



TOUR REPORT

Brilliant Brecks and Bee-eaters

28th June – 1st July 2023

www.oriolobirding.com

info@oriolobirding.com

29th June

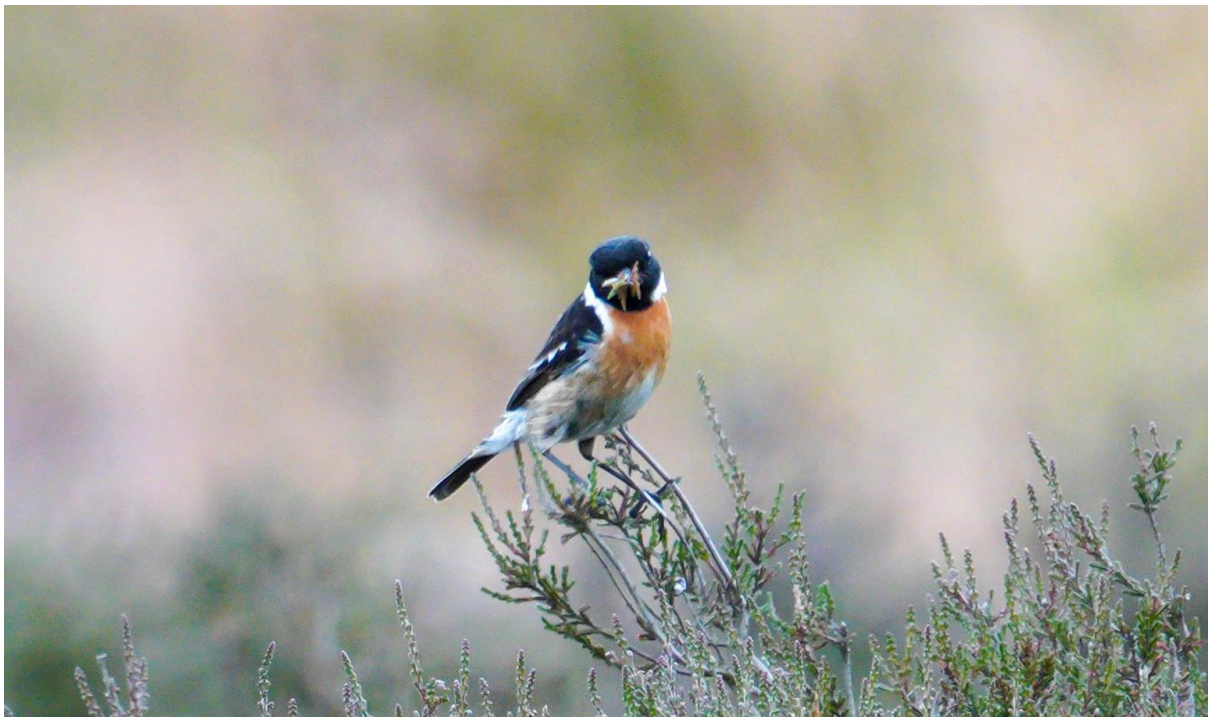
A somewhat challenging start to the trip, as the end of previous two weeks Mediterranean type weather had chosen to 'break' with the start of our trip! This meant heavy rain, with us rigged out in waterproof clothing, as opposed to the shorts and T-shirts we'd become accustomed to. Unperturbed Gary collected the group from their hotel in Mundford, with our destination for the day, the North Norfolk coast and eventually the hoped for Bee-eaters, which in many ways were the focus of the tour. A few speculative stops were made along the way for farmland birds, but this produced very little other than some Red-legged Partridges, the expected Corvid flocks, and a rather smart male Yellowhammer. Arriving at the coast our first destination was Cley Nature reserve and a quick visit to the Visitors Centre plus a look out over the pool visible from there. Avocets and Black-tailed Godwits were easily seen, along with several Lapwings and Shelducks and whilst we were watching three Spoonbills arrived, though only one remained visible, and in typical manner promptly went to sleep. A walk out along the iconic East Bank path was next with the rain by this time having started to ease and by the time we'd walked halfway along the path it had stopped. We scanned the marsh to the east, noting another Spoonbill, Avocets, Teal, and Black-tailed Godwits on the pools with several closer birds along the waterway cutting through the site too. Reed and Sedge Warblers could be heard singing in the reeds and scrub along the western side of the path, and the occasional 'pinging' call of a Bearded Tit could also be heard. Sand Martins were a constant feature, flying back and forth over the path, and a Yellow Wagtail was found in amongst some nearby Pied. As we neared the sea we looked out over the large wet marsh to the east, called Arnold's Marsh. Immediately obvious was around fifty Sandwich Terns sat on a sand bar, and a closer look revealed a single Common Tern sat in amongst them. Several Ringed Plovers and Redshanks and a moulting Ruff were also seen. A look at the sea revealed a solitary male Common Scoter sat on the water and several Sandwich Terns were noted flying past, along with a few Little Terns. A walk along the shingle took us to North Scrape next which is sited on the northern edge of the reserve. A small viewing screen overlooks it, and a look from there revealed four Dunlin, six Ruff plus several more Ringed Plover as well as two Little Ringed. We returned the way we had come, and as we walked along the East Bank at least four Bearded Tits flew across the path giving us some nice views. A short drive took us to our next stop at nearby Salhouse to look on a large pool there. A mix of gulls were immediately obvious, then two waders flew briefly along edge and on landing were identified as Wood Sandpipers. A pair of Marsh Harriers nearby were gratefully received and living in Norfolk its often easy to forget how rare there are in other parts of the country.

Next was the Bee-eaters, with the site they were using being another thirty minutes' drive along the coast. Arriving at the site we climbed out bus and promptly saw the first Bee-eater sat distantly on the telegraph wires that run across the site. We walked over to the main viewing area and enjoyed much closer views of all three of the birds in residence at the site. The birds were often sat on the wires but would fly also around calling and drop down to visit their nest hole. We had our lunch here too, and other birds noted during our visit, included a flock of confiding Long-tailed Tits and a Hobby.



One of several Silver-studded Blues that we saw.

Nearby Kelling Heath was next, with us taking a walk out onto heath and it wasn't long before we were enjoying views of the first of several Silver-studded Blues we were to see. A short walk further along revealed a male Stonechat sat out on top of a gorse bush, then the sound of a singing male Dartford Warbler was heard.



Male Stonechat at Kelling Heath

We had to work to find it, but it eventually appeared with several others, seemingly a family party, noted flitting around the undergrowth nearby. We then returned to the the bus, noting a showy and vocal Coal Tit family along the way.

30th June

A slightly different twist on the day for us today with a prebreakfast visit on the cards to nearby Lynford Arboretum. We walked down through the arboretum to a small well vegetated lake, pausing briefly there before taking a slightly different route back. A singing Marsh Tit appeared briefly on some wires, followed by a second as it flew off into a nearby tree, with the same tree producing an active Goldcrest higher in the canopy. Nuthatch and GSW joined the 'heard' list, as did Reed Warbler, Little Grebe and Moorhen, these latter birds hidden deep in the reeds on the lake. Several siskins flew over, and a singing Song Thrush was found perched out on a treetop.



Tree Pipit, this bird w still able to sing even with a full beak of food!

After breakfast a short drive took us to a large forest clearing and a walk out to view it, revealed at least three singing Tree Pipits, Stonechat, Common Buzzard, Yellowhammer and Whitethroat. Our next stop was an area of scrubland close to Lakenheath RSPB reserve, which holds a small population of Nightingales. We knew Nightingale would very much be a long shot this late in the season, but if you don't try as they say! On arrival another butterfly joined our list, a rather fresh-looking Painted Lady, and after parking we walked out along the path at the edge of the area. Blackcap and Whitethroat could be heard singing and a Garden Warbler appeared briefly in view. With no sign of a Nightingale, we returned along the path and as we did so a single "chaffinch" like contact call could be heard coming from the base of a nearby Hawthorn. We stood listening trying to see the bird, it then let out a soft croak, confirming its identity as a Nightingale. It remained hidden from view, eventually leaving the bush unseen, and heard moving further away and deeper into cover. A slightly different route back saw us adding Bullfinch to our trip list with a calling bird eventually breaking cover and flying past us. We moved onto the RSPB reserve timing our arrival perfectly to coincide with the moth trap being opened. As always Katherine, one of the wardens, was keen to show us what she'd caught, with the catch including several Poplar

Hawkmoths plus a range of species that included Swallow Prominent, Figure of Eighty, Spectacled Moth, Common Emerald, Dark Arches and Bright-line Brown-eye.

A walk round the reserve followed, with us pausing to visit the two watchpoints and hide along the way. The mornings highlights consisted of two Hobbies, a family of Pochard, singing Cetti's Warblers, two Great Egrets and a bubbling female Cuckoo, which called by the path just as we walked past, though it remained unseen clearly hidden deep in the reeds. Odonata additions included both Common Blue, Azure and Red-eyed Damselflies and Ruddy Darter, Four-spotted and Emperor Dragonflies. We arrived back at the Visitors Centre which coincided with a Kingfisher appearing on a post in the pond adjacent to it. Lunch was followed by a look at the washland area, and with water levels still very high species diversity was limited being mainly comprised of Mute Swans, Gadwall and Mallard. A single Shoveler was found amongst the latter and two Little Egrets were found feeding in the vegetation at the water's edge. A change of habitat next, with a short drive taking us to the Norfolk Wildlife Trust reserve at Weeting Heath. A walk through the wooded area to the hide saw lots of noise and activity from several parties of Coal, Blue and Great tits plus a family of Treecreepers. Arriving at the hide we looked out to view area of shorter vegetation in amongst the longer grass, where our hoped-for species Stone Curlew was found.



The pair of nesting Stone Curlews

One bird was sat on a nest and a second bird stood close by, with a third bird discovered later as well. A pair of Oystercatchers were also found, one bird brooding some freshly hatched chicks, and two Mistle Thrushes hopped around in typical fashion on the edge of the area too. With just enough time to fit in one more site we set off again, this time heading for an area of heath just outside Brandon.

A new site for Gary and unsure what we'd find we set off to explore, though the habitat looking very promising from the outset. We walked out across the heath noting several Stonechats and a Jay, followed by a Hobby that flew across in front of us to land in view on the top of conifer tree. A male Sparrowhawk followed next, taking a low approach across the heather before again landing in view in a nearby tree. Our last addition here though was a pair of Woodlark with the birds taking off by the side of the path, dropping back into the

heather and out of view. We had seen where they had landed though, and as we patiently stood searching, we were rewarded with one bird reappearing to perch on top of the heather.



Great views eventually of Woodlark.

We returned to the hotel for dinner, with a Nightjar excursion planned for later, though the weather had changed for the worse and with rain falling whilst we ate it didn't look overly promising. Luck was again on our side though, with the rain having stopped as we left. Parking by the road we walked through a section of woodland before emerging on the edge of a large area of clear-fell. The last Song Thrushes and Blackcaps could be heard singing along with a Cuckoo, and as the light started to fade, we didn't have to wait long before the first Nightjar started to Churr. We were then treated to an impressive ariel display, as birds flew over and around us with at least six birds heard and seen in total.

1st July

Our last day saw us checking out of the hotel and placing bags in the cars, before heading off once again to the North Norfolk coast. The weather had again changed, and now we were faced with a strong westerly wind, which wasn't ideal for our choice of destination. That said a selection of bushes and two hides meant we were able to shelter to a degree. The tide was low which meant any birds were spread widely over the area, and an initial scan revealed hundreds, if not several thousand shelducks, scattered widely over the area. Further searching revealed Curlew, Avocet, and Redshank, plus a feeding group of eight Spoonbills in one of the tidal creeks. Ringed plover and Oystercatchers with young were very much a positive, especially with all the doom and gloom we read about their breeding success nowadays. We walked on to the Rotary hide which gave us a nice view out over the extensive pools there. Large numbers of Black-headed Gulls and Greylag Geese were immediately noted, but looking more carefully we picked out eleven Spotted Redshanks in

amongst some partially submerged rocks, looking particularly smart in their retained black breeding plumage. Our time in the hide also produced around thirty Mediterranean Gulls on one of the islands, which included some well-developed young.



Smart is an understatement with these adult Mediterranean Gulls.

Small numbers of Barnacle Geese, around 300 Black-tailed Godwit and a male wigeon found asleep on one of the islands completed our visits, and we returned to the bus for an early lunch. As we approached the carpark, we briefly heard our first Turtle Dove, though the strong wind meant the bird remained hidden. After lunch we walked out along the raised seawall and footpath separating Snettisham Country Park and Ken Hill Marsh hoping for more Turtle Doves. As we walked along the path a vocal Song Thrush was immediately obvious as was several family parties of Goldfinches and Greenfinches on the telegraph wires and around the nearby bushes. A flock of pigeons took flight, initially appearing to be Woodpigeons but a closer look revealed at least two Turtle Doves with them, an encouraging start. The birds alighted briefly, enabling several of the group to get a half decent, albeit distant, views of them. We continued our walk, noting several more flying Turtle Doves. At this stage we concluded we probably wouldn't improve on our views, and we were grateful for the ones we had, had. Then our luck changed and as we started to descend the slope back to where the bus was parked, a Turtle Dove started singing, with the bird having appeared on the wires behind us! We then enjoyed the sort of views we'd hoped for, with the bird eventually taking off from the wires to do a series of display flights before finally disappearing.



Finally, the views of Turtle Dove we were hoping for.

One last stop of the day was on the way back to the Crown, to a small privately run nature reserve on the outskirts of the village of Flitcham, where a small hide overlooks a large field with a small river running through it. Oystercatcher and Moorhen were noted on the river and at least one Reed Warbler could be heard singing from the small nearby reedbed, which it transpired was also the home of a pair of Marsh Harriers, with the female flying out whilst we watched. A look over the nearby farmland from the road, gave us further views of the Marsh Harrier along with three Red Kites and four Red-legged Partridges were noted amongst the large numbers of Woodpigeons on view. We arrived back at the Crown as planned, where we said our goodbyes and started our respective journeys home.



Two of the 'Trimingham Trio'

Oriole Birding

Norfolk Brilliant Brecks & Bee-eaters

28th June - 1st July 2023

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	29	30	1
Anatidae (Ducks, Geese, and Waterfowl)					
1	Canada Goose	<i>Branta canadensis</i>		X	X
2	Barnacle Goose	<i>Branta leucopsis</i>			X
3	Greylag Goose	<i>Anser anser</i>	X	X	X
4	Mute Swan	<i>Cygnus olor</i>	X	X	X
5	Egyptian Goose	<i>Alopochen aegyptiaca</i>	X		X
6	Shelduck	<i>Tadorna tadorna</i>	X		X
7	Shoveler	<i>Spatula clypeata</i>		X	
8	Gadwall	<i>Mareca strepera</i>	X	X	
9	Wigeon	<i>Mareca penelope</i>			X
10	Mallard	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>	X	X	X
11	Teal	<i>Anas crecca</i>	X		
12	Pochard	<i>Aythya ferina</i>		X	
13	Tufted Duck	<i>Aythya fuligula</i>		X	X
14	Common Scoter	<i>Melanitta nigra</i>	X		
15	Red-legged Partridge	<i>Alectoris rufa</i>	X		X
16	Pheasant	<i>Phasianus colchicus</i>	X	X	X
17	Little Grebe	<i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>	X	X	
18	Great Crested Grebe	<i>Podiceps cristatus</i>		X	
19	Spoonbill	<i>Platalea leucorodia</i>	X		X
20	Grey Heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>	X	X	X
21	Great White Egret	<i>Ardea alba</i>		X	
22	Little Egret	<i>Egretta garzetta</i>	X	X	X
23	Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>	X	X	X
24	Sparrowhawk	<i>Accipiter nisus</i>		X	
25	Marsh Harrier	<i>Circus aeruginosus</i>	X	X	X
26	Red Kite	<i>Milvus milvus</i>	X		X
27	Buzzard	<i>Buteo buteo</i>	X	X	X
28	Moorhen	<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>		X	X
29	Coot	<i>Fulica atra</i>	X	X	X
30	Stone-curlew	<i>Burhinus oedipnemos</i>		X	
31	Oystercatcher	<i>Haematopus ostralegus</i>	X	X	X
32	Avocet	<i>Recurvirostra avosetta</i>	X		X
33	Lapwing	<i>Vanellus vanellus</i>	X	X	X
34	Ringed Plover	<i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>	X		X

#	Common Name	Scientific Name	29	30	1	
35	Little Ringed Plover	<i>Charadrius dubius</i>	X			
36	Curlew	<i>Numenius arquata</i>	X		X	
37	Black-tailed Godwit	<i>Limosa limosa</i>	X		X	
38	Ruff	<i>Calidris pugnax</i>	X			
39	Dunlin	<i>Calidris alpina</i>	X			
40	Redshank	<i>Tringa totanus</i>	X		X	
41	Wood Sandpiper	<i>Tringa glareola</i>	X			
42	Spotted Redshank	<i>Tringa erythropus</i>			X	
43	Black-headed Gull	<i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i>	X	X	X	
44	Mediterranean Gull	<i>Larus melanocephalus</i>			X	
45	Common Gull	<i>Larus canus</i>	X			
46	Great Black-backed Gull	<i>Larus marinus</i>	X			
47	Herring Gull	<i>Larus argentatus</i>	X	X	X	
48	Lesser Black-backed Gull	<i>Larus fuscus</i>	X	X	X	
49	Sandwich Tern	<i>Thalasseus sandvicensis</i>	X		X	
50	Little Tern	<i>Sternula albifrons</i>	X			
51	Common Tern	<i>Sterna hirundo</i>	X		X	
52	Rock Dove (Feral Pigeon)	<i>Columba livia</i>	X	X	X	
53	Stock Dove	<i>Columba oenas</i>	X	X	X	
54	Woodpigeon	<i>Columba palumbus</i>	X	X	X	
55	Turtle Dove	<i>Streptopelia turtur</i>			X	
56	Collared Dove	<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>	X	X	X	
57	Cuckoo	<i>Cuculus canorus</i>		H		
58	Nightjar	<i>Caprimulgus europaeus</i>		X		
59	Swift	<i>Apus apus</i>	X	X	X	
60	Kingfisher	<i>Alcedo atthis</i>		X		
61	European Bee-eater	<i>Merops apiaster</i>	X			
62	Great Spotted Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos major</i>		H		
63	Kestrel	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>	X	X	X	
64	Hobby	<i>Falco subbuteo</i>	X	X		
65	Jay	<i>Garrulus glandarius</i>		X	X	
66	Magpie	<i>Pica pica</i>	X	X		
67	Jackdaw	<i>Coloeus monedula</i>	X	X	X	
68	Rook	<i>Corvus frugilegus</i>	X	X	X	
69	Carrion Crow	<i>Corvus corone</i>	X	X	X	
70	Coal Tit	<i>Parus ater</i>	X	X		
71	Marsh Tit	<i>Poecile palustris</i>		X		
72	Blue Tit	<i>Cyanistes caeruleus</i>	X	X	X	
73	Great Tit	<i>Parus major</i>	H	X	X	
74	Bearded Tit	<i>Panurus biarmicus</i>	X			
75	Woodlark	<i>Lullula arborea</i>		X		
76	Skylark	<i>Alauda arvensis</i>	X	X	X	
77	Swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>	X	X	X	
78	Sand Martin	<i>Riparia riparia</i>	X	X	X	

#	Common Name	Scientific Name	29	30	1	
79	House Martin	<i>Delichon urbicum</i>	X	X	X	
80	Cetti's Warbler	<i>Cettia cetti</i>		H	X	
81	Long-tailed Tit	<i>Aegithalos caudatus</i>	X	X	H	
82	Willow Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus trochilus</i>	H	H		
83	Chiffchaff	<i>Phylloscopus collybita</i>	H	X	X	
84	Sedge Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus schoenobaenus</i>	X	X	X	
85	Reed Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus scirpaceus</i>	X	X	H	
86	Blackcap	<i>Sylvia atricapilla</i>	H	H	H	
87	Garden Warbler	<i>Sylvia borin</i>		X		
88	Whitethroat	<i>Sylvia communis</i>	H	X	H	
89	Dartford Warbler	<i>Sylvia undata</i>	X			
90	Goldcrest	<i>Regulus regulus</i>		X	X	
91	Wren	<i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>	H	X	X	
92	Nuthatch	<i>Sitta europaea</i>		H		
93	Treecreeper	<i>Certhia familiaris</i>		X		
94	Starling	<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>	X	X	X	
95	Blackbird	<i>Turdus merula</i>	X	X	X	
96	Song Thrush	<i>Turdus philomelos</i>		X	H	
97	Mistle Thrush	<i>Turdus viscivorus</i>		X		
98	Robin	<i>Erithacus rubecula</i>	H	X	X	
99	Stonechat	<i>Saxicola rubicola</i>	X	X		
100	Nightingale	<i>Luscinia megarhychos</i>		H		
101	House Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>	X	X	X	
102	Dunnock	<i>Prunella modularis</i>	H	X	X	
103	Yellow Wagtail	<i>Motacilla flava</i>	X			
104	Pied Wagtail	<i>Motacilla alba</i>	X	X	X	
105	Meadow Pipit	<i>Anthus pratensis</i>	X			
106	Tree Pipit	<i>Anthus trivialis</i>		X		
107	Chaffinch	<i>Fringilla coelebs</i>	X	X	X	
108	Bullfinch	<i>Pyrrhula pyrrhula</i>		X		
109	Greenfinch	<i>Chloris chloris</i>	X	X	X	
110	Linnet	<i>Linaria cannabina</i>	X	X	X	
111	Goldfinch	<i>Carduelis carduelis</i>	X	X	X	
112	Siskin	<i>Spinus spinus</i>		X		
113	Yellowhammer	<i>Emberiza citrinella</i>	X	X		
114	Reed Bunting	<i>Emberiza schoeniclus</i>	X	X		
153						
154						
#	Other Wildlife		29	30	1	
1	Meadow Brown					
2	Small White					
3	Silver-studded Blue					
4	Red Admiral					
5	Peacock					

#	Common Name	Scientific Name		29	30	1	
6	Small Skipper						
7	Speckled Wood						
8	Painted Lady						
9	Green-veined White						
10	Gatekeeper						
11	Large Skipper						
12	Small Tortoiseshell						
13	Ringlet						
1	Emperor						
2	Black-tailed Skimmer						
3	Four Spotted Chaser						
4	Ruddy Darter						
5	Azure Damselfly						
6	Common Blue Damselfly						
7	Blue-tail Damselfly						
8	Red-eyed Damselfly						

Many thanks to tour participants Rob McCormack and Richard Swinbank for use of their photos in the report.