

## Portland Heights Birdwatching Breaks

Friday February 24<sup>th</sup> – Sunday February 26<sup>th</sup> 2017



*Rock Pipit (from the January Birdbreak) photo by Gerry Studd*

### Saturday February 25th

**Weather: heavily overcast in a fresh south-westerly wind**

Weston, 0900

Rare warblers are seldom part of a February list so we started our weekend with an attempt to see the extremely rare Hume's warbler that has spent the winter on Portland instead of northern India where it should be. We had just given up and were walking out of the quarry when we heard the distinctive "swee-wee" call and the bird appeared briefly in a sycamore not far away from us. Sadly it did what these hyper-active little birds often do and vanished as quickly as it had appeared.

Ferrybridge, 1000

The mud-flats here held a large flock of Mediterranean gulls, many of which were in their black-headed breeding plumage. Out on the waters of the Fleet were a few red-breasted mergansers and a line of Brent geese flew in from the west. Waders were few and far between but we did see a small flock of dunlin and a couple of ringed plovers as well as single turnstone and oystercatcher.

Abbotsbury, 1100

Not much luck here but quite a few common birds were seen such as kestrel and meadow pipit. Much less expected was the hunt which appeared over the hill next to the car park necessitating a quick getaway to avoid the inevitable crowd of hunt followers which were no doubt on their way.

Bere Regis, 1200

Even less luck with no sign of the hoped-for flock of waxwings but the very approachable goldcrest was a real bonus.

Arne RSPB Reserve, 1300

An unusually quiet afternoon here in an increasingly strong wind but the hide at Shipstall Point did show us flocks of hundreds of birds including curlew, black-tailed godwit, wigeon and shelduck with smaller numbers of teal, redshank and great crested grebes. Searching with the telescope further out in the channel we had a big surprise when a pair of sandwich terns flew through, most likely wintering birds rather than early spring migrants.

The woods were almost devoid of birds this afternoon but we did find a single coal tit and had a brief view of a green woodpecker in flight.

## **Sunday February 26th**

**Weather: very similar to yesterday**

Portland Bill, 1000

After a quick look for the Hume's warbler we carried on to the Bill to look for purple sandpipers. Out on the sea we found a good variety of seabirds including gannets and razorbills whilst on the cliffs rock pipits were posing unusually close. After much searching we finally found the purple sandpipers along with seven turnstones and an oystercatcher. With the weather clearing up we decided to walk over to Pulpit Rock where we could see the guillemots already settled on their breeding ledges on the Westcliffs.

Portland Castle, 1200

Our first look at Portland Harbour was from Portland Castle where we had close views of a flock of red-breasted mergansers. The breakwaters of the International Sailing Academy's marina gave us the chance to compare cormorant and shag directly.

Ferrybridge, 1300

The mud-flats here today held a few Mediterranean gulls with a pair of mergansers feeding in the channel close to the bus. The highlight here was the peregrine that shot over the bus and out onto the Fleet putting up all the birds in the vicinity.

Sandsfoot Castle, 1400

Our second examination of Portland Harbour turned up relatively close views of black-necked and Slavonian grebes as well as a young male eider. Even closer were the brent geese and several summer plumaged Mediterranean gulls.

Radipole RSPB Reserve, 1500

Lots of birds here but the highlight must be the pair of marsh harriers that were watched at close quarters displaying over the reed beds. Wildfowl were abundant here with shelduck, pochard, teal, gadwall and shoveler seen well.

Lodmoor RSPB Reserve, 1600

On a whim we decided to fit in an extra stop to finish off the day and added spoonbill, snipe and lapwing to a remarkable weekend list of 86 species.

Looking forward to the next time,

Bob

**Bird List:**

Great Crested Grebe	Portland Harbour, Arne
Black-necked Grebe	Portland Harbour
Slavonian Grebe	Portland Harbour
Little Grebe	Radipole, Lodmoor
Fulmar	Portland Bill
Cormorant	Portland, Radipole, Abbotsbury
Shag	Portland
Gannet	Portland Bill
Little Egret	Ferrybridge, Arne
Grey Heron	Abbotsbury, Portland, Radipole
Spoonbill	Lodmoor
Mute Swan	Radipole, Abbotsbury
Canada Goose	Lodmoor, Abbotsbury
Dark-bellied Brent Goose	Ferrybridge, Portland Harbour, Arne
Shelduck	Radipole, Lodmoor, Abbotsbury
Wigeon	Arne, Abbotsbury
Teal	Radipole, Lodmoor, Abbotsbury
Gadwall	Radipole
Mallard	Radipole, Lodmoor, Abbotsbury
Shoveler	Radipole, Abbotsbury
Tufted Duck	Radipole
Pochard	Radipole
Eider	Portland Harbour
Red-breasted Merganser	Portland Harbour, Arne
Hooded Merganser	Radipole
Common Scoter	Portland Bill
Kestrel	various sites
Peregrine	Ferrybridge
Marsh Harrier	Radipole
Sparrowhawk	Weston
Buzzard	Arne
Pheasant	Abbotsbury
Water Rail	Radipole (heard)
Coot	Radipole, Lodmoor, Abbotsbury
Moorhen	Radipole, Lodmoor
Oystercatcher	Ferrybridge, Portland, Arne
Curlew	Ferrybridge, Arne
Redshank	Arne
Black-tailed Godwit	Lodmoor, Arne
Oystercatcher	Ferrybridge, Portland, Arne
Lapwing	Lodmoor
Ringed Plover	Ferrybridge
Dunlin	Ferrybridge, Lodmoor
Purple Sandpiper	Portland Bill
Snipe	Lodmoor
Turnstone	Ferrybridge, Portland Bill
Common Gull	various sites
Black-headed Gull	various sites
Mediterranean Gull	Radipole, Lodmoor, Ferrybridge
Herring Gull	various sites

Lesser Black-backed Gull	Radipole, Portland
Great Black-backed Gull	various sites
Sandwich Tern	Arne
Razorbill	Portland Bill
Guillemot	Portland Bill
Wood Pigeon	various sites
Collared Dove	Wyke Regis
Feral Pigeon	various sites
Great Spotted Woodpecker	Arne
Green Woodpecker	Arne
Skylark	Ferrybridge
Meadow Pipit	Abbotsbury
Rock Pipit	Portland Bill
Pied Wagtail	various sites
Wren	various sites
Dunnock	various sites
Robin	various sites
Stonechat	Radipole
Blackbird	various sites
Cetti's Warbler	Radipole (heard)
Hume's Warbler	Weston
Goldcrest	Bere Regis, Radipole
Long-tailed Tit	Arne, Radipole
Coal Tit	Arne
Blue Tit	various sites
Great Tit	various sites
Treecreeper	Arne
Magpie	various sites
Raven	Portland Bill
Jackdaw	various sites
Rook	Abbotsbury
Carrion Crow	various sites
Starling	various sites
House Sparrow	various sites
Goldfinch	Abbotsbury, Arne
Goldfinch	Abbotsbury, Arne
Chaffinch	Abbotsbury, Arne