

WILDLIFE TRAVEL

3rd to 7th December 2018 (5 days)

NORFOLK

Winter wildfowl and natural history



"wonderful places in the sunshine...
the roosts were excellent"

"leaders very knowledgeable and
entertaining"

Norfolk, 2014

Norfolk is justly famous for its wildlife. Our itinerary is designed to take in the most spectacular avian events and to give us a chance of seeing some of the county's splendid mammal-life.

From our base just north of Norwich, we'll explore the great wetlands and sweeping vistas of the **Norfolk Broads**. We'll visit a colony of Grey Seals and hope to witness both newborn seal pups and rough-and-ready courtship. We'll also visit the Thurne catchment where we have a high chance of finding winter geese and charming Chinese Water Deer. We end the day at the **spectacular roost of harriers** at NWT Stubb Mill where up to 100 Marsh Harriers may be accompanied by other raptors, Cranes and occasionally Bitterns. Our second day in Broadland will be spent in the Yare Valley, where we have a fair chance of seeing Otters at play, as well as wintering White-fronted and Taiga Bean Geese and the evening spectacle of thousands of corvids coming in to the roost which inspired Mark Cocker's celebrated 'Crow Country'.

After our time in the east, we will head north to spend a day on the marshes along the North Norfolk coast. A feature of this time of year are the large flocks of geese feeding out in the fields: thousands of Pink-footed Geese, along with smaller numbers of White-fronted and Tundra Bean Geese. We will spend some time on our goose chase, before turning attention to the marshes and beaches in search of Twite, Shorelark, Snow Buntings and any rare birds which may appear at this rewarding time of year. Our day in **North Norfolk** will end with the cackles of innumerable thousands of Pink-Footed Geese in our ears as they fly in to roost. Unforgettable!



Price
£845

Single Room Supplement
£110

Full board

- Day 1** arrive
- Day 2** Broadland
- Day 3** Yare Valley
- Day 4** North Norfolk
- Day 5** depart

Leader
Philip Precey
and second leader tbc

Mammals
amazing winter roosts
of birds: wild geese,
raptors, cranes and
crows

Wildlife and culture holidays



Our profits are donated to the **Wildlife Trusts**



ITINERARY

Please note that the itinerary may be changed to suit the weather or other practicalities or at the discretion of the leaders.

Norfolk in winter is a wonderful place, with birds arriving from their breeding grounds to spend the winter in the relatively mild conditions of East Anglia. Large concentrations of wildfowl gather on the grazing marshes and wetlands of the county, winter thrushes arrive in good numbers and the coastal wetlands fill up with waders. Amongst the regular migrants will often be something more exciting and less predictable - for this reason in particular, we may change the order of days or the exact destinations, depending on what birds have been reported in the area, to make sure we don't miss out on anything special and to best time our visits with tides and weather in mind.

Day 1, 3rd Dec Our holiday starts in Crostwick where we will meet this evening at our hotel in time for an introduction to the holiday and our first dinner together.

Day 2, 4th Dec Today we will travel eastwards, to explore the edge of the Broads National Park. We will start by heading to the coast at **Horsey**. Here we will walk through the sand dunes, looking out for migrant birds passing through the scrub. But the main attraction here is the breeding colony of **Grey Seals** on the beach. We should be able to get good views of the seals on the beach, the males fighting on the foreshore over the females, who are busy at the back of the beach with their new pups. We walk back inland, casting our eye over the nearby grazing marshes. Here we may find feeding flocks of White-fronted Goose or Whooper Swan, while occasional visitors include Rough-legged Buzzard or Little Egret. We will keep our eyes open for the diminutive Chinese Water Deer grazing in the field edges.

As the shadows lengthen, we will make our way inland a little way to watch what will hopefully be the first of several impressive evening roosts in the county. Here the highlight should be the presence of **Common Cranes**. A small and increasing population of this magnificent bird is now resident in the Broads, and regularly fly in to roost on the nearby Mere, giving their trumpeting call as they fly past. We should also see Marsh Harrier, together (perhaps) with Hen Harrier, Merlin or the ghostly Barn Owl.

Day 3, 5th Dec We head south today and explore the nearby Yare Valley. The RSPB reserve at **Strumpshaw Fen** gives us access to alder woodland and open pools in the reedbeds. Here, Cetti's Warbler may be heard singing, while we will also be listening out for the pinging of Bearded Tits as they move through the reeds and the squeals of secretive Water Rail. Muntjac and Chinese Water Deer graze quietly along the edge of the reeds. But for the real stars of the reserve we will need patience and luck in equal measure, as the hides offer some of the best chances for seeing Otter and Bittern in the county.

The nearby grazing marshes at Buckenham are home to the only wintering flock of **Taiga Bean Geese** in England, and we will be paying particular attention to this elegant goose during our visit. Peregrine regularly hunt over the marshes, preying on the large flocks of Lapwing and Wigeon.

As dusk falls, we head a little higher up the valley sides, to watch one of the unsung spectacles of the bird world, the massive roost of Rooks and Jackdaws, thousands and thousands of birds swirling into their roost, made famous in Mark Cocker's 'Crow Country'.

Day 4, 6th Dec Today we head north to the **North Norfolk Coast**. Today is perhaps the least predictable, as our itinerary will depend very much on where the birds are.

Large flocks of Pink-footed Geese spend part of the winter grazing the fields of North

Norfolk, usually joined by smaller numbers of White-fronted, Tundra Bean and Barnacle Geese. Rarities frequently turn up, with Ross's, Snow, Todd's Canada and the lovely little Red-breasted Goose all having turned up in recent years. We will use the latest local information to track down the feeding flocks.

We may then move on to the Norfolk Wildlife Trust reserve of **Cley Marshes**, where large numbers of Golden Plover and Dark-bellied Brent Goose gather on the Eye Field, while Marsh Harriers hunt over the reeds. The shingle beach between here and Salhouse is a regular wintering site for flocks of Snow Bunting and Twite, together with Lapland Bunting and Shorelark.

Another likely location for these species is the broad beach at **Holkham**, where we will also have the chance to look for sea duck such as Eider, Common and Velvet Scoter and Long-tailed Duck offshore. The pine woods here sometimes hold roving flocks of Crossbill, the nearby deer park often attracts wintering flocks of Hawfinch, while Great Grey Shrike or Rough-legged Buzzard may both have taken up winter residence somewhere in the area. In the evening, we will watch as **thousands of Pink-footed Geese** gather on the grazing marshes from their day time feeding out in the fields. Where ever we end up visiting, we are sure to enjoy the day.

Day 5, 7th Dec One final breakfast, and then it is time to bid farewell to The Old Rectory and to Norfolk and to head home, hopefully taking some good memories of the big skies and spectacular flocks of a Norfolk winter.

Accommodation, meals and travel

Our accommodation will be at **The Old Rectory** in the village of Crostwick, which lies 10 minutes north of Norwich on the B1150 towards North Walsham. If travelling by train, we will arrange for a shared taxi from Norwich (cost not included). All rooms are en-suite.

We shall be taking packed lunches each day. Evening meals will be taken at our hotel, Requests for special diets can be accommodated.

Our transport for this trip will be by small coach or minibus.

If you would like to **extend your stay** in Norfolk, we can book extra nights accommodation at the hotel, and give advice on good places to visit.



Leaders

Our leader for this trip is **Philip Precey**. Philip is a Director of Wildlife Travel and has led many of our trips in recent years, including destinations from Transylvania to Tasmania, including three previous trips to Norfolk. Philip lived in Norfolk for three years and has visited the county innumerable times before and since.

Philip will be joined in Norfolk by a second Wildlife Travel leader, depending on the final group size.

Whether it's helping with the tricky ducks and waders or keeping their eyes peeled for passing mammals that we hope to come across, our leaders' natural history knowledge will ensure you have a great time in Norfolk.

Weather

The English weather is of course anything but predictable. We should expect cool and possibly damp conditions, although who knows, the weather could be bright and sunny on some days and cold and wet on others! We will adapt our itinerary to the weather. It can be 'breezy' or even windy on the coast at times. We will not walk for long in adverse weather conditions. Evenings can be cold.



Fitness

We will be **walking for much of the day**, each day, albeit at a slow pace. In some locations 'facilities' are scarce! **You therefore need to have a reasonably good level of fitness** although none of the walks are strenuous. There are likely to be steps at the hotel.

**PRICE £845 per person,
Single Room Supplement £110**

**DEPOSIT £350 PER PERSON
BALANCE DUE BY 3/9/2018**

INCLUDED: Four nights' accommodation, full board basis. Local transport on excursions as specified in the itinerary. Entrance fees as specified in the itinerary. Services of leaders.

NOT INCLUDED: Travel to Crostwick. Refreshments and drinks with meals. Entrance fees for optional tourist attractions. Gratuities. Travel insurance.

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Wildlife Travel Ltd. Reg. No 2237697; (for Registered Charity numbers, please contact us)*

Trip reports from our previous holidays can be downloaded at www.wildlife-travel.co.uk

Photos: front (clockwise from top): Grey Seal at Horsey; Whooper Swans; Waxcap; Wigeon at Buckenham Marshes. Inside (from top): Snipe; strandline shells; Otter at Strumpshaw Fen; Common Cranes. Back: White-fronted Geese.