

Saturday February 22nd

Weather: clear skies with a fresh westerly wind

Kingbarrow Quarry, 0700

A pleasant morning for a walk round one of portland's oldest quarries. Several birds were in full song including song thrush, dunnock and wren with wood pigeon and stock dove in flight display. The highlight was the very brief view of a little owl but it was a shame it didn't stick around for a bit longer.

Portland Bill, 0930

Rock pipits were much in evidence here right from the start with a few meadow pipits amongst them but unfortunately no chance to compare them side by side. Out at sea the auks predominated with guillemots and razorbills all over the place. Singles of gannet, kittiwake and fulmar were seen but little else. By far the best bird was the sleepy purple sandpiper dozing on the cliff edge. Near the Bird Observatory we caught up with the spare little owl and enjoyed a far better view of this bird than the one we had in the morning. All around us skylarks were singing making it feel like spring.

Southwell, 1100

A quick look for the resident peregrines drew a blank but we did see the only butterfly of the weekend - a small tortoiseshell.

Grove Point, 1230

Another negative result here - no goats - but excellent views of a pair of buzzards instead.

Portland Castle, 1300

A major success here with the two black guillemots being found in close succession. A Slavonian grebe was an extra bonus.

Ferrybridge, 1330

The intertidal mudflats here were very quiet today apart from an interesting selection of gulls and some brent geese.

Sandsfoot Castle, 1430

Most of the birds here were pretty distant but did include a remarkable total of around twenty black-necked grebes including one in almost full summer plumage. At a similar distance were four black-throated divers, and even further out was a single great northern diver.

Bincleaves, 1530

We really struck gold at the third site we chose to search Portland Harbour from with close views of no less than twenty Slavonian grebes and four red-necked grebes. The great northern diver also treated us to a much better view.

Radipole Lake RSPB Reserve, 1600

Here we completed our set of all the five European grebes with a single little grebe seen from the North Hide.

Sunday February 23rd

Weather: mostly overcast with brief brighter spells in the afternoon in a strong southerly wind

Ferrybridge, 0930

A quick stop here to check through the gulls produced very little but a very smart little egret was a bonus.

Lodmoor RSPB Reserve, 1000

We doubled our wader list here (two new species!) with lapwing and snipe and also added some new ducks with wigeon and shoveler. However it was the appearance of the female marsh harrier which really made this stop worthwhile.

Arne RSPB Reserve, 1130

We started by walking out to Shipstall Point through the wooded farmland with its herd of sika deer. A host of new birds were seen at Shipstall but they all paled into insignificance compared with the remarkable sight of a flock of 22 spoonbills.

Returning to the car park the queue for the toilets was enlivened somewhat by the sound of a close firecrest, which only showed itself to one of the group unfortunately.

After lunch we walked out to Middlebere Lake where another two spoonbills were found along with a distant but very smart adult yellow-legged gull. We had all but given up on seeing any avocets when a line of white birds were seen in the far distance – a flock of 200 of these most beautiful of birds!

Looking forward to the next time,

Bob Ford, Feb 23rd 2014



Birds: 92 species

Black-throated Diver	Portland Harbour
Great Northern Diver	Portland Harbour
Slavonian Grebe	Portland Harbour
Great Crested Grebe	Portland Harbour
Red-necked Grebe	Portland Harbour
Black-necked Grebe	Portland Harbour
Little Grebe	Radipole, Lodmoor
Fulmar	Portland Bill
Gannet	Portland Bill
Cormorant	Portland Harbour
Shag	Portland Bill
Little Egret	Ferrybridge, Arne
Grey Heron	Radipole
Spoonbill	Arne
Mute Swan	Radipole, Lodmoor
Brent Goose	Ferrybridge, Arne
Canada Goose	Lodmoor, Arne
Shelduck	Lodmoor, Arne
Shoveler	Lodmoor
Wigeon	Lodmoor, Arne
Teal	Radipole, Lodmoor, Arne
Mallard	Radipole, Lodmoor, Arne
Gadwall	Radipole, Lodmoor
Tufted Duck	Radipole, Lodmoor
Pochard	Radipole, Lodmoor
Red-breasted Merganser	Portland Harbour
Kestrel	Various sites
Marsh Harrier	Lodmoor
Buzzard	Portland
Water Rail	Radipole (heard)
Moorhen	Radipole
Coot	Radipole
Curlew	Arne
Avocet	Arne
Oystercatcher	Lodmoor, Arne
Lapwing	Lodmoor
Grey Plover	Arne
Snipe	Lodmoor
Redshank	Arne
Black-tailed Godwit	Arne
Purple Sandpiper	Portland Bill
Common Gull	various sites
Black-headed Gull	various sites
Mediterranean Gull	Ferrybridge, Radipole, Lodmoor
Herring Gull	various sites
Great Black-backed Gull	various sites
Lesser Black-backed Gull	Radipole, Lodmoor
Yellow-legged Gull	Arne
Kittiwake	Portland Bill
Guillemot	Portland Bill
Black Guillemot	Portland Harbour
Razorbill	Portland Bill
Wood Pigeon	various sites
Feral Pigeon	various sites
Stock Dove	Kingbarrow
Collared Dove	Wool
Little Owl	Portland
Kingfisher	Radipole
Green Woodpecker	Arne (heard)

Great Spotted Woodpecker	Arne
Skylark	Portland Bill, Ferrybridge
Rock Pipit	Portland Bill
Meadow Pipit	Portland Bill
Pied Wagtail	various sites
Wren	Arne
Dunnock	various sites
Robin	various sites
Stonechat	Radipole
Blackbird	various sites
Song Thrush	Radipole
Cetti's Warbler	Radipole
Firecrest	Arne
Goldcrest	Arne
Tree-creeper	Arne (heard)
Bearded Tit	Radipole (heard)
Coal Tit	Arne
Blue Tit	various sites
Great Tit	various sites
Nuthatch	Arne
Raven	various sites
Magpie	various sites
Jackdaw	various sites
Rook	Ferrybridge
Carrion Crow	various sites
Starling	various sites
House Sparrow	various sites
Goldfinch	Portland
Greenfinch	Radipole
Linnet	Portland
Chaffinch	various sites
Siskin	Arne

Mammals:

Rabbit	Portland
Sika Deer	Arne

Insects:

Small Tortoiseshell	Portland
Wood Ant	Arne