

Norfolk Trip – October 2016

It'd only been 2 weeks since we'd come back from our last trip to Norfolk and we still hadn't physically recovered so it was quite worrying to be going away again so soon. One thing that was keeping our mood high though was that amazingly and for the 3rd year running, there were easterlies forecast. Although we'd have been happy with a couple of days they were forecast for nearly every single day of our trip :O!

Friday 7th October

I'd managed to be able to leave work at 12.50pm this time around but Wendy had to work until the end of the day. I went straight to the garage to fill my car up with petrol and give it a clean, so I got back just in time to give her a lift back to work after her lunch. I had loads to do before we left, so the afternoon was anything but relaxed. When Wendy finished at 5.20pm I picked her up and she had her tea and bath as usual before doing the last of the packing. This time Wendy had a brainstorm and had packed the small suitcase with our overnight stuff in it to save me from having to haul the big case up to the room at the Travelodge.....Clever! While she was sitting on the floor of her bedroom putting the last of the stuff into the case Lyca did something that had us both baffled. She ran up to Wendy paused for a second then ran out again with her tail high in the air wagging frantically. Nothing odd about that I hear you say but when Wendy looked down she found that Lyca had brought her favourite toy in and had dropped it next to the case :O! Lyca knows the signs of when we're going away, so the only explanation was that she wanted her toy to come too. Wendy called me in to have a look at what she'd done and after we'd had a laugh about it we were ready to go. Luckily the wind had dropped, so we weren't worried about the crossing at all. By the time I had the car loaded and we were locking up it was 6.55pm and 5minutes later we arrived at The Sea Terminal.

It wasn't anywhere near as busy at it had been 2 weeks ago but it was practically dark already, so there'd be no seawatching from the cabin for us! There wasn't even any Gulls flying around the harbour, so we were off to a very slow start bird wise. We'd arrived in good time and didn't have to sit there long as we were boarding at 7.16pm. When we got up to the lounge to get the cabin key Lyca spotted a huge dog in the queue, so they had a bit of a stand off, which was slightly embarrassing to say the least :/. She'd obviously drawn attention to us as Wendy could hear someone calling her name and went off to speak to some random woman sitting at one of the tables. She was still nattering by the time I had the key and there was no way I was going to stand there like a spare part, so I told her the number of the cabin and took Lyca up to get settled. I still needed to plan my route to Norfolk and check for any roadworks and closures but the wifi was down, so I couldn't. This was a bit annoying but I was glad when we set off early at 7.33pm. By 7.55pm I started to wonder if Wendy had forgotten the cabin number or been murdered, as there was still no sign of her. Shortly after that there was a sheepish knock at the door and it was her checking that she had the right cabin. Head like a sieve! It turned out that she'd been talking to Sam an old work colleague who she hadn't seen for a few years. They obviously had a lot of catching up to do! When she finally settled down on the bed it was time to watch my mate Andy make his TV debut on Countrywise! He works for Gwent Wildlife Trust and had taken Liz Bonnin to see Nightjars earlier in the year,

which was covered in the show. We waited with baited breath until nearly the end of the 30minute program and we had to say that he did a very good job of it. Neither of us would've been able to do it and he didn't even appear nervous or anything. Next time I see him I'll be asking for his autograph :P. After that we managed to sleep for about 1hour or so and were being called to our cars at 11.15pm. I took Lyca up onto the deck for a wee before we disembarked and ticked off our 1st bird of the trip, which unremarkably was a **Black-headed Gull**. Lyca was naughty when we got into the car because she wanted to be in the front on Wendy's knee, so was whinging and pulling to get out of her harness.....Urrghhh! It was a case of tough luck though and at 11.30pm we set off on the 1st leg of our journey.

Having set off early we were hopeful of arriving at the Travelodge early too but annoyingly at the lights to turn onto the M6 the road was blocked off and there were no signs pointing to a detour! Errrrrr? I drove straight on hoping to see some signs further on but there was nothing so Wendy wasn't happy and was telling me to turn around but I couldn't see the point. The slipway onto the M6 was closed with road works so I wouldn't be able to get onto the M6 anyway. It was only when I'd talked to a work colleague who'd been away that I realised I could've gone North on the M6 for 5 minutes then turned round at the next junction and come back down the M6.....Doh! This now meant driving over to Harrogate and then straight down the A1M south, which Wendy wasn't very happy about even though I pointed out that it was the exact route we come home on, just in the opposite direction.

Saturday 8th October

Having had the route messed up to start with I really didn't need the protests from Wendy who still reckoned I'd have been better turning around! She was tired and just wanted to get to bed as soon as possible and this route would take longer. It was already 1.26am when we got to Harrogate and we spotted our 1st mammal of the trip, which was as usual a **Rabbit** on a grass verge. I'd managed to get 15 minutes of my eta back but then Wendy announced that she needed a wee, so I had to stop at Wetherby Services.....Urrghhhh! It looked like a nice services but I'm reliably informed that everything was shut apart from Costa, so it wasn't as good as it looked unless you just needed the loo. Luckily it was a flying visit and we were on our way again at 1.45am. It had been a long day and we were pretty tired but luckily we both managed not to drop off before we arrived (later than hoped) at the Travelodge in Sleaford at 3am. Wendy took Lyca for a wee and I got the stuff out of the car to bring to the room. I was very pleased that the big case didn't have to come too so that'd been a good plan of Wendy's. Lyca knows the procedure now and pulled Wendy over to the entrance and stood up on her back legs and started dancing with excitement. The girl behind the desk who was really friendly was rather taken by her and even came out into the foyer to give her a big fuss. Luckily we weren't upstairs again, so the room was easy to get to at such an ungodly hour. When we let ourselves in Lyca was desperate for a drink then she jumped up on the bed and made herself at home. By the time we'd got changed and ready for bed it was 3.24am but we had no intention of getting up at stupid o'clock, so it didn't matter.

At 8am we were woken up by someone banging on the door of one of the rooms opposite and shouting, "EMMA!" over and over.....Grrrrrrrrrrrr! So much for not

getting up early! It sounded like there was a school trip staying there and the lucky teachers had the lovely task of going round waking up the zombie kids. Rather than me! After it'd all gone quiet again we managed to go back to sleep until 9.30am. I took Lyca out for a wee and added **Robin**, which was hopping round the car park, to our list. After she'd got dressed Wendy asked me what I wanted from Little Chef because she was going to get some breakfast and bring it back to the room. She was sick of eating in the car and wanted a more civilized to start the day.

When she got there it was quiet so she was served quickly and ordered my sausage bap and beans on toast for herself. The young girl behind the till was full of attitude and said, "We can't do beans on toast love you'll have to pick something else." Wendy had ordered and received beans on toast 2 weeks ago without a problem but when she questioned the girl the truth came out and they'd run out of cartons to put it in. A smiley young lad then came over and asked if he could help so Wendy told him her predicament of being veggie but there being nothing on the menu. He scratched his head for a second then said, "We could do you a veggie sausage sarnie?" Bingo! She thanked him and he took over from there, which she was very pleased about because he was really nice, unlike the girl.

She brought it all back up to the room and we sat down to eat it with Lyca licking her chops expectantly.



Where's mine?

If I'd known they did Linda McCartney veggie sausages I'd have got them myself! Little Chef obviously like to serve their food dry, as the sarnies were just 2 slices of white bread with 2 sausages sliced down the middle inside. Yet again there was no butter on the bread but luckily Wendy had taken enough tomato sauce sachets to alleviate the problem, just enough to enable her to swallow it! My pain au chocolat wasn't squashed this time and after we'd finished we gathered our stuff together and headed down to reception. When we got there a new woman had taken over and again she wanted to come round and say, "Hello" to Lyca, who fortunately was feeling friendly and loved the attention....Phew! She

actually said that it'd made her day, so Lyca had unwittingly made someone very happy. The girl who'd checked us in was still there and came out to join in but she looked as though she needed to go home to bed by then. We'd wasted enough time already and needed to get going to our 1st stop of the day, I then saw a tweet from a birder in Norfolk describing the rarity forecast for the week ahead as "Seismic!" :O!

It was raining lightly when we left at 11.18am, which compared to usual was exceptionally late. We planned to go to Holme 1st but we'd had reports of Ring Ouzel x2, Red-breasted Flycatcher, Yellow-browed Warbler and Jack Snipe at Warham Greens. With the predicted conditions being so good we decided to try our luck at finding something ourselves at Holme, although we didn't get too carried away with it and remained customarily skeptical. The roads were busy with it being a Saturday and getting close to lunchtime, so our progress was a bit slower than usual. There were, as always, **Wood Pigeons** everywhere and 4x **Magpies** being mobbed by **Rooks** in a field where there were also **Jackdaws** and **Herring Gulls**. Further along, we saw a flock of **Starlings**, a field full of **Common Gulls** and a huge flock of Finches over another field, which had gone to seed, turned out to be all just **Goldfinches**. We had our 1st **Kestrel** hovering over a verge followed by a **Moorhen** in a roadside ditch and a **Buzzard** just before we hit the 'Welcome to Norfolk' sign at 12.07pm. The weather had started to brighten up, so we were well overdressed for 16c.....Oooops! A **Jay** flew over the road and then I got a report through of a male Ring Ouzel back at home in the Isle of Man down south.....Grrrrrr! It's just typical that we were away and would almost certainly be the nail in the coffin for us finding our own at Holme :(.

I finally turned into the road leading to Holme Dunes NNR and a big colourful **Red Admiral** flitted across the road in front of us. We wound the windows down to listen out for any calls and heard a **Wren** singing from the bushes somewhere. One of the gardens was a hive of activity, so we stopped for a quick look finding mostly **House Sparrows** with the odd **Chaffinch** and a **Blue Tit** thrown into the mix. There were again **Common Darters** everywhere and they were flying over the road in pairs mating. In the fields on the NOA side were **Pheasants**, **Blackbirds** and around a pool were some **Curlews** but not much else to speak of. We carried on until I had to stop the car when a small Warbler flew across the road ahead of us. When we found it again it was in the brambles and was just a **Goldcrest**, which we didn't foresee there being any shortage of during the week ahead.

I parked up in the Visitor Centre car park at 12.59pm and Wendy went over to get our tickets and check the day's reports. There'd been a Ring Ouzel in the Dunes, a Yellow-browed Warbler in the trees and someone, who obviously had a scope, had seen a Pom Skua and Puffin over the sea earlier. It was 17c and no surprise that we spotted a **Migrant Hawker** whizzing around the brambles bushes.

As we got our stuff together we heard **Skylark**, saw a **Great Tit** in the huge conifers and a **Song Thrush** flew in but we realized we were way overdressed. The sun was beating down, so in her base layers, waterproof trousers and ski jacket Wendy was sweating already and she hadn't even walked anywhere yet! It'd seemed a good idea earlier when we'd left Sleaford and the weather looked dodgy but it was anything but by then and hard to believe that it was October.

Wondering what to do she grabbed her lighter Paramo coat from the boot and swapped them over whereas I just ditched my coat entirely and caked myself in sun cream :P! We could hear the constant calls of **Redwing** flying over as we set off through the trees, there was a **Dunnock** and a flock of **Linnets** flew chirpily overhead. Next we found a male **Blackcap** and looking down at an inlet we could see **Little Egret** and **Cormorant**. There was a flock of 100's of Starlings flying around which we checked optimistically for Rose-coloured but that would've been a bit of a tall order. Some **Dark-bellied Brent Geese** and a **Meadow Pipit** flew over and we heard **Redshank** and **Oystercatcher** as we headed towards the boardwalk. We viewed the beach from up there and added **Bar-tailed Godwit**, **Knot** and **Dunlin** but the sea was miles out and there was very little flying over it apart from more Brents.

We turned back and made our way through the dunes and stumbled across a great area of dense bushes.



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We could hear some feeble sounding squeaks coming from in there so we stopped to check it out. After waiting for a while and finding nothing but loads of freshly arrived Redwing, Blackbirds and Song Thrushes we gave up and carried on. It was just typical that all these Thrushes had just arrived from the continent but there wasn't a single Ring Ouzel in there for us.....Grrrr! As we walked away a couple of small birds flew out and started working their way down the line of trees at the side of the path. We finally caught a glimpse of a white rump and ID'd our mystery birds as a pair of **Bullfinches**. A bit further down we added **Reed Bunting**, which we tried and failed to make into a Little Bunting. A **Snipe** flew over as we approached the Visitor Centre and seeing as it was lunchtime Wendy went over to the café while I got back into the car with Lyca. She came back with a cappuccino and a small tub of Norfolk Ice cream for me. We ate our packet of crisps and cereal bar while watching the comings and goings from the car. There was a **Coal Tit** in the pines and some Goldcrests, which were really near to us. There'd been a few reports over the past couple of days of a Black-browed Albatross, which had been patrolling the Norfolk coastline, so we were hoping to get a lead at some point. A report came through on my phone of the bird having flown past Hunstanton just ½ hour ago! This could mean that it'd fly

past Holme as it's the next village along the coast but more realistically it probably already had while we'd been there. We decided that it was probably long gone and didn't bother going to look and instead I chose to get out to have a pop at some shots of a nice **Migrant Hawker** that we'd been watching flying around the Sea Buckthorn. It finally landed just next to the car, so I didn't have to go far and ended up with this shot.



Migrant Hawker

Next I thought I'd try my luck with a Goldcrest that was feeding low down in a conifer just next to the car. In typical Goldcrest style it just wouldn't come out into the clear or stay still for long enough, so I didn't get anything remotely useable.

By then it was 3pm, so we reckoned it was time to get going and we added **Mallard** and **Greylag** as we drove back up past the NOA pools. I stopped at the garage at Burnham Deepdale to get petrol, so Wendy took the opportunity to nip into the café to use the loos. It'd only been 2 weeks since we'd been there last but it only seemed like 5 minutes ago and had started to feel as though we'd never left! We still had some time on our hands before we had to pick up the key for the cottage, so I reckoned we should give one of my favourite places a quick once over first. There'd been another Red-breasted Flycatcher reported from there, so I reckoned it was well worth going for as well as to see if I could better my shots from last time. On the way to Warham greens we spotted a **Brown Hare** in a field and I parked up in the usual spot at the top of Garden Drove at 3.48pm. Getting out of the car the 1st thing that we noticed was a **Sparrowhawk** but then an awful smell hit us. When Wendy looked around she saw that the fields were now home to 100's of incredibly cute Piglets. She watched them running around chasing each other and seemingly having a great time until

reality struck and she couldn't stand it any longer and walked away with a bitter sweet taste in her mouth :{.

We set off down the track, which apart from a more autumnal hue and a few less leaves didn't really look any different from when we'd been there 2 weeks ago. A **Painted Lady** whizzed past us and the predominant sound was the high-pitched calls of the ridiculous amount of Goldcrests that on 1st glances were inseparable from the falling leaves as they tumbled from the branches to feed. We kept our ears pricked up for the call of a YBW but the only other thing of note was the presence of Lee Evans and his fan club making their way back up towards us. We all said, "Hello" as we passed and we guessed that he'd graced these parts due to the predictions of the seismic conditions everyone was talking about. He didn't look inspired and from we'd seen so far nor did we having added nothing but **Long-tailed Tit** by the time we got down to the Copse. There were a handful of birders standing around viewing the trees and a few more in the field opposite, so we had a scan of the field first.



Birders

We didn't have to look for long until we spotted a nice **Common Redstart** fly out of the bushes and land on top of some dried up thistles. There was a **Chiffchaff** in the bushes and then we finally heard the call of a **Yellow-browed Warbler** coming from behind us somewhere. We knew that we'd be there all day if we tried to get a view of it but we turned our attentions to the Copse anyway as that was where the RBF had been reported. We looked at the trees and wondered how long we were going to have to wait until it showed itself but when someone said they had it we were all eyes.....and ears. Quite quickly I could hear a call that was reminding me of the call the RBFly made in September. I concentrated on looking in the area the call was coming from as in September the bird would call just before or after moving. Sure enough after only a short wait I spotted the bird moving deep in the bushes but it disappeared again before I could put anyone on it. Luckily after a few more minutes it called again and the **Red-breasted Flycatcher** appeared at the front of the copse. I got Wendy onto it and others heard and saw me pointing so got on the bird as well. I fired off some shots while it was being so cooperative before it shot back into the cover of the trees. Nice!



Red-breasted Flycatcher

I was much happier with this photo than any of the ones I got in September!

We added **Blue Tit** but by that point Wendy was keen to get going and go and find out what our cottage was like. I reluctantly agreed and we plodded back up the track and were back at the car at 4.44pm. It was beginning to cloud over and looked as though it was going to rain by then and coupled with the fact that we'd arranged to collect our key between 4-5pm we'd timed it to perfection.

Annoyingly this was another cottage where we had to collect the key from a shop but this time it was in Blakeney so not as out of the way as we'd had to go in September.

Driving past the pool at Stiffkey we noticed that it was back to normal and was full of water again. We added **Grey Heron** and carried on to Blakeney to find the cottage company shop, which we had no idea where it was. It was in the main street where the Deli is but I didn't know how far down, so I approached it from the top. I drove slowly down the narrow street and we both kept our eyes peeled for the office and it wasn't until we got right down to the bottom that Wendy spotted it. I parked up and she ran in to get the key with 1 minute to spare at 4.59pm....Phew! Next I drove round to the Spa by which point it had started to rain and Wendy nipped in to get me a Pizza to have for tea and we added **Collared Dove** to our list driving through Cley.

This would be the first time we'd stayed in a cottage in Cley and even though it was further inland, so had no nice marsh views, I was still looking forward to it as Cley is a really good location when staying in North Norfolk. It was 5.12pm when I parked up outside Jesmond and looking at the front of it you could be forgiven for thinking it was a bedroom showroom. The lights had been left on for us and next to the front door was a huge window into what was the downstairs bedroom.



Cottage front

It looked very nice if not a little odd and we hoped that the rest of it would be equally as appealing. I tentatively opened the front door and we wandered in for our 1st look inside but luckily (for my ears) this time around we were both blown away. It was clean and looked exactly like the website had advertised it, so Wendy was more than a bit happy and was wandering around saying, "Oh wow, this is amazing!"



Living room

After the Eastgate experience I was more than a bit happy that it suited her highness, as I don't think I could've handled another mega strop! Having only just arrived she'd already made her mind up that we'd stay there again and she wasted no time in giving a very hungry Lyca her tea. When we went into the front bedroom we were really surprised to find that it stank.....Uh oh! Wendy said it smelled like an Indian Restaurant but I disagreed and thought it was more of an old man kind of smell. There was one thing for certain though and that was that neither of us wanted to sleep in there, so we went to check the upstairs out.



Bedroom

Luckily it didn't smell up there, so after I brought everything in from the car Wendy started to unpack our clothes and make herself at home. The only flaw in this plan was that if we needed a wee in the night we'd have to go downstairs via the wooden staircase to get to the toilet. That seemed a small problem though especially as there were torches hanging up by the front door, so we'd be able to see. Lyca coped with the staircase well, so that was another worry off our minds. She was also very pleased to see the toy that she'd packed for herself the day before and paraded it over to the rug with her tail wagging :P.



Toy!

After Wendy had finished the unpacking and we'd well and truly moved in it was teatime. The oven was easy enough to use and my pizza was ready in no time while Wendy heated up some soup she'd had the good sense to bring with her this time around. It didn't stop her from nicking a bit of my pizza again though!

There was a welcome pack on the table, which consisted of a vase of red roses, a box of mint chocolates and a bottle of red wine. Wendy doesn't like red wine or mint chocolates, so her mum would be getting the bottle while the chocolates had my name written all over them :). Still, any welcome pack is better than no welcome pack and when we don't get one on our arrival we get a bit annoyed like a right pair of entitled idiots! After that she went off to soak in a nice hot bath after the long day we'd had before Tesco came.

I thought they might have a bit of trouble finding us so I sat in the smelly room looking out for the van going past in the dark. Sure enough at 7.25pm it went straight past so I went out in the rain with a torch hoping he would come past again. He did and I suggested he stayed out on the road as the turn in to the driveway was another one that was quite tight. Wendy was able to take Lyca into the kid's bedroom and shut the door so she didn't make a nuisance of herself. When all the food had been put away Wendy poured herself a spritzer and sat down to phone her Mum from the luxury of the cottage phone. As always her Mum did caller display and phoned her back, so they could have a catch up without costing the cottage owners any money. After that we watched a bit of TV and Lyca had well truly made herself at home, sleeping for most of the evening. By 10.15pm we were absolutely shattered and headed off to bed to pick up on my audio book Butterfly Isles from where we'd left it 2 weeks ago.

Sunday 9th October

It was 4am when I woke up and having thought I'd sleep like a log I was gutted to find myself in a lot of pain with raging IBS.....Grrrrrrrr! I couldn't get comfy never mind go back to sleep, so I got up and went downstairs so as not to wake Wendy up. Lyca followed me down and I made myself as comfy as I could on one of the huge beanbags in the living room using one of the thin blankets (from the boat that we'd put over the settee) in an attempt to keep myself warm. There were **Tawny Owls** calling outside, so Lyca decided to bark, which woke Wendy up anyway. She then decided to wake her up 2 more times by going up and down the stairs unable to decide where she wanted to sleep.....Urrghhhhh! It absolutely chucked it down with rain, which I hoped would put some birds down for us to find later on. With the forecasted seismic conditions the mind boggled as to what would be around.....in our dreams! I finally went back to bed at about 8 am as my IBS had died down a bit but by then we were both pretty much awake anyway and we eventually got up at 9.30am. It had totally escaped me that I could've just gone and slept in one of the kids beds instead of freezing on the beanbag but the obvious isn't quite so blatant at 4am.....Doh! It was a lovely sunny day and after I'd taken Lyca out into the garden we had breakfast and Wendy made the sarnies and got our lunch together.



Garden

I had a report of a Dusky Warbler at Cromer Lighthouse, which although a bit risky as they hardly ever show, it would be a lifer for us both, so that seemed like a good plan to start the day with. It was also somewhere new for us to visit, so we set off at 11.10am feeling quite hopeful.

Had I thought ahead I'd have avoided the main coast road, which is our normal route and turned left out of the cottage and gone on the back roads but I didn't so we ended up in an almighty traffic jam in Cley. The traffic was backed up and there was no way through for anyone let alone the bus that eventually squeezed its way through the narrow street and freed the jam. There was a **Great Black-backed Gull** flying over the marshes and some **Egyptian Geese** grazing in the fields as we drove through.

I had no idea where Cromer Lighthouse was even though I'd heard it mentioned a lot of times on bird reports so I'd looked at the O/s and Google maps. I reckoned I'd seen how to get there even though it looked like the road I identified was for a private Country Club... :-\ . It wasn't long before we were there and confused when we found ourselves looking at some raised barriers at the bottom of the drive. Now what? Wendy seemed to think I should just ignore them and carry on (but she has some strange ideas, so I rarely listen to her) but I couldn't help but think that they were there for a reason and that maybe you needed a swipe card or something to get out once the barrier came down. There was no signage for a lighthouse either, so I turned the car around and drove out. I tried the next turning further up the road but this one went straight to a private golf course car park, so it couldn't be that. I'd run out of ideas by then so decided to go and have another look at the Country Club. The barriers were still raised which made me think it couldn't be an access thing as they would have been down by then, so maybe it was just for night time to stop Travellers taking caravans up there. With that idea in my head I drove through and followed the steep driveway up to the top through a strange housing estate (a bit similar to the Mount Murray setup) where we eventually saw a sign for Cromer Lighthouse. We let out a cheer and turned a corner to find a car park, which was pretty full. Was this due to the bird?

When we got out of the car it was 11.51am and raining but our spirits were lifted when a birder emerged from a gate looking, despite the miserable weather, happy. We asked him if he'd seen it to which he replied, "Oh yes, it showed about 8 or 9 times while I was there." That sounded promising considering we'd just presumed we'd be standing around for hours waiting for a brief glimpse of a notoriously skulky Warbler. When I put my bins round my neck I noticed that I'd finally lost one of my top lens caps. The join had split between the top ones, so they'd been separated for a while but one of them had, without me noticing, made it's bid for freedom somewhere along the line. Shrugging it off as no biggy we went through the gate and followed the path, which opened out to the headland and looking down the steep hill ahead of us we spotted the twitch.



Cromer lighthouse area

The path down the hill was very steep and a bit of a knee killer but we headed over to the mound just on the coast where everyone was standing. You could see why the bird had gone down in there, as it was thick with bracken, trees and bushes, so it had plenty of cover and could be anywhere in amongst that lot! Luckily enough though it'd moved from the fenced off area it'd initially been in, as that looked completely impossible! As we got ourselves into position the heavens opened and it started absolutely chucking it down.....Urrghhhh! Wendy's face was a picture and Lyca looked just as hacked off and then I realized that I had a problem, which surprisingly was nothing to do with toilets this time. I just hoped we weren't in for a week of rain as without my lens caps my bin's lenses were soaking, so I had to put them inside my coat and hope for the best. I wouldn't be seeing anything through them for a while but hopefully the Warbler was never going to show in rain like that anyway. We were absolutely soaking within no time and nobody appeared to have seen the bird recently either. There was one bloke with a camera and big lens in front of us who kept throwing a false scent by lifting his camera to take a photo. Who knows what he seeing because although the habitat looked amazing it was unbelievably dead. We very quickly cottoned on to the fact that he was just having a pop at anything that moved, so gave up taking any notice of him. Hopefully this decision wouldn't come back to haunt us! We'd started to give up hope of seeing the bird too and despite what the birder we'd met at the car park had said this was turning into the scenario we'd predicted from the start. Luckily the rain stopped and more

birders turned up while others left but I was reluctant to admit defeat just yet. We'd been there for ages eventually hearing it call from a bush but without a single sighting being reported so couldn't claim our lifer when all of a sudden a small and impressively nondescript bird flew from that bush and across to the right where it called again. The crowd got twitchy and I turned to see if Wendy had seen it too, which she had....Phew! It'd been an awful view but having heard it calling too we decided that after all the effort we'd put in we were going to claim **Dusky Warbler** as a lifer. We persevered for a while longer hoping desperately for a better view but it didn't show again. Bah.....8-9 times my arse! If only we'd been there when we first got to the Country club we might have saw it better but having ended up with a bit more than nothing I suppose we couldn't grumble. By then Wendy and Lyca were getting very bored and even though the sun was now out the bird just didn't want to come out to play, so we gave up and trudged back up the steep path to the lighthouse.



Cromer Lighthouse

It was 1.10pm when we got back to the car and I'd started to wonder why I hadn't been getting any alerts coming in on my phone. After scratching my head for a few moments I realized that it was wirelessly connected to the Go-pro and by the time I'd worked that out there was no 3g signal either.....Doh! Wendy was in need of a WC break by then and we needed to find somewhere to eat our lunch, so with Cromer being so busy I looked at the sat nav on my phone. I found a spot in the next town of West Runton, which was by to the sea, so we'd even have a nice view while we ate our sarnies. It turned out to be harder to find than I'd bargained for and after going down a dead end and having to turn round we eventually found the road leading to a car park and WC's. There were a lot of rambling hiker types wandering around and a good number of eccentric looking ones at that! I'd hoped to be able to stop in a layby at the side of the road or something and view the sea but there wasn't one and when I got to the car park at the end it was pay and display, so I wasn't prepared to pay for the privilege. Wendy went over to the WC's and I sat waiting for her wondering where to go next and whether or not my IBS was going to be made worse by having lunch. Luckily Wendy was really quick and we left the weirdos behind us but before we left the town she nipped into the Tesco express to see if she could find something for my IBS but there was nothing :(Driving out of West Runton we saw a **Lesser**

Black-backed Gull in a field with some Herring Gulls and with no better ideas I headed to Salthouse beach road.

It was 2.03pm when we arrived at Salthouse and I parked up so we could look out over the marshes and pools.



Salthouse

I had an alert through and pulled my phone out of my pocket to see what it was. Unbelievably the report of the Black-browed Albatross from Hunstanton yesterday had been a string :O! At least our pessimism of presuming it'd probably already been past Holme when we were there had paid off and we hadn't rushed over to view the sea and wasted our time. Even so, why people feel the need to string is a complete mystery to us. Idiots! There was a White-fronted Goose in the Eye Field at Cley, so for want of something better to do we decided to go there next. While we ate our lunch we scanned around to see what was about. It was surprisingly quiet, so all our hopes of finding ourselves a Lapland or Snow Bunting went out the window. Instead we ended up leaving having only seen 2x **Shoveler** flying over and some **Wigeon**.....Urrghhhhh!

Driving through Cley we spotted some **Red-legged Partridge** in a field and I pulled up at the hut at the Eye Field car park at 3pm. I handed over £2.50 to the bloke much to Wendy's disbelief because she'd thought I was just turning around so we could pull over at the side of the road and have a look from there. We had a scan through the Brents and Greylags but there was no sign of a White-front anywhere. I then got a report of 2x Ring Ouzels at Salthouse on Market Lane, which wasn't far away, so I drove off. This made Wendy even more flabbergasted as to why I'd just parted with £2.50 for the privilege of scanning a field for 20 seconds but it was too late by then. Market Lane was up the hill behind Eastgate Cottage where we'd stayed 2 weeks ago, so luckily I knew where to go. There were 3x **Marsh Harriers** hunting over the marshes and already we were having more luck with them compared to our last trip. Some **Black-tailed Godwits** flew over and there were **Lapwing** flying over the fields behind Cley Visitor Centre.

When we turned into Cross Street we were curious to know whether anyone was staying in Eastgate and sure enough there was a car in the drive. Wendy was glad it wasn't us but even so, after Wendy had got over her initial shock, we looked back on it with fondness....especially the view and the garden! When we got to the top of the road we found an area of dense trees and bushes, which looked perfect for a R.O or two. As we scanned the bushes and hedges I got a report of 5x Jack Snipe at Walsey Hills, so that would be our next plan, if we could get a park! There was another birder who'd got out of his car to walk down the road but we didn't want to leave Lyca in the back. There was no sign of any R.O's in the roadside hedges, so I drove slowly back down just in case they were still in the area but there was still nothing. Next I made a diversion to Cley Deli for Wendy and then we went to try our luck with the Jack Snipe.

Walsey Hills car park had been full when we went past to dip on R.O but it was strangely empty when we arrived at 3.20pm. There was a line of birders with scopes and bins viewing the pool the side of the road, so we left Lyca in the car and made our way over to join them.

We raised our bins and scanned our way through the reeds, weeds and mud at the back but couldn't see anything for the life of us.....Grrrrrr! They're tricky birds to spot at the best of times but this was just ridiculous! We tried to work out where to look by the angle of the scopes but we still couldn't see them, so eventually resorted to asking a guy with a scope. He kindly offered up his scope to Wendy just as I finally managed to pin one of the 5x **Jack Snipe** down in my bins...Phew! In the end we managed to find 3 of them and although I tried to get a record shot they were just too far away, so I gave up :(There was also a **Little Grebe** on the pool and in desperation we scanned the hedge bordering the field behind where I'd had R.O last year but there was nothing else about. As we headed back to the car I reckoned that Gramborough Hill could be worth a check even though there'd been nothing reported from there all day.

I parked up at Salthouse layby just opposite Grout's Lane and we set off walking down Beach road for our last try at finding something for the day. There were **Teal** on one of the pools and Lyca managed to flush a **Curlew** and **Grey Plover** a bit further down. We found 2x **Stonechats** sitting on posts and Reed Buntings and Meadow Pipits weren't in short supply. We also came across an absolute monster of a Parasol Mushroom.



Massive fungi!

We started to wonder if we were just flogging a dead horse bird wise in trying to add anything to our list but eventually we heard the squealing of a **Water Rail** and spotted a **Wheatear**. As we approached Gramborough Hill we'd already concluded that it was dead and this was made even more depressing by the fact that it was by then so cold that our ears were sore.



Gramborough Hill

To annoy Wendy I suggested we walk over to the little eye area where we find some nice habitat in September and to give Lyca a bit more of a walk. Wendy wasn't best pleased with this but in my favour was the fact that it might keep my raging IBS at bay a little longer. We wandered over along the shingle ridge and we spotted this odd thing floating in the sea, which was about the size of a small car.



Alien spaceship...

I can only assume it was something from a Gas rig or Wind farm?
Further along we came across one of the many WW2 bunkers which I always like to see but Wendy isn't bothered about at all. I wouldn't have fancied my chances in one of them if the Germans were invading!



Bunker

Hanging around this bunker was a Wheatear that wasn't that flighty but annoyingly I couldn't get a particularly clear shot of it.



Wheatear

In the nearby gorse bushes I spotted a small Warbler flitting around so since these bushes were about 20m from the North Sea my mind went into overdrive wondering what we'd just found. Unfortunately after it showed again it was just a Chiffchaff but even so both these birds were showing that there was some movement going on.



Chiffchaff

We finally gave up as the only other birds we could find were more Reed Buntings so we headed back to the car.

It was 4.40pm when we got back and we decided to go home via the Ring Ouzel road just in case they'd miraculously reappeared, although there'd been no new reports of them. It started to rain heavily and the bushes were just as dead as they'd been earlier so we headed for home.

Ten minutes later and we were back in the comfort of HQ and I sat down with my ipad to catch up with the world. There'd been a Siberian Accentor in Shetland (a first for Britain) and Steve Gantlett was on the case on twitter already appealing for a lift from any other interested twitcher. He was wanting to get from Norfolk to Aberdeen, which would be an 8 ½ hour drive to catch the flight at 6.10am to Shetland in the morning :O! Now that's a bird and a half but I can't say I was remotely tempted to make that kind of journey, maybe if it was somewhere in England we would have attempted it! After she'd fed Lyca Wendy set about making her tea by roasting some of her greenhouse tomatoes in garlic olive oil and heating her spinach and ricotta filo parcel in the oven. Does she think she's Nigella or something, what's wrong with beans on toast? I wasn't feeling like anything and ended up falling asleep on the settee and didn't wake up again until after she'd finished! She then went off for a bath and after that I supposed I should have one too. I didn't want to make my IBS any worse but I had to have something and eventually made some pasta with Bolognese sauce. Looking at the forecast it looked as though all the best winds were going to be aiming at East Yorkshire tomorrow, so all our hopes of seismic activity down in Norfolk looked set to be under threat. The TV was uninspiring, so we started to watch the Birding in Europe DVD I'd bought and eventually at 10.24pm we retired to bed to catch up on Butterfly Isles.

Monday 10th October

It was 7.45am when we woke up and excitingly it had rained heavily overnight but was now dry. With the Easterly winds that is as near to perfect conditions as you can get on this coast so I decided to go out to see if anything had been put down. By the time I'd let Lyca out, got dressed and eaten my breakfast it was later than I'd hoped and I didn't leave until 8.25am :[.

It took me 5 minutes to get to Walsey Hills and I quickly checked the roadside pool to see if anything else had appeared on there. Unfortunately there wasn't anything and a scan along the trees edging the pool on the left resulted in nothing either. Uh oh, not a good sign. Walking through the trees it was so quiet it wasn't funny. I eventually heard a **Cetti's Warbler** singing and a Marsh Harrier flew over when I had got up on the hill but apart from that and a few Redwing here and there it was worryingly dead. I knew not to flog the area as you could tell nothing had come in so I gave up and headed back to the car. As I was getting in a woman approached me and said "Are you the Manxman?" I was slightly confused by this but said "I am a Manxman aye". She shook me by the hand and said she had seen the car about and wanted to stop me as she used to live in the Isle of Man! Mental. She now lives in Yorkshire and was down on a birding holiday. She told me that the Jack Snipe were still on the pool and that she'd just been watching them.... Urghgh. She left so I thought I'd better go for another look at the Pool but they'd disappeared again.....Typical! I gave up at 9am and went back to HQ.

It was 9.53am when we finally headed out for the day and Stiffkey Camp Site Woods seemed as good a place as any to kick off with. Surely migrants had dropped in somewhere along the coast overnight. Wendy made me stop at Stiffkey Stores so she could stock up on the Pumpkin Pie Bars (what's wrong with a humble Mars Bar?) that she'd become addicted to since our last trip.

We arrived at the car park at 10.10am and when we got out of the car it was absolutely freezing. There were loads of Goldcrests in the woods which was finally a good sign and trawling through them all was as usual a slow process. There were some other birders hanging around but none of them looked particularly happy, not that that's anything unusual :P. Having resigned ourselves to the fact that there were no hidden gems in amongst them we carried on along the water-logged path hoping for some better luck in the copse at the end.



Stiffkey wood

Reality soon kicked us back into touch though when we discovered that there were literally no other birds in there at all....Urrghhhh! We stood for a while and it was so quiet you could've heard a pin drop until we heard the rustling of leaves above us. We looked up to find 3x young **Grey Squirrels** chasing each other through the treetops, which broke the boredom and provided us with some quality entertainment for a few minutes. When they'd gone we took a wander out into the field to check the other side of the trees but there was still nothing so we started to head back through the copse.



Stiffkey wood

Lyca was enjoying sniffing around amongst all the fallen leaves around the tree trunks and was slightly ahead of us. All of a sudden a **Woodcock** flew up from the ground and shot off through the trees like lightning. Sometimes having her around pays off and if she hadn't been with us we almost certainly wouldn't have seen it. At least we'd managed to see something in there and it was a bird we reckoned we'd struggle for elsewhere. We walked back the majority of the way outside of the wood, thinking that with the sun behind us we might have a better chance of seeing something at the edge of the wood.



Edge of the wood

Obviously, like most of our plans, this didn't work and it wasn't long before we got back to the car park. At the car it was 11.20am and really sunny, so the view over the marshes and East Hills was impressive. It was nearly lunchtime so there was no point going anywhere else before we'd eaten. Checking my phone I saw that there'd been a Great Grey Shrike and a couple of Ring Ouzels reported at Burnham Overy Dunes and a Radde's Warbler over in Holkham Pines.

Knowing that migrants like to drop in in mid-afternoon in Norfolk I really wanted to give it a shot as there was a chance of more stuff arriving while we were out there too. I drove off and stopped at Holkham 1st so we could take advantage of the WC's and Wendy couldn't resist a look in Adnam's the poncy shop for pressies and came out with a bag of goodies. After wasting a suitable amount of time I carried on to the layby at the top of the road at Burnham Overy and we cracked open the lunch bag. A flock of **Golden Plover** flew over as we sat munching on our sarnies watching some very dubious looking clouds drifting towards us. We decided to just go for it anyway and as soon as we'd got everything together and were about to cross the road it started to rain. Great timing!

The footpath was pretty muddy compared to the last time we'd been there 2 weeks ago so we had to try and skirt Lyca around the worst of it. We had a scan of the marsh when we got to the bottom and apart from a **Shelduck** the waders were so far away it was impossible to ID any of them without a scope. Wendy walked up on the sea wall while I stayed down in the ditch with Lyca to avoid any other dogs. I thought I'd have a bit of fun with my Go-pro and set it to record the walk with Wendy in view :P. Yet again she was stopped by a random stranger for a chat and I crossed my fingers that I wasn't going to be standing around for the next hour waiting. He turned out to be a nice bloke who'd stopped to tell her about the Shrike and after giving her directions and saying, "There's lots of birders there, so you can't miss it" she thanked him and we carried on. Nearer the dunes I went back up onto the sea wall after realizing that we'd seen hardly any people and there hadn't been one dog on it at all. What a difference two weeks makes!



Burnham sea wall

Down at the bottom Wendy shrieked, "Birds!" when a flock of Reed Buntings and Meadow Pipits flew in and landed on the wire fencing. I turned to look but then out of nowhere a **Great Grey Shrike** appeared on one of the posts ahead of us and we both looked at it in disbelief with our mouth agape :O! Lucky or what? We really couldn't believe what had just happened but I quickly tried to fire off some shots of it before it flew off across the boardwalk and into a bush on the

left. I handed Lyca over to Wendy and followed it even though there was no cover to make an approach behind.



Burnham Overy Dunes

The bird was very wary and watching my every movement. If I made one step forward it would fly to a bush 5metres further back.....Clever bird. Eventually it went on a bush at the back, which enabled me to crouch behind a nearby bush to cover my approach. This just about worked and I was able to get slightly closer but it was still a long way off. This shot was taken with my 1.4x extender on.



Great Grey Shrike

The bird was far too clever to try and get close for a cracking shot so I turned back and rejoined Wendy and Lyca.

We certainly hadn't expected that to happen but the rush of adrenaline had given us the boost we needed for the rest of the walk ahead of us. Needless to say that the Ring Ouzel's that'd been in the boardwalk bushes earlier had already gone and there was nothing in them by then. This was disappointing considering the conditions and that we'd seen more action in them 2 weeks ago! We headed off into the dunes and quickly found a small group of birders who were dotted around a mound beside a field. We asked them what they had and they said, "Great Grey Shrike." Errrrrrrrrr? Did that mean there were actually 2 birds around? That would've been a bit exciting and Wendy couldn't resist asking but none of them knew. It did seem strange that we'd just seen one that'd cleared off in the opposite direction while they'd been looking at theirs. They then said that they hadn't seen it for a while, so it was probably the same bird but we'll never know for sure.

It was a pleasant walk through the dunes, as always, even though it was non-eventful after the initial buzz from the GGS.



Burnham Overy Dunes

When we reached the Pines we found a pair of **Blackcaps** and there were loads of Redwing, which had presumably just arrived. We weren't entirely sure where the Radde's was, so we followed the footpath until we found a couple of birders sitting on the ground. Thinking we must've found the spot we stopped and hung around until we realized that there was absolutely nothing happening. In the end we asked them and they told us to go through the clearing into the reeds and follow the flattened area until we found the other birders. Doh! We followed their instructions and found the others who were all standing around looking bored.....nothing new there! It didn't look or sound like any of them had seen it for quite some time, so we prepared ourselves for another dip. Lyca lay down in the reeds at the side of the path and in the full sun it was far too hot for what we were wearing. Some of the others were obviously feeling the heat too and were sporting huge sweat patches on their T-shirts and eventually we had to take our coats off too. By the time we heard a Yellow browed Warbler calling we'd

practically given up and it was beginning to feel like your typical Warbler twitch....Urghhhh! To help alleviate the boredom the Yellow Browed Warbler came out into the open and everyone with a camera started firing off the shots. I had a go but it was so far away I didn't end up with anything remotely decent. By then Wendy was starting to worry that someone was going to accidentally stand on Lyca due to the fact that everyone seemed to have acquired ants in their pants and she was so well camouflaged. I wasn't ready to give up yet and wanted to stick it out for a bit longer and luckily another YBW came on the scene to distract her for a few more minutes. After what seemed like hours and still having had no sightings of the Radde's I had to admit defeat and call it a day, much to Wendy's relief. Lyca as usual had been very well behaved and knew exactly what to do when she's involved in a twitch.

We left the others to it at 2.45pm and headed back on the footpath hearing another YBW.



Raddes twitch

This meant that we knew of 3 in just that area but we'd overheard one of the birders saying he'd had 6 earlier! Back at the gate at Dusky corner we noticed that there were Robins everywhere, so there'd obviously just been a fall of them. They were everywhere! There was nothing new in the dunes and even the bushes at the boardwalk were very quiet. Walking back up past the marshes Wendy noticed a very white looking large Gull and after watching it flying around she suggested that it was a Glaucous Gull. This seemed a ridiculous idea in October so we dismissed it as the light was pretty harsh and could be reflecting on the white feathers of any old gull. It did appear to be fairly large and hefty though, so this bugged us the whole way back up the hill to the car.



Burnham seawall

It was 4.05pm when we got back to the car and the walk hadn't seemed as long as we remembered it from the past. We'd done 19,500 steps but it hadn't felt like it at all. I got some reports in and pulled out my phone to see if there'd been anything interesting seen. Unbelievably the Radde's had shown at 2.45pm the exact time we'd left AND worse still was an Ortolan Bunting in the dunes just ½ hour ago when we were probably walking up the track to the car!

Aarrghhhhhhhh! We should've predicted something like that happening and pitched a tent for night instead of leaving but it was too late and neither of us fancied doing the same walk all over again. Typical!

Back at HQ it was 4.48pm and as soon as we set foot through the door Wendy noticed that the house felt decidedly cold. I reckoned that perhaps the heating was on a timer and didn't come on until 6pm but she wasn't convinced. She gave Lyca her tea and then set about doing ours, which was much needed and went down a treat. While we were eating Wendy remembered that we'd been back earlier for the past 2 days and it'd been lovely and warm when we'd got in. Not sure as to what was going on I went off to clean the bath after mine the night before while she cleared up but we both found that there was no hot water. Uh oh! Great! I went to check the timer, which was showing that the heating should've been on. It clearly wasn't so I found the boiler in one of the small rooms but couldn't hear it running and finally I checked outside and found the boiler exhaust, which wasn't running either, so there was definitely a problem.....Nooo! Back in the house I trawled through the info booklet and found a phone number in case of any problems and spoke to a very nice bloke. He said he'd send someone out as soon as possible to have a look but I had a horrible feeling that we were out of oil and that wasn't going to be fixed for a while. I tried to reassure Wendy that even if there was no heating or hot water we'd be OK and would just have to wrap up but she was having none of it. It'd been a while, well since arriving at Eastgate 2 weeks ago, but what followed was a full on Karl Pilkington. Since being cold is her most hated thing there was no way she was going to freeze to death in a cold house. Nor did she like the idea of not be able to have a bath or wash her hair until Saturday, so she wasn't prepared to stay there if it couldn't be sorted. This is how I imagine living with

Kim Kardashian would be! Now that we knew someone was coming round neither of us could settle and we didn't want him ringing the doorbell and setting Lyca off on a barking frenzy, so I hung around the door. I'd be able to see car headlights coming up the drive and Wendy would be able to get Lyca out of the way before that happened. Fortunately we weren't hanging round for long and within ½ hour I saw a car approach and Wendy ushered Lyca into the downstairs bedroom and shut the door. I had the task of meeting and greeting as well as explaining the problem and he went off to investigate. A few minutes later and he was back and I held my breath waiting for his diagnosis. Luckily the pressure had just dropped in the locked tank outside, so he'd sorted it and we were up and running again.....Phew! I thanked him and off he went, so Wendy was free to let Lyca out and celebrated by running herself a much-needed hot bath to relax in. Panic over and normality resumed we settled down to watch a program about the Painted Lady Butterfly. By 10.20pm we were ready for bed, so I took Lyca out for a wee. It was a very calm and still evening outside without even a breath of wind and the only sound I heard was the barking of a Deer nearby.

Tuesday 11th October

We didn't wake up until 7.40am and peering through the curtains it was grey outside and threatening rain. After we'd had breakfast and got everything together we set off at 9.09am back to Stiffkey campsite car park, as there were still easterly winds, so surely there had to be some migrants to find at one of the hotspots? A **Hen Harrier** floated over the road ahead of us on the way and I parked up at 9.23am. The great thing about birding Norfolk in Autumn is that all of the places we want to go to are a stones throw away, so I don't have any long drives :).

This time we were doing the Warham Greens path to see if we could find ourselves a Ring Ouzel at the Whirlygig or, if our usual skills continued, absolutely nothing! You've got to be in it to win it as they say and we were in a great spot, so we headed off with our fingers crossed.



Warham Greens

There were birds in every bush, so our levels of optimism were raised straight away but having to check them all made our progress slow. We'd be there all day at that rate but we weren't complaining, as it's rare to see so much activity and could only be a good sign.



Redwing

We managed to flush another Woodcock from the side of the path, which flew off across the path and into the fields. Unfortunately due to the recent rain the path was really muddy but Lyca is quite good at skirting around the worst bits.....when the mood takes her! Wendy stopped to check a bird she'd seen in a bramble bush ahead and when it hopped out into the open we were pleased to see that it was a **Whinchat**. Having filled our boots with Whinchats 2 weeks ago we knew they were going to be in much shorter supply during this week. There were birds flying around and flitting between bushes everywhere and we didn't know where to look. Even though they'd all been common birds so far you just never know when you're going to find yourself something more interesting. Wendy saw a **Vole** running across the path ahead and luckily Lyca didn't spot it, nor did I for that matter. When we got to the Whirlygig we saw our 1st black bird, which of course was just a Blackbird as were all the numerous others....Grrrrrrr! Was finding our own Ring Ouzel too much to ask for in a Ring Ouzel hotspot?



Warham Greens

We walked all the way round the area having seen nothing but Blackbirds, so we rolled our eyes in disbelief. Wendy spotted a small Warbler flying in, which made us both notice a Blackbird dropping into the same bush shortly after. Both were deep in the cover of the branches so we couldn't see either but we were prepared to wait. Next we heard a call that made our ears prick up which was echoed by a 2nd bird. There were 2x **Ring Ouzels** in there somewhere and all we wanted was to see them! We slowly skirted around the bushes hoping to find them round the back but instead they both shot out of the bush and cleared right off into the distance calling to each other as they went. This made us vaguely pleased but having not had a decent view of them we were also left feeling disappointed and slightly deflated. In the end we decided that it was totally typical of our luck but at least we'd found our own Ring Ouzel's, which is what we'd wanted from the start. Un-deterred we carried on and found some **Redpoll** and heard a **Brambling** in a tree, which were both new birds for the trip. We then heard a sound, which made us look up and watched as 2x Tornados flew over.



Tornado

Eventually we got to the bottom of Garden Drove and firstly we checked the field opposite where the Redstart had been the other day, which is always a good place to check. There was nothing about apart from a nice **Comma**, so we wandered over to the copse. We made our way through it, round it and even checked the back of it from the field but apart from loads more Goldcrests and a **Great Spotted Woodpecker** there was nothing of note and no sign of the RB fly either. Instead of turning back like we usually would I was keen to keep going especially as there was so much going on. We heard another Brambling but that was it, so we decided to give up. There were some people walking a big black dog heading towards us and as Lyca hates big black dogs I took her back up to the copse to let them go past. While I was up there I bumped into local birder Penny Clarke, who asked had I seen anything. I told her what we'd seen and she said she'd just arrived and thanked me for my info. We had another wander around the Whirlygig before we left but there were hardly any birds around during the whole walk back. Everywhere was pretty dead which considering we didn't know where to look next earlier was a huge contrast. Had we arrived much later we would've had a totally different experience. We've lost count of the amount of times we've been in the right place at the wrong time and this just proved that luck is the key.

Back at the car it was 12.35pm, so we grabbed our lunch from the back. While we ate it we admired the view and were pleasantly surprised by the sight of some **Grey Partridge** flying over the marshes. We used to see them in arable fields but these days we only seem to see them where we least expect to like in sand dunes or salt marshes, so they've obviously had to seek out a sustainable way of life elsewhere away from the millions of released Pheasants. I had a couple of reports come in on my phone, one was a Barred Warbler at Cley and the other was an Olive-backed Pipit at Wells Woods. Having only seen 1 before we both considered OBP to be of the most interest, so that was our next plan sorted even though we knew from experience that OBPs in Wells Woods are like trying to find a needle in a haystack.

When we arrived at Wells Woods it was 1.09pm and we set off to The Dell glad that we now knew where it was.



The Dell! (Honest)

On the way we spoke to a bloke who told us that the OBP hadn't been seen again since it'd been reported earlier. Our hearts sank, it's hard enough to see them even when they're surrounded and we could already see how this was going to pan out! When we mentioned the fact that it'd been seen in The Dell he threw an annoying spanner in the works. Up until that point we'd been feeling quite good at having finally pinned The Dell down after all these years but he told us to forget that! New local Birders were now referring to the open grassy area next to the footpath where we'd had the Redstart years ago, at the entrance to The Dell (which we'd only just managed to find) as The Dell.....Grrrrrrrrr! This was going to cause a lot of confusion for everyone, surely? Maybe that was the intention? We had a quick scan of the new Dell noticing that there were no birders or birds around and quickly carried on to the old Dell. There wasn't much going on in there either, so we wandered through the trees until a Jay flew in and landed in a tree nearby with an acorn. This was the kind of Jay shot I'd been wanting for years, so I started to raise my camera slowly but as usual it clocked me and flew off.....Booooooooo :(They're clever birds, which is probably why they're so impossible to photograph. Next we hit a Tit/Crest flock and all of a sudden there were birds everywhere. We went through them all hoping to stumble across our own Pallas' Warbler or something but the best we came up with was a **Garden Warbler** in the flock. Wendy spotted something small dive into the undergrowth at the bottom of a bush and in looking for that we had a good view of a Brambling, which was nice. Having covered the area thoroughly we started to head back through the woods and after I'd done well recently to avoid it I inevitably ended up standing in dog poo.....Grrrrr!



Wells woods

I was fuming but Wendy found it hilarious, which didn't help matters at all. Why is it always me....Doh! Wendy didn't find it so funny when the poo was on the other foot and it was her turn on a walk around Derbyhaven at Christmas though.....Hahahahaha! I dragged and scraped my foot through as much long grass as I could but it's stubborn stuff and just wouldn't budge and was going to require me to find a puddle somewhere before I got into my car.

Having just dipped on another OBP at Wells Woods we were back at the car by 2.11am and luckily there was a conveniently placed puddle of recent rain at hand. After I'd swished my boot around in it sufficiently to complete the clean up job I could get in and sit down. Before we left Wendy went over to the WC's and on her way back she stopped to watch an F15 flying around noisily. As we still had time we decided to give the Barred Warbler at Cley a go so we left at 2.26pm just as I got a report of a Little Bunting at (the supposedly inaccessible) East Hills. What's the betting that it'd turn up at Warham Greens in the morning? I made a diversion to Cley Visitor Centre and Wendy ran in and grabbed a gluten free Bakewell Tart, which was very nice indeed. In the car park a couple in their late 70s stopped and stared at my car and through Wendy's open window said, "Are you from the Isle of Man?" Wendy laughed and said, "Yes" and they went on to tell us that they'd been there in 2008 and had enjoyed it very much. They obviously weren't birders then :P.

I parked up at the side of the road at West Bank at 3.03pm to the biggest twitch we'd seen all week.



West Bank (Norfolk, not Israel)

Considering it was for a Barred Warbler it was quite a turn out and an indication that the predicted seismic activity just wasn't happening in Norfolk. We climbed up the bank and took our positions to stare at the distant bramble bush we were informed the bird was in. It was a good job someone was looking elsewhere when a bloke called 2x **White-fronted Geese** flying in, which were more than likely to be the birds we'd dipped on the other day. We then overheard someone saying that the warbler had been showing minutes before we'd turned up, which sounded just about right for us. As we stood staring at the bush we $\frac{1}{2}$ heard a woman casually and quietly say something that sounded like, "Otter." Nobody else flinched but after my brain had caught up I glanced at the pool in the marsh only to see 2x **Otters** swimming around. I shrieked, "Wendy, Wendy, Otter!!!!" and unbelievably there were 3x Otters in the pool, our 1st Otters in England never mind Norfolk! Others heard my commotion and started looking at the pool as well and although they were a bit distant I got a shot where you can just about tell there were Otters there.



Who'd have thought that after we'd had to take a trip to the Outer Hebrides to see our 1st Otter we'd be watching them at Cley? Not us in a million years! They all swam to the edge nearest to us so we lost sight of them behind the reeds and didn't see them again but we'd have been more than happy to leave with just the Otters seeing as the warbler was nowhere to be seen. We stayed put for a bit longer half hoping the Otters would appear again but they didn't. I spotted a **Barnacle Goose** in the field with the other geese, which was another new bird for the trip. The only action we saw from the bramble bush was a Blackcap and a Robin, which had caused a few false alarms but all of a sudden someone called it. We quickly got our bins onto the spot and slap bang in the middle of the 2 other birds was the **Barred Warbler**.....Finally! Everyone let out a cheer and I grabbed a very distant record shot.



Barred Warbler (top), Blackcap (bottom)

It was just a Barred Warbler but the reaction it got was something else with people whooping, cheering and saying, "I saw its arse!" Unbelievable! It quickly disappeared again so it seemed like a good time to leave, so we went back to the car and left the others to it.

When we left it was 3.30pm and too early to head for home. A single **Swallow** flew over the road and towards the marshes, so we hoped it would catch up with the others somewhere along the line soon. My lack of lens protection on my bins was beginning to annoy me so our next stop was the big Cley Spy shop in Glandford. We've been there before and it was the only place we could think of in the area that might be able to solve my problem. We both ventured into the shop and as always we were the only ones in there. We awkwardly browsed the entire shop without any joy and where just about to walk out when I spotted what I was after behind the counter. The guy behind it asked if he could help, so I told him my predicament. He asked if I could go and get my bins so he could size them up and I went out to the car to get them. While I was gone he told

Wendy that some snotty woman had brought some back in a huff because they didn't fit hers so if he could find them and they fitted mine then I could have them. Imagine my surprise when I returned from the car and he produced some from out the back, which just about fitted and I was told I could have them for nothing! How nice of him was that? I felt a bit awkward just taking something without paying for it or buying anything else from the shop but he was quite insistent so I thanked him and we left.

Back at the car I got a report of the Radde's again as well as the OBP at Wells, so yet again we'd been in the right place at the wrong time.....Doh! On the way home I stopped outside The Three Swallows Pub in Cley, which looked nice and was within walking distance from HQ. We wanted to check that it was dog friendly and had something we could both eat on the menu before going there later. When Wendy got to the front door she saw a closed sign hanging in the window and there didn't look as though there were any lights on, which she thought was a bit odd. She started to head back to the car and noticed an old couple also trying their luck but when they opened the door and went in they gave Wendy the nod that it was open. She went inside and checked that we could bring Lyca and started to take photos of the menu on her phone so she could show me. The Barmaid stepped in and gave her a printed menu to take away, so that was our next plan sorted.

When we got back to HQ I got another report, which was that an Arctic Warbler had been seen in Wells Woods as well as the Radde's and OBP. Oh flipping heck! :(Wendy gave Lyca her tea and then did a quick washing cycle and hung it all up to dry on the radiators. A **Fieldfare** landed in the garden and hopped around on the lawn and by 5.50pm we were ready to go out.

We took a lovely short walk to the pub down a track and through a gate into the grounds of a huge church.



Cley Church

The sun was setting behind the hills and the sky was bright orange and looked very impressive. There was a notice to dog owners about picking up the poo but it didn't seem to be working as there was far too much of it around for our

liking.....Grrrrrr! Surrounded by gravestones Lyca must've felt right at home, as one of her favourite walks back at home is around the local cemetery!

We grabbed a seat in the back of the pub, so unfortunately we didn't have a view of the sunset but it was nice anyway. Both of us already knew what we were having after seeing the menu Wendy had been given earlier, so she went up to the bar to order. I ordered off the small plates menu because I wanted to leave some room for pudding and chose chicken in breadcrumbs with chips and roll (no salad or course!) and Wendy got the carrot and coriander soup. While we waited Wendy went outside to explore the beer garden, which was huge!



The Three Swallows Pub

She was really impressed and wondered why on earth we hadn't been there before. It was nicely done out inside, had a great beer garden with a cracking view, friendly staff and a decent, reasonably priced menu, so we crossed our fingers that the food would be of the same standard.



Interesting table!

When it arrived I couldn't believe the size of my portion considering it was meant to be a small plate meal! Wendy as usual nicked a few of my chips but I had so much I let her off this time. The food was very nice but I was gutted to find that I was so stuffed after I'd finished that I didn't have room for any pudding, not even 'a waffer thin mint'.....Boooooo :(Lyca was very naughty and growled at the nice lady who came to take our plates away, which made her jump. Apparently a Labradoodle in the beer garden had bitten her during the summer and it'd made her a bit wary even though she'd always been a dog lover. Cheers Lyca!



Behaving....

She didn't bat an eyelid when we were given our food, so maybe it was the taking away from us she didn't like? Embarrassed by that, when we finished our food we made a hasty exit and headed back through the cemetery using my phone as a torch to avoid standing in any more dog poo. There was a woman with a torch walking her Labrador heading our way, so given Lyca's mood we avoided them.

Back at HQ it was 7pm and Wendy went off for a bath while I started to work out our bird list for the trip. It wasn't looking as though it was going to end up being very impressive but we were having fun and that was the main thing. We chilled out and watched some TV for the rest of the evening and by 10.20pm we were more than ready for bed.

Wednesday 12th October

Surprisingly it was Wendy who was up 1st at 7.25am and she'd gone downstairs to make a cappuccino without Lyca even stirring. I eventually surfaced at 8am so Lyca reluctantly decided to drag herself out of bed, have a stretch and go for a wee. It looked as though it was going to be a decent enough day and it'd rained over night, so I started to think about what to do. Given that the conditions were still easterlies I was more than keen to walk out to Blakeney Point to see what the rain had put down but Wendy didn't sound quite as keen. It had to be done though and she knew it, so resigned herself to the fact that the day ahead was going to mainly consist of walking on 8 miles of shingle. Having learned our

lesson on the Ben Macdui walk we were going prepared this time and were taking our lunch with us in the rucksack, which lucky old me was going to have to carry as well as my camera.....Urrghhhh! With everything ready we loaded up the car and left HQ at 9.35am just in time for the heavens to open.

Wendy had been wanting to go for a look in one of the shops in Blakeney, so with the weather being anything but favourable it seemed like a good time. I parked up in the car park at the top of the road and she walked down to it only to find that it was closed. She nipped into the Deli on the way back and grabbed us a pain au chocolat for extra fuel for the day ahead though, so it hadn't been an entirely wasted journey. Considering our day was meant to be an eventful one all we'd managed to do so far was eat and sit in the car watching the rain. It looked as though it was going to pass over though, so I drove to the Cley beach car park, paid for a ticket and parked up.



Here we go!

Two minutes later the rain stopped, so we made our move and got our stuff together. I'd spotted a lone Golden Plover in the field in front of the carpark so I quickly grabbed a photo before we set off across the shingle at 10.10am.



Golden Plover

There were 2 other birders ahead of us, so we weren't the only nutters attempting Blakeney Point that day. The more birders out there meant more pairs of eyes which potentially would be all the better for finding stuff.....in our dreams! We hadn't been going for very long when we spotted some small birds scuttling about around some dried up plants on the shingle. We raised our bins and waited for them to reappear only to find a couple of Reed Buntings. There was another bird somewhere and we were hoping for a Little Bunting after one had been reported yesterday. When it emerged finally it wasn't what we'd hoped for but it was a **Mealy Redpoll**, which we couldn't really sniff at. Next up we found a **Skylark** but every other bird we saw was a Reed Bunting. We obviously checked them all in case any of them was a Little Bunting but that'd be asking too much. All of a sudden the action started and we watched a stream of birds flying in from the sea and diving down straight into the cover of the Sueda. There were Redwing, Blackbirds and Brambling, which was quite exciting to see. Carrying on I heard a call which rung a bell, so my ears pricked up and I called, "**Lapland Bunting!**" to Wendy. Last time I found a Lap it was by call when a small flock turned up at Fort Island a few years ago, so I knew it instantly. I found the bird on the shingle with a couple more Reed Bunts and handed Lyca over to Wendy while I attempted a shot. The birds were quite flighty and excellent at diving into the Sueda so I couldn't get a shot at all! :(In the ditch on the inland side of the shingle ridge a Grey Plover flew past so I attempted a shot of that even though I was only using my small gear. There was no way I was carrying my big kit for 8 miles... no way!



Grey Plover

Further along we came across another Brambling, more Redwing which were flying in and out of the sveda and loads more Reed Bunts, so there was plenty of action going on. Interestingly the next bird we saw coming in off the sea was a Woodpigeon, which surprised us but it didn't stop and carried on inland. A Woodpigeon?

By the time we'd reached our 1st milestone The Halfway House (which is actually only a 3rd of the way) it was 11.40am and sunny.



Halfway house (more like third way house!)

It'd only taken us 1 ½ hours to get there which we felt was pretty good considering we'd been stopping every few feet to check copious amounts of Reed

Buntings. Another Little Bunting had been recently seen in the area of The Hood, so instead of carrying on we thought it was worth a diversion just in case the bird was still hanging around. This was timely for Wendy who was desperate for a wee and in search of some cover to hide behind. While she was concentrating on that I shrieked, "**Short-eared Owl!**" as I watched it too coming in off the sea. Wendy nearly fell over backwards but managed to compose herself in time to watch it float over the marshes and eventually drop down into cover. Woo Hoo! After the Lap and SEO we now had our 2nd wind and were ready to do the next $\frac{2}{3}$ of the walk to the point where we planned to have lunch and find us a rarity.....Hahahahah! When we got to the Little Bunting zone we stopped for a scan finding nothing but 2x Chaffinches and a Fieldfare :(Some Grey Partridge were flushed from the beach and shot off across the marshes and there was a **Gannet** out over the sea but we seemed to have hit a dead patch for the rest of the trudge.



The Hood

When we finally arrived at the point we took a wander over to the Coastguards Building 1st and there seemed to be a lot going on in the brambles nearby.



Blakeney Point

We needed our lunch though so we decided we'd go back after that.

It was 1.10pm when we finally sat down and I could take the rucksack off my back and put my camera down.....Phew! One thing was for sure though and that was that the rucksack would be a damn sight lighter on the way back. We sat in our usual spot in front of The Plantation, which is more Bonsai than actual plantation :P.



Me and Lyca doing a Bill Oddie impression

This is the famous spot where Bill Oddie said that if you waited for long enough birds would appear as if from nowhere. As we wolfed down our sarnies and crisps we raised our bins to check every movement but found nothing more exciting than a few Goldcrests :(After we'd eaten and put the rubbish into a bag we gave up and headed back over to the Coastguards where all the action had been earlier.



Blakeney Point

There were 2 other birders sitting on a bench when we got back, so it was obviously a known spot and for all we know could be better than the plantation. I nipped into the WC's and put our rubbish into the bin while I was in there but compared to earlier there wasn't much going on in the brambles at all. I was just about to walk off when I noticed Wendy writing some notes, so I glanced back at the brambles only to see a brief view of a Ring Ouzel! :O! I called it to Wendy but by the time she'd looked up from her notepad it'd vanished. We waited for a bit to see if it'd come out again but there was no sign and it started to chuck it down with rain. We hid behind the WC's in an attempt to shelter from the worst of it but it seemed to be hitting us from every angle. After taking a daft selfie where I was meant to get the Coastguards in the background but failing to, we bit the bullet and decided to head back regardless and set off into the rain at 1.52pm.



Say, "Cheese"



That looks dodgy!

There was a patch of blue sky coming in but behind them were more black clouds, which were of course heading our way, so we put our skates on and upped the pace. When the rain stopped and the sun came out the wind dried us off quite nicely but that was short lived. No sooner were we dry than it started again.....Grrrrrrrr! Luckily for me I'd sorted some lens caps for my bins the day before.....Phew! It was becoming increasingly difficult to see out of our glasses as the rain was hitting us head on but luckily the **Whimbrel** that flew over called to alert us to it's presence. Just after Halfway House we spotted some **Turnstone** down on the beach and the rain stopped again. We saw a **Razorbill** flying over the sea and yet again just as we'd dried off the rain started again. This time it was heavier than ever and we were soaked through in no time at all. We could feel the water trickling down our legs and into our boots and dreaded to think how long they'd take to dry out. We couldn't see much by that point but we kicked up the Lap again in the spot as where we'd found it.



How is it not raining?!

I handed Lyca back to Wendy and tried to get some more shots but we really wanted to get back to the car by then. This time though I managed to pin the blighter down and got an ok shot!



Lapland Bunting

The last stretch of shingle felt like it went on forever and that we'd never get back but eventually we set foot on the concrete car park, which felt unbelievably good.

We were back at the car sitting in puddles of rain by 3.50pm and I got a report of a Black Brant at Cley. Neither of us had the will to go and look for it and just wanted to get dry and warm up. I checked my stats and found that the walk had been 19,800 steps, 8.55 miles and we'd burned 1600kcal although we both admitted that it wasn't the grueling torture we'd remembered it as and was much easier than we'd expected. Not that we were planning on repeating it again in a hurry, even if something amazing was found! There was only one more thing to do before going home and that was for Wendy to go to the shop she'd found closed earlier. She wanted to have a look in another one too for inspiration so I dropped her off outside. The shop is full of locally made stuff at high prices, so in her dripping wet walking gear she felt slightly out of place in such exclusive surroundings. A bloke walked in and started to talk to the woman who presumably owned the shop about his day out. He was telling her how he'd walked to the Church and got soaked in the rain which made Wendy want to scream, "Yeah tell me about it!" at him because he looked dry as bone compared to her. She had a good look around and then carried on up the street with her waterproofs sticking to her legs until she got to the next shop. Luckily it was open and she bought what she wished she had 2 weeks ago and hurried up to the car park where I'd been waiting for ages.

Back at HQ it 4.50pm and after getting out of our wet gear and putting our boots on the radiators we all had tea. Wendy enjoyed her bath more than ever and Lyca slept for the entire evening while we watched the Birding in Europe DVD.

By 9.20pm we were both nearly falling asleep and it wasn't because the DVD was boring either, so we decided that it was definitely bedtime. Zzzzzzzzzzz

Thursday 13th October

After sleeping like logs we were awake at 7.36am and were pleased to find that neither had suffered any ill effects from the Blakeney Point walk :). Our boots had dried out perfectly on the radiators but it was throwing it down with rain so we wondered how long they'd stay that way. We had a nice relaxing start to the day and Lyca was happy enough to resume her sleep after going outside for a wee. Wendy, after all of yesterdays exercise treated herself to some of her tomatoes on toast for breakfast and looking out of the patio door we spotted a Grey Squirrel in a tree at the bottom of the garden. A few minutes later and something my eye as well as Lyca's and she went nuts. She leapt off the settee and ran to the patio door barking at the sight of a **Roe Deer** running across the lawn, which was being followed in hot pursuit by another. Luckily Wendy saw them too, so we'd had some pretty good garden ticks at Jesmond making us want to stay there again even more. This was our last full day in Norfolk, so we wanted to make the most of it but with the weather looking so dodgy we weren't too sure what to do. I reckoned another pop at the OBP at Wells Woods was worth a shot and would also mean that we'd stay a bit sheltered from the rain amongst the trees.

We left at 10.13am and I made a detour to Cley Visitor Centre to see if they had the Birding in Lesvos DVD in stock. It was an idea I was toying with for next year but I wanted to do some research 1st to see what we could expect to see there during the different seasons. Unfortunately they didn't, so instead I bought some cake from the café as a consolation prize.....Om nom nom :). As we walked through the café we noticed the familiar faces of the head Moth Man and Dom Jolly lookalike from the moth trap event sitting at one of the tables with a few others. They must have regular meetings in there or something :O! They looked at us but didn't attempt to crack a smile, so we must've made a great impression! We'd already wasted enough time so we headed straight off to Wells.

It was 11am when I parked up at Wells Woods car park and there were dog walkers everywhere. Every time we thought the coast was clear another 3 would pop up from somewhere. Unbelievable, especially considering it was during the week! We spotted a clear window that would just give us enough time to get Lyca through the gate without any altercations and went for it while the going was good. Obviously we made a beeline for The Dell again but we weren't feeling hopeful. We heard a YBW and there were birds everywhere but every single one was a Goldcrest. We gave up and carried on through the trees to find the footpath and hit an area with a lot of activity, so we stopped. There was a photographer in there who looked very focused and serious so we wondered what he'd seen. All of a sudden a bird moved in the branches of a tree, so we raised our bins. It was just a Chiffchaff, so we waited again to see what else we could find.



Chiffchaff

There were birds moving about all around us and each time we got one in our bins it was just another Chiffer, but it was still obviously some kind of warbler movement we were witnessing. We optimistically crossed our fingers in the hope of something more interesting being amongst them but even with the biggest stretch of the imagination there wasn't :(Next we followed the path out onto the dunes to view the beach and Wendy went off to get some photos. She'd been after a particular shot of a beach through the dunes for ages and this was a perfect opportunity. She didn't stray far but I did start to wonder if she'd be able to find her way back again. I stood around waiting for her for quite some time until sure enough she popped out looking confused further down the path having got lost.....Useless!

We followed the path at the side of the woods and were very surprised to see another Woodcock, this time flying in off the beach. It zoomed over at a rate of knots and vanished into the woods having obviously just arrived after its migration and was the 3rd we'd now seen. This was pretty cool considering that sadly they are now on the endangered list :(When the path took its 1st turn off into the Woods we decided to follow it and it wasn't long before we found a Tit flock. Trawling through them we could only find all the usuals until we spotted a **Treecreeper** moving around amongst them. There were so many different types Fungi everywhere that Wendy couldn't resist getting photos of them all. She was using my point and click for this trip after being disappointed by the photos from hers 2 weeks ago. The macro capability on mine was the main difference and she was loving how easy it was to get a decent shot! A Jay flew in and landed on a branch right in front of us, so I raised my camera to attempt a shot. This was probably my last chance of the trip but yet again the little **** clocked me and was off like a rocket before I could even focus on it. Aarrghhhh!

At the drinking pool there were a few birders hanging around looking bored. We found a Tit/Crest flock and again there was nothing else in with them. We stood

around watching more and more birders turning up and after a while I got a report, which we didn't whether to believe or not. Apparently the OBP had been seen again from the southwest corner of the drinking pool while we were standing at the north end literally 20 yards away. Really? We hadn't seen anyone looking remotely like they had the bird in their bins and where was the crowd that would inevitably gather around it? It was all a bit odd. Something caught Wendy's eye and she pointed out a **Muntjac** up on a mound and with that we called it a day and headed back to the car. A **Peregrine** blasted over and we stopped to let Lyca make friends with a cute little Bichon Frise. It's always a good thing when she meets a dog she likes so we have to take a bit of time out so she can socialize. It's just a shame the little madam only seems to like small dogs of a similar breed to her own :(I wanted to give The Dell another quick scan, before we left, which Wendy thought was pointless. She was of course right but you never know. We walked back through the new area we'd found that looked good but it too was pointless but at least I didn't stand in dog poo this time.....Yey!



Deep in Wells Woods

When we got back to the car it was 1.44pm and I ran over to the WC's before leaving. We were absolutely freezing by then and hungry, so we ate our lunch in the car park. I got another report that the OBP had been seen at 1.20pm from over by the beach huts! Wouldn't you just know it? So near and yet so far and yet again it was a case of right place, wrong time.....Doh! We left at 2.14pm and the weather had taken a turn for the worse, so we really didn't know what to do next. We still needed Bearded Tit, so we thought Cley East Bank would be worth giving the once over.

It was 2.40pm when I parked up at the end of East Bank and we reluctantly got out of the car. It was blowing a gale and bitterly cold, so our enthusiasm levels dropped off a cliff. We'd started to feel a bit tired and were flagging by then too and even Lyca looked anything but raring to go. We battled our way down the bank in the horrendously strong wind and then it started to rain just to make matters even worse. About ½ way down Wendy's teeth were chattering and she'd had enough, so announced that she wanted to knock it on the head go back.

Those weren't her exact worse but you can probably imagine what they were :P. I handed Lyca over to her and said that I was going to go for a last look at the sea from the beach seeing as the wind was so strong. While Wendy walked as quickly as she possibly could with a very happy looking Lyca I battled it out down to the beach. I stood near another birder and took the icy blast for one last look to see if I could pull something interesting out. Typically the sea was as dead as ever so I rushed back to warm myself up. It was too early to go home, so Wendy suggested going to see if there were any sloes at Walsey Hills. It should be sheltered in there with all the trees and her Mum would really appreciate the sloes if there were any. She'd already checked the bushes there 2 weeks ago and hadn't found a single sloe but it was worth another look.

At 3.15pm I parked up and we went up the path with me looking for birds and Wendy looking for sloes. There were none in the usual places but eventually she did find some but the decent ones were all either too far into the undergrowth or too high up to reach and the rest were shriveled up and past it, so we gave up. When we got back to the car I got a report that turned all tomorrows plans upside down. There was now a Siberian Accentor in East Yorkshire! What the...? Eeek :O!!!!!! If it was still there tomorrow should we go for it? Surely we'd be crazy not to even though it would be a bit of a detour? This bird was a 1st for mainland Britain!

I drove back via the Deli for Wendy and we were back at HQ very cold and tired by 3.50pm. Wendy instantly started packing up and put all our dirty clothes on to wash. After rushing around trying to get things done it was time for tea and then baths. While Wendy carried on getting ready for our departure I set about hatching a few plans for how to spend our last day tomorrow, which was no easy task I can tell you!

Our options were:

- 1) Stay in Norfolk and stick to our usual routine.
- 2) Go to the Red-flanked Bluetail in Lincolnshire, which was not much of a detour from our usual Frampton marsh stop.
- 3) Clear off as early as possible and drive up to East Yorkshire to bag ourselves the rarest bird there'd been in Mainland Britain for years.

Oooooo decisions, decisions. I threw them at Wendy who instantly agreed with my gut instinct and that was to get the hell out of Norfolk and get our arses up to Yorkshire as quickly as humanly possible.....Sorted! This was a bird highly unlikely to EVER pop up in the UK during our lifetimes again (or so we thought), so was too good an opportunity to miss, so I did a bit of searching and found the best route there. Having wanted to visit Spurn Head for donkey's years I reckoned we could incorporate that into the day too depending on the time. It turned out that there was a Woodchat Shrike there, which was brilliant but then my heart sank.....big time. Spurn Head has a strict no dog policy and that means not even to be left in cars.....Boooooooooo :(That was the end of that idea then, so I eventually settled on visiting Flamborough Head instead, which is another good birding spot and another place I'd always wanted to visit. My head was full of plans and doubt that we were doing the right thing. Imagine all that driving only to find that the bird had gone?

Eventually I swapped planning for uploading the day's photos and was gutted to find that I'd forgotten to put the memory card back into the point and click. All the photos Wendy had taken during the day of the scenery and fungi weren't there.....Noooooooooooo! Slightly flabbergasted by this I asked her if she'd noticed the icon flashing in the corner of the screen or not checked any of her photos after taking them but she hadn't....Doh!

When Wendy had made our sarnies for tomorrow and done as much of the cleaning and packing up as she could we finally settled down to watch the Birding in Europe DVD. We heard the Tawny Owls calling outside again and they must've been in the trees in the garden as they were really close. We switched the TV off at 9.50pm and I put the dishes away before going to bed at 10am. I had a long day of driving ahead of me in the morning (and through a city!!) and I would need a clear head to do it. The question was, "Was it going to be worth all the effort or would the bird be gone?"

Friday 14th October

It was 7.30am when we got up although Wendy nearly got up at 6.35am but thought better of it considering she had to stay awake until 2.15am tomorrow morning. It was grey and overcast outside when I took Lyca out for a wee but that didn't matter if we weren't staying in Norfolk. The 1st thing I needed to find out was if the bird was still there or if it'd cleared off. If no reports of it came in there was no way I was driving all the way up to Yorkshire for nothing. After breakfast Wendy was busy rushing around getting everywhere cleaned and doing the remainder of our packing, so I took the opportunity to take our glass recycling to the Town Hall. The recycling collection at the cottage didn't include glass and there was a warning in the Guest Book that the bin men wouldn't take it either so we'd be charged for any found in the normal bin. What kind of weird system is that? It was quick and simple enough to take it down the road though and when I got back the report we'd been waiting for came it. "Siberian Accentor still in Easington" Woo Hoo! Not surprisingly it was attracting birders from all over the country, so we knew it was going to be very busy. From then on it was all systems go to get out as soon as possible and we still needed to return the key to the shop in Blakeney. When everything had been loaded into the car and the bin had been put out we waved, "Goodbye" to Jesmond, which had been one of our favourite cottages to date and drove away at 9.25am.



Jesmond

Wendy quickly ran into the Blakeney Cottage Company shop and handed the key over to the very smiley girl behind the desk. She asked if our stay had been a good one and Wendy told her it'd been great and then praised the speedy work regarding the boiler. She came running back out and then it was off to our next stop of Burnham Deepdale to fill up on petrol. When that was done we set off at 10.06am driving straight past all our usual last minute haunts, which really went against the grain. We didn't stop at Titchwell, Choseley or Flitcham, which we would normally rely on to boost our bird list on the last day. We were also ditching off Frampton Marsh so would loose out on even more birds! You know what they say though, it's quality not quantity that matters :P. The Red-flanked Bluetail was still in Lincolnshire but there was definitely no way we could afford to take the diversion to go and see it as well as go for the Sibe Accentor. A Jay flew over the road and we realized just how many we'd seen during the week. Our eta for Easington was 1.52pm, so the 1st part of the day was set to be a bit boring. It'd be worth it though, so we sat back and went with the flow. I got a report of a Glaucous Gull at Titchwell, which was very interesting. This made our suspected Glonk at Burnham Overy not such a crazy suggestion and could easily have been the same bird.

We reached the 'Welcome to Lincolnshire' sign at 11am but it felt like it'd taken forever to get there. The traffic was slow and we were already bored but we still had a long way to go yet. By 11.48am we were in East Lindsey and the landscape had completely changed and the fields absolutely stank!



Flat Lincolnshire!

There was a sign for 'local tates', which to us doesn't have quite the same ring to it as spuds or tatties! We passed a **Mistle Thrush** on some wires and Wendy spotted a flock of Redwing flying over with single Swallow tagging along behind. All of a sudden my phone went mad with reports coming in. There was a Red-flanked Bluetail at Gibraltar Point in Lincolnshire, Pied Wheatear at Flamborough Head, Little Bunting, Black-eared Wheatear and Dusky Warbler at Spurn and Rose-coloured Starling and Siberian Accentor at Easington! It was certainly all kicking off in East Yorkshire! There was so much going on and I just wanted to get up there as quickly as I could, so when Wendy mentioned lunch it wasn't my main priority. There was no way I was stopping anywhere and wasting time, so lunch was going to have to be eaten on the move. Wendy unwrapped my sarnie and opened my crisps and drink and put them on my lap, which wasn't ideal but a necessity. Wendy felt every bump and corner, so ended up feeling slightly ill as she ate hers but luckily it was short lived. When we stopped at some lights Wendy quickly gave Lyca a drink and she must've been desperate by then as she guzzled it down. What we didn't expect to see in the middle of nowhere was a couple of blokes walking on the verge at the side of the busy A road. They looked as though they'd just escaped from a secure unit somewhere and for all we know they could've! By the time we'd reached Caister it was 12.40pm and next up was Humberside Airport which Wendy tried to take a drive photo of.....Hahahaha!



Humberside Airport

The Humber Bridge was just as big and impressive as Wendy remembered it to be from the last time she'd over it about 20 years ago.



Humber Bridge

We let out a cheer when we saw the 'East Riding of Yorkshire' sign but we knew we still a fair way to go yet before we got to Easington. The stressful bit for me was next which was driving through Hull, I had only had a quick check on google maps and it showed that the road we would go on would sort of skirt the city so I hadn't looked into it anymore as it looked doable. I managed to accidentally guess all the correct lanes I needed for all the lights so that was good as if I'd taken a wrong lane I would've been driving through the City Centre....Phewww! We drove through Hull but it was a bit slow going with the traffic and it's a shame it wasn't a more scenic route because we're sure Hull does have some nice parts.....? Wendy spotted some Traffic Wardens walking down the road but I had to laugh when they turned out to be Prison Officers going to work through the gates of a very attractive Prison.....Doh!

We were both bursting for a wee by that point and Wendy reckoned we'd have to stop somewhere to let Lyca out for one too. The only problem was where? Wendy was fuming when she pointed out a services (as we were at the entrance) and I drove straight past it but further along I spotted a sign for a café and farm gift shop, so I duly followed it. I drove down a side road until we came across The Coffee Barn, which looked a tad poncey for such parts. I couldn't help but think it was a bit cheeky to just go in to use their loo's but I stopped outside anyway and Wendy ran in to investigate. She tried to look interested in the gifts as she scoured for the WC's and when she spied it right at the end of the shop she raced over and breathed a sigh of relief.....Phew! After being astounded as to how much her bladder could actually hold she went straight to the café to get herself a cappuccino and a piece of millionaire's shortbread for me.....Yey! I just couldn't bring myself to go in, so I decided that I'd try and hold on for a bit longer.

It was 1.53pm when we left for the last leg of our journey, a bit behind schedule to hopefully get to see a mega lifer. Things were beginning to get exciting and we started to spot cars with birders in them. We dread to think how far some of them would've travelled to see the bird but at least we weren't the only nutters around. The Black-eared Wheatear reported at Spurn had been re-identified as just a Northern, so we didn't feel quite so bad about not being able to go there as we were too far behind time. The car ahead of us was birders and when we turned into the side road where I planned to park we could see birders with cameras and tripods everywhere. I parked the car up in space between loads of others on the main road in Easington at 2.07pm and the adrenaline was now pumping. There was a Police presence and they'd closed the road the bird was down off with bollards and tape, impressive stuff! There were birders coming and going from every angle, so we headed down the road with a very excited Lyca in tow.



Abandoned Cars everywhere!

She thought she was going for a walk but unfortunately for her we had something important to do before that. We were fully expecting to find a huge crowd of birders 10 rows deep and that we'd have to wait for ages, enduring a lot

of pushing and shoving before getting a brief view of a distant bird. We walked through the barriers and looked up the road to see the twitch in an area of trees and we were pleasantly surprised by what we saw.

There was a group of no more than 30 birders standing along a fence looking into what looked like the garage area behind someone's house.



Sibe Accentor Twitch

We went and stood behind the row of people at the fence and were completely confused. Some people were standing around chatting whereas others were aiming their bins down at their feet, which was really odd. As I moved around to try and work out what was going on a photographer in front of me stepped aside to give me and Wendy a gap to go into. I said thanks and he said, "Have you seen it yet?" I said, "No, is it showing?" He laughed and said, "Yeah, it's about 3 foot in front of the fence!" My eyes nearly popped out of my head when I looked down at the gravel and saw the small brown bird, not too dissimilar to the Dunnocks it was feeding with. This was not just any old LBJ though and a view of its head was enough to make even a novice birder take notice. I was looking at the **Siberian Accentor** hopping around totally unfazed just a couple of feet away. Anyone could've been forgiven for overlooking this bird as it was hardly sticking out like a sore thumb and I couldn't help but wonder who on earth had found it :O! I turned to Wendy who was behind me and hadn't seen it yet and pointed it out to her. She literally couldn't believe that it was so close and stood aghast but took a point and click photo to show how ridiculously close it was!



Spot the super rare bird!

Considering this bird was a 1st for mainland Britain we were really shocked as to how relatively few people were there. The next thing on my agenda was to get a shot of it, as this was a once in a lifetime chance! No pressure! I handed Lyca over to Wendy who was still in shock at the sight of it and went in for the kill. It wasn't an easy task, as the bird was so close and the light so poor under all the trees. Wendy was calmly watching it through her bins when all of a sudden Lyca bolted and nearly ripped her arm off sending her flying sideways! I heard the commotion as well and turned round so quickly that I nearly wiped out an old woman next to me. She wasn't happy at all and started moaning about photographers but I just thought, "Shut up you daft whinge bag!" If it'd been on purpose then fair enough.....Grrrrrrr! Wendy was worried she'd hurt her back but had to get Lyca, who was barking and pulling to get to a Border Collie that had just turned up and was off the lead, back under control! Every birder was now giving Wendy dirty looks and looking unfavourably at Lyca. She reined her in but Lyca was being too naughty and loud to stay within the twitch, so Wendy had to take her out onto the pavement away from it all. Lyca was being so badly behaved and was pulling so hard that she ended up having to go for a walk up the road past the gas works. Wendy would much rather have been looking at the Sibe with me but the most important thing was that I got a decent enough shot of it before we left.



Siberian Accentor

Wendy came back from her walk and stayed back from the crowd so Lyca couldn't be a nuisance or cause any more embarrassment for her.



Quiet Twitch!

I kept turning around to see if they were still OK and Wendy kept giving me daggers, so eventually I had to give up and take Lyca off her before her back went.

While Wendy had been waiting for me she'd overheard some blokes talking. One of them was a Yorkshire Wildlife trust Warden and had a donations bucket for Yorkshire Wildlife Trust. He was saying that there'd been 400 birders there that morning and some had arrived at 11pm the night before and slept in their cars :O! She made an effort to get involved by responding with amazement and then asked him as subtly as possible where the Shorelark was at Kilnsea. When she

repeated the info to me she said it was next to the wheelbarrow, which was really handy (not) and had me in stitches! Never get Wendy ask for directions because I can guarantee that 100% of the time they'll make no sense. Luckily Wendy braved going back to ask again and I was at hand to get some actual directions out of him and he showed me exactly where to go using a map on his phone. I found it quite amusing when Flamborough Head flagged up and he called it. "A s*** hole." Did I detect a bit of local rivalry between Spurn and Flamborough? Hahah! We wandered back towards the main road where more birders were turning up, which must've been a sight for sore eyes for the residents of the otherwise pretty normal estate. As we went through the bollards, an old guy made a big fuss of Lyca, who was feeling a bit narky probably due to boredom. Wendy made her excuses by telling him she'd been cooped up in the car since 9.25am and he told her that he had 4 dogs with the same problem in his! When Wendy said we'd driven up from Norfolk he asked where we'd been staying as he lived in Kelling in Norfolk! We were back at the car at 3pm and luckily our next stop wasn't far away.

It was 3.07pm when we arrived at Kilnsea, which wasn't very far south towards Spurn and I parked up in another long line of cars down a road that lead to the car park. Unbelievably it was much busier that it had been at Easington, so we could only presume that everyone had already been there and were now scouring Spurn area for more rarities. There were birders everywhere walking about with scopes and cameras over their shoulders. There was a largeish group to our right looking over some small scrub field. We stood at the back trying to work out what they were looking at as we're always too polite to do a Lee Evans and shout, "GIVE ME DIRECTIONS!" when we appear at twitches but all I could find were Mealy Redpolls. There were quite a few but still not enough to keep us there. I later found out that it was where the Dusky Warbler was showing really well.....Arrghhhh! I was still bursting for a wee having not gone in the café earlier but luckily there was a WC in the car park at the end of the road. There was a small group of birders at the far end of the car park, so I reckoned I could hang on for a bit longer.



Shorelark Twitch

We joined the others (with not a wheelbarrow in sight!) and were shocked to see that the **Shorelark** was on the ground nearby going about its business without a care in the world! It was unfeasibly easy and a total contrast to trying to find any of the ones we'd gone for in Norfolk! We liked these Yorkshire birds :P. Having been resigned to the fact that we weren't going to see any Shorelarks in Norfolk because it was too early for them this was a real bonus. I didn't want to approach the nearest group of people in case I flushed the bird so I got down on the ground where I was and started to fire off some shots of it but even though it was close the light was anything but favourable for anything decent.



Shorelark

Wendy had been chatting to some bloke who'd come over and asked her what we were looking at. She'd shown him the Shorelark and then his attention turned to Lyca. He had an Apricot Cockerpoo at home and said that even though it was 4 years old it was still absolutely nuts. There's no hope of Lyca calming down any time soon then! It was starting to get late by then but I decided we still had enough time to go up the coast to Flamborough. It didn't look that far away on the map. After finally paying the WC's a quick visit we left at 3.30pm. Wendy's pen had run out, so all her notes were now just scratched into the notepad and she kept her fingers crossed that a) she'd be able read them and b) there was a spare in the car.

Luckily Wendy had put her diary in her rucksack, so she pinched the pen from that. We passed a **Red Deer** in a field on the way out of Easington and then got stuck behind a Tractor. Fortunately after a couple of miles he pulled over and let us past, so we could make some progress again. Wendy's replacement pen was hit and miss and causing her no end of frustration but at least we were on the last day and not the first! By the time we'd got as far as Bridlington it was raining, which was what we'd been worried about. At least the weather had held up for as long as had though.

It was 4.04pm when I pulled up in the car park at Flamborough Head and we liked what we saw.



Flamborough Head

Wendy's pen was working again but it was short lived. We walked down the hill and followed a muddy footpath into a field along a hedge, which for some reason is called "Motorway hedge" by the locals.



Motorway hedge

The light was fading fast and the 1st bird we saw was a Chiffer. An Olive-backed Pipit had been reported in "the field" there and I was pretty sure this was the same field. It looked good but it was ploughed so the chances of seeing anything were very slim. While we walked around we luckily saw **Kestrel** and **Peregrine** and Redwing and Meadow Pipit flocks were flying in off the North Sea, which was smart to see. I'd planned a small loop walk from the map in the car park and as we turned back to go along the coast section a Pipit shot out from a furrow and disappeared again without making a call. I was adamant that it was the Olive-backed Pipit just from its actions but it just wouldn't reappear so I could get a proper view of it. This gave me a flashback to the tedious wait for the OBP

at Weybourne a few years before but I wasn't going to go traipsing all over the farmer's field to try kick it up, so we gave it up as a bad job. It was really cold by then and windy too, so when Wendy stopped to take photos of the rocks below I could just picture her being blown over the edge!



Flamborough Head

We hadn't seen much out to sea or added anything new to our list, so I was quite pleased when I spotted a pair of **Common Scoters** flying past. It wasn't long before we were heading back towards the famous lighthouse, which was next to the car park.



Flamborough Head Lighthouse

Back at the car park I spotted another board and was impressed by the info on it.



Nice info!

When we got into the car it was 5.58pm and definitely time for tea. I got Lyca's out from the boot and Wendy unwrapped the cooked broccoli and mixed it in for her. Luckily she wolfed it down and didn't turn her nose up at it, so she got her dentastick and settled down on the back seat for a nap. We ate our 2nd sarnie of the day whilst looking out over the sea, watching the light disappear. It looked like a good spot to see a Barn Owl but despite that there wasn't one. After we'd eaten we both needed the WC before we set off and I took all our rubbish with me to put in the bin. Wendy changed her trousers while I was gone and just as I got back in the car a van turned up and a bloke went over the lock the WC's up for the night. Good timing or what? If we'd been 2 minutes later we wouldn't have made it. We'd already wasted enough time and had started to feel a bit uneasy hanging round the car park in the dark. A couple of cars had turned up but had quickly left, so we were a bit paranoid that we were preventing the local doggers or drug dealers from doing their thing.

When we finally left at 6.32pm it was totally dark and driving down the narrow track I was taken by complete surprise when a small bird flew out in front of me. I slammed on my brakes and narrowly missed hitting it and carried on. The next thing we knew was that there were loads of small birds flying out of the hedge and across the road in front of us. It was hard work trying to avoid them as they flew so low and shot out of nowhere with no warning whatsoever. Because it was dark and we couldn't see any details in the headlights it was impossible to say what the birds were but there'd obviously been some kind of fall of birds on migration. Sadly there was one lying dead in the middle of the track, which had most likely have been hit by the car ahead of us but it was good going to have only the 1 casualty really. With hindsight we should've stopped and had a look at it to see what species it was but at the time it seemed too depressing. It was a sad ending for a little bird that'd just travelled who knows how far only to be hit by a car as soon as it'd arrived :(.

It was a pretty simple drive out from Flamborough as it was practically a direct westerly route taking us onto the Harrogate road that we now use as our homeward route (avoiding Hull thankfully!). We were very pleased to see the

'County of North Yorkshire' sign at 7.51pm and by the time we'd hit Skipton we knew we didn't have much further to go. Approaching the Indian Restaurant in Gargrave our hearts sank when we saw that the road further up had been closed and there was a diversion sign.....Noooooooooooo! This wasn't what we wanted to see at all and just wanted to get to Clapham so we could put our feet up. Wendy reckoned she knew where to go but despite her knowing the area well I obviously had more sense than just go along with her directions and consulted my sat nav instead :P. Luckily there was a way around it but considering the narrow winding back road was so long Wendy was horrified to find that we came out at Long Preston, which is a stone's throw away on the main road and the initial point of the diversion! Totally fed up by that point we counted down the minutes and each one seemed to get longer and longer as we drove through the dark roads. Eventually we got to sign for Clapham and turned off with our fingers crossed that the Landlord was in a better mood this time and didn't make us feel unwelcome again. Last time we'd gone there he'd made it more than obvious that they all wanted to shut shop and go home so it was an awkward end to the day to say the least. We didn't really want to go back after that but Wendy reckoned that it may have been due to it being so quiet and a Sunday last time. She thought that a Friday night would probably be much busier and the staff wouldn't feel so inclined to close early. We didn't have any better suggestions on where to go and just hoped that her theory was right.

At 9.28pm I parked up and we wandered through the car park and ventured in through the door at The New Inn.



The New Inn

It was, as Wendy had predicted, much busier than last time and the staff all seemed quite happy.....Phew! I grabbed a seat and Wendy got Lyca's bowl out of her rucksack and gave her a much-needed drink before anything else. She had 2 bowls of water, so she must've been thirsty! Wendy then went up to the bar to get our drinks and was served by the very jolly Landlord.....Phew! He was back on form and regaling his staff with anecdotes that stretched the imagination somewhat :P. Wendy sat down with our drinks and I shared bit of info I'd just found out that made us both feel very lucky to have seen the Sibe in the way we

did. Yorkshire Wildlife Trust had had to organize a field for birders to park in after countless complaints from the residents of the village! Not only that but it was all going to be more military from the morning onwards and the 1st group of birders were going to be given access at 6.30am. If that wasn't bad enough, they'd have to form a queue and wait their turn to be allowed into the woods for a 5 minute viewing slot :O! Wow! Thank god we'd gone before all that started, it sounded like a total nightmare! I'd also found on 'Rare bird alert' a panoramic shot of the twitch from the morning before we got there and there were birders as far as the eye could see standing all the way down the road to the gas works where Wendy had walked Lyca and had all to herself that afternoon.



One of the biggest twitches ever!

When Wendy went up to the bar for the 2nd time she got engaged in conversation by the landlord. He was certainly a much happier man for having a lot of people around to bend the ears of :P. It must be pretty depressing on a Sunday evening when there are only 2 punters in and not worth staying open though, so we'll let him off for last time! By 11.05pm the pub had emptied, so we thought we'd better make a move, quickly finished our drinks and took our glasses up to the bar. We were the last to leave again and the Landlord followed us to the door so he could lock up. He jokingly said, "Your breakfast will be ready for the morning," to which Wendy replied, "I wish!" There's nothing she would've liked more than to have gone upstairs to one of the lovely rooms and gone to sleep! It'd been a long day and it wasn't even over yet :(. Again the pub was in darkness as we drove away at 11.07pm but we'd successfully managed to kill a bit of time before getting to Heysham.

In the car headlights we noticed that there were a lot of Moths flying around and driving through Lancashire it was still a very respectable 10c. Approaching Lancaster lights I noticed a Lorry approaching in my rear view mirror that seemed a bit odd. All of a sudden, he swerved around me then completely cut me up and shot into the inside lane! I shouted some suitable expletives and had to slam on to avoid being smashed into. I couldn't believe it, what on earth was that

about? Annoyingly there was no info on the back of his lorry or any company name on the side. If there had been they'd have been getting an earful in the morning. I could really have done without that at that time of night! When we got to Lancaster Asda it was 11.52pm and I filled my tank up with petrol. As it was still early I went into the store to see if I could find some bargains, namely oil for the car but had no such luck and it seemed pretty rubbish in there now. There was a group of what could only be students in the car park because we can't think who else would be playing in one of the trolleys like it was some kind of bespoke racing car :P. It definitely didn't seem like the behaviour of a gang of rebel chavs!

Saturday 15th October

When I got back Wendy went in next to use the WC's and have a look round. She didn't get any further than the toilets though as when she went to rinse the soap off her hands she couldn't work out how to use the taps.....Doh! She'd even asked a girl for help and she'd failed to work it out as well....Women! When she came back she had to rinse her hand with some of the bottled water she was drinking and then dry it with tissues! There was nothing left to do but drive to Heysham to wait in the queue to board, so I headed straight there.

When we arrived at 12.30am the car park wasn't busy at all, so it looked like the boat was going to be very quiet.



When are we getting on!

Foot passengers were called at 1.11am and finally us at 1.22am. We bundled Lyca into the cabin, Wendy brushed her teeth and we cracked open the blankets and instantly fell asleep. We woke up to the announcement that we were docking, so we grabbed our stuff and staggered in a daze down to the car at 5.35am. At 5.45am we were finally home, so after putting the heating on and unpacking the food while the electric blankets warmed up we all went back to bed.

By the end of the week I'd driven a total of 698 miles and we'd finished on a total of 114 birds which was very respectable especially considering we'd had to skip out Frampton Marsh. It was also bang on with our other October trips to Norfolk and although it wasn't our highest score it wasn't our lowest either. 2015 = 113, 2013 = 121, 2012 = 123. Unfortunately the prediction of seismic conditions in Norfolk didn't really materialize and it was pretty quiet on the rarity side. We saw plenty of common migrant activity though but all the action seemed to have happened in East Yorkshire and it certainly delivered! Our HQ had been amazing though and we'd definitely go back there again in the future.

Bird of the trip was obviously the Siberian Accentor and the whole day was like a fun mini adventure. We were so glad we hadn't panicked like some of the birders had and tried to get up to Shetland for the 1st Sibe Accentor (not that we ever would do anything as nuts as that!!). As if those 2 birds were unbelievable enough the totals for mainland Britain ended up being a whopping 10! Imagine if we'd decided to go to Shetland and gone through all that palaver to then see one turn up a few hours away but who'd have guessed you could've taken your pick at which one to go for? Miraculously we were lucky enough to have been at the Easington twitch when it was quiet considering it ended up being one of the biggest twitches in the UK of all time! Jammy or what? It also highlighted how much better East Yorkshire was again than Norfolk in October. Maybe we'll go there next Autumn instead.....?

Bird List

Mute Swan	Moorhen	Short-eared Owl	Dusky Warbler
Pink-footed Goose	Coot	Great Spotted Woodpecker	Chiffchaff
White-fronted Goose	Oystercatcher	Skylark	Goldcrest
Greylag Goose	Ringed Plover	Shore Lark	Red-breasted Flycatcher
Canada Goose	Golden Plover	Swallow	Long-tailed Tit
Barnacle Goose	Grey Plover	Meadow Pipit	Blue Tit
Brent Goose	Lapwing	Grey Wagtail	Great Tit
Egyptian Goose	Knot	Pied Wagtail	Coal Tit
Shelduck	Dunlin	Wren	Treecreeper
Wigeon	Jack Snipe	Duncock	Great Grey Shrike
Teal	Snipe	Siberian Accentor	Jay
Mallard	Woodcock	Robin	Magpie
Shoveler	Black-tailed Godwit	Redstart	Jackdaw
Common Scoter	Bar-tailed Godwit	Whinchat	Rook
Red-legged Partridge	Whimbrel	Stonechat	Carrion Crow
Grey Partridge	Curlew	Wheatear	Starling
Pheasant	Redshank	Ring Ouzel	House Sparrow
Little Grebe	Turnstone	Blackbird	Chaffinch
Gannet	Black-headed Gull	Fieldfare	Brambling
Cormorant	Common Gull	Song Thrush	Greenfinch
Little Egret	Lesser Black-backed Gull	Redwing	Goldfinch
Grey Heron	Herring Gull	Mistle Thrush	Siskin
Marsh Harrier	Great Black-backed Gull	American Robin	Linnet
Hen Harrier	Razorbill	Cetti's Warbler	Lesser Redpoll
Sparrowhawk	Rock Dove / Feral Pigeon	Blackcap	Mealy Redpoll
Buzzard	Stock Dove	Garden Warbler	Bullfinch
Kestrel	Woodpigeon	Barred Warbler	Lapland Bunting
Peregrine	Collared Dove	Yellow-browed Warbler	Reed Bunting
Water Rail	Tawny Owl		

Locations

