



TOUR REPORT
NORFOLK COMPLETE TOUR
10TH – 16TH MAY 2026

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SUNDAY 26TH APRIL

The group arrived in Exeter today at 3pm and after a short drive we were enjoying our first birding in the sunshine at the nearby Otter Estuary. There was a nice selection of waders about with Common Sandpiper, a brick-red Bar-tailed Godwit, Sanderling and a few Black-tailed Godwits to be seen. A lingering Spoonbill was also noted. From here it was a short hop to our overnight accommodation on the fringes of Exeter.

MONDAY 27TH APRIL – *Sunshine and light winds, 20C*

A beautiful sunny day for our exploration of South Devon today and after a quick stop for lunch provisions we headed directly to Yarnar Wood NNR on the edge of Dartmoor. Pied Flycatchers would be one of our main targets here and we saw a pair right away as soon as we went through the gate. The male showed brilliantly perching close to us in the sunshine and singing, advertising two adjacent nest boxes to the female who was clearly deliberating over which one she liked best! **Willow Warbler, Chiffchaff, Blackcap** and **Goldcrest** were all seen and heard and there were **Siskins** and a **Redpoll** buzzing over too. Some of the group saw a **Nuthatch** and then as we dropped down deeper into the beautiful oak woodland we heard the first snatches of **Redstart** song. This one took a little bit longer for us to pin down, but eventually we heard probably three different birds and had superb views of a male, which flew down close to the path to prospect a nest hole. The rest of the walk was quiet but it was lovely to walk with the warm sun on our backs and there were plenty of butterflies about such as lemon-yellow Brimstone.



Pied Flycatcher

Next we headed off towards the coast and the picturesque town of Teignmouth. Crossing south across the Teign estuary we took the winding road up along the coast to Labrador bay and parked in the RSPB car park. Our main target here would be **Cirl Bunting** and after lunching in the now rather hot sunshine, we took a walk down around one of the field margins. We could hear the distinctive tinny rattle of **Cirl Bunting** right away as we were crossing the stile into the field and soon we found one perched fairly distantly up in the trees. The light was thankfully decent and the bird perched long enough for everyone to get a good view in the scope. We saw the same or another again shortly after in a different section of hedge and on the walk back some of us had really good views of another male.



Common Redstart

The day had really raced on and we still had two hours to drive to get to our overnight accommodation at Ilfracombe. With a toilet stop on the way this got us there around 5.30pm for check in. We had a nice evening in Ilfracombe then got an early night ready for a big day tomorrow as we headed for Lundy. We already knew that the boat would not be running and we would in fact be taking the helicopter from Hartland Point.

TUESDAY 28TH APRIL – *Sunny spells and a fresh NE wind, 13C*

A day composed largely of travel logistics as we made our way over to Lundy Island! We dropped everyone at the shore office at 0830 ready to check in and pay for our helicopter supplements, then Nick and Ashley took the vans back to the B&B to park. There was some drama as their taxi to bring them back failed to arrive but thankfully they got a lift down with the B&B owner and met the coach in time for the 1hr 20m journey up to Hartland Point. Once there we had around a ninety minute wait, composed of the helicopter safety briefing and then a queueing system whereby around 56 people would be shuttled to the island 5 at

a time. This meant that the last of our party touched down on Lundy just before 12.30, and we were soon bedded in at the Marisco Tavern for lunch!



Northern (left) and Greenland Wheatear females

A bit more of a wait followed after lunch for the accommodations to be ready, so we took this opportunity to make our first birding walk down the famous Milcombe valley and back around by the cliffs at the south end of the island. There was some shelter in the valley and we watched several Chiffchaffs and a Willow Warbler feeding there. Two **Ravens** were overhead and we watched rolling and cronking in display flight, while a **Peregrine** also hung high in the wind above the valley. Along the cliffs, we had three **Wheatears** – a clear pair of nominate birds, plus a lovely Greenland race female. The size difference between the two races was stark, and the Greenland bird was so much darker and more richly coloured too. A **Common Whitethroat** bounded along the same wall too. Lots of Linnets and Meadow Pipits were seen and a **Razorbill** was spotted. We were then able to head to the shop and grab provisions for each house, and get checked in to our three accommodations ready for our first night on the island.

WEDNESDAY 29TH APRIL – *Sunny spells in strong Easterly winds, 13C*

A very windy day for our first full day on Lundy! Some of us had a walk around Millcombe before breakfast but it was right in the teeth of the gale and pretty hard going. **Chiffchaff** was about the best of it, plus a single **Sand Martin** flew over. Our plan for the morning was to head to the west side of the island, in the vague hope of finding some sheltered areas down the cliff to check for migrants. **Ravens** were about as always, tumbling on the wind, and a **House Martin** hurried north across the moor near the old light. From here we made our way along the clifftop path, checking down the cliffs wherever possible. Lots of

Wheatears were seen along the route, this being one of the main breeding areas for the 100+ pairs that nest on the island. We saw another female Greenland race bird too, which soon got chased off by 'the locals'. Reaching Jenny's Cove, we were able to get the scope bedded in out of the worst of the wind and view the fifty or so **Puffins** rafting on the water below. Lots of **Razorbills**, two **Common Guillemots** and **Shag** were also seen, while a **Peregrine** whizzed through and disappeared below the undercliff. A bit further out to sea, some of us saw a **Manx Shearwater** and there were some large rafts of **Kittiwakes** on the water. Hirundine passage typically started to build up after 11am and with them a single **Swift** went hammering through northwards. Eventually we reached Halfway Wall which bisects the island, and at this point we turned east and followed the wall up to the road. It was then a straight walk back down to the village and a break for lunch.



Male Northern Wheatear

Meeting up again at 3pm, we did the same walk we had done yesterday afternoon but in reverse. This took us along the wall to the west coast, where a small bachelor herd of the introduced Sika Deer gave close views. We went down to the rocket pole and then east along the clifftop before dropping down into St John's Valley. From the cliffs we saw some more **Razorbills** and a **Shag**, plus a **Common Seal** floating in the water. Millcombe was again desperately hard work in the wind but collectively we saw **Chiffchaff** and **Whitethroat**. Most of the group segued off to their various quarters at the top of Millcombe but for those of us who kept birding a bit longer, we were rewarded with a female **Cuckoo** that came tanking in high overhead on the wind, landed briefly before being flushed further down the valley by a couple of Woodpigeon.

After dinner we had a special treat in store as the observatory staff took us out after dark to the south end of the island, to the **Manx Shearwater** colony at Benjamin's Chair. The island

hosts some 15,000 breeding Manx and we were about to see a few of them in the hand as the staff went down the slope using red light to collect birds as they emerged from their burrows. It was a brilliant experience to see these ocean-going birds being ringed!



Sika Deer

THURSDAY 30TH APRIL – *Fresh South-east wind lightening later, sunny spells, 16C*

We skipped pre-breakfast this morning in lieu of the late finish yesterday so around 10am we set off into Millcombe Valley for a circuit around to check for any migrants. There was clearly a few more birds about especially in the sheltered lower portion where 3 **Willow Warbler**, 3 **Blackcap** and 2 **Common Whitethroat** were seen. **Sparrowhawk** and **Peregrine** were seen overhead and some of the group had seen a **Spotted Flycatcher** outside their accommodation at Bramble Villa. Reaching the top terrace the sun was catching the bushes and we found a nice **Lesser Whitethroat** which showed well by the stone steps.



Lesser Whitethroat

Then we took a packed lunch with us and headed off up the island, branching off the road to go across the edge of the airfield to check the gorse on the second highest point on the island. Here were a few more migrants including three **Greenland Wheatear**, 4 **Common Whitethroat**, 2 **Swifts**, 2 **Whimbrel** (one in song!), and 3 **House Martin**. We dropped back down to Quarter Wall where a fine male **Yellow Wagtail** greeted us by the gate and then we watched a nice selection of birds along the overgrown dyke. Two **Willow Warblers** and a showy **Garden Warbler** were here, along with the usual **Wheatears** and **Stonechats**. We lunched in the lee of a ruined croft before checking the quarry which hosted another **Willow Warbler**.

Pondsbury is the largest body of freshwater on the island and here we saw four **Dunlin**, a drake **Teal** and had **Sand Martin** and **Peregrine** over. We opted to come back along the west cliffs in what was now beautiful sunshine, but in truth we saw very little along this stretch other than **Fulmars** and **Wheatears** and a nesting **Shag**. Reaching Old Light we checked the garden at Stoneycroft but it saw nothing else and so took a direct route back to the village.

At this point most people opted to go back to the digs while a small group of us pushed on and went back into Millcombe Valley. Taking the middle terrace path along the north side we reached the last two conifers which were catching the afternoon sun, and picked up a movement of a small phyllosc feeding on the edge of the trees. In the brief glimpse it appeared to show bright green panels in the wings and then a pearl-white underside – crikey! The bird slinked through the pine foliage largely hidden from view but a plain, pale face was also seen and then it popped into full view revealing its identity as a **Bonelli's Warbler!!**



Western Bonelli's Warbler

For a further ten seconds it showed in the open and we were able to rattle off some record shots but in the same moment it also called, giving a distinctive upsurged 'huueee' call identifying it as a **Western Bonelli's Warbler**. It called a further three times but remained elusive and then disappeared altogether. We tried to rally the rest of the troops to relocate it, and also called the Obs staff to let them know of the find. A **Firecrest** popped up but was scant compensation for those who'd missed it. Incredibly the bird was never seen again – a moment of elation and frustration rolled into one!

FRIDAY 1ST MAY – *Fine day in light SW winds, 19C*

A superb days birding today with overnight rain and fog and the wind easing right back to a light SW, giving us real anticipation for more migrants. With this in mind we started with a pre-breakfast raid on Millcombe – the Bonelli's was sadly gone but numbers of common migrants were clearly up. **Blackcaps**, **Chiffchaffs** and **Willow Warblers** were everywhere, in fact at times they seemed to be in every bush and patch of cover. Two **Tree Pipit** 'spizzed' over and we had our first group **Spotted Flycatcher** north of the flagpole. Down at the bottom we chatted to the ringing team who showed us a **Willow Warbler** in the hand, and then as we turned to walk up along Battlements we found a stunning **Wood Warbler** feeding in the undercanopy of the oaks and sycamores. This lemon-yellow dazzler showed really well for us, with another **Spotted Flycatcher** and **Blackcap** in the same trees – superb!



Dawn on Lundy

After breakfast we set off on a long walk taking lunch with us. A male **Channel Wagtail** gave really good views in the paddock at Quarters, and then reaching the Old Light we checked the Stoneybreck garden – much birdier today with two **Willow Warblers**, a **Chiffchaff**, **Garden Warbler**, **Sedge Warbler** and a cracking male **Redpoll**. Two **Chiffchaffs** bounced along the wall ahead of us as we then cut across the airfield to the gorse patch. More migrants here included four **Willow Warblers** and a **Reed Warbler**. Reaching Quarter Wall, another **Sedge Warbler** was seen and then **Willow Warbler** numbers really started to pick up. We dropped down through the small quarry onto the lower terrace on the east side of the island and in the bushes around the Heligoland we had no less than four **Garden Warblers**, a **Cuckoo**, **Blackcap** and six **Willow Warblers**. A further 9 **Willow Warblers**, another **Garden Warbler**, **Tree Pipit**, **Pied Flycatcher**, three **Sedge Warblers**, 6 **Chiffchaff** and 12 **Whitethroat** were seen along this side plus a lovely **White Wagtail**. We lunched overlooking a cove with soaring **Peregrine**, moaning Common Seals and grunting **Razorbills**!



Wood Warbler in Millcombe

We walked on as far as Tibbets, enjoying the sunshine and views and flushing two **Whimbrel** from beside the path. We then started back south along the main track, checking Pondsburry which had a **Sedge Warbler**, three **Chiffchaff**, a **Sand Martin**, two **Swift**, a **Dunlin** and female **Teal**. Eventually we reached Quarter Wall again and we were birding here when news came through of a **Turtle Dove** at Tillage – only five minutes away. We dashed there to join Thomas and Eleanor who kindly showed us this stunning migrant, which was feeding on the ground behind a muck heap – just beautiful! The group then split with some heading back and others retracing to Quarter Wall cottages. From here we took the upper path back towards Millcombe which first gave us a view down into the canopy of Quarter Wall copse. There must have been twenty **Chiffchaff/Willow Warbler** here plus two **Spotted Flycatcher**,

1 **Pied Flycatcher**, 2 **Blackcap** and another **Garden Warbler**. Almost back at Millcombe and we picked up another **Spotted Flycatcher** and **Sedge Warbler**.



Turtle Dove

Finally we made another circuit of Millcombe to end the day – it was now really calm here so great conditions for spotting warblers. The place was crawling with **Willow Warblers** and **Chiffchaffs** and along the top terrace we had superb views of a second **Wood Warbler** – clearly different from the bird we had seen earlier this one was much paler with a distinct wing bar. More **Blackcaps** and **Sedge Warblers** followed but we couldn't dig anything else rare out to end the day. Still, it had been a really memorable one for the numbers of common migrants.

SATURDAY 2ND MAY – *Overcast day with light Southerly winds, 13C*

Our final day on Lundy dawned misty and we forwent our pre-breakfast walk as we needed to prepare our luggage for collection and tidy up the houses for check out. After breakfast though we had a good few hours to bird before having to catch the afternoon ferry back to Bideford, and so we set off up the island on a similar route to yesterday. The male **Channel Wagtail** showed well near Quarters, singing away and occasionally perching on the fencelines. Reaching Old Light, we briefly saw a cock **Redstart** which flicked out of the Stoneybreck garden and then weirdly spiralled up very high into the sky before bombing off down to the village. This bird was clearly new in though there was otherwise a distinct clear-out of migrants compared to yesterday – only a couple of **Chiffchaff** and **Willow Warbler** were seen at the gorse field plus a migrant **Sedge Warbler**. Two more flava wagtails flew north though and there was an increase in **House Martins** generally around the island. Reaching Quarter wall we continued along the road towards Tibbets and then came back in

along the east side using the broad grassy track that passes several small quarries. Yesterday this area had been teeming with birds but today only a couple of **Chiffchaff**, **Willow Warbler** and **Blackcap**, and a single **Garden Warbler** remained. A **Tree Pipit** flew over us calling as we climbed up to Quarter Wall House and we then saw little else until we reached the village where the **Channel Wagtail** pair was seen well, and a **Cuckoo** flew right past us and landed on a wall 30ft away before thinking better of it and dashing off towards Millcombe.



Wheatear

We had lunch now back at the tavern, before starting to make our way slowly down through Millcombe – again less birds here than yesterday with just a sprinkling of the common migrant warblers seen. We eventually boarded the Oldenburg for a 4pm departure, and set sail across the relatively calm sea towards Bideford. Seabirds were represented by **Razorbills** and **Manx Shearwaters** throughout the journey, plus the odd **Common Guillemot**, **Kittiwake** and four **Puffins**. The highlight was a pod of **Common Dolphins** which followed the ship for some while, frequently leaping out of the water alongside us much to the entertainment of the 240-strong crowd on board. We eventually reached Bideford just after 6pm, where a coach was waiting to take us back to Ilfracombe where we had started from five days previously.

SUNDAY 3RD MAY – *Overcast with light drizzle, 11C*

Our final morning saw us depart Ilfracombe and head back down to Exeter where the tour would finish. We had time for two hours birding before the station drop-off and so headed to Dawlish Warren NNR for a walk. The weather wasn't great but we had excellent views of two different male **Cirl Buntings**, improving on the views we had had on day one at Labrador Bay. There were a few **Stonechats** about and four **Whimbrel** flew over. Crossing onto the

beach we added a small party of **Sanderlings** along the tideline and a female **Common Eider** was on the sea. We had hoped to scan the inner harbour for waders but erosion of the sand dunes has now meant it is not possible to view without a very long walk round the far end of the point which we didn't really have time for on this occasion. So we headed back into Exeter St Davids station and dropped everyone in good time for their 1330 train back to London.



Cirl Bunting at Labrador Bay



Garden Warbler



Pied Flycatcher



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	26	27	28	29	30	1	2	3
1	Canada Goose	<i>Branta canadensis</i>	■							
2	Greylag Goose	<i>Anser anser</i>	■		■		■	■		
3	Mute Swan	<i>Cygnus olor</i>	■							■
4	Shelduck	<i>Tadorna tadorna</i>	■						■	■
5	Garganey	<i>Spatula querquedula</i>								
6	Shoveler	<i>Spatula clypeata</i>								
7	Gadwall	<i>Mareca strepera</i>								
8	Wigeon	<i>Mareca penelope</i>								
9	Mallard	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>	■		■	■	■	■	■	
10	Teal	<i>Anas crecca</i>					■	■		
11	Pochard	<i>Aythya ferina</i>								
12	Tufted Duck	<i>Aythya fuligula</i>								
13	Common Scoter	<i>Melanitta nigra</i>								
14	Red-legged Partridge	<i>Alectoris rufa</i>								
15	Pheasant	<i>Phasianus colchicus</i>	■	■						
16	Red-throated Diver	<i>Gavia stellata</i>								

17	Great Northern Diver	<i>Gavia immer</i>										
18	Fulmar	<i>Fulmarus glacialis</i>				■	■	■	■	■		
19	Manx Shearwater	<i>Puffinus puffinus</i>					■			■		
20	European Storm-Petrel	<i>Hydrobates pelagicus</i>										
21	Little Grebe	<i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>										
22	Great Crested Grebe	<i>Podiceps cristatus</i>										
23	Grey Heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>		■								
24	Little Egret	<i>Egretta garzetta</i>		■						■		
25	Great White Egret	<i>Ardea alba</i>										
26	Cattle Egret	<i>Bubulcus ibis</i>										
27	Glossy Ibis	<i>Plegadis falcinellus</i>										
28	Gannet	<i>Morus bassanus</i>				■	■			■		
29	Shag	<i>Phalacrocorax aristotelis</i>					■	■	■	■		
30	Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>		■	■				■	■		
31	Sparrowhawk	<i>Accipiter nisus</i>						■				
32	Marsh Harrier	<i>Circus aeruginosus</i>										
33	Red Kite	<i>Milvus milvus</i>			■							
34	Buzzard	<i>Buteo buteo</i>		■	■							
35	Water Rail	<i>Rallus aquaticus</i>										
36	Moorhen	<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>		■							■	
37	Coot	<i>Fulica atra</i>										
38	Oystercatcher	<i>Haematopus ostralegus</i>		■			■	H	■	■		
39	Avocet	<i>Recurvirostra avosetta</i>										
40	Lapwing	<i>Vanellus vanellus</i>										
41	Golden Plover	<i>Pluvialis apricaria</i>										
42	Grey Plover	<i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>										
43	Ringed Plover	<i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>										
44	Little Ringed Plover	<i>Charadrius dubius</i>										
45	Whimbrel	<i>Numenius phaeopus</i>		■				■	■	■	■	
46	Curlew	<i>Numenius arquata</i>										
47	Bar-tailed Godwit	<i>Limosa lapponica</i>		■								
48	Black-tailed Godwit	<i>Limosa limosa</i>		■								
49	Turnstone	<i>Arenaria interpres</i>										
50	Knot	<i>Calidris canutus</i>										
51	Ruff	<i>Calidris pugnax</i>										
52	Sanderling	<i>Calidris alba</i>		■							■	
53	Dunlin	<i>Calidris alpina</i>		■				■	■			
54	Snipe	<i>Gallinago gallinago</i>										
55	Common Sandpiper	<i>Actitis hypoleucos</i>		■						■		
56	Green Sandpiper	<i>Tringa ochropus</i>										
57	Redshank	<i>Tringa totanus</i>										
58	Greenshank	<i>Tringa nebularia</i>										
59	Kittiwake	<i>Rissa tridactyla</i>					■	■		■		

60	Black-headed Gull	<i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i>		■	■							■	
61	Mediterranean Gull	<i>Larus melanocephalus</i>											
62	Common Gull	<i>Larus canus</i>											
63	Little Gull	<i>Hydrocoloeus minutus</i>											
64	Great Black-backed Gull	<i>Larus marinus</i>		■		■	■	■	■	■	■	■	
65	Herring Gull	<i>Larus argentatus</i>		■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	
66	Lesser Black-backed Gull	<i>Larus fuscus</i>		■			■	■	■	■	■	■	
67	Sandwich Tern	<i>Thalasseus sandvicensis</i>										H	
68	Common Tern	<i>Sterna hirundo</i>											
69	Arctic Tern	<i>Sterna paradisaea</i>											
70	Great Skua	<i>Stercorarius skua</i>											
71	Arctic Skua	<i>Stercorarius parasiticus</i>											
72	Common Guillemot	<i>Uria aalge</i>					■				■		
73	Razorbill	<i>Alca torda</i>				■	■				■		
74	Puffin	<i>Fratercula arctica</i>					■				■		
75	Rock Dove (Feral Pigeon)	<i>Columba livia</i>		■									
76	Stock Dove	<i>Columba oenas</i>		■	■								
77	Woodpigeon	<i>Columba palumbus</i>		■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	
78	Collared Dove	<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>		■	■		■	■	■	■	■	■	
79	Turtle Dove	<i>Streptopelia turtur</i>							■				
80	Cuckoo	<i>Cuculus canorus</i>					■		■	■			
81	Swift	<i>Apus apus</i>					■	■	■				
82	Kingfisher	<i>Alcedo atthis</i>											
83	Great Spotted Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos major</i>			H								
84	Lesser Spotted Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos minor</i>											
85	Green Woodpecker	<i>Picus viridis</i>											
86	Kestrel	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>			■	■	■	■	■	■	■		
87	Hobby	<i>Falco subbuteo</i>											
88	Peregrine	<i>Falco peregrinus</i>				■	■	■	■				
89	Jay	<i>Garrulus glandarius</i>			■								
90	Magpie	<i>Pica pica</i>		■	■	■						■	
91	Jackdaw	<i>Coloeus monedula</i>		■	■								
92	Rook	<i>Corvus frugilegus</i>		■	■								
93	Carrion Crow	<i>Corvus corone</i>		■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	
94	Raven	<i>Corvis corax</i>				■	■	■	■	■			
95	Coal Tit	<i>Periparus ater</i>			■								
96	Blue Tit	<i>Cyanistes caeruleus</i>			■								
97	Great Tit	<i>Parus major</i>			■								
98	Marsh Tit	<i>Parus palustris</i>			H								
99	Skylark	<i>Alauda arvensis</i>		■	■		■	■	■	■	■	■	

[illegible]