

HOLIDAY HIGHLIGHTS

EAST YORKSHIRE

8-15 OCTOBER 2022

Guide: Julian Sykes

Guests: David & Pamela Petts, Jill Patrick, Joan Hunter, Vivien Emery, David Fosh

Day 1 Julian meets Viv at Leeds Bus Station (as the trains are on strike again!) and head off along the M62 towards Hull, turning off for Beverley on this lovely sunny afternoon. We make our way through the rural areas of this part of East Yorkshire until we reach this historic market town and our lovely hotel in the centre. We now meet up with Joan in the car park before we all check-in with Julian enquiring after our other guests, who have all arrived safely. We go to our respective rooms until we reconvene back at reception for our first evening meal in the very busy restaurant. David and Pam are waiting patiently with Joan, Jill, Viv and David F. being already seated at our table. The meal is superb and once ready Julian hands out the usual Speyside Wildlife gifts, goes through some important points and shows us our plan for the next day. After this we head back to respective rooms for what we hope is our first good night's sleep in this gorgeous hotel.

Day 2 We meet at the minibus at 08:45 and set off from our hotel heading south through miles of farmland on this beautiful but slightly windy morning. Eventually we reach the mighty Humber River and after paying the toll cross the equally mighty and impressive single span bridge. We now head west along the river which is currently at low tide and consequently exposing plenty of mud. Julian stops alongside Read's Island at a nearby parking place on this busy road and climbs out of the minivan. For the next while we scan through the wildfowl and waders feeding on the exposed mud and find lots of Lapwing, Curlew and Redshank, with a few Black-tailed Godwits, Avocets and David finds a lone Golden Plover. There are 100's of Teal along with lots of Shelduck and a few Mallards, with small skeins of Pink-footed Geese moving south overhead. We continue to look through the feeding birds as Viv and Joan find a Ringed Plover and Jill spots our first 'cream-crown' Marsh Harrier as it causes havoc amongst the ducks and shorebirds in front of us. It has been an excellent start to the day.

We now carefully cross back over this busy road and set off continuing along the Humber then south towards Scunthorpe as we are in North Lincolnshire. It doesn't take too long to get to the village of Alkborough and we soon arrive at the car park for Alkborough Flats NR, having seen a small flock of Stock

Doves along the way. We get ready for a walk out through the extensive phragmites beds and set off slowly along the track with Jill pointing out a female Reed Bunting flying overhead. We quickly find a couple more of these, then a Cetti's Warbler makes it's distinctive explosive song.

A little further and Julian hears another distinctive call and gets really animated as this is one of our major targets - Bearded Tit. We are all keen to try and see one especially as we can now hear them either side of the track. Eventually Julian, David and Pam spot one flying over the reeds, which lands in sight for a couple of seconds. It is difficult in the strong SW winds, but we do all manage to get a view of one as they fly and dive into cover. We remain vigilant and we are rewarded with a gorgeous adult sat out in the open for several seconds.

Thankful for this we now walk on, along the track and soon realise that the lagoon is completely dry! It is actually pointless going into the hide, so we continue on slowly as Dave sees a Mute Swan and Mallard in the trackside dyke. We are hearing Cetti's Warblers and Bearded Tits along the way, but they are almost impossible to see well. As we reach the end of the track we add Skylark, Meadow Pipit and Common Buzzard to the list.

We start back towards the car park and again we hear Bearded Reedlings near the track and again we stop to try and see them. This time we are successful as a family party feed close to where we are standing on top of the phragmites, waving about in the wind and David manages to get some excellent photos. We are all thrilled with this and continue our walk back to the minibus, getting there soon after.

Back at the vehicle, we head off out of Alkborough, passing Julian's Bower (a historic maze) and along the line of the River Trent. We need to do this for some miles before we can cross it back into Yorkshire and back north towards our next reserve through extensive agricultural lands. A couple of miles before we arrive, we stop for a small group of Roe Deer and a small flock of Pink-footed Geese feeding in the field. We also check another field where there is lots of Black-headed Gulls and Starlings but there are also some waders here which don't look right for the expected Golden Plover. We edge closer in the van and soon realise these are Ruff which look fabulous as we get some great views. This is superb and totally unexpected here, as we leave and drive the short distance to the famous Blacktoft Sands RSPB reserve.

It is now lunchtime and we break out the picnics, sitting at one of the tables, as Chaffinches "pink" above our heads. We are soon finished and after making use of their facilities we walk to the reserve reception where we are greeted by one of the staff and a lovely, chatty volunteer. The news isn't great as there is extensive renovation work going on to one of the hides and access has now

been changed, plus a few of the scrapes are dry due to the lack of rainfall recently. However we are informed of what could be potentially about, and a very interesting talk on how the reserve was formed and it's future.

Eventually we set off and along the back hedge, the flock of Ruff seen previously fly right over our heads and back towards the ploughed field. We continue now coming across a 'roving tit flock' that has lots of Long-tail, plus Great and Blue Tits, along with a couple of Common Chiffchaff and at least one Goldcrest. We reach the proposed best hide and settle down at the benches with the first birds being a group of three Ruff and a winter-plumage Spotted Redshank, which is superb.

We watch these for a while before turning our attention to the other species, which include lots of wildfowl, such as Eurasian Teal, Shoveler, Mallard and Wigeon. There is also a Little Egret here, Grey Heron, Common Redshank and a couple of Common Snipe. We stay for a while, hoping for a Water Rail or a glimpse of the Barn Owl in its box but not today, so we decide to move on. Just as we are about leave Jill is very lucky as she sees the 'blue flash' of a Kingfisher shoot past the hide, but sadly no one else does. With the information given to Julian, we decide to retrace our steps and go to a couple of hides on the other side of the reserve but the first one does not have one bird on show and the second isn't much better. This makes Julian's mind up and we now cut our losses and make our way back to the minibus, as our guide thinks more time at another site would be beneficial.

Now we drive slowly along the River through a network of lovely villages before reaching Goole where we cross the river and drive back towards Beverley. We have one more site to visit, which is the excellent North Cave Wetlands run by the equally excellent Yorkshire Wildlife Trust. We now make our way to the first covered boardwalk, which is adjacent to the parking area and look out over the main lake. We quickly find Great Crested and Little Grebes, lots of Greylag Geese, Cormorant, a single Tufted Duck plus Mallard, Teal and Shoveler. David spots a female Pintail, but this sadly drops out of site before we can all get on to it – hopefully we will find another?

We now leave this boardwalk and wander slowly round to a second large circular hide with a 360° view. We cover all the directions and finding lots more wildfowl of much the same species plus Little Egret and some very close Common Snipe. However there is no sign of the Jack Snipe which has been seen recently as a couple of locals have been looking for it for hours! We are thinking of leaving when one of the other birders says "Whooper Swan" as an adult lands in the water and duly swims towards the hide, giving us some fabulous views of this winter migrant. Once we have attained the obligatory photos we do now leave this hide and head back to the parking area.

We still have some daylight left so Julian suggests another walk down to the other side of the reserve, which is agreed too – although a few of us are now a little tired. Halfway down the lane we meet a couple who utter the words, no birder wants to hear – “a Hobby flew through five minutes ago!” We obviously go to where it’s been seen and on the water Dave finds our first Gadwall of the trip along with a few Coot and Joan sees a Great Spotted Woodpecker fly over. The light is starting to go as we make our final short walk down to the last hide, where we check these lagoons hoping to find the Ruddy Shelducks, which had been seen earlier this day. We search and search but they are not around but we do add Common Pochard to the list, along with Lesser Black-backed and Common Gulls, which isn’t too bad. Julian realises some of us are quite tired and volunteers to walk back for the minibus, which he kindly does with Joan and Jill to keep him company (and stay out of trouble!). It isn’t too long before they are back to the rest of us and heading off the reserve. It is a relatively short journey back to the hotel and we have some time before reconvening in the lounge to do our first checklist before another great evening meal.

Day 3 It is another gorgeous start to the day, with cloudless blue skies and lots of sunshine as we convene at the minibus to leave. We have had a great breakfast, Julian has collected the lunchtime sandwiches and we’re ready to go at 08:35 – superb, having already seen a few Pink-footed Geese fly over the hotel. We head north and east through some busy traffic but soon reach the village of Flamborough, turning off towards the ‘outer head’ and then down to South Landing. It is the F.O.G.s (Flamborough Ornithological Group) annual ‘mig week’ and they are around the Sealife Centre as we park the minibus. A ringing demonstration is underway but first we see the news that there has been over 3,500 Redwing over the headland by 9am. Sadly this has slowed considerably but it’s not long before we also hear the distinctive ‘seep’ as some of these beautiful winter thrushes pass over our heads.

The ringing group are checking the nets, so we wait patiently seeing more Redwing along with a Fieldfare spotted by Joan, Vivian and Jill. There are also other passerines around with Tree Sparrows, Goldfinch, Chaffinch, Great and Blue Tits seen. Eventually the ringers return with three bags with birds in them and one by one reveal their identity with a (presumed) continental Blackbird, Robin and Chiffchaff. Each one the processor relays information about their respective species which is incredibly diverse and interesting to us all. As these birds are released a Sparrowhawk is seen followed by a Song Thrush, Long-tailed Tit and more Redwing. News now has come through that a Yellow-browed Warbler has been seen near Highfield Manor and we decide to go a try to see this Eastern rarity.

We walk along the track where we find a couple of Grey Squirrels before reaching the area the bird was seen in. Here we stand in glorious sunshine, but the wind has increased from the SW making things a little difficult. We stand and wait and see a lovely male Bullfinch and a skein of Pink-feet high up heading southwest. There are also Long-tailed Tits calling when Julian hears the familiar call of the Yellow-browed Warbler and sees a movement in the adjacent tree. Sadly, this bird disappears but we can all clearly hear it calling before it obviously moves away – this is all very frustrating! We stay where we are for a while, being joined by other birders who have also failed to see the bird but heard it calling from several other places nearby. We stay a while but decide to move on as the bird is obviously not in the vicinity at the moment.

We now make our way back to the car park where we enjoy a cuppa before going back to the ringing station as they are again checking the nets and should be back soon. It is about 10 minutes before the person returns with another three bags on birds, which include a fabulous wee Goldcrest, Wren and a cracking Redwing, which again they process allowing Pam to release the ‘crest’ back into the wild – brilliant.

Julian now suggests another walk down to the South Landing beach and we set off passing the ravine where there are lots of activity going on. It is mainly Goldfinches and Chaffinches, but we do also see a Chiffchaff, Goldcrest, Tree Sparrow and a female Blackcap to our guide. We reach the edge of the beach and set up the telescope, quickly spotting several Oystercatchers and a few Redshanks on the tideline. Out to sea there are Red-throated Divers doing their thing (diving) with Gannets fishing much further out. Whilst David is watching a ‘Red-throat’ he says “dolphin? and another moving left” so we all aim our binoculars in the direction he’s looking. Sure enough there is a pod of Bottlenose Dolphins moving east towards Flamborough’s Outer Head, which is superb and we all get a good view through the telescope.

It is now nearly lunchtime and we start back up the slope to the car park, where we collect the picnic lunches and take them to the nearby tables, where we enjoy our delicious ‘deli-made’ sandwiches and nibbles. It has now become quite quiet here so Julian suggests we move on, so once we are ready, we thank the F.O.G. volunteers and ringers very much and drive away.

We now head back south and once we have cleared the busy traffic we are soon turning off for Hornsea, which takes a while along the winding back roads. We reach this coastal town, which was once famous for its pottery and drive round to the edge of Hornsea Mere where we park at the side of the road. We now grab our scopes and other equipment, with Julian leading us out to the edge of the lake, where we stop and scan. There is another birder here who says he’s seen a Greater Scaup earlier but not now for a while, so we start to carefully check the wildfowl. There is a lot of ducks here, which are mainly

Mallard, Tufted Duck, Wigeon, Shoveler and Coot along with Teal, Mute Swans, Greylag Geese and a single Pintail found by David's. We hear a Cetti's Warbler sing from the nearby reeds and also there are several Little Grebes, Moorhen, Little Egrets and Grey Herons. It is difficult though, as the strong winds are making things difficult with the choppy water and the telescopes being buffeted around. We think this is not worth carrying on with, so Julian says we should move on again.

We walk back to the minibus and after a brief comfort stop we are again heading south towards Beverley. Along the main road we now turn off for Tophill Low nature reserve, which is actually owned by Yorkshire Water but run by the wildlife trust. We now take the minor road out to the reserve seeing a flock of five Whooper Swans flying south over the reserve. We reach the car park and Julian pays the entrance fee while we get ready to go to the D reservoir hide. We are soon all set and Julian leads us off to a boardwalk up to a very new-looking and nice hide – but it's locked! Julian now disregards the signs and we are soon down looking out over the reservoir from outside of the hide, which works just as well. There are lots of duck on this water and we quickly see the usual suspects of Mallard, Gadwall, Shoveler, Tufted Duck, Common Pochard, Teal and Coot. There are a few Pintail here and we also add Goldeneye to the list along with both Great Crested and Little Grebes. However there has been a female Smew seen and after some searching Jill says she has found it, getting us all on to it shortly afterwards, which is brilliant – especially as this has become a very difficult bird to see in the county.

It is now late afternoon and after a while we decide it's time to leave as the light is starting to go. We return to the minibus and set off from the reserve and in the roadside fields we see several Brown Hares showing extremely well, which is great. Eventually we reach the main road and continue south to Beverley and our hotel in plenty of time to freshen up ahead of our evening meal.

Day 4

We are again ready to leave at 08:45 on yet another gorgeous morning with light SW winds – lovely for the day but not great for migration! We head out of town and again make our way through the initial heavy traffic towards Bridlington and then on to Flamborough. We turn off for the headland and a few miles later reach the outer head car park. We get ourselves ready for a walk and use the facilities while our guide sorts the necessary parking ticket. Once ready we walk out towards the 'fog station' with migrant Skylarks passing overhead, which is brilliant. We meet another birder coming the other way who informs us of a Yellow-browed Warbler he had seen earlier along the motorway hedge (here we go again!). Thankfully it is the way Julian had been going anyway so we would soon see if it was still around. The F.O.G. have purchased a plot of land adjacent to the hedge and we start to walk slowly

along the track next to this fenced off weedy field. There are lots of finches around, with lots of Linnets and Goldfinches plus a few Greenfinches and Tree Sparrows, which is brilliant.

As we walk slowly on we now see a pair of Stonechats, Reed Bunting and a Kestrel over the old lighthouse. About halfway along Julian sees something shoot across the track into the dense weeds but cannot relocate it but we do find our first Dunnocks here along with several Robins, and a Song Thrush flies into the hedge. We all get good views of this and now realise there are other birds to see with a couple of Chiffchaffs and Jill finding a male Blackcap. We stay here for a while watching all the activity going on and agree how good it is to see all the birdlife as well as the butterflies with both Red Admiral and Small White. There are other birdwatchers a little further as this is where the Yellow-browed Warbler was last seen so we join the small gathering searching for this Siberian gem.

Having failed the previous day to see it Julian doesn't want to stay there too long and opts to wander on a short way to look at the sea and exposed seaweed-covered rocks. Off-shore we can see our first Gannets of the day along with a few Red-throated Divers, which is great. On the rocks there are Oystercatchers along with some smaller waders which Julian identifies as Turnstone, another new bird for the list. Dave now finds and points out a Little Egret in one of the many rockpools, with quite a few Herring, Black-headed and Common Gulls loafing around.

While we are watching this, Julian sees that the 'Yellow-browed' crowd were staring intently into the same area of hedge and goes to see if they have seen something. Yes, they have and it's the warbler, but it's just gone out of sight - so he gestures to us all to come over. A few people have now wandered off and we start to check an area of hedge where the bird was heading. After a few minutes Julian says, "I think I've got it – certainly something with a good supercilium!" It has hopped back into the hedge, but he is convinced and certain as it makes another brief appearance. He now describes the exact spot it's in and we all now start to get a view, in fact it is not behaving like a typical, very active, Yellow-browed Warbler but much more lethargic. In fact, Julian puts his telescope on it followed by David, Jill, Joan and Viv. The bird is moving and thankfully feeding, with it going out of sight occasionally but returning to this sunny, calm corner of the hedge, which is superb.

We stay enjoying this scarce leaf warbler for quite a while before continuing our walk around the headland. We make it out to the end and Julian points out an Atlantic Grey Seal 'haul-out', which has dozens of them, of all shapes and sizes laying on the exposed rocks. They are entertaining as some waddle around and one pair start to fight with each other, which Pam really enjoys. We are also looking for birds here too as there are plenty of Gannets flying

past and lots of Red-throated Divers in the water. David points out a line of Guillemots flying past, and in the water there is a couple of Razorbill showing well, although Dave is struggling to find them in the telescope! Jill spots a couple of Cormorants flying north as we continue to see a light passage of Gannets and auks.

It is now nearing midday (where has the time gone?) and we set off slowly back round the headland towards the minibus with Julian pointing out the lovely new F.O.G. seawatching hide. Eventually we reach the van and again make full use of the facilities which gives a couple of us time to scan the area. We can see first one then two Common Buzzards circling up, which is then followed by another three doing the same thing, as they 'kettle up' into the scattered clouds. We are soon back into the van as are the raptor watchers and we drive away from the 'out head' very satisfied with our morning.

We now drive into the village and out to Thornwick where we stop at the caravan park. We get out and in the now warm sunshine, gather our things including the lunches and walk slowly down to the small hide. There is a couple already in there which makes things difficult to get seated, but Julian knows them from his days with the Fife Bird Club and they agree to leave after a lengthy catch-up with our guide. We settle down in the hide with our sandwiches and look out over the small pool. There is a Bittern here but sadly it's not showing at all, but we do see a single Common Snipe, Greylag Goose and lots of Teal and Moorhen, including one stood in a tree! We stay here until we have finished our lunches before returning to the vehicle and heading further north to Bempton Cliffs RSPB reserve.

We arrive at the car park, grab our gear and walk round to the visitor centre where we are greeted by a couple of the reserve staff, with Brian (one of the volunteers) offering to take us round – we duly accept. He informs us that a Firecrest has been seen along the woodland trail and we agree that is where we should start. We can hear Goldcrests almost immediately along with a couple of Chiffchaffs but no sign of the scarcer crest, as we make our way along the Hawthorn and Willow hedge. We reach a natural gap and go through to the main track bordering the adjacent farm fields, where Brian tells us there has been a Whooper Swan. It doesn't take long for Julian to say "got it" as we can now see just the head of this winter migrant – not the best view in the world!

Our walk continues with a stiff breeze now developing as we walk slowly down towards the cliffs finding a pair of Stonechats, Dunnock and Robins along the way. We can see there are still plenty of Gannets around as we get to the first platform which looks down on to the cliff face and the sea. Some of the Gannets are on the ledges with most flying back and forth along with lots of doves. Brian says that DNA testing was done recently on these birds and

it was found that 15% of them were pure Rock Doves which is good enough for us. We have seen at least 20 birds flying round already so three must be genuine!

Julian is scanning the water for seabirds, when he says "I've got a couple of Harbour Porpoise" but initially there's nothing to help the rest of us find them. However they are moving and swimming towards a 'pink buoy' and after we all find the right pink buoy we get some decent views of them occasionally breaking the surface of the water. David and Pam are keen to try and get photos of Gannets with their young on a nest and head off to another platform further south, arranging to meet back at the visitor centre later. The rest of us continue north where we are able to look into Filey Bay, with views of The Brig in the distance and we can even see where Brian lives. There are more Gannets around here and on the water we find a couple of Guillemots followed by our first Shag of the tour. We stay here for while watching the seabirds and also inland as there is a large flock of Linnets flying around along with Meadow Pipits and Skylarks.

We now decide to leave and slowly walk back along the track to the visitor centre where we buy ourselves and hot drink and a very nice piece of cake. We say "goodbye and thank you" to Brian, who is now heading off to prepare for another group arriving for a dusk walk which should be lovely. The refreshments are most welcome as we sit outside watching the Tree Sparrows come and go from the feeders to the nearby bramble hedge. David and Pam duly arrive and join us with their coffee and cake – it is lovely to have a bit of down time.

Once we are ready we head back to the minibus and set off, stopping in the lane to have a better look at the Whooper Swan in the field. We now drive back south and with the short time we have left Julian decides to call in at Tophill Low, but today the gate is locked a good hour before they are meant to! It is too late to go anywhere else so we start back to the hotel, stopping for a juvenile Marsh Harrier Jill has found flying across the adjacent field. A little further we now stop as David has spotted a pair of Red-legged Partridges fighting right next to the van which is fascinating. Once the fight has broken up, we now continue out to the main road and south back to our hotel.

Day 5

A relaxed start to the day sees us setting off from the hotel a little after 9am, heading out of Beverley north. We again drive through extensive agricultural fields through some incredibly scenic and quaint villages, which are so well looked after. We soon reach the rolling hills of the beautiful Yorkshire Wolds, enjoying every turn and straight on these narrow country roads. There are lots of Pheasants around and we also see a few Red-legged Partridges as we drop down into another lovely village – Thixendale. We now drive slowly up the hill to the famous Robert Fuller Art Gallery where we are greeted by Jane and

made to feel most welcome with some hot drinks. We now spend some time inside admiring some of Robert's artwork and also his camera and video work, with several monitors showing his footage of the wildlife he's seen both in the UK and abroad.

After a while, the man himself appears and asks if we are ready to head back outside for a tour around the area. We are soon all ready in the car park and after pointing out a male Bullfinch, he leads back onto the road and down the hill a short way. He then points at a natural gap in a tree's foliage and there sits a gorgeous female Tawny Owl – superb. We take the obligatory photos and get some mind-blowing looks through the telescope as she sits patiently staring back at us. Once we are ready, we continue a little further and now Robert explains about the inhabitants of the various nest boxes dotted around and the antics that go on between the residents, which is fascinating. After this we slowly head back to the gallery seeing a few Redwings fly over and a Sparrowhawk zips through looking for a Tree Sparrow to feast on. He now takes us around the garden which is a network of lawned tracks through his (now) mature trees and shrubs – perfect habitat for local wildlife. He then walks us over to where he's constructed his badger sett and where his local Stoats hang out as we listen with great interest as he recalls facts and information on his exploits with these animals. The tour ends and we thank him very much for his precious time, especially as he needs to now pack for his next big adventure out to Panama and hopefully filming Harpy Eagles! We go back inside the gallery amazed at what we had just learnt and some of us indulge in a wee bit of retail therapy.

Around 11:30 we leave the gallery and drive back towards Thixendale, and out the other side stopping very soon for a couple of Red Kites circling over the road. Jill and Julian also see a Mistle Thrush fly past along with a few Redwings and a Kestrel.

We soon reach our next stop where we all get out of the minibus and start scanning the valley. The weather is improving after what has been a cloudy and cold morning, but the wind is freshening which isn't great. There are lots of Common Buzzards here with Joan finding a particularly pale one, highlighting their diversity in plumage. Another Sparrowhawk appears which creates havoc with the local jackdaws as they 'kettle up' into the sky like a black cloud! We had hoped for a Peregrine but sadly not and with it being nearly lunchtime we now set off north again to our next site. This drive is just as scenic and beautiful as we cross into North Yorkshire and head northeast towards Scarborough.

Eventually we reach our destination, and start to drive slowly along this wooded valley, pulling into a car park with picnic tables along the edge of the River Derwent. We now park and collect our lunches and commandeer one

of the tables for the picnic. Again the 'deli-made' sandwiches are a great success and we all enjoy them, especially as we have the company of a lovely male Grey Wagtail. Once we have finished Julian suggests a walk along the river and off we go. It is quiet though, seeing just Robin and Wren before stopping to turn round. We are checking the surrounding trees as Joan spots our first Coal Tit of the tour, with Julian now hearing another familiar call – Marsh Tit. We search and eventually find it amongst the foliage with Viv and Jill also seeing a Treecreeper. The walk has suddenly got so much better!

We start back towards the car park with David and Pam seeing another Sparrowhawk which has alighted on a low branch by the river. David gets some very good images of this juvenile raptor as it sits and also when it drops to the ground. After a short while it flies off and we keep walking back along the boardwalk stopping again for another couple of Marsh Tits.

We reach the bus and now set off to the next layby where there are some well-stocked feeders which are currently active with Marsh, Coal, Great and Blue Tits, Chaffinch and Robin, however these birds disperse into the wood leaving them unoccupied, which is most unusual, especially as this lasts for 15 minutes. We can only assume the birds are full with food and have gone for a siesta, which prompts us to move on too.

It is now mid-afternoon as we drive to Scarborough and then south to Filey, where we park up at the North Cliff Country Park making full use of their facilities. We drive towards Carr Naze where we park and scan into the bay from the cliff top, but it's incredibly quiet. Initially just a couple of Guillemots are seen down below us and a gathering of the commoner gulls. Jill is looking further out beyond Filey Brig seeing a few Gannets passing before she spots a small flock of Common Scoter heading just into the bay where they land. The sea here is choppy and they are not easy to find but we persevere and get them in the telescopes, being the first ones we have seen this week.

Whilst we are watching these, Julian spots a Kittiwake flying south above them, which a few of us manage to get on to. We have about an hour before we need to leave so Julian suggests a walk out towards the point, and we set off slowly along the track. We get to the other side of the peninsular and the sea here is much calmer with the winds coming from the south and a clear view right up to Scarborough Castle. We see more auks bobbing around on this side, including a couple of Razorbill which are quite close in but not much else. However, we keep searching the sea and Julian (like yesterday) finds a couple of Harbour Porpoise but this time they are much closer and near an obvious 'pink buoy'. It does not take us long to find these small cetaceans and we get some pretty good views of them through our telescopes.

After this we continue to walk along the cliff top seeing Linnets, Goldfinches and Meadow Pipits along the way until we reach a lovely new seat that overlooks the Brig. We again put up the telescopes and scan the exposed pools at the end of the peninsular where we find quite a few Oystercatchers plus Common Redshank, Ringed Plover and another new bird for the tour - Sanderling. In the sea adjacent to the Brig there are also a couple of Red-throated Divers and Shag, but again they are not easy to pick up in the swell.

It is now time to walk back to the minibus and on the way we get good views of a Kestrel just hanging in the wind motionless before diving down on to some unsuspecting prey. We reach the van and set off away from Filey on our long drive south to Beverley getting to our hotel a little after 6pm.

Day 6 It's another glorious day in East Yorkshire with cloudless skies and bright sunshine as we leave Beverley at 08:45. We initially drive NE before turning back SE towards the city of Hull through huge fields of ploughed and sown agricultural lands. At the outskirts we take the ring road around the city and head again south and east through the lovely villages of Keyingham, Patrington and Easington until we reach the Kilnsea area of the Spurn peninsular. A comfort break is necessary, and we drive to the Blue Bell Café where we use the public facilities on the edge of the North Sea. Following this we return the same way and park at Kilnsea Wetlands. We climb out of the minibus into warm sunshine and make ourselves ready for a walk around this site. While this is going on a huge flock of Golden Plover fly over heading to the coast as the tide is now starting to go out, which it does very quickly.

We now set off along the track heading towards the coast and bypassing the temptation to call in at the hide. We keep going for a couple more hundred metres until we reach the gate at the 'Listening Stone'. Here, slightly to the north a small crowd has assembled of birdwatchers and photographers intently staring into the hawthorn hedge. We walk along to join them and immediately see what they are looking at – a gorgeous 1st winter Barred Warbler. This normally skulking 'large, sylvia warbler' is happily hopping around the outer edges of the hedge, slowly making its way further along. We are absolutely thrilled by this and settle down to watch and photograph it for the next hour. It continues to move and feed as it goes back and forth along this section of hedge, mainly right out in the open, which is just superb.

Once we have had enough Julian suggests we walk a little further on to a watchpoint that overlooks the scrapes and lagoon. We can now concentrate on other things with plenty of Reed Buntings around along with Skylark, Goldfinch and Dunnock. We check the lagoon and Julian finds a Knot along with another new bird for the list – Grey Plover, of which there are several. There is also Greylag Geese, Little Egret, Common Redshank, Teal, Wigeon, Mute Swan, Mallard and lots of Little Grebes. Joan does really well

to pick out a Greenfinch sat on the phragmites and David spots a few Meadow Pipits in the same area. Viv and Jill have been checking another small, shallow lagoon where there are more duck including some beautiful male and female Pintail, Gadwall and Shelduck. They are puzzled by a couple of small waders amongst the commoner Black-tailed Godwits, Redshanks and Oystercatchers. These turn out to be Dunlin and now with some closer scrutiny of the sandy edges Julian finds a Spotted Redshank, which looks atypical as it's laying down.

It is now fast approaching midday and thoughts of lunch are creeping in, so Julian decides we shall walk slowly back to the minibus. However, the Barred Warbler has literally followed us along the track and is hopping around a tiny hawthorn tree just below where we are standing. So now we watch it catch and devour a juicy worm followed by giving itself a bath in the nearby water, which is fascinating! We do now slowly leave, and walk back down the track towards the car park, elated with the day so far. A little further on Julian stops again and sets up his telescope to check an area, almost immediately announcing "Little Owl!" We struggle to believe this, but there, tucked away staring right back at us is a fabulous Little Owl, which is superb. Once we have enjoyed this, we again carry on until we reach the car park where Joan sees a small skein of Pink-footed Geese flying over.

It is now back in the hot van and away we go down towards Spurn Discovery Centre where we stop in the adjacent car park. Now we grab the lunch box and carry it to the picnic tables where we sit and enjoy our sandwiches in the incredibly warm (for mid-October) sunshine! Once we have finished and made full use of their facilities we now get ready for another short walk around the 'triangle'. We soon find a pair of Stonechats before reaching the beach to look out to sea, which is very quiet. However, we persevere and find a few small flocks of Teal bobbing around, along with Jill spotting our only Red-throated Diver of the day. Pam does well to find Grey Seal before Julian sees a very, 'white-looking' gull flying north out to sea. It is an adult winter Mediterranean Gull, which is another new bird for the list, with a few more heading north not long after.

The walk continues down to The Warren, where we check the mudflats and initially find a couple of Bar-tailed Godwits, Curlew, Redshank and Dunlin. However, a little further away is a huge flock of Golden Plover which at time glisten in the afternoon sunlight. We are about to leave when a man digging Lug Worms disturbs them and they all fly up and around in a fantastic Golden Plover murmuration! We watch transfixed as this 1000+ strong flock of waders, wheel and dive in unison, making some incredible shapes in the air before coming to ground a little further away.

We continue on again, now getting to the vehicle a short time later, which is most welcome as most of us are pretty over-dressed for the weather conditions and struggling in the heat. Once we are ready to go we set off and return back up to Hull where we now skirt the south side towards the M62 turning off for North Cave at the appropriate junction. From here it doesn't take too long to reach our final destination of the day – North Cave Wetlands, where hope to find one of the Ruddy Shelducks seen there recently. We drive straight down to the hide the birds have been reported from, park and set up the scopes overlooking the lagoon – again no sign! Although amongst the Lapwing flock, Julian spots a single Ruff, which is nice and there is a Lesser Black-backed Gull with the usual Herring and Black-headed Gulls. The wildfowl is the expected Mute Swan. Greylag Geese, Pochard, Tufted Duck, Shoveler, Wigeon, Teal and Mallard.

We decide to now walk slowly back up the lane to check the next deeper pool, seeing a few Redwing along the way. Again we set up the telescopes and check the wildfowl which now includes Gadwall and Coot with a few Moorhen around the exposed muddy edges. Julian hears a distinctive call and points up as a Green Sandpiper flies over and sadly away out of sight, not even stopping on the reserve! David now says "I've got a Water Rail" and tries to explain where it is but this isn't easy as it keeps disappearing into the phragmites, however, he perseveres and this normally secretive bird reappears running across a more exposed area where most of us get to see it in the lovely afternoon sunlight. It now dashes into cover again and doesn't come out, so we decide we shall walk on a little further towards the entrance and look from the covered watchpoint.

As we follow the mature hedge we can hear and see Goldcrests, Great, Blue and Long-tailed Tits plus a few more Redwing fly out. We reach the viewing platform and an initial scan reveals the expected Great Crested and Little Grebes, Cormorant, some of the same ducks and a snipe skulking at the waters edge. Julian now says "There's a Green Woodpecker on the bank, in the sunlight!" Sure enough we can clearly see this lovely bird, with its green, black and red plumage looking radiant in the sunshine. We continue to watch it pick at the ground for insects, which is brilliant and then Joan says "there's two woodpeckers" as the first is joined by its partner. These birds are here for quite a while and make for a lovely end to the day, as Julian walks back down the lane to the minibus and drives up to collect us. We now leave North Cave Wetlands and head north back up to our hotel in Beverley where we have time to freshen up ahead of our evening meal.

Day 7

Today has a fresher feel to it, being distinctly autumnal as we go for breakfast at 07:30, being ready to leave just over an hour later. We are again heading down to Spurn and follow the same route as the previous day, seeing Stock Doves, Curlews, Kestrel and Roe Deer before we reach Kilnsea. We go straight

round to the Discovery Centre car park and make ourselves ready for the 'Spurn Unimog Safari' down to the point. We now walk slowly down to the Warren area where we are due to board this unusual purpose-built vehicle and with the tide in, scan the Humber. There are lots of Shelduck on the water along with a few Little Egrets, Bar-tailed Godwits, Golden Plover, Redshank and Dunlin along the narrow strip of exposed mud.

Harry and Morgan arrive, make their introductions and inform us that the Unimog will be there shortly, before pointing out a Common Scoter flying past. Julian hears a Goldcrest in an adjacent Hawthorn and goes to investigate, finding it and a Chiffchaff hopping around, which is encouraging. Adam now arrives with the Unimog, and we all climb aboard with a double seat to ourselves! We set off and drive slowly south along the road passing the ringing station and sea-watching hide, through large areas of Sea Buckthorn which is great for birds. Harry is at the front identifying some of the waders we are seeing before we reach the sand of where this peninsula was breached several years ago. We now stop as we can see our first small flock of Dark-bellied Brent Geese bobbing around in the river's murky waters. We bounce around as we cross the breach stopping just before the road as there are more Brent Geese plus waders on the sandy beach. There is a huge flock of Oystercatchers with smaller numbers of Redshank, Grey Plover and Bar-tailed Godwits with Julian spotting a lone Avocet at the far end.

As we move off again a large flock of Dunlin alight and we are now treated to a 'murmuration' of this dinky waders as they wheel around constantly changing their aerial shape – superb. We now carry on as Adam is keen to get us to the point as the Unimog is required elsewhere but along the way Harry points out our first Stonechats of the day and a few Redwing fly out of the thick mass of Sea Buckthorn. Eventually we reach our destination and alight the vehicle with all of our gear as Harry explains the plan which is essentially walking the tracks around here for an hour or so before making our way to the lighthouse where we rendezvous again with Adam. Sounds good, and off we go.

Harry has exceptionally good hearing and sight (oh to be young again!) and he is calling birds that are migrating south out over the Humber Estuary. They are mostly Skylarks, Rock and Meadow Pipits along with a few Siskin which we can distinctly hear their calls as they pass overhead. The trees and shrubs though are pretty quiet as we see the odd Robin, Blackbird, Dunnock and Stonechat. We get deeper into the vegetation along the narrow track and now hear both Goldcrest and Chiffchaff along with the calls of Cetti's Warbler and Long-tailed Tit, both of which are noteworthy here. We are near the beach where the North Sea meets the estuary and now get to see the Long-tailed Tits as they flit through the buckthorn and hawthorn shrubs.

At the beach we walk out to check the water but again this is quiet, with just a few gulls loafing around, but sadly no skuas or other seabirds which are sometimes found here. After a while we return along the tracks heading back to the coastguard cottages when both Harry and Julian say “Brambling” and point up as a male passes right overhead. Harry who sports a bridge camera is like lightning and fires off a couple of shots which captures this winter finch in full bounding flight – just amazing!

We carry on slowly with another couple of Brambling, more Siskins, pipits and Skylarks flying over as the day's weather starts to improve. We reach the cottages and now make full use of their facilities while the rest of us are entertained by a very obliging male Stonechat. Once ready we continue along the main road towards the lighthouse with a few Redwing being flushed from the roadside bushes. We reach the base of the lighthouse and Harry opens the door to allow anyone inside and a climb of over 100 steps up to the light. Joan and Jill opt for this while, Julian, Viv, David and Pam remain at ground level, sitting outside in the lovely sunshine. We are sat chatting with Julian going to check the North Sea, where he spots a drake Eider flying past and returns just as Joan and Jill join the others saying how marvellous the view is from the top. We now continue to wait until a little after 1:30pm when Adam arrives with the Unimog. We quickly board and set off back this time not stopping at all until we reach the Warren. We climb down off the vehicle and thank very much our ‘safari guides’ as they have all done a sterling job this morning.

We now walk slowly back up the road to the minibus where we grab the picnic lunches and go to the tables outside to enjoy our sandwiches, fruit and snacks in the warm sunshine. A wader flies past towards the small pool behind the centre giving a call Julian recognises and immediately spots the Jack Snipe. We have heard the call but didn't see the bird but Julian's keen to see if it's landed in view and goes to the small hide that overlooks this reedy pool. Sadly not and no one in the hide saw anything drop in either, which is a little disappointing and our guide returns to the picnic tables.

We have now all finished and make use of the facilities before we move on. Julian thinks Spurn is quiet, even the Barred Warbler has departed so suggests somewhere closer to Beverley – Tophill Low NR. We are all fine with this and we head back to the minibus and once ready set off away back up the peninsular going the same way as we came this morning. We actually skirt Beverley getting to this reserve, which is about five miles north of the town.

On the way we see several more Kestrels, a Common Buzzard and more Roe Deer before getting to the car park. Julian sorts out the entrance fees while the rest of us grab our scopes and walk up to the hide overlooking D reservoir. At the feeders we wait for our guide with Jill finding a Marsh Tit on them along

with a few Coal, Great and Blue Tits. Julian soon arrives and we go into the larger hide but the picture windows make viewing very distorted, however, this doesn't stop Julian finding the Black-necked Grebe amongst all the other wildfowl but we need to get a clearer view.

We now go into the smaller hide where the windows open fully and sure enough we get some fabulous views of this scarce wintering grebe down in the near corner. Once we've had a good look we quickly check the rest of the water finding more of the common wildfowl species along with several Great Crested and Little Grebes. We are keen to investigate a bit more of the reserve but the light is already fading and it's only just after 5pm! David and Pam stay behind to watch the feeders while Julian, Joan and Jill walk along the track that leads to another lagoon – or so we thought!

We soon reach the hide only to find this scrape is bone dry so we quickly leave and continue further along the track to discover that remedial work is ongoing and this is also closed. It has been a waste of time so with the light now seriously fading we return to the car park where Julian goes to get David and Pam. The reserve warden is there and Julian asks when the work will be done and he hopes by next Spring, which would be great as the proposed changes sound very beneficial to the reserve.

We are soon all back at the minibus and driving out to the main road where we now have a short journey to the hotel, soon enough we are emptying the van of all our belongings as we go our separate ways in the morning. We have plenty of time to freshen up before meeting again for our final meal in the restaurant. We conduct the usual checklist followed by our 'highlights of the week', which are both varied and fabulous to reflect on. We thank Julian very much for all his hard work, which our guide really appreciates and 'thanks us very much' before our last excellent meal in this equally excellent accommodation.

Day 8

After our breakfast at 8am we go our separate ways with Joan, Jill, David and Pam driving all the way to their respective homes. Julian and Viv are taking the minibus to York Train Station before our guide continues to his home in West Yorkshire. We say our "thanks and farewell" to the excellent hotel staff who have looked after us superbly and bring to a close a wonderful week in the East Riding of 'God's Own Country'.

Species of the Trip

David	Tawny Owl
Pam	Bottlenose Dolphins
Jill	Barred Warbler/Smew
Joan	Green Woodpecker
Viv	Barred Warbler
Dave	Yellow-browed Warbler
Julian	Barred Warbler

Place of the Trip

David	Robert Fuller Gallery
Pam	South Landing ringing station
Jill	Flamborough Headland
Joan	South Landing area, Flamborough
Viv	Whole of the Flamborough headland
Dave	Robert Fuller Gallery
Julian	Flamborough Headland

Magic Moment

David	Julian's reaction to hearing my Yellow-browed Warbler tape!
Pam	Having a Goldcrest in the hand at South Landing
Jill	Seeing the Barred Warbler transform from pristine to soggy mess after a bathe
Joan	Walking into the Robert Fuller Gallery and seeing all those wonderful paintings
Viv	Seeing the Bottlenose Dolphins pass South Landing
Dave	The ringing session at South Landing
Julian	Seeing a Yellow-browed Warbler through the telescope

BIRDS

Mute Swan
Whooper Swan
Pink-footed Goose
Greylag Goose
Canada Goose
Dark-bellied Brent Goose
Shelduck
Mallard
Gadwall
Pintail
Shoveler
Wigeon
Eurasian Teal
Common Pochard
Tufted Duck
Eider
Common Scoter
Goldeneye
Smew
Red-legged Partridge
Pheasant
Red-throated Diver
Little Grebe
Black-necked Grebe
Great Crested Grebe
Gannet
Cormorant
Shag
Little Egret
Great Egret
Grey Heron
Red Kite
Marsh Harrier
Common Buzzard
Sparrowhawk
Kestrel
Water Rail
Moorhen
Coot
Oystercatcher
Avocet
Ringed Plover
Golden Plover
Grey Plover
Lapwing
Knot

Sanderling
Turnstone
Dunlin
Green Sandpiper
Common Redshank
Spotted Redshank
Black-tailed Godwit
Bar-tailed Godwit
Curlew
Common Snipe
Jack Snipe
Ruff
Black-headed Gull
Common Gull
Mediterranean Gull
Herring Gull
Greater Black-backed Gull
Lesser Black-backed Gull
Kittiwake
Guillemot
Razorbill
Feral Pigeon
Rock Dove
Woodpigeon
Collared Dove
Tawny Owl
Little Owl
Kingfisher
Great Spotted Woodpecker
Green Woodpecker
Skylark
Rock Pipit
Meadow Pipit
Pied Wagtail
Grey Wagtail
Dunnock
Robin
Stonechat
Song Thrush
Redwing
Fieldfare
Mistle Thrush
Blackbird
Blackcap
Barred Warbler
Cetti's Warbler (heard only)

Chiffchaff
Yellow-browed Warbler
Goldcrest
Wren
Great Tit
Coal Tit
Blue Tit
Marsh Tit
Long-tailed Tit
Bearded Tit
Treecreeper
Magpie
Jackdaw
Carrion Crow
Rook
Starling
House Sparrow
Tree Sparrow
Chaffinch
Brambling
Linnet
Goldfinch
Greenfinch
Siskin
Bullfinch
Reed Bunting
Yellowhammer

MAMMALS

Grey Seal
Harbour Porpoise
Bottlenose Dolphin
Roe Deer
Brown Hare
Rabbit
Grey Squirrel

OTHER SPECIES

Red Admiral
Small White
Common Darter
Migrant Hawker
Common Hawker
Grasshopper (sp)
Steelblue Lady Beetle
Common Toad