

The Forest of Dean

Naturetrek Tour Report

3 - 5 March 2017



White-throated Dipper



Wild Boar



Great Grey Shrike



Peregrine

Report and images by Greg Mabbett



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Tour participants: Greg & Tom Mabbett (leaders) with a group of 14 Naturetrek clients

Summary

We spent a fantastic weekend in the Forest, looking for a range of special wildlife whilst avoiding the inclement weather. We enjoyed stunning views of Great Grey Shrike and Goshawk, and on an evening drive had spectacular views of Wild Boar.

Day 1

Friday 3rd March

We gathered in the dining room of the Speech House Hotel. Tom gave a brief itinerary of the weekend's activities then we all got to know each other a little better. We enjoyed a lovely three course meal before heading out around 10pm for an evening Boar drive. We managed to locate six Fallow Deer in the grounds of the hotel. A short while into the drive we saw Muntjac, Fox and finally two sounders of Wild Boar – the second group giving fantastic views in the headlights, with the male scratching on a tree and others crossing the track in front. After enjoying these fascinating creatures, we headed back to the hotel for some rest before the first full day.

Day 2

Saturday 4th March

We started the morning with a pre-breakfast walk at Parkend. Standing on the village green we saw Great Spotted Woodpecker, Greenfinch, Mistle Thrush and Stock Dove, and had stunning views of nine Hawfinches. At times the Hawfinch came onto the ground to feed, giving fantastic views for all. We watched the birds for about 40 minutes, in-flight and perched in the trees preening, before heading for breakfast.

After a hearty breakfast we headed off to our first stop of the day – Crabtree Hill. We walked a short way to the glade hearing Siskin and Crossbill overhead. As we entered the glade we managed to locate the wintering Great Grey Shrike. It gave superb views both perched and hunting, catching at least two Common Lizards whilst we were there. After watching the bird for half an hour, we finished off the walk back to the vehicles. On the way we saw Reed Bunting, Stonechat, Buzzard, Meadow Pipit, a mixed tit flock and a distant Goshawk.

We had a quick comfort break at the hotel and while in the car park saw a lovely little Grey Wagtail. The next port of call was New Fancy View in the hope of closer views of Goshawk. Despite conditions looking good, we had no joy in the 45 minutes we spent there, but did see Buzzard, Raven, Bullfinch and Siskin. After calling it a day at New Fancy View, we headed to the Fountain Inn for a tasty lunch.

After lunch we took a short walk from the Fountain Inn down the river, instantly locating a Dipper; also singing Marsh Tit and a feeding Siskin just yards away. A male Goshawk gave brief views in-flight overhead and, as we walked back to the vehicles, an adult female and an immature Goshawk gave a short display and a stunning close fly-by, giving everyone the chance to take in and appreciate the stunning features of these magnificent birds. After the excitement of the Goshawks we jumped in the vehicles and headed to our final location of the day – Brierley.

Taking the lower track with mixed coniferous woodland to our left, we saw Bullfinch, Siskin and a frustratingly short glimpse of two Crossbills overhead. As we climbed up the track to the ridge we managed to locate four

feeding Crossbills giving excellent views close to the track. Everyone enjoyed time with the birds in the telescope, enjoying their parrot-like antics. We carried on the walk and it was finished off with great views of Treecreeper and a perched Great Spotted Woodpecker – a great end to a fantastic day.

In the evening we met at 7pm, discussed the day's events and checked-off the different species we'd seen over another lovely three course meal.

Day 3

Sunday 5th March

Again today, we started with a pre-breakfast walk. Unfortunately the weather was against us, with heavy persistent rain cutting our morning walk short, but not before soaking us to the skin! We had views of Song Thrush, Redwing, Greylag Geese and Chaffinch.

After drying off over breakfast and with the weather brightening, we headed to Cannop Ponds. On arrival there was a Grey Wagtail and a Pied Wagtail giving excellent views together on bare earth. We walked down to the lake where Mandarin Duck, Little Grebe, Mallard and Gadwall were all present. After sprinkling some seed on the ground, we encouraged Nuthatch, Marsh Tit and Great Tit to feed within a few feet of us, giving excellent views of these stunning birds. While scanning for raptors, a pair of Peregrines stooped overhead and a Goshawk was seen in the distance. After having our fill of the birds on the lake, we walked back along the road with Birch woodland to our right, and another Goshawk went overhead. Song Thrush and Goldfinch were also seen. We then jumped in the vehicles and made our way to Symonds Yat Viewpoint.

Arriving the viewpoint there was a Sparrowhawk and a few Buzzard circling. After a short while one of the resident Peregrines give a stunning fly-by along the river course. The pair were then found in a nearby tree, perched close to the viewpoint and allowing stunning telescope views. Marsh Tit, Coal Tit and Nuthatch were visiting a small feeding station. A Bank Vole was also taking advantage of any dropped seed. Raven, Canada Geese and Pheasant were also seen from the viewpoint. After making the most of the beautiful views, we headed to Woorgreen's Lake for our last stop before lunch.

With a good smattering of common waterbirds, a male Goosander stood out from the crowd and a couple of Teal were hiding on the island. After the short stop, we headed to the Speech House for lunch.

After lunch we headed to the famous RSPB Nags Head reserve. We walked the short trail, encountering a number of small tit flocks and getting good views of a Goldcrest in a Holly tree. With the woods relatively quiet, we headed to an open glade; Yew Tree Break. Walking down the track, we instantly stumbled across a large flock of Lesser Redpoll moving quickly through the Larch and Birch. As we walked the path we could hear the distant chirp of Crossbill and also managed to locate four very confiding Redpolls. With time running out, we headed back to the vehicles, but not without one last surprise - a stunning perched male Crossbill! The whole group enjoyed excellent views—a great way to end the weekend.

We then headed back to the Speech House, went through a final checklist and said our farewells.

Species Lists

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

	Common name	Scientific name	March		
			3	4	5
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>			✓
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	Tufted Duck	<i>Aythya fuligula</i>			✓
11	Mandarin Duck	<i>Aix galericulata</i>			✓
12	Goosander	<i>Mergus merganser</i>			✓
13	Eurasian Sparrowhawk	<i>Accipiter nisus</i>		✓	✓
14	Northern Goshawk	<i>Accipiter gentilis</i>		✓	✓
15	Common Buzzard	<i>Buteo buteo</i>		✓	✓
16	Peregrine Falcon	<i>Falco peregrinus</i>			✓
17	Common Pheasant	<i>Phasianus colchicus</i>			✓
18	Common Moorhen	<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>			✓
19	Eurasian Coot	<i>Fulica atra</i>			✓
20	Common Gull	<i>Larus canus</i>		✓	
21	European Herring Gull	<i>Larus argentatus</i>			✓
22	Lesser Black-backed Gull	<i>Larus fuscus</i>		✓	✓
23	Stock Dove	<i>Columba oenas</i>		✓	
24	Common Wood Pigeon	<i>Columba palumbus</i>		✓	✓
25	Eurasian Collared Dove	<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>		✓	
26	Great Grey Shrike	<i>Lanius excubitor</i>		✓	
27	Great Spotted Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos major</i>		✓	✓
28	European Green Woodpecker	<i>Picus viridis</i>		✓	
29	Meadow Pipit	<i>Anthus pratensis</i>		✓	
30	Pied Wagtail	<i>Motacilla alba yarrelli</i>		✓	✓
31	Grey Wagtail	<i>Motacilla cinerea</i>		✓	✓
32	Dipper	<i>Cinclus cinclus</i>		✓	
33	Eurasian Wren	<i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>		✓	✓
34	Dunnock	<i>Prunella modularis</i>		✓	✓
35	European Stonechat	<i>Saxicola rubicola</i>		✓	
36	Mistle Thrush	<i>Turdus viscivorus</i>		✓	✓
37	Song Thrush	<i>Turdus philomelos</i>		✓	✓
38	Common Blackbird	<i>Turdus merula</i>		✓	✓
39	Redwing	<i>Turdus iliacus</i>	✓	✓	✓
40	European Robin	<i>Erithacus rubecula</i>		✓	✓
41	Goldcrest	<i>Regulus regulus</i>		✓	✓
42	Long-tailed Tit	<i>Aegithalos caudatus</i>		✓	✓
43	Marsh Tit	<i>Poecile palustris</i>		✓	✓
44	Coal Tit	<i>Periparus ater</i>		✓	✓
45	Great Tit	<i>Parus major</i>		✓	✓
46	Eurasian Blue Tit	<i>Cyanistes caeruleus</i>		✓	✓
47	Eurasian Nuthatch	<i>Sitta europaea</i>		✓	✓

	Common name	Scientific name	March		
			3	4	5
48	Eurasian Treecreeper	<i>Certhia familiaris</i>		✓	✓
49	Eurasian Jay	<i>Garrulus glandarius</i>		✓	
50	Eurasian Magpie	<i>Pica pica</i>		✓	
51	Western Jackdaw	<i>Coloeus monedula</i>		✓	✓
52	Carrion Crow	<i>Corvus corone</i>		✓	✓
53	Common Raven	<i>Corvus corax</i>		✓	✓
54	Common Starling	<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>		✓	✓
55	House Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>		✓	
56	Common Chaffinch	<i>Fringilla coelebs</i>		✓	✓
57	European Greenfinch	<i>Chloris chloris</i>		✓	
58	European Goldfinch	<i>Carduelis carduelis</i>		✓	✓
59	Eurasian Siskin	<i>Spinus spinus</i>		✓	✓
60	Lesser Redpoll	<i>Carduelis cabaret</i>		✓	✓
61	Eurasian Bullfinch	<i>Pyrrhula pyrrhula</i>			✓
62	Hawfinch	<i>Coccothraustes coccothrustes</i>		✓	
63	Red Crossbill	<i>Loxia curvirostra</i>		✓	
64	Common Reed Bunting	<i>Emberiza schoeniclus</i>		✓	

Other Taxa

1	Fallow Deer	<i>Dama dama</i>	6		
2	Muntjac Deer	<i>Muntiacus reevesi</i>	1		
3	Wild Boar	<i>Sus scrofa</i>	c10		
4	Red Fox	<i>Vulpes vulpes</i>	1		
5	Grey Squirrel	<i>Sciurus carolinensis</i>		✓	✓
6	Bank Vole	<i>Myodes glareolus</i>			✓

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Siskin