

The Forest of Dean

Naturetrek Tour Report

3 - 5 June 2016



European Stonechat



Four-spotted Chaser



Green Tiger Beetle



Stock Dove

Report compiled by Greg Mabbett
Images courtesy of Tim Cossins



Naturetrek Mingledown Barn Wolf's Lane Chawton Alton Hampshire GU34 3HJ UK

T: +44 (0)1962 733051

E: info@naturetrek.co.uk

W: www.naturetrek.co.uk

Tour participants: Greg Mabbett (leader) with six Naturetrek clients

Summary

We enjoyed a weekend searching the historic Forest of Dean for the special birds that use the woods and heath for breeding. We had a really special wildlife encounter on the first evening. Whilst searching for nightjars we managed to stand in the perfect area on the heath. After hearing a churring bird we were treated to fantastic flight views of European Nightjar just feet in front of us, low over the gorse and overhead. It was a fantastic spectacle from these rare breeding birds.

Day 1

Friday 3rd June

Everyone met at the Speech House Hotel at 6.30pm. Greg outlined some of the history of the Forest of Dean and talked about a few species we hoped to see over the weekend, before we enjoyed a delicious three-course meal.

After dinner we headed out on a short drive to Crabtree Hill to search for nightjars. We arrived in plenty of time before it was dark and walked a short way along the track to the heath. We chose the top path which gave us a good view of the area. First we were treated to superb views of an early evening Eurasian Woodcock and the great light allowed us to see its plumage. After a short wait we heard our first churring European Nightjar, deep in the heather in front of us. Then, in the blink of an eye, two males were chasing each other low in front of us giving excellent views on and off for the next twenty-five minutes. We also saw birds overhead and perched, silhouetted in a tree. It was a wonderful experience.

Everyone was happy as we returned to the vehicle, hearing a juvenile Tawny Owl as we walked. Also seen were Tree pipit, European Stonechat and European Roe Deer. What a great start to the weekend!

Day 2

Saturday 4th June

We started the day with an early morning walk from the hotel to the Cyril Hart Arboretum. We managed good views of Stock Dove feeding on the open field and as we entered the arboretum, Goldcrest were heard singing and Common Firecrest gave frustratingly brief and short bursts of song. The highlight was a pair of Common Redstart and we enjoyed excellent prolonged views as they fed low down. As we left the arboretum we enjoyed good views of Eurasian Nuthatch, Coal Tit and Great Spotted Woodpecker around the bird table. We then headed back along the Gloucestershire Way to our hotel for breakfast.

Our first port of call after breakfast was the RSPB Nagshead Reserve; a stunning example of mature Oak woodland managed for wildlife. We started our walk from the car park down towards the lower hide. As we crossed the open field a Eurasian Sparrowhawk was seen dashing along the tree line. As we entered the wood two Spotted Flycatchers were seen moving low on an Oak tree and a couple of Eurasian Treecreepers were in the area carrying food.

Next we enjoyed watching a pair of European Pied Flycatchers which were using a nest box close to the hide and giving excellent views as they visited the box with food for their young. From the hide we watched a

Mandarin Duck with young, and nests of both Great and Eurasian Blue Tits were seen with busy parents in and out of the nests with food. A pair of Eurasian Blackcap was also noted.

We walked back up the track and joined a long trail which took us through the stunning ancient woodland where a perched Common Buzzard was briefly seen. As we approached the top of the trail a singing Wood Warbler was seen as it flitted through the canopy. We left the wood and went out onto the heath where we saw a singing Eurasian Siskin, and at least three Garden Warblers were singing and gave brief views. Further along the heath we saw Green Tiger Beetle and Green-veined White butterfly on the track, and Tree Pipit was giving its full beautiful parachuting display and excellent views, perched on a stump. Other birds seen were Eurasian Bullfinch, Great Spotted Woodpecker, and great views of a Goldcrest drinking from a puddle. As we re-entered the wood and returned to the car park, a male European Pied Flycatcher was singing and seen briefly. Eurasian Jay and a Eurasian Nuthatch visiting a nest box were also seen.

After a great morning at RSPB Nagshead we had a short drive to the Fountain Inn at Parkend for a well-earned lunch. After lunch we checked an area in the hope of spotting Wild Boar. There was no luck on the boar front but we did have Great Spotted Woodpecker and Eurasian Jay flying in front of our vehicle.

Our next destination was New Fancy View, a viewpoint that looks over the interior of the forest. Birds seen here included European Greenfinch, Common Chiffchaff, Common Linnet and Common Buzzard. Two young Adders were sunning themselves on top of the viewpoint; always a treat to see.

Our last stop was at the Yew Tree Break/Horse Lawn area. Here we walked along a track with the wood to our left and an open glade to our right. A singing Wood Warbler was heard deep in the wood and there were plenty of singing Goldcrests in the area. As we reached the end of the track a party of Long-tailed Tits was working through a stand of Larch. We heard the brief song of Common Firecrest, and Northern Goshawk was heard calling deep in the wood. As we returned to our vehicle a Common Redstart was singing in the glade so we tracked it down and had excellent views as it perched in full view. A fitting end to the day.

We returned to the hotel and everyone had a little time to relax before we met for the checklist and our evening meal. After dinner we left the hotel at 10.30pm to go spotlighting for Wild Boar. We drove around the local area, scanning with the spotlight. Unfortunately we didn't see a boar, though we did spot four Red Foxes and a couple of Fallow Deer. After an hour we called it a day and time for bed!

Day 3

Sunday 5th June

We started the day with a repeat of yesterday's walk to the Cyril Hart Arboretum and back along the Gloucestershire Way. Common Firecrest was heard again and we enjoyed great views of Eurasian Nuthatch and Common Chaffinch at eye level and on the ground in the car park. Great Spotted Woodpecker and Stock Dove were also seen.

After a hearty breakfast and with everyone raring to go, we headed for our first stop of the day at Woorgreens Lake and a walk up onto Crabtree Hill. We parked and walked through a short section of Oak woodland to the lake where we stopped to view the species breeding on the lake. Birds seen were Little Grebe, Mute Swan,

Greylag Goose, Canada Goose, Mallard, Tufted Duck, Common Moorhen, Eurasian Coot and Lesser Black-backed Gull.

After enjoying the lake we walked to the glade. As we walked Common Cuckoo and European Green Woodpecker were heard, and as we entered the glade a singing Tree Pipit was perched on top of a Birch. Broad-bodied and Four-spotted Chasers were seen over the small pools. We carried on through the middle of the glade where a superb Northern Goshawk was cruising overhead and then soaring high with two Common Buzzards, giving a great comparison of size between the species. A Eurasian Hobby was also briefly seen at range. As we approached the end of the glade we had excellent views of Willow Warbler, Common Whitethroat and Common Linnet, and a family of European Stonechats were seen close to the path. We spent some time enjoying the rich birdlife of the heath before heading back into the woodland.

As we followed the track down we found a Great Tit nest in a stump, a singing male Eurasian Blackcap showed well, up to three Wood Warblers were heard singing, and Eurasian Wren and Mistle Thrush were also seen. A single Wild Boar was briefly seen in the long vegetation. We waited and watched to see if it would reappear. It didn't so Greg walked into the area. As he moved, the cracking of a stick underfoot caused the boar to flush into the wood giving everyone great views as it charged off. Also seen were four Fallow Deer and Coal Tits were heard all around. Nearing the end of the walk we went back past Woorgreens Lake where Common Swift, Barn Swallow and Common House Martin were feeding over the lake.

We walked back to the vehicle and headed to Cannop Ponds where we had a quick stop. Plenty of water birds were seen including two more Mandarin Ducks, and a Gadwall was new for the weekend. After Cannop Ponds a few of the group required an early departure so they were dropped off before we headed for lunch at the New Inn at Small Standing.

After enjoying lunch in the garden on a beautiful afternoon we headed to Symonds Yat. We walked to the top viewpoint and enjoyed watching the Peregrine Falcon chick which was on full view in the nest. After a short while the adult female flew in, mobbing a Common Buzzard that had strayed too close to the nest, and then perching on the rock face. A pair of Common Buzzards gave excellent flight views as they soared below us. Other new birds seen were Great Cormorant and Common Pheasant.

After a hot and enjoyable afternoon on Symonds Yat we had reached the end of the weekend, so we drove back to the hotel, filled in the checklist and said our goodbyes after a fantastic weekend enjoying the Forest of Dean.

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Eurasian Nuthatch

Species Lists

Birds (✓=recorded but not counted; H = heard only)

	Common name	Scientific name	June		
			3	4	5
1	Little Grebe	<i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>			✓
2	Great Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>			✓
3	Mute Swan	<i>Cygnus olor</i>			✓
4	Greylag Goose	<i>Anser anser</i>	✓	✓	✓
5	Canada Goose	<i>Branta canadensis</i>			✓
6	Mallard	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>	✓	✓	✓
7	Gadwall	<i>Anas strepera</i>			✓
8	Tufted Duck	<i>Aythya fuligula</i>			✓
9	Mandarin Duck	<i>Aix galericulata</i>	✓	✓	✓
10	Eurasian Sparrowhawk	<i>Accipiter nisus</i>		✓	
11	Northern Goshawk	<i>Accipiter gentilis</i>		H	✓
12	Common Buzzard	<i>Buteo buteo</i>		✓	✓
13	Peregrine Falcon	<i>Falco peregrinus</i>			✓
14	Eurasian Hobby	<i>Falco Subbuteo</i>			✓
15	Common Pheasant	<i>Phasianus colchicus</i>			✓
16	Common Moorhen	<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>			✓
17	Eurasian Coot	<i>Fulica atra</i>			✓
18	Eurasian Woodcock	<i>Scolopax rusticola</i>	✓		
19	Common Gull	<i>Larus canus</i>		✓	
20	European Herring Gull	<i>Larus argentatus</i>		✓	
21	Lesser black-backed Gull	<i>Larus Fuscus</i>			✓
22	Feral Pigeon	<i>Columba livia 'feral'</i>			✓
23	Stock Dove	<i>Columba oenas</i>		✓	✓
24	Common Wood Pigeon	<i>Columba palumbus</i>		✓	✓
25	Common Cuckoo	<i>Cuculus canorus</i>			H
26	Tawny Owl	<i>Strix aluco</i>	H		
27	European Nightjar	<i>Caprimulgus europaeus</i>	✓		
28	Common Swift	<i>Apus apus</i>	✓		✓
29	Great Spotted Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos major</i>			✓
30	European Green Woodpecker	<i>Picus viridis</i>		H	H
31	Barn Swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>	✓	✓	✓
32	Common House Martin	<i>Delichon urbicum</i>	✓	✓	✓
33	Tree Pipit	<i>Anthus trivialis</i>	✓	✓	✓
34	Pied Wagtail	<i>Motacilla alba yarrelli</i>	✓	✓	✓
35	Eurasian Wren	<i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>	✓	✓	✓
36	Spotted Flycatcher	<i>Muscicapa striata</i>		✓	
37	European Pied Flycatcher	<i>Ficedula hypoleuca</i>		✓	
38	Dunnock	<i>Prunella modularis</i>		✓	✓
39	European Stonechat	<i>Saxicola rubicola</i>		✓	✓
40	Mistle Thrush	<i>Turdus viscivorus</i>		✓	✓
41	Song Thrush	<i>Turdus philomelos</i>	✓	✓	✓
42	Common Blackbird	<i>Turdus merula</i>	✓	✓	✓
43	Garden Warbler	<i>Sylvia borin</i>		✓	
44	Eurasian Blackcap	<i>Sylvia atricapilla</i>		✓	✓
45	Common Whitethroat	<i>Sylvia communis</i>	H		✓
46	Willow Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus trochilus</i>	✓	H	✓
47	Common Chiffchaff	<i>Phylloscopus collybita</i>		✓	H

	Common name	Scientific name	June		
			3	4	5
48	Wood Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus trochilus</i>		✓	H
49	European Robin	<i>Erithacus rubecula</i>		✓	✓
50	Common Redstart	<i>Phoenicurus phoenicurus</i>		✓	
51	Goldcrest	<i>Regulus regulus</i>		✓	H
52	Common Firecrest	<i>Regulus ignicapilla</i>		H	H
53	Long-tailed Tit	<i>Aegithalos caudatus</i>		✓	H
54	Coal Tit	<i>Periparus ater</i>		✓	✓
55	Great Tit	<i>Parus major</i>		✓	✓
56	Eurasian Blue Tit	<i>Cyanistes caeruleus</i>		✓	✓
57	Eurasian Nuthatch	<i>Sitta europaea</i>		✓	✓
58	Eurasian Treecreeper	<i>Certhia familiaris</i>		✓	
59	Eurasian Jay	<i>Garrulus glandarius</i>		✓	✓
60	Eurasian Magpie	<i>Pica pica</i>		✓	
61	Western Jackdaw	<i>Corvus monedula</i>		✓	✓
62	Carrion Crow	<i>Corvus corone</i>		✓	✓
63	Common Raven	<i>Corvus corax</i>		H	✓
64	Common Starling	<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>			✓
65	House Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>		✓	✓
66	Common Chaffinch	<i>Fringilla coelebs</i>		✓	✓
67	European Greenfinch	<i>Chloris chloris</i>		✓	
68	European Goldfinch	<i>Carduelis carduelis</i>		✓	✓
69	Eurasian Siskin	<i>Spinus spinus</i>		✓	H
70	Common Linnet	<i>Linaria cannabina</i>		✓	✓
71	Common Bullfinch	<i>Pyrrhula pyrrhula</i>		✓	✓

Mammals

1	Fallow Deer	<i>Dama dama</i>		✓	✓
2	European Roe Deer	<i>Capreolus capreolus</i>	✓		
3	Wild Boar	<i>Sus scrofa</i>			✓
4	Red Fox	<i>Vulpes vulpes</i>		4	
5	Grey Squirrel	<i>Sciurus carolinensis</i>		✓	✓

Other Taxa

1	Adder	<i>Vipera berus</i>		✓	
2	Dor Beetle	<i>Geotrupes stercorarius</i>		✓	✓
3	Green Tiger Beetle	<i>Cicindela campestris</i>		✓	
4	Green-veined White	<i>Pieris napi</i>			✓
5	Speckled Wood	<i>Pararge aegeria</i>			✓
6	Painted Lady	<i>Vanessa cardui</i>			✓
7	Broad-bodied Chaser	<i>Libellula depressa</i>			✓
8	Four-spotted Chaser	<i>Libellula quadrimaculata</i>			✓
9	Large Red Damselfly	<i>Pyrrhosoma nymphula</i>			✓
10	Common Darter	<i>Sympetrum striolatum</i>			✓