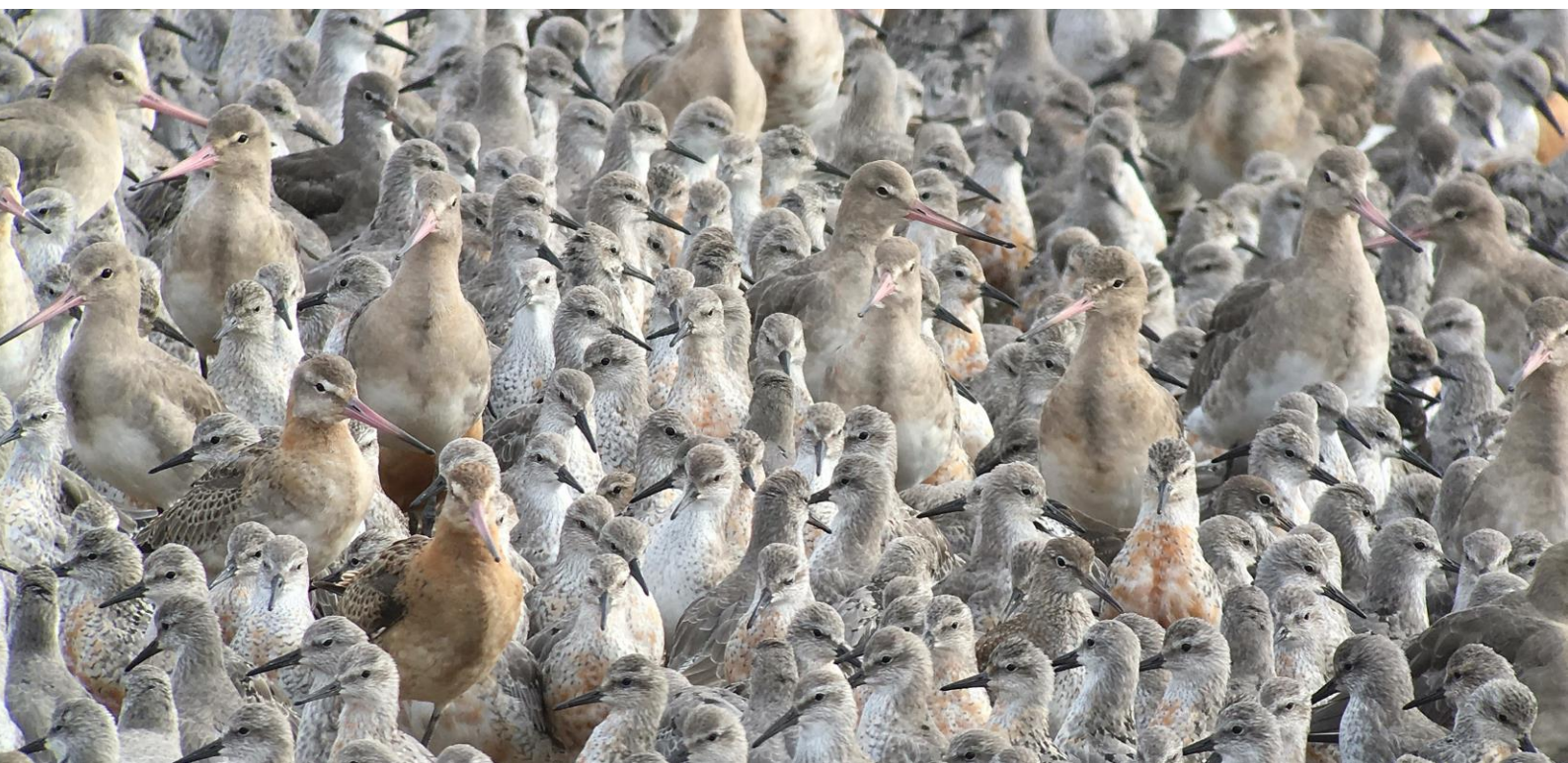




ORIOLE BIRDING



TOUR REPORT NORFOLK MIGRATION MAGIC WEEKEND 13TH – 16TH SEPTEMBER 2018

www.oriolebirding.com

oriolebirding@gmail.com

[twitter](#) 

Tour leader
Jason Moss

Tour participants
Polly Robb
John Davis
Carol McCollough
Jennifer Henshall
Edward Lee
Trevor Moss

THURSDAY 13TH SEPTEMBER 2018 - Cley Marshes

Bright and sunny, light SW wind, 18C

At this time of year, we all know that the weather can be unpredictable, with the summer coming to an end rapidly. With this in mind, we felt that we should make the most of what was today a pretty superb day of pleasant weather, and get out and do some birding! And so we met our group at the Blue Boar (following pickups from King's Lynn train station) and headed out to the NWT Cley Marshes. After collecting our permits, we headed round to the Babcock Hide to check some of the open water in that area. Walking along the Iron Road, we were escorted most of the way along the track by a Common Whitethroat and Reed Bunting, while the first of several Marsh Harriers was quartering the nearby marshes. The pool and flood here was rather quiet, with small numbers of Teal the sole representative of wild wildfowl (the rest being made up of the usual Greylags, Canada Geese and Egyptian Geese!). From here we walked over to the Babcock Hide overlooking Watling Water. A small number of Black-tailed Godwits were noted in flight over the area here, but this scrape was also devoid of any waders or much wildfowl. The area had presumably been disturbed shortly before we arrived. Walking back to the van, a small flock of House Sparrows contained a surprise juvenile **Tree Sparrow** in the brambles here; a very scarce breeding species on the coast. Getting into the van, we headed towards the visitor centre, stopping first for a quick look at Snipes Marsh. This body of water held 2 **Green Sandpipers** and a number of Common Snipe, along with a single Tufted Duck, several Little Grebes and a few Teal. A corvid was noted mobbing a small bird of prey over the back trees, which transpired to be an adult **Hobby**. This agile falcon was noted taking one of the many treetop dragonflies and devouring it in flight, before drifting out of view. From here we parked the van up near the visitor centre and walked out to the main hide overlooking Pat's Pool and Simmond's Scrape. The pools held a few hundred Black-tailed Godwits, several Avocets and a good number of Ruff, the latter being represented by a mixture of ages and sexes, giving a good comparison in excellent evening light. Eight Dunlin were also present feeding in the shallow water at the far end of Simmond's Scrape. Wildfowl here were represented by small numbers of Wigeon, Shoveler and Teal. As the evening progressed, the number of gulls coming from inland to roost here increased, numbering around 400 Black-headed Gulls, these hosting 8 **Mediterranean Gulls** of all ages. Later still a 2nd calendar year **Yellow-legged Gull** dropped in onto Pat's Pool; one of very few large gulls present tonight. By now it was time to head back, with many of the group having travelled a fair distance to get here today, so we made our way back to Great Ryburgh.



A surprise juvenile Tree Sparrow at Cley

FRIDAY 14TH SEPTEMBER 2018 - Snettisham and Titchwell

Overcast with sunny spells, showers late afternoon, 17C

Our first full day in the field on this trip demanded an early start. With a high tide of 7.5 meters at 09:50 at Snettisham, the morning promised a fantastic wader spectacle, and it's always good to arrive here a couple of hours before the top of the tide. With that, we left the Blue Boar with packed bacon sarnies at 7am, arriving at Snettisham at about 07:40. After a hot drink we set off for the main sea wall, noting Reed Buntings and Chiffchaffs in the scrub. Common Terns were still carrying food over the pits, and the first swirling flock of Knot was seen far over the Wash. Reaching the estuary side, we began scanning through the closer waders on the shore, noting Sanderling, Dunlin and Ringed Plovers in small numbers. Further out on the mudflats vast numbers of Oystercatchers were already packed together ahead of the tide. A small commotion from the nearer waders alerted us to a flyby juvenile **Peregrine** which headed north up the coast, while a quick look at the pits behind us revealed 3 **Greenshank** roosting along with several Little Egrets. The seaward side also hosted a single juvenile **Spoonbill** feeding in one of the muddy creeks. Moving further along, we were able to keep ahead of the incoming tide, reaching the upper reaches of the estuary to watch as the big flocks of Knot, Oystercatcher, Curlew, Bar-tailed Godwits and Grey Plovers all jostled for position as the water quickly encroached. The flights of knot were at times spectacular, even though their number was lower than what it will be during the winter. A single **Pink-footed Goose**, our first of the autumn, looked lost amongst the flocks of waders. All the time we watched, groups of waders were peeling off from the throngs, many heading inland to roost or feed on fields, though many had packed in onto the islands in the pit behind us. This was arguably the most spectacular area today, with every inch of space on the small islands taken up by packed flocks of Knot (including some superb summer plumaged birds), Black-tailed Godwits, Dunlin and Oystercatchers. The activity was mesmerising, and the opportunities to learn about the identification and ageing of the species present were excellent. A group of 8 **Spotted Redshank** were roosting further over near the far bank of the pool, and a juvenile **Curlew Sandpiper** put in a brief appearance amongst the jostling Dunlin in front of the Shore Hide before disappearing amongst the throngs. At times the big flocks of Knot would get up and fly around the pit, their murmuration-type formations utterly spellbinding to watch, and the sound of their mass of wings just superb. Leaving the hide (reluctantly!) a number of birds began to return to the estuary, flying low over our heads and stopping us dead in our tracks just to stare! The walk back was punctuated by a flock of **Pintail** headed inland, while the hawthorn patches held a surprisingly showy **Cetti's Warbler** and both Common and **Lesser Whitethroat**. All in all, a superbly productive morning!



Spoonbill at Snettisham

From here we made our way to Titchwell, where we would spend the rest of the afternoon. After lunch and hot drinks in the car park, we headed onto the reserve, noting Pochard on the Reedbed Pool. Reaching the Freshmarsh, one of the first birds noted was a very smart juvenile **Curlew**

Sandpiper keeping company with 2 Dunlin. Its very neatly scalloped upperparts and peachy wash to the breast made for a particularly smart-looking bird. The marsh also held numerous Ruff and Black-tailed Godwits, while Marsh Harriers were noted circling on many occasions. On the volunteer marsh, several Grey Plovers still possessed their summer plumage and looking pretty dapper. Walking out to the shore, we stopped to have a scan of the sea. Small numbers of Sandwich Terns were fishing offshore, while Bar-tailed Godwits, Oystercatchers, Ringed Plovers, Dunlin and Sanderling littered the exposed oysterbeds. A scan of the sea picked up a single Common Scoter and, pleasingly, a juvenile **Red-necked Grebe**, its contrasting dark crown and white cheek, along with its rufous neck and breast making its rather stand out. Another highlight here was a single juvenile **Arctic Skua** which dashed past close inshore, while a single immature Gannet passed distantly. Towards the horizon several skeins of **Pink-footed Geese** could be seen approaching the coast to our east, numbering about 180 birds all in all; a fantastic thing to see to herald the coming autumn. Further up the beach a couple of groups came in close enough for us to see and hear them; a real feeling of autumn. A walk out to Thornham point provided us with a single **Wheatear** and Willow Warbler, though the highlight here was arguably a sulphur yellow Budgie in the dunes! Back to the main reserve, we enjoyed further views of the **Curlew Sandpiper**, while a low-flying 'v' of calling **Pink-footed Geese** coming down onto the saltmarsh was appreciated by all. A male and female **Bearded Tit** showed well briefly in the reedbed, while a single vocal **Spotted Redshank** flew over towards Thornham. Reaching the Meadow Trail, we made for one last part of the reserve before calling it a day, heading to Patsy's Pool. Looking along the track which neighbours the horse paddocks here, we soon picked up a single **Turtle Dove** which offered good scope views and was appreciated by all. Finally, Patsy's itself held a nice array of diving ducks including 2 **Red-crested Pochard** and several Common Pochard, along with the more usual fare. From here we returned back to the van, tired but happy after a top day of Norfolk birding.



A very showy juvenile Curlew Sandpiper at Titchwell

SATURDAY 15TH SEPTEMBER – Frampton RSPB and Wells Woods

Overcast with sunny spells, fine all day, light SW, 17C

Our second full day in the field was another one of fine weather, but another with unfavourable south-westerly winds! With little prospect of any significant migrant arrivals on the coast, and certainly no conditions for seawatching, our days itinerary was fairly open. With that, and the knowledge that a few good birds had been present of late, we decided to make the journey across to one of our favourite reserves; Frampton RSPB. Setting off, we arrived at around 10am, just before the tide was at its highest. This meant that the scrapes were rich with waders escaping the high tide. Over 1000 Black-tailed Godwits, 100s of Dunlin and Ringed Plovers and dozens of Ruff were present on the islands, along with at least 4 **Curlew Sandpipers** amongst them. Walking along the main path a flock of about 20 Pochard came overhead, while wildfowl were represented by many Wigeon, Teal and Shovelers. Making our way towards the sea wall, we were hopeful that we would be able to find

our main target here; the long-staying **Long-billed Dowitcher**. However, as we approached its favoured area, those present already reported that it hadn't been seen in a few hours. Common Snipe gave good views in some of the wet channels along with several Teal and a Black-tailed Godwit, but little else so we made our way up onto the sea wall for a different angle. From up here we enjoyed the sight of a tight group of 24 **Spotted Redshank** all roosting on one of the pools, including 2 dusky juveniles. Checking every possible corner of the dowitchers favoured channel, we eventually managed to pick it up as it began feeding along the sedge-covered fringes of the dyke. Rapidly entering winter plumage, the birds overall grey colouration combined with bold white supercilium, yellow legs and sewing machine-like feeding action made for a fairly distinctive bird, though we were rather too distant to pick up further details. Suddenly about 20 Snipe flew through, flushing the dowitcher with them. However, we were able to follow the dowitcher in flight owing to the cigar-shaped slither of white trailing down the back, seeing it land on the edge of the main channel. With that we headed down and got good views of it for a short while before it disappeared into dense cover again. A great bird! Leaving it behind, we headed round towards the 360 hide, where a flock of at least 20 **Yellow Wagtails** greeted us amongst some cattle. On the scrapes behind us the large numbers of waders were still pleasing to watch, especially as they became more agitated, their innate sense that the tide was dropping urging them to slowly peel off and head for the wash. A single **Common Sandpiper**, 3 **Greenshank** and a good flock of about 12 Pintail were of note here. Walking back to the visitor centre, a surprise came in the form of a single adult **Whooper Swan**; surely too early? A quick enquiry in the visitor centre revealed that it had been there for at least 2 years. From here, after a hot drink, we took a short drive around the corner to the nearby reservoir, where a fine variety of wildfowl and Little Grebes also played host to a single **Black-necked Grebe**. Apparently an adult entering winter plumage, the shadow of its ear covert plumes could just be seen. A single **Green Sandpiper** and several Ruff also added to the interest here.



The Frampton Long-billed Dowitcher obliged, and part of the flock of 24 Spotted Redshank

From here, we made the journey back to Norfolk. With a couple of hours remaining for birding, we decided that, as the week had so far been rather light on passerine interest, we should give the areas around Wells woods a try, though this was always going to be either boom or bust, bird-wise, with

the wind in such an uninspiring direction! However, we gave it a go, and it started with some promise. A tit flock greeted us as we entered the woods, hosting at least 6 Chiffchaffs along with the commoner species, while a couple of Siskins were heard calling overhead. This flock moved through rather quickly however and we weren't able to follow it further. Walking the woods further for the next hour failed to yield another flock and, bar a few Coal Tits and a Treecreeper, unfortunately was very quiet on the bird front in general! However a pleasant ending to the afternoon met us as we began to walk back to the van, with a couple of small skeins of **Pink-footed Geese** dropping into the marshes towards Holkham, 'winking' as they went.

SUNDAY 16TH SEPTEMBER 2018 - Stiffkey

Bright and sunny, fine all day, light SW, strengthening PM, 23C

Our last day of this Norfolk tour dawned another nice one, with clear skies and a light south-westerly wind. Before heading out to the coast we took a walk over to the River Wensum to scan the surrounding marsh, noting both Grey Heron and a Common Buzzard on the ground in some recently cut grass bordering the river. Presumably they were both feeding, perhaps on small frogs or toads that would have been abundant in the wet grassland; unusual behaviour, particularly for the Buzzard! The resident Stock Doves were also noted in the nearby old barn. From here we got in the van and headed out to Stiffkey. Nearing the south of the village, we came across our first grounded **Pink-footed Goose** flock, numbering around 150 birds, in a stubble field. It was nice to park the van and watch these wonderful geese at close quarters, and gave a nice taster for our upcoming winter tours! Moving on we parked up at Stiffkey Campsite car park, from where we would walk out to Warham Greens. Linnets were abundant throughout the walk, while bird of prey interest out on the saltmarsh included 2 **Red Kites** and 2 Marsh Harriers hunting the creeks. Our hope was that we might encounter some migrants in this productive stretch of coastline, and we didn't fair too badly considering the weather, with a **Whinchat** being the highlight, along with 4 Blackcaps, 2 Common Whitethroats and a single **Lesser Whitethroat** in the pit beyond the Whirligig. A further highlight was a flock of about 400 **Golden Plover** which were initially in a potato field, before flying low overhead and settling on the saltmarsh. We also heard Bullfinch on this walk, but were unable to spot them.

From The campsite, we then drove round to the layby from where we could take a look at both Stiffkey Flood and Stiffkey Fen. The former produced 4 Ruff and a single **Green Sandpiper**, along with a small number of Teal. Backtracking, we had lunch at the van, enjoying a single male Marsh Harrier quartering the nearby fields as we ate. Then we continued on to the Fen. Bullfinches were again heard but not seen, while as we walked out a flock of 31 **Spoonbills** were noted in flight over the fen, apparently disturbed from their roost. Gaining a view of the flock, 21 **Spoonbills** remained, this being the best site in Norfolk at the moment for this species! Several **Greenshank** could also be seen out on the fen, as well as a good number of Black-tailed Godwits, Ruff, a single **Green Sandpiper**, about 100 Redshank, about 10 **Pintail** and over 100 Wigeon; a really rich site for birds at the moment! A look out into Blakeney harbour revealed a number of Grey Plovers and nice views of Little Egrets, while some nice flights of Wigeon came over in great light. By now, it was already time to depart, with a run to King's Lynn station in order, but we had one last treat before we headed off. Back at the van, a **Hobby** hove into view over the fields, picked up pace and bombed over towards the fen, where it shot back and forth in pursuit of an unseen prey. What a fantastic raptor, and a nice end to the weekend.

Oriole Birding Tour - Norfolk Migration Magic Weekend 13th - 16th September 2018

Species order, names and taxonomy follows - Gill, F and D Donsker (Eds). 2018. IOC World Bird List (v 8.1). <http://www.worldbirdnames.org/>

#	Common Name	Scientific name	
1	Canada Goose	<i>Branta canadensis</i>	✓
2	Barnacle Goose	<i>Branta leucopsis</i>	✓
3	Greylag Goose	<i>Anser anser</i>	✓
4	Pink-footed Goose	<i>Anser brachyrhynchus</i>	✓
5	Mute Swan	<i>Cygnus olor</i>	✓
6	Whooper Swan	<i>Cygnus cygnus</i>	✓
7	Egyptian Goose	<i>Alopochen aegyptiaca</i>	✓
8	Shelduck	<i>Tadorna tadorna</i>	✓
9	Shoveler	<i>Spatula clypeata</i>	✓
10	Gadwall	<i>Mareca strepera</i>	✓
11	Wigeon	<i>Mareca penelope</i>	✓
12	Mallard	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>	✓
13	Pintail	<i>Anas acuta</i>	✓
14	Teal	<i>Anas crecca</i>	✓
15	Pochard	<i>Aythya ferina</i>	✓
16	Red-crested Pochard	<i>Netta rufina</i>	✓
17	Tufted Duck	<i>Aythya fuligula</i>	✓
18	Common Scoter	<i>Melanitta nigra</i>	✓
19	Red-legged Partridge	<i>Alectoris rufa</i>	✓
20	Pheasant	<i>Phasianus colchicus</i>	✓
21	Little Grebe	<i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>	✓
22	Great Crested Grebe	<i>Podiceps cristatus</i>	✓
23	Red-necked Grebe	<i>Podiceps auritus</i>	✓
24	Black-necked Grebe	<i>Podiceps nigricollis</i>	✓
25	Spoonbill	<i>Platalea leucorodia</i>	✓
26	Grey Heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>	✓
27	Little Egret	<i>Egretta garzetta</i>	✓
28	Gannet	<i>Morus bassanus</i>	✓
29	Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>	✓
30	Sparrowhawk	<i>Accipiter nisus</i>	✓
31	Marsh Harrier	<i>Circus aeruginosus</i>	✓
32	Red Kite	<i>Milvus milvus</i>	✓
33	Buzzard	<i>Buteo buteo</i>	✓
34	Water Rail	<i>Rallus aquaticus</i>	H
35	Moorhen	<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>	✓
36	Coot	<i>Fulica atra</i>	✓
37	Oystercatcher	<i>Haematopus ostralegus</i>	✓
38	Avocet	<i>Recurvirostra avosetta</i>	✓
39	Lapwing	<i>Vanellus vanellus</i>	✓
40	Golden Plover	<i>Pluvialis apricaria</i>	✓
41	Grey Plover	<i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>	✓
42	Ringed Plover	<i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>	✓
43	Curlew	<i>Numenius arquata</i>	✓
44	Bar-tailed Godwit	<i>Limosa lapponica</i>	✓
45	Black-tailed Godwit	<i>Limosa limosa</i>	✓

#	Common Name	Scientific name	
46	Turnstone	<i>Arenaria interpres</i>	✓
47	Knot	<i>Calidris canutus</i>	✓
48	Ruff	<i>Calidris pugnax</i>	✓
49	Curlew Sandpiper	<i>Calidris ferruginea</i>	✓
50	Sanderling	<i>Calidris alba</i>	✓
51	Dunlin	<i>Calidris alpina</i>	✓
52	Snipe	<i>Gallinago gallinago</i>	✓
53	Common Sandpiper	<i>Actitis hypoleucos</i>	✓
54	Green Sandpiper	<i>Tringa ochropus</i>	✓
55	Redshank	<i>Tringa totanus</i>	✓
56	Spotted Redshank	<i>Tringa erythropus</i>	✓
57	Greenshank	<i>Tringa nebularia</i>	✓
58	Long-billed Dowitcher	<i>Lymnodromus scolopaceus</i>	✓
59	Black-headed Gull	<i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i>	✓
60	Mediterranean Gull	<i>Larus melanocephalus</i>	✓
61	Common Gull	<i>Larus canus</i>	✓
62	Great Black-backed Gull	<i>Larus marinus</i>	✓
63	Herring Gull	<i>Larus argentatus</i>	✓
64	Yellow-legged Gull	<i>Larus michahellis</i>	✓
65	Lesser Black-backed Gull	<i>Larus fuscus</i>	✓
66	Sandwich Tern	<i>Thalasseus sandvicensis</i>	✓
67	Common Tern	<i>Sterna hirundo</i>	✓
68	Arctic Skua	<i>Stercorarius parasiticus</i>	✓
69	Rock Dove (Feral Pigeon)	<i>Columba livia</i>	✓
70	Stock Dove	<i>Columba oenas</i>	✓
71	Woodpigeon	<i>Columba palumbus</i>	✓
72	Collared Dove	<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>	✓
73	Turtle Dove	<i>Streptopelia turtur</i>	✓
74	Green Woodpecker	<i>Picus viridis</i>	H
75	Kestrel	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>	✓
76	Eurasian Hobby	<i>Falco subbuteo</i>	✓
77	Peregrine	<i>Falco peregrinus</i>	✓
78	Jay	<i>Garrulus glandarius</i>	H
79	Magpie	<i>Pica pica</i>	✓
80	Jackdaw	<i>Coloeus monedula</i>	✓
81	Rook	<i>Corvus frugilegus</i>	✓
82	Carrion Crow	<i>Corvus corone</i>	✓
83	Coal Tit	<i>Parus ater</i>	✓
84	Blue Tit	<i>Cyanistes caeruleus</i>	✓
85	Great Tit	<i>Parus major</i>	✓
86	Bearded Tit	<i>Panurus biarmicus</i>	✓
87	Skylark	<i>Alauda arvensis</i>	✓
88	Swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>	✓
89	Sand Martin	<i>Riparia riparia</i>	✓
90	House Martin	<i>Delichon urbicum</i>	✓
91	Cetti's Warbler	<i>Cettia cetti</i>	✓
92	Long-tailed Tit	<i>Aegithalos caudatus</i>	✓
93	Chiffchaff	<i>Phylloscopus collybita</i>	✓
94	Reed Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus scirpaceus</i>	✓
95	Blackcap	<i>Sylvia atricapilla</i>	✓
96	Lesser Whitethroat	<i>Sylvia curruca</i>	✓

#	Common Name	Scientific name	
97	Whitethroat	<i>Sylvia communis</i>	✓
98	Wren	<i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>	✓
99	Treecreeper	<i>Certhia familiaris</i>	✓
100	Starling	<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>	✓
101	Blackbird	<i>Turdus merula</i>	✓
102	Robin	<i>Erithacus rubecula</i>	✓
103	Whinchat	<i>Saxicola rubetra</i>	✓
104	Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe oenanthe</i>	✓
105	House Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>	✓
106	Tree Sparrow	<i>Passer montanus</i>	✓
107	Dunnock	<i>Prunella modularis</i>	✓
108	Yellow Wagtail	<i>Motacilla flava</i>	✓
109	Pied Wagtail	<i>Motacilla alba</i>	✓
110	Meadow Pipit	<i>Anthus pratensis</i>	✓
111	Chaffinch	<i>Fringilla coelebs</i>	✓
112	Bullfinch	<i>Pyrrhula pyrrhula</i>	H
113	Greenfinch	<i>Chloris chloris</i>	✓
114	Linnet	<i>Linaria cannabina</i>	✓
115	Goldfinch	<i>Carduelis carduelis</i>	✓
116	Siskin	<i>Spinus spinus</i>	H
117	Reed Bunting	<i>Emberiza schoeniclus</i>	✓