

The Forest of Dean

Naturetrek Tour Report

16 - 18 February 2018

Report compiled by Greg Mabbett



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

Summary

We spent a fantastic weekend exploring the Forest searching for its beautiful wildlife. The real highlight was the number of Hawfinches we managed to find. Over the weekend we enjoyed around 50 birds in many different locations with a single flock of at least 30 - a real treat!

Day 1

Friday 16th February

The whole group met in the dining room of the Speech House Hotel. We ran through a rough itinerary of the weekend before enjoying a delicious three-course meal while getting to know each other a little better. After dinner we went for our first night drive, searching for Wild Boar and any nocturnal mammals. With the Boar proving hard to find, we managed to see multiple Fallow Deer, a Fox and Muntjac. With time against us we headed back to the hotel in preparation for the next day.

Day 2

Saturday 17th February

We started the day with a pre-breakfast walk at Parkend where we stood on the village green in the hope of seeing Hawfinches. After a short while the first birds dropped into the top of a Lime tree and we then spent 45 minutes watching them, with the flock building to around an impressive 15! Whilst enjoying these beautiful birds, we also saw Brambling, Goldfinch and Mistle Thrush. After this fantastic start to the day, we headed back to the hotel for breakfast.

After breakfast we headed out on our first walk of the day at Woorgreens Lake. As soon as we were out of the van there was a Nuthatch and a Chaffinch feeding nearby in the leaf litter. We carried on up to the lake where a nice selection of common water birds were seen, before making our way up to Crabtree Hill. We were lucky enough to bump into the wintering Great Grey Shrike here! We enjoyed fantastic views of it in-flight and perched in a nearby tree. Whilst we were standing there a male Crossbill was seen perched at the top of a spruce tree. The Crossbill and Great Grey Shrike flew off so we moved on to the top of the glade and continued our walk down into the woods where we came across four more Crossbill and two Siskin, getting fantastic views of both male and female Crossbill. Nearing the end of the walk we managed to find two singing male Siskin close by in a Yew tree. We made our way back to the van and saw two Wild Boar which were so tame that we thought they must have been recently released, and enjoyed close views before heading off to New Fancy Viewpoint.

We spent 45 minutes at the viewpoint looking over the interior of the Forest in the hope of finding a Goshawk and we had distant but good views on a couple of occasions. With everyone happy, we headed to the Fountain Inn for lunch.

After lunch we headed to the famous Nagshead RSPB reserve. We enjoyed a walk along the short trail seeing some more common species including Nuthatch, Treecreeper, Goldcrest and a flyover Peregrine to finish. After this we headed for an open glade called Horse Lawn.

We did a circular walk past some clear fell and then through the woods, encountering Siskin and Crossbill. We also had fantastic views of a herd of Fallow Deer, including a buck with a set of very impressive antlers! A great end to the day - we headed back to the hotel.

After enjoying a lovely meal we headed out on a Boar drive. The Boar were playing hard to get, but seeing plenty of Fallow Deer kept us entertained. After around an hour we managed to locate a single Boar, so we called it a night.

Day 3

Sunday 18th February

Our pre-breakfast walk today was at Yew Tree Break, where we had good views of Redpoll, Crossbill, Siskin and Fallow Deer. After enjoying the delights of the early start, we headed back to the hotel for breakfast.

After breakfast we made our way to Cannop Ponds, a short distance from the hotel. We arrived at the lakes and during a circular walk around them we encountered stunning Mandarins, accompanied by Tufted Duck, Gadwall and Little Grebe. In the trees surrounding the lake Treecreeper, Jay and Chaffinch were all seen well.

We then headed to Symonds Yat. We spent two hours at the viewpoint enjoying outstanding views of the resident pair of Peregrine Falcons. From this high vantage point, the Peregrines were flying at eye level in front of us - a sight to see. A couple of brief views of Goshawk were had over the woods. Marsh Tit, Nuthatch and Bank Vole were visiting the feeding station, whilst Ravens and Buzzards were ever-present. We headed back to Speech House for lunch.

Heading back out after lunch we made our way to Brierly, taking a circular walk past stands of Pine, Beech and Larch trees. We started off hearing the calls of Hawfinch and then located a large flock of approximately 20-30 birds feeding on and off the ground - a special sight to see a flock of this size. After enjoying the Hawfinch for 15 minutes, we continued on our walk. As we came alongside the Larch trees a large mixed flock of Siskin and Redpoll were busily feeding in the tree tops, with one flyover Crossbill heard. We finished the walk with close views of a lovely male Bullfinch and a flyby Sparrowhawk - a fitting way to end the weekend.

We headed back to the hotel, finished the checklist, said our farewells and headed home.

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Species Lists

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

	Common name	Scientific name	February		
			16	17	18
1	Canada Goose	<i>Branta canadensis</i>		✓	
2	Greylag Goose	<i>Anser anser</i>		✓	
3	Mute Swan	<i>Cygnus olor</i>		✓	
4	Mandarin Duck	<i>Aix galericulata</i>			✓
5	Gadwall	<i>Mareca strepera</i>			✓
6	Mallard	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>		✓	✓
7	Tufted Duck	<i>Aythya fuligula</i>		✓	✓
8	Little Grebe	<i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>		✓	✓
9	Grey Heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>			✓
10	Great Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>			✓
11	Eurasian Sparrowhawk	<i>Accipiter nisus</i>			✓
12	Northern Goshawk	<i>Accipiter gentilis</i>		✓	✓
13	Common Buzzard	<i>Buteo buteo</i>		✓	✓
14	Common Moorhen	<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>		✓	
15	Eurasian Coot	<i>Fulica atra</i>		✓	
16	Lesser Black-backed Gull	<i>Larus fuscus</i>			✓
17	Stock Dove	<i>Columba oenas</i>		✓	
18	Common Wood Pigeon	<i>Columba palumbus</i>		✓	✓
19	Eurasian Collared Dove	<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>			✓
20	Great Spotted Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos major</i>		✓	
21	Peregrine Falcon	<i>Falco peregrinus</i>		✓	✓
22	Great Grey Shrike	<i>Lanius excubitor</i>		✓	
23	Eurasian Jay	<i>Garrulus glandarius</i>		H	✓
24	Eurasian Magpie	<i>Pica pica</i>		✓	✓
25	Western Jackdaw	<i>Coloeus monedula</i>		✓	
26	Carrion Crow	<i>Corvus corone</i>		✓	
27	Northern Raven	<i>Corvus corax</i>		✓	✓
28	Coal Tit	<i>Parus ater</i>		✓	
29	Marsh Tit	<i>Poecile palustris</i>			✓
30	Eurasian Blue Tit	<i>Cyanistes caeruleus</i>		✓	
31	Great Tit	<i>Parus major</i>		✓	
32	Long-tailed Tit	<i>Aegithalos caudatus</i>			✓
33	Goldcrest	<i>Regulus regulus</i>		✓	
34	Eurasian Wren	<i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>		✓	
35	Eurasian Nuthatch	<i>Sitta europaea</i>		✓	
36	Eurasian Treecreeper	<i>Certhia familiaris</i>			✓
37	Common Starling	<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>			✓
38	Common Blackbird	<i>Turdus merula</i>		✓	✓
39	Redwing	<i>Turdus iliacus</i>			✓
40	Song Thrush	<i>Turdus philomelos</i>		✓	
41	Mistle Thrush	<i>Turdus viscivorus</i>		✓	
42	European Robin	<i>Erithacus rubecula</i>		✓	✓
43	House Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>		✓	
44	Dunnock	<i>Prunella modularis</i>		✓	
45	Pied Wagtail	<i>Motacilla alba yarrellii</i>		✓	
46	Common Chaffinch	<i>Fringilla coelebs</i>		✓	
47	Brambling	<i>Fringilla montifringilla</i>		✓	

	Common name	Scientific name	February		
			16	17	18
48	Hawfinch	<i>Coccothraustes coccothraustes</i>		15	30
49	Eurasian Bullfinch	<i>Pyrrhula pyrrhula</i>			✓
50	European Greenfinch	<i>Chloris chloris</i>			✓
51	Common Redpoll	<i>Acanthis flammea</i>			✓
52	Red Crossbill	<i>Loxia curvirostra</i>		✓	✓
53	European Goldfinch	<i>Carduelis carduelis</i>		✓	✓
54	Eurasian Siskin	<i>Spinus spinus</i>		✓	✓

Mammals

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

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