

East Yorkshire in Autumn

26-30 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 and groups of passerines feeding among the conifers.

During the tour, we encountered a good number of rare and exciting species, with Siberian Stonechat a highlight for most participants. Garganey and Caspian Gull were other highlights as we ventured around parts of East Yorkshire.

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. 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 **Eurasian Teal**, **Tufted Duck**, **Little Grebe** and **Moorhen**. Venturing further round the reserve to the Turret Hide, our group was treated to fantastic views of **Common Snipe** as they foraged in the waters below. Before we continued our walk, we made a brief stop at the nearby viewpoint where we were able to see **Common Buzzard** and **Red Kite** circling over the rear woodlands. Continuing our walk to the reedbeds and the reed pools, there were more **Little Grebes** feeding on the water, **Chiffchaffs** calling in the hedgerow and noted some **Evening Primrose** with their bright yellow flowers adorning the sides of the paths. We then boarded the van and made our way back to the hotel to settle and unpack before our evening meal.

Day checklist: 42 species



Day 2: Flamborough Head, Bempton Cliffs RSPB and Grimston

Day two began at Flamborough Head where we were joined by Sam Viles of BirdGuides. The weather held off enough for us to have a look along Motorway Hedge, as this is often a good location for migrants. **Chiffchaffs**, **Blue Tits** and **Reed Buntings** were the highlights from the hedge walk, but the Red-breasted Flycatcher seen a couple of days before had departed.

We decided to walk the coastal walk to the Seawatching Hide, stopping to look below the cliffs at a group of juvenile gulls. Most were **Herring Gulls**, but Sam noted a rather pale-looking bird which allowed us to get fantastic views of a first-winter **Caspian Gull**. While we were enjoying the Caspian Gull, we also noted the feeding waders: **Common Redshank**, **Curlew**, **Turnstone** and **Oystercatchers** were among the seaweed. Venturing round the headland, we made a stop to look at the **Grey Seal** haul-out. **Rock Pipits** were also on the rocks, and a rather large-looking **Carrion Crow** gave us a puzzle.



On the sea itself, we noted several **Red-throated Divers** milling around, and **European Shag** were feeding, other notables were **Razorbill** and **Northern Gannets**. While there was very little diversity in the seabirds on the water itself, we did note **Eurasian Wigeon** flying south overhead and **Common Scoter** also flying north above the waves. After deciding we were rather cold and in need of some food, we ventured towards the clifftop restaurant for our lunch stop.



With lunch out of the way, Bempton Cliffs RSPB was our next stop for the afternoon birding. There were barely any birds left on the cliffs but we noted some lingering **Northern Gannets**. **Guillemot** and **Razorbill** were milling around on the sea below with some **Red-throated Divers** also seen. Before heading off, we made a quick stop to the feeding station where **Tree Sparrows**, **Goldfinches**, **Greenfinches**, **Blackbirds** and **Dunnocks** were feeding.

As we were leaving, a BirdGuides message showed that a Siberian Stonechat was on our route home. A brief discussion resulted in us making the short journey towards Grimston where we joined a gathered crowd. It wasn't long before we sighted some **European Stonechats** feeding between the muddy field. A paler bird then appeared with a beautiful supercilium, allowing us great views of a **Whinchat**. Then another paler bird – the **Siberian Stonechat** was still here and provided excellent comparisons with the nearby **European Stonechat**. Adding to the migrant extravaganza we were watching, a **Northern Wheatear** joined the group. The birds then very kindly sat together in one hawthorn bush with us seeing **European Stonechat**, **Whinchat** and **Siberian Stonechat** alongside each other!



Day checklist: 41 species

Day 3: Blacktoft Sands RSPB and Far Ings NNR

With rain setting in for some of the day, we made the decision to visit the reserves where there were hides in which we could shelter. Arriving at Blacktoft Sands RSPB, we headed towards the Ousefleet Hide as it was high tide. This is the best time for wildfowl and waders to be roosting but couldn't find anything out of the ordinary among the **Northern Shoveler**, **Gadwall**, **Eurasian Wigeon**, **Mallard** and **Eurasian Teal** which were on the islands. The waders on the island included **Spotted** and **Common Redshanks** and the delightful **Ruff** in their various plumages. Notably we had **Black-tailed Godwit** and **Common Snipe** feeding around the grassy verges. The most exciting



sighting from this hide was watching 13 **Bearded Tits** hopping and feeding around the rear of the pool.

We then walked to the rear hide to look at the deeper pool where the ducks often linger. Sitting and watching, we added **Common Shelduck** and **Northern Pintail** among the other wildfowl, but could only find a lone **Dunlin** between the sitting duck. The reedbeds were also alive with calling **Water Rails** and **Marsh Harriers** hunting over the reedbeds. For our lunch break, we headed to a café before then heading to Far Ings.

Far Ings was rather quiet as we headed around the different pools, with no sign of the hoped-for Spoonbills. As we reached the farm area we started to hear geese. Stopping to look up, we watched thousands of **Pink-footed Geese** heading towards the estuary to roost. It was a magical experience as the skeins continued to fill the sky with the blaring sounds, as if moving clouds.

With the excitement of the Pink-footed Geese having passed, we ventured round to some of the rear pools with **Water Rails** putting on quite the show chasing each other and the **Moorhens** attempting to share the pool. Each of the hides we visited also had the sounds of **Cetti's Warblers** belting from the reeds; elsewhere we enjoyed **Long-tailed Tits**, **Chiffchaffs**, **Goldcrest** and **Wrens** in the hedegrows.

Day checklist: 40 species



Day 4: Spurn Peninsula

Our longest day of birding was about to begin as we visited the Spurn Peninsula. We parked up at Bluebell car park ready to begin our walk around the Kilnsea area. There had been some notable species in the area in recent days, and we began our morning by joining the Spurn Bird Observatory warden Paul at the ringing hut. As we arrived, he had a bag ready and waiting for us showing us a gorgeous **Garden Warbler**. Great views of newly arrived **Goldcrests** in the hawthorns followed. We made an effort to walk around the Church Field, looking and listening for the Dusky Warbler that had been seen in recent days but unfortunately, we had no luck. Afterwards we slowly wandered down towards Kilnsea Churchyard looking for amigrants. Our luck was in order as we entered, we heard the unmistakable call of a **Pied Flycatcher** which then gave good views as it flitted between the trees. We tried to ensure that everyone managed good views and luckily the **Pied Flycatcher** sat perfectly on the wooden gate as we were leaving.

In search of other migrants, we made our way to Sykes Field. Here we walked through the caravan park to the willows at the rear of the field. As we stood and waited, a glorious male **Common Redstart** appeared and fed on the grass right in front of us. Our stomachs rumbled and we headed towards YWT Discovery Centre to enjoy a warming lunch.

It wasn't long after ordering and waiting for our lunch to arrive, one of the local birders Richard came running up the ramp shouting "there's an eagle coming!" We grabbed our binoculars and took up position outside the café door and waited. It wasn't a long wait and with regular updates from the Spurn radio, we saw the huge bird with tiny birds around it – it was a **White-tailed Eagle** being mobbed by 10 or so **Common Buzzards**! This comparison showing the sheer size of the eagle as it glided slowly overhead down the point. The views were fantastic – a great experience!

After lunch and the excitement of the eagle settled down. The search again for birds began as we travelled from the Discovery Centre towards Beacon Ponds where the hedges had **Common Linnets** and **Reed Buntings** calling as we passed. A quick peak at the feeders saw **Goldfinch**, **Greenfinch**, **Great Tit**, **Dunnock** and **Tree Sparrows** taking a bite from the station and we noted a male **Yellowhammer** sitting atop of the hedge. A female **Garganey** was swimming with Teal and Shoveler on the pools. As we were leaving the area, we decided to make one last stop at the Riverside to look for a Black Redstart, which showed to all the group on a wood pile.



Day checklist: 59 species

Day 5: Tophill Low NNR

Our final morning had arrived, and we travelled northwards to Tophill Low NR. Waterbirds were filling D Reservoir with **Tufted Duck**, **Common Pochard**, **Teal**, **Mallard** and **Coot** all visible from the hide. We noted the great variation in **Great Crested Grebe** plumages on show, with some in full winter apparel and others still in moult. The standout bird here was the **Black-necked Grebe** that was picked up from the hide. Continuing our morning, we walked through the woodland adding **Coal Tit**, **Goldcrest** and **Blue Tit** to our day list, while the marshland hides allowed fantastic views of **Common Snipe**. As we headed out of the hide a flock of **Common Redshank** flew overhead. Our return route from the lower reservoirs and to end our birding trip – a **Tawny Owl** called from distant woodland.

Day checklist: 39 species

| 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 | | | | | |
| Pheasant | | ✓ | | | |
| 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 | ✓ | | | ✓ | |
| Red Kite | ✓ | | | | |
| Peregrine Falcon | | | | | |
| Tawny Owl | | | | | ✓ |
| Kingfisher | | | | | |
| Great Spotted Woodpecker | ✓ | | | | |
| Jay | | | | | ✓ |
| Magpie | ✓ | | ✓ | ✓ | |
| Jackdaw | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Rook | | | | | |
| Carrion Crow | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Coal Tit | | | | | |
| Blue Tit | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Great Tit | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Bearded Tit | | | ✓ | | |
| Barn Swallow | | ✓ | | | |
| House Martin | | | | | |
| Common Chiffchaff | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Cetti's Warbler | ✓ | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Garden Warbler | | | | ✓ | |
| Goldcrest | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Wren | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Long-tailed Tit | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Skylark | | ✓ | | ✓ | |
| Starling | ✓ | | | ✓ | ✓ |
| Song Thrush | | | | ✓ | |
| Blackbird | ✓ | ✓ | | ✓ | ✓ |
| Robin | ✓ | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Pied Flycatcher | | | | ✓ | |
| Common Redstart | | | | ✓ | |
| Black Redstart | | | | ✓ | |
| Northern Wheatear | | ✓ | | ✓ | |
| Stonechat | | ✓ | ✓ | | |
| Duncock | ✓ | ✓ | | ✓ | ✓ |
| Tree Sparrow | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | |

| | | | | | |
|--------------------|---|---|---|---|---|
| House Sparrow | | ✓ | | ✓ | |
| Grey Wagtail | | | | | ✓ |
| Pied/White Wagtail | ✓ | | | | ✓ |
| Meadow Pipit | ✓ | ✓ | | ✓ | |
| Rock Pipit | | ✓ | | | |
| Chaffinch | | ✓ | | | |
| Greenfinch | | | | ✓ | |
| Common Linnet | | ✓ | | ✓ | |
| Goldfinch | ✓ | ✓ | | ✓ | ✓ |
| Common Redpoll | | | | ✓ | |
| Reed Bunting | | | ✓ | ✓ | |
| Yellowhammer | | | | ✓ | |

NOTABLE SPECIES

| | | | | | |
|--------------------|--|---|--|---|---|
| Siberian Stonechat | | ✓ | | | |
| Caspian Gull | | ✓ | | | |
| Whinchat | | ✓ | | | |
| White-tailed Eagle | | | | ✓ | |
| Black-necked Grebe | | | | | ✓ |

Trip total: 105 species