



ORIOLE BIRDING



TOUR REPORT **NORFOLK AUTUMN MIGRATION WEEKEND** **8TH – 11TH OCTOBER 2020**

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THURSDAY 8TH OCTOBER - *Cloudy day with fresh W winds and drizzle, 15C*

Our Autumn migration long weekend follows a slightly different format than our normal evening meet time, with a lunchtime start to give us the afternoon on day one to 'mop up' on any rare birds which may already be around before the start of the trip. This has worked well over the years and certainly did today, as we were able to see both a confiding **Hoopoe**, and a smart **Red-necked Phalarope**, in our first couple of hours in the field. We set off in the drizzle to Wighton, where a long-staying **Hoopoe** had been delighting a small crowd for the past week or so (though almost certainly present since the beginning of August). The bird was feeding at the base of its favoured muck pile as soon as we arrived and we had fantastic scope views for the fifteen minutes or so we were there. A great start!



Hoopoe – a splash of Mediterranean colour by a muck pile in Wighton!

The great thing about autumn in Norfolk is that birds can appear from all points of the compass, and no sooner had we left a flavour of the Med, than we were watching a visitor from the far North! At a dreak and dreary Salhouse, the first-winter **Red-necked Phalarope** was busily spinning around on the pool behind the duck pond, and by walking down the footpath towards Little Eye, we were able to get really good views of it. The Shovelers it was hanging about with were also spinning around stirring up prey from the bottom of the pool – perhaps helping one another out?! We could see the limited grey first-winter feathers dropped in on the mantle (a useful feature for separating from the earlier-moulting Grey Phalarope) and the birds dinky size and very fine bill. A really nice little bird and great way to kick off the trip.

With an hour or so of the day to play with, we popped down Garden Drove at Warham Greens, to scan the saltmarsh. A covey of **Grey Partridges** were in the pig fields, and we watched several males

flutter-jumping and fighting with each other in the grass and giving their grating call. A male **Marsh Harrier**, 400+ **Golden Plovers**, a juv **Grey Plover**, a few **Brent Geese**, and a sprinkling of **Pink-footed Geese** arriving to roost on the binks, rounded off a very good first afternoon.



Red-necked Phalarope at Salthouse, 8th October

FRIDAY 9TH OCTOBER – *Sunny spells and moderate W winds, showers later, 15C*

A great days birding today was mainly centred around the Holkham area where we spent the whole morning walking west through the meals, to the dunes and back for lunch. Our main target was to try and get good views of **Yellow-browed Warbler**, and we didn't have to wait long – we found our first of the day only about 250m west of Lady Anne's Drive, feeding quietly in a Holm Oak over the path and showing superbly. There were one or two Goldcrest and Treecreeper about too, but the bird was pretty much on its own and settled in one spot. A tour first was that we had it perched in the scope on the same branch for about two minutes – quite unusual for a **Yellow-browed**! With our boots well and truly filled on this score, we continued west, bagging a nice **Great White Egret** at Washington Hide and more tits and crests as we passed Meals House towards Crossracks. Here we had the odd Chiffchaff, Song Thrush and another **Yellow-browed Warbler** which called loudly beside the track. The remainder of the walk to the west end was fairly quiet – a third Yellow-browed called from the sallows by the track but remained unseen, and we had more views of Treecreepers and another **Great White Egret**. Reaching the dunes at the west end, we had distant views of three **Cattle Egrets** with the Herefords on Overy GM – a permanent fixture now on the Holkham reserve. A **Barred Warbler** had been seen recently in the nearby bushes but not reported for four days, though we suspected there was at least a chance it could still be present. Marcus and his group had just beaten us to it, relocating the bird with a few Blackcaps, and we found a suitable perch on the dunes and had fabulous views of it in one small area of brambles and low trees. An excellent morning!

We decided to head back along the seaward side of the pines, and it was nice and sheltered along here. Stonechats were added, and a flock of ten Pintail came in off the sea. We didn't see much else other than the odd Rock Pipit, and a **Northern Wheatear** on the saltings. **Red Kites** were often on view though, drifting over the pines, and of course we saw Marsh Harrier and Buzzard too. Lunch would be at nearby Wells North Point, and gulls were on the menu here with two lovely **Little Gulls** –

adult and second winter – among the throng of Black-heads. A single **Mediterranean Gull** was also picked out and the usual collection of Wigeon, Teal and Lapwing.



Barred Warbler – an unexpected bonus at Holkham

Titchwell would be our destination for the rest of the afternoon, and after a soaking on the way out to Island Hide, we were able to take cover there and enjoy **Golden Plovers**, **Ruff**, **Avocets**, **Black-tailed Godwit** and Dunlin on the freshmarsh. We then split with most of the group heading to Thornham Point with Ashley to check for Lapland Bunting, and some staying on the main reserve with Nick. The beach was littered with **Sanderling**, Turnstone and **Knot** and we had superb close views of all of them. Bar-tailed and Black-tailed Godwits were seen side by side with some fine **Grey Plovers**, and the rain even cleared to give a crisp, cold evening. We didn't find the Lapland, but saw three **Wheatears** on the way up to the point, and on the way back we had the sun behind us for more beautifully illuminated waders and gulls. Finally on the freshmarsh, an adult **Yellow-legged Gull** had dropped in to roost and a young **Peregrine** was terrorising everything before heading off over the reedbed. We ended a great day with a couple of thousand **Pink-footed Geese** in flight over the coastal stubble fields near Brancaster – lovely stuff!

SATURDAY 10TH OCTOBER – *Overcast and showery day in fresh westerly winds, 10C*

We headed East today to the Norfolk Broads, starting at Waxham for a check of the coastal scrub and for a look at the sea. One of the days highlights came as we pulled up near the church, as a stunning male **Black Redstart** was on the fence just by the parking spot. We had great views of it around the house on the corner, and it was certainly a while since we'd seen such a smart one in Norfolk! After this nice bonus, we wandered through to the dunes to scan the sea. Lots of Gannets were moving south, almost all of them juveniles, and on the water we had excellent views of two adult **Red-throated Divers** both still sporting a bit of red. To **Razorbill** drifted past close in with a Guillemot, and there were a few **Mediterranean Gulls** feeding off the reef. Our first Swallows of the weekend were also seen here, feeding along the leeward edge of the marram dunes. We check the Shangri-la garden and copse to the south along the coastal footpath, noting a Blackcap, Goldcrest and Sparrowhawk but it was quite exposed here and it seemed really quiet.



Black Redstart – a stunning little bonus at Waxham this morning

Next we made our way south along the coast road to Horsey and on towards Somerton, often a good area to check for Cranes. We saw a few Pink-footed Geese, and a fine **Great White Egret** which drifted in over the road and landed sentinel in one of the marshy fields. No Cranes though, so we continued on to Martham Ferry where we hoped to catch up with a long-staying **Glossy Ibis**. Thankfully the bird was very obliging, being very close to the footpath and easy to see in one of its favoured flooded fields. A single Black-tailed Godwit and Snipe were in the same field, too. Behind us, on Heigham Holmes, we saw two adult **Common Cranes** and watched them preening among cattle and Greylag Geese, quite clearly through the scope. A nice double bill before lunch!

A leisurely afternoon saw us cut across from Martham to Acle (we saw a large flock of Cranes distantly in the air, but they landed too far out of view to be worth chasing), and headed down to Buckenham Marshes. The light was wonderful here in between the frequent showers, and we enjoyed the throng of Wigeon and Teal present around the main scrape. An adult **Peregrine** was sitting out on the marsh, giving some really good views, and a Sparrowhawk posed briefly too – its fierce yellow eye striking through the scope! To complete a nice raptor hat-trick, a young **Hobby** then cruised across the marsh – surely the last one we will see this year! A good afternoon and we managed to dodge most of the showers too.



Glossy Ibis at Martham, 10th October

SUNDAY 11TH OCTOBER – *Sunny spells in fresh W winds, 10C*

A slower day to end the weekend but still managed to add a few migrants to what was a very respectable species total for the tour. We headed for Wells Woods, hoping the long staying Red-backed Shrike might still be about but also hoping for a few Scandinavian migrants dropping in, as a large movement of thrushes had taken place around first light, with flocks of **Redwings** piling through inland. Most of this passage had dried up by the time we hit the coast, but we still saw several flocks of Redwings numbering around 20-30 birds, plus a couple of **Fieldfare** and a few Song Thrushes. The birches around The Dell were fairly quiet, though the regular Goldfinch flock hosted several **Lesser Redpolls** and a **Brambling** which was wheezing away above us. A couple of Blackcaps were also seen and four **Crossbills** flew low south calling. After looking unsuccessfully for the presumably-departed shrike, we heard a soft tacking in the hedgerow by the main track west of The Dell and noticed a **Lesser Whitethroat** moving through the hawthorns. Not surprisingly, it was an 'Eastern' race bird probably of the *race blythi*, with a nice brown wash extending well up over the nape and onto the crown. It was fairly faithful to a small area of bushes, and we were able to get some pretty good views. A kingfisher whizzing through the bushes as a slightly bizarre sight for some of the group while looking for the whitethroat! Another 11 **Redpolls** flew west calling and then up around the drinking pool, more Redwings were dropping in. Coming back along the main track, we bumped into a **Redstart** too – it's been a really good autumn for this species here. More **Redpoll** and **Brambling** views on the way back wrapped up a decent morning, and **Ruff** and **Bar-tailed Godwit** were seen on Quarles grazing marsh with the Curlew flock.

Cley would be our final destination of the weekend, and after lunch we had a walk down East Bank. It was pretty breezy along here, and Bearded Tits remained heard but not seen. There were plenty of

wildfowl of course with **Pintail** among the large numbers of Wigeon and Teal on The Serpentine. Arnold's Marsh held really good numbers of waders, with around 100 Dunlin, several gorgeous fresh juv **Grey Plovers** and a few Knot. An adult **Peregrine**, initially seen in flight over the reedbed, had settled on a fence post at the back of the marsh keeping watch – a regular perch for it of late. The sea was tumultuous in the strong Northerly winds, and the breakers were crashing dramatically onto the shingle with plumes of spray flying up into the air. Large numbers of **Gannets** were milling about offshore, often passing really close in to the beach in mixed age groups. With several good sized flocks of Starlings whistling through westward (they always mark something of a turning point in the autumn!) as we wandered back down the bank, it was time to head back to base at the end of a great weekend.

SYSTEMATIC LIST - BIRDS

1. Red-throated Diver
2. Gannet
3. Little Grebe
4. Great Cormorant
5. Grey Heron
6. Little Egret
7. Cattle Egret
8. Great White Egret
9. Glossy Ibis
10. Mute Swan
11. Greylag Goose
12. Canada Goose
13. Egyptian Goose
14. Pink-footed Goose
15. Barnacle Goose
16. Brent Goose
17. Common Shelduck
18. Mallard
19. Common Teal
20. Gadwall
21. Northern Shoveler
22. Eurasian Wigeon
23. Pintail
24. Common Scoter
25. Tufted Duck
26. Common Pheasant
27. Red-legged Partridge
28. Grey Partridge
29. Common Kestrel
30. Marsh Harrier
31. Common Buzzard
32. Red Kite
33. Eurasian Sparrowhawk
34. Peregrine
35. Hobby
36. Common Moorhen
37. Common Coot

38. Common Crane
39. Pied Avocet
40. European Oystercatcher
41. Common Ringed Plover
42. Golden Plover
43. Grey Plover
44. Northern Lapwing
45. Common Redshank
46. Eurasian Curlew
47. Common Snipe
48. Black-tailed Godwit
49. Bar-tailed Godwit
50. Dunlin
51. Ruff
52. Knot
53. Sanderling
54. Turnstone
55. Red-necked Phalarope
56. Black-headed Gull
57. Common Gull
58. Herring Gull
59. Lesser Black-backed Gull
60. Great Black-backed Gull
61. Yellow-legged Gull
62. Mediterranean Gull
63. Little Gull
64. Guillemot
65. Razorbill
66. Woodpigeon
67. Collared Dove
68. Great-spotted Woodpecker
69. Green Woodpecker (H)
70. Common Kingfisher
71. Hoopoe
72. Skylark
73. Pied Wagtail
74. Meadow Pipit
75. Rock Pipit
76. Barn Swallow
77. Wren
78. European Robin
79. Common Redstart
80. Black Redstart
81. Common Stonechat
82. Wheatear
83. Dunnock
84. Common Blackbird
85. Song Thrush
86. Redwing
87. Fieldfare
88. Mistle Thrush

- 89. Cetti's Warbler (H)
- 90. Blackcap
- 91. Barred Warbler
- 92. Lesser Whitethroat (*blythi*)
- 93. Common Chiffchaff
- 94. Yellow-browed Warbler
- 95. Goldcrest
- 96. Blue Tit
- 97. Great Tit
- 98. Coal Tit
- 99. Long-tailed Tit
- 100. Bearded Tit
- 101. Treecreeper
- 102. Rook
- 103. Carrion Crow
- 104. Western Jackdaw
- 105. Common Magpie
- 106. Jay
- 107. Common Starling
- 108. Chaffinch
- 109. Goldfinch
- 110. Common Linnet
- 111. Greenfinch
- 112. Siskin
- 113. Redpoll
- 114. Brambling
- 115. Bullfinch
- 116. Common Crossbill
- 117. Reed Bunting