



ORIOLE BIRDING



TOUR REPORT **NORFOLK BUTTERFLIES & DRAGONFLIES** **13TH – 16TH JULY 2020**

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TUESDAY 14TH JULY - *Sunny spells and light Northerly breeze, 18C*

An excellent and varied day's wildlife watching in North Norfolk today saw us head first of all down to Cley for some birding, as the weather was quite cool and overcast. We made for the East Bank car park, and took a slow wander down towards Arnold's Marsh. A surprise came right out of the traps, as a **Norfolk Hawker** was patrolling the ditch on the east side of the bank by Don's Pool. We had expected this species to be largely over by now, and this was also our first ever seen at Cley.

Bearded Tits were really obliging today along the East Bank, and we had several really good views of juveniles, plus a great perched up view of a male. Reed Warblers and Reed Buntings were also in evidence, and several Sand Martins were passing west, no doubt coming from the cliff colonies at Weybourne. The Serpentine was interesting for waders, with one of the local Redshank broods now almost fully grown, picking among the feeding **Icelandic Black-tailed Godwits**. A **Common Sandpiper** was present too, and the odd Curlew. At Arnold's, we saw a few Sandwich Terns, with a fledged youngster, and four Dunlin were present – all adults still with black belly patches. We opted to wander up to the sea, and enjoyed more close views of fishing Sandwich Terns, plus a few Common Terns and a fly-by **Little Tern**. A summer **Golden Plover** called as it headed over high west, and over the sea a **Bar-tailed Godwit** was hurrying in the same direction. As we walked back along to the Serpentine, we stopped to check the waders again. A colour-ringed **Continental Black-tailed Godwit** (form *limosa*) was now visible, but it was with an even larger, longer billed and stocky bird, also an adult in advanced moult. It showed just the odd straw yellow barred summer flank feather and a few summery coverts but was otherwise also largely grey – surely a female *limosa* too, given its bulk and bill length. **Black-tailed Skimmer** was also seen along the walk, and a few butterflies were now on the wing – Gatekeeper, Meadow Brown and Small White.



Two Continental Black-tailed Godwits (left, and right, with an *islandica* in between), Cley East Bank 14th July

After a coffee, we walked along to the Visitor Centre, picking up Comma, Red Admiral and Peacock along the way. From the picnic area, we were able to very distantly scope an adult **Pectoral Sandpiper** on Pat's Pool – initially very hard to see among the cobbles of earth churned up by the cattle, but eventually when the sky clouded up and the heat haze dropped, the bird wandered into the open next to a female Ruff for comparison. We could at least see its size, elongated structure

and well marked pectoral band. A **Little-ringed Plover** flew over calling, and a Sparrowhawk whizzed by.



Silver-studded Blue, North Norfolk 14th July

Next up we decided to head onto the heaths, as there were now quite a few butterflies on the wing. Our target would be the **Silver-studded Blue**, but we knew we would see a good selection of other species too. The Viper's Bugloss was buzzing with both Small and **Essex Skippers**, and a good chance for close comparisons. We saw several **Small Copper** too, and eventually also out main quarry in good numbers among the heather – the delightful **Silver-studded Blue**. Both males and females were seen, all now fairly worn. A **Dartford Warbler** sang briefly but remained hidden, and an **Emperor** patrolled back and forth over the heather, often passing within inches of us. Lunch beckoned, in the shade of the car park – it was now quite warm, and more butterflies were in order!

Nearby, at a secluded spot in the woods on the Cromer-Holt ridge, we went to check a clearing where White-letter Hairstreak sometimes comes to nectar at the Bramble blossom. The flowering patch was alive with bees, and as soon as we arrived we saw both **White Admiral** and **Silver-washed Fritillary**. The latter gave us the most fantastic views, with at least six males and a female floating around us and landing on the flowers right on the end of our noses. We spent a good while photographing them and checking carefully for the hairstreak, but it wasn't to be seen. Green-veined White, Ringlet, Peacock and Brimstone were also seen, plus another excellent perched view of a **White Admiral** just as we were leaving.

More birding next, and a visit to the pools at North Point near Wells. Seven **Spoonbills** could be well observed, typically at the far east end of the pools – four juveniles could be picked out by their whiter plumage and shorter bills. The pools held a good selection of other waterbirds – 5 male **Ruff**,

a **Greenshank**, **Green Sandpiper**, 8 **Little-ringed Plovers**, c30 Black-tailed Godwits, a second-summer **Mediterranean Gull** and an impressive 118 Lapwing. A fledged group of three young **Marsh Harriers** were perched in an elder waiting to be fed – we later saw the adult male quartering nearby too. We rounded off a busy day with a quick stop at our office pond, to see the **Banded Demoiselles**. There were also a few Azure Damselflies but it was now too cool for any larger species. An exciting day!



Silver-washed Fritillary, female, 14th July

WEDNESDAY 15TH JULY – *Overcast with spells of light rain, 16C*

A largely damselfly-based day today with some key targets to go for, and we opted to start at Roydon Common in west Norfolk as the best of the weather was early on, with some bright spells lifting the temperature up. Indeed as we walked in on the track to Grimston Warren, quite a few butterflies were out basking – Meadow Brown, Comma, Ringlet, Gatekeeper, Green-veined White, Speckled Wood and Large Skipper. Once on the common, we spent some time checking around a series of pools where we enjoyed close views of our first Common Darters and **Keeled Skimmers**, and a Four-spotted Chaser. Damselflies were quite hard to come by though, and we couldn't find any Black Darters either. We crossed to the main heath, noting a family of Green Woodpeckers and a party of Stonechat along the way. Unfortunately, the weather began to deteriorate and we had light rain for the next hour or so as we explored the main pond. Several Ruddy Darters were newly emerged and we saw many **Emerald Damselflies** in the sedges around the water's edge. In common with our July visits in each of the last two years, we also found a **Willow Emerald Damselfly** here, our first of the year. No Black Darters though, so it was back to the van and time for another spot.

A 45 minute drive across country saw us arrive at the pingo trail car park at Thompson Common, in the Brecks. This site is always high on our agenda for damselflies, being home to both Emerald and Scarce Emerald, often flying together. After lunch, and a quick dash through the mosquito-infested

wood, we were soon watching a male **Scarce Emerald Damselfly** at close quarters. We ended up seeing quite a few, all males, and many Emeralds too. It was certainly instructive to see them cheek by jowl, and the cool weather at least meant they weren't too mobile! Back at the van, we decided the rain was probably set in for the day, and so turned our attention to birds for the rest of the afternoon. Heading to the pig fields we were delighted to find three **Stone Curlews** quite close to the road, and with no heat haze, were able to watch them scurrying about and preening through the scope – our first of the year, due to the lockdown!



Scarce Emerald Damselfly, male, Thompson Common 15th July

Lynford would be our final call of the day, and a flock of **Common Crossbills** came through the car park at treetop height – another species we had not seen much of in 2020, due to their recent scarcity. A heavy east coast June passage though had looked set to bring plenty of Breckland arrivals, and sure enough this appeared to be a good sized flock. The rain came down heavy though, and we lost them, so headed down to the paddock for a quick check. A **Spotted Flycatcher** was seen, but little else, so we made our way back up through the arboretum to try and relocate the **crossbills**. We found them eventually, down by the gravel pit, resting in the top of a fir tree after the passing of the rain, preening and no doubt getting themselves dried off. When they all took flight, we estimated 60 birds, though there could have been more. We found them again in a settled feeding area, and this time had prolonged scope views – it was great to see lots of streaky juveniles. Back to base then, after another productive day.

THURSDAY 16TH JULY – *Sunny spells then cool and overcast*

A frustrating day as we had saved the main butterfly site for today based on the weather forecast, which even up until this morning still said it would be warm and sunny! But we woke to overcast skies and a cool wind, and it was quickly apparent we would see nothing over at Foxley Wood. So instead we headed up to the North coast for a walk at Burnham Norton, which provided us with an excellent selection of birds. A **Great White Egret** was seen lumbering off over the marsh as we arrived and it or another was then seen from the main track, standing in the pool at the north-east corner of the marsh. We didn't see much else until we reached the seawall, and a **Whimbrel** flew south calling and we enjoyed the views across the saltmarsh to Scolt Head and beyond. On the main pools, we saw **Common Sandpiper**, a few summery looking Black-tailed Godwits, and four **Spoonbills** which flew around for us before settling in the open for scope views. A party of five fledged young Bearded Tits were hanging out at the edge of a big sedge tussock with a juv Sedge Warbler, so we had done really well for seeing this species on the trip. A **Bittern** made a flight over the reeds, and everyone managed to get on it as it headed west towards Deepdale marsh – we needed a Cattle Egret for the full set, but couldn't find one among any of the herds today! Retracing our route, another **Great White Egret** was seen in flight, and there were plenty of Reed Warblers and a Common Whitethroat.

Holkham next, and we wanted to do a circuit of the dunes and pines now the sun was warming things up through the thinning cloud. The best bugging was to be had on a bank of wildflowers near the Lookout, where we saw our first **Wall** of the year, and a lovely **Holly Blue**. The walk through the dunes was really quiet though, and we only saw Small Copper on the butterfly front – no Dark Green Fritillaries to be found. Near Washington Hide, we watched the brambles and saw another Holly Blue, then an alarm call caused us to turn round and to our amazement, a **Little Tern** was mobbing a Kestrel which came in and perched in the pines halfway along the ride! The tern must have been half a mile from its breeding area, so obviously felt the Kestrel spelt real danger! It bombed it a few times in the pine, then headed back to the beach! The walk back through the pines added little, and after lunch back at the drive it was time to move on.

Unfortunately, the weather had really mucked up our plans today. Having been forecast to be sunny, then actually turning out cool and cloudy, had forced us to the coast. Then it actually turned out warm after all and we probably could have gone inland. Now we did go inland, to Foxley Wood, the cloud had thickened again and a cool wind appeared – there was no way we were going to see any Purple Emperors! Sadly we had to cut our losses and head back to Fakenham, where a small marshy area entertained us with some damselfly-ing for the last hour. The site was really dry, but we still managed to dig out a male **Scarce Emerald Damselfly** among the sedges, which was great to see.

Large and Small Skippers, Comma, Green-veined White and several mature male Ruddy Darters were also seen, plus another **Banded Demoiselle**, to round off the trip.



Ruddy Darter, 16th July

SYSTEMATIC LIST - BIRDS

1. Little Grebe
2. Great Cormorant
3. Grey Heron
4. Little Egret
5. Great White Egret
6. Great Bittern
7. Eurasian Spoonbill
8. Mute Swan
9. Greylag Goose

10. Canada Goose
11. Egyptian Goose
12. Common Shelduck
13. Mallard
14. Common Teal
15. Gadwall
16. Northern Shoveler
17. Tufted Duck
18. Red-legged Partridge
19. Common Pheasant
20. Common Kestrel
21. Marsh Harrier
22. Common Buzzard
23. Red Kite
24. Eurasian Sparrowhawk
25. Common Moorhen
26. Common Coot
27. Stone Curlew
28. Pied Avocet
29. European Oystercatcher
30. Little-ringed Plover
31. Golden Plover
32. Northern Lapwing
33. Common Redshank
34. Common Greenshank
35. Eurasian Curlew
36. Whimbrel
37. Black-tailed Godwit
38. Bar-tailed Godwit
39. Dunlin
40. Ruff
41. Common Sandpiper
42. Green Sandpiper
43. Pectoral Sandpiper
44. Black-headed Gull
45. Herring Gull
46. Lesser Black-backed Gull
47. Great Black-backed Gull
48. Mediterranean Gull
49. Sandwich Tern
50. Common Tern
51. Little Tern
52. Woodpigeon
53. Collared Dove
54. Stock Dove
55. Green Woodpecker
56. Great-spotted Woodpecker
57. Common Swift
58. Skylark
59. Pied Wagtail
60. Barn Swallow

61. House Martin
62. Sand Martin
63. Wren
64. European Robin
65. Common Stonechat
66. Dunnock
67. Common Blackbird
68. Song Thrush
69. Sedge Warbler
70. Reed Warbler
71. Blackcap (H)
72. Common Chiffchaff
73. Common Whitethroat
74. Dartford Warbler (H)
75. Spotted Flycatcher
76. Blue Tit
77. Great Tit
78. Coal Tit
79. Marsh Tit
80. Bearded Tit
81. Rook
82. Carrion Crow
83. Western Jackdaw
84. Common Magpie
85. Jay (H)
86. Common Starling
87. House Sparrow
88. Chaffinch
89. Goldfinch
90. Common Linnet
91. Greenfinch
92. Siskin
93. Common Crossbill
94. Reed Bunting
95. Yellowhammer

Butterflies

1. Large White
2. Small White
3. Green-veined White
4. Brimstone
5. Wall
6. Meadow Brown
7. Ringlet
8. Gatekeeper
9. Speckled Wood
10. Comma
11. Peacock
12. Small Tortoiseshell
13. Red Admiral

14. White Admiral
15. Silver-washed Fritillary
16. Small Copper
17. Silver-studded Blue
18. Holly Blue
19. Small Skipper
20. Large Skipper
21. Essex Skipper

Odonata

1. Common Blue Damselfly
2. Azure Damselfly
3. Blue-tailed Damselfly
4. Emerald Damselfly
5. Scarce Emerald Damselfly
6. Willow Emerald Damselfly
7. Banded Demoiselle
8. Four-spotted Chaser
9. Black-tailed Skimmer
10. Keeled Skimmer
11. Common Darter
12. Ruddy Darter
13. Emperor
14. Norfolk Hawker