

Portland Heights Birdwatching Breaks Friday June 12th – Sunday June 14th 2009

Saturday June 13th

Weather: Dense fog in the early morning and evening, clearing with warm sunny intervals at midday.

Portland Bill, 0700

The fog made sea-watching an unusually pointless exercise this morning, but we did it anyway and managed to see some shadowy blurs that might have been Guillemots and some blurry shadows that might have been Fulmars.

Giving this up after about half an hour we called in to the Bird Observatory to look at the overnight catch from Martin Cade's moth-traps. Dominating the list were the Heart-and-darts and the Marbled Minors but the stars were the beautiful Small Elephant Hawk-moths.

Kingbarrow Quarry, 0930

The first butterflies of the weekend, Common Blues, were seen here, closely followed by numerous Dingy Skippers and Small Heaths. A number of day-flying moths were seen including some very smart Mother Shiptons. The best bird was the Little Owl that is regularly seen at this site whilst a Lesser Whitethroat responded well to a recording of its song. Common Whitethroats appeared to be everywhere. A Common Lizard and 2 Slow-worms started off the weekend's reptile list and a purple patch of Early Gentians was the best botanical sighting.

Admiralty Quarries, 1130

Huge numbers of Pyramidal Orchids here with the first Silver-studded Blues of the year (see photo on right by Geoff Manger) and a gorgeous Hummingbird Hawk-moth. A family of Ravens were about the only birds seen.



High Angle Battery, 1230

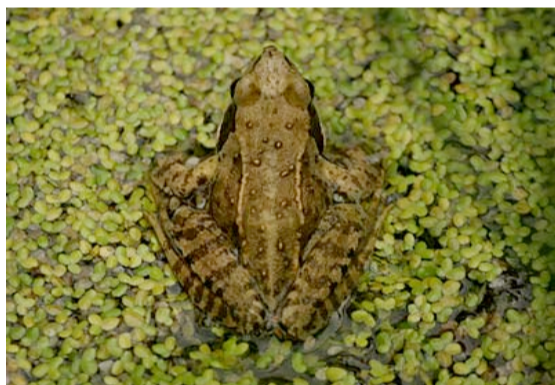
A superb male Adonis Blue was a very welcome addition to the butterfly list.

Ferrybridge, 1330

Very little here apart from a distant Ringed Plover. We were more interested in our sandwiches by now anyway.

Powerstock Common, 1500

Not many butterflies on this cloudy afternoon but a huge variety of plants including Dyer's Greenweed, Twayblades and hundreds of Common and Heath Spotted Orchids. Dragonflies were seen for the first time of the weekend with a particularly handsome Beautiful Demoiselle. Birds here were mostly heard rather than seen and included Chiffchaff, Willow Warbler, Marsh Tit and Nuthatch. The highlight of the afternoon was a fine example of the very rare Birdsnest Orchid.



Common Frog



Red-headed Cardinal Beetle



Yellow Flag Iris



Birdsnest Orchid



Azure Damselfly
(photo by Geoff Manger)

Sunday June 14th

Weather: calm, warm and dry with long sunny intervals especially in the afternoon

Portland Bill, 0700

With much better visibility we could actually see the seabirds this morning and soon added Razorbill and Gannet to the weekend bird list. At the Bird Observatory we benefited from Martin's expertise and added a number of new moths to the list compiled yesterday - and corrected a number of my mistakes!



Right: Flame Shoulder

Perryfields, 1000

Investigating reports of Grizzled Skippers we explored this area at some length. None of our quarry was found in the quarry but we did find good numbers of Small Blues and a few Dingy Skippers.

Grove Point, 1200

The huge female Adder that we often see here was at home again but in the hot weather was hiding in the shade of the long grass most of the time. Looking out over the East Weares we found a distant Sandwich Tern and a closer Stock Dove. Examining the landscape far below us we found 8 of the flock of 10 British Primitive Goats introduced last year by Natural England in an attempt to control the invasive scrub.

Ferrybridge, 1230

Very quiet again with just one Oystercatcher and a brief view of 2 Ravens cruising Chesil Beach.

Hogcliff Down, 1330

We visited this superb site to see the colony of Marsh Fritillaries and weren't disappointed with perhaps as many as 20 of these beautiful insects, although they were all rather tatty. All sorts of other insects were seen including a Burnet Companion, a Garden Chafer, a Dung Beetle and, less welcome, quite a few Horse-flies.



Right: A male Marsh Fritillary



Chickerell, 1600

An unconventional finale to the weekend with this visit to some man-made ponds next to an industrial estate on the edge of Weymouth. A host of dragonflies were seen with the highlight being a colony of Scarce Blue-tailed Damselflies.

Left: An exuvia of an Emperor Dragonfly

The weekend's list:

Birds: 61 species

Fulmar
Gannet
Cormorant
Shag
Grey Heron
Mute Swan
Canada Goose
Tufted Duck
Mallard
Buzzard
Kestrel
Peregrine
Pheasant
Coot
Moorhen
Oystercatcher
Ringed Plover
Black-headed Gull
Herring Gull
Great Black-backed Gull
Kittiwake
Sandwich Tern
Guillemot
Razorbill
Stock Dove
Wood Pigeon
Collared Dove
Little Owl
Swift
Great Spotted
Woodpecker (heard)
Skylark
Swallow
House Martin
Meadow Pipit
Rock Pipit
Pied Wagtail
Wren
Dunnock
Robin
Blackbird
Song Thrush (heard)
Reed Warbler
Cetti's Warbler
Whitethroat
Lesser Whitethroat
Blackcap
Chiffchaff
Willow Warbler
Spotted Flycatcher
Marsh Tit
Blue Tit
Great Tit
Nuthatch (heard)
Magpie
Jackdaw
Rook
Carrion Crow
Raven
Starling
House Sparrow
Chaffinch
Greenfinch
Goldfinch
Linnet
Bullfinch
Yellowhammer

Butterflies: 17 species

Dingy Skipper
Large Skipper
Small White
Green-veined White
Large White
Brimstone
Common Blue
Silver-studded Blue
Adonis Blue
Small Blue
Marsh Fritillary
Red Admiral
Painted Lady
Small Tortoiseshell
Small Heath
Meadow Brown
Speckled Wood

Moths: 38 species

Agapeta zoegana
Burnet Companion
Bright-line Brown-eye
Buff Ermine
Cinnabar
Common Marbled Carpet
Common Swift
Common Wainscot
Cream-spot Tiger
Dark Arches
Drinker
Dusky Brocade
Flame
Flame Shoulder
Garden Tiger
Heart and Club
Heart and Dart
Hummingbird Hawk-moth
Knot Grass
Large Yellow Underwing
Middle-barred Minor
Mother Shipton
Pale Arches
Setaceous Hebrew
Character
Shoulder-striped
Wainscot
Shuttle-shaped Dart
Six-spot Burnet
Small Elephant Hawk-moth
Smoky Wainscot
Speckled Yellow
Thistle Ermine
Treble Lines
Vine's Rustic
White Ermine
White-point
Willow Beauty
Yellow Shell

Dragonflies: 8 species

Beautiful Demoiselle
Azure Damselfly
Common Blue Damselfly
Blue-tailed Damselfly
Scarce Blue-tailed D'fly
Broad-bodied Chaser
Black-tailed Skimmer
Emperor

Other insects:

Common Groundhopper
Ephemera danica (a
Mayfly)
Scorpion-fly
Green Lacewing
Nettle Weevil
Garden Chafer
7-spot Ladybird
Red-headed Cardinal
Beetle
Dung Beetle
Volucella bombylans (a
hoverfly)

Reptiles/Amphibians:

Slow-worm
Adder
Common Lizard
Smooth Newt
Common Frog

Mammals:

Roe Deer
British Primitive Goat
Rabbit

Plants: selected species

Bogbean
Viper's Bugloss
Ivy Broomrape
Common Broomrape
Rock Samphire
Wild Madder
Carline Thistle
Greater Knapweed
Mouse-ear Hawkweed
Rough Hawkbit
Broad-leaved Eyebright
Yellow Rattle
Pale Flax
Purging Flax
Common Centaury
Lesser Centaury
Early Gentian
Yellow-wort
Yorkshire Fog
Yellow Flag Iris
Wild Strawberry
Great Mullein
Marjoram
Self-heal
Thyme
Wild Privet
Common Spotted Orchid
Heath Spotted Orchid
Pyramidal Orchid
Birdsnest Orchid
Twayblade
Birdsfoot Trefoil
Dyer's Greenweed
Horseshoe Vetch
Kidney Vetch
Restharrow
Zigzag Clover
Red Valerian