



TOUR REPORT NORFOLK SPRING MIGRATION 23rd - 29TH MAY 2021

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All pictures accompanying this report, taken by tour participant, Adrian Eastman

Monday 24[™] MAY

Gary collected the group for their base at Great Ryburgh with several of them having already started birding locally with Sparrowhawk, Treecreeper and Goldcrest amongst the birds seen. Gary had laid thoughts of a plan the day before, but a change in the weather had dictated a rethink.

Goshawk is always an outsider in May but with options of visiting a site just south of Swafham and a bright sunny morning now upon us, it seemed too good an opportunity to miss. Arriving at the site we went to disembark and Simon suddenly exclaimed he was watching a Stone Curlew in the ploughed field by the van! We then enjoyed great views of the bird in the centre of the field, where it stayed throughout the length of our visit in the company of Red-legged Partridges and Lapwings.



A surprise roadside Stone Curlew.

Skylarks sang and flew around us and two distant Woodlarks were heard singing too. A Pair of vocal Eurasian Curlews appeared, as did a Kestrel and a solitary Crossbill that flew over high calling. It wasn't long before the first Buzzards also appeared, with at least six noted in the area during our stay. Then our second piece of good fortune appeared in the form of a Goshawk, reasonably close and staying in view for everyone to see, eventually dropping into a dive and disappearing back into the woodland.

Our next stop was for Tree Sparrows, and again we met with success with at least three seen, plus the first of the days Red Kites. We then headed back to the coast making one more stop at a small section of woodland. A singing Yellowhammer greeted us here as we climbed out

the van, on show on top of a nearby tree, which was in contrast to the singing Garden Warbler that unfortunately remained tucked away hidden from view. A short walk resulted in three singing Tree Pipits and two Woodlark the latter two disturbed by some dog walkers and choosing to fortunately re land a short way away from us, allowing some fantastic views. With time ticking by we started our journey back to the coast, arriving at Holkham our next destination, in time for lunch.

After lunch we walked along the track heading west from the car park. At this point we were worried our luck had run out, with the clouds darkening and the first raindrops felt. We soldiered on regardless, noting singing Chiffchaff, Willow Warbler, Treecreeper and Goldcrest. As luck would have it the rain eased and eventually stopped. We enjoyed a successful afternoon seeing the Common Crane that had also been seen by the last Oriole Birding Group, plus several Great White Egrets and at least eight Spoonbills. A more unexpected species here was a Cattle Egret spotted by David as it flew past the hide we were in, a brief view but the orange tinge of the birds plumage was quite obvious. As we arrived back at the Van to find a confiding pair of Grey partridge in a nearby field plus a Black-tailed Godwit, both new additions to our list.



A rather smart and confiding Grey Partridge at Holkham NNR

We had just enough time left to visit one more site, a small wetland area outside Wells-next-the sea. Again fate took over, with Gary receiving a message to say a Temminck's Stint had just been found at the same site! We arrived at the site and a friend of Gary's quickly put him on the bird, which he in turn did for the group. The bird was fairly distant so we walked to another area to view it more closely, which we did, though unfortunately the bird had decided to now go to sleep! Another addition here was a couple of Little Ringed Plovers noted amongst the expected range of other species seen at the site.

We returned back to the Blue Boar and on arriving back in Great Ryburgh we realized how luck we had been, with the rain finally arriving. This resulted in a torrential downpour, which

included hail, and meant we had to spend 15 minutes sitting in the van waiting for it to ease enough for the group to get out!

Tuesday 25th May

A change of plan today and a return to the coast, with our first stop being Snettisham Coastal Park. We parked and walked into the country park, with the bushes offering some protection from the stiff breeze blowing. We didn't have to walk far before our hoped for target species, Turtle Dove, was heard and as luck would have it we quickly found the bird perched in full view on the edge of a large Hawthorn bush. It transpired this was to be the first of several good views were to have of a least two birds during our time there.



One of several Turtle Doves seen at Snettisham Coastal Park

We walked through the Park joining the sea wall to over look nearby Ken Hill Marshes. The marshes seemingly contained lots of birds, but were predominantly the expected breeding gulls, geese and commoner waders. We walked back along the path gaining views of Whitethroat and Sedge Warbler on the coastal park side, plus the added bonus of a showy Lesser Whitethroat, though a reeling Grasshopper Warbler wasn't so cooperative! Our next stop was the nearby RSPB reserve where we added a flock of Brent Geese, breeding Mediterranean Gulls and a nesting Ringed Plover to our list for the day.

Heading back along the coast we detour slightly to view the Fulmars at their nesting site on Hunstanton Cliffs before arriving at our lunch spot, Holme Nature reserve. We had lunch then spent half hour (dodging the rain, again!) in the NOA hide overlooking the Broadwater. New birds for the trip were a small group of five Wigeon and several Pochard, with a noteworthy flock of nine presumably Tundra Ringed Plovers alighting briefly before continuing their journey and heading off west.

A walk along the coastal path followed next with a nice view of one of the three calling Cuckoos, a pair of Stonechat and confiding Meadow Pipits. A scan along the distant shoreline

revealed a handful of waders with Turnstone, Sanderling and Grey Plover, all welcome additions.

Returning to the van we made our way towards our final destination Titchwell RSPB reserve, taking a slightly deviated route in through the local farmland. This paid off as a singing Corn Bunting burst into song just as we drove past. On stopping and climbing out to view, it was apparent there were at least two singing birds present.

Titchwell next as planned, and a walk out to view the fresh marsh from the footpath. The fresh marsh appeared relatively quiet with two Common Terns, three Turnstone and a few Avocets amongst the more interesting birds present. The reed bed nearby though was a bit more productive with a singing Cetti's Warbler giving tantalizing glimpses in a nearby Willow and a well-hidden booming Bittern. Marsh Harriers were constantly in view and it is easy to forget how healthy the population in North Norfolk is. Hirundines and Swifts were active too and on watch these it became apparent the channel we were looking along was a route the Bearded Tits were taking. The thoughts were they were probably feeding young, as every minute or two a bird would appear and we literally just had to just lift up our binoculars and be a bit patient to see one fly into view.

Wednesday 26th May

Gary collected the group as usual and with the sun out, things were looking good! Our destination today was the east coast and the Norfolk Broads, though to be exact Hickling Broad. An uneventful journey saw us arriving in good time to book in and pay for a planned boat trip out on to the Broad. Several Willow Warblers were singing in the trees surrounding the car park though a quick look in at the scrape in front of the hide en-route to the boat was disappointingly quiet, though we did hear a squealing Water Rail.

Our guide John fitted us out with life jackets, we boarded the boat and after a short safety talk and we were soon heading out across the broad.

The journey across the Broad was quiet, several Common Terns, Marsh Harriers and a confiding Great Crested Grebe sat on her nest.



Great Crested Grebe on it's nest during our boat trip.

We docked at the mooring on the Weavers Way heading for the 60' tower that nestles in amongst the largely Oak wood there. As we approached the tower calling Cranes could be heard, and we were hopefully they'd be viewable from the top. Unfortunately they weren't, but almost in consolation a Bittern suddenly appeared, flying right across in front of us! We enjoyed incredible views of it as it flew past and was watched flying over the Broad towards the visitor centre, finally dropping into the reeds near there. We made our way back to the boat and then on to the centre noting a similar range of species as before, plus a briefly perched Bearded Tit.

The weather was again set to deteriorate, so a walk along one of the routes from the visitor centre was deemed a good move before lunch. We didn't stay dry for too long though but did manage a nice spread of species. Largely in and around the reed bed and flashes along the route we took which included the expected Wildfowl and commoner Waders, plus two Common Cranes, Avocet and Wigeon. Hundreds and Swifts and Hirundines flew over the area feeding and scanning through them revealed a small percentage were in fact Sand Martins, a new bird for the trip. Lunch followed before we headed off to our next destination Potter Heigham Marshes. With drove along the track to park, aware the area was very wet! After several attempts to park without getting stuck, we settled for a more cautious spot, choosing to walk a bit further instead. The rain was still falling but had eased to a degree, eventually stopping as we circumnavigated the site. Water levels on the site were very high which again was reflected in the birds present and the only real birds of note were a Spoonbill, a pair of Teal and a perched Stock dove, the latter two new birds for the trip. Our last stop of the day saw us taking a slightly deviated route back towards Norwich and heading to Strumpshaw Fen RSPB reserve.

With a limited amount of time available to us, we decided to do a woodland walk. Although initially quiet we hit a purple patch, with a male Great Spotted Woodpecker, almost certainly two Spotted Flycatchers and a family of showy Treecreepers performing well for us. We

returned to the Visitors Centre finishing our visit with views of Marsh Tit on the feeders there.

Thursday 27th May

A return visit to the Brecks was the plan for us today and having made a short soiree at the beginning of the week, the pressure was off to a degree. Our first stop was Lynford Arboretum and Lady Luck was smiling on us again, with a singing Firecrest heard as soon as we opened the doors of the van. We walked to the area it was singing in and manage to pick it out in the canopy above us, with us all eventually gaining good views. We then did a circular walk through the Arboretum visiting the now largely reed covered small lake near the paddocks.

Two more singing Firecrests were encountered plus a several Goldcrests, and the feeders by the walled Garden gave us nice views of Nuthatch and Coal Tit. At the lake a vocal pair of Little Grebes were finally tracked down, initially proving somewhat of a challenge as they appeared and disappeared in amongst the reeds.

A short drive took us to our next destination and again as we disembarked we were off to good start, with a singing Woodlark drifting into view above the tree canopy and two Garden Warblers chasing each other in the top of some nearby trees. Our walk here started with some typical Breckland clear fell habitat which produced two singing Tree Pipit, Woodlark and Willow Warbler, followed by a river walk where we saw Grey Wagtail, Great Spotted Woodpecker, Stock Dove, flyover Siskins and the highlight for many, a pair of Treecreepers, watched bringing food to feed their young, their nest well hidden behind a piece of tree bark.



Treecreeper just about to disappear into its well hidden nest, on our walk along the Little Ouse.

With lunchtime approaching we headed next to Lakenheath RSPB reserve. After eating lunch we headed out to make a circular walk through the reserve itself, then back along the riverbank. It wasn't long before our first Hobby appeared, hawking for insects above us, a Cuckoo called continually in the one of the Poplar plantations which was seen later, with a female heard making its 'bubbling' call too. We arrived at the furthest part of the reserve, noting a calling Water Rail as we walked along, then we stopping at the viewpoint looking out over the extensive reed-bed. Traditionally the reserve is a collection point for Hobbies before they disperse out into the wider area, we thought we had missed them but it was soon apparent large numbers were still present with a quick count revealing almost fifty birds hawking high above the reed-bed.



One of fifty Hobbies present at Lakenheath Fen

A kingfisher was a bonus here too, hovering over the further end of the channel that stretched out in front of us. We walked back along the river watching an actively feeding Common Tern and noting several Dragonflies and Butterflies, Hairy Hawker, Four-spotted Chaser, Brimstone, Peacock and a less expected Painted Lady.

A small flood area revealed our next hoped for bird, a drake Garganey, clearly showing signs of immaturity, seemingly a second calendar year bird, but smart all the same! Our last destination today was a small scrubland reserve that was only a short drive away. We parked and walked along the tarmacked track that borders the site, noting singing Garden and Willow Warblers, Blackcap, Whitethroat and Yellowhammer. Brief snatches of a Nightingale song were soon heard, though this was to a degree to be the pattern of the remainder of our trip. The bird at times sang very close to us and we did manage between us several brief glimpses of it. We were running out of time so we returned back up the track as a second bird started singing ahead of us. We spent a frustrating five minutes trying to see it with mixed success, and we were literally just about to leave when the bird jumped out in full view! It then proceeded to sing, clearly enjoying the sunshine, with it remaining in full view and song for the next ten minutes, totally unexpected and an amazing conclusion to a successful day!



The incredibly showy, and vocal! Nightingale.

Friday 28th May

The coast was our destination again today, our first stop Burnham Overy Dunes. We walked down the entrance track with Adrian noting a brief Green Woodpecker, a species we'd been hearing but had struggled to see.

The flooded fields either side of the track held the expected commoner waders such as Redshank, Lapwing and Avocet, many with young, which was pleasing to see and the hedgerows either side of us gave us opportunities to view Sedge Warblers and Whitethroat well again. We walked onto the raised sea wall path noting at least two Great White Egrets and several Little Terns, our first, flying into the adjacent harbour creek. We arrived at the dunes noting the expected Meadow Pipits and Stonechats and walked out towards the western end and at this point things got a tad more exciting! A series of messages had been coming through on Gary's phone, documenting the progress of a Bee-eater moving west along the coast. The bird had not been reported since passing Cley but we were aware it was heading towards us. Suddenly the distinct soft thrilling call of a Bee-eater was heard above us, though clearly already having flown past us. A frantic second or two of searching revealed the bird flying over nearby Gun Hill, though unfortunately only Gary and Simon managed to see it. Viewing out to sea and along the beach here, gave us more views of Little Terns, plus distant Sanderlings on the shoreline and an even more distant flock of Common Scoters out at sea. The walk back saw us stopping again at the path side pool, nestled in the large reed bed. As we scanned David picked up a 2CY Little Gull, which was dip feeding on the western side of the pool, which was another very welcome addition.

With the weather having improved insects had started to appear, with a pristine Brown Argus noted, plus out first Damselfly, an Azure, also seen.

Our next stop, Kelling Heath, where unsurprisingly lunch was the first priority! After lunch we went out onto the Heath, in search of primarily Dartford Warbler, the site being the only

area for them in Norfolk. The known association between Stonechat and Dartford Warbler saw us searching for the former first, and it wasn't long before a family party was found. We stopped to watch them and true to form our first Dartford Warblers appeared flying across in front of us and disappearing into a nearby area of gorse scrub. A short wait soon had the male returning to the top of what was to transpire to be, its favourite song post, where it gave a burst of song and enabled everyone to see it.



The distinct profile of a singing male Dartford Warbler

Several more views were gained during our stay and the supporting cast included a perched male Bullfinch and again on the insect front Green Hairstreak and Small Tortoiseshell Butterflies.

We returned to the van and moved onto our next stop, the iconic East Bank at Cley. A cooler walk than we were expecting and with skies darkening we hoped we'd stay dry, we fortunately did, and managed to see a few new species too.

A singing Yellow wagtail was impressive to see, picked out eventually by Jenny as it wandered around in the long grass. Scanning the adjacent wetland areas, wading birds seemed thin on the ground though eventually a small flock of four Dunlin were found in the company of two stunningly plumaged Turnstones.

A male Wheatear was our next new bird, quickly followed by several Sandwich Terns. We had just enough time for one more stop, choosing to pop in again at North Point. The expected selection of birds was all we could manage, and with evening excursion planned later we headed back to our base at the Blue Boar.

After dinner we headed off to an area of Norfolk Heath, to be met on arrival by our first roding Woodcock. A short walk followed down onto the main track and viewing area, with a calling Cuckoo and two Stonechats keeping us amused.

We stood waiting and listening and it wasn't long before the first bird was heard. What followed then was the most amazing Nightjar display and activity we could have hoped for, with at least six birds watched continuously, largely in the half-light, for the next 20 minutes. Two males were watched clearly vying for the attention of a female and two more birds were watched chasing a Kestrel, with one of our the group, who will remain nameless, so taken back all he could do was repeatedly mutter some colourful expletives! Woodcocks also put in an appearance, flying over calling as we watched. One more surprise was in store for the group, as a roadside stop on the way back produced a calling Corncrake! A returning released bird or an offspring from last year's bird at the same site, a questionable tick, but great to hear all the same!

Saturday 29th May

Our last morning and a relaxed slightly shorter day planned at Frampton Marsh RSPB reserve. We made good time arriving just before ten o'clock and after checking in at the Visitor Centre we took a route that circumnavigates the reserve. One of the most impress parts of our visit to the site was the number of birds present, especially wading birds, with young Avocets especially seemingly everywhere we looked. Four pairs of Little Ringed Plovers were noted and Knot, Bar-tailed Godwit, Ringed Plover and Dunlin were also recorded. Two 2CY Little Gulls were found too and other species of note recorded included around thirty Brent Geese, two Tree Sparrow, Yellow Wagtail, Marsh Harrier and Spoonbill. A pair of Black-necked Grebe were also present at the site, but search as we might we just couldn't find them. We concentrated a large part of our efforts on the area they were reported in with no success. With the walk round nearly complete, we decided to check the birds in front of the 360 hide before lunch. This proved to be a good move as we discovered one of the Black-necked Grebes tucked away amongst some dead vegetation in the centre of the lagoon.

Lunch followed, after which we made our back towards Norfolk, saying goodbye to Adrian at Kings Lynn train station and then us all going our separate ways on our arrival back at the Blue Boar.

Species List

Brent Goose Branta bernicla
Canada Goose Branta canadensis

Greylag Goose Anser anser
Mute Swan Cygnus olor

Egyptian Goose
Shelduck
Tadorna tadorna
Garganey
Spatula querquedula
Shoveler
Spatula clypeata
Gadwall
Mareca strepera
Wigeon
Mallard
Anas platyrhynchos

Teal Anas crecca
Pochard Aythya ferina
Tufted Duck Aythya fuligula
Common Scoter Melanitta nigra
Red-legged Partridge Alectoris rufa
Grey Partridge Perdix perdix
Corncrake Crex crex

Pheasant Phasianus colchicus Fulmar Fulmarus glacialis Little Grebe Tachybaptus ruficollis Black-necked Grebe Black-necked Grebe **Great Crested Grebe** Podiceps cristatus Spoonbill Platalea leucorodia Bittern Botaurus stellaris Grey Heron Ardea cinerea Cattle Egret Bubuleus ibis **Great White Egret** Ardea alba Little Egret Egretta garzetta Cormorant Phalacrocorax carbo Sparrowhawk Accipiter nisus Goshawk Accipiter gentilis Marsh Harrier Circus aeruginosus Milvus milvus Red Kite Buzzard Buteo buteo Water Rail (H) Rallus aquaticus Moorhen Gallinula chloropus

Coot Fulica atra
Crane Grus grus

Stone-curlew Burhinus oedicnemus Oystercatcher Haematopus ostralegus Avocet Recurvirostra avosetta Lapwing Vanellus vanellus **Grey Plover** Pluvialis squatarola Ringed Plover Charadrius hiaticula Little Ringed Plover Charadrius dubius Curlew Numenius arquata Bar-tailed Godwit Limosa lapponica Black-tailed Godwit Limosa limosa Turnstone Arenaria interpres Knot Calidris canutus Temminck's Stint Calidris temminckii

Sanderling
Dunlin
Woodcock
Redshank
Calidris alba
Calidris alpina
Scolopax rusticola
Tringa totanus

Black-headed Gull Chroicocephalus ridibundus
Mediterranean Gull Larus melanocephalus

Common Gull Larus canus

Little Gull *Hydrocoloeus minutus*

Great Black-backed Gull

Herring Gull

Larus marinus

Larus argentatus

Larus fuscus

Sandwich Tern Thalasseus sandvicensis

Little Tern

Common Tern

Rock Dove (Feral Pigeon)

Sterna hirundo

Columba livia

Columba oenas

Woodpigeon Columba palumbus
Turtle Dove Streptopelia turtur
Collared Dove Streptopelia decaocto
Cuckoo Cuculus canorus

Nightjar Caprimulgus europaeus

Swift Apus apus
Kingfisher Alcedo atthis
European Bee-eater Merops apiaster
Great Spotted Woodpecker Dendrocopos major

Green Woodpecker

Kestrel

Hobby

Falco subbuteo

Garrulus glandarius

Magpie Pica pica

JackdawColoeus monedulaRookCorvus frugilegusCarrion CrowCorvus coroneCoal TitPeriparus aterMarsh TitPoecile palustrisBlue TitCyanistes caeruleus

Great Tit Parus major

Bearded Tit Panurus biarmicus
Long-tailed Tit Aegithalos caudatus
Woodlark Lullula arborea
Skylark Alauda arvensis
Swallow Hirundo rustica
Sand Martin Riparia riparia
House Martin Delichon urbicum

Cetti's Warbler (H) Cettia cetti

Willow Warbler Phylloscopus trochilus
Chiffchaff Phylloscopus collybita

Sedge Warbler Acrocephalus schoenobaenus
Reed Warbler Acrocephalus scirpaceus

Grasshopper Warbler (H) Locustella naevia Blackcap Sylvia atricapilla Garden Warbler Sylvia borin Lesser Whitethroat Sylvia curruca Whitethroat Sylvia communis **Dartford Warbler** Sylvia undata **Firecrest** Regulus ignicapilla Regulus regulus Goldcrest

Wren Troglodytes troglodytes

Nuthatch Sitta europaea Treecreeper Certhia familiaris Starling Sturnus vulgaris Blackbird Turdus merula Song Thrush Turdus philomelos Mistle Thrush Turdus viscivorus Spotted Flycatcher Muscicapa striata Robin Erithacus rubecula Stonechat Saxicola rubicola Wheatear Oenanthe oenanthe House Sparrow Passer domesticus Tree Sparrow Passer montanus Dunnock Prunella modularis Yellow Wagtail Motacilla flava Grey Wagtail Motacilla cinerea Pied Wagtail Motacilla alba Meadow Pipit Anthus pratensis Tree Pipit Anthus trivialis Chaffinch Fringilla coelebs Bullfinch Pyrrhula pyrrhula Greenfinch Chloris chloris Linnet Linaria cannabina Lesser Redpoll Acanthis cabaret Crossbill (H) Loxia curvirostra Goldfinch Carduelis carduelis Siskin Spinus spinus Corn Bunting Emberiza calandra Yellowhammer Emberiza citrinella **Reed Bunting** Emberiza schoeniclus

Chinese Water Deer
Reeve's Muntjac
Grey Squirrel
Brown Hare
Rabbit

Hydropotes inermis
Muntiacus reevesi
Sciurus carolinensis
Lepus europaeus
Oryctolagus cuniculus

Orange Tip Anthocharis cardamines

Small White Pieris rapae
Painted Lady Cynthia cardui
Peacock Inachis io

Brimstone

Small Tortoiseshell Aglais urticae
Green Hairstreak Callophrys rubi

Small Heath Coenonympha pamphilus

Cinnabar Moth Tyria jacobaeae

Azure damselfly Coenagrion puella