

# West Norfolk Bird Watching



Norfolk's western region skirts The Wash, the UK's most important estuary for wild birds and a site of international significance. A vital part of the East Atlantic flyway, one of the major bird migration routes in the world, the Wash provides a plentiful wintering over location for more than 300,000 birds. West Norfolk's vast inland waterways and countryside provide rich habitats for a number of species. The area boasts top internationally renowned bird watching and nature reserves with something to see all year round.



## Spring

The Norfolk coast is the first port of call for many summer visitors. Early spring migrants start to arrive in mid February when the first avocets are back at Titchwell Marsh, and by the end of March you'll hear the first chiff-chaffs in the woods and see early wheatears along the coast. April and May are amongst the busiest species-wise, as the last of the winter visitors linger on and the hedgerows, woods and marshes start to fill with summer birds. This is a great time to watch the marsh harriers sky dancing displays as they hunt on the wing.

Spring	What to see	Where
Thousands of summer visitors arrive while winter visitors linger	Avocets on the marshes	Titchwell Marsh RSPB
	Chiff-Chaffs and wheatears	All along the coast
	Marsh harriers over the reedbeds	Titchwell Marsh RSPB
	Migrating waders, warblers and the black-tailed godwit	Welney Wetlands Centre WWT

## Summer

The time to enjoy the sight and sound of common, little and sandwich terns as they fish offshore, or to sit outside a country pub at dusk whilst the swifts scream over head. The Weeting Heath National Nature Reserve in the Brecks is the only place in the UK where you can see stone curlews from a hide. Other highlights to spot are woodlarks or possibly a hobby as it chases dragonflies.

An after dark walk on a heath to listen for the churring song of a nightjar is a magical way to end the day, which you might have spent watching for birds of prey at a raptor watch point or sighting the first returning waders still in their breeding plumage as they stop off on the coast on their way south.

Summer	What to see	Where
Long days and warm evenings are perfect for spending time outdoors	Stone curlews	Weeting Heath National Nature Reserve
	Swifts darting overhead	Sitting outside with a pint of local brew!
	warblers and other summer visitors busy rearing young	Everywhere
	terns and gulls foraging for food	All along the coast
	The first returning knot from Greenland still in their breeding plumage	Snettisham RSPB
	At night, listen to nightjars churring on a heath	Dersingham Bog National Nature Reserve, Cat Bottom Sandringham, Roydon Common NWT

# Autumn

A season of change with the first south bound waders appearing in July and some summer visitors continuing to rear young into October. Watch for departing warblers feasting on blackberries and the first winter thrushes feeding in the hedgerows after their north sea crossing.

The first skeins of wintering wild geese start appearing, and the Norfolk coast in the winter is famous for being the place to see wind blown vagrants from the four points of the compass.

Autumn	What to see	Where
Many tens of thousands of birds are on the move. Depending upon the weather, who knows what wind blown rarity might turn up.	Warblers	Everywhere
	First skeins of brent geese return from the Arctic	All along the coast
	Flocks of bearded tits gather before dispersing for the winter	Titchwell Marsh RSPB
	First skeins of pink footed geese return from Iceland	Snettisham RSPB

# Winter

Vast skeins of pink-footed geese from Iceland arrive to spend the winter in the county. Over 40% of the world population can be present, a spectacular 90,000 birds. This is the best time to visit The Wash, the UK's most important estuary for wild birds, with over a third of million birds wintering over. Eight species arrive at Welney in internationally important numbers, and it is the largest wintering ground in Europe for the Bewick's and whooper swans. Hundreds of swans come in to roost in late afternoon, and this impressive sight can be enjoyed from the comfort of a heated observation room.

A high tide walk at Snettisham RSPB nature reserve is the time and place to see vast swarms of knot and maybe a hunting barn owl. Wintering birds of prey can be seen hunting on the wing, including hen harriers, merlin and peregrine.

Winter	What to see	Where
The busiest season for bird watching in Norfolk	Pink-footed geese	Snettisham RSPB
	Wintering birds of prey including the harrier, merlin, peregrine and short eared owl	Titchwell Marsh RSPB
	Knots swarming at high tide - the "spectacular" Redwings and fieldfares	Snettisham RSPB Countryside
	Finches, tits and woodpeckers	Woods
	Bewick's and whooper swans, flocks of pintail, teal, gadwell and shoveler	Welney Wetlands Centre WWT

# Further Information & Contacts



## RSPB Reserves

Titchwell Marsh Tel: 01485 210779 email: [titchwell@rspb.org.uk](mailto:titchwell@rspb.org.uk)  
Snettisham Tel: 01485 542689 email: [snettisham@rspb.org.uk](mailto:snettisham@rspb.org.uk)  
Ouse Washes Tel: 01354 680212 email: [ouse.washes@rspb.org.uk](mailto:ouse.washes@rspb.org.uk)  
Web: [www.rspb.org.uk](http://www.rspb.org.uk)



## Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust (WWT)

Welney Wetlands Centre: Tel: 01353 860711 email: [info.welney@wwt.org.uk](mailto:info.welney@wwt.org.uk)  
Web: [www.wwt.org.uk](http://www.wwt.org.uk)



## Norfolk Wildlife Trust

East Winch Common, Roydon Common, Weeting Heath, Ringstead Downs, Holme Dunes, Grimston Warren, Syderstone Common and Narborough Railway Line.  
Tel: 01603 625540 email: [admin@norfolkwildlifetrust.org.uk](mailto:admin@norfolkwildlifetrust.org.uk)  
Web: [www.norfolkwildlifetrust.org.uk](http://www.norfolkwildlifetrust.org.uk)



## Natural England

Dersingham Bog NNR Tel: 01485 543044 and Holkham NNR Tel: 01328 711183  
email: [enquiries.east@naturalengland.org.uk](mailto:enquiries.east@naturalengland.org.uk)  
Web: [www.naturalengland.org.uk](http://www.naturalengland.org.uk)

## Out & about

Visitors can take advantage of the CoastHopper bus service operating daily up to every hour during early spring, autumn and winter and up to every half hour from May to October. The service continues through to King's Lynn and connects with the London King's Cross train service arrival and departure times at King's Lynn railway station. Visit [www.coasthopper.co.uk](http://www.coasthopper.co.uk)

## Accommodation

Whether you are looking for hotels, bed and breakfasts, self-catering cottages, caravan and campsites or hostels you will find an ideal base for your bird watching break on the website [www.birdwatchingwestnorfolk.com](http://www.birdwatchingwestnorfolk.com). All accommodation featured is part of the national quality assurance scheme.

## Tourist Information Centres

Hunstanton Tel: 01485 532610  
King's Lynn Tel: 01553 763044  
Downham Market Tel: 01366 383287

[www.visitwestnorfolk.com](http://www.visitwestnorfolk.com)

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