



ORIOLE BIRDING



TOUR REPORT **NORFOLK LATE AUTUMN** **26TH – 31ST OCTOBER 2020**

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TUESDAY 27TH OCTOBER - *Rain and strong Southerly winds, 9C*

A wet and miserable day to kick off our week of Norfolk birding, but we managed to find a few bits and pieces despite the weather. We kicked off down at Weybourne, where a Dusky Warbler had been around for the past fortnight. We had a look in the birds favoured willows, but didn't hear anything calling and with only really one or two openings where it was possible to see into the bush, there was little prospect of getting everyone onto it anyway. So we turned our attention to the sea, which was of course flat calm given the fact the strong wind was directly offshore. This made good conditions for picking out birds on the water, and we enjoyed close ups of **Red-throated Diver** in particular, plus more distantly three female **Common Scoters**. Gannets were also noted passing further out, Turnstone and Sanderling were along the beach and best of all, a lovely first-winter **Caspian Gull** joined a young Great Black-backed on the water just offshore. The bird had a beautiful clean white head and breast, spotted neck shawl and in flight, white tail base and striking terminal band. This was a new bird for most of the group, so a nice start.

Sheringham next and to Beeston Common, where we hoped to catch up with one of the **Yellow-browed Warblers** recently present. A nice bonus as we made our way across the rather muddy common, was a party of twenty or so **Lesser Redpolls** which perched right in the open for us. At the far east side of the common, we found the **Yellow-browed Warbler**, which was occasionally vocal but largely very elusive. We managed one good view of it in the treetops, and several sketchy views! There were plenty of other small birds here too – Goldcrest and a nice **Marsh Tit** being the highlights. The rain was tightening its grip on the day already, and after a short comfort stop at Cley, we continued west to Holkham.



Ring-necked Duck at Holkham Lake with Tufted Duck behind, 27th October

Pink-footed Geese were seen in large numbers heading inland to feed, and we tried to locate the flock on the ground but they were in an area that we were not able to view. A huge flock, perhaps over 10,000 birds, could be seen distantly through several hedgerows feeding in maize stubble – a staple for them in these early weeks of their winter stay. Reaching Holkham, we parked at the village car park and had lunch, before heading towards the lake. We saw and heard one very brief **Hawfinch** in the yew by the garden near the main gate, but in the poor weather the rest of the flock remained elusive. Several **Redwings** were feeding on the berries, and we saw Goldcrest and **Nuthatch** nicely too. Down at the lake, we found the *Aythya* duck flock at the south end by the island, and managed to seek enough shelter behind the large oak trees to scope the flock which was actually quite close in. The drake **Ring-necked Duck** showed really well, and allowed some great comparisons with the Tufted Ducks nearby. Gadwall and Pochard were also seen in the increasingly grim conditions. Back at the main gate, we looked again, unsuccessfully, for the Hawfinches – one for another day. A **Great White Egret** rounded off our day, on the pools at North Point as dusk rapidly closed in.

WEDNESDAY 28TH OCTOBER – *Sunny spells and strong S winds, 9C*

A much better day of weather and birds today, as we headed up to Burnham Overy to start off with a walk out along the seawall. A roadside stop on the way gave us brilliant views of a covey of **Grey Partridges**, which skulked into a sunny hedge bottom but allowed close approach in the van so we could photograph them in a sunny patch beneath the bushes. Reaching overy, we walked along the rather windswept seawall but saw some good birds along the way. The light was fantastic for watching **Dark-bellied Brent Geese**, **Grey Plovers**, Dunlin and **Knot** in the harbour, and a fine adult male **Marsh Harrier** which cruised by. At the first reedbed, we could hear **Bearded Tits** ‘pinging’ and were greeted by a lovely male perched up on the tops of the reeds. Five then towered up into the sky, their tiny wings whirring as they battled upwards against the seemingly insurmountable wind. Eventually, at the second attempt, they decided to push on and we lost them as tiny dots way above us – fantastic to see! We then watched two Rock Pipits along the edge of the channel, and then counted 78 **Barnacle Geese** on the grazing marsh with Pink-feet. We had a good scan round for the recent Rough-legged Buzzard but couldn’t find it – several Red Kites and Marsh Harriers providing some compensation.



Marsh Harrier at Burnham Overy

Holkham next and we parked down at Lady Anne's Drive where large numbers of **Pink-footed Geese**, probably many thousands, were milling around on the marshes. Some were close to the drive and provided some really nice views in the sunshine. Four **Crossbills** flew south calling up by The Lookout, before we headed west along the path through the meads. This was very quiet – a few Goldcrests and tits were seen along the walk but it was too windy for much else. On the freshmarsh, we enjoyed the amazing sight of no fewer than eighteen **Cattle Egrets** together, out from Washington Hide – often settling on the backs of the cows. A **Great White Egret** lumbered by – but we hadn't seen a Little Egret yet! A sign of the times! A young **Peregrine** also circled over us giving good views as we watched a tit flock in the Holm Oaks at Meals House. Back at the drive, we enjoyed more spectacular flights of Pinks over lunch.



Cattle Egret taking a ride, Holkham Freshmarsh

Our original plan was to head into the bay after lunch, but news of a **Lesser Yellowlegs** at Cley showing well by the coast road had us switching things up and driving east. The sun came out as we arrived and we were treated to quite extraordinary views of this trans-Atlantic straggler, striding around in a small puddle of water in the grass close to the path to the village. Up Beach Road, we capitalised on the fantastic light to watch **Brent Geese** up close, with two families of three and two goslings allowing really close approach. Several hundred were in the Eye Field, and the light was just stunning here – especially as a flock of **Golden Plovers** were resting with them. A really lovely way to wind up the afternoon, but we had one more treat in store.

Along at Stiffkey Greenway, the weather held out and we were able to spend an hour scanning the saltmarsh up to dusk. Two ringtail **Hen Harriers** were seen, one showing quite well, and a **Barn Owl** cruised right past us at close range. The highlight though, was the amazing spectacle of perhaps 10,000 **Pink-footed Geese** lighting to roost on the binks off Wells East Hills, an endless stream of birds heading out over the marsh and 'whiffling' down onto the sandbars for the night. Another **Barn Owl** on the way home capped off a great day.



Lesser Yellowlegs – ‘showing well’ at Cley

THURSDAY 29TH OCTOBER – *Rain all day, fresh S winds, 10C*

A grim day of weather, but we kept plugging away! It was already raining by the time we reached our first stop of the day at Thornham Harbour, and it would continue to do so for the rest of the day. Nevertheless, our first target fell surprisingly easily, as six **Twite** flew in and landed in the edge of the saltmarsh creek as soon as we arrived. We had great views of them feeding among the Sea Aster, and taking grit on the road in front of us. One of the birds was colour ringed from the project at Dove Holes in Derbyshire, and is a female which has bred at that site every year and wintered at Thornham since 2016 at least. We were even able to look up photos of her on the breeding grounds thanks to the excellent Twitter feed of Jamie Dunning who runs the project.

Titchwell next, and with an awful lot of water around it was mainly Teal and Gadwall on the freshmarsh and nothing else. Even the tidal pool was quiet today, with only a single Ringed Plover of note. The beach was better with Bar-tailed Godwits, Knot and Sanderling plus a single **Eider** and a couple of Great Crested Grebes – but for late October, pretty poor! We cut our losses, and marched back into the driving rain to get warm with a brew before switching things up and driving south for an hour into the Brecks – at least a chance to get warm and dry.

Stone Curlews would be our main target here, as the last stragglers remain before departing for their wintering grounds. We searched their favoured gathering area hard but couldn't find anything at all, and it was only as we were about to give up that we found them standing right out in the open in an old onion field! Seven **Stone Curlews** were visible, and we had fantastic scope views through a

gap in the hedge. We even forgot about the driving rain for the time we were enjoying such good views of these 'Norfolk Plovers'.



Twite at Thornham Harbour – ringed at Dove Holes, Derbys, in 2016

Lynford rounded off a soggy day, and we had a walk down through the arboretum to check the paddocks area. A **Marsh Tit** was visiting one of the feeders by the bridge, which everyone enjoyed, and 11 **Crossbills** flew over us calling. We followed them as they headed back towards the arboretum, but didn't see exactly where they landed and weren't able to relocate them. As we wandered back up towards the car park, a flock of 80 **Brambling** flew over us calling – the biggest flock we've seen so far this back end. We couldn't dig anything else out though, and so turned tail for home a bit earlier than usual.

FRIDAY 30TH OCTOBER – *Overcast day with some light rain and fresh W winds, 15C*

A considerably milder day today behind the passage of yesterdays weather front, and we had a productive day exploring the Broads region. Buckenham Marshes was first stop, and despite the drizzle again, and enjoyed seeing the big numbers of Wigeon and Teal, and scattering of other ducks. An adult male **Peregrine** looked smart perched typically on one of the gates on the marsh, and a Sparrowhawk flopped in flushing the wildfowl before landing on the ground in full view. An assortment of feral geese were also on the marsh, plus plenty of Lapwing and a few Golden Plover. Cantley next, and after exploring down beyond the level crossing and seeing only Pink-footed Geese,

we had more luck from the top path finding nineteen **Russian White-fronted Geese**, including several goslings. Another adult Peregrine zoomed in and landed in the dead trees at the back, too.

Cranes would be next on our agenda, and after exploring the Clippesby to Oby area unsuccessfully, we headed through Martham and picked up the coast road through Horsey. A **Great White Egret** was seen near Horsey mill, but it was otherwise pretty quiet along this stretch. Reaching Waxham though, we found twelve adult **Common Cranes** in the fields opposite the tythe barn, and enjoyed some brilliant scope views of them. It was super busy by Shangri-la, with half-term holidayers heading for the beach, but we squeezed in and had lunch there before wandering up to the dunes to scan the sea. Several Gannets were moving offshore, and we also noted Guillemot and Red-throated Diver, but the highlight was a juv **Long-tailed Duck** which flew in and landed close inshore, inside the breakwater. A really nice bonus!



Long-tailed Duck – great views of a juv at Waxham

From here we decided to head back up to the north coast and have a quick look along the East bank at Cley which we had not done previously. Large numbers of Wigeon, Teal and Shoveler were on Pope's Marsh, and on the pool west of the top end of the bank, a long staying female **Greater Scaup** was still present and giving good views. On Arnold's Marsh, a near adult (probably 4cy) **Caspian Gull** was present – an extensive white 10th primary, pale pinkish-yellow legs, slightly darker (than Herring) mantle and dark beady eye all contributing to the ID. It had a fairly slender, greenish-yellow bill with just a small dark subterminal mark giving away its not-quite-adult age. Many Dunlin, the odd Grey Plover and two Black-tailed Godwits were also seen here. We ended the day along at Wells North

Point, and in the fading light we notched a **Green Sandpiper** before a fantastic roost flight of **Pink-footed Geese** came over us on their way to the sandbanks, and a **Great White Egret** lumbered off against the sunset – brilliant!



Common Cranes at Waxham

SATURDAY 31ST OCTOBER – *Fresh SW wind, sunny spells then heavy rain. 15C*

Half a days birding today was planned for ‘mopping up’ on a few missed species for the tour list. We had planned to head for Holkham, but the strong winds had closed the park and Lady Anne’s Drive which meant we had to park at Wells Pinewoods end and head out to the beach from there. We wanted to check the birches first, where we had good views of a single **Fieldfare** that flushed off the path, and then Quarles Marsh which was full of wildfowl and waders. **Ruff** was perhaps surprisingly new for the week, and we also added **Pintail** and **Greenshank**. Lots of Black-tailed Godwits were feeding on the pasture, and a single Bar-tailed Godwit was among Curlews on the water. The beach was a little windswept, and already starting to get busy – several Brents were along the channel, and three **Red-breasted Mergansers** were another list addition offshore. An adult **Mediterranean Gull** showed well, flying in and landing on the beach where it allowed us to get some good scope views.

Before the rain arrived, we were keen to head to an area where we knew the Pink-feet had been feeding for the last few days, in a harvested maize field. We arrived to find local birder and wildlife artist James McCallum parked in the field gateway and we joined him to scan the flock which was gingerly edging towards us through the maize, with another large number resting in the cereal field beyond. More birds were dropping in to feed all the time and it was brilliant to watch them arriving. Adult and juv **White-fronted Geese** were seen, and a great opportunity to compare the plumages and practice picking them out of the throng. Three **Barnacle Geese** were in the back field too, but the rain came on to curtail our goose-watch and saw us heading back to base for lunch and farewells. Still, a super way to end and great to see the flock on the deck having watched them go to roost on a few evenings this week.

#	Common Name	Scientific name	26	27	28	29	30	31	
1	Brent Goose	<i>Branta bernicla</i>			■	■		■	
2	Canada Goose	<i>Branta canadensis</i>				■	■		
3	Barnacle Goose	<i>Branta leucopsis</i>			■			■	
4	Greylag Goose	<i>Anser anser</i>		■	■	■	■	■	
5	Pink-footed Goose	<i>Anser brachyrhynchus</i>		■	■		■	■	
6	Mute Swan	<i>Cygnus olor</i>		■	■		■		
7	Egyptian Goose	<i>Alopochen aegyptiaca</i>			■	■	■	■	
8	Shelduck	<i>Tadorna tadorna</i>			■	■	■		
9	Garganey	<i>Spatula querquedula</i>							
10	Shoveler	<i>Spatula clypeata</i>			■	■	■	■	
11	Gadwall	<i>Mareca strepera</i>		■	■	■	■	■	
12	Wigeon	<i>Mareca penelope</i>		■	■	■	■	■	
13	Mallard	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>		■	■	■	■	■	
14	Pintail	<i>Anas acuta</i>						■	
15	Teal	<i>Anas crecca</i>		■	■	■	■	■	
16	Pochard	<i>Aythya ferina</i>		■					
17	Tufted Duck	<i>Aythya fuligula</i>		■					
18	Eider	<i>Somateria mollissima</i>				■			
19	Velvet Scoter	<i>Melanitta fusca</i>							
20	Common Scoter	<i>Melanitta nigra</i>		■				■	
21	Goldeneye	<i>Bucephala clangula</i>							
22	Red-breasted Merganser	<i>Mergus serrator</i>						■	
23	Red-legged Partridge	<i>Alectoris rufa</i>				■	■		
24	Grey Partridge	<i>Perdix perdix</i>			■				
25	Pheasant	<i>Phasianus colchicus</i>		■	■	■	■	■	
26	Red-throated Diver	<i>Gavia stellata</i>		■			■		
27	Fulmar	<i>Fulmarus glacialis</i>							
28	Little Grebe	<i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>			■			■	
29	Red-necked Grebe	<i>Podiceps grisegena</i>							
30	Great Crested Grebe	<i>Podiceps cristatus</i>				■			
31	Slavonian Grebe	<i>Podiceps auritus</i>							
32	Spoonbill	<i>Platalea leucorodia</i>							
33	Bittern	<i>Botaurus stellaris</i>							
34	Grey Heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>			■		■		
35	Great White Egret	<i>Ardea alba</i>		■	■		■		
36	Little Egret	<i>Egretta garzetta</i>			■	■	■		
37	Gannet	<i>Morus bassanus</i>		■			■	■	
38	Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>		■	■	■	■	■	
39	Shag	<i>Phalacrocorax aristotelis</i>							
40	Sparrowhawk	<i>Accipiter nisus</i>		■	■		■		
41	Marsh Harrier	<i>Circus aeruginosus</i>		■	■	■	■		
42	Hen Harrier	<i>Circus cyaneus</i>			■				
43	Red Kite	<i>Milvus milvus</i>		■	■			■	
44	Buzzard	<i>Buteo buteo</i>			■	■	■		
45	Water Rail	<i>Rallus aquaticus</i>							
46	Moorhen	<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>		■	■	■	■	■	

47	Coot	<i>Fulica atra</i>			■	■				
48	Crane	<i>Grus grus</i>						■		
49	Stone-curlew	<i>Burhinus oedicephalus</i>					■			
50	Oystercatcher	<i>Haematopus ostralegus</i>					■		■	
51	Avocet	<i>Recurvirostra avosetta</i>					■			
52	Lapwing	<i>Vanellus vanellus</i>			■	■	■	■	■	
#	Common Name	Scientific name	26	27	28	29	30	31		
53	Golden Plover	<i>Pluvialis apricaria</i>			■		■			
54	Grey Plover	<i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>			■	■	■			
55	Ringed Plover	<i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>			■	■				
56	Curlew	<i>Numenius arquata</i>			■	■	■	■		
57	Bar-tailed Godwit	<i>Limosa lapponica</i>				■		■		
58	Black-tailed Godwit	<i>Limosa limosa</i>				■	■	■		
59	Turnstone	<i>Arenaria interpres</i>			■	■	■			
60	Knot	<i>Calidris canutus</i>			■	■				
61	Ruff	<i>Calidris pugnax</i>							■	
62	Sanderling	<i>Calidris alba</i>			■		■		■	
63	Dunlin	<i>Calidris alpina</i>			■	■	■			
64	Little Stint	<i>Calidris minuta</i>								
65	Woodcock	<i>Scolopax rusticola</i>								
66	Jack Snipe	<i>Lymnocyrtus minimus</i>								
67	Snipe	<i>Gallinago gallinago</i>					■			
68	Green Sandpiper	<i>Tringa ochropus</i>						■		
69	Redshank	<i>Tringa totanus</i>				■	■	■	■	
70	Spotted Redshank	<i>Tringa erythropus</i>								
71	Greenshank	<i>Tringa nebularia</i>							■	
72	Kittiwake	<i>Rissa tridactyla</i>								
73	Black-headed Gull	<i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i>			■	■	■	■	■	
74	Mediterranean Gull	<i>Larus melanocephalus</i>							■	
75	Common Gull	<i>Larus canus</i>			■	■	■	■	■	
76	Little Gull	<i>Hydrocoloeus minutus</i>								
77	Great Black-backed Gull	<i>Larus marinus</i>			■	■	■	■	■	
78	Herring Gull	<i>Larus argentatus</i>			■	■	■	■	■	
79	Lesser Black-backed Gull	<i>Larus fuscus</i>					■	■		
80	Common Guillemot	<i>Uria aalge</i>						■		
81	Razorbill	<i>Alca torda</i>								
82	Rock Dove (Feral Pigeon)	<i>Columba livia</i>					■			
83	Stock Dove	<i>Columba oenas</i>					■			
84	Woodpigeon	<i>Columba palumbus</i>			■	■	■	■	■	
85	Collared Dove	<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>			■	■	■	■	■	
86	Cuckoo	<i>Cuculus canorus</i>								
87	Barn Owl	<i>Tyto alba</i>				■				
88	Tawny Owl	<i>Strix aluco</i>								
89	Little Owl	<i>Athene noctua</i>								
90	Short-eared Owl	<i>Asio flammeus</i>								
91	Kingfisher	<i>Alcedo atthis</i>								
92	Great Spotted Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos major</i>			■					
93	Green Woodpecker	<i>Picus viridis</i>								
94	Kestrel	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>			■	■	■	■	■	

95	Merlin	<i>Falco columbarius</i>							
96	Peregrine	<i>Falco peregrinus</i>			■		■		
97	Jay	<i>Garrulus glandarius</i>			■	■	■		
98	Magpie	<i>Pica pica</i>			■	■	■	■	■
99	Jackdaw	<i>Coloeus monedula</i>			■	■	■	■	■
100	Rook	<i>Corvus frugilegus</i>			■	■	■	■	■
101	Carrion Crow	<i>Corvus corone</i>			■	■	■	■	■
102	Coal Tit	<i>Periparus ater</i>			■	■	■		
103	Marsh Tit	<i>Poecile palustris</i>			■		■		
104	Blue Tit	<i>Cyanistes caeruleus</i>			■	■	■	■	■
105	Great Tit	<i>Parus major</i>			■	■	■	■	■
106	Bearded Tit	<i>Panurus biarmicus</i>				■			
107	Skylark	<i>Alauda arvensis</i>					■	■	■
#	Common Name	Scientific name	26	27	28	29	30	31	
108	Cetti's Warbler	<i>Cettia cetti</i>					H		
109	Long-tailed Tit	<i>Aegithalos caudatus</i>			■	■	■		■
110	Chiffchaff	<i>Phylloscopus collybita</i>			■			■	
111	Yellow-browed Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus inornatus</i>			■				
112	Blackcap	<i>Sylvia atricapilla</i>							
113	Firecrest	<i>Regulus ignicapilla</i>							
114	Goldcrest	<i>Regulus regulus</i>			■	■	■		
115	Wren	<i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>			■	■	■	■	
116	Nuthatch	<i>Sitta europaea</i>			■				
117	Treecreeper	<i>Certhia familiaris</i>							
118	Starling	<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>			■	■	■	■	■
119	Blackbird	<i>Turdus merula</i>			■	■	■	■	■
120	Fieldfare	<i>Turdus pilaris</i>							■
121	Redwing	<i>Turdus iliacus</i>			■			■	■
122	Song Thrush	<i>Turdus philomelos</i>			■				
123	Mistle Thrush	<i>Turdus viscivorus</i>			■			■	
124	Robin	<i>Erithacus rubecula</i>			■	■	■		■
125	Black Redstart	<i>Phoenicurus ochruros</i>							
126	Redstart	<i>Phoenicurus phoenicurus</i>							
127	Stonechat	<i>Saxicola rubicola</i>				■		■	
128	Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe oenanthe</i>							
129	House Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>				■		■	
130	Tree Sparrow	<i>Passer montanus</i>							
131	Dunnock	<i>Prunella modularis</i>			■	■		■	
132	Grey Wagtail	<i>Motacilla cinerea</i>						■	■
133	Pied Wagtail	<i>Motacilla alba</i>				■	■	■	■
134	Meadow Pipit	<i>Anthus pratensis</i>							
135	Water Pipit	<i>Anthus spinoletta</i>							
136	Rock Pipit	<i>Anthus petrosus</i>				■			
137	Chaffinch	<i>Fringilla coelebs</i>			■		■		
138	Brambling	<i>Fringilla montifringilla</i>					■		
139	Bullfinch	<i>Pyrrhula pyrrhula</i>							
140	Greenfinch	<i>Chloris chloris</i>			■				
141	Linnet	<i>Linaria cannabina</i>					■	■	
142	Lesser Redpoll	<i>Acanthis cabaret</i>			■		■		
143	Goldfinch	<i>Carduelis carduelis</i>			■		■		

144	Siskin	<i>Spinus spinus</i>					■			
145	Corn Bunting	<i>Emberiza calandra</i>								
146	Yellowhammer	<i>Emberiza citrinella</i>				■	■			
147	Reed Bunting	<i>Emberiza schoeniclus</i>				■		■		
148	Lapland Bunting	<i>Calcarius lapponicus</i>								
149	Snow Bunting	<i>Plectrophenax nivalis</i>								
150										
151	Additional Species									
152	Hawfinch				■					
153	Ring-necked Duck				■					
154	Caspian Gull				■			■		
155	Cattle Egret					■				
156	Lesser Yellowlegs					■				
157	Twite						■			
158	Long-tailed Duck							■		
159	Whooper Swan							■		
160	Greater Scaup							■		