

A Trip to Norfolk

19th & 20th November 2004

Graham Crick and myself set off from Thanet at 05.00hrs on Friday 19th November on a very cold, still morning. The roads were quite empty as we travelled up towards the M2 motorway, only at the approach to the Dartford Tunnel did the traffic begin to increase as the M25 started another new day. By 06.05hrs we were through the Tunnel, in steady traffic, heading towards the M11. There was a heavy frost and the temperature had dropped to -1C outside the car. We arrived at Lynford Arboretum, just off the A134 North West of Thetford, at 07.50hrs. A woodland area, which was alive with small birds but, unfortunately, the sun had not risen sufficiently thus the light levels were too low for photography! A quick cup of coffee from the thermos flask that Graham had brought along then we stretched our legs and while walking around a small part of the woods and down to the lake. We noted the following birds.

Robin, Blue, Great, Long-tailed & Coal Tits, Chiffchaff, Goldcrest, Chaffinch, Jay, Great-Spotted Woodpecker, Common Treecreeper, Nuthatch, Blackbird, Song & Mistle Thrushes, Redwing, Fieldfare, Woodpigeon, Mallard, Coot, Little Grebe, Tufted Duck, Canada Geese and Mute Swan.

Resuming our journey at 08-45hrs, back onto the A134, continuing north rejoining the A1065 to Swaffham where we stopped for a good fried breakfast - naughty but nice! Our journey then took us up the A1065 until we turned onto the B1105 heading towards Wells-next-the-Sea. Arriving at West Barsham there were 3- 4000 Pink-Footed Geese on the fields. We stopped at the side of the road so we could get a better look though the flocks of geese. It was very obvious that there were more than Pink-Footed Geese in the field and a careful search revealed Pink-Footed & Bean Geese, Golden Plover, Lapwing, Meadow Pipit, Skylark, Magpie, Carrion Crow, Woodpigeon, Pheasant, Red-legged Partridge, Starling & Blackbird in various numbers.

We then continued on our journey and, with only about 6 miles from Wells-next-the-Sea, Graham suggested that we take a look around Holkham Park. We arrived at Holkham about 10.30hrs. The grounds consist of woodland, open fields and a good-sized lake. The temperature had not risen above 1C from the time we embarked on our journey back at 05-00hrs and despite the sun shining brightly there was a fair wind blowing which gave a chill factor of at least -1C. As we left the car and started our walk the first thing that we noticed was the small herd of Fallow Deer roaming around the park.



The other thing was Grey Squirrels running up and down trees, which brought our attention to one of the 4 Treecreepers that were observed, also the following were seen Goldcrest, Blue, Great & Coal Tits, Nuthatch, Dunnock, Wren, Blackbird, Song Thrush, Redwing, Fieldfare Great Spotted Woodpecker, whilst the lake allowed us to add Moorhen, Mallard, Little Grebe, Graylag, Canada and Egyptian Geese.



We decided to go back to Wells-next-the-Sea and headed down Beach Road where we located 2500+ Brent Geese in the fields. Looking through the flock of Brents, we noted there were a few hundred Lapwings and Black-headed Gulls amongst them and the odd Pied Wagtail flitting about. We moved off down the quay looking at a few “dodgy” ducks to waste some time until the geese would start to show. Returning to Beach Road, just before the light was going down at about 16.40hrs, the first wave of Geese took to the sky and they just keep coming! Thousands of geese heading out to their roost at sea, way out in the Wash. What a fantastic sight and one that will stay in my mind for a long time. We also counted 104 Little Egrets heading west.

Time for Fish and Chips, down in the town, then up to the B&B to get warmed up and a good nights’ sleep in readiness for tomorrow. Things didn’t quite go as planned, as the B&B was not up to what I required and, by the morning, it was apparent that I could not stay another night. We had to cut our trip short by one day and this was a bit disappointing.

We started late and headed to Titchwell RSPB reserve. A swan, out in a field on the way, was, on closer inspection, a Bewick’s Swan. Arriving at Titchwell RSPB it was bitterly cold –1C, however, there were lots of little birds about in the car park and around the shop-cum-centre. Robins proved to be very plentiful also Blue Tits, Great Tits, Long-tailed Tits, House Sparrows, Chaffinches, Greenfinches, Dunnock Goldcrests, and the odd Wren.



On the walk out to the sea there were a few hundred Brent Geese over to the right of the walkway with some Curlews & Little Egrets, while out on the main pools we saw "Sammy" the Black Winged Stilt along with Black-headed Gulls, 30+ Black-tailed Godwits and a few Wigeon, Teal, Mallard and Shoveler. There seemed to be little else but, as we reached the sand dunes, was the welcome sight of 30+ Goldfinches with Meadow Pipits and Linnets. Looking out over the beach, we scanned for Snow Buntings and Shore Larks without success. Out on the shoreline there was plenty to see. Hundreds of birds, all sorts of Gulls, Oystercatchers, Turnstone, Sanderling, Ringed Plover, Dunlin, and still more birds out over, and on, the sea. More Gulls along with Gannets, Common Scoter, Brent Geese, Long-tailed and Eider Ducks. Walking back to the centre we noted just one new bird for the trip, an Avocet. Back at the Reserve Centre Café, Chaffinches were shuffling around the ground foraging for scraps under the tables. After a cup of Coffee and something to eat we headed off to Stiffkey.

We arrived at Stiffkey in the hope that we would see the Lesser Yellowlegs that had been reported there. We scoped the marsh for about 1 hour with nothing more than a few Redshanks, 5 Little Egrets, 4 Curlew, and a few mixed Gulls. There were good numbers of Common and Grey Seals out on the sandbanks towards Blakeney Point.



On returning to the car park we had a small flock of Linnets and one Stonechat, the time had come for us to start our journey back down to Kent! The trip was over but the sight and sound of the geese will stay forever. (Gadget)