



ORIOLE BIRDING



TOUR REPORT
EAST YORKSHIRE
22ND – 27TH SEPTEMBER 2019

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SUNDAY 22ND SEPTEMBER – *Light south-easterly winds and overcast with heavy rain later, 24C*

It was a really muggy afternoon for the start of our annual autumn tour to East Yorkshire, and we started the trip with a couple of hours birding at Frampton in Lincolnshire on our way north – well it would be rude not to! The reserve was bustling with waterbirds, and we were soon enjoying both the warm sunshine, and a scope full of wildfowl on the reedbed pool where throngs of Wigeon, Teal, Shoveler and Pintail were gathered, along with two ‘sweeping’ young Spoonbills. Ruff were plentiful too, and we had good opportunities to study the different sizes and colours of adults and juveniles of both sexes. A flock of **Black-tailed Godwits** held a few **Golden Plovers** – but not any that looked remotely interesting! Moving on to 360 hide, the middle scrape hosted lots of wildfowl and more **Ruff**, **Golden Plover** and **Black-tailed Godwits**. A family group of **Pink-footed Geese** on the bank allowed us to study the subtle covert markings of the different age birds, and the muddy edges of the pool were full of feeding **Snipe**. A juvenile **Greenshank** was the only other wader of note, though mention of a ‘Grey Plover’ did get our ears pricked up, as it was supposedly on reedbed pool. We headed out for a scan, but everything flew up just as we got there so we thought no more of it and continued towards the sea bank. Here we had the light behind us and had more excellent views of **Golden Plovers**, and then down by the old car park two **Spotted Redshanks** put on a fine display. Four more were in the pools behind, and we picked out at least five **Yellow Wagtails** on the muddy expanse to the north viewed from the top of the bank. We could see a big storm approaching from the south, and six **Greenshank** flew in calling overhead – it felt the sort of afternoon when something would drop in, and it did! As we walked back to the visitor centre, we could see a small crowd gathered – a moulting adult **American Golden Plover** was on reedbed pool! Presumably the ‘Grey Plover’ we’d heard about earlier! The bird looked freshly arrived, exhausted and crouching down with its eyes closed. It did eventually wake up and have a bit of a preen, and showed its long wings and bold, crisp white supercilium. Typically for this species, it still had substantial black on the belly, and the upperparts were monochrome and lacking and gold spangling. It was also rather small – a Ruff standing next to it was even a touch bigger. A great bird to round off the session, but now we had to get going and make the two hour trip on to West Carlton! On arrival we made a quick turnaround before heading out to dinner – seeing a **Barn Owl** on the way out, and a super **Tawny Owl** on the way home



Spotted Redshank at Frampton, 22nd September

MONDAY 23RD SEPTEMBER – *Dry day in a moderate SW wind, sunshine later, 20C*

A pleasant and varied days birding in the Spurn area today despite the unfavourable conditions for migration. We parked down by the discovery centre, and were greeted by a **Sand Martin** heading south and a Water Rail squealing nearby. Walking up the road back towards Kilnsea, we found large flocks of **Tree Sparrows** and finches feeding in a sunflower crop, and a big flock of Starlings which we checked carefully for something more interesting, without luck. Singles of **Yellow Wagtail** and **Rock Pipit** headed south, and round at Kilnsea churchyard, a **Pied Flycatcher** called and showed briefly in the sycamores. Generally though, the day had a quiet feel to it, but thankfully the tide was rising on The Humber and this meant there were plenty of waders to be seen. A big flock of **Golden Plovers** headed inland over us, and off the Crown & Anchor numbers of birds were building, particularly Shelduck and Oystercatcher. Good numbers of Curlew and Redshank were also present, and a few **Bar-tailed Godwit** and **Sanderling** along the edge of the rising water added interest. A juvenile tern caused us a bit of an ID headache, as it was sat distantly on its own on the mud – difficult to size and hard to see plumage clearly. We thought maybe a young Arctic to start with, but eventually it had a good fly round revealing its true identity as a first-winter **Little Tern**, quite a late sighting. Further down along the canal bank path, a **Whinchat** was keeping three Stonechat company on the fenceline behind Rose Cottage, and a juvenile **Peregrine** struggled along the edge of the estuary carrying a Redshank! Reaching The Warren, the last area of mud to be covered held good numbers of Knot, Dunlin and Ringed Plover, plus 17 **Grey Plover** – one of which was still in full summer plumage. A **Greenshank** was noted, and best of all a **Great White Egret** lumbered slowly south over us. By the Heligoland, we glimpsed another **Pied Flycatcher**, and a male Blackcap and Common Whitethroat were also seen. We ended an action-packed morning with a short seawatch which produced around 100 **Little Gulls** feeding offshore, a trickle of southbound **Common Scoter** and a small pod of **Bottle-nosed Dolphins** which gave good views as they made their way north.

After lunch, we headed north along Beacon Lane, which was totally devoid of any migrants at all. We cut across the fields to the listening dish, where the crop held several Reed Buntings, and another huge flock of Starlings kept us busy. Beacon Lagoon was looking really good with lots of mud and plenty of birds – mainly Teal and Wigeon, but with three Dunlin and a Knot feeding at point blank range along the edge. We had seen several gorgeous **Mediterranean Gulls** flying past us over the fields, and we counted another 17 on Kilnsea Wetlands, where a large roost of Knot was just getting ready to head back out onto the Humber on the dropping tide. Two Sandwich Terns flew over, and 18 **Pink-footed Geese** arrived from the north and dropped wearily into the stubble fields where they remained to the days end. Six **Greenshank** were the pick of the waders here, though a single Avocet was also seen. We concluded our day along Vicar's Lane in Easington, where a Yellow-browed Warbler had been seen earlier. We didn't locate it, but did see a couple of Chiffchaffs with the tit flock, and two different **Common Redstarts** – a vocal young male along the compound fence, and a female in the hedge bottom along the lane. A nice way to round off the day.

TUESDAY 24TH SEPTEMBER – *Very wet day in strong SW winds, 17C*

The forecast suggested that today would be a really tough one, but actually with a bit of careful planning to make sure we were either driving or sheltering through the worst periods of heavy rain, we did extremely well. The day kicked off on the coast at Aldbrough, just a short drive from the guest house, with a seawatch. The winds weren't ideal, but often there can still be a bit of movement over the sea here during early morning. We ended up logging around 15 **Red-throated Divers**, mainly heading south but with one or two also on the water. A light trickle of Gannets were also passing, as well as a single **Fulmar** and the odd **Guillemot**. Four **Common Scoter** and a first-winter **Mediterranean Gull** completed a productive watch, before we headed on to Hornsea Mere.

Just as we arrived at the mere, a local birder came up to tell us that a **Little Stint** had just been found on the shoreline of Kirkholme Point. The bird was easily located, and extremely confiding – most likely we were the first humans it had ever seen! The bird showed down to a few feet, allowing detailed scrutiny of every feather. A young male **Ruff** plopped in beside it, and we also found Dunlin,

Snipe and **Greenshank** so the weather had obviously downed a few waders. Over the mere, we enjoyed fantastic views of **Little Gulls**, dip-feeding over the water at close range – the velvet black underwings of the adults really stood out in this overcast light. More subtle was an eclipse **Garganey** among a huge throng of Teal, which thankfully climbed out of the water onto a log and began preening, drooping its wing to flash powder blue coverts. Other species new for the list here included Tufted Duck, Common Pochard, a brace of **Goldeneye** and a brief **Water Rail** – not a bad morning so far!



Little Stint – amazing views at Hornsea Mere today

Tophill Low would be our destination for the rest of the day. By the time we arrived, the weather front had reached us properly and it was now absolutely sluicing it down. We parked under some trees to try and get enough shelter to make a brew and get ourselves toggged up for a walk. We were soaked to the skin by the time we reached the reception hide! Here a couple more **Goldeneye** were seen, as well as many Great Crested Grebe and diving ducks. Pressing on through the woods, we flushed a **Green Sandpiper** from the pond, and then at North Marsh we had superb views of a **Kingfisher** perched outside the hide. Despite the weather, we were doing OK and by the time we reached the car park again for lunch, the rain had stopped and things were warming up a touch. Chiffchaff, Goldcrest and Treecreeper were all in the pines by the reception buildings. After lunch, we negotiated our way (eventually!) round the new layout of paths that lead down to south marsh, as we hoped to connect with a **White-rumped Sandpiper** present there for the last few days. Thankfully the bird was still present, and very obliging – we found it feeding furtively on its own on a muddy island among Teal. In fact it was very unobtrusive, feeding quietly with a shuffling gait like a Temminck's Stint and quite unlike their usual behaviour when feeding with Dunlin. We could see its finely streaked breast and flanks, reddish brown bill base and prominent supercilium, as well as super long wings and a few scattered dark feathers on the mantle. Three Dunlin and a **Ruff** were also present, as were a couple of Snipe and another **Kingfisher** perching nicely. We relocated to the second hide, where we had even better views of the sandpiper – a lifer for most of the group so well worth a good study! We arrived back at the car park just as the heavens opened again, so it was time to head back to the digs.



Kingfisher at Tophill Low – a flash of blue to brighten a wet afternoon

WEDNESDAY 25TH SEPTEMBER – *Overcast with light easterly winds and mist, 16C*

Flamborough Head would be our destination for the whole day today, and despite the light easterly breeze circulating only from just off the coast, we felt the very light wind and overcast weather could see a few drift migrants making landfall around the head. We started at the lighthouse, where a Common Whitethroat, few Reed Buntings, Stonechat and a **Whinchat** were in the surrounding bushes. A seawatch from the clifftop was the obvious place to start, and we enjoyed great views of the passing squadrons of Gannets, a dozen or more **Red-throated Divers** passing south close inshore, and large numbers of **Kittiwakes** and Guillemots feeding in rafts further out. A single dark phase juvenile **Arctic Skua** was a nice addition, and we also saw our first Shags of the trip. Heading along the path by the line of willows that traverses the outer head, we saw three **Whinchat** in total, favouring the extensive gorse area, and another four Common Whitethroat. Other than a single **Grey Wagtail** over though, there was no visible passage to speak of. Next we checked the Bay Brambles, adding a lemon yellow **Willow Warbler** and a brief **Wheatear** – perhaps a few more birds would arrive after lunch!

Bempton RSPB was a good lunch spot, with a **Pied Flycatcher** sallying from the willows in the car park. Exploration of the adjacent dell added a male Blackcap, Song Thrush, Goldcrest and two more Whitethroat, while a foray down to the clifftop produced two more **Whinchat**. The Gannets were

putting on a fantastic show here, cruising along the clifftop at point black range. For the second half of the afternoon, we returned to the head, and enjoyed a more productive spell for migrants. A **Ring Ouzel** was 'chacking' along the Old Fall hedge, and eventually we got some decent views of it in flight. Further down we saw a smart **Lesser Whitethroat**, a very elusive **Redstart** and then at the plantation, two more **Willow Warblers**. The **Redstart** showed again as we walked back up the hedge, and the **Ring Ouzel** flew out and perched this time giving everyone a better view. It had been one of those days where a lot of legwork was required to grind out the few birds available, but we ended on a high with a super bright **Yellow-browed Warbler** in the gardens of the coastguard cottages, flitting among the sycamore leaves and calling frequently. This was our first of the autumn – unusually late in the season but it has been a poor year for this species so far. Another view of the same **Willow Warbler** in the golf course willows and a **Wheatear** on the course itself, rounded off the day.



Several Whinchats were seen today including this confiding bird at the head

THURSDAY 26TH SEPTEMBER – *Heavy showers and fresh SW winds, 17C*

Our quietest day of the trip saw us head back down to Spurn, but in blustery south-west winds there was little on offer in the way of migration and highlights were few and far between. We started off down at the discovery centre, and our planned walk down to The Warren was instantly dropped in favour of a visit to Canal Scrape Hide, as we could see a storm rushing up The Humber towards us. We made it to the hide, as the heavens absolutely opened! Two **Dunlin** and a **Little Egret** were on the pool, and a **Goldcrest** was in the nearby bushes. Walking down to The Warren, we set ourselves up for a seawatch, and the sun was now out and it felt warm out of the wind tucked down in front of the hide. A **Great White Egret** flew slowly south over the watchpoint – it was certainly a good week on the east coast for this increasingly regular species. Our seawatch produced plenty of **Gannets**, a few

Sandwich Terns, single Guillemot and a couple of really nice **Red-throated Divers** on the sea. The highlight though was a **Wood Sandpiper** which flew south along the beach calling – a nice surprise! After this we took the brave decision of undertaking a walk down across the breach, to say we had at least set foot on Spurn Head proper! It was very exposed and windswept, and we didn't see too much – a few Golden Plover on the estuary, a smart male **Greenland Wheatear** and a real increase in the southerly movement of Meadow Pipits. This had been a feature throughout the morning but now really picked up pace in the stiffening wind. They were passing low along the beach in groups of 20 or so at a time, and the final day count for the peninsula was 3053!



Migrant Hawker at Spurn

After lunch, we headed up to Easington in the hope of connecting with either or both of Yellow-browed Warbler and Firecrest which were both reportedly still present. We found a nice sheltered corner where a young **Willow Warbler** showed beautifully, and we also saw Chiffchaff, Whitethroat and Goldcrest, but neither of the two targets. The rest of the lane was very windswept, and we had little chance of seeing anything amongst the trees there. Back in Kilnsea, we visited the wetlands hide and with the tide now rising, we did well for waterbirds. A **Spotted Redshank** was among the assembled throng of its common cousin, and there were plenty of Teal, Wigeon, **Mediterranean Gulls** galore and two Avocets. A few Dunlin and Turnstone, and increasing numbers of Knot, dropped in as the tide pushed in. The Knot were swirling onto the pool in small flocks and shuffling up together on the spits, great to see. Nine **Greenshank** included two which dropped in, and a big flock of **Golden Plover** could be seen in the distance dropping on the fields looking back towards Easington. Heading back to the car park, the pasture to the west was full of Curlew and a few Bar-tailed Godwits, all pristine juveniles. We ended the day trying to see the plover flock with mixed success – we got a look through them, but they were pretty distant from the road and it was very windy for using a scope. 18 **Pink-footed Geese** were in the stubble fields here though. A challenging day!

FRIDAY 28TH SEPTEMBER – *Light Northerly winds and sunshine, 15C*

Our final morning's birding saw us depart West Carlton after another very enjoyable stay, and make the journey of just over an hour over The Humber to Blacktoft Sands RSPB near Goole. It was another morning of blustery heavy rain showers, but thankfully here we had the various hides for shelter. From the reception centre, we had superb views of three **Water Rails** – two adults and a moulting juvenile – and **Bearded Tit** was also seen at the base of the reeds. A **Kingfisher** flashed through, and a **Green Sandpiper** gave nice views feeding at the far end of the pool. From Marshland Hide, we counted 31 **Common Snipe**, and these showed brilliantly along the muddy fringes. We looked hard for a Jack, but to no avail. Single **Ruff**, and a beautiful fresh juvenile *islandica* **Black-tailed Godwit** (later joined by three adults) were other highlights, plus there was a flush of winter wildfowl on offer. A **Barn Owl** slumbered in a nest box (we could see its body and legs!) and we had some excellent views of the local **Marsh Harriers** over the reedbed. A really nice session in this hide was rounded off with fantastic views of a male and female **Bearded Tit**, hopping around on the mud in the open at the base of the reeds. Singleton Hide, at the other end of the reserve, had recently hosted a **Spotted Crake** – it seemed to have departed now but we saw another two **Water Rails** here, and had stunning views of two **Peregrine**, one of which came right across the scrape and whizzed just past the front of the hide! Further views of **Ruff** and **Kingfisher** rounded things off, before we set off back to Norfolk.



White-rumped Sandpiper – certainly the highlight of the week for rarity value

SYSTEMATIC LIST

1. Greylag Goose
2. Pink-footed Goose
3. Brent Goose
4. Canada Goose

5. Mute Swan
6. Common Shelduck
7. Northern Shoveler
8. Gadwall
9. Eurasian Wigeon
10. Mallard
11. Northern Pintail
12. Eurasian Teal
13. Garganey
14. Common Pochard
15. Tufted Duck
16. Common Scoter
17. Common Goldeneye
18. Red-legged Partridge
19. Common Pheasant
20. Red-throated Diver
21. Little Grebe
22. Great Crested Grebe
23. Northern Gannet
24. Northern Fulmar
25. Great Cormorant
26. European Shag
27. Grey Heron
28. Little Egret
29. Great White Egret
30. Eurasian Spoonbill
31. Western Marsh Harrier
32. Eurasian Sparrowhawk
33. Red Kite
34. Common Buzzard
35. Water Rail
36. Common Moorhen
37. Eurasian Coot
38. Pied Avocet
39. Eurasian Oystercatcher
40. Grey Plover
41. European Golden Plover
42. American Golden Plover
43. Northern Lapwing
44. Common Ringed Plover
45. Eurasian Curlew
46. Bar-tailed Godwit
47. Black-tailed Godwit
48. Ruddy Turnstone
49. Red Knot
50. Ruff
51. Sanderling
52. Dunlin
53. Little Stint
54. White-rumped Sandpiper
55. Common Snipe
56. Green Sandpiper
57. Wood Sandpiper
58. Spotted Redshank
59. Common Greenshank

60. Common Redshank
61. Arctic Skua
62. Common Guillemot
63. Black-legged Kittiwake
64. Black-headed Gull
65. Mediterranean Gull
66. Common Gull
67. Herring Gull
68. Lesser Black-backed Gull
69. Great Black-backed Gull
70. Little Gull
71. Little Tern
72. Sandwich Tern
73. Stock Dove
74. Woodpigeon
75. Collared Dove
76. Barn Owl
77. Tawny Owl
78. Common Kingfisher
79. Great-spotted Woodpecker
80. Common Kestrel
81. Peregrine
82. Eurasian Jay
83. Common Magpie
84. Eurasian Jackdaw
85. Rook
86. Carrion Crow
87. Eurasian Skylark
88. Barn Swallow
89. Common House Martin
90. Sand Martin
91. Coal Tit
92. Eurasian Blue Tit
93. Great Tit
94. Long-tailed Tit
95. Bearded Tit
96. Eurasian Treecreeper
97. Eurasian Wren
98. Goldcrest
99. Cetti's Warbler (H)
100. Common Chiffchaff
101. Willow Warbler
102. Yellow-browed Warbler
103. Sedge Warbler
104. Eurasian Blackcap
105. Common Whitethroat
106. Lesser Whitethroat
107. European Robin
108. Pied Flycatcher
109. Whinchat
110. European Stonechat
111. Common Redstart
112. Northern Wheatear
113. Eurasian Blackbird
114. Ring Ouzel

- 115. Song Thrush
- 116. Common Starling
- 117. Dunnock
- 118. Western Yellow Wagtail
- 119. Grey Wagtail
- 120. Pied Wagtail
- 121. Meadow Pipit
- 122. Rock Pipit
- 123. Common Reed Bunting
- 124. Yellowhammer
- 125. Common Chaffinch
- 126. European Greenfinch
- 127. Common Linnet
- 128. European Goldfinch
- 129. House Sparrow
- 130. Eurasian Tree Sparrow