

Heights Hotel Birdwatching Breaks

Friday September 23rd – Sunday September 25th 2011

Saturday September 24th

Weather: Mostly sunny and warm in a very light southerly breeze

Portland Bill, 0700

Our weekend started with an hour or so at the Bill in which Wheatears predominated with Pied Wagtails a close second. Seabirds were few and far between in the calm conditions we all enjoyed watching the Gannets which cruised past in the middle distance. A Weasel was an unexpected find as it dashed out from under a line of rocks to frighten the Meadow Pipits feeding quietly on the Common.



Weston, 0930

An extensive tour of the area took in Barleycrates Lane, Suckthumb Quarry, Avalanche Road, Reap Lane and the Westcliffs. A fine Yellow Wagtail was the best bird seen here, but the Whinchats were much appreciated as well, particularly as they were often side by side with Stonechats and Wheatears giving us the opportunity to compare these confusion species. Swallows were streaming overhead all the time, especially at the Westcliffs where we also saw pairs of both Peregrines and Ravens.

Chesil Beach, 1200

We scored a real success here as an optimistic search for a Grey Phalarope produced 2 of these amazing little birds at very close range and in unusually calm conditions for this rare species.



Ferrybridge, 1300

A very quiet location today with just a single Ringed Plover and a few Sandwich Terns.

Lodmoor, 1400

Lots of new birds here with a Little Stint the best amongst an excellent selection of waders including 10 Black-tailed Godwits, 2 Greenshank, a Redshank and several Common Sandpipers. Another beautiful Yellow Wagtail was seen, even brighter than the one at Weston this morning. A real bonus was the juvenile Water Rail that appeared at the edge of the reeds only to be joined by a very smart adult bird. A good range of Mediterranean Gulls were here too with all 3 plumages seen well – first year, second year and adult. And I nearly forgot the excellent views we had of the reserve's famously productive adult male Marsh Harrier, looking remarkably fit after fathering no less than 8 young in a single season!

Radipole, 1530

Some of us had a good view of a Cetti's Warbler here but we all heard them singing at us from the bushes. Little else of note was seen but we did add plenty of birds to the list, mostly waterfowl of one sort or another.

Sunday May 10th

Weather: a dull morning with some light rain around midday, warmer in the afternoon

Portland Bill, 0700

This time we opted for a walk around the Admiralty Slopes and Topfields but managed to add nothing to the list apart from hearing a distant Pheasant. We did have good views of several Sparrowhawks and Buzzards though.

Lodmoor, 1000

A quick look for yesterday's shrike drew a blank again but we did see a lovely juvenile Grey Plover.

Bere Heath, 1100

A bit of a marathon here with relatively little to show for our efforts although the pair of Peregrines just above us on a pylon were really excellent. Our aim was to find some Crossbills and indeed we did just that but it would have been nice if they had stayed just a little longer...

Lunch was had at the side of the road with a pair of Hobbies cruising around overhead. Perhaps the morning wasn't a complete waste of time then!

Middlebere Farm, 1500

This site never fails to delight and it really produced a treat today in the shape of a flock of no less than 20 (yes 20!!!) Spoonbills, one of the largest flocks of this species ever to be seen in the UK. A Marsh Harrier gave a very exciting fly past and another 2 Hobbies entertained us with their acrobatic antics catching dragonflies over Arne Heath. After waiting almost an hour the promised Avocets finally put in an appearance – great birds even if there were only 2 of them!

At the concluding cream tea our total of 94 species showed just how busy we had been spotting birds. Here's looking forward to the next time...

Bob Ford



19 Spoonbills at Middlebere
I'm sure I counted 20, but when I checked my photos...

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Birds: 94 species

Little Grebe	Radipole
Great Crested Grebe	Radipole
Gannet	Portland Bill
Cormorant	various sites
Shag	Portland Bill
Spoonbill	Middlebere
Little Egret	Lodmoor, Middlebere
Grey Heron	Lodmoor, Radipole,
Mute Swan	Radipole, Lodmoor
Canada Goose	Radipole, Lodmoor
Shelduck	Middlebere
Wigeon	Middlebere
Gadwall	Lodmoor, Radipole
Teal	Lodmoor, Radipole
Mallard	Lodmoor, Radipole
Shoveler	Lodmoor, Radipole
Tufted Duck	Radipole
Hooded Merganser	Radipole
Marsh Harrier	Lodmoor, Middlebere
Sparrowhawk	various sites
Buzzard	various sites
Kestrel	various sites
Peregrine	Portland, Bere Heath
Hobby	Bere Heath, Middlebere
Water Rail	Lodmoor
Moorhen	Lodmoor, Radipole
Coot	Lodmoor, Radipole,
Pheasant	Portland
Oystercatcher	Portland, Middlebere
Ringed Plover	Ferrybridge
Grey Plover	Lodmoor
Lapwing	Lodmoor
Little Stint	Lodmoor
Dunlin	Lodmoor
Greenshank	Lodmoor, Middlebere
Redshank	Lodmoor
Common Sandpiper	Lodmoor
Curlew	Middlebere
Snipe	Radipole
Black-tailed Godwit	Radipole
Bar-tailed Godwit	Ferrybridge
Grey Phalarope	Chesil Beach
Mediterranean Gull	Lodmoor, Radipole
Black-headed Gull	various sites
Herring Gull	various sites
Great Black-backed Gull	various sites
Common Gull	Ferrybridge, Lodmoor
Sandwich Tern	Ferrybridge, Lodmoor
Common Tern	Radipole
Guillemot	Portland Bill
Wood Pigeon	various sites
Feral Pigeon	Radipole
Stock Dove	Lodmoor
Collared Dove	Portland
Green Woodpecker	Lodmoor, Bere Heath (heard)

Skylark	Portland
Swallow	various sites
House Martin	Portland
Meadow Pipit	various sites
Tree Pipit	Portland Bill (heard)
Rock Pipit	Portland Bill
Pied Wagtail	various sites
Yellow Wagtail	Portland, Lodmoor
Wren	Portland
Dunnock	various sites
Robin	various sites
Stonechat	various sites
Whinchat	Portland
Wheatear	Portland
Blackbird	various sites
Cetti's Warbler	Radipole, Lodmoor
Blackcap	Portland, Lodmoor
Chiffchaff	various sites
Goldcrest	Bere Heath
Long-tailed Tit	Lodmoor
Coal Tit	Bere Heath
Blue Tit	Lodmoor
Great Tit	various sites
Treecreeper	Bere Heath
Raven	Portland, Bere Heath
Magpie	various sites
Jackdaw	various sites
Rook	Ferrybridge
Carrion Crow	various sites
Starling	various sites
House Sparrow	various sites
Siskin	Bere Heath
Crossbill	Bere Heath
Chaffinch	Portland
Greenfinch	Portland
Goldfinch	various sites
Linnet	Portland

Insects: 8 species

Red Admiral	various sites
Peacock	Portland
Large White	Portland
Small White	Portland
Wall	Portland
Common Darter	Radipole
Migrant Hawker	Radipole
Fox Moth	Portland, Middlebere

Mammals: 2 species

Weasel	Portland Bill
Rabbit	Portland

Fish: 1 species

Flounder	Middlebere
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