

Autumn migration in the Borders

Birdwatching Breaks and Black Isle birding are offering you a unique combination of birding in NE England and Dumfries and Galloway in SW Scotland. Your visit is timed to coincide with the autumn migration along the Northumbria coast with visits to Lindisfarne and Bamburgh. Further west is the large and extensive Scottish region of Dumfries and Galloway. This offers us the visible migration of swans, ducks and geese into the area which often include rarities from North America. A visit to the west coast and Loch Ryan is also included in the itinerary.

■ Please note this itinerary can be combined with North Yorkshire on page 63 of this brochure or our Scottish Highlands autumn tour on page 14. The tour starts and finishes at Edinburgh which has good connections with the rest of Britain. It is advisable to stay in Edinburgh on the night of October 8th.

Day 1: We meet up in Edinburgh at midday and travel south to the border town of Berwick-upon-Tweed. Our main interest is the River Tweed itself which meanders towards the North Sea. The river is an important area for Mute, Whooper and rarely Bewick's Swans plus concentrations of Goosander and Common Goldeneye. Any exposed areas of mud may yield views of the commoner waders and, possibly, Greenshank, Common Sandpiper and Spotted Redshank. Transfer to the village of Belford, our base for the next three nights.

Days 2-3: Lindisfarne is our destination today, an island situated just offshore of the Northumbria coast and reached by a causeway. We have to time our visit with the tidal conditions as the island gets 'cut off' at high tide. At low tide the area is internationally important for populations of Pale-bellied Brent Geese, Eurasian Wigeon, Common Knot and Bar-tailed Godwits. In the deeper waters we have a good chance of locating Common Eider, Long-tailed Duck and Common Scoter. Our main interest is in the bushes and gardens of Lindisfarne which can be alive with migrants in the right weather conditions. The Snook is an area of bushes and shrubs where recent autumn migrants have included Eurasian Wryneck, Black Redstart, Red-breasted Flycatcher, Yellow-browed Warbler, Firecrest and Common Rosefinch. In the dune system it is possible to locate Short-eared Owls and

Dates

Monday October 9th – Sunday
October 15th 2017

Leader: Mark Finn

Group Size: 8

Birds: 120-140

Woodcock from Scandinavia. Fields near the village are worth checking for migrant thrushes, buntings and finches which may include uncommon migrants in Lapland Bunting and Twite. In the village itself stands of trees and bushes lure Willow and Garden Warblers, Chiffchaff and Blackcap. The stone walls of the castle are also attractive to migrants such as Northern Wheatear and Whinchat. We spend a good part of the day birding along Straight Lonnen which has a hawthorn hedge running along its length. During October we have a chance of locating Red-backed Shrike, Barred Warbler and perhaps rarer species in Reed and Radde's Warblers. Budle Bay is a large area of intertidal mudflats which attract geese including Barnacle, Pink-footed and the occasional White-fronted Goose, European Golden Plover and Northern Lapwing. Further south, we visit the picturesque village of Bamburgh with its dominating castle. The coastal habitats attract Red-throated Diver, Slavonian Grebe, seaducks and gulls. Rocky areas may produce Purple Sandpiper, Ruddy Turnstone and Dunlin.



Marsh Tit *Photo: Chris Bradshaw*

Day 4: Today we head west into Dumfries and Galloway and head towards Caerlaverock. The habitats here include farmland, ponds and salt-marsh. The reserve is internationally important for Barnacle Geese which arrive in their thousands during October. In addition to this amazing spectacle, we should also locate Whooper Swans and many species of ducks which in recent years have included vagrant Ring-necked Duck, American Wigeon and Green-winged Teal from North America. Towards dusk we have a chance of watching hunting Barn and Short-eared Owls and other raptors - Peregrine Falcon, Merlin and Hen Harrier. Transfer to Castle Douglas, our base for three nights.

Day 5: Morning visit to Loch Ken, a habitat of woodland, fen, marsh and open water. In the forest we may find Willow Tit, Great Spotted Woodpecker, Eurasian Nuthatch and the commoner woodland birds. Damper areas around the loch attract Water Rail, Common Snipe, Common Redshank, Northern Lapwing and, importantly, a small population of Greenland White-fronted Geese. In the afternoon, we visit Mersehead on the Solway. This is another important area for Barnacle and Pink-footed Geese, Northern Pintail and Eurasian Teal.

Day 6: Loch Ryan is a sea loch with mud-flats and a shingle spur. This is an important area for Great Northern, Black-throated and Red-throated Divers, Red-necked and Slavonian Grebes, Pale-bellied Brent Geese and Greater Scaup. If north-westerly gales have occurred, we may find Manx and Sooty Shearwaters, European Storm Petrel, Sabine's Gull and Great, Arctic and Pomarine Skuas. On our return to Castle Douglas, we can recheck areas where rare or unusual birds have been reported.

Day 7: Head back to Edinburgh where the tour concludes in late morning.

Prices

Tour Price: £1,395
Single Room: £130
Deposit: £200

This holiday is fully inclusive of accommodation and meals, transport and permit fees, guidance, tips and taxes.

Not included: drinks, insurance, items of a personal nature and any fees to enter nature reserves if you are not a member.