

The Forest of Dean

Naturetrek Tour Report

23 - 25 March 2018



Hawfinch



Red Crossbill (male)



Great Grey Shrike



Adder

Report compiled by Tom Mabbett
Images courtesy of Ginnie Cox



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

Day 1

Friday 23rd March

We met at 6.30pm and after an introduction to the weekend and what we hoped to see, we enjoyed a delicious dinner.

Following dinner there was the opportunity to head out spotlighting and it proved to be an excellent session, despite the light rain. At least three Foxes were briefly seen and after covering a few roads and quiet tracks, we encountered our first Wild Boar. It was a single animal and rather flighty, and was only glimpsed by some. Continuing on, we had a fly-by Tawny Owl and later enjoyed excellent perched views. We continued on our quest for boar and were rewarded as we found a sounder not far off the road that afforded super views. Two adults and around ten tiny young were seen well before they trundled off. After this success we headed back to Speech House and a quick scan of the field here produced three Fallow Deer. A great start to the weekend!

Day 2

Saturday 24th March

We met at 7am for our pre-breakfast outing and headed down to Parkend. We stood on the green and enjoyed Goldfinch and Greenfinch in the telescope before our target bird Hawfinch flew overhead. At least four birds landed in the Lime trees and we enjoyed some really excellent views. Nuthatch showed very well and a party of Long-tailed Tits were enjoyed. After more Hawfinch views and everyone delighted with their views, we headed back for breakfast.

After a great breakfast we headed out to Crabtree Hill for a walk. Soon after starting we had brief views of two more Hawfinches. We moved on up to the open glade, enjoying Goldcrests singing and flocks of Coal Tits in the Larch here. Up in the glade a Great Spotted Woodpecker was, unusually, feeding on the ground and we stood and scanned and watched for anything else. A couple of Ravens went over and Stonechat was enjoyed before we were delighted to find a wintering Great Grey Shrike not far from us. We went on to enjoy simply brilliant views as the shrike was hunting and moving all around us. We watched it catch and impale a lizard and also pick up various beetles. With scope-filling views we could really study every detail. On a favourite tree we found the remains of Minotaur Beetles and a pellet that it had coughed up, which was made up of fur and small bones, and the odd feather. We carried on eventually and went on to enjoy views of Redpoll, Siskin, a singing male Stonechat was excellent, and a couple of flyover Crossbills.

With Buzzards starting to get up in flight, we headed back to the vehicle and went to give New Fancy View to try for any raptors. There was a little warmth, and just enough to tempt an Adder out on the approach to the viewpoint! We had brilliant prolonged views of the male Adder, with mega close-up views through the telescope. From the viewpoint we didn't have luck with Goshawk but a Kestrel went over, which is not often seen here, and Green Woodpecker was heard. We headed back for lunch and in Parkend we watched from the carpark for a short time and had yet more brilliant views of Hawfinch, and some very smart Bramblings were well spotted by Judith near to them at the back of a garden. What an excellent morning!

We enjoyed lunch and after a short stop at Cannop Stoneworks, where Mandarin Ducks were enjoyed together with a range of close up commoner species including Marsh Tit, we headed to Brierley. Here we went on a great

circular walk and the highlight species was Crossbill. We saw seven in total and had close views as they fed on Larch cones and also on lichens, which was interesting to witness. Both males and females were seen very well.

We then headed back to the hotel after a super day. After counting at least 50 Redwings on the field by the hotel, we enjoyed a great dinner and recapped on everything we had seen.

Day 3

Sunday 25th March

We were up at 7am again for a pre-breakfast visit to Parkend Church. The weather was much better and there was lots of birds singing. We walked slowly and quietly through the Oak woodland with Nuthatches calling loudly, and Stock Dove and Great Spotted Woodpecker drumming very close by. We were listening for its smaller cousin but there was no joy. Four Hawfinches were in the top of an Ash nearby and lots were calling all around us. We soon noticed they were dropping down to feed on seed put out in a front garden not far from us. We had scope-filling views of these super birds for the next half an hour or so while listening and looking out for other species. It was a great opportunity to compare the differences between males and females, with at least three birds dropping in to feed. We also enjoyed a pair of Bullfinches and a Nuthatch flicking moss down on us and working up the side of the church!

After breakfast and a Hawfinch breaking into song, seen from the car park, we headed to Nagshead RSPB reserve. It was glorious sunny conditions and we enjoyed a beautiful walk through this ancient woodland. We enjoyed Treecreepers singing and more Nuthatches, and after standing quietly heard our main target, the Lesser Spotted Woodpecker that breed here. We tried hard to spot the bird and hoped it would call or drum, but it was not to be and this tiny gem went unseen.

We moved on and in perfect conditions, pooped back into New Fancy viewpoint. After enjoying super views of two more male Adders and a Common Lizard, we watched from the viewpoint and eventually had good but fairly distant views of a Goshawk cruising directly overhead showing key features. A flyby Linnet provided the tenth finch species of the weekend and then we headed to Yew Tree Break before lunch. We saw noisy Jays here and watched a couple of Crossbills on top of Larch trees before heading to the hotel for lunch, as Buzzards displayed overhead.

This afternoon we headed to Symonds Yat and enjoyed a super couple of hours watching from this most super viewpoint. The female Peregrine soon stooped in and preened on a nearby branch and we enjoyed a range of behaviours. An intruding adult was seen off, as was a young bird, and we enjoyed watching the female chasing down a feral pigeon but missing it! Amazing speed and power! Another Goshawk drifted overhead and we enjoyed some nice views as it displayed and showed the classic deep wingbeat flight. A Sparrowhawk was also seen, with Marsh Tit, Coal Tit, Dunnock and Nuthatch coming to seed for close views.

After a super session here we headed for home, calling briefly at Cannop Ponds for close Mandarin Duck views and Little Grebe. After dropping some back at the hotel we finished with a short walk at Woorgreens Lake. Here there was one female Goosander asleep on the island, along with noisy Greylag and Canada Geese, more Little Grebes and a single flyover Sand Martin, showing spring was on its way at last!

We called it a day and said our farewells back at the hotel with everyone heading their separate ways. It had been a fantastic weekend with a wonderful range of species seen and superb views of the vast majority, while witnessing some amazing behaviour. Of course there was a lot of fun along the way.

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Species Lists

Birds (✓=recorded but not counted; H = heard only; c. = circa; f = female; m = male; y = young)

| | Common name | Scientific name | March | | |
|----|---------------------------|--------------------------------|-------|-----|----|
| | | | 23 | 24 | 25 |
| 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 | Mallard | <i>Anas platyrhynchos</i> | | ✓ | ✓ |
| 6 | Tufted Duck | <i>Aythya fuligula</i> | | ✓ | ✓ |
| 7 | Goosander | <i>Mergus merganser</i> | | | 1f |
| 8 | Common Pheasant | <i>Phasianus colchicus</i> | | | ✓ |
| 9 | Little Grebe | <i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i> | | | ✓ |
| 10 | Great Cormorant | <i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i> | | ✓ | ✓ |
| 11 | Eurasian Sparrowhawk | <i>Accipiter nisus</i> | | | ✓ |
| 12 | Northern Goshawk | <i>Accipiter gentilis</i> | | | 3 |
| 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 | Feral Pigeon | <i>Columba livia domestica</i> | | | ✓ |
| 18 | Stock Dove | <i>Columba oenas</i> | | ✓ | ✓ |
| 19 | Common Wood Pigeon | <i>Columba palumbus</i> | | ✓ | ✓ |
| 20 | Eurasian Collared Dove | <i>Streptopelia decaocto</i> | | ✓ | |
| 21 | Tawny Owl | <i>Strix aluco</i> | ✓ | | |
| 22 | Lesser Spotted Woodpecker | <i>Dryobates minor</i> | | | H |
| 23 | Great Spotted Woodpecker | <i>Dendrocopos major</i> | | ✓ | ✓ |
| 24 | European Green Woodpecker | <i>Picus viridis</i> | | H | H |
| 25 | Common Kestrel | <i>Falco tinnunculus</i> | | 1 | |
| 26 | Peregrine Falcon | <i>Falco peregrinus</i> | | | 4 |
| 27 | Great Grey Shrike | <i>Lanius Exubitor</i> | | 1 | |
| 28 | Eurasian Jay | <i>Garrulus glandarius</i> | | H | ✓ |
| 29 | Eurasian Magpie | <i>Pica pica</i> | | ✓ | ✓ |
| 30 | Western Jackdaw | <i>Coloeus monedula</i> | | ✓ | ✓ |
| 31 | Carrion Crow | <i>Corvus corone</i> | | ✓ | ✓ |
| 32 | Northern Raven | <i>Corvus corax</i> | | ✓ | ✓ |
| 33 | Sand Martin | <i>Riparia riparia</i> | | | 1 |
| 34 | Coal Tit | <i>Parus ater</i> | | ✓ | ✓ |
| 35 | Marsh Tit | <i>Poecile palustris</i> | | ✓ | ✓ |
| 36 | Eurasian Blue Tit | <i>Cyanistes caeruleus</i> | | ✓ | ✓ |
| 37 | Great Tit | <i>Parus major</i> | | ✓ | ✓ |
| 38 | Long-tailed Tit | <i>Aegithalos caudatus</i> | | ✓ | ✓ |
| 39 | Goldcrest | <i>Regulus regulus</i> | | ✓ | ✓ |
| 40 | Eurasian Wren | <i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i> | | ✓ | ✓ |
| 41 | Eurasian Nuthatch | <i>Sitta europaea</i> | | ✓ | ✓ |
| 42 | Eurasian Treecreeper | <i>Certhia familiaris</i> | | ✓ | ✓ |
| 43 | Common Starling | <i>Sturnus vulgaris</i> | | ✓ | ✓ |
| 44 | Common Blackbird | <i>Turdus merula</i> | | ✓ | ✓ |
| 45 | Redwing | <i>Turdus iliacus</i> | | c50 | ✓ |
| 46 | Song Thrush | <i>Turdus philomelos</i> | | ✓ | ✓ |
| 47 | Mistle Thrush | <i>Turdus viscivorus</i> | | ✓ | ✓ |

| | Common name | Scientific name | March | | |
|----|---------------------|--------------------------------------|-------|-----|-----|
| | | | 23 | 24 | 25 |
| 48 | European Robin | <i>Erithacus rubecula</i> | | ✓ | ✓ |
| 49 | European Stonechat | <i>Saxicola rubicola</i> | | 4 | |
| 50 | House Sparrow | <i>Passer domesticus</i> | | ✓ | |
| 51 | Dunnock | <i>Prunella modularis</i> | | ✓ | ✓ |
| 52 | Grey Wagtail | <i>Motacilla cinerea</i> | | ✓ | |
| 53 | Pied Wagtail | <i>Motacilla alba yarrellii</i> | | ✓ | ✓ |
| 54 | Meadow Pipit | <i>Anthus pratensis</i> | | | ✓ |
| 55 | Common Chaffinch | <i>Fringilla coelebs</i> | | ✓ | ✓ |
| 56 | Brambling | <i>Fringilla montifringilla</i> | | c5 | |
| 57 | Hawfinch | <i>Coccothraustes coccothraustes</i> | | c10 | c12 |
| 58 | Eurasian Bullfinch | <i>Pyrrhula pyrrhula</i> | | 1 | 2 |
| 59 | European Greenfinch | <i>Chloris chloris</i> | | c5 | |
| 60 | Common Linnet | <i>Linaria cannabina</i> | | | 1 |
| 61 | Common Redpoll | <i>Acanthis flammea</i> | | c10 | |
| 62 | Red Crossbill | <i>Loxia curvirostra</i> | | 7 | 2 |
| 63 | European Goldfinch | <i>Carduelis carduelis</i> | | ✓ | ✓ |
| 64 | Eurasian Siskin | <i>Spinus spinus</i> | | ✓ | ✓ |

Other Taxa

| | | | | | |
|---|---------------|-----------------------------|---------|----------|----|
| 1 | Fallow Deer | <i>Dama dama</i> | 3 | 5 | 2 |
| 2 | Wild Boar | <i>Sus scrofa</i> | 3ad 10y | 1 dead y | |
| 3 | Red Fox | <i>Vulpes vulpes</i> | 3 | 1 | |
| 4 | Grey Squirrel | <i>Sciurus carolinensis</i> | | ✓ | ✓ |
| 5 | Adder | <i>Vipera berus</i> | | 1m | 2m |
| 6 | Common Lizard | <i>Zootoca vivipara</i> | | | 1 |