

East Yorkshire in Autumn

21-25 September 2025

Leader: Dan Rouse

Tour Summary

Autumn is one of the most intriguing times to be birding in East Yorkshire – it's a season when we are unsure of what may turn up next. During our stay at the Cave Castle Hotel, we were greeted each morning with skeins of Pink-footed Geese gracing the skies overhead. The grounds also provided some lovely morning birds as people went on a post-breakfast stroll, with Grey Wagtails, Moorhens, calling Tawny Owls and groups of passerines feeding among the conifers.

The week was perhaps not the most exciting in terms of weather, but we managed to see some interesting migrants such as Red-breasted Flycatcher, Garganey, Curlew Sandpiper and other delights. It was a week of laughter and exciting birds!

Day 1: Arrival and North Cave Wetlands

We arrived at the hotel for midday before meeting each other and discussing the arrangements for checking in. The van was then filled with our equipment before driving the 10-minute journey to North Cave Wetlands, ready for our first birding. This was the first time our group had met and we got to know each other through our first stop at the initial viewpoint where we saw wetland birds such as **Eurasian Teal, Tufted Duck** and **Little Grebe**. Venturing further round the reserve to the Turret Hide, our group was treated to fantastic views of **Common Snipe** and **Green Sandpiper** as they foraged in the waters below. Continuing our walk to the reedbeds, we scanned through the different ducks for anything usual with no luck, but a quick shout from Richard resulted in the group watching a **Eurasian Bittern** glide across the pool before dropping into the opposing reeds. We then boarded the van and made our way back to the hotel to settle and unpack before our evening meal.

Day checklist: 44 species



Day 2: Spurn Peninsula

Our visit to Spurn was to be our longest day in the field. We pulled into the Kilnsea Wetlands car park and met up with Sam Viles from BirdGuides. Unfortunately, Kilnsea ‘Wetlands’ didn’t live up to its name as the exceptionally dry summer meant there was no water on the scrapes, but there were at least some **Meadow Pipits** feeding on the ground. As we walked towards Beacon Ponds, **Common Linnets** and **Reed Buntings** were calling from the hedges as we passed. A quick peak at the feeders saw **Goldfinch**, **Greenfinch**, **Great Tit**, **Dunnock** and **Tree Sparrow** taking a bite from the station.

We scanned across the ponds looking for anything of interest – the main thing that caught our attention was the amount of **Little Grebes**, with 12 birds in total. Elsewhere on the water we saw **Dunlin**, **Knot**, **Ringed Plover** and a very brief **Little Stint** which did not hang around long enough to get everyone onto. However, all the group connected with the **Garganey** that we picked out from among the **Eurasian Teal**, **Gadwall**, **Northern Shoveler** and **Northern Pintail**. With our stomachs rumbling, we made our way back to the van and on to YWT Discovery Centre for a spot of lunch.



With our hunger satisfied, we made a brief stop at the Canal Scrape Hide where a **Jack Snipe** was putting on quite a show, bobbing away while feeding. We then walked along the Canal Path before making a brief stop in Corner Field where a Greenish Warbler had been reported in previous days – luck as not in our favour and we instead watched many **Common Chiffchaffs** feeding among the willows.

Venturing further along the road down towards the Warren, we decided to have a look from the Seawatching Hide at Numpties as the tide was high and the sea was very gentle. Perched in the hide away from the wind, we settled into position when our first seabird went past – a lovely **Red-throated Diver** followed by **Northern Gannets**, before long we also had a group of **Common Scoter** sitting among the waves. I had watched a large bird ride above a wave and shouted “skua!” before it then came close in giving fantastic views of an **Arctic Skua** as it passed. During our watch we also had **Guillemot**, **European Shag**, **Cormorant** and **Sandwich Tern**. It was then time to depart the area, with a quick stop to look at the Humber from the Warren. From here, we were able to pick out **Bar-tailed Godwit**, **Red Knot**, **Ringed Plover**, **European Golden Plover** and **Grey Plover** roosting and feeding on the mudflats.

Day checklist: 66 species



Day 3: Flamborough Head and Bempton Cliffs RSPB

Day three began at Flamborough Head, where we were again joined by Sam Viles. The weather was looking exciting and we decided to have a look along Motorway Hedge as this is often a good location for migrants. **Common Chiffchaffs**, **Blue Tits** and **Reed Buntings** were best from the hedge walk, so we continued to the clifftop towards the seawatching hide as the sea was still relatively calm – with some of us sheltering from the wind, we took up position on the clifftop watching large groups of **Northern Gannets** flying across the waves. On the sea itself, we noted 33 **Red-throated Divers** milling around, and **European Shag** were diving feeding, other notables were **Guillemots**, **Razorbill** and **Northern Fulmar**. While there was very little diversity in the seabirds on the water itself, we did note **Eurasian Wigeon** flying south over the sea, and on the rocks below the clifftops were **Common Redshank**, **Dunlin**, **Curlew**, **Oystercatcher** and **Turnstone** all feeding among the seaweed. After deciding we were rather cold and in need of some food, we ventured towards the clifftop restaurant for lunch.

With lunch out of the way, Bempton Cliffs RSPB was our next stop for the afternoon birding. There were very little birds left on the cliffs, which is to be expected at this time of year – however, we did find some **Northern Gannets** still with older chicks on the ledges. We had **Guillemot** on the sea along with more **Red-throated Divers**, from the viewpoint there were **Northern Fulmar** and gulls passing below. The most notable species of our time on the viewpoint was a **Peregrine Falcon** which then chased **Feral Pigeons** below and disappeared around the cliffs out of sight. Before heading off, we made a quick stop to the feeding station where **Tree Sparrows**, **Goldfinches**, **Greenfinches**, **Blackbirds** and **Dunnocks** were feeding.

Day checklist: 46 species



Day 4: Tophill Low NR, Hornsea Mere and Flamborough Head

Seeking a bit of respite from the windy coastline of East Yorkshire, we turned our attention to Tophill Low NR which is an active water-treatment facility with an adjoining nature reserve – the ideal place for wildfowl to spend the winter months! On our drive into the reserve road, chief spotter Richard

Sighted a **Kingfisher** which quickly flew downstream. Parking up, we spent the first part of our visit in the main hide looking onto the D Reservoir. This was filled with **Coot** and **Tufted Duck** but we also noted **Common Pochard**, **Greylag Geese** and **Great Crested Grebes** feeding on the water. While searching through the flocks of **Tufted Duck**, we noted a female **Greater Scaup** loafing at the rear of the reservoir. This gave the group a fantastic opportunity to compare these similar-looking diving duck side by side.

Looking for a shift in species, we stopped and watched the small stream at the rear of the hide where **Grey Wagtail**, **Cetti's Warbler**, **Great Spotted Woodpecker** and **Chaffinch** feeding and drinking at the edges of the stream. Venturing further round towards the O Reservoir, we popped into the marsh hide where there was plenty of waders and wildfowl using the lagoon – notably we saw five **Common Snipe** and three **Green Sandpipers** in the water, plus **Curlew** and **Lapwing** on the grassy banks. As we were looking through the different waders, a smaller wader walked out from the reedbeds giving us great views of a **Curlew Sandpiper** – a much sought-after bird for the trip! Two **Marsh Harriers** (an adult female and a juvenile) gave us great views of the mother bird hunting while the juvenile continued to scream from a fencepost.

As the afternoon arrived, we headed to Hornsea Mere to have a spot of lunch and to look through the gulls. Standing on the water's edge, we began looking through the different areas of the lake with **Mute Swan**, **Great Crested Grebe** and **Gadwall** were feeding in the water itself, **Dunlin** were feeding in front of us on the shingle ridge as we hoped again for a Curlew Sandpiper with no luck. As we began looking further afield, I picked through the large group of gulls at the rear of the lake with the majority being **Common Gull** or **Black-headed Gulls** two rather smaller birds were notably sitting on the edge of the group – a quick zoom-in showed the characteristics of **Little Gulls** and the group then managed to get all the scopes on them before they merged with the other gulls and locating them turned difficult. As we were then looking through the reeds and watching a **Marsh Harrier** hunting over the reedbeds, Mark asked what the above incoming was – we looked up as a **Eurasian Hobby** glided gracefully overhead giving us fantastic views of the red 'trousers'! Enjoying the delight of the Hobby, my phone pinged with an alert from BirdGuides that a Red-breasted Flycatcher had been located at Flamborough Head. A quick discussion resulted in us boarding the van and making the journey to the headland.

After a rather exciting drive, our group disembarked and quickly made their way down to the aforementioned Motorway Hedge (a very great space for migrants as mentioned!), other birders had arrived and were looking at the front facing edge of the hedge. After quickly scanning and chatting with the locals, someone mentioned that they had a possibility of it at the rear of the hedge – we quickly gathered the scopes and headed round to the rear end of the hedge and took up position. Scanning thoroughly through the willows, every fluttering bird was possibly our quarry, but the red breasts of Robins gave us false hope each time! Then, a brief tail-pump and a fly-catch from the willow gave us the confirmation we needed – the **Red-breasted Flycatcher** was here! We spent the next 45 minutes watching the bird feed and flying out from the willows before it eventually sat out in the open, allowing everyone to see this rare visitor.

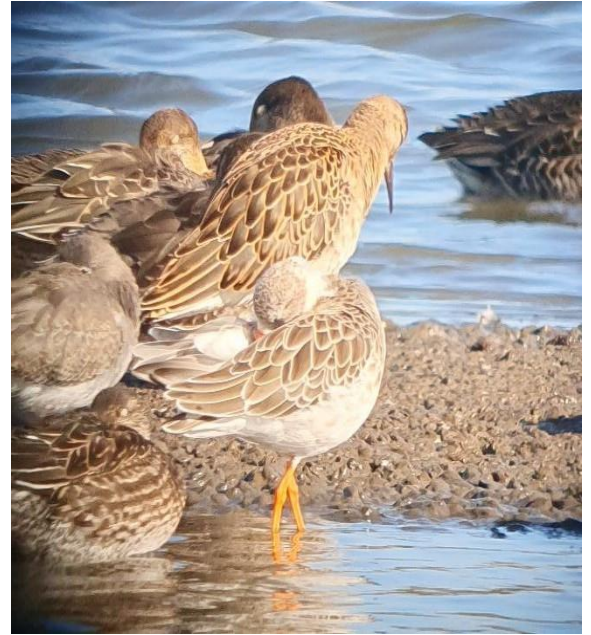
On our return route home, we made a quick stop at Bridlington Harbour to look for the Grey Phalarope that had been seen previously, we searched the choppy waves and managed to pick out a small grey shape riding the waves. This was the **Grey Phalarope** and members of the group managed to connect before the bird disappeared behind the waves.

Day checklist: 54 species

Day 5: Blacktoft Sands RSPB

Our final day had arrived and we made our way to Blacktoft Sands RSPB for a morning birding session. There were not many targets left to see, but the highlight of the morning was by far the sheer amount of **Pink-footed Geese** that were migrating through – flocks of thousands of shouting geese passed overhead and over the distant fields, bringing us a classic sound of autumn. A **Eurasian Sparrowhawk** glided past at point-blank range, giving us a fright as the bird almost travelled in through the window!

We made our way to the Ousefleet Hide where the waders were the stars of the show. **Common** and **Spotted Redshanks** and **Dunlin** were roosting on the mud banks. However, the sheer amount of **Ruff** was a delight with almost 20 birds counted in various plumages, with the greyish adults and golden juveniles seen. Scanning the rear reedbeds, a **Water Rail** sit out giving us great views of this otherwise elusive species to round off the trip. With that, the morning ended and we headed back to the accommodation to say our goodbyes.



SPECIES	DAY ONE	DAY TWO	DAY THREE	DAY FOUR	DAY FIVE
Greylag Goose	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Canada Goose				✓	
Pink-footed Goose	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Brent Goose			✓		
Mute Swan	✓	✓		✓	✓
Common Shelduck		✓			
Garganey		✓			
Northern Shoveler	✓	✓			✓
Gadwall	✓	✓		✓	✓
Eurasian Wigeon		✓	✓	✓	✓
Mallard	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Northern Pintail		✓			
Teal	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Pochard				✓	
Common Scoter		✓			
Tufted Duck	✓			✓	
Goldeneye				✓	
Feral Pigeon	✓		✓		
Stock Dove	✓	✓			
Common Woodpigeon	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Collared Dove		✓	✓		
Water Rail					✓
Moorhen	✓		✓	✓	✓
Coot	✓			✓	
Ruff				✓	✓
Grey Plover		✓			
European Golden Plover		✓			
Ringed Plover		✓			
Oystercatcher			✓		
Curlew		✓		✓	✓
Bar-tailed Godwit		✓		✓	
Black-tailed Godwit					✓
Northern Lapwing	✓	✓		✓	✓
Jack Snipe		✓			
Common Snipe	✓	✓		✓	
Green Sandpiper	✓			✓	
Common Redshank	✓	✓	✓		✓
Spotted Redshank					✓
Turnstone			✓		
Red Knot		✓			
Dunlin		✓	✓	✓	✓
Arctic Skua		✓			
Razorbill		✓	✓		
Common Guillemot	✓	✓	✓		
Little Gull				✓	
Kittiwake			✓		
Black-headed Gull	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Common Gull	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Herring Gull	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Lesser Black-backed Gull	✓	✓	✓		✓
Greater Black-backed Gull					

Sandwich Tern		✓			
Great Crested Grebe				✓	
Little Grebe	✓	✓		✓	
Red-throated Diver		✓	✓		
Fulmar			✓		
Gannet		✓	✓		
Cormorant	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Shag			✓		
Eurasian Bittern	✓				
Little Egret	✓	✓		✓	✓
Grey Heron	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Common Kestrel		✓	✓		
Sparrowhawk				✓	✓
Marsh Harrier				✓	✓
Hobby				✓	
Common Buzzard	✓		✓	✓	✓
Peregrine Falcon			✓		
Tawny Owl				✓	
Kingfisher				✓	
Great Spotted Woodpecker				✓	
Jay				✓	
Magpie	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Jackdaw	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Rook	✓	✓			
Carrion Crow	✓	✓			
Coal Tit				✓	
Blue Tit	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Great Tit		✓	✓		
Barn Swallow	✓	✓			
House Martin	✓				
Common Chiffchaff	✓	✓			
Cetti's Warbler	✓	✓		✓	✓
Goldcrest		✓		✓	
Wren		✓		✓	
Long-tailed Tit	✓		✓	✓	
Skylark			✓		
Starling	✓	✓		✓	
Song Thrush				✓	
Blackbird	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Robin	✓	✓			
Stonechat		✓			
Dunnock		✓	✓	✓	
Tree Sparrow		✓	✓		
Grey Wagtail		✓		✓	
Pied/White Wagtail	✓			✓	
Meadow Pipit	✓	✓			
Rock Pipit		✓			
Chaffinch		✓	✓	✓	
Greenfinch		✓	✓	✓	
Common Linnet	✓	✓	✓		
Goldfinch	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Reed Bunting		✓			

NOTABLE SPECIES

Greater Scaup				✓	
Little Stint		✓			
Curlew Sandpiper				✓	
Red-breasted Flycatcher				✓	
Grey Phalarope				✓	

Trip total: 111 species