

Norfolk trip Sept 2010

It had reached September again and with the "Team Jinx" moniker well and truly put to bed with some superb local finds in the last few months including a first for the Isle of Man, Lapland Longspur ;). We decided to expand our finding horizons and take them to Norfolk for the Autumn Migration. Last year we went 22nd to 29th and just missed out on RB fly, Icterine Warbler, Wryneck etc so this time we booked the week earlier, very clever or so I thought. It was just a matter of crossing our fingers and toes and praying for some Easterly winds. On our previous 3 visits to Norfolk we hadn't had any luck with wind direction and had just about scraped a few good birds but I knew if we got the winds this time the birding would be crazy.....something neither of us have ever experienced. We had pinned our hopes on a Wryneck, a bird both of us were dying to see. With a few days to go the winds were only Northerly and Westerly.....Nooooo! Still, there were a few smart birds hanging around, an Arctic Warbler had been there for a week and a Red Backed Shrike for 2 weeks.

Friday 17th September

We travelled across on the evening boat so it was dark and not possible to seawatch. We tried to get some sleep but I was slightly hindered on that front as my sheet was covered in dry vomit.....Urghgh! Thank god the very strong winds had died down for our crossing or it might have got covered in a fresh coating!

On the drive down to Norfolk we picked up our first bird of the trip as it crossed in front of us, a lovely **Barn Owl**. We had decided to do our standard overnight stay tactic, this time go straight to Holme NWT in Norfolk, hoping to get in at dawn and see the Arctic Warbler. Holme NWT is a reserve on the NW coast of Norfolk, it comprises of coastal dunes with scattered bushes, a belt of Pines and a few floods with a reedbed. We arrived on site at 4.15am but there was a gate closed to the reserve..... no problem we would stop in the nearby car park. When we finally arrived there was a Chav car sitting there which gave us bad vibes so we made a quick change of plan and went just down the road to Titchwell which we knew we could get in to at dawn. After 1.5 hours sleep we woke at 6am and it was ffffreezing. Wendy quickly got her new toy going... a Jetboil. It did exactly what it says on the tin and made her a coffee in lightning quick time (under 2 minutes.... wuff!). Whilst making her coffee we saw and heard the usual suspects **Blackbird, Wren, Chaffinch, Wood Pigeon, Great Tit, Blue Tit** and **Robin**. After that we had a quick look at Titchwell. The path to the island hide had only been reopened a few days earlier due to the recent building works but best of all they had now put some shallow muddy areas right in front of the hide. Nice to see the RSPB have done something about trying to bring birds closer so people can actually see them at this reserve.



Norfolk trip Sept 2010

On the freshwater scrape we picked up **Herring Gull, Shoveler, Cormorant, Lapwing, Avocet, Teal, Redshank, Dunlin, Pintail, Black-tailed Godwit, Ruff** and **Little Egret**. In with the Dunlin we could pick out the smaller **Little Stint** as well. Not the best view of one but the best bird of the morning so far.

On the walk back we had a look at the Thornham Marsh area and quickly spotted a **Spoonbill** take off and fly right out to the point. On the pool were **Mute Swan, Great-crested Grebe, Little Grebe, Canada Geese** and a few **Swallow** passed over. By now we were painfully cold (I had looked at the weather forecast before coming to Norfolk and said it looked warm and sunny so we packed our warm weather clothes (Whoopsadaisy) so we scurried back to the car to get the heater on. Near the car park we had a flock of **Greylag geese** go over followed by a nice **Jay** and not so nice **Carrion Crow**. Unusually we then heard a **Chiffchaff** singing!/? As we drove out we also spotted a **Duncock** and a **Pheasant**. It was now 8am so the Holme gate was still shut but I had checked in the Norfolk bird book and it said walking through the dunes towards the Holme pines is usually good for migrants especially Wrynecks and Shrikes. So, after stopping off at a new deli that was full of stropy posh people and getting what tasted like a pure pork sausage bap, (yack... give me 5% pork any day of the week!) we went back to the Holme reserve and parked up at the dunes car park. We had been to Holme last September but never looked at the dunes section and straight off you could tell this place would be great on a good day. Gorse and bramble bushes dotted around, sheltered by dunes. We wandered round the dunes grilling the bushes and even tagged on the end of a group of blokes thinking they were looking at something good (they had stopped so that one bloke could have a wee I think) but we just couldn't find anything good. All we saw were **Mipits, Starling, Collared Dove, Pied Wagtail, Magpie** and couple of common migrants in the form of **Wheatear**. We then went over to the shingle ridge and had a look on the beach here were **Oystercatcher, Curlew, Sanderling, Great Black Back Gull** and a nice summeryish **Grey Plover**. Overheard we then heard the distinctive honking of large **Pink-footed goose** flocks as they seemed to be flying in off the sea. We then heard a call we aren't used to in the IOM, 2 **Yellow Wagtails** flying straight over. This was a bit of a surprise as last year in September we didn't even find 1 in a week.

We finally reached the pines but didn't know where we were supposed to aim for so we just meandered through the trees listening out for the roving tit/crest flock. It was about 8.30am now and we were slightly worried there hadn't been any text alert saying the bird had been seen. Uh oh . Eventually we came across the wardens standing in the trees so we guessed that was the spot for the Arctic Warbler so we stood nearby. 30 minutes later the wardens left empty handed but the birder count had hit about twenty so surely this amount of eyes could find the bird. We were all spaced out nicely but everyone was looking very dejected. After another hour a group of about 4 birders were looking through their bins getting agitated. We looked in the general area and we spotted a little bird moving through the bush. I thought, "Aha here we go". The bird was deep in the bush and neither of us could get any colour on it but then I got a half a second view of its head before it flew off. It looked like it had a good super on it but the view was so microscopic there was no way I was calling it. Wendy just got a rear view of it so got less than me... arghghg. After two hours in the pines we were cold so decided to go to the visitor centre to pay and sort Wendy's coffee fix out. While there we talked to the warden and he said there had been no sightings at all today... oh bum :(We also decided to join NWT, I had been thinking about this for a while and since we like coming to Norfolk I worked out it would save us money after a few trips. After we'd thawed out slightly we headed back into the pines, there were even more birders on site now but still no sighting. We quickly gave up looking at that one spot and instead decided to walk round the pines. Again we couldn't find the tit/crest flock but in a clearing I heard a lark call from overhead. I was on autopilot and just said, "Oh skylark going over" but then they called again

Norfolk trip Sept 2010

and we realised it didn't sound the same so looked up and got the bins on the two birds. We were totally chuffed to see two stumpy **Woodlarks** flying over, Wendy's first lifer of the trip! After completing the pines circuit we called back into the visitor centre to report the Woodlarks. It was not only interesting to hear that they are quite scarce at Holme but that they had been reported again also over the dunes. So after about 3 hours in total of trying we gave up on the Arctic Warbler. We found out later that the warbler hadn't been seen again after Thursday...dohh... a bit team jinx... eeek! While we were still at Holme we had a quick check of the floods and yet again they were rubbish all we saw were **Coot, Black-tailed Godwit, Goldfinch, Moorhen** and **Egyptian Goose** whooooopee. To put the icing on the day cake, at the back of the floods was a vet sticking his hand up cows bums... :-\ We quickly left Holme NWT.

In the Neil Glenn Norfolk book it mentions Holme Marsh which is accessed from the village. We had never attempted there before so this time we went for a look. Apart from having to park in the tiniest car park ever and it smelling of leaking sewage the place looked rarely visited (that might be the reason come to think of it). The thin path was overgrown everywhere but there were some smart bushes around. Flying over were a few **Stock Dove** and a **Mistle Thrush**. At one section I got bored looking at nothing so started pishing. I tried for a few minutes and nothing happened. I thought, "Ah well no birds here" but then Wendy started having a go and within seconds birds were flying in from everywhere! **Willow Warbler, Blackcap** and tons of Blue and Great Tits.... good skills or what? Wendy had accidentally volunteered herself as the trip Pisher though!! Ha ha. We went a bit further along and checked out two of the 'hides' (more like rotting sheds) that looked out over the marsh. We quickly gave up after only seeing a **Gadwall** and a **Great spotted Woodpecker** fly over (and also I had a sudden call of nature). We quickly zipped back to Titchwell and its toilets! While there we thought we may as well go in and have another look as things couldn't get any worse :). In the car park, while Wendy was in the ladies room, I was still in a mood about being rubbish at pishing and when I spotted a Robin in the bushes I decided to have another go....within 2 seconds the Robin flew off... grrrr. As it did, I spotted something shuffling under the leaf litter, thinking it might be a Song Thrush (new for the trip!) I kept my eye on the spot. The little chap then popped up and it made me spit my Special K mini breaks out all over the place. I got a perfect look at my first ever **Weasel!** I couldn't believe it, what a cracking tiny little chappy. I then started panicking as Wendy wasn't there to see it and I actually contemplated running into the ladies toilets to get her but luckily enough she appeared in time. I waved madly but she must have thought I was being a plank as she just carried on sauntering over. When she got within range I screamed WEASEL!!!! That sped her up but I had now lost it. A few tense minutes passed but we then both watched him bounding around for the next 5 minutes. I grabbed my camera but he had decided that he was camera shy and would only appear for a few seconds before shooting off again. Using all my skill and ability I got this shot. I will be sending it to National Geographic magazine as it looks good enough to be up for an award I reckon....

Norfolk trip Sept 2010



After that excitement and bagging my first lifer of the trip too we went back to the island hide on the reserve proper. The new muddy area was now working perfectly. The Dunlin flock were within 20 yards and in the dunlin flock were the 2 Little Stints. Even though the light wasn't the best we still got our best Little Stint view ever.



Next thing a bloke who strongly resembled a tramp sat himself down next to Wendy and within seconds she was hinting at me to go. I just thought she was having coffee DTs but in fact she was struggling to breathe as the tramp dude was stinking of wee...

Norfolk trip Sept 2010

Bleurrgh! On the way out we then passed a woman with a bushier beard and moustache than I could grow in a year! Errrr? :O Hopefully this was a 'Norfolk' issue rather than a general 'Birders' issue. In recent years a few celebrities have 'come out' and admitted to going birding so there is always the hope that birding would become a bit more normal but these two put birding right back in the hobby for the freaks of the week. Doh. It was now 4pm so we could finally get into our HQ. Heading east we went through Burnham Norton and I recognised the ace Barn Owl field. As we drove along side it I pointed this out and amazingly before I finished my sentence two birds flew across the road! We quickly pulled in and watched 3 Barn Owls in the end.....very smart. In the hedge we then heard a strange two-toned call which made me think, "Eh up, could be a yellow browed warbler". We waited for the bird to appear and were a bit annoyed to see a Chiffer...bit of a weird call but hey ho. By now we were completely knackered and after picking up a **Marsh Harrier** going past Cley we got to our Salthouse HQ at 5pm after being on the move for nearly 24 hours! We were a bit disappointed to find that there was no mobile signal, which meant no text alerts coming in, so I quickly checked the wifi and Birdguides to see if the Arctic Warbler had been seen. It hadn't but a Pectoral Sandpiper had been reported 30 minutes earlier from Salthouse marsh. The bird was reported to be within 500 yards from HQ! Even though we were pooped, we are totally hardcore (oh yes) and went out. Unfortunately I didn't quite understand the paths going out onto the marsh and we ended up walking nearly 3 miles..... whoops! We added a **Sandwich Tern** and then came across a bloke sitting at the back of his van looking out over the marsh. I assumed he would know about the Pec so went and asked had he seen it. He was a local man and I was a bit shocked by his snappy unhelpful nature. He just threw his hand out and barked, "Yeah it flew that way". So, cheers for that whoever you are, sooo helpful... not! That put the nail in the coffin for the day so went back to HQ to get warm.

Saturday 18th September

I had half expected to need half of Saturday to recover from the trip down but amazingly we were both up ridiculously early and raring to go. With our dip yesterday we decided to get straight out to Winterton Dunes on the NE coast without waiting. There had been a male Red-backed Shrike there for 2 weeks but since the Arctic warbler had upped and gone before we'd arrived we were beginning to worry that this would too. Winterton was about 1 hour away and is another area of Coastal dunes with scrub and trees sheltering in the dunes, we had never been there before so at the least we were seeing somewhere new. We headed off at 9.15. When we got there Wendy went to the ladies room and I had a look down the beach road where the RBS had been reported the day earlier. Worryingly I couldn't see any birders about but then I spotted a gleaming white blob on top of a bush, a quick look through the bins confirmed the **Red-backed Shrike**. I was about 100 yards off at that point and thought I would walk a bit closer to at least get a record shot. As I got to be within about 40 yards Wendy appeared and straight off was on to the bird too. Lifer for both of us.... wahey! I managed to get one bad record shot in the blinding sunlight and the bird then dropped behind the bush.

Norfolk trip Sept 2010



I thought, “Ah not to worry, Shrikes love standing on top of bushes, it will be back in a second and since there is no one around we will have this all to ourselves”. Within 1 minute there were about 6 other birders there, I have no idea where they came from, and that meant there was no way I could attempt to stalk the bird. We stayed back at about 50 yards range and just shook our heads in disbelief when watching birders (not photographers) walking straight up to the bush to within 10 yards and another walking along the top of the dunes (breaking the horizon) near the bush. Not surprisingly the bird never showed in the open again while we were there.....Grrrrr. Wendy then spotted 2 **Common Buzzard** over the distant trees and a local photographer started panicking and questioned her ID skills, saying that Buzzard wasn't common down that way. As he was double checking her ID I asked her, “Are you sure it's not that 747 flying past or maybe that House sparrow over there?” This provoked a deathly silence followed by the most monster evil stare ever. Oops..... I'll get me coat!

We waited for an hour hoping to outdo the others but realised we wouldn't win that battle so I suggested we go to nearby Hickling Broad. Hickling Broad is another NWT reserve but this one is inland and comprises of reedbeds and freshwater. We also got in for free since we were now NWT members saving us 9 quid.... kerching.

Norfolk trip Sept 2010



In summer it's supposed to be one of the places for Swallowtail butterfly and Dragonfly specialities so I took my Macro lens in my pocket just in case. You could tell this place was good for the aforementioned species as there was tons of stuff on the entrance gate alone like this Common Darter.



Then we got a Butterfly lifer in the form of a tatty Comma.

Norfolk trip Sept 2010



Next up was a Migrant Hawker Dragonfly lifer (which needed a book purchase and a little bit of working out before clinching the id).



On the boardwalk around the reserve we heard **Water rail** screaming and there were Common Lizards everywhere (which all seemed to be pretty small....weird).

Norfolk trip Sept 2010



Only problem was that there were tons of mozzies about and they just love eating me and Wendy so we had to quickly get round and out. On the way out we overheard the shop lady talking to a bloke about 18 Common Crane had been seen the day before at the raptor watch point. I was thinking, "Eh, where's that, it's not on the reserve map?" so Wendy went and asked about it. We were told it was 1 mile away down a road so we set off to try and find it. By the time we got to the watch point it was 3.30pm, supposedly a good time for seeing the Cranes heading to their roost sites. The viewable area was miles and we both feared this would be another Great Ryburgh or Swanton Novers again (see May article) where the watch point is about 100 miles away from where the birds appear so you can hardly tell what they are. I then spotted a weird Yellow Dragonfly and grabbed a shot to try and ID it later (confirmed later on to be a mature female Black Darter). Wahey, another Dragonfly lifer!

Norfolk trip Sept 2010



While I was messing about doing that and the other two people were looking through their scopes across the vast area, Wendy suddenly shouted, "Cranes!" I looked up and saw Wendy looking back behind the watch point so we all swivelled round and there were 3 **Common Crane** flying low and very close. Good skills from Wendy. I quickly grabbed a bad record shot of Wendy's first ever Common Crane.



We couldn't do any better than that so we left Hickling at 4.15pm. We still had some time left in the day so went back to Winterton Dunes to see if we could get the Shrike

Norfolk trip Sept 2010

to ourselves. As we approached I could see at least 8 people watching the area... dohhh.....we pulled up anyway and wandered over. Shock horror, the bird wasn't showing so we decided to go and have a look in the southern dunes bushes to see if we could find our own migrant. The bushes look brilliant here



and within 50 yards Wendy had spotted a **Lesser Whitethroat**, about another 20 yards on and we could hear a two toned call again. Again my spidey senses tingled as I thought, "Ooooo possible YBW". It took us about 10 minutes to finally locate the warbler but yet again it was another Chiffer... grrrrrrrrrr! What was going on with their stupid calls? If I could have got close enough I would have given the Chiffer a slap for winding us up... fttt. We were getting hungry now so we turned back and left. Later that evening a bloke posted a superb shot of the RBS, looking like he was about 20 yards off... grrrr...how jammy? We drove back through the Hickling / Horsey area when Wendy casually mentioned, "Oh look some Common Cranes in that field"..... Wooot!! After turning round and coming back we managed to park up and get a great view of what must have been the same 3 birds feeding in the field.

Norfolk trip Sept 2010



Nice. We finally rolled up back at HQ at 7pm and were completely knackered. We wouldn't be able to keep this effort up for much longer without collapsing.

Sunday 19th September

Overnight there had been rain but the winds were still a brisk Westerly but we were crossing our fingers that the bad weather had put something down. Whilst getting ready to go out I spotted a Lesser Whitethroat in the HQ garden, defo a migrant, things were looking up. More excitingly though, when we had got in the previous night we had seen there was a report of a Barred Warbler at Warham Greens that was found at about 5.30pm. The lack of mobile signal in Norfolk was hitting us hard and with not getting that text alert the previous evening our first destination would have to be Warham Greens. Whenever we have been to Norfolk we have visited here but it's not a reserve or anything. It's part of the coastal footpath and consists of bramble and hawthorn bushes on either side of the path on the edge of the salt marsh. In a few areas there are sheltered sections or higher areas that seem to attract the migrants. One place is the Iron gible (which has now been renamed "the whirlygig") and this was where the Barred Warbler was supposed to be. As we arrived at Stiffkey campsite car park to walk the 1 mile section west to Warham Greens the heavens opened again.... Flip! Still as we are totally hardcore (ish) we headed out. Within seconds we both couldn't see a thing through our glasses but we battled on. By the time we got to the whirlygig area the rain had finally stopped and we located the crowd of 10 people staring forlornly into the bushes. Not good. 2 hours later and having only seen another Lesser Whitethroat we decided the bird must have gone or was staying deep down in the bushes to avoid the rain and brisk winds. Bahhhh yet another dip for our trip and we were only on day 3. On the walk back Wendy's eyes nearly popped out of her head as two proper rambling hikers walked past in the skimpiest shorts you have ever seen, the bloke's were so short it looked like he was walking 'au naturel'! Maybe he was....who know's?

Norfolk trip Sept 2010



Back at the car we couldn't work out where to go next as for this trip I hadn't done any day plans. After a quick discussion we decided to go and have a look at our favourite reserve Cley NWT. On the way there I realised we were going past Blakeney, so, even though there was no migrant activity at Warham, we popped into Friary Hills. We should have realised that this was a waste of time as the migrants just weren't here and we ended up only finding 2 blackcaps... doh. We arrived at Cley reserve at 12.05 and the place was chocka block (again we got in for free and saved another 9 quid... double kerching). We only went to the two near hides and disappointingly there was very little here that we wouldn't see at home like Wigeon, Teal, etc. Whilst looking out of one of the hides I suddenly got a mobile signal and 10 texts came in at once... one of them read, "Barred Warbler showing at Warham Greens but elusive" ... oh @%*#£!!! So it was back to Warham Greens then..... We arrived back on site at 3.25 and the crowd was now at 12....Wuff!



I asked the bloke next to us when it was last seen and he said he had been there 20 minutes ago but he hadn't seen it...oh bum. Within 5 minutes though I heard a call from the left that the bird was showing, I worked out the general direction they were looking and got straight on the bird. Wahey! Joy soon turned to panic as Wendy was

Norfolk trip Sept 2010

saying she couldn't see it, and neither could the bloke I had been talking to! I tried to give directions into a non descript bush that looked the same as all the other bushes it was with, then the bird turned, showed the bars on its bum and disappeared. I had a great view for my lifer, Wendy had got a terrible naked eye back end view (not enough for her lifer) and anonymous bloke didn't even see it! It was all over in seconds. This was at 3.30pm. By 4 it hadn't reappeared and Wendy was getting depressed so I said we would give it till 4.15 then go. At 4.05 the anonymous bloke gave up and left, at 4.10 I spotted 4 **Spoonbill** flying over the salt marsh behind us and a Ringtail **Hen Harrier** which I called out to the others. While they were looking out over the salt marsh, I turned back to look at the bushes. Instantly I locked onto a shape moving deep in the bush but couldn't make out any details at all. I got Wendy onto the shape and we both watched it. We could make out some grey so I thought, "Hang on that could be the Lesser Whitethroat yet". Wendy was saying she didn't think it was but..... I was going to stay on the side of caution so as not to make fools of us. As we were both looking through our bins with intent, the other birders had spotted this and started asking. I told them that we had something in the centre of the bush but it could just be the Lesser Whitethroat. Two seconds later the bird moved forward and this clinched it..... **Barred Warbler**.....plain as day. I called it loudly and gave out directions good enough for everyone to get on it. The bird stayed in view for about 20 seconds... really smart. It kindly reappeared at 4.20 and 4.28 and I even managed a record shot.



This was more like it, even though they look quite plain we had both wanted to see a Barred Warbler for a long time. A few minutes later a bloke appeared and asked if it had been showing, I said, "Yeah a few minutes ago in that Elderberry bush but it's well elusive, buckle yourself in for the long haul". He literally said, "Oh ok", lifted his bins up and said, "What's that? Bottom right of the bush?" I had a look and talk about jammy swine... there was the Barred Warbler again. It was a really good spot from this dude as the bird was deep in the bush... I whispered to Wendy, "We should follow this bloke around for the rest of the trip if he's that lucky!"

Norfolk trip Sept 2010

At 4.40 we decided to head off, can't have too much excitement in one day! To top the day off Wendy had a play with the Aga back at HQ at lunch time so we came home, starving, to the best Baked spuds known to man! Om nom nom. After tea I nipped out to Cley since it was only 5 minutes away and it was now free for us :) In the hide were two very hardcore looking birders (one even had tattoos!) and there was zero chatting going on. I reckon that if I'd so much as squeaked then one of them would have nipped me. Luckily enough they gave up quickly so I could relax. There were a lot of common birds here all roosting for the night. I was quickly bored so started scanning through all the Black-headed gulls and quite spawnilly I found a juv **Med Gull** in the flock.... skillzzz. But by now it was 7pm and pretty dark so I gave up and returned to HQ.

Monday 20th September

We needed to get some shopping in so first thing headed east to the two biggish coastal towns Sheringham and Cromer. On the way Wendy visited a lifer Deli in Weybourne and got the nicest Coffee ever. At Sheringham we had a look around and were considering going on their smart looking Steam Train Railway until we found out that it was like 10 quid each for a 20 minute trip to Holt so we decided against it.



Next up was Cromer so that we could stock up on my lactofree cheese that I can't buy anywhere in the IOM. My sat nav didn't know where the Morrisons was though so we stopped off at the Morrisons petrol station we'd spotted a few days earlier to ask. There was little room to park there so I pulled up next to the air thingy, not wanting to block a petrol pump. Literally 1 second later I heard a beeping behind me and could see an old bloke gesticulating wildly and shouting at Wendy who was walking across the forecourt. He was shouting F*% ^ng MOVE YOUR CAR!! This wound me up something rotten, do people in England have any more than 1 seconds patience? I moved the car into the car wash bit to get out his way but he was still waving wildly... I was getting angrier and angrier and was just about to get out of the car to go and give him some when Wendy reappeared with the directions so I drove off. As we did though I gave him the uppers... haha.. I win! (sort of). On the way back I thought, "Oooo we could visit Weybourne cliffs". I had read about this place in the Norfolk book and it was supposed to be good for Richards Pipit, Ring Ouzel etc. We had never been there before so it was another new place for us to explore.

Norfolk trip Sept 2010



Unfortunately it was blowing a right hooly here so we did a short walk up to this group of cottages perched on the eroding cliff edge.



There were literally no birds in the cliff edge fields but there was a great view of the sea. Quite quickly we picked up on a dark phase Arctic Skua heading west (why

Norfolk trip Sept 2010

west?) which then attacked a Sarnie Tern... cool. This was followed by another Arctic Skua close in. I was now thinking that we should have seawatched on the Friday / Saturday when there were strong N winds. We could have seen some good stuff like Sooty shearwater and Long-tailed skua and close in as well.... bummer. With nothing else happening we headed out of Weybourne and Wendy got mentally excited about a new deli she just spotted but.....err.....it was the same one she had visited not 1 hour earlier..... Oh dear, a bit dizzy!

Heading back west we next visited Kelling Quags.. We have a love/hate relationship with Kelling Quags. We had visited it 3 times in the past, seen literally nothing and each time vowed never to go again but you could tell that the shallow flooded field and surrounding area next to the sea would be brilliant in the right conditions. Yet again though, it was rubbish although we did get our best view of a **Hobby** ever, at one point it flew 50 foot over our head catching dragonflies. I could have got a shot but was enjoying watching it way too much to even lift the camera. On the walk out we met another friendly birder and he was saying how there was very little about, the worse he had ever seen it in a September.... Arhgghgh. Funnily enough, we were told the same thing the previous September when we visited.....hmmm. Before leaving Kelling we nipped into the tearooms for Wendys coffee fix... big mistake. Holy crackers... what a mental place. It was like walking into a set on Heartbeat or something. There were old blokes looking dead at the tables, books for sale in a corner that were published in 1948 and the general whiff of world war 2 (not that I know what that whiff is like). We quickly sidled out and tried to get back to the car. Before we did a woman stopped us and asked us how to get to Kelling Campsite. I acted the Billy big balls and became the honorary cockney saying, "Yeah luv, what ya wana do is go up the apples and pears, take a right and jobs a good un." I realised later that I'd sent her nowhere near the campsite... Oops. I thought we could visit Kelling Heath while we were nearby so we drove the few miles inland to the heath. Even though it was only about 2pm we were knackered and ended up staggering around the place. We made it across the road and the train track seeing very little when we met a guy who was possibly the most helpful (and non- patronising) birder ever. We got talking to him about how we were hoping to see Dartford Warbler and he gave us some superb info and also told us how to find Adders here. He then offered to guide us round for a bit to try and help us see both. A bit later on a mate of his appeared, again very friendly but neither of them could find a Dartford Warbler for us.



Norfolk trip Sept 2010

They reckoned a morning attempt would be better than the middle of the day especially as it was quite windy. So we left empty handed but saw a Frog, tons of weird fungi (including some fly agaric stuff which Wendy got very excited about... it just looked like a red blob to me.. :) ..) and some Dragonflies I wasn't allowed to stop and spend 10 hours trying to ID. Bah.... spoilsport!

Back in Salthouse we decided to go and have a look at Gramborough Hill which is just a bit east from Salthouse Beach car park. It's not a hill as such, just a higher bit of Shingle ridge, but on the sheltered side there are a handful of stunted bushes. We have seen Gramborough Hill mentioned many times on Birdguides and we could see why. Wendy cracked out the pishing but there was nothing here at all... flipping heck, if only we were here in Easterlies!! We had a quick look over the shingle ridge and added **Arctic** and **Common Tern** to our trip list but that was it so we called a halt to a very poor day.

Tuesday 21st September

Armed with the Kelling Heath info from the friendliest birder ever, we headed inland first thing. The wind had dropped right off and there were no rain clouds in the sky so our chances of finding a Dartford Warbler couldn't have been better really. Within 1 minute of getting on site we could hear one singing then we saw a long tailed dark bird fly across the path and land deep in a bush. We then had a few minutes tense wait before finally Wendy said, "It's there, under the Stonechat!" The friendly bloke had told us that the Dartford Warblers hang round with the Stonechats, so if we found them first we'd find the DWs. Sure enough there was a scruffy **Dartford Warbler**! This must have been our 4th or 5th attempt in total and the effort had finally paid off. After 30 more minutes we had had great views of at least 4 birds. This was lifer number 5 for Wendy.



Norfolk trip Sept 2010

Really good to see these smart little birds had survived the heavy snow of last winter. On the walk out a young **Green Woodpecker** shot off the path calling like a nutter and near the cottage we could hear a **Crossbill** calling from the pines.

Even though the winds had still been westerly and rubbish for migrants we decided to still go and have a look round Wells Woods. Last year I thought we had found the best area in the Wells Woods pines called 'The Dell' but it turns out I hadn't.... Oops. This time though I read the book properly and we did find the famous area, confirmed by finding a sign saying, "This is The Dell". We quickly located the roving Tit flock which included **Treecreeper** and strangely a **Great-spotted Woodpecker** but there was nothing else like a RB fly or Icterine Warbler or even just something. I felt pretty depressed now as every year this is the place for migrants. Wendy then found a warbler in the flock but it was too distant to get any details apart from it was white underneath. Before she could get me on to the bird it had flown off. I didn't think anything more of it until a few days after we got back to the IOM when I read that a Western Bonellis Warbler was found in Wells Woods two days later...

Nooooooooooooooooooooo! There was very little else so we did a circuit to the other side of the wood, found a female **Bullfinch** and went to the cafe to cheer ourselves up with Coffee and a Whippy 99. We couldn't help but notice though that the average age of the patrons of Wells Woods was approximately 72. It felt a bit weird being the youngest people somewhere when we are both in our mid 30s! After Wells Woods we decided to do some proper tourist things and had a walk round the town of Wells next to the sea.



This place was like Norfolk's equivalent of Blackpool but smaller and without any hotels or a prom. Basically it had loads of arcades and chippies. We had a walk up the main shopping street which was reminded us of walking down Strand Street in 1982. There were a handful of shops trying to be modern and expensive in between the majority of old crappy ones and we quickly shuffled back to the car (after Wendy had added another Deli tick out of her Collins guide to Delis of Britain).

After Wells we headed back east and decided to nip into the North Hide at Cley since we hadn't been there yet. We could see that the car park was absolutely chockablock so we carried on and had a walk down the East Bank instead. I'd been hot all day so I decided to do this walk in a T shirt. What a bad move that was, it was absolutely freezing.....Brrrrrrrr! There had been a flock of 8 Lapland buntings reported all week from Cley, normally we would have visited these straight away but as we had had our Lapland Bunting fill in the Isle of Man recently we weren't too bothered about these

Norfolk trip Sept 2010

birds. Before reaching the shingle ridge we had a look at the shallow pool on the right. I love that pool it's always got waders on it and yet again it had several **Spotted Redshank** and quite a few **Ruff**. There was also a big flock of smaller waders at the back but they were too far off to ID. I really wish this pool had a hide on it but I suppose it would get washed away every time the sea came over the ridge. We could see a group of 6 people on the ridge so wandered over and asked where the Laps were. We were directed onto them and it was nice to see these birds again.....even though they are just lbj's they are still smart. The crowd grew to about 10 people so we moved off to try and get a view of the Calidrid flock. We took a wide berth and got well past the Lap flock safely. When I looked back I could see a birder with a camera had approached closer, probably to within 20 yards, but two eccentric looking walkers were heading straight across the top of the ridge towards the Laps. They nearly walked over the birds so the flock flew off, probably before the photographer had got a decent shot, but at least everyone got to see them. After checking through the waders and trying to make a Dunlin into a Pectoral Sandpiper, I heard a call I sort of recognised. I was absolutely sure it was a Snow Bunting but we couldn't find any bird on the ground so we gave up and went back to the car. On the way we got chatting to a few birders who were at the Laps and we were both totally shocked to hear them blame the photographer for flushing the birds. It seems the 'in thing' at the moment is to blame photographers for this but in this case it was ridiculous. The birder with a camera had not moved for about 5 minutes but the walkers literally stood on the flock. This wound me up a little but I bit my lip and didn't make a scene. Amazingly this wasn't a one off, another couple of birders further on also blamed the birder with a camera... wierd. Maybe this bloke has previously been guilty but it didn't get away from the fact that the walkers had flushed those birds. Later on that day on the Birdguides website it had a report saying 18 Lapland Buntings and 1 Snow Bunting at Cley. Grrrrrrrr! When we got back to the car, it was only 4.15 so we headed to the North Hide at for the last look of the day. We were determined to go there even though 99% of the time you're always looking into the sun. At the car park just as we were getting out I finally got a mobile signal and in came 6 texts. One of them said Pectoral Sandpiper showing well at Titchwell... Arghghgh! Pec sandpiper is one of those birds I've always wanted to see for some reason and even though it meant a 40 minute drive west I persuaded Wendy to change our plan and go there instead.

There were only two other birders in the Island Hide at Titchwell and zero birds on the nearby mud. I thought there would have been more people around than this so I asked the blokes about the bird. They told us it hadn't been seen that day but last night it was on the mud about 20 feet away. I thought, "Ehhh..... last night?" So I got my phone out to re-read the text alert... my heart sank to the floor when I noticed the text alert was dated the previous day. Grrrrrrr.....not again! Why the f had it only just come in? Luckily I was too tired to get mad so we just packed up our gear and trudged back to the car, hearing **Cettis Warbler** on the way. When we got back to Salhouse we were too tired to be bothered cooking so we went to the pub for tea to try and cheer ourselves up. Typically and to carry on with the bad luck of the day my first mouthful of Cod had a whopping bone in it.... dohhhhh.

Wednesday 22nd September

Again it had been raining over night and there was coastal mist first thing, exciting, but still no easterlies. That's all we needed to complete the perfect weather conditions. Unfortunately it was still from the west. Bah. Still, just in case, we headed straight out to check the Gramborough Hill bushes again. The second we got out of the car it started chucking down. Great start to the day... not. At the bushes we quickly "pished" through them and managed to get a Chiffer out then a Goldcrest

Norfolk trip Sept 2010

which proceeded to skewer its wing on a bit of dead gorse. I thought it would be stuffed and I might need to dive into the spiky bush to try and save it. We watched it from deep within the bush for 10 minutes, maybe longer, slowly but surely removing the spike! Smart.



Migrant wise there was nothing on the ground bar 2 Wheatears but there was large numbers of Meadow Pipits passing over. Even though yet again the migrant activity was zero we still moved west a few miles to Walsey Hills NOA. This reserve is basically just a small hill caked in bushes about half a mile from the sea. It seems abandoned now though as there was no Visitors Centre and all the paths were overgrown. Nearly every bush had a Chiffchaff singing and there was a pair of **Peregrine** flying over but apart from that there was nothing here. We did spot some corrugated metal on the ground and since Bill Oddie is always lifting that stuff up and finding all kinds of snakes underneath we had a go. To our great surprise, not, we didn't even find a worm under any of them.... bah.

It was only 11.15 and it was clear that we were in for another uneventful day as we were at our 3rd location of the day already. Cley North Hide! We'd finally made it here, maybe the delay would reward us and we would find a Great Knot or something? On the short walk to the hide we spotted a large slow flying Egret. It was quite a way off but you could easily make out the large bend in the neck but try as I might I couldn't see the colour of the bill as the bird was flying away from us. We were positive it was a Great White Egret but couldn't claim it. As it flew towards the main Cley reserve I assumed someone there would report it. No one reported anything bar a Spoonbill and this was definitely not a Spoonbill, they look completely different to a GWE in flight. Very wierd. In the north hide it was quite empty which was nice so we settled down for a bit of a rest. All the waders were at the back of the pool which made them way too distant to ID, especially as this stupid hide looks straight into the sun apart from maybe 1 minute before sundown. This North pool desperately needs a more sensibly position hide in my opinion. I don't know what the rules are for positioning hides but surely number 1 in that list is MAKE SURE ITS

Norfolk trip Sept 2010

NOT LOOKING INTO THE SUN! After about 10 minutes Wendy picked up two smallish waders flying in. They didn't land at all but flew round a few times, we got a good look at them in flight and the white rump confirmed these as two **Curlew Sandpipers**. At least they were slightly different but not the Pectoral Sandpiper I was hoping for. It was now only 12.20 so we went and had another look round Cley proper and in Daukes Hide was possible the most boring bloke in the world. He was talking non-stop about Nikon cameras, it was a continuous drone, most of it was complete pants and I was dying to shout out, "GOOGLE IT!" but again managed to bite my lip. I couldn't handle his rubbish for any longer so we left and went back to HQ for lunch.

Eating my lunch I spotted that the Gitzo tripod I had been after for a while was in stock at Warehouse express. I knew they had a shop in Norwich which was only 40 minutes away so I took some brave pills, revised the route in Google Street view then bombed off. 2 hours later I had a very nice tripod :)

Thursday 23rd September

Yet again the lack of mobile signal was hitting hard and we had missed text alerts of a Yellow-browed Warbler at Warham Greens the previous evening. This really annoyed us as YBW was a bird we really would have loved to see so this was to be our first stop in the hope that the bird had hung around. It was raining again and the winds were now a gentle southerly. On the path from Stiffkey car park within 50 yards we spotted a few birds moving deep in the bushes. At home we would normally just presume it was a Dunnock and walk on but in Norfolk your hair stands on end and you are determined to pin the bird down because it could be literally anything. Wendy started pishing and a **Whitethroat** appeared followed by a definite Flycatcher. I called RB fly (mainly out of hope than anything) and I hadn't even got the bird in my bins at that point. We both got a good view and realised it was just a **Pied flycatcher**. Damit.



Norfolk trip Sept 2010

Obviously a migrant but not what we wanted really. We then had another bird which looked warbler ish drop down deep into the bush and it was never seen again. This was getting annoying now. About 100 yards further on were two **Yellowhammer** sitting in a bush. Yellowhammers aren't known for migrating so I'm not sure what these were. Nearer the Whirlygig we came across the Tit flock so got a bit excited as surely this was where the YBW would be. It wasn't... god dammit :(There was another Lesser Whitethroat though. There was no one at any bushes so we assumed the bird hadn't been seen again that morning so we had a look around the Whirlygig bushes. We spotted a few more unidentified birds dive into the bushes and walked back out. On the way back a small group of old birders came the other way and one woman had eyes on the side of her head like a fish. I know people take the micky out of Norfolk but flipping heck. Has there been a Nuclear fallout down there recently or something?

Disappointed we left Warham at 11.20. We had got slightly excited by the early Flycatcher but we just couldn't pin anything else down. Story of the trip really. We were running out of places to visit so we thought lets go to Holme again but this time the NOA section. Holme is really strange in that these two reserves are in the same area but you have to pay seperately at both. The NOA section was further east and did have the better bushes behind the dune ridge but I think again you needed the right conditions, which we didn't have. To top it off it was now thrashing down... we ended up playing eye spy in the car while waiting for it to stop. I lost that game big time.....talk about kicking a man when he is down. After about 20 minutes the rain eased off so we headed off into the general direction where we thought the Visitor Centre was. We ended up doing a loop and coming back out at the entrance! I was getting wound up by this place already but eventually we found the Centre but couldn't get in as the door was stuck. Great. Inside there were a few laid back people who seemed surprised we wanted to enter the reserve. One of the blokes had a rather authoritative chat to us and we did gather some good gen. There was a Brambling at the Dell Hide so off we went back towards the hides we had walked straight passed. We squeezed into the shed like hide which looked over a feeding table so we assumed this was the Dell Hide, although none of them appeared to be named. There were 3 well weird people in here, I think they were all from the same family and none of them said a word. After 10 minutes of this tense atmosphere and no Brambling we moved on the the next hide. That was even smaller and more useless so we slowly made our way back to the Dell Hide where the wierdo family had gone but there were even fewer birds now. As we didn't get any map of this reserve we ended up wandering around (mainly in circles) although we did stumble across a smart section of bushes.

Norfolk trip Sept 2010



We didn't find anything here either and had had enough of the NOA side so walked back into the NWT pines section after passing several NOA hides that had 'No entry' signs on them. What is all that about? Totally stupid, if you ask me. We quickly located the Tit flock and encouragingly it included a lot of Goldcrests. Then in the same flock we found the male **Brambling**.....a bit jammy. Also in the same flock was a couple of **Blackcap**. After a coffee top up at the NWT Visitor Centre and a chat to the nice bloke behind the counter we left Holme for the last time. It was now only 2.16pm and I literally couldn't think of where else to go.

Wendy had a look in the brochures and leaflets we had picked up and found that there was a Sealife Centre in Hunstanton. It sounded good with a North sea section and a Shark Tunnel thing..... cool. I looked in the sat nav and Hunstanton was only 10 minutes away down the west coast. Excellent. 10 minutes later it was like we had driven back in time 30 years. We spent 10 minutes touring the town as we couldn't find any directions to the Sealife Centre taking in some lovely views such as this.....



Not what we were expecting from a coastal town in Norfolk. After eventually finding the Sealife Centre car park (which was a unused field) I was seriously reconsidering staying. I was thinking my car would be on bricks within 2 seconds of parking up.

Norfolk trip Sept 2010

We chanced it though and walked through what looked like an abandoned fairground and finally found the Sealife Centre. We were just about to pay at the counter when Wendy spotted the price, £12.50 each!! EACH!? That's more than it is to get into Disneyland for gods sake. We turned round and walked straight out. Before we left Hunstanton forever we had to have another look around to fully absorb the ambience. The scene was perfected by two clinically obese women who were probably 14 but looked about 40, each pushing a pram.....louverly.



It was still too early to go back to HQ so I suggested RSPB Snettisham which was about 5 minutes down the coast. Snettisham was another place I've heard a lot about but never visited so I was interested to see what it was like. It's here that the 'Wader extravaganza' occurs when the tide is extremely high but we were there 3 hours before high tide so we wouldn't get to see the spectacle. We had inklings about the place when we parked up and saw that there was no Visitor Centre or anything. The only thing we noticed was that it was a 1.5km walk to get to the hides. Urgh! Undeterred we set off and after a few minutes walking we turned a corner to be greeted by two large lakes bordered by what looked like a shanty town!



Norfolk trip Sept 2010

Slightly put off by this grim area we quickened our pace but that didn't stop Wendy spotting a **Whinchat** perched on top of a gorse bush.



Nice to see that Snettisham is used by migrants....just not the Wryneck or Funky Mopopolese Warbler we were hoping for. Further along the path in some smart coastal bushes we heard a very strange scratchy song from deep in a bramble bush. We'd both never heard anything like this before so were confused as to what it was. I got the phone out and went through some birds songs that we hadn't heard. Amazingly it fitted Barred Warbler perfectly! Had we finally at nearly the last hurdle found ourselves a decent bird? Well no, we hung around the bush for 10-15 minutes and the bird just didn't show. We were absolutely gutted. Dejected, we trudged on for the remaining 1k. When we crossed between the two weird coastal lakes and onto the shoreline path we finally saw the wash mudflats for the first time.



Norfolk trip Sept 2010

You could see thousands of waders dotted all over the place and could imagine what happens when the tide (which was so far out we couldn't see it) pushes up and makes all these birds congregate together. Back in the actual RSPB Reserve there was very little on the weird derelict lake thing. We came across a Wheatear which I tried and failed to make into a Desert Wheatear. We staggered into the first hide we came across, had a 10 minute rest and realised that there was nothing here and that it looked unlikely that anything was going to happen so we set off on the huge journey back. On the way we passed at least 10 birders coming the other way. These were the first people we had seen. As we left the wash behind us I checked the time and it was only 2 hours before high tide... hmmm. We couldn't help but wonder if we were walking away just before the best 'Wader extravaganza' in history was just about to happen. Ah well least we had seen Snettisham reserve, never again!

Once back at the car I downed a Relentless energy drink and we made our way back east arriving back at HQ about an hour later. This was our last full day in Norfolk and it had been another disappointing one really. We just hadn't had the luck of the winds at all during our holiday. The Pied Fly migrant we found was probably just a British bird filtering down the coast so even our best find was pretty poo. Urhggh :(

Friday 24th September

The winds were finally from the east today... on the day we had to leave. Typical! We both had a horrible feeling that there would either be something amazing found today, while we were half way up the A1, or tomorrow, when we were back on the IOM. We still hadn't figured out what to do on the way out of Norfolk but my initial plan was to go to Frampton marsh in Lincolnshire and see the reserve properly for the first time. After checking Birdguides and seeing that there was 94 Black terns, 1 Slav Grebe and 2 Black necked Grebes at Rutland water we decided to go there instead. We chucked most places in Norfolk out that day so we could include both Frampton and Rutland. Sorted.

We were hoping to get up a bit later than normal on our last day but stupidly woke at 6.30am.... doh. Seeing as we were up early we had a last look at Gramborough Hill. When we got to the coastal bushes the heavens opened... Grrrrrr. We got soaked, cold and saw nothing in the bushes although on the sea we did add a **Razorbill**. We left our Salhouse HQ at 10am and went straight to our regular stop off, Fritcham Abbey Farm, which is 1 hour away. Wendy found the **Little Owl** straight away but yet again it was on the fence right at the back. She then spotted a small dove flying towards us and called **Turtle Dove**, sure enough there were two flying over. Excellent stuff. An hour later we waved bye bye to Norfolk and headed into Lincolnshire to RSPB Frampton Marsh. There had been a Pec Sandpiper seen here so we were hoping to finally pin one of them down and get a good look at one. We had visited Frampton Marsh in May to see the Oriental Plover but we didn't get the time to have a proper look around. This time we had a wander about which wasn't pleasant as we were being blown to bits by freezing, gale force winds. Frampton Marsh contains a few large shallow freshwater marshes that are right next to the Wash. In May the place was jam packed with ducks, waders, everything. Now it was strangely quiet but still we battled our way over to the 360 hide in the middle of the marsh. Straight away we could see a wader that looked a bit strange, like a Ruff with a different jizz. We ended up going with a freaky Ruff.

There were a few other birders in the hide and we got chatting to a few of them, unfortunately they said the pec sand was right in front of the hide 10 minutes ago! Arhghg. After a few more minutes of scanning we found a few **Golden Plover** then

Norfolk trip Sept 2010

suddenly the bloke next to us said, "Oooo..... found the Pec sand". We got very excited and got directions to the bird. Our excitement turned to depression when we realised the bloke had pointed us on to our weird Ruff. The bloke had been so helpful though so I couldn't bring myself to correct him and act the smart arse. The question now was had there actually been a Pec Sand at Frampton Marsh at all? After the disappointment of potentially another dip and the freezing wind blasting through the hide windows, adding to the depression, we decided to leave at 14.48.

We then had to travel back on ourselves to get to Rutland Water (which was supposed to be 1 hour away) but there was tons of traffic jams so we finally arrived at Rutland at 16.20. I jokingly said, "Hehe, I hope the Visitor Centre isn't shut". Sure enough, as we approached the Centre we could see it was in darkness....Oh flip! I had another look at the Rutland water map and by complete luck I realised the Grebes and terns were being seen from the Egleton side not the place we were at! Dohhhh stupid me. We zipped round to the other side and luckily it was still open.... phew. By now we were quite tired from the early start and travelling so I crossed my fingers that the Grebes were at the nearest hide. No such luck.....shock horror, they were at the furthest away hide! Still, we are hardcore birders and took it on the chin and headed out into the cold. What seemed like hours later we arrived at the hide and searched for ages but couldn't spot anything remotely like a small grebe. Although we did locate the **Black Tern** flock albeit down to 9 birds. Interestingly there was a slightly small dark Tern in the flock but it was just too far out of range to see the side of its neck so I couldn't confirm my suspicions. It was now getting late so we trudged off, having dipped on another two lifers for Wendy. Could the day get any worse? Of course it could. Within a few minutes of leaving the hide I got a Birdguides text saying 1 white winged black tern with 8 Black terns at Rutland water.... we couldn't believe it. If we had a bit more energy I'm sure we would have kicked off but by now after so much bad luck we just shrugged our shoulders. It was blatantly obvious that the smaller tern was the white winged BT but without getting any features ourselves we couldn't say we had seen it. This was an extra kick in the teeth and now a dip for me as well as another for Wendy. Today had totalled 5 dips for Wendy and 1 for me. Bad enough to put you off birding for life! On the walk back we picked up a distant **Green Sandpiper** and finally saw **Tree Sparrows** near the Visitor Centre but even two new birds for the trip didn't lift our crushed spirits. By the time we got back to the car we were absolutely frozen solid so we headed straight off with the heaters on full blast and that signalled the end of our weeks holiday.

When planning which week to go to Norfolk during autumn migration we thought we had picked a beauty. I was quietly optimistic of a week filled with amazing birds and having difficulty choosing which lifers to go for first. Instead we got the worst winds for migration possible and ended up scraping about, working hard for very little reward, it was very depressing and tiring. It also seemed like there's very little news being put out in Norfolk or possibly it's just that there were fewer decent birders around at the time. Either way, when the texts did come in, they were for a bird seen hours before rather than minutes which was quite disappointing. We have always felt that Norfolk is very birder friendly but it seems to be heading towards the 'keep it in the family' way. Obviously no one is entitled to see other people's birds but when you are working hard trying to find yourself a decent bird (that you would report instantly) with no reward and you receive a text of something good it's a boost for the moral to go and see it. It reminds you that there are birds out there and that one day it could be you who finds something special.....well, you never know!

In the end we finished the trip with 129 species which is less than the total recorded in May, we did cover nearly 1500 miles in the May trip though and this time it was more

Norfolk trip Sept 2010

like 900 miles. It was 9 more birds than we saw in Sept 09 but we were only in Norfolk for 4.5 days then.

Wendy got 5 lifers (Woodlark, Red-backed Shrike, Barred Warbler, Dartford Warbler and Common Crane) and I got two new birds (RBS and Barred Warbler).

Bird of the trip for me was the Red-backed Shrike, it would have been nice to watch it in the open for longer but still for our first RBS to be a cracking male was fantastic. Wendy couldn't decide which was her bird of the trip. It was a toss up between the Common Crane, Red-backed Shrike and the Dartford Warbler.

Edit: On the Saturday of arriving back in the Isle of Man a massive Mega was found at Blakeney point, Norfolk which drew thousands of people to walk the 8 miles in wind and driving rain. The bird was a possible Alder Flycatcher from America and only the second one for Britain. Not only that but on the same day there were reports of Yellow Browed Warblers, Common Rosefinch, Red-breasted Flycatcher, Grey and Red necked phalarope...!!! That was the sort of thing we were hoping for in our week, if it wasn't so absolutely gutting it would be hilarious... time for the Team Jinx label to be reinstated me thinks!