

Autumn migration in Cornwall

Cornwall is located in the extreme south-west of the British Isles and is ideally located to receive migrants from North America, Asia and Europe. The majority of sites are situated in the west of the county and are easily accessed from our base in Penzance. Over the years West Cornwall has regularly attracted rare species during mid-October. Please note it is advisable to arrive in Penzance on the evening of October 8th 2021 or October 7th 2022

■ The following itinerary is subject to change due to weather conditions and wind direction, particularly when visiting Porthwarra and Pendeen.

Day 1: Surrounded by farmland and scrub, Drift Reservoir is our first destination today. On the reservoir resident species include Little Grebe, Common Pochard, Tufted Duck and Common Kingfisher. If the water levels are low the muddy edges attract Common Greenshank and Green Sandpiper. In recent years Drift has attracted rarities in the form of Ring-necked Duck and Lesser Scaup. For the remainder of the day we explore the West Cornwall valleys of Nanquidno, Cot and Kenidjack, which are close to St Just. In the upper part of the valleys it is possible to locate several species which use sycamore and oak trees in search of food. Among the flocks we should locate Spotted and European Pied Flycatchers whilst Firecrest and Yellow-browed Warblers occur on an almost annual basis. Careful searching of the scrub may reveal a migrant Eurasian Wryneck or perhaps something scarcer in the form of a Barred or Melodious Warbler. All three valleys have small streams running through them which attract Common Snipe, Eurasian Woodcock and if we are fortunate the uncommon and cryptically plumaged Jack Snipe.

Day 2: First port of call today is Land's End airport, which usually has no air traffic on Sundays. A check of the grassy fields should reveal European Golden Plovers, and perhaps an American Golden Plover among them – the species occurs almost annually here. In the right conditions this is also a favoured area for Buff-breasted Sandpiper. The grasslands sometimes

Dates

**TOUR A: Saturday October 9th –
Saturday October 16th 2021**

**TOUR B: Saturday October 8th –
Saturday October 15th 2022**

Leader: Phil Beraet

Group Size: 8

Birds: 90–110

attract unusual pipits, which may include Richard's and Red-throated, plus a chance of Greater Short-toed Lark. If conditions are good we will revisit the three valleys and explore the fields and cliff-tops near the coast. Our main objective is to locate the increasing numbers of Red-billed Choughs which use the area on a regular basis. If the winds are onshore there is the possibility of migrant Merlin, Peregrine Falcon and Short-eared Owl. In the second week of October there is a good chance of Black Redstart, Ring Ouzel and Lapland and Snow Buntings using the coastal fields and rocky outcrops.

Day 3: Marazion Marsh is close to our base in Penzance and is in part-managed by the RSPB. The marsh is a reliable spot for the commoner herons and wildfowl and gives us a chance of locating Eurasian Bittern in the reedbeds. In the reeds Cetti's Warbler, Common Chiffchaff, European Stonechat and Common Reed Bunting are resident. A scan into the bay from Marazion may reveal returning winter birds, notably



Eurasian Bittern Photo: Simon Papps

Great Northern and Black-throated Divers and in recent years Pacific Diver. Careful scanning of the sea may also reveal Black-necked and Slavonian Grebes, Common Scoter and the ever-present Northern Gannet, Razorbill and Common Guillemot. Penzance and Newlyn both have extensive fishing ports and a visit to these could produce Mediterranean, Iceland and Glaucous Gulls. Waders using the area include the declining Purple Sandpiper, Ruddy Turnstone, Sanderling and Dunlin. Rarities observed in recent years have included Surf Scoter, Grey Phalarope and North American gulls, notably Ring-billed, Laughing and Bonaparte's.

Day 4: A change of direction today as the group heads to The Lizard – a long promontory jutting into the English Channel and the most southerly point of mainland Britain. Our first stop at Kynance Cove may have migrating flycatchers, warblers and thrushes. At Church Cove, on the eastern side of

the peninsula, our interest is in the sycamore trees around the churchyard. This site often produces records of Icterine Warbler and Red-backed Shrike in October while rarer species in recent years have included Western Bonelli's, Pallas's, and Black-and-white Warblers and Red-eyed Vireo, the latter being almost annual in occurrence. On exiting the village a check of the heathland often produces sightings of the shy Dartford Warbler and Hen and Western Marsh Harriers, whilst Peregrine Falcon and Eurasian Kestrel often hunt over the heath.

Day 5: Our main interest today is spending time around the Hayle Estuary, which is one of the most important birding areas in Cornwall. Areas of interest include Ryan's Field, Carnsew Pool and the old railway station at Lelant. Anne's Wood holds the common woodland species and localised Great Spotted Woodpecker and Eurasian Nuthatch. The estuary often has large



Eurasian Spoonbill

Photo: Simon Papps

numbers of gulls including reasonable numbers of Lesser Black-backed, Mediterranean and on occasions Little. Muddy sectors of the estuary attract waders in the migration season and we have a chance of Red Knot, Common Greenshank and Bar-tailed Godwit. Scarcer species which occur in autumn include Wood and Curlew Sandpipers, Little Stint and Ruff. The Hayle Estuary also has a long track record of attracting rarities and scarcities from North America, Europe and Asia with recent records including Eurasian Spoonbill, Great Egret, Pectoral and Baird's Sandpipers, Lesser Yellowlegs, Bonaparte's and Ring-billed Gulls and White-winged Tern.

Days 6-7: On one of these two days we will pay a visit to Porthgarra or Pendeen for seabird passage. For best results these sites are reliant on south-westerly or westerly winds. Gwennap Head is probably the best area for sightings of shearwaters, skuas, terns and storm petrels with good passage numbers of Great and Arctic Skuas, Balearic, Manx and possibly late Sooty Shearwaters along with steady flows of Northern Gannet, Northern Fulmar, Common Guillemot and Razorbill. The valleys at Porthgarra often harbour migrants and passage birds of prey. Recent visits have produced sightings of Merlin, Short-eared Owl, Black Redstart, Richard's Pipit, Lapland and Little Buntings. Other possibilities include Eurasian Hoopoe, Red-breasted Flycatcher and Ring Ouzel. If the

west winds have been present for a long period there is an excellent chance of a North American passerine. Stithians Reservoir is close to The Lizard and a reliable site for Green and Wood Sandpipers and maybe an American 'peep' such as White-rumped or Baird's Sandpiper. On the reservoir wildfowl such as Northern Shoveler, Eurasian Teal and Eurasian Wigeon are sometimes joined by rarer ducks in the form of Garganey, Lesser Scaup and Green-winged Teal. Depending on news of unusual or rare birds these last two days are flexible to meet our needs.

Day 8: The tour concludes after breakfast with ample time for journeys back home by either rail or road.

Prices

Tour Price: £1495
Single Room: £ No charge
Deposit: £150

This holiday is fully inclusive of accommodation, meals and complimentary transport.

Not included: Drinks, insurance and items of a personal nature. Accommodation and meals on the nights of October 8th 2021 or October 7th 2022