



1 CY STEPPE GREY SHRIKE (*Lanius excubitor pallidirostris*)

TOUR REPORT

Cornwall 19th – 24th Oct 2025

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Sunday 19th October

After checking in to our accommodation in St Just, the group assembled by the minibus where we said our ‘hellos’, then we boarded, to head off to our first destination of the trip, the nearby Hayle Estuary. We’d all travelled through some horrendous wet and foggy weather on our journeys earlier in the day, but fortunately this had now cleared, and we were left with a bright sunny afternoon. We arrived at the Estuary with the tide already well on the way in, and we headed first to one of the further points near Hayle itself, called the Carnsew Basin, adjacent to Asda, so plenty of parking! The levels here were already very high, but we decided to get out of the bus and have a quick look anyway. Our visit produced a **Kingfisher** which flew along the main channel towards us, before disappearing out of sight between two nearby moored boats. Several **Little Grebes**, **Grey Heron**, **Curlew** and **Bar-tailed Godwit** were the only other noteworthy birds seen and we reboarded the bus to head back towards the mouth of the estuary, parking alongside ‘Ryan’s Field’ and area adjacent to the main estuary. This is one of the last spots to flood and is managed by the RSPB and overlooked by a large hide. The tide hadn’t made much impact there, but we did note three Spoonbills, along with small numbers of **Redshank**, **Curlew** and **Bar-tailed Godwit**. We crossed over the road to view the now largely flooded estuary, spending the next hour searching through the wildfowl and remaining waders on the largely distant shoreline. One exception to this was a **Curlew Sandpiper**, tucked up tight against the bank just below where we were standing.



Curlew Sandpiper, roosting just below where we were standing.

The bird didn't look overly unhealthy, but its behaviour would imply things maybe weren't quite right.

Other more noteworthy birds seen during this period included two **Shelduck**, three **Pintail** and a handful of **Shoveler**, all found amongst the much larger number of **Wigeon** and **Teal**. A winter plumaged **Spotted Redshank** was found feeding alongside its commoner cousins, and a sleeping redheaded **Goosander** was a surprise addition. We also logged a healthy number of **Greenshank**, ten in total, and a solitary **dark-bellied Brent Goose**.

Monday 20th October

With the forecast predicting a wet windy day ahead, we were pleasantly surprised when the rain eased and stopped just after breakfast, which coincided nicely with our departure for the day. Today was in fact going too far exceed our expectations weatherwise, with blue sky and sun appearing on occasion too. The wind remained strong though, switching from South-westerly to a North-westerly by the end of the day. With the wind in mind, we started the day by heading to Porthgwarra for some sea watching. Arriving at the site we positioned ourselves in the mouth of the cove, which was well sheltered, added by the fact the wind had already shifted more to the west, which unfortunately wasn't ideal. **Gannets** were immediately obvious as they drifted past over the sea, and we managed to note several **Manx Shearwaters**, **Razorbills** and **Guillemots** during our time looking out. We then deposited the scopes back in the bus, and set off for a walk along the valley. We walked up along the entrance road and then out across the fields, before completing a loop back to the bus. The first piece of woodland coupled with the nearby gardens, proved the most productive, with at least four, maybe as many as six, **Firecrest** in the area, which gave us some great views as they chased each other around.



We saw at least four Firecrest during our visit to Porthgwarra.

Their commoner **Goldcrest** cousins were also easily seen, along with good numbers of **Chiffchaff**, and a male **Blackcap** was noted too. We concluded our visit just before midday and decided to head back to the Hayle Estuary for lunch, in the hope a slightly lower tide would produce some new trip birds. We paused for lunch sat in the hide at Ryan's Field, with the area in front of us virtually devoid of birds, though we did note two **Spoonbills** and a **Kingfisher**.



We enjoyed nice, close views of this Spoonbill as we ate lunch.

Looking out next over the estuary next, added a couple of new species as hoped, namely **Ruff** and **Ringed Plover**, though generally things were very much bird wise, as they had been the day before. Moving onto Hayle itself, we again looked in again at Carnsew Basin, before moving onto nearby Copper House Creek, with a small selection of expected species seen at both. News then reached us of a reported Icterine Warbler at Pendeen Lighthouse, and with the news only thirty minutes old we decided to drive over to try and see it. We arrived to find the wind was now blowing strongly over the area, which offered us no real hope of relocating the warbler. On the plus side looking down onto the sea below us, we could a steady stream of seabirds filing past. We decided to give up on the warbler and finish the day as we'd started with some sea watching. Over the next hour or so thousands of seabirds streamed past. **Razorbills** and **Guillemots** were seemingly the most numerous, though with equally impressive numbers of **Kittiwakes** and **Gannets** too. Smaller numbers of **Manx Shearwaters** were also picked out, as well as three **Arctic Skuas** one of which was watched mercilessly harassing a **Kittiwake**, undoubtedly trying to encourage it to drop its food.

Tuesday 21st October

The forecast was for a largely dry day ahead and with this in mind; we decided to spend the day exploring some of the nearby coves and valleys. After breakfast we made the short drive to the first of these, Kenidjack Cove, parking a short way in along the entrance track, before heading off down into the valley heading towards the sea. The valley here is well vegetated, though most of it spread quite loosely, making it a realistic area to cover well. We spent the next couple of hours doing just that, with the rewards for our effort, two **Sparrowhawks**, two **Grey Wagtails**, a tricky and elusive **Firecrest**, a **Great Spotted Woodpecker** and our first **Raven** of the trip. We also encountered good numbers of **Chiffchaffs**, with vocal birds seemingly in most areas of cover and invariably accompanied by a Goldcrest or two. Our next destination for the day was Sennen Cove with us walking out along the coastal path, having lunch at Lands End, before returning to Sennen via a more inland route. The highlight of the trip here was undoubtedly the **Choughs**, with birds accompanying us constantly as we walked along, calling above us, to then tumble down towards the sea.



A 'tumbling Chough', a species we encountered in impressive numbers.

The local corvids had clearly had a very good breeding season and at one point a large flock of around forty birds flew past. We were expecting it to be comprised of a mixture of **Choughs** and **Jackdaws** but were pleasantly surprised to find it was comprised solely of **Choughs**! A **Wheatear**, several **Stonechats** and a **Kestrel** were all noted on the walk back, and on arriving back in Sennen we spent some time looking out over the sea from the seafront. A **Black Redstart** had been reported earlier and after a short while our patience paid off and the bird appeared. Our group had become split up at this stage, and we tried in vain to attract the attention of the others, though we needn't have worried as unbeknown to us they had also found another **Black Redstart**, two hundred yards further along the beach!



One of the two Black Redstarts the group saw.

We finished the day at Cot Valley, which was a very enjoyable walk in the afternoon sun, but birding wise things were quiet, with another brief **Firecrest** and a handful of the **Chiffchaffs** and **Goldcrests** the best we could find.

Wednesday 22nd October

With a favourable weather forecast we decided to head to the Lizard peninsula today, with an added draw there, a **Steppe Grey Shrike**, which had been the area for the last few days. As we ate breakfast, a bird news update confirmed this was still very much the case, so we set off after breakfast for the Lizard and Mullion Cove, its chosen location for its stay. As we passed through Penzance and out towards Helston, a herd of cattle in a roadside field were found to be in the company of a flock of twenty-five Cattle Egrets, very much a welcome addition for the day. Arriving at Mullion we parked and walked down to the cove, then up the steep coastal path to join a small crowd of birders at the top. The bird had been seen some fifteen minutes earlier but had now disappeared. We patiently waited and were rewarded with the bird being located deep in the centre of a bramble bush. Views weren't brilliant, but we could at least see it and make the bird's salient features primarily its pale bill and reduced eye mask. After a while the bird did the decent thing, moving up through the bush to appear on top, then moving again to give us perfect, unobstructed views sat out on some near rocks. We wandered back down to the cove, with several of the group partaking in celebratory coffee and cake before we boarded the bus again to head onto Lizard Village. We'd nearly arrived when a message came in to say a **Dusky Warbler** had been found close-by, ironically in the area we were planning to walk to. After parking we set off in pursuit and some fifteen minutes later, we were stood staring into a small line of Willow saplings and bramble. It appeared we'd set off with too much haste, as Helen and Simon who'd been at the rear of the group, had, had the good fortune of seeing several **Ring**

Ouzels, including a smart male. The **Dusky Warbler** meanwhile was behaving in a typical manner, calling periodically as it moved about in the deeper cover, making trying to see it a real challenge! Several of the group gained brief glimpses but it wasn't until the bird moved into an isolated patch of brambles and flew back out that we were all were able to at least see it in flight. A calling **Water Rail** was a surprise, clearly drawn into the area by the small pool of reed edged water nearby. By now there was a few spots of rain in the air, so we headed back to the bus for a late lunch, noting at least three male **Blackcaps** and more **Choughs** on the way, though unfortunately no sign of the earlier Ring Ouzels. The rain by now was falling heavily and after lunch we set off to nearby Church Cove, hoping the trees there may give some shelter and some birds too. Unfortunately, we achieved neither, and reluctantly accepted defeat and we set off towards our base at St Just. We had one more stop in mind on the way though, the small boating lake on the edge of the town of Helston. The lake has a history of attracting unusual birds and today was no exception, with a 1CY male **Ring-necked Duck** having taken up residence there. We found the duck without too much trouble, with initial impressions not quite as expected, with the bird in a plumage we rarely see, though the expected 'banded bill' was easy to see.



1CY Drake Ring-necked Duck in the heavy rain!

We made one more speculative stop on the way back, at Marizion, with us stopping for a while to look out to sea from the beach carpark, and with the rain still falling heavily this was done from the comfort of the bus. Far from ideal, but we did manage to find two female type **Common Scoters**, and several **Turnstones** and a **Ringed Plover** along the beach.

Thursday 23rd October

We woke to the sound of the wind this morning, an obvious increase in strength, and predicted to be like that all day. They had forecasted rain at times too, but they had fortunately got that largely wrong. After breakfast we set off to our first destination of the day, Drift Reservoir. We set off along the path from dam along the western edge to the small hide nestled in the Northwest corner. We didn't see too much along the way, largely due to the wind, though we did hear several **Goldcrests** calling in the path side bushes. We settled into the hide with a large flock of **Canada Geese** immediately noted in the Northern corner. A look through these revealed several duck species with them, namely **Gadwall**, **Teal** and **Wigeon**, and as we continue to check the general area, we also noted at least four **Little Grebes** and two **Little Egrets**. A small shorebird was spotted on the far bank and identified as a **Common Sandpiper** and another new trip addition followed shortly after in the form of a **Great crested Grebe**. We returned to the bus heading off next to Marazion and the RSPB reserve there. On arrival our first stop was a look out over the sea, though with so many surfers enjoying the conditions just offshore birds were in short supply! A look further along the beach though did reveal a feeding flock **Turnstones**, accompanied by a small flock of **Sanderlings**. A Coffee break followed to avoid a rain squall, though the squall was so brief we all felt a bit guilty sitting in the sunshine ten minutes later rather than being out birding! We did resume our birding though, walking over the road to view the marsh from the footpath. One species we'd hoped for here was **Jack Snipe** and today was to be our lucky day with us finding one almost immediately. We enjoyed some great views of it as it bounced up and down feeding on the edge of some cut reeds.



Cryptically coloured Jack Snipe feeding on the edge of the reeds.

We then spent the next hour or so walking through the reserve itself, and although our list wasn't exhaustive, we did gain some appreciated additions. These included several

‘heards’ in the form of **Cetti’s Warbler** and **Water Rail** and ‘seens’ such as **Green Woodpecker**, **Cattle Egret**, **Bullfinch** and **Stonechat**. After lunch we headed north to our next destination St Gothian’s Sands. The site hosts a small freshwater pool which has an impressive suite of unusual sightings attributed to it, so is always worth checking out. Today though there was little of note, just the expected selection of gulls and commoner water birds. The day was close to ending, and with the wind still blowing strongly from the west we decided to head to Pendeen for the last hour of the day. We arrived at the lighthouse to find we were the only birders there, so we settled ourselves down in front the walled surround of the lighthouse out the wind. There was a steady movement of birds passing, though not as busy as our previous visit. The bulk of the birds were the same though, **Guillemots**, **Razorbills**, **Kittiwakes**, **Gannets** and the occasional small group of **Manx Shearwater**. We also noted two small flocks of **Common Scoters** too.



Gannets were a regular feature during our sea watches.

Friday 24th October

The wind hadn’t abated much overnight, and at times during the day it seemed to have increased, which made for a challenging day! On the plus side we had very little rain, with sun and blue skies with us for the bulk of the day. We started out after breakfast, making the short drive to nearby Nanquido Valley, parking and then heading around the site in a large loop. Walking down the main track we cut off out to head down to the sea, walking a short way along the coastal path before heading back inland to complete the circuit. Highlights of the walk included a **Firecrest**, which was literally the first bird we set eyes on, two **Blackcaps**, two **Chough**, and single **Stonechat** and **Chiffchaff**, not the most productive of walks, but pleasant all the same, and as the day progressed, we realised we’d done quite well. Porthgwarra was our next destination, where we again walked around in a large loop, heading up onto the cliff top on the coastal path, and then walking back inland to the car park. The cliff top was very windy and the only birds

we saw were a few **Gannets** offshore, several **Jackdaws** and a **Chough**. The inland part of the route was similar, with the areas such as the dried-out pools and sixty-foot cover only producing a few **Chiffchaffs** and **Goldcrests**. Lunch followed next, after which we drove out the valley to stop at nearby Polgigga for an afternoon walk there, which involved a walk along a tree-lined lane leading eventually down to Nanjizal Valley. Disappointingly again, it was windy and seemingly largely bird less, a **Grey Wagtail** the best we managed. We returned to the bus and headed to the next cove along, Porthcurno, which unfortunately again yielded a negative result. The day was nearly over, and a last roll of the dice saw us returning to St Just to finish the day with a speculative half hour at Kenidjack Valley. Unsurprisingly we had the same disappointment there, a frustrating day to say the least, but we'd certainly tried!

Saturday 25th October

Our last morning and a relatively short one from a birding perspective, and after struggling yesterday for passerines we decided to head back to the Hayle Estuary. After packing our bags in the vehicles and checking out of the guesthouse, we set off, to find we had timed our arrival perfectly. We started at Ryan's Field which was surprisingly quiet, a colour ringed adult **Spoonbill**, (ringed in Denmark), four **Little Egrets**, a dozen or so **Curlews** and a brief **Kingfisher** the best of it. We walked over the road to view the Estuary and as we hoped the tide was dropping and the birds were appearing in good numbers. Mainly wildfowl, largely **Teal** and **Wigeon** and gulls, but a few more interesting things including around ten **Greenshank** and three **Brent Geese**, the dark-bellied bird we'd seen before and two pale-bellied individuals. A young **Peregrine** was a welcome addition too, regularly sweeping over the area regularly disturbing the feeding birds.



1CY Peregrine, which entertained us, regularly swooping down over the estuary.

We moved onto Copperhouse Creek, adding another new bird to the trip list, **Grey Plover**, with three seen, with several **Greenshank** and seven **Dunlin** also in residence. We'd run out of time, so we headed back to the Guesthouse to collect our cars and set off on our journey's home. As we did so one member of the group, Andy, spotted four **Common Snipe** flying over, a welcome last addition to our list.

ORIOLE BIRDING CORNWALL AUTUMN MIGRATION 2025

*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	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	Comments
1	Canada Goose	<i>Branta canadensis</i>	X	X		X	X		X	
2	Mute Swan	<i>Cygnus olor</i>				X	X			
3	Common Shelduck	<i>Tadorna tadorna</i>	X	X					X	
4	Northern Shoveler	<i>Spatula clypeata</i>	X			X				
5	Gadwall	<i>Mareca strepera</i>					X			
6	Eurasian Wigeon	<i>Mareca penelope</i>	X	X			X		X	
7	Mallard	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>	X	X		X	X	X	X	
8	Northern Pintail	<i>Anas acuta</i>	X	X					X	
9	Eurasian Teal	<i>Anas crecca</i>	X	X		X	X		X	
10	Tufted Duck	<i>Aythya fuligula</i>				X	X			
11	Common Scoter	<i>Melanitta nigra</i>				X	X			
12	Common Pheasant	<i>Phasianus colchicus</i>		X		H				
13	Little Grebe	<i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>	X	X			X			
14	Great Crested Grebe	<i>Podiceps cristatus</i>					X			
15	Manx Shearwater	<i>Puffinus puffinus</i>		X			X			
16	Northern Gannet	<i>Morus bassanus</i>		X	X	X	X	X		
17	Great Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>	X	X			X		X	
18	European Shag	<i>Phalacrocorax aristotelis</i>		X	X	X	X	X		
19	Grey Heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>	X	X	X		X		X	
20	Little Egret	<i>Egretta garzetta</i>	X	X	X	X	X		X	

50	Common Woodpigeon	<i>Columba palumbus</i>		X	X	X	X	X	X			
51	Collared Dove	<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>		X			X		X			
52	Common Kingfisher	<i>Alcedo atthis</i>		X	X					X		
53	Great Spotted Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos major</i>				X		H				
54	Eurasian Green Woodpecker	<i>Picus viridis</i>						X				
55	Common Kestrel	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>				X	X		X			
56	Peregrine Falcon	<i>Falco peregrinus</i>								X		
57	Eurasian Jay	<i>Garrulus glandarius</i>		X				X				
58	Common Magpie	<i>Pica pica</i>		X	X	X	X	X	X	X		
59	Red-billed Chough	<i>Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax</i>				X	X		X			
60	Eurasian Jackdaw	<i>Corvus monedula</i>		X	X	X	X	X	X	X		
61	Rook	<i>Corvus frugilegus</i>		X	X	X	X	X	X	X		
62	Carrion Crow	<i>Corvus corone</i>		X	X	X	X	X	X	X		
63	Common Raven	<i>Corvus corax</i>				X		X				
64	Eurasian Skylark	<i>Alauda arvensis</i>				X	X	X	X			
65	Eurasian Blue Tit	<i>Cyanistes caeruleus</i>		X	X	X	X	X	X			
66	Great Tit	<i>Parus major</i>		X	X	X	X	X	X			
67	Long-tailed Tit	<i>Aegithalos caudatus</i>		X	X		X	X	X	X		
68	Eurasian Wren	<i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>		X	X	X	X	X	X	X		
69	Goldcrest	<i>Regulus regulus</i>		X	X	X	X	X	X	X		
70	Firecrest	<i>Regulus ignicapilla</i>			X	X			X			
71	Cetti's Warbler	<i>Cettia cetti</i>						H				
72	Common Chiffchaff	<i>Phylloscopus collybita</i>		X	X	X	X	X	X	X		
73	Eurasian Blackcap	<i>Sylvia atricapilla</i>			X		X		X			
74	European Robin	<i>Erithacus rubecula</i>		X	X	X	X	X	X	X		
75	Black Redstart	<i>Phoenicurus ochruros</i>				X						
76	European Stonechat	<i>Saxicola rubicola</i>				X	X	X	X			
77	Northern Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe oenanthe</i>				X						
78	Ring Ouzel	<i>Turdus torquatus</i>					X					

79	Eurasian Blackbird	<i>Turdus merula</i>		X	X	X	X	X	X			
80	Common Starling	<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>		X	X	X	X	X	X	X		
81	Dunnock	<i>Prunella modularis</i>		X	X	X	X	X	X			
82	Grey Wagtail	<i>Motacilla cinerea</i>		X	X	X	X	X	X			
83	Pied Wagtail	<i>Motacilla alba</i>		X	X	X	X	X	X	X		
84	Meadow Pipit	<i>Anthus pratensis</i>			X	X	X	X	X			
85	Rock Pipit	<i>Anthus petrosus</i>		X	X	X	X	X	X	X		
86	Common Reed Bunting	<i>Emberiza schoeniclus</i>						X				
87	Common Chaffinch	<i>Fringilla coelebs</i>		X	X	X	X	X	X	X		
88	Eurasian Bullfinch	<i>Pyrrhula pyrrhula</i>						X				
89	European Greenfinch	<i>Chloris chloris</i>		X	X	X	X	X	X	X		
90	Common Linnet	<i>Linaria cannabina</i>					X	X	X			
91	European Goldfinch	<i>Carduelis carduelis</i>		X	X	X	X	X	X	X		
92	Eurasian Siskin	<i>Spinus spinus</i>				X		H				
93	House Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>		X	X	X	X	X	X	X		
94	Barnacle Goose			X	X							
95	Dark bellied Brent Goose			X	X					X		
96	Pale bellied Brent Goose									X		
97	Spotted Redshank			X								
98	Spoonbill			X	X					X		
99	Goosander			X								
100	Curlew Sandpiper			X	X							
101	Sooty Shearwater				X							
102	Tawny Owl					H						
103	Dusky Warbler						X					
104	Steppe Grey Shrike						X					
105	Ring-necked Duck						X					
106	Cattle Egret						X	X				
107	Jack Snipe							X				

[illegible]