

The Forest of Dean

Naturetrek Tour Report

2 - 4 June 2017



Young Tawny Owl



Pied Flycatcher nest box



Green Tiger Beetle



Male Red Crossbill

Report and images by Greg Mabbett



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Tour participants: Tom & Greg Mabbett (leaders) with 12 Naturetrek clients

Day 1

Friday 2nd June

We all met at 6.30pm and after introductions, Tom and Greg went through the plan for the weekend before a delicious dinner. After dinner and despite the rain falling, we ventured out to Cannop Stoneworks for a walk. We enjoyed seeing Mandarin Duck on the lake, Fallow Deer, roding Woodcock and superb views of Wild Boar coming onto the track in front of us! We enjoyed more good views of Woodcock before the rain came down a little heavier and we retreated to the vehicles and the short drive back to The Speech House.

Day 2

Saturday 3rd June

We were up at 7am for a pre-breakfast bird walk with perfect blue skies. House Martin, Swallow and Pied Wagtail were enjoyed from the car park before we went for a lovely walk with birds singing all around us. The highlights were excellent scoped views of a singing Redstart and two Spotted Flycatchers. Song Thrushes were all over the place and we watched Goldcrest with Nuthatch and Treecreeper nearby. It was a great start to the day and we returned to the hotel for a well-earned breakfast.

After breakfast we headed to the RSPB Nagshead reserve and spent a while walking the trails and enjoying whatever we happened to come across. Whilst heading to the lower hide, we stopped as a Goshawk was calling from close by. It called repeatedly and very clearly but we could not see the bird, although it was a great experience to hear it. Carrying on, it wasn't long before we spotted our first Pied Flycatchers and we worked hard to get onto them as they actively fed.

Continuing on the long trail, we watched a pair of Pied Flycatchers visiting a box and had really great views as both adults came in to feed young: a special sighting. Further on a Nuthatch pair were using another box and we enjoyed watching them coming and going too.

As we continued our walk, we enjoyed seeing Tree Pipit, Raven and a mating pair of Green Tiger Beetle; these smart insects being very numerous here. We had a look over a small pond noting a Garden Warbler, Emperor Dragonfly and Broad-bodied Chaser. It was then time for lunch.

After a great pub lunch we had a scan from New Fancy viewpoint, giving super views over the forest. A rather distant Goshawk was our reward, together with a Common Lizard basking and a few Buzzards.

We continued on to our final site for the day at Horse Lawn and walked a very nice circuit here. The sound of Wood Warbler was soon heard, though a little distant, and at the crossroads a Firecrest was singing loudly. We all managed to get views of this special bird that is really doing well here. At one point we watched it through the telescope preening and it was seen carrying nest material: Great! As we were watching, a female Crossbill briefly landed in the top of a spruce tree. We continued on and were closer to the Wood Warbler on the return path and after some persistence, managed to get this lovely bird in the telescope, its distinctive song filling the air. It really was an excellent walk.

We headed back to the hotel for a couple of hours of relaxation before dinner and then, after a delicious meal, we headed out once again for a walk to see Nightjars. Walking to the glade we enjoyed three Fallow Deer giving great views, and Tree Pipit and Willow Warbler allowed prolonged telescope views. After a bit of a wait and some close Woodcock flybys, the fantastic churring sound made by the male Nightjar was heard. It wasn't long until we had our first views with a male, showing the white feathers on the tail and wings, clearly chasing a female just metres in front of us! We had really amazing views of these special birds before light faded and we headed for the vehicles. On the way back we spotted a large Wild Boar in the spotlight and after hearing a Tawny Owllet calling, we tracked it down and had wonderful views. What a treat! As if this wasn't enough, as we were watching the recently fledged owl in the telescope, the adult came in to feed it, passing over what looked like a worm. Magic: an evening not to be forgotten! We drove the couple of minutes back to the hotel and turned in after a wonderful few hours.

Day 3

Sunday 4th June

For those who wanted, there was the option of a pre-breakfast outing and we went the short distance to a nearby glade to enjoy the early sun. A Spotted Flycatcher was the highlight, with a couple of fly-over Crossbills, a pair of Stonechat, and Tree Pipit always singing and displaying nearby.

After a hearty breakfast we went for a look over Woorgreens Lake with a Mute Swan family seen and a few Tufted Duck. Walking into a glade, a pair of Crossbill flew over and landed within a larch tree, so we homed in on them and for the next 20 minutes or so enjoyed simply wonderful views of these superb birds. We were able to see their amazing bills and even tongues working at the seeds as they dangled upside down, at times just in front of us! It was a brilliant encounter and when they moved away, we headed for the vehicles and moved on ourselves.

Next stop was Symonds Yat, famous for its Peregrines and we were soon enjoying flight views of these birds with the female on show, perched in a tree. One chick was also seen on the nest ledge. The weather was not ideal for much flying so after we had all taken in the great view and had a good look at the Peregrines, it was time for some lunch back at our hotel.

After a relaxed lunch we headed out in heavy rain for a look over Cannop Ponds and thankfully, with the weather clearing, we were able to enjoy close views of many Mandarin Ducks with very approachable young, Grey Wagtail, Gadwall, lots of House Martins zipping over the lake, Marsh Tit visiting some seed, and Nuthatch and Chaffinch gave close views.

We left and dropped off some of the group at the hotel for their journey home, and then the rest of us headed for our final stop at Parkend. The sun was now out and above the church, five Buzzards circled and Greg spotted a Peregrine with them! We went for a short walk, having telescope-filling views of Siskin feeding in alders and enjoying the sun for the final excursion. It was a lovely end to the weekend and on the walk back to the vehicles, a Goshawk was seen circling over its territory. A few of us managed to get binoculars on this powerhouse of a bird, but Goshawk is always one to leave you wanting more!

We headed back to the hotel a short distance away and all said our farewells after a weekend full of great birds and lots of fun along the way.

Species Lists

Birds

Greylag Goose *Anser anser*: A few seen.

Canada Goose *Branta canadensis*: 15-20 at Woorgreens.

Mute Swan *Cygnus olor*: Adults with 6 young at Woorgreens. Also at Cannop.

Mandarin Duck *Aix galericulata*: Many at Cannop with young.

Gadwall *Anas strepera*: 2 seen Cannop.

Mallard *Anas platyrhynchos*: a few seen.

Tufted Duck *Aythya fuligula*: circa 8 at lakes.

Common Pheasant *Phasianus colchicus*: 5 from Symonds yat.

Little Grebe *Tachybaptus ruficollis*: 2 on Cannop.

Northern Goshawk *Accipiter gentilis*: Heard quite close at Nags Head; seen at New Fancy and Parkend though distant.

Common Buzzard *Buteo buteo*: Seen daily.

Red Kite *Milvus milvus*: 1 seen high over.

Eurasian Coot *Fulica atra*: seen.

Eurasian Woodcock *Scolopax rusticola*: Excellent views of roding birds. Circa 3

European Herring Gull *Larus argentatus*: a few seen.

Lesser Black-backed Gull *Larus fuscus*: a couple seen.

Stock Dove *Columba oenas*: calling and seen well.

Common Wood Pigeon *Columba palumbus*: seen.

Eurasian Collared Dove *Streptopelia decaocto*: seen.

Common Cuckoo *Cuculus canorus*: Heard only.

Tawny Owl *Strix aluco*: Brilliant views of an Owlet being fed a worm by an adult in the spotlight.

European Nightjar *Caprimulgus europaeus*: Special views of 2 birds chasing each other and feeding.

Common Swift *Apus apus*: a few daily.

Common Kingfisher *Alcedo atthis*: one briefly.

Great Spotted Woodpecker *Dendrocopos major*: Heard and seen.

European Green Woodpecker *Picus viridis*: Heard only.

Peregrine Falcon *Falco peregrinus*: 2 adults and 1 young seen (though 3 young at nest), 1 adult at parkend.

Eurasian Jay *Garrulus glandarius*: a few seen.

Eurasian Magpie *Pica pica*: a few seen.

Western Jackdaw *Coloemus monedula*: common.

Carion Crow *Corvus corone*: a few seen.

Northern Raven *Corvus corax*: a few seen and very close views at Cannop.

Coal Tit *Periparus ater*: a few seen.

Marsh Tit *Poecile palustris*: 1 seen at Cannop.

Eurasian Blue Tit *Cyanistes caeruleus*: seen.

Great Tit *Parus major*: seen.

Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica*: seen.

Common House Martin *Delichon urbicum*: seen.

Long-tailed Tit *Aegithalos caedatus*: heard only.

Willow Warbler *Phylloscopus trochilus*: singing all over the place and telescope views.

Common Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus collybita*: a few heard and seen.

Wood Warbler *Phylloscopus sibilatrix*: Just 1 heard and seen very well.

Eurasian Blackcap *Sylvia atricapilla*: heard and seen.

Garden Warbler *Sylvia borin*: circa 3 heard and seen.
Common Firecrest *Regulus ignicapilla*: a minimum of 4 singing at various sites!
Goldcrest *Regulus regulus*: heard and seen regularly.
Eurasian Wren *Troglodytes troglodytes*: heard and seen.
Eurasian Nuthatch *Sitta europaea*: seen daily.
Eurasian Treecreeper *Certhia familiaris*: seen daily.
Common Starling *Sturnus vulgaris*: a few seen.
Common Blackbird *Turdus merula*: common.
Song Thrush *Turdus philomelos*: common and always singing and showing well.
Mistle Thrush *Turdus viscivorus*: two seen.
Spotted Flycatcher *Muscicapa striata*: 3 - 2 seen on first morning and 1 on second morning.
European Robin *Erithacus rubecula*: seen.
European Pied Flycatcher *Ficedula hypoleuca*: circa 5 at Nagshead.
Common Redstart *Phoenicurus phoenicurus*: a few heard singing; 1 scoped well on first morning.
European Stonechat *Saxicola rubicola*: 1 pair seen.
House Sparrow *Passer domesticus*: a few seen.
Dunnock *Prunella modularis*: seen.
Grey Wagtail *Motacilla cinerea*: 2 seen at Cannop, 1 at Parkend.
Pied Wagtail *Motacilla alba yarrellii*: seen.
Tree Pipit *Anthus trivialis*: circa 10 seen daily displaying.
Common Chaffinch *Fringilla coelebs*: common.
Eurasian Bullfinch *Pyrrhula pyrrhula*: 2 pairs seen well.
European Greenfinch *Chloris chloris*: good views of 1 singing; heard regularly.
Common Linnet *Linaria cannabina*: a few in glades.
Red Crossbill *Loxia curvirostra*: circa 5 with brilliant views of a pair feeding in larch very close up.
European Goldfinch *Carduelis carduelis*: a few seen.
Eurasian Siskin *Spinus spinus*: telescope views of juvenile bird. Circa 10 seen.

Mammals recorded:

Fallow Deer *Dama dama*: 6 seen well.
Wild Boar *Sus Scrofa*: 3 on first night with 1 stopping on track: 1 seen very well on second night.
Grey Squirrel *Sciurus carolinensis*: seen.

Other taxa recorded:

Speckled Wood	Green Tiger Beetle	Violet Ground Beetle
Emperor Dragonfly	Broad-bodied Chaser	Azure Damselfly
Humming-bird Hawk-moth	Common Lizard	

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