

## NORFOLK/CORNWALL TRIP – OCTOBER 2018

### PART 1 – NORFOLK

Having spent 3 weeks of our holidays up in Scotland this year we needed to decide what to do with our remaining 2 weeks. Wendy had been making noises about going back to Cornwall, which we hadn't done for 4 years, so it seemed like a good plan. It had been a year since we had been to Norfolk as well, so I thought we could go there for the second week, so the drive back to Heysham on the way home wouldn't be such a nightmare. Obviously, the drive from Cornwall to Norfolk would still be horrendous, but there was no getting around that. When I went to book the boat I found that there were no dog cabins available for the Friday night sailing, so we had to settle on going on the Saturday morning instead. This meant we'd have more time to prepare after work on Friday and we wouldn't have to pay for a Travelodge but we'd have to be up early on the Saturday and I'd have to drive in the weekend traffic including the dreadful M5.....Uh oh!

Looking at the cottages available I found one in Norfolk that for some reason I'd never seen before. It was in Blakeney and situated down a track on the coastal side of the main A road. It looked out over the marshes and was surrounded by trees, which looked as though, if the conditions were right, we could have some amazing birds in the garden! How hadn't I seen this cottage before? I had to book it straight away but my heart sank when I found that it wasn't available for the second week.....Nooooooo! We really wanted to go to Cornwall for the first week as things seem to move through there earlier in autumn, but not wanting to miss out on such an amazing cottage we decided to turn our plans around and I booked it. We'd done it the same way round 4 years ago so it wasn't a total disaster. I was worried we wouldn't get to the Norfolk cottage in time for a Tesco delivery since we wouldn't be setting off from Heysham until lunchtime, so I decided to book that for the following morning just to be on the safe side. The Blakeney Spa was open until 10pm so we'd be able to grab our tea from there when we arrived to tide us over.

Trying to find a nice place in Cornwall was a different kettle of fish and everywhere was ludicrously expensive. We then realised that it was due to it being the UK's half term holidays (different to the Manx week), so nowhere was going to be cheap.....or as we found available! Any of the prime locations I wanted to go to were obviously already booked up but I managed to find a couple of cottages that looked OK and whittled it down to one, which was a bit old school but was in Cot Valley which is a pretty decent migrant valley. My first choice had been one of the cottages at Porthgwarra but when I looked more closely it didn't even have a TV, so I had to forget it. I booked the Tesco delivery for there for the day we planned to arrive (Saturday) but in the last slot, as I was pretty sure it would be touch and go if we got there in time. With everything booked it was just a case of waiting to see what the weather had in store for us. The Cornwall cottage was booked from the Friday, so if the worst came to the worst and there was nothing happening in Norfolk, we had the option of leaving a day early to head down to Cornwall.

It wouldn't be a holiday for us if there wasn't the tail end of hurricane threatening to throw a spanner in the works and that's exactly what Storm Callum did. The wind was horrendous and two days before we were due to leave it looked as though our sailing was going to be cancelled....several had been that week already.....Arrghhhh! Unbelievably, when it got to Friday it wasn't windy at all, maybe it was the eye of the storm or something, so we went to work feeling more optimistic.....Phew! It was nice being at work knowing that we didn't need to rush out as quickly as possible to get down to the Sea Terminal on time. Wendy was on reception while the hygeinist did her last session of the week and she was feeling

nice and calm for a change. I was trying to get as many loose ends as possible tied up before I went off for two weeks and was moving some boxes piled up in the workshop. All of a sudden there was an almighty crash and then an intense pain in my foot!! I looked down and found that there was a storage server on my foot, which had dropped from about 4ft up. The pain was horrendous, so I quickly sat down while the other lads in the room were killing themselves laughing at me. Their faces soon turned to shock and then green in colour when I took my shoe and sock off and my foot had swollen to around twice the size!! I had never seen my foot like that before and everyone started running round like headless chickens. All I could think was, "Oh my god I'm driving to Norfolk tomorrow morning and I've broken my foot, the holiday will have to be cancelled!" I think I must still have been in shock but somehow I got my shoe squeezed back on and I hobbled to my car to drive myself to A & E (no one offered to take me). I was sat on a wheelchair with my foot in the air at the end of one row of chairs for a few hours before I was seen. I told the Dr that I thought the server was about 6kg, but when I went back to work 2 weeks later I checked and it was actually 20kg! The Dr said he didn't think it was broken but would send me for an x-ray just in case. I couldn't believe it. How could something so heavy and dropped from such a height not have broken my foot?

While I sat there waiting, I had to message Wendy to let her know the bad news. It was getting on for 4pm by then and obviously, she totally panicked and her nice relaxed end to the day was turned upside down. Firstly, she had to let her Mum know so she could drop Lyca home, as I had no idea how long I was going to be, and the rest hung in the balance.

I got my x-ray within a few minutes and was back to see the Dr who confirmed that there were no broken bones, just several bruises and said he would give me co-codamol for the pain. He went on to say that a side effect was that it makes you drowsy, which was the last thing I needed with the drive to Norfolk ahead of me. Luckily, he agreed to prescribe me the low dose Co-codamol and reassured me that I'd be ok on them. I was really worried about how it was going to affect our plans, and not only did I have long distances to drive but everything else centred around walking. I messaged Wendy again, so she could stop worrying and she closed down the practice and skipped off to tell the hygienist who was also very relieved and gave Wendy a bottle of Prosecco to take away with her. She wasn't expecting that at all, so it came as a nice surprise to make up for the stressful end to the afternoon. When she got home I was already back and resting my foot, so she sorted tea out for us both. I sat with my foot elevated with an ice pack on it for as long as I could for the rest of the evening but obviously, I still had things to do before the morning. By the time we went to bed we were both feeling slightly dubious about the following day. One thing we did realise was that it was a good job things hadn't worked out as planned because I don't reckon I'd have been able to drive to Castletown that evening never mind Sleaford!

Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> October

I had set my alarm for 6.30am, so we both got up and started to get all the last minute stuff ready. I'd really struggled to find a way to sleep comfortably with the pain in my foot, so was extremely worried that when I tried to get out of bed I wouldn't be able to put any weight on it. Amazingly, I could walk on it which was a good start, but putting my walking shoes on was a different matter. In the end I had to loosen the laces off completely and leave them untied to be able to get them on. When everything was packed, I started to load the car up and it was throwing it down with rain, so I was soaked in no time...Yuk! I was annoyed I hadn't worn something else while I loaded the car as now my traveling clothes were wet through :(. My foot was pretty sore when it pressed against my shoe but I wanted to delay taking my painkiller until later, so I'd get the benefits for the long drive as I knew pressing the accelerator was going to kill. It was such a rush trying to get ready and we

were running late but we locked up the house and headed off at 7.52am. Six minutes later and I was ushered to park up at the back of the first queue of cars! There were about six rows of cars, so being the last car to arrive I'd totally jumped the queue, but I was only following orders :P. hilariously, at 8.02am we were boarding, which was just 10 minutes after we'd left the house, so we'd timed it to perfection. I was told to park up on the lower deck right at the front, so I was likely to be one of the first cars off too! Jammy or what? After getting the key we went straight up to the cabin, where Lyca made herself comfortable on the bed as usual. There were some **Herring Gulls** flying around the harbour and we departed nice and early at 8.33am :). With it being a Saturday morning there wasn't much on TV and the chances of us getting any sleep to kill some hours were slim, so we had a long and boring crossing ahead of us. After Wendy had painted her nails, she looked out of the window to see if she could add some birds to the list. There were a good few **Gannets** and a **Cormorants** but no sign of the Minke Whale that'd been hanging around the vicinity for a weeks. That had wasted a few minutes, so we both lay down to watch TV and Wendy fell asleep.....Hahahaha! I didn't manage to get any sleep at all but at least the sea was relatively calm, so it wasn't too rough a crossing. When Wendy woke up she was freezing but my mind had turned to food and my tradition of having Chicken Burger and Chips....Om nom nom :). Wendy wasn't best pleased but got up and rang for room service anyway. When the bloke arrived, she gave him her order and was told that it might not be possible as they were still only serving food from the breakfast menu. Wendy told him that the menu said that main meals were served from 10.30am onwards and it was nearly 11am, so he said he'd go and ask. Uh? Not knowing if I was going to get anything or not, we waited patiently until there was a knock at the door and Wendy went to find out. I was very relieved to see that he had a tray in his hands with my food on it, so after she'd paid we started to tuck in. Lyca sat at our feet ever hopeful of a stray chip falling off the plate but her luck was out. While Wendy picked at the chips I bit into my burger only to find that for some reason it had cheese on it. Usually they ask if you want cheese or bacon, to which I always decline, so this was a first for me and not an entirely welcome addition. I ate it anyway and saved a little piece of chicken to give to Lyca after Wendy had given her the odd chip or two. She never begs for food at the table at home, so she obviously feels entitled to a treat too when she's on her hols, which is fair enough. After we'd finished, I put the tray out in the corridor and remembered that I still needed to phone the cottage company to ask about the key. I spoke to a very pleasant woman and explained that we were going to arrive in Norfolk too late to be able to collect it from the office, so I needed to make alternative arrangements. She told me that it wasn't a problem and that she'd leave the key outside the office somewhere safe, so we were free to collect it whenever we got there, ace! At least that was one thing off my mind and all I had left to worry about was my foot. We thought we'd better take Lyca out for a wee before we got off but when we got up on deck we were shocked to see that we were practically there and the boat was literally pulling into its berth :O! I'd recently upgraded the trusty Sony RX100 point and click that we've used for years on holidays and was testing out the new Sony RX100 Mk5 that I'd bought second hand off ebay. I was really interested to see how the pictures would turn out with all the extra tech involved being 5 years newer.



Approaching Heysham harbour

I ran up the stairs with Lyca, she performed and we all legged it back to cabin, adding **Black-headed Gull** and **Great Black-backed Gull** to our list, and gathered all our stuff together. It was 11.59am when we docked and while we waited to be called an announcement came on which provoked a rather delayed reaction. "Would the young lady travelling with Mr Dick please contact the information desk?" We thought nothing of it until a few seconds later when we heard a loud explosion of laughter coming from the cabin next door and the penny then dropped. Wendy roared with laughter and sniggered at the passengers somewhat unfortunate surname and I told her off just in case he was next door or something.....Urrghhh! We were called to go to our cars and we sat feeling rather smug that we were going to be one of the first cars off, so we didn't have to wait for long. All of a sudden, we didn't feel so smug when it looked as though the ramp had broken and wasn't going down. Some blokes gathered around and stared up at it and we had a horrible feeling that we could be sitting there for hours while they tried to fix it. This isn't unheard of and would be just typical of our luck considering we didn't have any time to waste and needed to get going. Luckily the ramp wasn't broken and had merely had some kind of momentary glitch and it started to slowly open.....Phew! We didn't have to race to the cottage to accept our Tesco delivery and as long as we got to Blakeney before the Spa shut at 10pm we'd be fine, so I didn't have any deadlines to make for a change.

We finally drove off at 12.09pm and there were plenty of **Feral Pigeons** flying around the terminal. It was a gloomy day with rain, mist and a strong wind blowing but that's only what we've come to expect on our journeys anywhere. I'd decided to take the route via Harrogate again, so I hoped it'd clear up at some point as I was looking forward to being able to see the scenery for the first time ever seeing as it's always dark when I drive it normally. The first birds we added on the drive were just the predictable **Rooks** and **Jackdaws** but there was plenty of time to improve on that. As we drove through the former mill village of Caton in Lancashire we noticed how flooded the floodplains were after all the rain we'd had recently. What surprised us the most was that there were still livestock being kept there, despite them having been pushed out to what little dry land remained around the outer edges of the fields.





Bad flooding

I was starting to think this route was a stupid idea, as I really needed to be on a motorway so I could get the cruise control on to take the pressure off my foot. Instead I was having to slow down for villages every 5 minutes.....Doh. At Burton-in-Lonsdale we added **Starlings** and at Wendy's old favourite Farm Shop (from her numerous trips to North Yorkshire in the past) 'Country Harvest' at Ingleton there were loads of **Woodpigeons** in a field. By the time we'd got past Clapham I had to stop to sort out my sat nav, as it'd already thrown a wobbler and ditched off the route I'd programmed into it.....Urrghhhh! Back on track we drove through Hellifield and on our approach to Conistone Cold Wendy spotted a field absolutely caked in **Lapwing** and a couple of **Carrion Crows**. As we got nearer to Skipton, we added **Pheasant** and **Grey Heron** but we weren't expecting anything interesting on this leg of journey anyway. It was plain sailing until we got near Harrogate where I turned off and headed through Otley, where our old Landlord from Kirby Cottage lives. The roads there were small and slow going and Wendy recounted watching two Red Kites over Otley just before we spotted our first **Red Kite** of the trip. Very timely! My sat nav decided to have another moment of madness, so again it was slow going on the backroads but we spotted a **Kestrel** hovering over a field somewhere in the middle of nowhere. Two miles south of Harrogate we found ourselves driving around the village of North Rigton and Wendy breathed a sigh of relief when I said, "Nice views." She'd binged on about how lovely North Yorkshire was for years and this was the first time I'd said anything positive about the area, being the only time driving through it in daylight. We drove past an area of woodland in the village of Harewood and saw another Red Kite, but it wasn't alone and there were actually 6 birds circling over it. Further along and we found 7 more and then another making a total of 14 birds, which made us wonder whether Harewood House has a feeding station or something. It turned out that Red Kites were reintroduced at the Harewood Estate in 1999, which was funded by Yorkshire Water and Yorkshire Wildlife Trust and they're doing really well despite illegal raptor persecution in the area. Yorkshire has the worst record for illegal raptor persecution in the UK.

Having recently bought my first Land Rover Defender I was really interested to see just how many we'd see during the holiday. I'd counted 14, so far and asked Wendy to keep a tally going, which she wasn't exactly overjoyed with but reluctantly agreed. Just as she'd closed the page I spotted another, so she had to go back and add it in, rolling her eyes in despair. We saw our first **Common Buzzard** of the trip and then added another 2x Red Kites, so the

reintroduction really was doing well. Driving through Collingham Wendy spotted a lovely black Cockerpoo, we added **Magpie** to our bird list and I'd already tallied up 16 Defenders in Yorkshire alone! When we finally started heading south on the A1M it was surprisingly warm with clear blue skies, which was a contrast from the gloom we'd been greeted with when we drove off the boat. There were a few **Lesser Black-backed Gulls** feeding in a ploughed field and it was 24.5c at 2.47pm. When we got down to Nottinghamshire it rose to 25.5c, which we hadn't expected in mid-October, so we were boiling in the car and had to open the windows. One thing Wendy had started to notice was that we still hadn't seen a single Blackbird. During the summer we'd noticed how few fledglings we'd seen or even heard, so this was very worrying. We reckon that the hot, dry spell had made it so hard for them to feed that they'd had a really bad year :( We passed a dead Fox at the side of the road, then a dead Deer and then a dead Badger, so we crossed our fingers that we'd actually see some alive during our trip. Wendy was starting to get really tired by then and was struggling not to drop off, which was bad timing seeing as we were getting near to our first stop of the day. Driving through Methwold we saw a pair of **Collared Doves** and at 4.11pm we finally parked up at RSPB Frampton Marsh in Lincolnshire. Phew!

We got out of the car and Wendy ran into the visitor centre to use the WC before we went to stretch our legs and see what was about. Amazingly the walk felt better for my foot than stuck at an angle in the car. I took it easy though as it didn't feel great. It wasn't going to be a very long walk at all, but it was Lyca's only one of the day, although our lethargy had seemingly rubbed off on her too, so we didn't feel too guilty. Wierdly, the water levels were really low and some of the pools and floods were completely dry....Uh oh! I hoped this wouldn't mean the birds would be even further away than normal or not there at all....



Where's the water?

We headed towards the gate but were stopped in our tracks when we saw a 'No Dogs' sign on it.....Eh? This was news to us, but they'd stopped dogs from going anywhere on the reserve apart from down the main road and although access was pretty limited before we could still get close enough to the first pool to view it. From the road we had a scan of the now distant pool and added **Wigeon, Pintail, Mallard, Shoveler, Teal** and **Black-tailed Godwit** which seemed to be about it. Just before we gave up Wendy spotted an **Avocet** right at the back, which we didn't expect to see there at all. A **Sparrowhawk** blasted through but none of the birds even batted an eyelid and a single **Golden Plover** flew in, which was a real sign of the times. We carried on down the road keeping an eye on the

bushes for Tree Sparrow and Yellowhammer, but a **Goldfinch** was the only bird we found. There were 2x **Moorhens** in the ditch at the side of the road and some **Egyptian Geese** in the field, which we'd never seen at Frampton before either. We didn't give the Swan that was in a ditch a second glance until I clicked and had a look through my bins to confirm **Whopper Swan**.....Doh! The weather had been so mild recently that it was hard to believe that our winter birds were already returning. There was another dog heading towards us, so we stopped in a layby to let it past. We heard a familiar squeak and looked up to see a **Common Snipe** hurtling upwards and flying off as well as spotting some Geese grazing in a field. Thinking that they could well be Pink-feet, we had a look but they were just **Canada Geese**. Frampton was pretty dead and Wendy was moaning that it was a waste of time and we may as well have just carried on to the cottage. I reminded her that Lyca needed some kind of walk and decided to just go to the end of the road and not bother going up onto the bank.



Looking towards the seawall

We got down to the last pool in a field of cows and an old man came over to make a fuss of Lyca. He was totally smitten and luckily Lyca was in a good mood and didn't show us up.....Phew! While we stood there chatting to him Wendy spotted a wader at the near edge of the pool and raised her bins to check it. Thinking it was probably just a Barwit she was totally taken off guard when she saw it and said, "Errrr what the \*\*\*\* is that?" She pointed it out to me just as it went behind a cow and luckily the old man went back to his car, so I waited to see if it'd reappear. I wasn't expecting much but when it finally came out and into view I very casually said, "It's a **Long-billed Dowitcher**." It was a strange moment and I don't know if it was due to our tiredness, but it just wasn't registering. Neither of us were particularly excited by it nor did it feel real, so I decided to get a record shot just to be on the safe side.





Long-billed Dowitcher

We were doubting ourselves as usual especially as Wendy had been saying what a waste of time it was just minutes beforehand! We even went so far as to check the Collins Bird Guide app on Wendy's phone and it was spot on, but we were still in doubt. Typically, the bird wasn't cooperating and spent most of its time out of sight of behind the long grass, so I couldn't get any good shots. Wendy was freezing and had realised that it was Lycas dinner time, so we all headed back to the car. On the way we added **Mute Swan** and **Reed Bunting** but there was still no sign of any Tree Sparrows or Yellowhammers. We were still in denial that it was a Long-billed Dowitcher and reckoned that surely somebody else must've seen it too, so we didn't want to look stupid! After realising that we were being silly and that it definitely was one Wendy trotted off inside the Visitor Centre. Still being cautious she asked the woman inside if they'd had a Long-billed Dowitcher on the reserve to which she said that it'd been hanging around for a month, but it hadn't been seen today. Woo Hoo! We'd known nothing about it, so even though we weren't the actual original finders of the bird and couldn't claim it as our own, it'd been a great personal find for us :).

Not wanting to be defeated I drove up to the end of the road, so I could set my tripod up and hopefully get something better. This went down like a lead balloon for Wendy, who just wanted to get to the cottage but it's not every day you've got a Long-billed Dowitcher to photograph, so it was tough luck. The bird was hiding behind the long tufts of grass, so it wasn't ideal and I had to keep hoping that it'd come out into the clear at some point. While I was doing that Wendy fed Lyca and sat feeling bored and tired. A **Yellowhammer** flew over me while I was realising that my new expensive Micro four thirds adaptor wasn't working, so there was no way for me to get any decent video.....Aarrghhh! The only solution would be to send it back, but luckily enough I'd brought my old cheapo adaptor with me so I could still get photos. This couldn't have come at a worse time because I'm not going to get many chances to video a Long-billed Dowitcher and this was only the second time we'd ever seen one! I eventually had to give up and went back to the car. Why I hadn't tested it before going away is anyone's guess but I'll know for next time....Doh! As I was getting ready to drive off a bloke wearing head to toe camo wielding a rifle walked past us on his way down to the bank. We wondered what he was doing considering he was on an RSPB Reserve and could only conclude that he was after Rabbits :(.

It was 5.40pm when we set off on the last leg of the journey and we saw our first **Chaffinches** of the trip in a field. My sat nav was talking utter rubbish again so I had to stop by Frampton Church to sort it out and while I was doing that we heard a **Goldcrest** calling. Wendy cheered when we passed the sign for 'Norfolk' and my Defender count was already on 20 :O! When I turned off at Sculthorpe to join the coast at 6.54pm it was nearly dark, but we could see loads of Moths flying in the headlights. A **Vole** ran across the road and it was still 21.5c when we were driving through Stiffkey. When we got to Blakeney I dropped Wendy off at the Spa so she could get something for our tea and took a spin around the corner to collect the keys for the cottage. After I'd picked Wendy up, I had to find the cottage, which was down a track off the main road. The temperature had gone up to 22c and it felt really humid as we drove in the pitch black keeping our eyes peeled for the turn off. I finally spotted it and luckily there was no other traffic coming because it was just after the brow of the hill, so any cars behind could easily go straight into the back of you if you stopped. I could see this as a potential problem but all we wanted to do was get there. We scared a **Muntjac Deer** from the grassy bank at the entrance, so it quickly leapt into the trees and vanished. The track was very rough and was surrounded by trees but there were no lights to help us see where we were going. We drove past a small house and turned a corner to finally find North Down House sitting there in the darkness. Even in the darkness I could tell this house and its location was something special. Luckily the lights had been left on for our arrival, but it was eerily quiet and felt quite spooky as we got out of the car at 7.31pm.

I opened the door and let Wendy and Lyca in and we could instantly feel the warmth of the central heating, so at least it wasn't cold.....Phew! It was possibly too hot in there if the truth be known but we couldn't grumble, as it looked really clean and nice although not half as big as it had done on the website. Wendy went into the kitchen and put the oven on and started to unpack our food while I lugged all our cases and bags in. She was getting really annoyed because there were at least 7x flies buzzing around in the kitchen and she could only think that there was something dead in there or that maybe the cleaners had left all the doors open when they were there earlier. They were buzzing around everywhere and another thing that was bugging her was that she couldn't find a fridge anywhere and having opened all the cupboards she'd run out of ideas. Eventually she opened a huge bespoke cupboard on the other side of the room and found a fridge, freezer and a massive larder.....Phew! It was a really good idea and she was relieved too, as all the other cupboards were full of pots and pans and plates, so she'd wondered where she was going to put all our stuff.



Kitchen

It wasn't long before our pizza was ready, so we sat down to finally have our long overdue tea. On the table was a vase of red roses, some chocolate mints and in the fridge was a bottle of Prosecco as our welcome pack. A pint of milk and some bread would've been handy considering we had no shopping until tomorrow but hey ho :P. After a quick tea, as there wasn't very much of it, Wendy went upstairs to run herself a bath and unpack our toiletries and clothes while she waited for it to fill. She didn't get very far though and shouted down to me that the bathroom bulb had blown, so she had no light, so I had to go up and remove one from a spare room to replace it. It turned out later that there was a light, which was sufficient enough on the bathroom wall cabinet, so I could've saved myself the hassle! It'd been such a warm day that the house was like a sauna and I was so tired that I couldn't be bothered to work out how to adjust the heating. Seeing as it had been so warm, we reckoned it'd be worth putting the moth trap out for a couple of hours just to see what we'd get. It was due to rain overnight and tomorrow so it couldn't be left out all night, which was lucky seeing as we were so tired and didn't fancy getting up early to empty it anyway. It gathered all the bits together and started to assemble it out in the back garden. All of a sudden, I noticed that there was no perspex for the top pieces, so I went inside to try and find them. I'd put it all together in a pile, so there was nowhere else it could've been and I realised that I'd left it at home, still in the cellar.....NOOOOOOOOOOOO! Without it the trap was as good as useless because all the moths would just fly back out as and when they wanted.....Doh! I had no other option but to plug it in anyway and hope for the best, but it was extremely bad news for any future trapping over the next fortnight. What an absolute idiot! Before long I'd caught 5 and Wendy had found one in the bathroom, so we potted them up and put them in the fridge and I came inside to chill out. I thought I may as well leave the trap out until we went to bed just out of interest, but I wasn't expecting much of haul. Back in the living room Wendy asked me how my foot was, so I took my sock off and we both looked at it in horror. It had turned a fetching shade of purple and was so swollen that Wendy laughed and said it looked like a haggis.



Haggis foot

I could only assume co-codamol was working an absolute treat, the sight of my foot was pretty horrific, but it wasn't as painful as it looked. It had got us to Norfolk though and that was the main thing.

My problem of the new adaptor had been playing on my mind, so after a lot of thinking I wondered if I needed to do a firmware update, so I set about doing it. I was so relieved to find that it'd worked, so not only had I saved myself the hassle of returning it I now had an adaptor for my camera....Yey! While Wendy was in the kitchen, getting herself a glass of Prosecco, she'd had a look at one of the moths in the fridge and reckoned it was a Green Brindled Crescent if so, that would be a lifer which was amazing considering the duff moth trap. She then whatsapped her Mum, as there was no phone in the house and luckily it worked really well. She'd been laughing about something so after she'd hung up I asked her what it was. Apparently, her sister had gone out to the freezer in the garage and unbeknown to her she'd stood in Cat poo, which she dragged through the house and up the stairs, which had made a horrendous mess of her carpet. Her sister had been in a rush to get to work so her Mum had to go up with her carpet cleaner to get rid of.....Ewwwwww!



All of a sudden, our day didn't seem too bad in comparison. I went out to get the moth trap in and although there were none inside it there were loads resting on the side of the house and ground nearby. Most of them were Black Rustic and I called Wendy out to have a look. We potted the interesting ones up and put them in the fridge with the others for the morning and I brought it all back inside. Wendy was feeling so tired and brain dead, my foot was sore and we had no yogurt for Lyca, so when she started asking for it at 10pm Wendy tried to compensate by giving her some carrot. This kept her quiet for all of 5 minutes and then she became obsessed with something under the settee. We couldn't see her head as it was under it and her tail was wagging frantically. When I went to investigate, I found a tennis ball, so I had to pull it out and hide it from her.



Trying to get the ball

By 11pm we couldn't stay awake any longer and headed off to bed.

Sunday 14<sup>th</sup> October

Lyca decided that we didn't need a lie in and tried to get us up far earlier than we wanted, so we ignored her and managed to get her to go back to sleep until 8.30am. When Wendy had woken up earlier she'd heard something that sounded like a Toad calling outside. She had no idea what it was but, she'd heard it before and when she googled Toad it was nothing like it, so she was stumped. I took Lyca out for a wee and it started to rain, which was set to last for the rest of the day, so it was a good job we had to stay in to wait for Tesco between 11-12pm. I could hear **Curlew** calling from down on the marsh and had my first view from the house. You could see the whole stretch of Blakeney Point and Blakeney Marsh including Halfway House and the Coastguard building, so it was the best view (and location) we've ever had from a cottage in Norfolk.





What a view!

It didn't half make you realise how long that walk is! Wendy hadn't been able to resist a sneaky peek of it when she'd got up for a wee earlier, so she'd already seen it. There was a **Robin** hopping around in the garden and Lyca wolfed down her breakfast and went straight to the living room and sat in front of the wall unit staring up at the shelf where I'd hidden the ball she'd found last night and started whinging constantly.



Gimme the ball!!!

She was totally obsessed, so I ended up putting it in the bin, which stopped her once and for all. Wendy was OK for breakfast as she'd brought some cartons of oat milk and a box of cereal with her but I was stuffed. I'd planned to get milk if there was none in the fridge on our arrival, but I just couldn't be bothered and decided to sit it out until Tesco came. We started to go through the Moths from last night and considering it had been done by unconventional methods we'd done really well and even had 5x lifers.

\*Green Brindled Crescent x1

Large Yellow Underwing x3  
Black Rustic x20  
Red Green Carpet x2  
\*Feathered Thorn x2  
\*Brown-spot Pinion x1  
Shuttle-shaped Dart x2  
\*Autumnal Rustic x1  
Turnip Moth x1  
\*Beaded Chestnut x1  
Setaceous Hebrew Character x1  
Diamond back x1  
Micro (unidentified) x1

Total = 37 moths (13x sp)

After that our attention turned to trying to eradicate the flies while seeing what was out in the garden and I finally spotted our first **Blackbird** of the trip! There was also a **Roe Deer** in the trees by the house, **Rabbits**, a male **Bullfinch**, a **Blue Tit** and **Little Egret** flying over the marsh. I was starting to feel really hungry by then and from 11am I was counting the minutes to when I could have my breakfast. By 11.50am there was still no sign of Tesco and we started to get worried that they weren't coming at all. I then got a message saying that they were running late and it could be as late as 1.20pm when they got here, so I couldn't wait that long and decided to go to Spa. It was lunchtime, so I didn't bother with milk, but I got some baps, flora, a yogurt, some crisps and a drink and took it all back to the house. Wendy had brought the remainder of her vegan cheese with us and a jar of pickle so with the addition of some of Lyca's cucumber she had lunch sorted. I didn't have any cheese and wouldn't eat hers if you payed me, so I had one of my all time favourites and made a crisp bap....Om nom nom :P. Tesco finally arrived at 1.35pm and I went out to help the woman delivery driver with the crates. She told me she'd got a flat tyre and that was why she was so late, so we couldn't be annoyed with that. After all the shopping had been put away it started chucking it down with rain again, so we held off rushing to go out and tried to swat more flies instead.



Handy... :(



We'd initially thought there were about 7 but by the time we'd swatted 7 there were more, so it looked as though we'd never get rid of them all.

The rain eased off and we headed out at 2.30pm making a detour to Spa (again!) and then Picnic Fayre in Cley so that Wendy could get her Deli fix. Seeing as it was raining and we didn't feel like doing much anyway I reckoned we should go and have a look for the reported Jack Snipe at the pool at Walsey Hills. We could also have a very quick walk and hopefully stay relatively dry, as it'd be sheltered under the cover of the trees.

When I parked up at Walsey Hills it was 3.15pm and absolutely throwing it down! There was a **Little Grebe** swimming around on the pool and we scanned the reeds around the edges for the Jack Snipe from the car.



Walsey Hills pool

There was also a **Little Egret** quite close so, seeing as I had no wildlife photos to show for the day and wasn't expecting to get another opportunity, I thought I may as well give it a shot. I positioned the car perfectly and just as I raised my camera it walked to the left and vanished behind the long grass.....Urrghhh! We had a different angle to look for the Jack Snipe but there was absolutely no sign of it, so we gave up looking. We reluctantly got out of the car into the rain and set off down the footpath at the bottom of Walsey Hills. Wendy noticed how the sloes were all well past it and shrivelled up and it looked as though the lower most accessible ones had all been picked too. We found the Tit flock and added **Great Tit** to our list but there wasn't any to suggest that there'd been any sort of fall of Goldcrests. We listened out for a YBW but had no luck and the best we could pull out was a **Chiffchaff**. When we got to the end I suggested going into the field and walking along the tree line for a bit seeing as it was the only leg stretch of the day and couldn't even be classed as a walk.



Fields behind Walsey Hills

I spotted a **Brown Hare** hunkering down in what remained of the crops and then a Roe Deer with 2x young ones. It was the nearest I'd ever been and typically I didn't have my camera with me, so I couldn't get a shot. A **Stock Dove** flew over and there was a **Marsh Harrier** but with it being my best chance of getting a nice Deer shot I told Wendy that I'd go back to the car and get my camera because I didn't think they were in a hurry to move off. Wendy wasn't convinced but we all turned around and headed back to the car passing 2 blokes who looked like father and son who seemed to also be looking for the Jack Snipe.

By then it was so wet and windy that Wendy stayed in there with Lyca while I hurried back to the field. I had a **Greenfinch** flying over and I flushed 3x **Grey Partridge** but my heart sank when I got there and saw that the Deer had gone, so I'd got absolutely soaked for nothing.....Grrrrr! I walked past the 2 blokes again and they were standing in the flattened area under the trees where we'd looked from earlier. It looked as though they'd spotted something, so I stopped to see if I could see anything but as far as I could tell there was nothing there. I was pretty cold, wet and depressed when I got back to the car, but I wasn't the only one! The 2 blokes were walking back to their car absolutely dripping wet too and they stopped to ask us if we'd seen the Snipe. I told them we hadn't and the older of the 2 said that he'd seen something at the back that he thought was it but then he noticed that it hadn't moved at all, so it probably wasn't.....Hahahaha! About 40x Stock Doves came in and landed up in a tree on the other side of the pool, which is the most we've ever seen together.

We left at 4.17pm and I drove to Salthouse to have a scan from the end of the beach road near to where the car park used to be before it was totally obliterated in the storms a couple of years ago.





Salthouse looking towards Gramborough Hill

It's weird to think that we used to park there and Wendy used to get a coffee from the van that was renowned for nice coffee. We'd even had a Storm Petrel fly over the car but now it's just an extension of the Shingle beach. There was a **Pied Wagtail** running around, 2x **Greylag Geese** in a field and we heard a **Meadow Pipit** going over but after hoping for a Snow or Lapland Bunting that was as good as it got. It was so dark and grim that we didn't fancy sticking around and headed for home at 4.28pm.



Salthouse looking back inland

I was still counting Land Rovers and had tallied up 24 already by the time we got back to the house at 4.41pm. Wendy gave Lyca her tea and then set about preparing ours, which was a nice easy job. Hers required the boiling of a kettle to pour over her Itsu Satay Noodles and mine only involved heating up my vegan pulled pork in a pan, cutting the other bap from lunchtime in half and putting some Fries to Go in the microwave. Mine was really nice, which left Wendy feeling slightly envious, as hers wasn't nearly as nice as she'd

remembered it having been on our summer holiday. Even though we hadn't done much at all Lyca was already zonked.



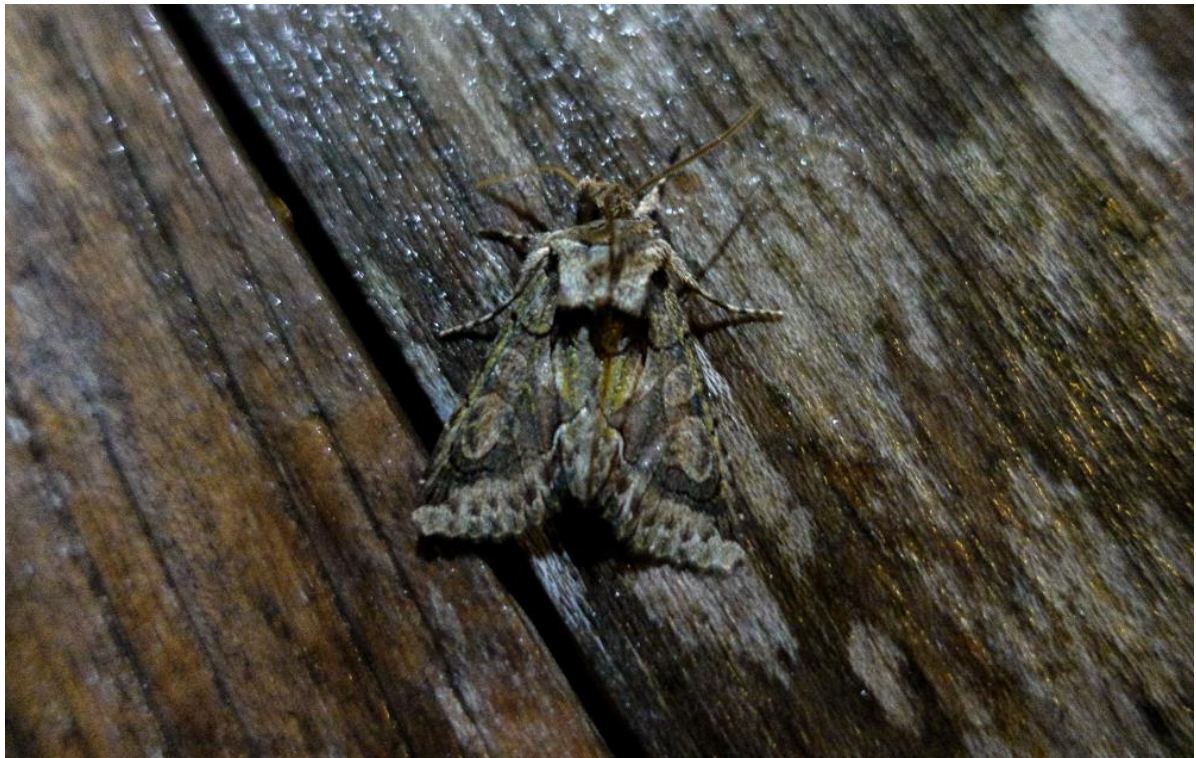
Zonko'ed

After we'd had baths and Wendy had spoken to her Mum we watched some rubbish TV. The reports started to flood in from Cornwall and we don't know if it's due to suppression or bad mobile reception but reports when it's pitch black outside are neither use nor ornament! When we'd had enough Wendy put the dishes away, while I let the moths from the fridge go and took photos of the interesting ones.



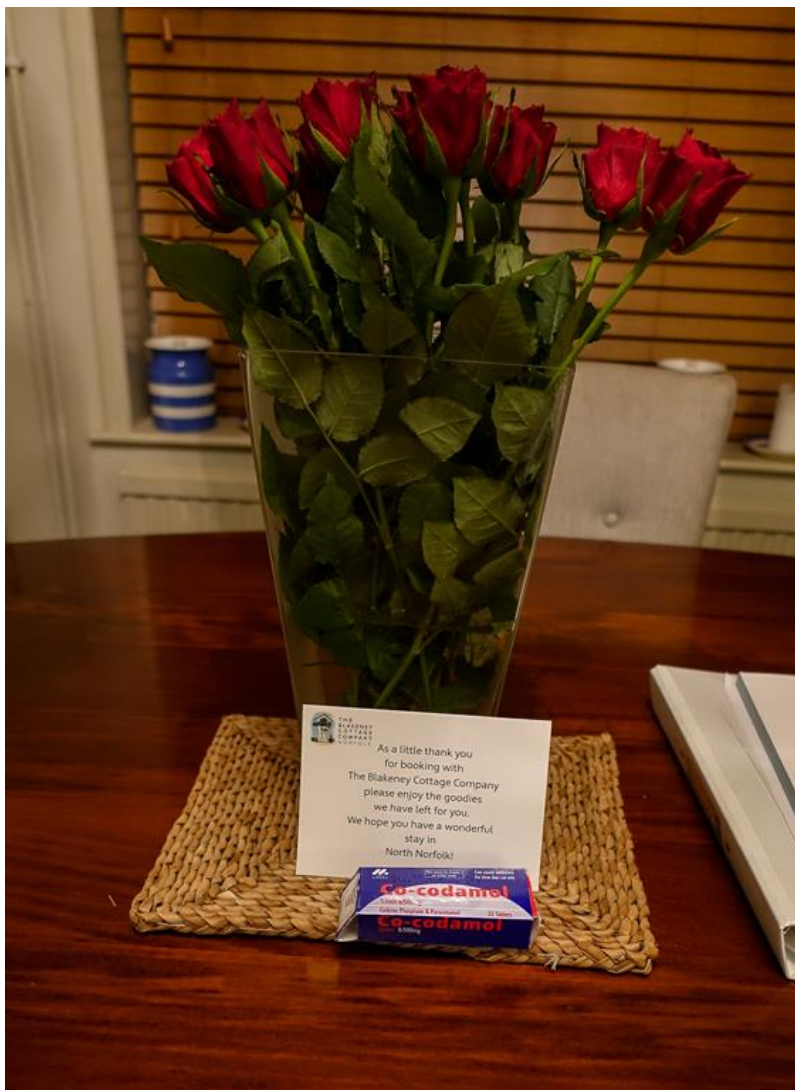
Red-Green Carpet





Green-brindled Crescent

Even though we'd hardly done anything all day we were so tired and Wendy laughed at the not so welcoming looking welcome pack on the table.



It was 11pm by the time we got into bed and we reinstated Sarah Pascoe's audiobook Animal that we'd started listening to in Scotland in June.

Monday 15<sup>th</sup> October

Lyca decided to climb all over Wendy at some ungodly hour and then wouldn't settle, so at 8am that was it and we got up. There were 2x **Dunnocks** in the garden, but it was chucking it down again, so I prepared to get soaked when I took Lyca out. It'd be lovely to stay somewhere that had a dog proof garden again, so I didn't have to go out with her every time! When I came back inside I noticed that my thick winter coat had a massive rip in it all the way along the waistline where the drawstring is....Uh oh! It wasn't a small rip either and if the weather stayed like it was I was in trouble, so I had to think quickly. Having always wanted a Paramo coat I started to check online as to which stores nearby stocked them and Cley Spy in Glandford was one of them...Phew! While Wendy made the sarnies for our lunch I was trawling through what car I could get on pcp, if any. Although the forecast was saying it shouldn't be raining it was still throwing it down, so Wendy prepared herself by putting her new waterproof trousers on. When I saw them I couldn't help but laugh because they look like they're made of PVC.....Hahahaha! They didn't look as though they'd let any water through, so although lacking in style were totally practical.

The weather may have been awful but it was still 12.5c when we headed out at 11am. Glandford was only 8 minutes away and I parked up outside Cley Spy and we ran in to see if I could sort my coat problem. Nothing is ever that easy though and after rummaging through the coats and finally finding the only medium size Halcon model on the racks I went to try it on. It fitted well and I was all set to buy it when I found that it had a rip in the sleeve.....Nooooooo! Wendy suggested taking it to the counter to show them and asking did they have another one in stock, so I did. It was just my luck that they didn't but they offered me a discount if I was prepared to send it to Paramo for repair. Seeing as my existing coat had a rip in it I wasn't prepared to pay the best part of £300 for another one with a rip in it, so I declined.....Grrrrr! Gutted, we went back to the car and I started to drive away when Wendy announced that she wanted to go to the Art Café to see if she could pick up a treat for us to eat. I dropped her off but had to go back up to top of the car park by Cley Spy to get a space meaning that Wendy got soaked when she came out and had to find me. She did have a pan au chocolat though, which cheered me up after such an unproductive start to the day. Driving through Morston my Landy count went up to 28 and Wendy decided she wanted to go to Stiffkey Stores, so I had to do the difficult manoeuvre of turning in off the main road to park outside. It's not the most accessible shop in the world and only has enough space for about 3 cars maximum in a tiny wall enclosed space, so I hate going there. She disappeared for ages and finally came out happy, with a bag full of poncey things that cost a fortune. We'd wasted enough time already and really needed to take Lyca on a decent walk after her two days of laziness. I reckoned Warham Greens was worth a shot, you just never know what you're going to find there.

I'd just turned off the main road onto Garden Drove when all of a sudden, I had a horrible feeling that I'd turned down the wrong track again. It'd been years since I'd made that mistake but our surroundings just didn't look right at all and we knew we were in for an extremely bumpy ride.....Doh! Wendy was absolutely adamant that it was the wrong one, so when we spotted the entrance into a field I reckoned I could turn around in it to save my car from having to endure the trauma of having to get all the way down to the bottom. I thought I'd better make sure first, so I checked the map on my phone and unbelievably it was right after all! It was amazing how unfamiliar it looked after just a year, although that



was a feeble excuse! I carried on until we found the concrete area and I parked up only to find that it was practically lunchtime. We decided to eat our sarnies before going out although Wendy didn't enjoy hers as much as she could've with the pig farm being right in front of us. A Tit flock flitted their way up the line of bushes but there was nothing in with them and we heard then saw 7x **Redwing** flying over, which must've just come in. We'd expected to have heard loads of Redwing already, but they seemed to be late arriving this year. Next, we saw 6x **Black-tailed Godwits** flying inland, so we got our stuff together and headed out at 12.30pm.

The Tit flock was long gone by then and having expected to have sore necks already from scouring through 100's of Goldcrests it was surprisingly quiet all the way down to the Copse at the bottom. Wendy reached into her pocket to get the camera only to find that she'd left it in her rucksack in the car.....Doh! That meant that I'd have to take the scenery shots on my phone because Wendy's old holiday iphone isn't up to it! The Copse and the bush line were totally dead and there was no sign of any life apart from us in it.



'The' hedge

Out over the marsh I spotted some Geese flying over it and when we got them in our bins, they were our first **Pink-footed Geese** of the trip. Suddenly, we could hear Goldcrests and there were loads of them, which had obviously just come in. We went through them all as best we could but there wasn't anything in with them as far as we could see....or hear :(. We carried on and started walking towards The Quarry but only saw the usual Goldfinches and a male Reed Bunting on the way. When we got to The Quarry, we were distracted by a flock of about 1000 Starlings flying around and then it all kicked off and we were finally seeing some action at last after such a slow start.





The Quarry

There were birds flitting around and skulking everywhere we looked and as luck would have it the first one to get our attention was a **Garden Warbler**.



Garden Warbler

There was a male **Blackcap** in there too and then the Thrushes arrived with a **Song Thrush** in with some dark billed Blackbirds and then some Redwing came in and landed at the top of the bushes. A large flock of **Golden Plover** flew over and we decided to carry on thinking that it would be worth another check on the way back to see what else had dropped in. When we got to the Whirligig the weather was pretty grim, it was dark and had started to drizzle.



Whirlygig path

Wendy was feeding Lyca Blackberries, which she gobbled up like she hadn't been fed for days and while she was doing that I looked around only to see a **Short-eared Owl** flying over, so I quickly called it to her. SEO is always a cracking bird to see but by the time I'd raised my camera it was flying away from us and was too distant for anything other than a rubbish record shot....Boooooo :{.



Short-eared Owl

There was definitely evidence of vis mig going on, so it hadn't been as much of a waste of time than we'd initially thought. Now all we wanted was for a Little Bunting to drop into The Quarry on our way back.....Hahahaha dream on! We turned back hoping for something exciting adding **Skylark** as we approached "The seat", which is where I lost my favourite cap



all those years ago. The washed up tree trunk's certainly seen better days since then and is half the size of what it used to be!

I had a scan over the marshes and spotted a nice female **Hen Harrier** out hunting in the direction of East Hills. One day we'll make the effort and go out there although when we do it'll be the quietest day there in history! Back at The Quarry it was totally dead, so we'd seen the best of the action earlier and all our hopes of finding something were duly binned. As we made our way back up Garden Drove we found the Tit flock, which had a gazillion more Goldcrests amongst them. Finding ourselves back in the all too familiar situation of trying to trawl through them all for no reward whatsoever, we finally gave it up as a bad job.

It was 2.46pm when we got back to the car and I put the poo bags in the boot to dispose of when we found a bin. Lyca had been very productive on this walk and had lumbered us with a record breaking 3 bags!!!!!! As I drove up the track a **Jay** flew over and we reckoned Stiffkey Woods would be worth a quick check as they were nearby. As soon as we got out of the car we could tell it was dead, there were no birds flitting around the bushes nor could we hear any calling, so Wendy was the first to say that it was going to be a total waste of time. With such an optimistic start we headed over to the Woods and Lyca led the way up the bank and into the trees.



Stiffkey wood and marsh

There was nothing but total silence as we walked slowly along the path and the face of the rather odd-looking old guy who was heading back to the car park said it all. He looked so depressed, not to mention weird, that we didn't even bother to ask if there was anything about and to add insult to injury it was cold and grey too.....Boooooooo! I wanted to finish what we'd started, so insisted that we went all the way to Stiffkey Wood Copse anyway, despite Wendy's protests. Considering we've seen Red-flanked Bluetail in there in the past it was totally devoid of any life on this occasion, so Wendy had annoyingly been right.

When we got back to the car it was 3.32pm and the odd guy was still standing around in the car park. Luckily I don't think he heard me say, "We'll have to write about that grumpy man in the article" and Wendy's typically worse reply of, "He was just \*\*\*\*\* weird not grumpy!" Oops! Just as we were getting ready to leave a young couple who'd just arrived got out of their car and started heading off towards the woods for a dog walk. Strangely the weird guy was hot on their trail and rushed up behind them nearly tripping over their dog

and walking into the bloke. We watched on with a hefty dose of suspicion seeing as there were no birds about to rush back for but when they carried on along the coastal path and he skulked off back up into the woods we breathed a sigh of relief although the “Bleurrgh!” factor still lingered. Wendy realised that she’d forgotten to get any scenery shots even though she’d actually remembered to bring the camera with her this time, so she got out of the car to take some. Down on the marsh we added **Shelduck** and on the way back up the road we saw a **Linnet** in the hedge.

It was still too early to head for home so I drove to Cley Beach car park and parked up at 4.01pm. We left Lyca in the car and wandered over to shelter under the Coastguards to have a scan out to sea.



Cley Coastguards

It absolutely stank in there and I’m sure there’s no need for me to go into too much detail as to what of. Even the sea was dead and all we could see were juvenile Gannets, GBB’s and **Common Gulls** but frustratingly Wendy had seen the briefest glimpse of a small Grebe like bird the second before it dived. It didn’t come into view again due to the choppy sea and by then we’d had enough and decided to pack up for the day.

When we arrived back to HQ it was 4.26pm and the house felt decidedly cold, so I adjusted the heating. I got a report in on my phone and the first was a Grey Catbird at Trevescan in Cornwall, which was a second for mainland Britain although some would say a first! Considering we were supposed to be in Cornwall but the cottages hadn’t work out that way, we could’ve cried. The second report was of Snow Buntings at Cley and having just come from Cley this really annoyed us. We couldn’t believe our bad luck but when I read on I felt better as they were up Old Woman’s Lane and we hadn’t been anywhere near there....Phew! Next came reports of Penduline Tit and Short-toed Lark from Cornwall, so given our rubbish day we started to think that our jinx was back and our fears that our 2 weeks were going to be wrong way round came flooding back :( There was absolutely nothing we could do about it now so all we could do was wait and watch the disaster unfold.....Bahahahaha!

After Lyca had been fed we set about doing ours, which was another nice easy affair. Wendy knocked up her beany, lentilly concoction and boiled some pasta for me with a microwavable pouch of bolognese sauce. After that Wendy went for a bath and I was

totally gutted to see actual photos on Birdguides of the Cornwall Catbird. So, Cornwall had a Grey Catbird, Penduline Tit, Short-toed Lark and Wryneck while Norfolk had just Snow Bunting which we hadn't seen, brilliant.....NOT! I now knew for a fact that we were doing the holiday the wrong way round, which just rubbed salt in our wounds after such an uneventful day. On the positive side there were now easterlies forecast for Thursday and Friday, so we just had to hope that they'd bring something in to end the week with. We watched the utter rubbish that was being dished out on TV, which wasn't even in HD either (first world problems) and I put the disabled moth ~~trap~~ light out even though the conditions weren't good. We were being bombarded with all the amazing moths people were getting on a Facebook group we follow and were hoping for something a bit special on the trip. Our most wanted was the pretty impressive looking Merveille du Jour, which the majority of members had already had and seemed common as muck, but typically we were still hoping for one as a lifer and without a properly working moth trap I was 100% sure we wouldn't be seeing one this time. By 10pm we'd had enough and went to bed feeling pretty deflated in the hope that Sarah Pascoe would cheer us up.

Tuesday 16<sup>th</sup> October

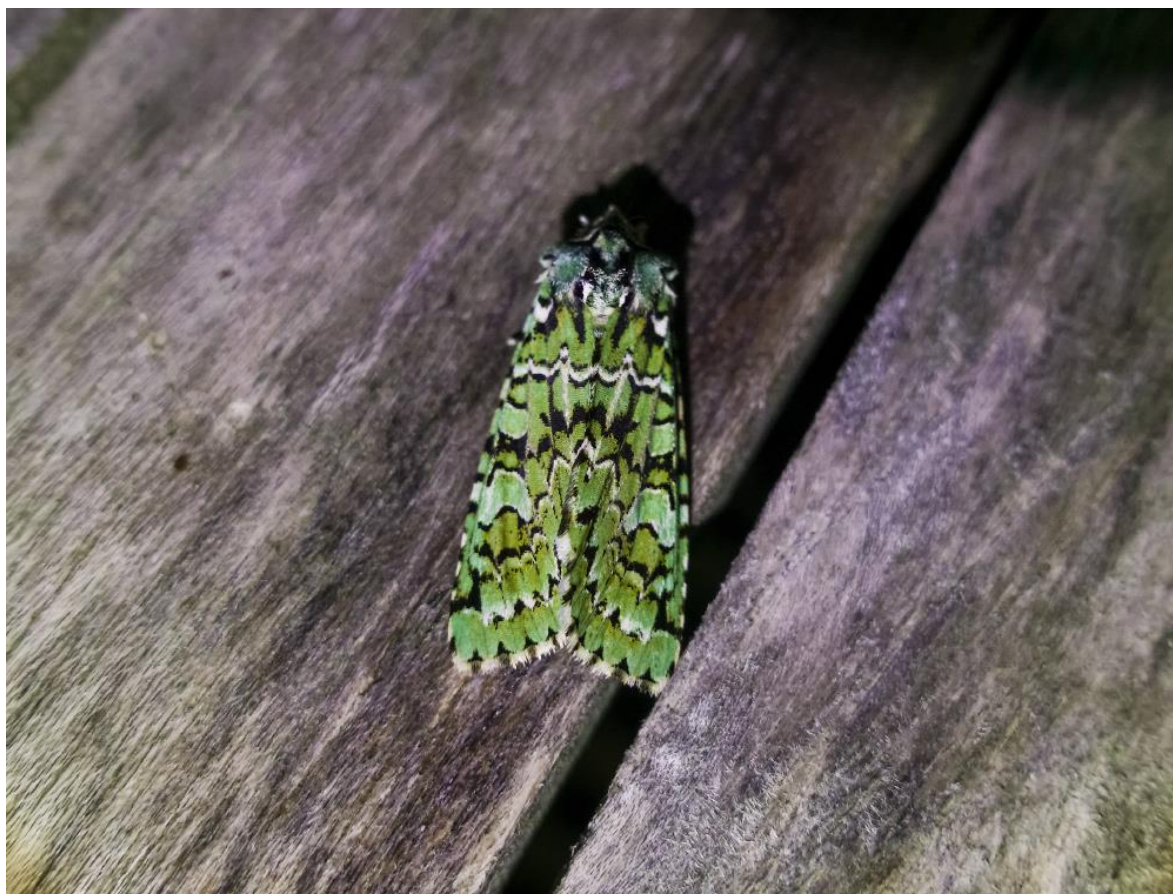
I'd set the alarm for 7.30am because I wanted to get out to Burnham Overy as early as possible for a change to see if there was any more action than in the afternoon which is when we normally get out onto the dunes. When I looked outside, I saw that there was coastal mist and it'd rained overnight, which was a good start for potential birds but very bad news for any moths as there was no perspex on the top of the trap...Uh oh! I rushed downstairs and out of the kitchen door to check the damage but was pleasantly surprised by what I found. Although the trap hadn't pulled that many moths into it (or they had just flown off) the path, the table and side of the house were caked in them!





Moth table

Again, I thought that Black Rustic was the predominant species and I didn't know where to start counting them, until I realised how many Large Yellow Underwings there were! I could hear Redwing going over while I tried to pot as many of the interesting ones and count everything else, while Wendy was in the kitchen writing the list and doing a tally as well as making our sarnies to speed things up a bit. She did have to drop what she was doing and come running outside when I shrieked, "OMG **Merveille du Jour!**" It didn't disappoint either and we could hardly believe that we'd finally just scored one of our 'most wanted' moths...Happy days :).



Merveille du Jour

We were very pleased at our haul from half a trap and a rainy night :)

Our list is as follows -

Black Rustic x25  
 November Moth x19  
 Setaceous Hebrew Character x6  
 Turnip x2  
 Large Yellow Underwing x48  
 Silver-Y x1  
 Common marbled Carpet x1  
 Shuttle-shaped Dart x4  
 \*Merveille du Jour x1  
 \*Large Wainscott x 6  
 \*White-point  
 Red-green Carpet x5  
 Green-brindled Crescent x1  
 Straw dot x1  
 Beaded Chestnut x3  
 Feathered Thorn x3  
 \*Dark Chestnut x1  
 Lunar Underwing x6  
 Feathered Ranunculous x1

Total = 134 moths (x 18sp)





White-point



Large Wainscot

After all that excitement we eventually sat down to eat our breakfast while Lyca had curled up on the settee in the living room and gone back to sleep.

We left HQ at 9.10am which probably wasn't as early as we'd have liked but was the best we could manage and I parked up at Burnham Overy at 9.33am. There'd been a Yellow-



browed Warbler reported down the track and we could see a couple of birders looking for, or at it, as we crossed the busy main road. We stopped near them to have a look, presuming that they were onto it but there was no sign, so we carried on. Just after we'd gone over the stile at the gate we heard the call we'd hoped to have already heard but hadn't. It was the **Yellow-browed Warbler**, so we stopped by the Oak tree it was calling from to try and pin it down.



Failing to get a shot of the Yellow-browed warbler

We raised our bins when a bird moved right in the middle of the tree but it was just a Blackcap. We actually counted a total of 6, which was notable, until the YBW finally popped out into the open at the back of the tree. I tried to fire off some shots but couldn't get anything clear of it so you can hardly tell it's a YBW.... Skillzzz. It turned out that there were actually 2 in there, not just the one that'd been reported.



Yellow-browed Warbler honest! Lol

Happy to have finally seen YBW we carried on down the track spotting some Pink-footed Geese grazing in a field.



Pink-footed Goose

We were really surprised that it'd taken us that long to have found a sizeable flock, but everything seemed to be late arriving this year. We wanted to avoid the dog walkers up on the ridge so stuck to the path in the ditch again





Burnham sea wall

Down there you walk closer to some reed beds and in there we heard the 'ping ping' of **Bearded Tits**. Wendy then stopped to get me to take a photo of a pink flower that was growing at the side of the path to ID later.



Pink flower :)

There were loads of Reed Buntings and Goldcrests on the way and we heard a **Redshank** kicking off in one of the channels behind the ridge. When we got down to the amazing group of bushes at bottom of the path, we stopped to give them the once over. Having hoped for them to be full of birds with it being earlier we were disappointed to yet again find them dead. Urrghhhh! One of these days we'll get there and it'll be worth it but this wasn't our day.....again! The conditions were just all wrong and we got the impression that we were yet again wasting our time, although it was a lovely walk, so we'd just have to treat it as such. The sum total of our findings were **Stonechat**, Wren, Blackcap and Robin, so we carried on into the dunes to see if we'd have any more luck.



Burnham Overy Dunes

As we walked, we were kicking up flocks of Meadow Pipits that were feeding on the ground and there were also loads of Reed Buntings sitting along the fence and in the bushes. This was a good indication that there'd been some movement and all we had to do was find something more interesting amongst them. It wasn't like we were asking for too much as we trawled through all of them hoping for a Richard's Pipit or Little Bunting without any joy :(. Fed up, I turned my attention to the sky and spotted a Marsh Harrier that was seemingly flying in off the sea. Another big flock of Mipits weren't far behind it as well as a load of Redwing and a couple of **Fieldfare**. By now my foot was getting really sore as was Wendy's back and with so little going on, we had a bit of a grumble. We looked at the bushes where there are always Ring Ouzels seen but there wasn't so much as a Blackbird in them today!



Ring Ouzel bushes

We walked up one of the mounds which seems to be a vantage spot for local Birders to sit at all day to wait and see what comes in. Obviously, we didn't have time to try this tactic, but we had a futile scan over the trees and fields at Holkham anyway. Wendy had totally



given up hope by then and was keen to get going but all of a sudden I spotted a huge flock of thrushes pouring in and dropping down into the bushes. They were so fast and obviously desperate to find cover, so I went through them as best I could. Again, they were mainly Redwing with a few Fieldfare tagging along but then I noticed a much darker bird and quickly realised that it was a **Ring Ouzel**! I called it to Wendy, but it totally vanished into the back of the bush and we never saw it again but at least we'd seen something of interest on the walk. Thinking that we'd had our excitement for the day we then spotted a **Hobby** over the pines which was catching and eating Dragonflies on the wing...Cool! We wondered whether there was enough food for it seeing as it was October, but it seemed to be doing alright for itself. A Sparrowhawk whizzed through as we wandered up the sandy path to the beginning of the pines to view the back of the bushes from the gate into the field where we knew the Ring Ouzel was. It was still either deep in the bush or had stealthily moved off unnoticed as there was no sign of it but there were loads of **Common Darters** and 3x **Migrant Hawkers** flying around, so the Hobby wasn't struggling at all. Next, we went into The Pines and heard another YBW and Wendy pointed out that there were Earthstars everywhere.



Earthstar

As we trudged our way up and down the dunes we heard, then saw, a flock of 30-40 **Siskin** flying around and a **Great spotted Woodpecker**, which were new for the trip. We scoured the bushes for any sign of movement but there wasn't any, so we started to make our way back. Having kicked up a SEO there last year we decided to go back via the dunes again but somehow, we found ourselves back on the path we'd walked out on.....Doh! Not wanting to waste any more time we just stayed on it and retraced our steps hoping that something different would drop in. The sun was out so it was too hot with all our cold weather gear on and there were Common Darters everywhere. Depressingly, the bushes were still empty, but I spotted 2x **Red Kites** flying over the cow field, which were nice to see. Back in the ditch we heard the call of a bird going over, which was familiar and one we'd already heard

on our walk. It took us a while but when I clicked and called out, "**Brambling!**" we could've kicked ourselves for not clocking it sooner. Out on the fields a huge flock of Pink-feet were coming in which is quite a sight and sound.



Pink footed geese coming into land

Wendy found a small hairy caterpillar on the path, which we think was a **Ruby Tiger**, so I got a record shot of it to ID later.



Ruby tiger caterpillar (possibly)

Walking back up past the reedbed we heard the squealing of a **Water Rail** and saw a **Small Copper** and **Red Admiral Butterfly**.



By the time we were back at the car it was 12.47pm and absolutely boiling but we were more than ready for our lunch. While we ate our sarnies I checked Birdguides and saw that there'd been a Pied Flycatcher at Stiffkey Woods and a Richard's Pipit that'd flown in by Warham Pits, which was typical considering we'd been there the day before and seen nothing much.....Grrrrrr! After lunch we reckoned that the Shorelarks that were at Holme would be worth a visit and we set off at 1.08pm. They were hanging around an area of Holme that we'd never been to before, so it'd be interesting to see somewhere different instead of our usual one through the dunes.

Luckily it wasn't that far away and we were there by 1.31pm. I parked up by the toilets and seeing as it was so warm Wendy wriggled her way out of her base layers like some kind of escapologist in the passenger seat, so was already knackered before we'd even been anywhere! After she'd paid the WC's a quick visit, we headed off across the golf course in the hope that we heading in the right direction.



Crossing Holme golf course

Luckily for us there was a birder heading back who very kindly stopped to give us directions. He was wearing a pink cravat, which wasn't exactly the attire of your average birder, but he was shall we say, slightly on the eccentric side. His directions were very specific and involved walking across the marsh at a 45-degree angle but not further than the ridge, where we'd find the channel behind it where the birds were feeding. We thanked him and set off confident that we knew where we were going. After a while we started to doubt ourselves and wondered if we'd gone wrong somewhere along the line but when we spotted three birders standing around, we headed straight for them.





Holme beach

When I started to get nearer, I stopped for a quick scan to see if I could find them to work out where I needed to set my tripod up thinking I would try for some video. I quickly found a couple of the **Shorelarks** on the opposite side of the channel running around frantically and looked around to find a good spot. I turned around to see if Wendy had seen them, but she was dawdling so far behind me that when she'd looked, she'd just dismissed them as some waders.....Oops! When she got closer, I told her that they were there, so she had a second look and realised her mistake.....Doh! She could've kicked herself for being so stupid but while I got some photos she counted 7 in total and although there'd been 12 reported neither of us could find them all. While I was busy, she kept trying to find the others with no success. There was only myself and another photographer by then and he was so much closer than me, but I'd been trying to be respectful of the birds and keep my distance. They seemed happy enough, so I started to slowly edge my way closer, stopping from time to time to make sure I wasn't spooking them.



Ministry of funny walks!

A **Ringed Plover** flew in, which was new for the trip and things were going well until we spotted a group of birders heading our way. I grabbed as many photos as I could as I knew what was going to happen.



Shorelark

They hadn't taken the route we'd been told to and were heading straight for the birds, so when they got too close for comfort they all lifted and flew off down the channel and landed miles away.....Grrrrrr! While they were up we were able to count all 12, and it was anyone's guess where the others had been lurking. Well and truly flushed we didn't hold any hopes that they'd come back, so I packed away my gear and we started to head back. When the birders approached us, they were oblivious and asked us if we'd seen the Shorelarks. Not wanting to blatantly say that they'd just flushed them all we just told them that we had but they'd just flown off and pointed them in the right direction. We found some **Oystercatchers** a bit further out as we walked back and met some more very nice and friendly birders who also asked us about the birds.

It was 2.42pm when we got back to the car and Wendy was on a mission to do a Deli tour to get pressies on the way home. First off was Thornham Deli, where all the 'yummy mummies' and ponces seem to gather in their hoards. She was ages in there and came out with very little to show for it and next I stopped at Burnham Deepdale for petrol, where Wendy shocked me by refraining from a visit to Fat Face. Next up was Adnam's at Holkham where she disappeared for ages again and came out with a bag stuffed full of goodies, none of which were for me....Boooooo :(. While I was waiting for her I worked out that we'd done 16,000 steps during the day.

Driving down the track to HQ there were Thrushes everywhere and I parked up outside the house at 4.03pm. I checked my phone for any reports and saw that there'd been a Barred Warbler at Burnham Overy! So we went there early for a change and the only bird reported was later in the day after we'd gone....Grrrrrr! There'd also been a Clifden Nonpareil trapped at Glandford, which for anyone interested could go and see it being released at



6pm. Hmmmmmm. Wendy suggested going but I thought it'd be a bit pointless seeing as it's just a big brown moth with blue underwings. We chilled out for a bit before Wendy gave Lyca her tea and put the oven on for my crispy sweet and sour chicken. She added some curry powder to her concoction and made it into a curry and nicked some of my rice and quinoa mix to have with it. After our very nice tea we both had baths and settled down to watch some TV. No sooner had we sat down than Wendy's phone rang, which was weird because her Mum usually waits for Wendy to let her know when to phone. This set alarm bells ringing in Wendy's head, so she answered it quickly with her heart racing. It was indeed her Mum who asked her if she was sitting down before giving her some rather bad but not entirely surprising news. After she'd hung up, she filled me in and tried to switch off but there was nothing on TV worth watching to distract her. We were starting to feel really tired by then and remembering that we had a fridge full of moths I took them outside to release and got some photos of the decent ones before they flew off. Wendy's back was starting to play up because the settee was uncomfortable, so we decided to call it a day and went to bed to listen to more Sarah Pascoe.

Wednesday 17<sup>th</sup> October

At 7.50am we woke up and Lyca was, as usual, raring to go and full of beans.....Urrghhh! I took her out and there were loads of Finches going over including Brambling, but it started to rain, which hadn't been forecast. Wendy wasn't very happy with the bed and her back was sore every morning, so she was crossing her fingers that the one in Cornwall would be better. She phoned her Mum for an update and after making our lunch and having breakfast we headed out late at 10.30am. As we were getting into the car a Buzzard flew over and landed in the trees in the garden, which was pretty cool. I wanted to do the walk we'd done when we stayed at Eastgate in Salhouse to Kelling and back again, so I drove to Salhouse and parked up in the car park at 10.40am. We noticed that Eastgate looked as though there was work being done on it, so we took a wander over to have a look.



Eastgate :O

The house had been totally gutted and there was a planning permission sign on the gate for an extension and a flood defence wall, which it desperately needed.





Oooooo

We dread to think how much it'll be to stay there after it's all finished, if they still let it out at all, but we strongly suspect it'll be way out of our price range! It was desperate for a makeover though. We crossed over the busy main road and walked along the verge until we finally got onto the footpath...Phew! A lot of the bushes we remembered had been cut right back and I think part of the bank had been removed, which wasn't a good start.



Salthouse to Kelling path

There'd be no Red-breasted Flycatcher hanging out there anymore! Further along we found a bush that was full of birds, so we stopped for a look. First, we spotted a **Wheatear** and the rest seemed to be Reed Buntings, so we scanned through them.



Reed Bunting

I found one that I reckoned was smaller than the others but all of sudden all the birds flew off and disappeared into the hedge in the next field along, so we'll never know if that was our Little Bunting or not :( We carried on and Wendy was just about to open her mouth to say, "No dead Willow Warbler this time" having seen one on the path last time when I found a dead Toad! As we were approaching the Water Meadows a Hawk whizzed over, so I tried to get a shot of it but failed miserably.....Doh! It looked a bit weird, but was probably just a



Sprawk, or so we hoped. When we got to the Water Meadows, we stood at the fence to scan the water to see what was about.



Kelling Water meadows

There were no other birders around, which is unusual if there's a decent bird there, so it looked like we were wasting our time again.....Urrghhh! Wendy had found a Gull, which she thought was a Med Gull but managed to convince herself that it wasn't at the last minute. I found a **Mediterranean Gull** and pointed it out to her, which was a different bird to the one she'd been looking at. Going back to hers she'd been right all along and there were 2 Med Gulls out on the pool. A further scan produced 2 more making that 4x Med Gulls, one of which was a nice adult bird.



Med Gull

I got a report notification on my phone and pulled it out of my pocket to see what it was, hoping it was something we could go for to add some excitement. I rolled my eyes and



groaned when I read that there was a Red-flanked Bluetail at Holkham Pines, 50m away from where we'd been the day before.....Grrrrrr! Why are we always either a day late or a day early? There was absolutely nothing else of interest on the pool and not even a single Wader, which was unusual, so we carried on. Wendy was stopping every now and then to feed Lyca the big juicy Blackberries that were on the bushes, so we weren't going anywhere quickly. We'd just turned the corner to go head towards the shingle ridge when we spotted a Warbler, which dived deep into a bush. Thinking that this could be our bird of the trip we decided to hang around to see if it'd show itself again just to make sure it wasn't.....Hahaha you live in hope! Wendy decided to go back around the corner to see if she could flush it back to me but instead the bird flew out of the bush and down the path before vanishing into another bush much further away. She had no doubts that it was another Garden Warbler and came back to tell me that it'd gone. While she was doing that another small brown Warbler flew out of the reeds briefly followed by the unmistakable blast of a **Cetti's Warbler** and back at our original spot there was another, so there were 2 birds. It was nice to have seen a Cetti's for a change too, albeit very briefly. We followed the path over to the ridge and clambered our way up the side to the top. The pillbox seemed to be on an even more squiffy angle than ever and there was a Wheatear standing on top of it.



Is it getting washed away ?

We watched it run across the top then it jumped in the air and caught a moth, which from what we could see looked like a Large Yellow Underwing. It looked as though there were loads of people on the beach further up at Cley, so I asked Wendy. As she turned to look, I heard a weird call that didn't sound at all familiar, so I looked out to sea to try and find the culprit. A half-hearted scan around produced a Shag sitting in the water, so I told Wendy who looked a bit confused. Eh? She said that she was looking at a **Red-throated Diver** that was just in front of us and close in and that it was also calling really loudly.....Ooops! This was something we'd never witnessed before and when a juvenile bird popped up behind it we realised that it was an adult and explained why it was being so noisy.....Cool!



Red-throated Diver

We watched them for ages and added **Razorbill** to our list while we had a look to see if there was anything else around. As usual it was really dead and apart from another 2x Red-throats that was it. We saw nothing all the way back to Salthouse but when a noisy Redshank flew into one of the pools flushing all the other birds we picked out 7x **Knot** amongst them.



Salthouse marsh pools

It was really quiet all the way down the coast and there wasn't even the usual Pipits or Buntings. At Gramborough Hill we found 3x Goldcrests and the absence of any other birders said it all about the conditions. Feeling deflated we wished we were in Cornwall but had no choice but to plod on and hope that the easterly winds would finally bring something in. Looking back towards Salthouse some **Ruff** flew in and I spotted another Red-throat close in, so seeing as I wasn't even getting many opportunities to get any wildlife pics, this



looked like my best chance of the day. Lyca wanted to go for a paddle so wasn't happy that I'd gone down there without her and was up on her back legs pulling Wendy.



Mad dog!

She went so mental when I got back, it was as though I'd been gone for hours! As we walked along the shingle, we heard the faint sound of a bird calling as it flew overhead, which sounded like a Snow Bunting. We looked up but couldn't see anything, so we'll never know for sure. The only other birds we saw were another 2x Red-throats until we got to the pool next to East Bank and we spotted some **Dunlin**. There were loads of birders standing on the beach who all seemed to be looking at the side of the ridge, so we wondered if they were watching the Snow Buntings. Having heard the call earlier we couldn't resist a quick look ourselves, just in case, but there didn't appear to be anything there apart from some Meadow Pipits, so we didn't hang around. Up on East Bank we could hear Bearded Tits calling and stopped just at the right time to see a small group of them flying towards us before vanishing into the reedbed nearby. We hoped that one of them would pop out into the open to give me a chance of getting a shot, so we stayed put and waited. Wendy had seen 2 of them climb up to the top of some reeds and squeaked to alert me but by the time I'd raised my camera they'd flown off.....Grrrrr! The rest of the group were quick to follow them, and we watched the 6 birds until they were too far away. One of these days I'm going to get lucky and get a decent Beardie shot, but yet again I'd failed. Just as we were about to walk off they all lifted with the addition of 2 others and flew really high up calling as they went which seemed to make all the others that were hiding in the reedbed start flying around too....Cool. This made us wonder how many there actually are in there and how impossible it would be to even attempt to do a count! They seemed to have had a good year though, which was some positive news for a change. Nearly at the end we were stopped by a bloke who said he'd just seen a Barn Owl flying in the direction we were heading in, so we hurried along to hopefully catch up with it. We added **Coot** to our list just before crossing over the road to Walsey Hills, where we had another look for the Jack Snipe and failed again. We carried on up the side and across the fields and I kept my fingers crossed that there wasn't masses of midgies again like last time. On the same stretch of the walk last year I got so many bites my head looked a right mess and my lymph nodes swelled up, so I'd had to take antihistamines for the rest of the week and I wasn't keen to relive the experience!





Heading back towards Salthouse

Luckily there weren't any and after climbing the steep hill and coming out of the lane at the bottom of the road by The Dun Cow I finished the walk unscathed.....Phew!

It was 2.38pm by then, so we were starving and couldn't wait to eat our lunch. I checked my phone for any reports and laughed out loud when I read that there'd been a YBW at Walsey Hills and the Jack Snipe had been seen again on the pool.....Hilarious! We contemplated throwing our bins over the nearest hedge and giving up birding altogether and just to add insult to injury the walk had only been 15,000 steps and 9km but Wendy's back was sore and my foot was throbbing.....Oh dear! Feeling a bit old and decrepit there was only one thing for it and Wendy went to Cley Deli and bought a Bakewell Tart, which was very nice....Om nom nom :). There'd been a report of a Two-barred Warbler at Wells Woods earlier, which I'd been keeping an eye on to see if it was seen again but there hadn't been anything since, so we didn't bother going to look.

Back at HQ it was 3.44pm and there seemed to have been a bit of an influx of Blackbirds this time. I went out to the outhouse and put some washing on and then took my drone out for a flight.



Looking East towards Blakeney

I decided to be brave this time and flew it 700m away, which seemed quite far enough until afterward when I reckoned I could've taken it further still. Tea was another quick and easy affair of Quorn Burger and Fries to Go for me and some reheated concoction for Wendy. After that Wendy went for a bath, hung all the washing up to dry and we sat down to watch TV. The Med Gulls we'd seen were as I'd thought 1<sup>st</sup> winter, 2<sup>nd</sup> winter and an adult and we'd made the right decision not to go for the 2-barred Warbler as it hadn't been seen since 1pm, so we'd have dipped. I'd also managed not to get eaten alive by midgies, so at least some positives had come out of the day! We were really tired again and packed up at 10.20pm and went to bed.

Thursday 18<sup>th</sup> October

It was a clear and sunny day when we woke up at 7.47am and with so little about we had no idea what we were going to do for the day. Annoyingly the forecasted Easterlies hadn't materialised and weren't going to tomorrow either.....Aarrghhhh! This put a final dampener on the week, so we leisurely got ourselves ready and didn't leave the house until 9.53am. The car was saying it was 13.5c, so it was going to be another warm day later on and for want of any better suggestions I reckoned we should go to Holkham Pines to chance our luck for the possible Two-barred Warbler. Obviously, we didn't feel even vaguely optimistic about finding the bird, but with nothing else happening it was the only thing about to twitch and a nice walk if nothing else although the initial part of the walk is always stressful due to the amount of other dogs off the lead.

When I parked up on Lady Anne's Drive it was 10.12am and the car park was as busy as ever. I went over to get my ticket and thinking we might be some time there I paid £6 for 4hrs.....Grrrr! There was a new flashy Visitor Centre being built at the entrance, which was called 'The Lookout' and looked very modern.





The Lookout

We headed off down the path and it wasn't long before we spotted a **Grey Squirrel** scurrying around on the ground, so I stopped to get a photo seeing as I'd taken so few during the week so far.



Grey Squirrel

Further along the path we got to Meol's house and although it always looks derelict and empty, this time we could see people inside. It looked as though the estate staff were making Christmas decorations or something in there, which seemed a bit odd. We heard a Yellow-browed Warbler and stopped for a look next to 2 very friendly birders, who were from Peterborough. The sun was right in our faces and none of us could get a remotely decent view of the trees it was calling from, so when another small Warbler shape flew and



disappeared into another tree we knew we didn't stand a chance of IDing it.....Boooooooo :(.  
That could've been something amazing for all any of us knew! We heard **Coal Tit** and **Treecreeper** calling from the trees to the right of us, which were new for the trip but gave up shortly after and carried on. Wendy had decided that she needed a wee, so we took a diversion into the area where the Red-flanked Bluetail had been a couple of years ago, as it was off the beaten track. Next we headed into the woods to find the sycamores where I'd worked out the 2-barred had been reported from.



Holkham Pines

When we got there things didn't add up as there were no other birders or Sycamores to be seen. The Peterborough birders caught us up and we all stood around scratching our heads, trying to find at least one Sycamore to give us some kind of indication that we were in the right place but failed.....Eh? I checked the coordinates on the report again and they must've been wrong, so we turned back. On the way back we luckily found the twitch further in the woods and we noticed straight away the presence of sycamores! Now it was just a case of hoping that as the bird hadn't been reported all day a miracle would happen and it'd put in an appearance to rescue a pretty none eventful week.....Hahahaha! A birder who we always see at twitches was there and then another bloke and his mate who can at best be described as a prat charged through announcing, "2x Chiffers, 2x Goldcrests" to anyone stupid enough to have not already noticed. It was pretty tedious standing around scanning the trees for a bird that was probably long gone but we stayed for as long as we could before giving up. We walked back slowly hoping to hear or see anything unusual but had no such luck. I sent Wendy over to The Lookout to check it out and get some photos and she was suitably impressed.





Oooo flashy

There were toilets in there, which had been totally lacking up until then as well as a Café. This was great but we couldn't help but feel sorry for the guy who used to be there in an ice cream van because surely, he'd have to find another pitch now? Back at the car it was 12.43pm, so we had our lunch and I checked my phone for any reports. There'd been a Great Grey Shrike at Burnham Overy and a Ring Ouzel in the meadow at Cley Spy this morning, which wasn't very inspiring. We desperately wanted to get down to Cornwall for that Grey Catbird which amazingly was still there but couldn't decide on when or how to do it. The question was did we leave Norfolk a day early as we had the Cornwall cottage from Friday or do we go on Saturday as originally planned. Wendy threw a curve ball in and wanted to leave Norfolk on Friday evening and do half the journey with an overnight stay at a Travelodge to save her back, my foot and break the journey up. I couldn't see the point in that and thought it'd better to leave Friday morning and do the whole journey in one and arrive at the cottage late to be ready to go to the Catbird first thing the next morning. We couldn't agree and had just had our first dip of the trip, so were feeling pretty fed up by then. We still had the whole afternoon to fill before heading for home too, so we settled on the Cley walk.

When we got there it was 1.34pm and we dragged ourselves down East Bank without so much as hearing a single Bearded Tit.



East Bank

When we got to the beach we trudged through the shingle and finally saw 6x Dark-bellied Brent Geese flying over the sea. We really would've expected to have seen loads by then but hadn't. Lyca was pulling me to try and get to the sea for a paddle, which was annoying and as we got near to West Bank we found a RTD really close inshore.



Cley beach

A flock of Waders flew up the tideline and amongst the Dunlin and Ringed Plover were some **Turnstone**, which were new for the trip. Next we added **Guillemot** and could see loads of people walking up the beach on their way back from Blakeney Point. There'd not even been any reports from there over the week, so it wasn't even worth bothering with. We started to walk up West Bank and noticed that all the people heading back from Blakeney Point were in fact a load of kids on a school trip and not surprisingly they didn't look as though they were having fun at all!

Back at the car it was still only 2.52pm and I desperately needed the WC, so went straight to Cley Visitor Centre. Wendy stayed in the car with Lyca and when I got back we noticed the



**House Sparrows** in the bushes surrounding the car park. It was weird that today was when the Redwing and Fieldfare had just started to arrive in any great numbers, things were definitely late this year. Having run out of ideas we headed for home and flushed a Sparrowhawk off the drive on the way. It was 3.11pm when we got back, so I took the drone out for another flight while Wendy went upstairs to wash her hair and have a bath. This time I was much more confident and took it well out over Blakeney Marsh.



Looking over Blakeney marsh towards Blakeney point

I still had a lot of battery left so took it over towards Blakeney village as well.



Blakeney

It'd been such a noneventful day we'd decided to go out to the Three Swallows for tea, so Wendy hoped there'd be something on the menu for her.





Three Swallows

We'd done 17,000 steps over the course of the day and Lyca was really hungry and following Wendy around looking for food until it was time for her tea. The poor dog was all curled up on the settee looking very content, so looked reluctant to go anywhere when I went to put her collar and harness on. The pub doesn't serve food until 6pm but by 5.41pm we were bored of hanging around and set off. The sunset over the fields across the road was amazing, so Wendy got me to go over to get a photo, it doesn't do it justice though.



Sky on fire

We still had 10 minutes to kill, so after sitting down at our favourite table out the back Wendy went to the bar to order some drinks. She'd chosen The Botanist Gin with Fever Tree Elderflower Tonic and asked what the soup was to see if it was vegetarian or preferably vegan. To her horror it wasn't, so she came back to the table scratching her head as to what she was going to have. I already knew what I wanted because I have it every time but she was stuck. There was nothing vegan and her only option was to have the Camembert and Apple fritters again, so she went up to order it. My crispy chicken with sweet chilli sauce and a bap were as nice as ever and we'd got some chips to share but Wendy wasn't keen on



hers at all. It seemed as though her taste buds had finally changed and no longer enjoyed cheese after all her previous attempts to give it up. She wrapped her bap up in her serviette and stuffed it in her bag for later and although we'd both had food from the light bites menu the portions are huge, so we were stuffed and left at 6.36pm.

We saw a Muntjac on the drive and were back at HQ by 6.50pm, so I went for a bath before sitting down to watch TV. Lyca was flat out but we couldn't tell if it was tiredness or boredom after having not got any lifers this week.



Awwww

We were now seriously considering leaving a day early and heading down to Cornwall tomorrow. It seemed like we were wasting our time in Norfolk when there was a Grey Catbird to see in Cornwall, so it made total sense to just give up and go. My foot seemed to be getting better even with all the walking amazingly so I was confident the drive would be ok.



Getting better!

By 10.45pm we'd had enough and went up to bed to sleep on it.

Friday 19<sup>th</sup> October

The sky was clear and blue again when we got up at 7.20pm, so there didn't look hopeful that anything interesting would've been grounded overnight.....Urrghhhh! I reckoned that we should try Warham again and if there was still nothing happening then we should give up and drive down to Cornwall a day early. Wendy started to pack up our stuff in preparation for our departure, so we could make a speedy exit if we needed to. Looking at Birdguides they reckoned that the 2-barred Warbler was a string, so the only decent bird around had been made up....Hahaha! It was 10c when we left at 9.25am. Wendy was very reluctant and had already decided that it was going to be a waste of time and we'd be better off leaving for Cornwall straight away probably to just get the very long journey over as quick as possible. I wanted to at least give it a go and also to make the most of our last day in Norfolk, but she wasn't convinced.

I parked up at the top of Garden Drove at 9.38am and a painter and decorators van pulled up just after us. The guy was a birder and had a very quick scan around with his bins before driving off, so Wendy said, "says it all!" We slowly walked down the tree lined track but it was totally dead. Further on we decided to go west instead of the normal east and checked The Bomb Hole, which was also dead.....Grrrrrrr!



The Bomb hole

There were Brents and Golden Plover out over the marshes and Wendy was getting annoyed that we were wasting our time and could be already making tracks to Cornwall. I was adamant that we were going to go back out to the Whirligig, so we carried on. The Quarry was lifeless as was The Whirligig, until a juvenile **Swallow** flew over all on its own. I eventually admitted defeat and we turned around and just to make matters worse Lyca decided to treat herself and rolled in a dead crab!





Hehehehe

We really hoped that it wasn't going to smell too bad and the last thing we needed was to have to bath her when we didn't have time! Wendy bent down to check and luckily it didn't smell at all....Phew! On the way back behind the Quarry were a couple of Grey Partridges so I tried for a shot but struggled shooting into the light.



Grey Partridge

We were really pleased when we spotted a **Yellowhammer** flying between bushes and then we found a lovely pristine **Comma** feeding in the sunshine.





Comma

We were glad to find that the Yellowhammer wasn't alone when 7 more flew out of the bushes and further down the path. It was still dead on our way back up Garden Drove and when I checked my shoes before getting into the car I was gutted to find that I'd gone and stood in dog poo.....Yuk! I spent ages trying to get it off, so that was more time wasted. To add insult to injury we also had to stop at a bottle bank somewhere to get rid of our glass, apparently if the binmen find glass in your dustbin you're charged for it and the recycling collection doesn't accept it, so you have to deal with it yourself! We'd spotted some recycling bins earlier at Morston and luckily there was one for glass, so that was another job done. I missed the turn off to the HQ, which amused Wendy no end and by the time we got back it was 11.47am. We'd done 13,500 steps, which wasn't too bad considering the rest of the day was going to be spent sitting in the car. Wendy's back had given her a really sharp pain earlier, so she was really worried about the journey ahead of us and still wanted to stop off somewhere overnight to break it up. Wendy set about packing the rest of our stuff, emptying the fridge and cleaning while I fixed the thread that Lyca had pulled on the carpet in the bedroom. It was hard to tell that it'd happened by the time I'd finished....Skillz! Lyca knew that we were leaving and was sulking in the living room but there was 3 potential lifers for us in Cornwall just during that morning, so it made no sense to stay in Norfolk however nice the cottage was! There'd been the Grey Catbird, a Richard's Pipit and a Little Bunting compared to nothing in Norfolk, so there were no doubts in our minds that we were doing the right thing. Wendy had seen that The Foraging Vintners back home had finally put their Rhunessa up for sale to the public and was worried that it'd be sold out if she left it until we got back, so I'd asked my Dad if he could get her some. She wanted 6 bottles as a treat for her family over Christmas, New Year and also her Mum's Birthday and I'd bank transfer him the money, as it wasn't going to be cheap!!!! Her face lit up when I told her I'd just got a message from him saying that he'd just been there to get it then quickly hit the floor when I told her that he'd had to carry it all the way along the prom and up the hill in



Port Erin. This was because the prom had been closed, so he'd no choice and she felt really bad because it must've weighed a tonne!

After we'd eaten lunch I started to load the car up while Wendy did all the last minute stuff and went round the house taking photos. It'd been a brilliant HQ and although we always say that this time was different given the amazing location and was the best to date. It was just a shame we hadn't had any easterly winds as we were sure the trees surrounding the house would have been caked in migrants.



Great cottage

We drove away at 1.32pm feeling apprehensive about the long drive ahead of us, to say the least! Wendy ran into the cottage company office to drop the key off and we set off to Cornwall. I noticed that we'd done the least mileage ever for a Norfolk trip and up until then we'd only done 390 miles. We decided to start another bird list for Cornwall and if that was the case then we'd have to start part 2 of the article when we arrived at the cottage. This would give us the best comparison of what was about in both places and also give some content to part 1 seeing as not much had happened.....Hahaha! We'd hit Cambridgeshire by 3pm and it was 16c and really sunny but what really struck us was vast expanse of flat, hedgeless fields at the side of the road. Unsurprisingly we didn't see any wildlife whatsoever along this stretch.



Where's the hedges?

I went back to the beginning of a funny audiobook I'd been listening to hopefully fill the time in nicely. We didn't plan on listening to it all, but we'd see how it went. So, having just left Norfolk early due to there being no birds around it was typical of our luck when I got reports of a Great-white Egret at Warham Greens, where we'd been that morning and a Rough-legged Buzzard which flew right over our HQ.....Whaaat? That was especially annoying as that's a bird we still need to see. There was also more Yellow-browed Warblers but I decided not to look at the Norfolk reports from then on and turned off the notifications choosing to only see the Cornwall reports pop up. We were making good progress as we passed Leicestershire, then Warwickshire at 4.36pm but then our hearts sank when we saw a sign for queues approaching Coventry.....Booooooooo :( There were also 45 minute delays on the M1, so we were glad we weren't going on it. There were more queues south of Birmingham, so when Wendy saw the sign for Hopwood Park Services, she decided we needed to stop. It was past Lycas's teatime and we needed something too, so I agreed and pulled in. Wendy grabbed Lycas tea from the boot, added the broccoli from the cooler bag and gave it to her then went into the services to use the WC's and get us some food. When she came back, she had a bag from Burger King, which went totally against her grain but was the best she could do. She'd got me chicken nuggets, a bean burger for herself and some fries to share, which did the job and luckily Wendy didn't choke on hers :P. We realised that because we were leaving a day early we'd have no food until tomorrow evening when the Tesco came, so we'd have to live off what was in the car until then like a pair of cool youtube influencer travellers or something.....not.

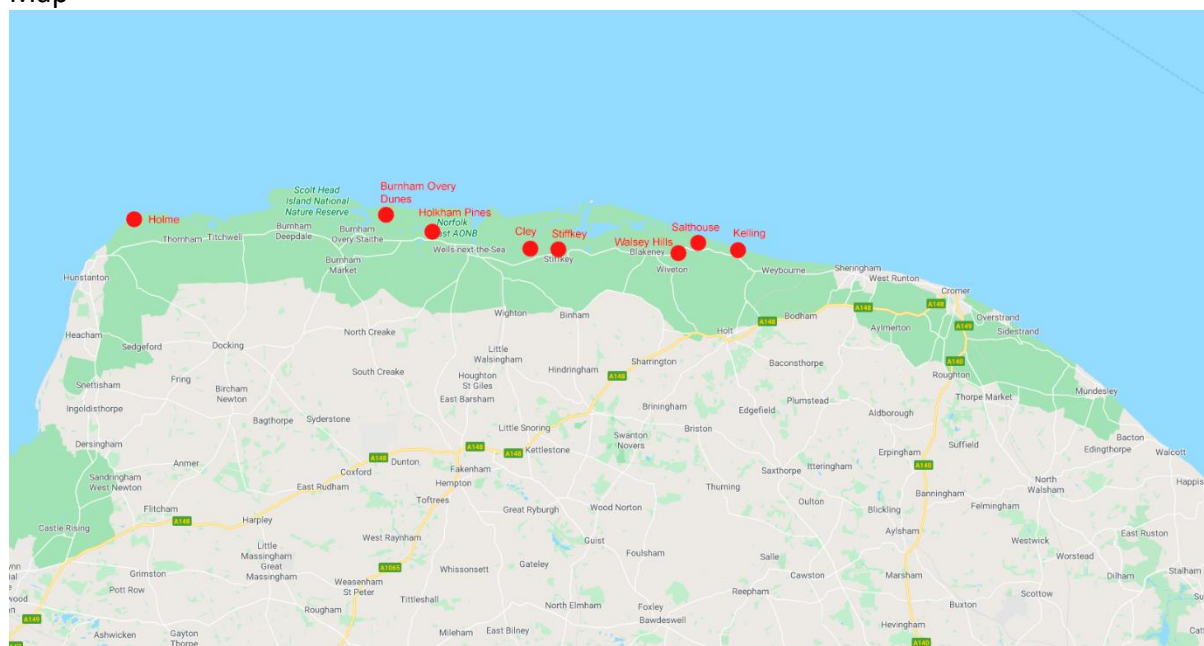
We left the services at 6.39pm and our break had worked out well, as all the congested traffic had cleared, so it was plain sailing from then on. We drove past Gloucestershire, Somerset and arrived at Devon at 8.29pm but were anything but nearly there.....Urrghhhh! I had to stop again to get petrol from a massive services in Exeter at 8.50pm and was horrified to see that it was £1.59 per litre....Grrrrrrr, about 10p more than even the Isle of Man!!! We cheered when we saw the sign for Cornwall at 9.32pm but we still had a long way to go yet! My sat nav then decided to take us off the main road and put us on some stupidly narrow country road round Sancreed, which added more time onto our journey. We saw a **Bat** in the headlights and were relieved when we got back onto a proper road to St Just. Unfortunately, it wasn't much better and still not the main road we should've taken but it was too late in the day to worry about that. It was still 11c, which was really warm



compared to the temperature in Norfolk and we were really happy to finally be on the home straight to our new HQ.

Continued in part 2.....

## Map



## Bird List

Mute Swan	Ringed Plover	Wheatear
Whooper Swan	Golden Plover	Blackbird
Pink-footed Goose	Grey Plover	Fieldfare
Greylag Goose	Lapwing	Song Thrush
Canada Goose	Knot	Redwing
Brent Goose	Dunlin	Cetti's Warbler
Egyptian Goose	Ruff	Blackcap
Shelduck	Snipe	Garden Warbler
Wigeon	Long-billed Dowitcher	Yellow-browed Warbler
Teal	Black-tailed Godwit	Chiffchaff
Mallard	Curlew	Willow Warbler
Pintail	Redshank	Goldcrest
Shoveler	Turnstone	Bearded Tit
Red-legged Partridge	Black-headed Gull	Long-tailed Tit
Grey Partridge	Mediterranean Gull	Blue Tit
Pheasant	Common Gull	Great Tit
Red-throated Diver	Lesser Black-backed Gull	Coal Tit
Little Grebe	Herring Gull	Treecreeper
Gannet	Great Black-backed Gull	Jay
Cormorant	Guillemot	Magpie
Little Egret	Razorbill	Jackdaw
Grey Heron	Rock Dove / Feral Pigeon	Rook
Red Kite	Stock Dove	Carrion Crow
Marsh Harrier	Woodpigeon	Starling
Hen Harrier	Collared Dove	House Sparrow
Sparrowhawk	Short-eared Owl	Chaffinch
Buzzard	Great Spotted Woodpecker	Brambling
Kestrel	Skylark	Greenfinch
Hobby	Swallow	Goldfinch
Peregrine	Meadow Pipit	Siskin
Water Rail	Pied Wagtail	Linnet
Moorhen	Wren	Bullfinch
Coot	Dunnock	Snow Bunting
Oystercatcher	Robin	Yellowhammer
Avocet	Stonechat	Reed Bunting

