



ORIOLE BIRDING



TOUR REPORT **NORFOLK SHOREBIRDS** **16TH – 19TH AUGUST 2020**

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MONDAY 17TH AUGUST - *Overcast with light winds, heavy rain later 20C*

A varied days birding today saw us make an early start to hopefully capitalise on the tail end of a recent 'fall' of Scandinavian drift migrants on yesterdays heavy rain and easterly winds. We reached the car park at Stiffkey Campsite around 0730, and after a bacon butty, we set off west towards the whirligig. The coastal bushes were pretty lively with passerines – Common and **Lesser Whitethroats** were plentiful as we walked along, and they were flicking along ahead of us. A single Reed Warbler, Yellowhammer and a **Pied Flycatcher** were also seen, the latter posing among a Dog Rose by the side of the track before typically giving us the slip. Over the marsh, about two hundred **Golden Plover** went up as a **Peregrine** went over, and we also picked up Marsh Harrier, **Whimbrel** and three Common Snipe. West of the whirligig we found more whitethroats of both species, a Blackcap and Chiffchaff to add to the mornings roll call.

Wells Woods would be our next stop, a good place for holding migrants after a fall. Pied Flycatchers had been ever-present here for the last week, and we did find around six of them this morning – mainly along the sheltered southern edge of The Dell but remaining very elusive. While checking the canopy carefully we saw several lemon-yellow juvenile **Willow Warblers**, and also the rear-end of a **Wood Warbler** showing a silky white belly and bright green tertial fringes. Sadly though, this bird melted away and we didn't see it properly. Common and Lesser Whitethroat and Blackcap were all seen again, but we couldn't locate a tit flock today. The meadow produced sightings of Brown Argus, Painted Lady, Common Blue and Migrant Hawker, but then a call from a local birder alerted us to the presence of the long staying Icterine Warbler, so we dashed off to find him. By the time we reached the spot, we learned that a Greenish Warbler had also popped out briefly in the same trees as the Icterine! We had walked past this spot about twenty minutes before! Sadly despite searching, there was no sign of either warbler again and we had to settle for another **Pied Flycatcher** and Willow Warbler.

After lunch, we moved to North Point pools just east of the town. We had a great session here enjoying the waders and wildfowl, with four young **Spoonbills** also topping the bill. The farmer was busy mowing the juncus in the middle of the east scrape, but it didn't really seem to bother the birds. A **Greenshank** flew in and landed right beside the track, in perfect light next to a juvenile **Little-ringed Plover**. We saw about twenty Ruff, including fantastic close views of five juveniles, and at the back were seven **Green Sandpipers** and about one hundred Black-tailed Godwits. Scanning west of the track revealed a juvenile **Wood Sandpiper**, which was very nice to see. After enjoying more good views of the various waders and several Brown Hares, we wandered back up, watching a copulating pair of Migrant Hawkers settled beside the track on the way.

Titchwell was our final port of call today, though it was a fairly brief visit curtailed by the approach of a torrential rain storm. The freshmarsh was full of birds though and we enjoyed some good scope views of Bar-tailed and Black-tailed Godwits together with Knot, Dunlin and Golden Plover. A fine adult **Yellow-legged Gull** was picked out, and there were many **Mediterranean Gulls** present too, both adults and scaly-backed juveniles. **Bearded Tit** was seen, and a juv **Curlew Sandpiper** appeared close to the path with a small group of Dunlin. The highlight though was two perfect juvenile **Little Gulls** in wonderful fresh plumage – so rarely seen here – which floated past us and north towards the sea. The rain started, and sent us scuttling for cover, and rounding off our day.

TUESDAY 18TH AUGUST – *Sunny spells and SW winds, rain later 20C*

Another good, varied day in the field saw us kick off down at Kelling Water Meadows. The walk down the lane was fairly quiet but from the gate looking down into the wet meadow area, we saw four Common Snipe skulking about. The pool itself seemed quiet, until a Sparrowhawk cruised over

and flushed everything – including a juvenile **Wood Sandpiper** that had been hiding around the fringes. Thankfully it dropped back in and gave some good but brief views in alert posture on the side of the pool, before dropping back into a gulley out of view. The raptor theme continued as a Hobby appeared over Weybourne Camp and took a Swallow, before circling up above us and heading off over the valley. We skirted the north end of the pool and then headed along the edge of the camp, picking a **Yellow Wagtail** up with the cattle, and sifting through the droves of Linnets and Stonechat families to try and pick anything else out – two **Whinchats** popped up, on the fence along the coastal side of the camp, and were also joined by a Wheatear. A short gaze over the sea produced several Sandwich Terns and two Fulmars, plus a Marsh Harrier in off and second one west out over the sea. Six Common Buzzards were really high up over the coast too – perhaps already on migration. The walk back was quiet, save for several beautiful blue male Migrant Hawkers.

Cley would be our next stop, and we started by checking the pool on Snipe's Marsh – seven **Green Sandpipers** and a **Common Sandpiper** gave some nice comparisons here, but pride of place went to the magnificent **leucistic Grey Heron** perched in the edge of North Foreland plantation. Looking for all the world like a Great White Egret, its structure and thicker bill gave the game away, as well as its unusually pale legs. Heading down East Bank, we watched five juvenile Ruff and another Common Sandpiper on the Serpentine, and Arnold's Marsh hosted 80 Curlew and four Sandwich Terns. It was quite warm and muggy now, and pretty quiet generally, so we headed back to the van for lunch.

The afternoon would be spent along the coast at Titchwell, picking up where we left off yesterday afternoon. The freshmarsh now had plenty of water after the recent torrential rain storms, so there were a lot of birds concentrated onto a few small islands and so pretty tightly packed in! Mixed flocks of godwits held a **Bar-tailed Godwit** with a leg flag, from the Wash Wader Ringing scheme, and we picked out singles of Golden Plover and **Spotted Redshank**, a few Knot, and lots of Ruff. **Bearded Tits** showed really well along the reed edge from Island Hide, and a single adult **Spoonbill** was resting out in the middle. Dunlin were scarce with the higher water – just two were seen, and there was no sign of yesterdays **Curlew Sandpiper**. **Mediterranean Gulls** were again in good supply though, with plenty of juveniles on show.

We decided to take a chance on an approaching rain shower and head for the beach, though with the tide rising most of the waders were on tidal pool. Two more **Spotted Redshanks**, about fifty Turnstone and one hundred Oystercatcher were here, with a few Sanderling along the tideline. We didn't linger though, as we could see the rain approaching fast from the south-west. We made it to Island Hide, and sheltered there for ten minutes with a preening **Water Rail** for company. Two more **Spoonbills** had arrived, and a couple of **Yellow Wagtails**. A nice haul and with the passing of the rain and resultant rainbow, we headed for home.

WEDNESDAY 19TH AUGUST – *Overcast in southerly winds, rain later 19C*

Half a days' birding today before taking the clients back to West Sussex, and we decided given the quiet conditions for coastal migrants to do some birding en route south in the Brecks. Stone Curlews are very much a feature of this time of year, as they begin to gather into pre-migration flocks ready to depart. These tend to peak during late September, but we hoped to already find a few today. The area the birds had been in recently initially drew a blank, but we eventually found a large flock of Lapwings in a potato field and careful checking yielded a couple of **Stone Curlews**. Good views were had through the scope, peering through a gap in the hedge, and we even heard them indulge in a bout of noisy calling – great stuff! At Lynford, we wanted to catch up with the recent **Crossbill** flock again, and they were still favouring the same area as recently. We spent an hour watching up to sixty, feeding in conifers but also commuting over us to a stand of birch and back again. They were

typically vocal, and often perching right on the tops of the trees allowing for some good views. From here, we made the 2.5hr run south to Sussex and dropped the clients off at the end of the tour.

SYSTEMATIC LIST - BIRDS

1. Little Grebe
2. Great Cormorant
3. Grey Heron
4. Little Egret
5. Eurasian Spoonbill
6. Mute Swan
7. Greylag Goose
8. Canada Goose
9. Egyptian Goose
10. Common Shelduck
11. Mallard
12. Common Teal
13. Gadwall
14. Northern Shoveler
15. Tufted Duck
16. Common Pochard
17. Common Pheasant
18. Common Kestrel
19. Marsh Harrier
20. Common Buzzard
21. Red Kite
22. Eurasian Sparrowhawk
23. Peregrine
24. Hobby
25. Common Moorhen
26. Common Coot
27. Water Rail
28. Stone Curlew
29. Pied Avocet
30. European Oystercatcher
31. Little-ringed Plover
32. Common Ringed Plover
33. Golden Plover
34. Northern Lapwing
35. Common Redshank
36. Common Greenshank
37. Spotted Redshank
38. Eurasian Curlew
39. Whimbrel
40. Common Snipe
41. Black-tailed Godwit
42. Bar-tailed Godwit
43. Curlew Sandpiper
44. Dunlin

45. Ruff
46. Knot
47. Sanderling
48. Common Sandpiper
49. Green Sandpiper
50. Wood Sandpiper
51. Black-headed Gull
52. Little Gull
53. Herring Gull
54. Lesser Black-backed Gull
55. Great Black-backed Gull
56. Yellow-legged Gull
57. Mediterranean Gull
58. Sandwich Tern
59. Common Tern
60. Woodpigeon
61. Collared Dove
62. Stock Dove
63. Great-spotted Woodpecker
64. Common Swift
65. Skylark
66. Pied Wagtail
67. Yellow Wagtail
68. Meadow Pipit
69. Barn Swallow
70. House Martin
71. Sand Martin
72. Wren
73. European Robin
74. Common Stonechat
75. Whinchat
76. Wheatear
77. Dunnock
78. Common Blackbird
79. Sedge Warbler
80. Reed Warbler
81. Blackcap
82. Common Chiffchaff
83. Willow Warbler
84. Common Whitethroat
85. Lesser Whitethroat
86. Pied Flycatcher
87. Blue Tit
88. Great Tit
89. Marsh Tit
90. Bearded Tit
91. Rook
92. Carrion Crow
93. Western Jackdaw
94. Common Magpie
95. Jay

- 96. Common Starling
- 97. House Sparrow
- 98. Chaffinch
- 99. Goldfinch
- 100. Common Linnet
- 101. Greenfinch
- 102. Siskin
- 103. Common Crossbill
- 104. Reed Bunting
- 105. Yellowhammer