

Saturday January 5th

Weather: Overcast with a short spell of light rain in the morning. Wind light westerly.

Portland Bill, 0900

We started with a visit to Bill where we saw plenty of seabirds, including 2 Red-throated Divers flying past just off the coast. Further offshore were plenty of Razorbills and Guillemots along with a solitary Fulmar. About half a mile out over the Portland Race were hundreds of Kittiwakes and a couple of Gannets. As if this wasn't enough a pair of common Scoter flew past close enough to easily see the paler face of the female.

All was quiet at Portland Bird Observatory (www.portlandbirdobs.org.uk/aa_latestnews.htm) but in the nearby quarry the usual Little Owl was just visible as it dozed in its shelter under the rocks.

Grove Point, 1100

At first the Peregrine was not at home but before long it returned and gave us good views as it sat on its cliff-top perch. Underneath this ledge the cliffs were full of Fulmars sorting out the coming season's nesting sites. Out on the sea a Grey Seal was moving slowly along the coast.

Ferrybridge, 1230

The day's highlight was the superbly tame Snow Bunting that allowed us to approach within a few feet. A video can be seen at <http://youtu.be/je4rYTnyXDw>
The flock of 600 Mediterranean Gulls here was easily the largest number we have ever seen and may well be one of the largest concentrations of this species ever seen in the UK.

Portland Sailing Academy, 1330

Our first look at Portland Harbour was a little disappointing but did come up with a good size flock of 50 or more Red-breasted Mergansers.

Sandsfoot Castle, 1400

Our second harbour viewpoint was much better with a Great Northern Diver, 10 Black-necked Grebes, 4 Slavonian Grebes, 3 Common Scoter and an Eider. Sat here eating lunch and watching grebes at close quarters was easily one of the highlights of the weekend.

Radipole Lake, 1500

We hit the target as soon as we arrived here with 4 Bearded Tits feeding opposite the Visitors' Centre – and of course Hoodie the Hooded Merganser was in residence. The North Hide produced the regular female Marsh Harrier but no sign of the Bittern we had hoped for.

Southwell, 1630

We finished the day with, given the deteriorating weather conditions, a rather over-optimistic attempt to see one of the 2 Barn Owls that have been seen in the area recently.

Sunday January 6th

Weather: overcast becoming increasingly dark and wet through the afternoon

Portland Bill, 0900

We returned to the Bill to see if we could catch up with one of the species missed yesterday, and before long we had it in our sights – a Purple Sandpiper. Before we moved on we also managed to get much better views of Razorbills and also added Lesser Black-backed Gull to the weekend's list. A very approachable Raven was a much better sighting than the one obtained yesterday.

Ferrybridge, 1030

Another catch-up stop, this time to try to get some of the wader's we missed yesterday. Sadly the mudflats were empty again and we only managed very distant views of a few Ringed Plovers and Dunlins on Chesil Beach.

East Stoke, 1230

Twitching at its most efficient was demonstrated here as we parked a few hundred metres away from our target, a lovely Whooper Swan. Here's a video recorded three days earlier: <http://youtu.be/lpDpdxGHByg>

East Holme, 1300

We had to work harder here and walk along the road a bit before we caught up with a superb Pink-footed Goose feeding alongside a flock of sleepy Greylags. This was a new species for a Heights Hotel Birdbreak, as were the two Egyptian Geese nearby.

Wareham, 1400

Another very pleasant lunch stop next to the River Frome.

Middlebere Farm, 1430

With the weather closing in we called in at one of our favourite hides and enjoyed good views of a wide range of species in rapidly deteriorating light. The Avocets gave the closest views but a stationary Jay was very much appreciated as well. A gorgeous Red Fox was one of the few mammals seen all weekend.

Lodmoor, 1530

A brief stop to look for Water Pipits that only provided what were the first Goldfinches for some of the group.

Weymouth Seafront, 1600

A walk along the pier overlooking Weymouth Bay as the gulls started to assemble for the evening roost produced the best view of Little Grebe of the weekend.

Southwell, 1630

A final and slightly desperate attempt to find one of the two Barn Owls brought our weekend to a close with a total of only 82 species seen, but a great deal of quality rather than quantity.



Red-throated Diver	Portland Bill
Great Northern Diver	Portland Harbour
Slavonian Grebe	Portland Harbour
Great Crested Grebe	Portland Harbour
Black-necked Grebe	Portland Harbour
Little Grebe	Radipole
Fulmar	Portland Bill
Gannet	Portland Bill
Cormorant	Portland, Radipole
Shag	Portland Bill
Little Egret	Ferrybridge, Middlebere
Grey Heron	Radipole
Mute Swan	Radipole
Whooper Swan	East Stoke
Greylag Goose	East Holme
Pink-footed Goose	East Holme
Egyptian Goose	East Holme
Brent Goose	Ferrybridge
Canada Goose	Radipole
Shelduck	Radipole, Middlebere
Shoveler	Radipole
Gadwall	Radipole
Wigeon	Middlebere
Teal	Radipole, Middlebere
Mallard	Radipole
Tufted Duck	Radipole
Common Scoter	Portland Harbour, Portland Bill
Hooded Merganser	Radipole
Red-breasted Merganser	Portland Harbour
Eider	Portland Harbour
Kestrel	Portland
Peregrine	Portland
Buzzard	Portland
Sparrowhawk	Radipole
Marsh Harrier	Radipole

Pheasant	Wool
Water Rail	Radipole (heard)
Moorhen	Radipole
Coot	Radipole
Curlew	Middlebere
Oystercatcher	Portland Bill, Middlebere
Avocet	Middlebere
Ringed Plover	Ferrybridge
Lapwing	East Holme
Dunlin	Ferrybridge
Purple Sandpiper	Portland Bill
Redshank	Middlebere
Turnstone	Portland Bill
Common Gull	Radipole
Black-headed Gull	various sites
Mediterranean Gull	Ferrybridge
Herring Gull	various sites
Great Black-backed Gull	various sites
Lesser Black-backed Gull	Portland Bill
Kittiwake	Portland Bill
Guillemot	Portland Bill
Razorbill	Portland Bill
Wood Pigeon	various sites
Feral Pigeon	Radipole
Collared Dove	Portland
Skylark	Portland Bill
Rock Pipit	Portland Bill
Meadow Pipit	Portland Bill
Pied Wagtail	various sites
Wren	various sites
Dunnock	various sites
Robin	various sites
Blackbird	various sites
Song Thrush	Middlebere
Cetti's Warbler	Radipole
Goldcrest	Radipole
Bearded Tit	Radipole
Long-tailed Tit	Radipole
Coal Tit	East Stoke (heard)
Blue Tit	Radipole
Great Tit	Radipole
Raven	Portland
Magpie	various sites
Jackdaw	various sites
Jay	Middlebere
Rook	Ferrybridge
Carrion Crow	various sites
Starling	various sites
House Sparrow	various sites
Greenfinch	various sites
Goldfinch	various sites
Chaffinch	various sites
Reed Bunting	Radipole
Snow Bunting	Ferrybridge

Mammals: 3 species

Brown Rat	Radipole
Red Fox	Middlebere
Grey Seal	Portland Bill