

HOLIDAY HIGHLIGHTS

NORTHUMBERLAND

11 – 17 NOVEMBER 2023

Guide: Julian Sykes

Guests: Helen O'Donnell & Mike Dixon, Joan Hunter, Margaret Mowbray, Dave Thompson

Day 1 Julian meets up at 7pm with Dave, Margaret, Joan, Mike and Helen who have all arrived by car earlier in the day or even the day before. We head into a comfortable reception room and here we get an input from our guide on what we are hoping to do over the next few days, and the obligatory SW checklist, notepad and pen. Following this we head into the hotel's restaurant for our first evening meal, which is lovely, not long after this we head back to our rooms and hopefully a good night's rest before the adventure begins in the morning.

Day 2 It's an early start on this fine morning as we leave Bamburgh at 07:15 and drive the short distance round to Budle Bay. A Red-breasted Goose has been seen recently here amongst a flock of Barnacle Geese and we think it's worth try for before breakfast. We stop at the lay-by and scan out towards Fenham Flats and see a huge flock of geese heading towards us. By the way they are flying they are surely Pink-footed Geese and as they head over, we also hear their very distinctive calls, which is still superb. There are more geese heading for the fields that all look like 'pinkies' as we continue to scan. There are gulls flying over along with small flocks of Curlew and Lapwing. The early morning sunlight is illuminating this wonderful scene and any thoughts of being tired are soon forgotten on this magical morning. Julian continues to search and finds our first Brown Hare, which is quickly followed by several more plus a couple of Roe Deer in the distance.

Time is moving on and we see another small flock of geese alight in the distance from the exposed mud flats of low tide – Julian thinks these look interesting, and we are back in the minibus and trying to get nearer. We find a field entrance to park safely and set up the scopes, we find Barnacle Geese but only about 100, which is great but just a fraction of what's around. We check these carefully and cannot find the Red-breasted, but we do add Wigeon, Shelduck, Teal, and Dave finds a Shoveler, which is good for this site. Julian hears a distinctive call and says "Whoopers!" as three of these winter swans fly right past us still calling.

It is getting near breakfast time and just before we leave a Sparrowhawk is found sitting on a low branch at the other side of the field. It is nearly 8am and we need to be back in the bus, getting back to the hotel 10 minutes later, after seeing such a lot. We quickly head to our rooms and then down to the restaurant where we enjoy our morning meal.

An hour later we are again ready to leave, as we drive out to the A1 and then south down to Morpeth, getting there 40 minutes later. We drive out along some narrow, rural, winding roads towards the Abbey, before we pull into a small parking area off the minor road. Our target here is Hawfinch and our chances are good as some have already been seen this morning. We walk slowly along the track with Helen pointing out some fabulous fungi along the way before reaching a small group of assembled birders. Julian makes conversation and it seems the Hawfinches have not been seen for about 20 minutes as they are feeding within the Hornbeams, plus we have just missed a Waxwing fly-by. We are not too upset as a lovely pair of Bullfinches fly over calling, along with Chaffinches, Robin, Dunnock, Blue and Great Tits in the nearby Hawthorns.

It is still a beautiful morning, and the autumnal colours are stunning. We wait for something to happen, adding Great Spotted Woodpecker, Wren, Goldfinch and Long-tailed Tit to the day's list. After about half an hour a couple of Hawfinches fly out and circle round disappearing back into the Hornbeams close by, but they are still impossible to see through the dense foliage. We wait again and thankfully it isn't long before more appear over the mature trees and do a wonderful flypast, showing off their distinctive shape and clear broad wingbars before one lands right at the top of a tree in full view. We just manage to get the scopes on it before it drops down slightly and becomes partially obscured, but we can at least see it. It stays in this place for a few minutes before dropping again and disappearing completely. We have had a decent view but hope for better, so we wait again, but not for long as Julian is keen to move on to our lunch site – Big Waters C. P. After a short while we walk slowly back to the minibus and set off south.

We arrive at this wetland site a little after noon and once parked, grab our lunches and optics and set off towards the hide. A Sparrowhawk flies over doing its diagnostic 'flap, flap, glide' but it's generally quiet until we reach the lake, where we hear the squeal of a Water Rail. From the hide we initially start by watching the bird feeders which is incredibly productive with lots of Great and Blue Tits, Robin, Dunnock and Chaffinches, plus a few gorgeous Tree Sparrows, a fabulous male Yellowhammer and male Reed Bunting. This place is renowned for its Willow Tits and it's not long before one is zipping in and out from the feeders, as is their m.o. Eventually we all manage to get a good view of this scarce local breeder, which has disappeared from much of the UK. Our attention diverts to the lagoon as we dive into our lovely picnic

lunches. There's lots of wildfowl, with Gadwall, Shoveler, Wigeon, Teal, Tufted Duck and a few Goldeneye, Mute Swans, Greylag and Canada Geese, Crested and Little Grebes, Coot and Moorhen. We find a few Common Gulls amongst the commoner Herring and Black-headed and on the man-made island are a couple of Little Egrets and a Cormorant – also very productive. We stay here until almost 2pm, dividing our time between the feeders and the reed-fringed lagoon and having a great time. We wander back round to the carpark seeing a few Redwings flying over just before we set off.

Our plan is to try and find some of the reported Waxwings around the Gosforth area and our guide has details of the latest sightings. We start to negotiate the quiet suburban streets of this district of Newcastle, with information that they are being seen at this moment. We make our way through to the named street only to see a couple of birders who inform us they actually flew off just 20 minutes earlier! With just an hour of decent light left in the day we try another favoured sight near the hospital but there is no sign. We return to the last reported site and do a walk round the streets adding Greenfinch to the daily list but not much else as the weather starts to turn grey and damp. Around 4pm we concede defeat and decide to head back to Bamburgh, as the light is fading fast in these overcast conditions. We get back to the hotel an hour later, leaving us plenty of time to freshen up and relax before reconvening for the checklist ahead of our evening meal.

Day 3

A day of contrasts as Storm Debi is moving through Northumberland and after breakfast, we set off for Druridge Bay. It's a tough drive south, but as we head east the weather improves, however we get diverted from our usual route due to flooding! We eventually arrive at our first site – Widdrington Lake and scan the moor beyond. There's a raptor chasing a corvid and Julian thinks Merlin, but it sadly disappears before he can get definitive identification. We get out of the minibus as the rain has periodically stopped, and search for the falcon without success. Joan says she has a harrier and sure enough here is an adult female Marsh Harrier, which we all manage to see.

We continue to scan the area with plenty of wildfowl and gulls on the lake, including our first Great Black-backed Gulls. We find another two Marsh Harriers with a very smart adult male and an immature, along with our first Kestrel of the day. After a while Julian refinds the original falcon, again chasing corvids but from further away across the lake. It lands, and our guide manages to get his telescope on the perched raptor. It's a young male Peregrine, and it's great to get these views, albeit distant. We watch as this avian predator flies off from its branch chases a few birds around and returns to the same tree before heading back to the original place and again chases more corvids in very 'merlin-like' attacks! It is starting to rain again so we decide to leave and head further towards the coast.

We stop along the coastal road to look at five Little Egrets at the north end of Cresswell Pond before going to the parking area. We get our things together for a leisurely stint in the hide and slowly set off towards the track. Helen is one of the last, wanting to look at the Pink-footed Geese in a distant field, but utters the words "there's an owl". Julian quickly looks at it and shouts to the others "Short-eared Owl", bringing everyone back to our position. Over the next 20 minutes we are treated to an incredible display by this wonderful bird as it quarters the adjacent field. In fact, at one point, it comes so close we hear the whistle through its wings, which is astonishing! During this time Julian and Joan are also lucky to see a Woodcock fly into cover followed by a fly-past of 17 Whooper Swans, which we all see. It eventually departs to hunt another field further away, so we all walk to the hide, flushed with this great success.

In the hide we join a few more 'locals' who inform us of what's about and proceeds to point these out. There are four Long-tailed Ducks, swimming about with a single drake Goosander and a couple of Red-breasted Mergansers. We see lots of Common Redshank, Dunlin, Common Snipe and Lapwing, along with a winter plumage Spotted Redshank, four Knot, a Turnstone and Bar-tailed Godwit. Another flock of Whooper Swans fly in, making their very distinctive call, and another female Marsh Harrier flies through disrupting the Teal and Wigeon. The rain comes and goes over the hour and just after noon we leave the hide having had a fabulous time, with lots of action. We walk back to the minibus and set off towards the village through a large flood that's covering the road. We stop at the public conveniences and make full use while Julian goes to check the sea, where he finds our first Eider and a Shag. It is nearing lunchtime and once ready, we head off again back towards Druridge Pools.

As we drive slowly along the road, we see a Kestrel hunting, followed by a large finch flock on the overhead wires. These look like a mixed group of Goldfinches and possibly Linnets, but they fly off out over the saltmarsh. There are two birds still left - one is Goldfinch, the other is clearly a Twite being very streaky with a small yellow bill (maybe the others were too?). Sadly, those in the back of the bus cannot see it and it soon flies off to join the flock, which has disappeared into the saltmarsh. We decide to continue and drive straight round to Druridge, where we park by the track to the hide. We grab our lunches and walk down to the hide to find the seats are wet, so we improvise by sitting on our plastic bags, used for holding other items. We settle down and quickly check the water, where we find lots of Wigeon, Teal, Mallard and a few Shelduck. There is diving duck too, which incredibly turns out to be another 1st winter Long-tailed Duck! A Grey Heron is stood on a fence post and another couple of Whooper Swans are with the Greylag Geese. Another Marsh Harrier flies through again causing havoc with the wildfowl, plus there is another Kestrel. Joan identifies some distant ponies as Exmoors, which are used by the Wildlife Trusts to graze this difficult pasture.

We stay here until nearly 2pm when the decision is made to leave. As we walk back down the track, Julian sees a few Snipe fly across and wonders why, when a 'ringtail' Hen Harrier appears over the banking. We all manage to see it before it sees us and doubles back out of sight, so we hurry back to the main road in the hope of refinding it. We cannot see anything, so we get back into the minibus and drive around the saltmarsh in the hope of seeing it again but we have to satisfy ourselves with a distant Common Buzzard.

It is mid-afternoon and already in these grey conditions the light is failing so we drive round to East Chevington lagoon, but there is remedial work going on and access to the hide overlooking the gate is closed, which is a shame. It is 'plan B' as we drive to the country park where we aim to use the facilities but on the drive in we stop for another finch flock, where we find quite a few Siskins. We reach the toilets and also check the feeders, but they are empty, so we again move on after everyone's ready. It is a short drive to Hauxley NWT reserve where we stop for a few Roe Deer at the side of the road, before continuing to the car park. We overlook the feeders here but it's quiet, as most birds are settling down to roost, although Mike sees a Great Spotted Woodpecker, Margaret finds a few Tree Sparrows and there's also some Redwing, but not the 'hoped for' Red Squirrel. We stay for about 20 minutes before making a slow drive back towards Bamburgh, through historic Warkworth. Julian decides to go the 'long way' back in the hope of an owl, but the weather's not great. We do get a surprise with a couple of Pipistrelle (type) bats and a fantastic covey of Grey Partridge, which is the biggest Dave's seen in many years! We eventually get back to our hotel just after 5pm after a fantastic day, especially in the conditions.

Day 4

The forecast today is dire, and the plan is to travel inland to Kielder, where we hope it's slightly better. We set off in the rain and travel south down the A1 turning off just before Alnwick and drive the rural minor roads, with the view out towards the Cheviots hampered by the low cloud. We reach Hepple and just beyond pull on to the verge of the River Coquet bridge looking for Dipper. The river is very high with all the recent rains and there are some exposed rocks, but no Dipper. Joan says, "I've got a Kingfisher" and describes its position, and we all get a view before it flies out of sight – great start. We continue to search the area when Joan says to Julian "I think I've got an egret?" Julian trains his scope on the bird and sure enough it is an egret – a Great White Egret which our groups have seen here three years running! We get back into the bus and continue our journey to Elsdon, we travel through some fabulous countryside, stopping again at Dough Crag in the hope of a Raven. The mist is again against us, and the crag is out of view, but we are rewarded with a good flock of Fieldfare close to the minibus. We soon move on to the village of Elsdon, where we call in at their public facilities on the site of a Motte and Bailey Castle.

We soon leave Elsdon and drive up on to the moorland towards Harewood Forest, stopping at the impressive Winter's Gibbet where we spend a little time. The rain starts so we are back into the minibus and start our drive to Kielder. As we get to Holyburn Plantation Julian notices a bird with a white rump in the roadside hedge – interesting! We pull over and see these birds flying across the adjacent field – they are Brambling and there's lots of them! It is still raining so we stand under the van's tailgate with a telescope and get good views of them feeding around the Beech Trees along with Fieldfare, Redwing and Chaffinches.

We again move on and as it's getting towards lunchtime, we head straight through Redesdale and out to the minor road leading up to the Kielder Water reservoir. We reach this huge body of water and drive up along its length through the extensive coniferous forest surrounding this area. We are almost at the village when we turn off for the Bakethin N.R. car park. Thankfully the rain has stopped but it's still heavily overcast as we set off along the track towards the hide with our lunches. On the way we stop for some impressive fungus with both red-belted Conk and Curry Milkcap being seen. We reach the hide and settle down to our picnics and a hot drink, plus looking out over the water. It's quiet with just a few Mallard, Tufted Duck and Little Grebe on offer, but it's good to sit and enjoy the quiet ambience.

We are here a while, and when ready, set off back to the car park where we stop for a Goldcrest in the trees. As we are here a couple of Common Crossbills fly over calling but don't stop, this then happens again as we get closer to the vehicle. Julian hears more crossbills, and we search the surrounding treetops but nothing, however Helen notices a strange white blob on the pond boardwalk. She looks through her binoculars and reveals a Dipper standing on the edge, with its white throat patch showing up against the dark background. We are all thrilled with this and get some great views as it stands there, occasionally bobbing away. It flies out to the pool and starts to swim in the still waters, looking for marine invertebrates to feed on. We leave the Dipper in peace and once back in the van head up to Kielder village where we park again and walk out to the river bridge.

It is quiet here, so we move on to the castle where we make full use of the facilities before setting off on the forest drive. This metalled road heads out up and over this huge forest, where we find a Mistle Thrush amongst several Blackbirds. It is late afternoon, and we can see that it's starting to get darker as we travel this rural track, and consequently it's quiet with birdlife. Eventually we reach the end of the track and the main road, it's almost dark as we start back towards Elsdon, again through Redesdale and then a difficult drive back to the Alnwick. We continue through this historic town and out to the

At where we head north to Bamburgh and our comfortable hotel. We are pleased to be back as the weather is shocking again, hopefully the next couple of days will be better.

Day 5 It's another pre-breakfast start as we head for the coast in the early morning gloom, reaching Stag Rocks, literally minutes later. We stay in the minibus for a while as it starts to get lighter and grab our scopes, scanning the rocks in front of us. Julian locks on to one of our target species immediately, as he finds a few Purple Sandpipers running around. We all get a good view of these birds plus lots more around amongst the smaller numbers of Dunlin, Turnstones and Oystercatchers, with Julian doing an initial count of 67, which is superb.

We continue to enjoy these wintering waders as they feed on the seaweed covered rocks, with the waves dramatically crashing behind them. Margaret says she's found a few Bar-tailed Godwits on the beach, and a Meadow Pipit flies inland. Mike who's been looking inland says "I've got a Short-eared Owl!" and we quickly join him. The owl has dropped out of view, but Julian finds an owl hunting the area, which is a Barn Owl? This is still brilliant and more expected as they breed near here, but then a second owl appears, and this is a Shorty – wow! We are thrilled to watch these two birds hunting this small patch of rough ground before they both drop down to the ground. Our guide finds the Barn Owl in the scope, and it's caught something, but we cannot see the Short-eared Owl. After a couple of minutes, the Barn Owl takes off again and flies off carrying its prey.

We return to the waders, to try and find something more before we have to leave for breakfast. Julian is checking the sea and finds a small group of Eider, a few Common Scoter, followed by a couple of Red-throated Divers bobbing around in the swell. It has been a brilliant start to the day and just after 8am we set off back to the hotel.

We enjoy a very welcome breakfast, which always tastes better after such a successful beginning to the day. Once ready we reconvene at the minibus a little after 9am and set off north towards the tiny village of Ross. We are on the hunt for Barnacle Geese and we pull over to check the extensive agricultural fields here. Helen finds a sheep field full of Curlew and Lapwing and when Julian puts his scope in this area, discovers a huge flock of Golden Plover too, but they are distant. We keep briefly seeing and hearing Skylarks and Linnets but it's not until a female Sparrowhawk attacks, we see the extent of the flock as it scatters. Julian trains his scope on a distant field and discovers the 'Barnacle flock' feeding but they are difficult to see. It is raining slightly as we all grab our telescopes and start to scrutinise them as there is a Red-breasted Goose amongst them.

We spend the next hour checking and rechecking the 700+ strong flock as they feed in the distance, but we cannot see this rare goose, but we also know we cannot see the whole flock either. Around 11am Julian admits defeat and 'calls time' on the search so we pack up our things and head off (Julian's pretty sluffed!)

We again drive north along the A1 turning off down a dead-end road, which overlooks Fenham Flats. The drive down the narrow hedge-lined road produces a few Yellowhammers, Redwing and more Linnets. We park at the end and can see lots of birds out on the mudflats, so we carefully get out of the minibus, grab the scopes and lunches, and go to the two-storey hide. It is a wonderful scene overlooking Holy Island in the distance, with bird-covered tidal mud all around. There are lots of Pale-bellied Brent Geese, which clearly grab our attention, along with lots of Wigeon, Shelduck, and Teal. There are also lots of waders, with a surprising good number of Knot with the more expected Dunlin, Redshank, Curlew and Oystercatchers. We continue to shuffle round the small hide, as we eat our picnics and find new things with Grey Plover, Bar-tailed Godwit, Eider, Goldeneye, Little Egret and Grey Seal being added. The tide is rising all the time pushing these birds closer to our position until another observer appears on the edge of the mudflats forcing them away! We decide to leave and head off back south.

We soon stop again at Budle Bay, where the waders here are being pushed closer to the road, getting some incredibly close views of Knot and Dunlin. A comfort stop has been requested so Julian heads through Bamburgh to Seahouses where he parks near the public conveniences overlooking the bay. While we are away from the bus Julian checks the rocks below and finds a mixed flock of Oystercatchers, Turnstone and fabulous Purple Sandpipers, much closer than the ones earlier today. As we return to the minibus, we also watch this group of roosting birds on the rocks before we set off again towards Low Newton, arriving about 20 minutes later.

Julian drops us off at the village and goes to park the minibus as we check out the beach and foreshore. We again find plenty of Purple Sandpipers amongst the Turnstone and Redshank, this has to be one of the best counties in the UK for this lovely wader? Also, here we find a couple of Pied Wagtails, Meadow Pipits, and in the bay, there are a few Eider bobbing around. Our guide returns and with limited time, and the start of some inclement weather we walk round to the scrape, where we find lots more wildfowl and waders. There are a lot of Teal, Wigeon, and Mallard plus a good number of Common Redshank, with a couple of Dunlin and a Common Snipe. The rain is annoying, so we continue along the track to the hide for shelter and look out over the deeper lagoon. Initially there is mainly Mallard to be seen but we soon add more Teal, Wigeon and a single Tufted Duck plus Moorhen and a pair of Little Grebes. The rain stops and a immature male Marsh Harrier appears out of the reeds, disturbing

the Reed Buntings and the wildfowl as it is mobbed by a couple of Carrion Crows. This scarce raptor flies around for a while, before landing in a willow opposite to the hide, affording great views. After a while it alights again and after a couple of circuits of the pond, disappears over the ridge.

It is getting dark so we slowly make our way back to the village with Julian and Joan going for the bus, which is very appreciated as we are all a little tired after this long day. We are soon on board and heading back to our hotel in Bamburgh, for a very welcome freshen up ahead of the checklist and dinner.

Day 6 We have a slightly earlier breakfast on our last day in Northumberland and a walk round Holy Island. The weather is still overcast but with very little rain and very little wind, which is superb. We set off north a little after 08:30 getting to the island's causeway about 30 minutes later. The tide is well out, and on the exposed mud we can see a few Pale-bellied Brent Geese, Bar-tailed Godwits, Shelduck, Little Egret and Common Redshanks. We drive across the causeway on to the island, where we head straight for the main car park near the village. It has clearly had a lot of rain lately as the road is littered with some big puddles and we drive slowly on. We reach the car park just as a huge flock of Golden Plover fly up from an adjacent field and fly around overhead in an amazing murmuration. This goes on for several minutes with the sound over their wings being heard as they pass by along with their plaintive calls – just magical. Joan is absolutely loving this and starts to see visible shapes in the dense, swirling flock, with a 'dolphin' being her favourite. They eventually land again and after purchasing the parking ticket, we ready ourselves for a few hours wandering round.

We head into the village with Dave seeing his first Collared Dove of the week, along with lots of House Sparrows, Starlings, Robin and Blackbird. We first stop at the facilities, which is most welcome, before checking the small freshwater pool, where we see lots of Teal and more Redshank. We set off along 'straight lonnen' heading north towards the sand dunes. The track is also very wet as we negotiate the large puddles, checking the fields as we go and finding a few Roe Deer, but not much else. The track opens up and we stop at a field with lots of Curlew in, when Julian says "Short-eared Owl" looking ahead along the track. Some of us see it before it drops out of sight so we hurry along to the area and start to scan. There's a Kestrel sat on the fence, and more Roe Deer, with some Golden Plover a little further back but no owl. Then it flies up again and we all see it as it flies a short distance and drops down again. Julian finds it in his telescope, and we can see its head, staring at us and also looking round, which is brilliant. As this is going on another Short-eared Owl appears, which the Kestrel isn't keen on and starts to mob it. This owl is quartering the area, as the Kestrel peels off, leaving it alone, but at one point we can see the owl, Kestrel and Golden Plover in the same view! This owl heads off across the track we are stood on and over towards some sheep fields, where it is joined

by at least two more Short-eared Owls – we don't know which way to look! Time is moving on, so we set off again along 'straight lonnen' stopping at the end as we get to the dunes.

Julian has had a report of Snow Buntings and decides to quickly check the nearby beach, while we have a rest and check this area. Our guide is gone about 20 minutes in which time Joan and Margaret have found our first Stonechat of the week, and we can see three Short-eared Owls hunting in the distance. Julian returns with the news that he has not found any Snow Buntings but did flush a Woodcock off the track and tried to refind it but sadly couldn't.

We follow the track east out towards the coast, and this is very boggy too, but we are pleased to see the ground rising and the path becoming easier to negotiate. We follow the track out towards 'The Lough' stopping again for Short-eared Owls hunting over the adjacent fields, with some talon grappling going on. We eventually reach the hide and settle down for lunch and check the large pool. A Goldcrest first attracts our attention right next to the hide followed by a 'northern' Chiffchaff, which we would love to be a Siberian, but sadly doesn't have all the necessary criteria. Out on the lough are a family of Mute Swans, lots of Teal and Mallard, plus a single Tufted Duck and Goldeneye. There are a few Reed Bunting flying across the reedbed but it's the Short-eared Owl that again grabs our attention. We see one interacting with both a Kestrel and a Carrion Crow, which is incredible as they fly up into the sky in a three-way aerial tussle!

Once we have had our picnics and hot drinks, we have to continue our circular walk towards Lindisfarne Castle. Short-eared Owls are being seen almost constantly as we walk along on this warm and sunny afternoon. We stop to look out to sea and find our first Razorbills, plus Red-throated Divers, Shag and a flock of Common Scoter flying north. A little further along we stop again as Helen has found a few waders on the seaweed-covered rocks and as we check these a Whimbrel flies past, making it's distinctive call. It drops on to the rocks so we can get some good scope views, which is great. On we go as Julian is conscious of the (safe crossing) time, getting to the imposing castle, which we stop to admire.

Out in the bay we see much the same seabirds, plus a few Red-breasted Mergansers and lots of Eider (or Cuddy Ducks here). As we walk to the village we stop for a pair of Stonechats, and also several Rock Pipits on the foreshore. We reach the sandy beach and check the waders with a nice flock of Dunlin being found with the Turnstones and Redshank. Margaret and Joan have gone on ahead to use the facilities, with Helen and Dave also walking slowly on, when Julian finds our first (and only) Ringed Plover, with Mike being the only one of us to see it too. We all get back into the village where we all hook up at the Lindisfarne gelato for a very welcome ice cream. The choice is superb

with each of us going for something different and really enjoying it too. We eat these as we walk back to the car park which is virtually empty as the tide is turning and the causeway will be soon covered. Before we leave, we get the Golden Plover aerial spectacle one more time, which is a very fitting end to this wonderful day on this very special island.

We set off back off the island, stopping to scan the still exposed mudflats but don't find the 'hoped-for' Greenshank before returning to the AI and back south. Julian has had a message that the Red-breasted Goose had been seen earlier so with the remaining light we head down to Ross, where we park again just by the village. A quick scan with the binoculars reveals the large Barnacle Goose flock, and they are in a decent position – our chances are good! We grab our scopes and just as we start to scrutinise the flock, they all fly up – the farmer and his dog have clearly taken umbridge with them and move them on. We cannot believe our bad luck as they separate and head off into the distance out of view.

Over the next hour we do manage to refind some of the goose flock but sadly not the Red-breasted – we cannot be too disappointed as we have had such a wonderful day. Around 4pm we head back to Bamburgh and our hotel, where we have plenty of time to freshen up and start our packing before reconvening for the checklist and the highlights of the week, which is unsurprisingly dominated by the owls we have seen this week. We enjoy our final evening meal with again some fantastic conversation, before around 9pm we head off to our respective rooms.

Day 7 It's breakfast at 8am again for the final time, with another hearty meal to set us all on our separate ways. Once finished we say our "fond farewells and safe journey" to each other before heading back to our rooms and make our final preparations. It has been a wonderful week and we are all sad to be heading home.

Species of the Trip

| | |
|----------|------------------|
| Margaret | Short-eared Owl |
| David | Long-tailed Duck |
| Joan | Short-eared Owl |
| Mike | Short-eared Owl |
| Helen | Short-eared Owl |
| Julian | Short-eared Owl |

Place of the Trip

| | |
|----------|----------------|
| Margaret | Holy Island |
| David | Cresswell Pond |
| Joan | Holy Island |
| Mike | Cresswell Pond |
| Helen | Cresswell Pond |
| Julian | Stag Rocks |

Magic Moment

| | |
|----------|---|
| Margaret | The Dipper on the boardwalk |
| David | Seeing the SEO and Barn Owl together |
| Joan | Golden Plover murmuration |
| Mike | Sat in the hide watching the SEO, Kestrel and Crow interact |
| Helen | Spotting the Dipper, after I thought it was a bit of white rubbish! (Seren-Dipper-Ty) |
| Julian | First Helen saying "I've got an owl" (for SEO), then Mike doing the same thing (for Barn Owl)! |

BIRDS

Mute Swan
Whooper Swan
Greylag Goose
Canada Goose
Pink-footed Goose
Barnacle Goose
Pale-bellied Brent Goose
Shelduck
Mallard
Gadwall
Shoveler
Wigeon
Teal
Pochard
Tufted Duck
Common Eider
Common Scoter
Long-tailed Duck
Goldeneye
Goosander
Red-breasted Merganser
Red-legged Partridge
Grey Partridge
Pheasant
Red-throated Diver
Little Grebe
Great Crested Grebe
Cormorant
Shag
Grey Heron
Great Egret
Little Egret
Hen Harrier
Marsh Harrier
Common Buzzard
Sparrowhawk
Kestrel
Peregrine
Merlin
Coot
Moorhen
Water Rail (heard only)
Oystercatcher
Ringed Plover
Grey Plover
Golden Plover
Lapwing
Knot
Purple Sandpiper
Turnstone
Dunlin
Redshank
Spotted Redshank
Bar-tailed Godwit
Curlew
Whimbrel
Woodcock
Snipe
Black-headed Gull
Common Gull
Herring Gull
Great Black-backed Gull
Lesser Black-backed Gull
Razorbill
Feral Pigeon
Woodpigeon
Collared Dove
Short-eared Owl
Barn Owl
Kingfisher
Great Spotted Woodpecker
Skylark
Meadow Pipit
Rock Pipit
Pied Wagtail
Dipper
Dunnock
Robin
Stonechat
Mistle Thrush
Redwing
Fieldfare

Blackbird
Chiffchaff
Goldcrest
Wren
Great Tit
Coal Tit
Blue Tit
Willow Tit
Long-tailed Tit
Magpie
Jackdaw
Rook
Carrion Crow
Starling
House Sparrow
Tree Sparrow
Chaffinch
Brambling
Linnet
Twite
Goldfinch
Greenfinch
Siskin
Bullfinch
Hawfinch
Common Crossbill
Reed Bunting
Yellowhammer

MAMMALS

Grey Seal
Grey Squirrel
Brown Hare
Rabbit
Roe Deer
Exmoor Ponies

BUTTERFLIES

Red Admiral