<i>Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax</i>			X	X		X	X	X	
55	Eurasian Jackdaw	<i>Corvus monedula</i>		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
56	Rook	<i>Corvus frugilegus</i>		X	X	X	X	X			
57	Carrion Crow	<i>Corvus corone</i>		X		X	X	X	X	X	
58	Common Raven	<i>Corvus corax</i>			X	X				X	
59	Eurasian Skylark	<i>Alauda arvensis</i>			X	X	X	X	X	X	
60	Barn Swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>				X					
61	Eurasian Blue Tit	<i>Cyanistes caeruleus</i>			X	X	X	X	X	X	
62	Great Tit	<i>Parus major</i>			X	X	X	X	X	X	
63	Long-tailed Tit	<i>Aegithalos caudatus</i>		X	X		X	X	X		
64	Eurasian Wren	<i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>			X	X	X	X	X	X	
65	Goldcrest	<i>Regulus regulus</i>				H	X	H			
66	Firecrest	<i>Regulus ignicapilla</i>				X	X	X			
67	Cetti's Warbler	<i>Cettia cetti</i>							H		
68	Common Chiffchaff	<i>Phylloscopus collybita</i>			X	X	X	X	X		
69	Yellow-browed Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus inornatus</i>					X				
70	Eurasian Blackcap	<i>Sylvia atricapilla</i>			X		X				
71	European Robin	<i>Erithacus rubecula</i>		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
72	Black Redstart	<i>Phoenicurus ochruros</i>			LO						
73	European Stonechat	<i>Saxicola rubicola</i>			X	X	X	X	X	X	
74	Northern Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe oenanthe</i>				X		X		X	
75	Eurasian Blackbird	<i>Turdus merula</i>		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
76	Song Thrush	<i>Turdus philomelos</i>					X	X		X	
77	Common Starling	<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
78	Dunnock	<i>Prunella modularis</i>			X	X	X	X	X	X	
79	Grey Wagtail	<i>Motacilla cinerea</i>			X	X	X	X	X		
80	Pied Wagtail	<i>Motacilla alba</i>		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
81	Meadow Pipit	<i>Anthus pratensis</i>		H	X	X	X	X	X	X	
82	Rock Pipit	<i>Anthus petrosus</i>		X	H		X		X		
83	Common Reed Bunting	<i>Emberiza schoeniclus</i>							X		
84	Common Chaffinch	<i>Fringilla coelebs</i>			X	X	X	X	X	X	
85	European Greenfinch	<i>Chloris chloris</i>						X	X		
86	Common Linnet	<i>Linaria cannabina</i>				X	X	X	X	X	
87	European Goldfinch	<i>Carduelis carduelis</i>			X	X	X	X	X	X	
88	House Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
89	Pink-footed Goose			X		X					
90	Spoonbill			X							
91	Green Sandpiper			X							
92	Red-flanked Bluetail				X						

[illegible]