



TOUR REPORT

Norfolk

11th – 14th September 2025

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11th September

I reached Briarfield at just after 2pm and after a quick cuppa the whole crew of myself plus eight assembled for a walk down into **Titchwell**. The Ivy hedges were alive with Wasps and Ivy Bees and few Red Admirals and a Willow Emerald was seen as we entered the woods were Migrant Hawkers still patrolled the ditches. Down at the east bank track we scanned the pools for waders and amongst the swirling flock of Dunlin there were at least six each of Little Stints and Curlew Sandpipers along with a few Ruff and Little Ringed Plovers. We also picked up Avocets and Lapwings and a Greenshank gave chase to a marauding Sparrowhawk.



Two Glossy Ibis had been reported and were suddenly up and in flight betting buffeted to the east by the strengthening wind brought in by the violent squall passing just off shore that illuminated the vista with frequent long lived fork lightening. A Kingfisher blew through and a Great Egret flopped along the reed tops where a juvenile Marsh Harrier hunted. Behind us a Red Kite drifted over the Willows and a glance the other way gave us a Spoonbill following the line the Ibis took. It was all go and I am not sure the new crew knew where to look.

With rain coming our way too we moved on passing another Great Egret and then five Yellow Wagtails feeding in the horse paddocks with about 30 Pied Wagtails. It was good to see some autumn ones on the deck for a change rather than just flying over calling.



Great Egret

The trees homed many Chiffchaffs and a few Tits but with rain falling we pressed on thankfully by the time we reached the first hide it had stopped. We stayed outside and watched a fine flock of 36 Ruff which included every size imaginable and one very fine white male. I found the Pectoral Sandpiper feeding with them and it was close enough to show off the intricate ruff-like feather markings and pale mantle braces as well as the telltale breast band. They soon spooked and we moved to the other side of the hide to continue our scanning which put us straight onto the Red-necked Phalarope spinning in silky whiteness out on the lagoon. After just two minutes

it flew but we soon picked it up again in the adjacent corner but hang on, it looked a bit dark? I scanned back to the original corner and there was the pale bird – two RNPs! The new bird was much browner and presumably younger? A Ringed Plover called and Snipe, Curlew, Redshank and Black-tailed Godwits were added along with an immature Water Rail having a good preen. All the dabbling ducks were represented with six circling Pintail being the most popular and a dashing female Sparrowhawk spooked everything on the back lagoon which included two Cattle Egrets to go with the herony tally for the day.

It was tempting to stay and check the big gulls but it had been a long day for one and all and we needed to get back to Briarfields for dinner so began to retrace our steps adding two Common Terns, a couple of Little Egrets and a Tit flock that gave us Coal and Long-taileds and several Chiffchaffs and Blackcaps while the Yellow Wagtails were still on the paddock as we wended our way back in the light rain and truly blinding mega rainbows. Not too shoddy for three hours in the field.



Ruff & Pec Sandpiper

12th September

With so much being seen in and around the Titchwell reserve we opted to spend the morning thoroughly exploring and by just before 9am we were heading out of the car park and onto the trail. Trevor had popped out of the centre and informed me that an Osprey had been sat out on Thornham on a post eating a fish but had already moved on. We popped out of the trees having had great views of a Treecreeper and I put my bins up and there was an Osprey way out over Thornham. We followed it inland towards the houses and lost it over the trees just as a second bird – a juvenile, cruised literally above our heads. It headed inland over the visitors centre and we looked back towards the mouth of Thornham Channel where two Ospreys were hunting alongside each other practically over the sea! This was getting silly.

These two were on view almost continually for the rest of our walk down and one caught and ate a fish while both were chased by Red Kites and Marsh Harriers. With Common Buzzards and Kestrels it was a bit of a raptorfest. It was set to be a mammoth tide and Thornham Marsh was rapidly disappearing under water pushing up Redshank, Greenshank, Lapwings, Curlews and flocks of Starling and both Little and Great Egrets were seen.

On the first lagoon and drift of white became a snaky line of sleeping Spoonbills and we counted 53 which is way more than I have ever seen together in the UK.

I was determined to get us to the sea as soon as we could but it was difficult to walk past the waders and such like on the way down although the two juvenile Red-necked Phalaropes had now found each other and were weaving like crazy bobbing dodgems in and out of the Greylags Geese and Black-tailed Godwits!

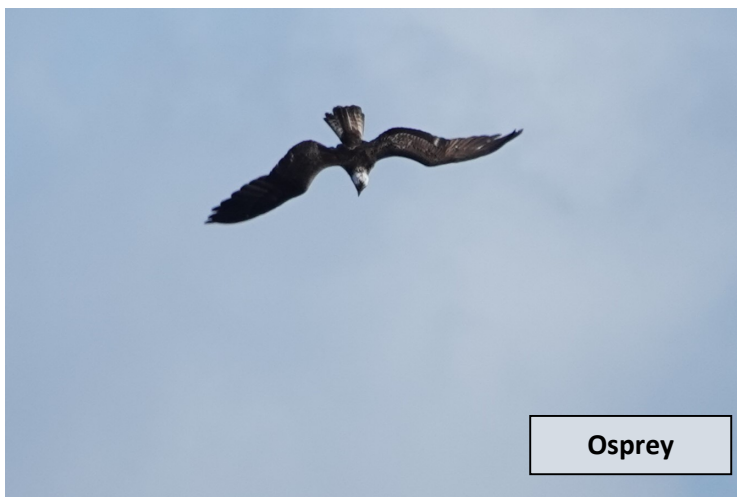
The brackish lagoon was completely full with just the top of the tallest reeds visible – the first time I have ever seen it like this and exactly what it was constructed for. Some Turnstones and Oystercatchers were on the last lagoon but there were no Grey Plovers and such like. Unsurprisingly down at the beach there was actually little left and the 'fort' was completely submerged. We spent quite some time scanning the sea and got great views of silvery black juvenile Gannets, squeaky Sandwich Terns, single Guillemot and Razorbill which were both preening quite close in, seven Great Crested Grebes, a summer plumaged Red-throated Diver, eight Scoter and a smattering of waders whizzing by including the first Knot, Bar-tailed Godwit, Sanderling and Ringed Plover of the trip.

Way out to the east the Oystercatchers and Gulls were all up over Scolt Head and there above them was an Osprey and we tracked it back along the beach towards us where this adult bird hovered and plunged in close offshore but came up without lunch. Was this a new bird or a Thornham one that had got behind us. Personally I think it was a fifth but one must not be too greedy!

Lunch beckoned and we started to walk back passing several Wall Browns on the way. Back at the Spoonbills they were getting more active and suddenly the whole flock was up and scattering in all directions. I have never been in the position of not knowing which flock of Spoonbills to look at. It was my moment of the day.

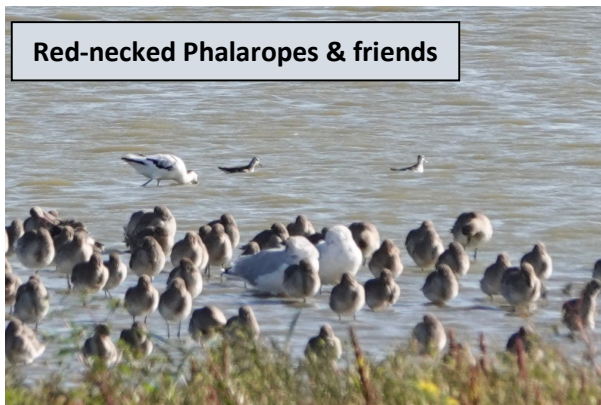
We could not find the Phalaropes this time but the Pectoral Sandpiper was slowly poking around an island and two Golden Plover were found with slightly grumpy expressions. A Grey Wagtail was added to the trip list as it flew over our lunch stop calling.

Heading east from here took us past Holkham where two herds of cows clearly had Cattle Egrets with them but as ever we could not pull over and so we pushed on to North Point Pools which I was very pleased to see still had plenty of water on the eastern side. Huge flock of Greylags dozed warily in the stubble with a few watchful Egyptian Geese and out on the flood there were many eclipse dabbling ducks including Pintail and Wigeon and three Spoonbills and two Little Egrets were tucked in the furthest corner. There were a few gulls to search through and I was pleased to find a 1cy Caspian Gull paddling around.



Despite being some muddy margins there were no small waders at all with just some Black-tailed Godwits and Avocets. A falcon overhead became a juvenile Hobby that put on a splendid show for ten minutes; zipping to and fro and even going for Linnets in a distant hedgeline. Meanwhile the more casual Kestrel continued to hover hunt and was not fazed by her flamboyant cousin. There were Marsh Harriers, Buzzards and Kites circulating but the birds on the pools seemed very unfussed.

A walk down to the seawall was quiet with a couple of quiet 'tackers' in the brambles that were burgeoning with berries and the heavily scented Ivy had a plethora of insects with the odd Red Admiral, many Wasps, a few Hoverflies and Buff-tailed Bumblebees and a very good number of stripy little Ivy Bees. There were Wall Browns too with 21 counted although none visited the Ivy.



Red-necked Phalaropes & friends

Down on the saltmarsh we counted 15 more Spoonbills and a few more Little Egrets and watched a deluge of rain over Wells. We caught the side end of it briefly and given the water on the roads when we headed back through town we had been very fortunate not to get caught out in the open. Back at the van there were now Brown Hares in the fields and we counted four where none had been seen on the way down. These fields have always been very good for them.

We retraced our route back to Titchwell stopping in the Burnham Overy Dune layby to have a scan and search for Grey Partridges but alas there were none and we only found a few

plump Wood Pigeons, Jackdaws and a several spangled clod like Golden Plovers that were successfully trying to blend in.

Back at Briarfields some of us chose to walk back down to the eastern trail for a quick look at the waders. Two Muntjac were on the path and once down at the end of the track we were able to watch the same evening wader selection as yesterday but in less blustery conditions and amongst the Dunlin we found two Curlew Sandpipers, four Little Stints and seven Little Ringed Plovers. There were 18 Golden Plover roosting amongst the Lapwings. It was a pleasant pre dinner walk to finish things up.

13th September

The crew were all out on time and we were soon on our way to Snettisham in the hope of witnessing the wader spectacle. Unlike the biggest winter tides, there were not many people down there and with glorious light we got to watch the tide come quickly in and push the thousands of birds up close to us. Unfortunately the off shore breeze kept the tide short of covering the mud but we still got see some amazing swirling, twisting, murmuring balls and snaky lines of shimmering Bar-tailed Godwits and Knot along with huge pied drifts of Oystercatchers, perfectly separated groups of roosting Curlew, even more socially distanced Ringed Plovers and a smattering of other species including stunning black-bellied Grey Plovers, Dunlin, Little Stints and even Sanderling.

There were many BTO ringed Oiks and amongst the Curlew were multiple colour ringed and white flagged birds whose digits I did my best to read along with OP (I think) which along with the yellow flag also has a radio tracker fitted to its back.

I also saw several colour flagged Bar-tailed Godwits and Oystercatchers. There were still quite a few sum plum Godwits and Knot too and a single Common Sandpiper was the first of the trip. Sandwich and Common Terns were also keeping pace with the tide and we were

fortunate enough to see two Little Terns (albeit Micro would have been a better name) along with two juvenile Black Terns that briefly settled before disappearing high and inland.



A Kingfisher flashed along the channel where a Harbour Seal watched us and flared its nostrils and female Sparrowhawk skimmed across in front less than a foot off the shingle in an attempt to catch one of the small Linnet flock. Great and Little Egrets were seen and Red Kites, Kestrels and Marsh Harriers were on view near constantly with more Kites and Buzzards inland behind us.

Hundreds and Redshank and Black-tailed Godwits and a few Turnstone had come onto the pits in expectation of a high tide and soon most headed back leaving just the Blackwits resting up. A group of six Spotted Redshanks were keeping to themselves on their own private island and 43 Spoonbills were asleep on the bank with some Cormorants and Greylags. Little Grebes snorkelled but there was little else on there.



their way inland beyond the pits. Big raptors were constantly in view.

The tide had already retreated a long way and I was relieved to find a young male Peregrine desperately trying to secure some lunch. It failed but did put on a grand show for us. A few paces further on three Turtle Doves got up off the beach and did a circuit and two flew right under our noses a short while later. Rather sadly my first in the UK this year. Everyone was very pleased to get such close prolonged flight views.

Lunch and toilets drew us away (not necessarily in that order!) and I took us back along the crowded coast road to Holkham once again passing Cattle Egrets on the way. The sky was looking ominous but we stuck to the plan of a walk along the inside on the pines and to be honest it was a delightfully calm, warm and relaxing experience. As usual most people just walk through the Gap and disappear! It was very quiet bird wise with Goldcrest and Willow Warbler added to the trip list as well as Treecreepers, Coal Tits and a few Chiffchaff. There was not even one Sylvia tuck. Out on the dry fresh marsh it was all about Red Kites and Buzzards and few Muntjac. I resorted to some quality moth leaf mine time with the crew and educated them on the micro wonders happening in so many of the leaves around us! Another Common Swift flew lazily west with some Swallows which was surprising.



Common Darter

There were plenty of Migrant Hawkers and Common Darters and a couple of Ruddy Darters too and a few more Butterflies with Wall Brown, Speckled Wood, Small White, Red Admiral and Comma all seen. We stood and quietly watched the view from the platform beyond the Washington Hide before retracing our steps in the now warm sunshine only to be greeted by a purple bruised sky with saturated clouds heading over the Holkham Estate accompanied but spectacular fork lightening.

As we headed back to Briarfields we caught a few spots of the edge of the storm but had once again somehow managed to avoid getting a proper soaking. As dusk fell as we headed for dinner a wave of mostly Swallows – all silent – headed steadily and suddenly across the car park and several hundred must have been involved and with a small vanguard was a lone Common Swift. Could we have made it back to Titchwell before the Holkham bird made it this far west?

With seriously grotty weather pushing in from the south-west we opted to stay local to Briarfields and re-visit Titchwell. It was a glorious morning with clear blue skies and an autumnal crispness to the air. The car park was a heat trap and there were Migrant Hawkers and Common Darters patrolling and the background bird song was almost solely of Wood Pigeons and Robins as we walked down through the trees and out onto the track to the sea. It was a leisurely amble with lots of stops to scan the waders once again and this time we enjoyed excellent close views of two of the juvenile Curlew Sandpipers as they actively fed with various sized Ruff. The pale Red-necked Phalarope was still spinning and bobbing but its browner buddy had seemingly taken by a Hobby the evening before! There were 38 Spoonbills but Pete Merchant had had 68 a little earlier and it now seems that the Snettisham birds are different to those on this bit of the coast suggesting that we had seen about 110 in just three days! Even this morning's flock would have been the most I had seen in the UK in a day!

We did not see an Osprey this time but there were Kites and Marsh Harriers all around and out on Thornham there were more Starling and Lapwings flocks as well as good ball of bouncing Linnets. Mark found a cracking male Wheatear sitting on some dead Thistles where more Linnets and some Goldfinches fed. Hundreds of House Martins and Swallows swept back and forth over the marsh and once again a Common Swift was picked up.

As we neared the beach we found the hoped for little colony of Sea Aster Mining Bees and watched them going to and from their sandy path side burrow that must get filled in by careless feet a hundred times a day. A Satellite Fly was lurking around the burrows waiting to sneak in and do the dirty deed on the larva of the Bee.



Curlew Sandpiper



Sea Aster Mining Bee

Down at the sea the tide was still coming in but the fort was visible and sea looked flat and dead but our patience was rewarded with a dark Arctic Skua and hulking Great Skua going west and a cracking adult Pomarine Skua with the best part of its tail languidly heading the other way closer in – three Skuas and three species and completely unexpected.

There were a few silvery juvenile Gannets and our first adult too and on the sea we found seven sum plum Red-throated Divers, five Great Crested Grebes, Common Scoter and some Auks with a Guillemot and a flotilla of five Razorbills. Juvenile Sanderling arrived and scuttled on clockwork legs along the

tide line while Oystercatchers headed to their Scolt Head roost. A line of Geese were found coming in from the west at height and although at that point we could not hear them there was no doubt that we had our first 41 Pinkfeet and for me a true sign that autumn had arrived. The scavenging Black-headed Gull had been replaced by a Common Gull that snaffled a bit of dropped cake. A large flock of distant hirundines made landfall off towards Thornham Point.

We slowly walked back and the Pinkfeet flock chose to circled back to land and drifted west over our heads at which point the telltale 'nudge nudge wink wink' could be heard and there were smiles all round – partly because of the Monty Python reference!

Back near the centre we followed a Tit flock which contained several Chiffchaffs and Goldcrest and a Reed Warbler was heard calling but did not show while two immature Moorhens were feasting on Blackberries quite unconcerned about us standing there. We all had a relaxed final lunch in the car park, once again lounging under the apple trees before going our separate ways after a very rewarding few days in north-west Norfolk.

	Birds
1	Mute Swan
2	Greylag Goose
3	Pink-footed Goose
4	Canada Goose
5	Shelduck
6	Egyptian Goose
7	Mallard
8	Gadwall
9	Pintail
10	Shoveler
11	Wigeon
12	Teal
13	Pochard
14	Tufted Duck
15	Common Scoter
16	Red-legged Partridge
17	Pheasant
18	Red-throated Diver
19	Great Crested Grebe
20	Little Grebe
21	Cormorant
22	Gannet
23	Cattle Egret
24	Little Egret
25	Great White Egret
26	Grey Heron
27	Glossy Ibis
28	Spoonbill
29	Red Kite
30	Marsh Harrier
31	Buzzard
32	Sparrowhawk
33	Kestrel
34	Hobby
35	Peregrine
36	Osprey
37	Water Rail
38	Moorhen
39	Coot
40	Oystercatcher
41	Avocet
42	Little Ringed Plover
43	Ringed Plover
44	Golden Plover
45	Grey Plover
46	Lapwing
47	Ruff
48	Pectoral Sandpiper

49	Knot
50	Sanderling
51	Dunlin
52	Curlew Sandpiper
53	Little Stint
54	Turnstone
55	Redshank
56	Greenshank
57	Spotted Redshank
58	Green Sandpiper
59	Black-tailed Godwit
60	Bar-tailed Godwit
61	Curlew
62	Snipe
63	Red-necked Phalarope
64	Great Skua
65	Pomarine Skua
66	Arctic Skua
67	Black-headed Gull
68	Common Gull
69	Herring Gull
70	Lesser Black-backed Gull
71	Great Black-backed Gull
72	Caspian Gull
73	Sandwich Tern
74	Common Tern
75	Little Tern
76	Black Tern
77	Gulliemot
78	Razorbill
79	Feral Pigeon
80	Stock Dove
81	Wood Pigeon
82	Collared Dove
83	Turtle Dove
84	Common Swift
85	Kingfisher
86	Green Woodpecker
87	Great Spotted Woodpecker
88	Skylark
89	Sand Martin
90	House Martin
91	Swallow
92	Meadow Pipit
93	Pied Wagtail
94	Grey Wagtail
95	Yellow Wagtail
96	Wren
97	Dunnock
98	Robin

99	Stonechat
100	Northern Wheatear
101	Song Thrush
102	Redwing
103	Mistle Thrush
104	Blackbird
105	Common Chiffchaff
106	Blackcap
107	Reed Warbler
108	Cetti's Warbler
109	Goldcrest
110	Great Tit
111	Blue Tit
112	Coal Tit
113	Long-tailed Tit
114	Treecreeper
115	Magpie
116	Jackdaw
117	Rook
118	Carrion Crow
119	Raven
120	Starling
121	House Sparrow
122	Chaffinch
123	Linnet
124	Greenfinch
125	Siskin
126	Reed Bunting

	Other Wildlife
1	Chinese Water Deer
2	Muntjac
3	Fallow Deer
4	Grey Squirrel
5	Grey Seal
6	Harbour Seal
7	Rabbit
8	Brown Hare
10	Mole hills
11	Red Admiral
12	Wall Brown
13	Migrant Hawker
14	Ruddy Darter
15	Common Darter
16	Willow Emerald Damselfly
17	Ivy Mining Bee
18	Sea Aster Mining Bee
19	Common Carder Bee
20	Buff-tailed Bumblebee