

Tour Report Norfolk in Early Summer 13 - 17 June 2025

Little owl



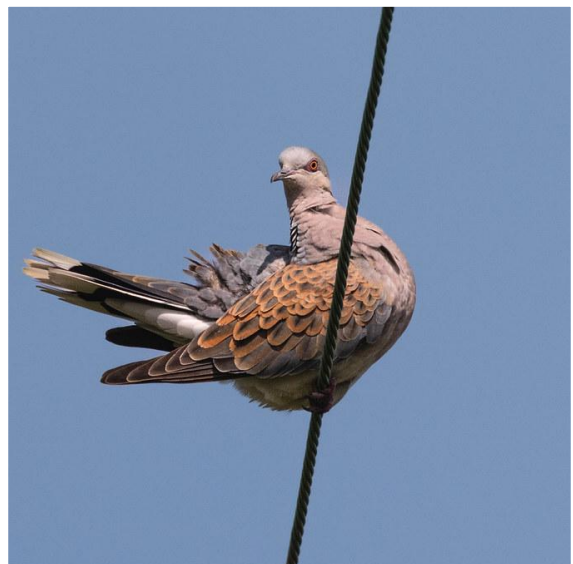
Silver-studded blue butterfly



Swallowtail butterfly



Turtle dove



Compiled by Nick Acheson

Friday 13 June 2025

Day 1:

Snettisham Coastal Park

This afternoon, after our briefing to introduce the tour, we went to Snettisham Coastal Park, which has probably the most important population of turtle doves remaining in North Norfolk. One male was fantastically obliging, singing from a powerline just above us, while another flew past us and briefly sang out of view. Also here, we saw freshly fledged families of both marsh harriers and red kites. As it was a hot afternoon, most birds were singing deep in the bushes and reeds, but we heard sedge warbler, common and lesser whitethroats, blackcap and Cetti's warbler.

This was to prove an excellent tour for summer insects. Our lists of both dragonflies and butterflies began today at Snettisham with appearances by a splendid male emperor dragonfly, numerous freshly emerged meadow browns, a painted lady, and several other butterflies.

After dinner we visited a nearby heath. Before dusk, we watched a hobby hunting insects and saw a male stonechat. As darkness fell, we heard the songs and displays of common snipe, redshank, nightjar and woodcock, but we were unable to see any of them.

Saturday 14 June 2025

Day 2:

North Norfolk Coast

Our first port of call this morning was Kelling Heath. The Dartford warblers that breed here refused to be found (we suspected the females were on their second clutches), and we spent time watching stonechats, linnets and listening to willow warblers. The undisputed highlights were the numerous very fresh silver-studded blue butterflies, including a mating pair which allowed a very close approach.

Since the previous evening we had been talking about carnivorous plants, we next moved to Beeston Common. At this wonderful site, we saw a host of plants including common spotted and southern marsh orchids, marsh helleborine, bog pimpernel and three carnivorous species: round-leaved and greater sundews and common butterwort. At the pond there were dozens of pairs of azure damselflies, plus plenty of four-spotted chasers and a male emperor.

Our plan had been to have lunch at NWT Cley Marshes, however, a power cut at the visitor centre meant that we had to drive a short distance inland to Cley Spy. Here we had a very good lunch and several of the guests visited the galleries and shops. Thereafter, we headed back to Cley to visit the reserve. From Teal Hide we could see a spoonbill on Simonds' Scrape, while on Pat's Pool there were many species to see, including little ringed plovers, redshank, gadwall, shelduck, avocets (including some on their nests). Marsh harriers passed over several times, disturbing the ducks, waders and gulls, and there was a constant stream of swallows, house and sand martins and swifts, hunting insects from above the scrapes (including swallows nesting in the rafters of the hide above us).

Following dinner, we visited a second wet heath where, this time, we saw a couple of nightjars overhead and caught glimpses of some of the numerous woodcock that we heard displaying.

Sunday 15 June 2025

Day 3:

Norfolk Brecks and Lakenheath Fen

This morning we drove to RSPB Lakenheath Fen, which lies just over the River Little Ouse and the county border with Suffolk. We first made our way to the river, to look back into Norfolk and to Hockwold Washes. Here we were specifically looking for a Caspian tern, which had arrived the previous evening. After searching through many black-headed gulls, greylag, Canada geese and mallards, we found this impressive bird, which was new for almost all of you.

From here we walked along the riverbank, admiring the many dragonflies and butterflies around us. There were several immaculate large skippers and clouds of meadow browns. Four-spotted chasers were everywhere, as were common blue and blue-tailed damselflies. We heard and saw several reed buntings and reed warblers, while some of us got a glimpse of a bittern in flight and a kingfisher.

From the viewpoint at Joist Fen, we were unable to find a bittern, but we did see a hobby, marsh harriers and a red-eyed damselfly on a yellow waterlily pad. Best of all was a pair of cranes which flew over before coming to land in the grassland by the railway line. On the walk back to the visitor centre, we admired some very fresh scarce chasers and met a greylag goose roadblock. The cuckoo song was near-constant here and we heard plenty of Cetti's and sedge warblers.

From Lakenheath (where several of you refuelled in the visitor centre with coffees and ice creams), we visited NWT Weeting Heath. A pair of stone curlews and a pair of common curlews were both right in front of the West Hide. Also here we saw a singing yellowhammer, a mistle thrush, several lapwings and – on the walk back to the van – plenty of common woodland birds.

Our final port of call in the Brecks was Lynford Arboretum, which we all greatly enjoyed. A firecrest was remarkably obliging, singing repeatedly, and popping into view, apparently while foraging to feed his fledgling chicks. A singing goldcrest was less obliging. By the lake, we were thrilled to watch a pair of little grebes tending to their half-grown chicks. Walking back, we saw an entire family of treecreepers.

Monday 16 June 2025

Day 4:

Norfolk Broads

We spent the whole of today in the Norfolk Broads. We called first at NWT Hickling Broad. Before we had even left the car park, we saw our first swallowtail butterfly, nectaring on a patch of brambles. From here we walked through fen, reedbed and wet woodland to reach the edge of the broad. On our way, we saw a wonderful family of bearded tits, with the adult male feeding his newly fledged chicks right by our path. We also saw several Norfolk hawkers, black-tailed skimmers and variable damselflies and another swallowtail.

Over the broad there were marsh harriers and common terns. In the reed by the broad's edge was another entertaining family of bearded tits, a willow warbler in the birches above them. On the bank between Bittern Hide and Brendan's Marsh, we stopped to admire a colony of very rare fen mason wasps and their chimney nests. Some even had a quick view of a bittern here. On the walk back through woodland to the visitor centre, we met a host of insects, including a swallowtail and an emperor moth caterpillar.

After lunch we headed back out to the woods, where some took the photos of swallowtails they'd been imagining. We then walked the short loop around the reserve, seeing more swallowtails and plenty of dragonflies and damselflies.

At NWT Ranworth Broad, we walked out along the boardwalk, admiring carr woodland plants including royal fern and alder buckthorn and fen plants including marsh fern, milk parsley, southern marsh orchid

and skullcap. As soon as we arrived at the visitor centre, Teala (NWT visitor centre manager) took us back onto the boardwalk to show us the very first tiny swallowtail caterpillar of the year. Richard (NWT boatman) then took us onto the broad. On the open water, we seemed to be surrounded by great crested grebes (and their stripy chicks) and common terns. Also here were tufted ducks, pochard, a great egret and Ranworth's famed pair of ospreys. The female was on her nest, while the male perched in a nearby tree.

Richard took us to see the River Bure before ferrying us back to Ranworth Staithe on Malthouse Broad, past a kingfisher and another endearing great crested grebe family with two chicks.

Tuesday 17 June 2025

Day 5:

Dersingham Bog NNR

We stayed close to our hotel this morning, paying a visit to Dersingham Bog National Nature Reserve. By the boardwalk through the bog, there was a singing male tree pipit, which we later found had a brood of fledgling chicks. The boardwalk gave us excellent opportunities to admire cranberries, bog asphodel and round-leaved sundews with insect victims. Nearby, there were several stonechats.

Leaving Dersingham, we still just had time to call at a local church where, to our delight, a little owl was in its accustomed roost hole. We finished our tour on the edge of the same village, looking out onto farmland where we saw red kites, marsh harriers, multiple buzzards, house martins, fledgling swallow chicks, stock doves and more.

Thank you all for your unfailing enthusiasm for the wildlife of Norfolk, and for your tremendous sense of humour, which made our tour such a joy. We very much look forward to travelling with you again soon and sharing more wonderful wildlife with you.

Images by Alan Rosen

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Checklist for Norfolk in Early Summer



	Common Name	Scientific name	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5
	BIRDS		✓		✓	✓	
1	Canada goose (introduced)	<i>Branta canadensis</i>	✓		✓	✓	
2	Greylag goose	<i>Anser anser</i>		✓	✓	✓	
3	Mute swan	<i>Cygnus olor</i>	✓			✓	
4	Egyptian goose (introduced)	<i>Alopochen aegyptiaca</i>	✓			✓	
5	Common Shelduck	<i>Tadorna tadorna</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
6	Northern shoveler	<i>Spatula clypeata</i>		✓	✓		
7	Gadwall	<i>Mareca strepera</i>		✓	✓		
8	Mallard	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>	✓	✓		✓	
9	Eurasian teal	<i>Anas crecca</i>		✓			
10	Common pochard	<i>Aythya ferina</i>				✓	
11	Tufted duck	<i>Aythya fuligula</i>				✓	
12	Red-legged partridge (introduced)	<i>Alectoris rufa</i>	H		✓	✓	
13	Grey partridge	<i>Perdix perdix</i>	H				
14	Pheasant (introduced)	<i>Phasianus colchicus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	
15	Little grebe	<i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>			✓		
16	Great crested grebe	<i>Podiceps cristatus</i>			✓	✓	
17	Eurasian bittern	<i>Botaurus stellaris</i>			✓	✓	
18	Eurasian spoonbill	<i>Platalea leucorodia</i>	✓	✓			
19	Grey heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>		✓	✓	✓	
20	Great egret	<i>Ardea alba</i>				✓	
21	Little egret	<i>Egretta garzetta</i>		✓	✓	✓	
22	Great cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>		✓	✓	✓	
23	Eurasian sparrowhawk	<i>Accipiter nisus</i>	✓				
24	Western marsh harrier	<i>Circus aeruginosus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
25	Common buzzard	<i>Buteo buteo</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
26	Red kite	<i>Milvus milvus</i>	✓	✓		✓	✓

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27	Osprey	<i>Pandion haliaetus</i>				✓	
28	Water rail	<i>Rallus aquaticus</i>			H		
29	Common moorhen	<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>		✓	✓	✓	
30	Eurasian coot	<i>Fulica atra</i>			✓	✓	
31	Eurasian common crane	<i>Grus grus</i>			✓		
32	Eurasian oystercatcher	<i>Haematopus ostralegus</i>	✓		✓	✓	
33	Pied avocet	<i>Recurvirostra avosetta</i>		✓			
34	Eurasian stone-curlew (thick-knee)	<i>Burhinus oedicephalus</i>			✓		
35	Northern lapwing	<i>Vanellus vanellus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	
36	Little ringed plover	<i>Charadrius dubius</i>		✓			
37	Eurasian curlew	<i>Numenius arquata</i>			✓		
38	Black-tailed godwit	<i>Limosa limosa</i>		✓			
39	Common snipe	<i>Gallinago gallinago</i>	H				
40	Eurasian woodcock	<i>Scolopax rusticola</i>	H	✓			
41	Common redshank	<i>Tringa totanus</i>	H	✓	✓		
42	Black-headed gull	<i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
43	Mediterranean gull	<i>Ichthyaeus melanocephalus</i>	✓				H
44	European herring gull	<i>Larus argentatus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
45	Lesser black-backed gull	<i>Larus fuscus</i>			✓	✓	
46	Sandwich tern	<i>Thalasseus sandvicensis</i>		✓			
47	Common tern	<i>Sterna hirundo</i>		✓	✓	✓	
48	Caspian tern	<i>Hydroprogne caspia</i>			✓		
49	Stock dove	<i>Columba oenas</i>		✓	✓		✓
50	Common woodpigeon	<i>Columba palumbus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
51	Eurasian collared dove	<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>		✓			
52	European turtle dove	<i>Streptopelia turtur</i>	✓				
53	Common cuckoo	<i>Cuculus canorus</i>	✓		✓	H	✓
54	Western barn owl	<i>Tyto alba</i>	✓				
55	Tawny owl	<i>Strix aluco</i>		H			
56	Little owl	<i>Athene noctua</i>					✓
57	European nightjar	<i>Caprimulgus europaeus</i>	H	✓			
58	Common swift	<i>Apus apus</i>		✓	✓	✓	
59	Common kingfisher	<i>Alcedo atthis</i>			✓		
60	Great spotted woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos major</i>			H		H

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61	Common kestrel	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓
62	Eurasian hobby	<i>Falco subbuteo</i>	✓		✓		
63	Eurasian jay	<i>Garrulus glandarius</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓
64	Eurasian magpie	<i>Pica pica</i>	✓		✓	✓	
65	Western jackdaw	<i>Coloeus monedula</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
66	Rook	<i>Corvus frugilegus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
67	Carrion crow	<i>Corvus corone</i>			✓	✓	
68	Coal tit	<i>Pariparus ater</i>					H
69	Eurasian blue tit	<i>Cyanistes caeruleus</i>		H	✓	✓	✓
70	Great tit	<i>Parus major</i>		H	H		✓
71	Eurasian skylark	<i>Alauda arvensis</i>	H	H	H	✓	✓
72	Sand martin	<i>Riparia riparia</i>		✓			
73	Barn swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
74	House martin	<i>Delichon urbicum</i>		✓		✓	✓
75	Cetti's warbler	<i>Cettia cetti</i>	H	H	H	H	
76	Long-tailed tit	<i>Aegithalos caudatus</i>			✓	✓	✓
77	Bearded reedling	<i>Panurus biarmicus</i>				✓	
78	Willow warbler	<i>Phylloscopus trochilus</i>		H		✓	
79	Common chiffchaff	<i>Phylloscopus collybita</i>	✓	H	✓	H	H
80	Sedge warbler	<i>Acrocephalus schoenobaenus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	
81	Eurasian reed warbler	<i>Acrocephalus scirpaceus</i>	H	H	✓	✓	
82	Eurasian blackcap	<i>Sylvia atricapilla</i>	H	H	✓	H	H
83	Garden warbler	<i>Sylvia borin</i>	H		H		
84	Lesser whitethroat	<i>Sylvia curruca</i>	H				
85	Whitethroat	<i>Sylvia communis</i>	H	H	✓	✓	
86	Firecrest	<i>Regulus ignicapilla</i>			✓		
87	Goldcrest	<i>Regulus regulus</i>		H	H		
88	Eurasian wren	<i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>	H	H	✓	✓	H
89	Treecreeper	<i>Certhia familiaris</i>			✓		
90	Common starling	<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>	✓	✓	✓		
91	Common blackbird	<i>Turdus merula</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
92	Song thrush	<i>Turdus philomelos</i>	H	H		✓	H
93	Mistle thrush	<i>Turdus viscivorus</i>			✓		
94	European robin	<i>Erithacus rubecula</i>			✓	✓	H

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95	European stonechat	<i>Saxicola rubicola</i>	✓	✓	✓		✓
96	House sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
97	Dunnock	<i>Prunella modularis</i>	H		✓	H	
98	Pied wagtail	<i>Motacilla alba</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
99	Meadow pipit	<i>Anthus pratensis</i>		✓			H
100	Tree pipit	<i>Anthus trivialis</i>					✓
101	Common chaffinch	<i>Fringilla coelebs</i>	H	H	H	✓	H
102	European greenfinch	<i>Chloris chloris</i>	✓	H		✓	
103	Common Linnet	<i>Linaria cannabina</i>	✓	✓			✓
104	European goldfinch	<i>Carduelis carduelis</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
105	Eurasian siskin	<i>Spinus spinus</i>			H		
106	Yellowhammer	<i>Emberiza citrinella</i>			✓		
107	Common reed bunting	<i>Emberiza schoeniclus</i>	H		✓	✓	
	MAMMALS						
1	Roe deer	<i>Capreolus capreolus</i>	✓	✓			
2	Reeve's muntjac	<i>Muntiacus reevesi</i>	✓	✓	✓		
3	European rabbit	<i>Oryctolagus cuniculus</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓
4	Grey squirrel	<i>Sciurus carolinensis</i>		✓	✓		
5	Noctule bat	<i>Nyctalus noctula</i>	✓				
	BUTTERFLIES						
1	Large skipper	<i>Ochlodes sylvanus</i>	✓	✓	✓		
2	Brimstone	<i>Gonepteryx rhamni</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	
3	Large white	<i>Pieris brassicae</i>		✓	✓	✓	
4	Small white	<i>Pieris rapae</i>			✓		
5	Common blue	<i>Polyommatus icarus</i>	✓				
6	Silver-studded blue	<i>Plebejus argus</i>		✓			
7	Holly blue	<i>Celastrina argiolus</i>	✓			✓	
8	Red admiral	<i>Vanessa atalanta</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	
9	Painted lady	<i>Vanessa cardui</i>	✓	✓		✓	
10	Small tortoiseshell	<i>Aglais urticae</i>		✓	✓	✓	
11	Peacock	<i>Aglais io</i>		✓			
12	Comma	<i>Polygonia c-album</i>		✓	✓	✓	

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13	Swallowtail	<i>Papilio machaon britannicus</i>				✓	
14	Wall	<i>Lasiommata megera</i>		✓	✓		
15	Small heath	<i>Coenonympha pamphilus</i>	✓		✓		
16	Meadow brown	<i>Maniola jurtina</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	
	Dragonflies and Damselflies						
1	Banded demoiselle	<i>Calopteryx splendens</i>			✓		
2	Large red damselfly	<i>Pyrrhosoma nymphula</i>			✓		
3	Azure damselfly	<i>Coenagrion puella</i>		✓	✓	✓	
4	Variable damselfly	<i>Coenagrion pulchellum</i>				✓	
5	Common blue damselfly	<i>Enallagma cyathigerum</i>			✓		
6	Blue-tailed damselfly	<i>Ischnura elegans</i>			✓		
7	Red-eyed damselfly	<i>Erythromma najas</i>			✓		
8	Hairy dragonfly	<i>Brachytron pratense</i>				✓	
9	Norfolk hawker	<i>Aeshna isocetes</i>			✓	✓	
10	Brown hawker	<i>Aeshna grandis</i>			✓		
11	Emperor dragonfly	<i>Anax imperator</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	
12	Four-spotted chaser	<i>Libellula quadrimaculata</i>		✓	✓	✓	
13	Scarce chaser	<i>Libellula fulva</i>				✓	✓
14	Black-tailed skimmer	<i>Orthetrum cancellatum</i>		✓	✓	✓	