

Tour Report NORFOLK IN LATE WINTER 6 – 9 February 2026

Brambling



Muntjac



Eastern black redstart



Marsh harrier



Compiled by Nick Acheson

Friday 6 February 2026

Day 1:

West Norfolk

Having met for our welcome briefing this afternoon, we headed to a heath very near our hotel where there is a roost of raptors. The weather was decidedly gloomy, with almost constant drizzle and rain. However, we did see dozens of red kites coming to roost, a single marsh harrier and two brief hen harriers: an adult male and a ringtail. There were also plenty of meadow pipits coming to roost and as we walked back to the van, through the gloom, we saw a huge flock of jackdaws and small flocks of goldfinches and long-tailed tits.

Saturday 7 February 2026

Day 2:

North Norfolk

This morning we ventured east, stopping first at Kelling Heath where we saw lots of linnets and several skylarks and heard mistle thrush and green woodpecker. In the car park, on our return, we saw a gorgeous male bullfinch feeding on buds.

Next we continued east to Sheringham, where a male eastern black redstart has been present for at least a month. It took us no time to find him and we enjoyed wonderful views in lovely morning light. In just the last few days, a pair of west European black redstarts has been found nearby so we walked the short distance to the site and quickly found the male. For some of you, these were your first-ever black redstarts. To see first eastern, then western males, within half an hour of one another, is quite a way to begin your relationship with black redstarts!

Unfortunately for us, a purple sandpiper which had been seen earlier had just been disturbed by the time we reached the seafront. But, having not found the sandpiper, we drove a short distance westwards to Weybourne where a splendid flock of pink-footed geese was feeding on harvested sugar beet. This week has seen a remarkable arrival of geese, of a species which normally winters on the Continent. They have ganged up with our wintering pink-feet. So, with a little effort we also found plenty of Russian white-fronted geese, a handful of barnacle geese and a single tundra bean goose.

As the rain had begun by now, we called at NWT Cley Marshes for lunch, and to visit a beautiful exhibition of tapestry in the visitor centre. After lunch, we drove to the beach car park to look at a flock of dark-bellied brent geese in the Eye Field. We managed to pick out several of last year's juveniles among the geese but a pale-bellied brent goose at the back of the flock, in a little valley, proved too difficult for most of us to see. Also here there were redshanks on the Eye Pool and we had amazing views of two male marsh harriers.

Our next port of call was Stiffkey where there were plenty of birds on the flood at the west end of the village. Among hundreds of wigeon there were a few teal. Likewise, near a few dozen black-tailed godwits there was a single curlew. The stars here, in a Norfolk context, were three glossy ibises.

As the weather was looking a little more promising, we decided to head to Roydon for the last 90 minutes of the day. This was a great decision as we had far better (though still distant) views of three hen harriers – two first winter birds and an adult male – and at least two (possibly three) merlins which were hopping between perches on the mire. Plenty of red kites were coming to their roost and we saw both kestrel and buzzard here too. Two snipe flew over us most obligingly and there was a roe buck grazing right by the car park as we got back.

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Sunday 8 February 2026

Day 3:

Norfolk Brecks

Our first port of call this morning was a wet heath not far from King's Lynn, which is a regular wintering site for the elusive jack snipe. Unfortunately for us, despite concerted effort and the use of a thermal imager, the jack snipe proved entirely elusive. Nevertheless, we loved the site and enjoyed excellent views of yellowhammers.

We next called at Swaffham to buy sandwiches for lunch, before calling at woodland nearby, where several species of raptor regularly display in February. Here too, we were betrayed by conditions. The weather was far too grey and damp for birds of prey to soar on the thermals. Our consolation prizes were a singing skylark and a buzzard perching not far away, looking damp and disconsolate.

From here we drove to Lynford Arboretum, which saved the day, ornithologically speaking. While no hawfinches came to feed in the tunnel of hornbeam trees, the site was constantly busy with chaffinches, blue tits and great tits during the 45 minutes we waited there. They were joined by (at least) three male and one female bramblings, a coal tit and a marsh tit, a treecreeper, a nuthatch and a pair of goldcrests. The grey squirrels were less exciting but deserve an honourable mention. We walked from here down to the lake and the paddocks, seeing redwings, siskins and a handful of flyover crossbills.

At Santon Downham we stopped for lunch (during which four crossbills dropped to pine trees by the car park and a redpoll flew over calling). Across the road a woodlark was singing. While he was very high, against a dull sky, we enjoyed his beautifully sad song. We then walked along the river, where birding was tricky but enjoyable. There were great spotted woodpeckers here, a showy nuthatch, a little grebe, singing siskins, a family of long-tailed tits and plenty of common tits and finches.

Monday 9 February 2026

Day 4:

RSPB Snettisham

Despite the gloomy weather forecast, today we headed back to the coast, to RSPB Snettisham. Things began well, with hundreds of pink-footed geese flying inland over our heads as we arrived and a barn owl crossing the first pit. On the next pit we admired a splendid drake goldeneye and a pair of tufted ducks and we found a pair of little grebes in the species' favourite haunt.

Searching the mud of the Wash, we came across a large flock of dark-bellied brent geese and hundreds of shelduck. In the creeks, there were hundreds of teal, too. And scattered all across the mud were thousands of wading birds: oystercatcher, avocet, redshank, curlew, bar-tailed godwit, knot, dunlin, lapwing, ringed plover and a couple of grey plovers.

There were a few more goldeneye on the pits, plus plenty of wigeon, shoveler and cormorants, which we enjoyed watching from the Rotary Hide. Also here were roosting brent geese and a rowdy group of courting shelducks. Noisiest of all were the hundreds of lapwings crowding the islands on the pit. A marsh harrier flew by in the distance. Perhaps the most striking observation here was the interaction of the low sun and the misty cloud, which created a halo of light around the sun.

All too soon, it was time to head back to our hotel where our tour came to an end. Thank you for your excellent and most entertaining company during our short tour, and for your joyful enthusiasm for Norfolk's wildlife. It was a great pleasure to travel with you, and I very much hope to see you all again on a Wildlife Worldwide tour soon.

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Checklist for Norfolk in Late Winter



	Common Name	Scientific Name	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4
	BIRDS					
1	Brent goose	<i>Branta bernicla</i>		✓		✓
2	Barnacle goose	<i>Branta leucopsis</i>		✓		
3	Greylag goose	<i>Anser anser</i>		✓		✓
4	Pink-footed goose	<i>Anser brachyrhynchus</i>		✓		✓
5	Tundra bean goose	<i>Anser serrirostris</i>		✓		
6	White-fronted goose	<i>Anser albifrons</i>		✓		
7	Mute swan	<i>Cygnus olor</i>		✓	✓	✓
8	Egyptian goose	<i>Alopochen aegyptiaca</i>		✓	✓	✓
9	Shelduck	<i>Tadorna tadorna</i>		✓		✓
10	Shoveler	<i>Spatula clypeata</i>		✓		✓
11	Gadwall	<i>Mareca strepera</i>				✓
12	Wigeon	<i>Mareca penelope</i>		✓		✓
13	Mallard	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>		✓	✓	✓
14	Pintail	<i>Anas acuta</i>		✓		
15	Teal	<i>Anas crecca</i>		✓		✓
16	Tufted duck	<i>Aythya fuligula</i>				✓
17	Common scoter	<i>Melanitta nigra</i>		✓		
18	Goldeneye	<i>Bucephala clangula</i>				✓
19	Red-legged partridge	<i>Alectoris rufa</i>		✓		
20	Pheasant	<i>Phasianus colchicus</i>		✓	✓	✓
21	Little grebe	<i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>			✓	✓
22	Grey heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>		✓	✓	
23	Great white egret	<i>Ardea alba</i>		✓		
24	Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>		✓		✓
25	Marsh harrier	<i>Circus aeruginosus</i>		✓		✓

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26	Hen harrier	<i>Circus cyaneus</i>		✓		
27	Red kite	<i>Milvus milvus</i>		✓	✓	
28	Buzzard	<i>Buteo buteo</i>		✓	✓	
29	Water rail	<i>Rallus aquaticus</i>				H
30	Moorhen	<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>		✓	✓	✓
31	Coot	<i>Fulica atra</i>				✓
32	Oystercatcher	<i>Haematopus ostralegus</i>				✓
33	Avocet	<i>Recurvirostra avosetta</i>		✓		✓
34	Lapwing	<i>Vanellus vanellus</i>		✓	✓	✓
35	Golden plover	<i>Pluvialis apricaria</i>				✓
36	Grey plover	<i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>				✓
37	Ringed plover	<i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>				✓
38	Curlew	<i>Numenius arquata</i>		✓		✓
39	Bar-tailed godwit	<i>Limosa lapponica</i>				✓
40	Black-tailed godwit	<i>Limosa limosa</i>		✓		
41	Knot	<i>Calidris canutus</i>				✓
42	Dunlin	<i>Calidris alpina</i>		✓		✓
43	Snipe	<i>Gallinago gallinago</i>		✓		
44	Redshank	<i>Tringa totanus</i>		✓		✓
45	Black-headed gull	<i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i>		✓		✓
46	Great black-backed gull	<i>Larus marinus</i>		✓		✓
47	Common gull	<i>Larus canus</i>				✓
48	Herring gull	<i>Larus argentatus</i>		✓	✓	✓
49	Stock dove	<i>Columba oenas</i>			✓	
50	Woodpigeon	<i>Columba palumbus</i>		✓	✓	
51	Collared dove	<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>			✓	
52	Barn owl	<i>Tyto alba</i>				✓
53	Great spotted woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos major</i>			✓	
54	Green woodpecker	<i>Picus viridis</i>		H	H	
55	Kestrel	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>		✓	✓	
56	Merlin	<i>Falco columbarius</i>		✓		
57	Jay	<i>Garrulus glandarius</i>	H		✓	
58	Magpie	<i>Pica pica</i>		✓	✓	
59	Jackdaw	<i>Coloeus monedula</i>	✓	✓	✓	

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60	Rook	<i>Corvus frugilegus</i>		✓		
61	Carrion crow	<i>Corvus corone</i>		✓	✓	
62	Coal tit	<i>Periparus ater</i>		✓	✓	
63	Marsh tit	<i>Poecile palustris</i>			✓	
64	Blue tit	<i>Cyanistes caeruleus</i>		✓	✓	✓
65	Great tit	<i>Parus major</i>		✓	✓	
66	Woodlark	<i>Lullula arborea</i>			✓	
67	Skylark	<i>Alauda arvensis</i>		✓	H	✓
68	Long-tailed tit	<i>Aegithalos caudatus</i>	✓	H	✓	
69	Goldcrest	<i>Regulus regulus</i>			✓	
70	Wren	<i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>		H	✓	✓
71	Nuthatch	<i>Sitta europaea</i>			✓	
72	Treecreeper	<i>Certhia familiaris</i>			✓	
73	Starling	<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>		✓	✓	
74	Blackbird	<i>Turdus merula</i>		✓	✓	✓
75	Redwing	<i>Turdus iliacus</i>			✓	
76	Song thrush	<i>Turdus philomelos</i>		H	✓	H
77	Mistle thrush	<i>Turdus viscivorus</i>		H	✓	
78	Robin	<i>Erithacus rubecula</i>		✓	✓	✓
79	Black redstart	<i>Phoenicurus ochruros</i>		✓		
80	Stonechat	<i>Saxicola rubicola</i>		✓		
81	House sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>		✓	✓	
82	Duncock	<i>Prunella modularis</i>		✓	✓	✓
83	Grey wagtail	<i>Motacilla cinerea</i>		✓		
84	Pied wagtail	<i>Motacilla alba</i>		✓	✓	
85	Meadow pipit	<i>Anthus pratensis</i>	✓	✓		✓
86	Chaffinch	<i>Fringilla coelebs</i>		H	✓	
87	Brambling	<i>Fringilla montifringilla</i>			✓	
88	Bullfinch	<i>Pyrrhula pyrrhula</i>		✓		
89	Greenfinch	<i>Chloris chloris</i>		H		✓
90	Linnet	<i>Linaria cannabina</i>		✓		
91	Lesser redpoll	<i>Acanthis cabaret</i>			✓	
92	Common crossbill	<i>Loxia curvirostra</i>			✓	
93	Goldfinch	<i>Carduelis carduelis</i>		✓	✓	✓

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94	Siskin	<i>Spinus spinus</i>		H	✓	
95	Yellowhammer	<i>Emberiza citrinella</i>		H	✓	
96	Reed bunting	<i>Emberiza schoeniclus</i>				H
	MAMMALS					
1	Rabbit	<i>Oryctolagus cuniculus</i>			✓	✓
2	Brown hare	<i>Lepus europaeus</i>		✓		
3	Grey squirrel	<i>Sciurus carolinensis</i>			✓	
4	Roe deer	<i>Capreolus capreolus</i>	✓	✓		
5	Reeve's muntjac	<i>Muntiacus reevesi</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓