

The Forest of Dean

Naturetrek Tour Report

17 - 19 February 2017



Common Merganser (Goosander)



Hawfinch



Song Thrush



Great, Coal & Blue Tits

Report and images by Greg Mabbett



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Tour participants: Greg Mabbett (leader) with a group of eight Naturetrek clients

Summary

We spent an enjoyable weekend searching the Forest for its special wildlife, encountering some foggy conditions but not letting that stop us from seeing some special wildlife including Hawfinch, Lesser Redpoll and Wild Boar on our night drive: all brilliant encounters!

Day 1

Friday 17th February

We all gathered in the dining room at 6.30pm where Greg gave a brief introduction and an overview of the weekend's activities, plus some species we hoped to encounter. After a stunning three course meal and everyone having a good chat and getting to know each other, we turned in to get a good night's sleep in anticipation of what tomorrow might bring.

Day 2

Saturday 18th February

We met by the vehicle at 6.45am for a pre-breakfast walk with our target being Hawfinch. It was a foggy start but we took a short drive to Parkend where we stood on the village green near some known feeding trees. We enjoyed the dawn chorus with Song Thrush the overriding song. Green and Great Spotted Woodpeckers and a mixed tit flock kept us occupied. After thirty minutes six Hawfinches dropped into the top of some lime trees giving excellent prolonged views and a good chance to take in the features of these special birds. Three more joined the flock and with breakfast calling, we headed back to the hotel leaving the Hawfinch still loafing in the top of the trees. A great start!

After a hearty breakfast, we headed for Woorgreens Lake and then Crabtree Hill glade. Unfortunately the fog hadn't lifted making birding difficult; we could only view half the lake. A Grey Heron flushed as we arrived. Male Goosander, Tufted Duck, Mallard and Coot were on the lake with a few Siskins calling overhead. We walked around the lake and up onto the glade with the fog being so thick we couldn't see a lot, but heard Greylag Goose, Lesser Redpoll, Siskin, Chaffinch and Goldfinch. The only bird seen was a Great Grey Shrike very briefly, and only by a few of the group. We headed back past the lake picking out a lone Teal.

With the birding being difficult, we stopped at a feeding log near Cyril Heart arboretum. After covering the log with seed we enjoyed an instant response with Blue Tit, Great Tit, Coal Tit, Nuthatch and Chaffinch all enjoying the seed at close range. It was a great chance to compare all the differences between the tit species. We also located a lone feeding Lesser Redpoll in a birch giving excellent telescope views as it fed.

On our way for lunch at the Fountain Inn at Parkend we took a short stop at New Fancy View, not expecting to see much with the fog, but we enjoyed the atmospheric views over the interior of the forest. At the Fountain Inn we had a brief scan before lunch and picked out a male Hawfinch with a few Greenfinches, giving great views in better light.

After enjoying a delicious lunch we made our way to Brierley. As we arrived a flock of Siskin landed in front of us giving excellent scoped views of males and females. We proceeded with the walk around, seeing plenty of the

common species including Great Spotted Woodpecker, Jay, Goldcrest and mixed tit flocks. A large flock of Siskin drew our attention after being flushed by a Buzzard, and the Buzzard being followed by a distant Goshawk. We carried on and spotted a couple of Ravens as we walked alongside a large Larch plantation, with great views of Treecreeper and a couple of fly-over Crossbills. We dropped down back towards the vehicle and had fantastic views of a singing Song Thrush to end the day.

We met before dinner in the dining room and went through the checklist for the day, afterwards enjoying another great meal. At 10pm we headed out on a night drive in the hope of seeing Wild Boar. We drove around with a high powered torch looking through the wood. We saw a couple of Foxes and after half an hour we found a sounder of Boar just off the road giving great views. We turned around and drove back past with a single Boar standing in the road. A great end to the day!

Day 3

Sunday 19th February

We started Sunday with a pre-breakfast walk at Yew Tree Break. Arriving to a stunning sunrise, we made our way around the glade. A Fallow Deer was grazing on the edge of the wood and a Goshawk chasing a Sparrowhawk shot across the glade! Redwing, Meadow Pipit, Redpoll and Raven all passed overhead. We stood at the top of the glade hearing plenty of Crossbills overhead. We finally managed to find a male perched for long enough for the whole group to get great views. What a cracking start to the day and we headed back for breakfast.

Our first stop of the day was Cannop ponds. A flock of Chaffinch were feeding on the path with a single male Reed Bunting. The pond had a great selection of waterbirds: Mandarin, Tufted Duck, Gadwall, Wigeon, Mallard, Little Grebe, Coot, Moorhen and Cormorant were all on and around the lake.

After spending an hour or so enjoying the birds we headed to our next destination; Symonds Yat. We walked to the viewpoint at the top, with stunning views of the River Wye. The resident pair of Peregrine was perched near the nest site and a good number of Buzzards were soaring. After a short while an immature Goshawk join the Buzzards, giving good comparison between the two species. Raven and Bullfinch were also seen. A Kingfisher was skilfully spotted on the river below and showed well in the telescope.

After enjoying the view, we headed for a short walk at Horse Lawn before lunch. It was a nice walk but quiet on the bird front, with a few fly-over Siskins and a showy Treecreeper being seen. It was now time for lunch so we headed to the Speech House Hotel.

After a delicious lunch we made the short drive to Nags Head RSPB reserve, a stunning example of untouched ancient oak woodland. We walked the short trail, enjoying views of Song Thrush, Great Spotted Woodpecker, Nuthatch and several Treecreepers. We were also lucky enough to spot a perched Buzzard, getting excellent views through the telescope. Finishing the short trail, we made our way down to the lower hide, getting views of Goldcrest, Goldfinch and a lone male Siskin sat on one of the tallest spruce trees; a great way to end the weekend!

We headed back to the hotel to fill in the checklist and say our farewells after a great wildlife-filled weekend.

Species Lists

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

	Common name	Scientific name	February	
			18	19
1	Little Grebe	<i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>		✓
2	Great Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>		✓
3	Grey Heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>	✓	✓
4	Mute Swan	<i>Cygnus olor</i>	✓	✓
5	Greylag Goose	<i>Anser anser</i>	H	□
6	Canada Goose	<i>Branta canadensis</i>	✓	✓
7	Mallard	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>	✓	
8	Eurasian Teal	<i>Anas Crecca</i>	✓	
9	Gadwall	<i>Anas strepera</i>		✓
10	Eurasian Wigeon	<i>Anas penelope</i>		✓
11	Tufted Duck	<i>Aythya fuligula</i>	✓	
12	Mandarin Duck	<i>Aix galericulata</i>	□	✓
13	Goosander	<i>Mergus merganser</i>		✓
14	Eurasian Sparrowhawk	<i>Accipiter nisus</i>		✓
15	Northern Goshawk	<i>Accipiter gentilis</i>		✓
16	Common Buzzard	<i>Buteo buteo</i>		✓
17	Peregrine Falcon	<i>Falco peregrinus</i>		✓
18	Common Pheasant	<i>Phasianus colchicus</i>		✓
19	Lesser Black-backed Gull	<i>Larus fuscus</i>	✓	
20	Common Moorhen	<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>		✓
21	Eurasian Coot	<i>Fulica atra</i>	✓	✓
22	Stock Dove	<i>Columba oenas</i>		✓
23	Common Wood Pigeon	<i>Columba palumbus</i>	✓	✓
24	Eurasian Collared Dove	<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>	✓	□
25	Great Spotted Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos major</i>	✓	✓
26	European Green Woodpecker	<i>Picus viridis</i>	H	
27	Great Grey Shrike	<i>Lanius excubitor</i>	✓	□
28	Common Kingfisher	<i>Alcedo atthis</i>	□	✓
29	Meadow Pipit	<i>Anthus pratensis</i>		✓
30	Pied Wagtail	<i>Motacilla alba yarrellii</i>	✓	✓
31	Grey Wagtail	<i>Motacilla cinerea</i>	✓	✓
32	Eurasian Wren	<i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>	✓	✓
33	Dunnock	<i>Prunella modularis</i>	✓	✓
34	Mistle Thrush	<i>Turdus viscivorus</i>	✓	✓
35	Song Thrush	<i>Turdus philomelos</i>	✓	✓
36	Common Blackbird	<i>Turdus merula</i>	✓	✓
37	Redwing	<i>Turdus iliacus</i>	✓	✓
38	European Robin	<i>Erithacus rubecula</i>	✓	✓
39	Goldcrest	<i>Regulus regulus</i>	✓	✓
40	Long-tailed Tit	<i>Aegithalos caudatus</i>	✓	✓
41	Coal Tit	<i>Parus ater</i>	✓	✓
42	Great Tit	<i>Parus major</i>	✓	✓
43	Eurasian Blue Tit	<i>Cyanistes caeruleus</i>	✓	✓
44	Eurasian Nuthatch	<i>Sitta europaea</i>	✓	✓
45	Eurasian Treecreeper	<i>Certhia familiaris</i>	✓	✓
46	Eurasian Jay	<i>Garrulus glandarius</i>	✓	✓
47	Eurasian Magpie	<i>Pica pica</i>		✓

	Common name	Scientific name	February	
			18	19
48	Eurasian Jackdaw	<i>Coloeus monedula</i>	✓	✓
49	Carrion Crow	<i>Corvus corone</i>	✓	✓
50	Common Raven	<i>Corvus corax</i>	✓	✓
51	Common Starling	<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>	✓	✓
52	House Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>	H	
53	Common Chaffinch	<i>Fringilla coelebs</i>	✓	✓
54	European Greenfinch	<i>Chloris chloris</i>	✓	
55	European Goldfinch	<i>Carduelis carduelis</i>	✓	✓
56	Eurasian Siskin	<i>Spinus spinus</i>	✓	✓
57	Lesser Redpoll	<i>Carduelis cabaret</i>	✓	✓
58	Eurasian Bullfinch	<i>Pyrrhula pyrrhula</i>	□	✓
59	Hawfinch	<i>Coccothraustes coccothrustes</i>	✓	
60	Red Crossbill	<i>Loxia curvirostra</i>	✓	
61	Common Reed Bunting	<i>Emberiza schoeniclus</i>	□	✓

Other Taxa

1	Fallow Deer	<i>Dama dama</i>		✓
2	Wild Boar	<i>Sus scrofa</i>		✓
3	Red Fox	<i>Vulpes vulpes</i>		✓
4	Grey Squirrel	<i>Sciurus carolinensis</i>	✓	✓
5	Common Frog	<i>Rana temporaria</i>		✓

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