**HEIGHTS HOTEL WILDLIFE BREAKS**

**Friday November 2nd – Sunday November 4th 2018**

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| Lesser Yellowlegs at Lodmoor *(photo by Bob Ford)* |

**Saturday November 3rd**

**Weather: Mostly bright and dry but in a strong southerly windy**

Portland Bill, 0900

In very windy conditions we explored the most southerly point of Dorset seeing good numbers of Gannets and Kittiwakes flying east some distance offshore along with Cormorants and Shags closer in. A Glaucous Gull flying past escaped detection by all but one of us but was later seen by a number of local birders.

Walking along the Eastcliffs towards the Bird Observatory we had good views of Rock Pipits, Turnstone and Oystercatcher on the shore. At the Observatory the Warden, Martin Cade, showed us the night’s moth catch which included a couple of very rare Flame Brocades. As we left a Peregrine appeared overhead and proceeded to chase the Wood Pigeons in the ancient strip lynchet field system.

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| Rock Pipit  *(photo by Bob Ford)* | Flame Brocade  *(photo by BobFord)* |

Grove Stadium, 1100

Our search for the elusive Yellow-browed Warbler produced no more than a few distant calls and glimpses of birds that may or may not have been our target. Hearing that the Glaucous Gull had been seen flying in our direction we searched the sea from the lookout at Grove Point but again to no avail.

Ferrybridge, 1230

In improving conditions we enjoyed excellent views of a Little Egret from the van with a flock of five or more Skylarks on the shoreline. In the distance on Chesil Beach fifty or so Ringed Plovers could be seen sitting out the high tide along with several Dunlins. The mudflats held no less than six species of gull including single Lesser Black-backed and Mediterranean Gulls.

Lodmoor RSPB Reserve, 1330

This excellent reserve produced the star sighting of the weekend when the Lesser Yellowlegs appeared just in front of us, feeding just a few metres away. Many other waders were seen as well including Greenshank, Snipe and Black-tailed Godwit.

Lesser Yellowlegs *(photo by John Thompson)*

Radipole RSPB Reserve, 1500

A quick stop here to look for some Scaup that had been sighted earlier instead produced a very unusual looking duck that was most likely a hybrid between Tufted Duck and Ring-necked Duck. Whilst we were puzzling over this individual a pair of Marsh Harriers appeared hunting over the reeds. Cetti’s Warblers and Water Rails were heard on the way back to the car park, where a group of five Snipe were seen feeding at the edge of the gull flock.

\*\*\*STOP PRESS\*\*\* *our “hybrid duck” has now been confirmed as a first winter male Ring-necked Duck*

\*\*\*UPDATE\*\*\* *two weeks later I’ve finally managed to get some photos of it, see* [*http://www.natureportfolio.co.uk/birdbreaks/2018/nov18/ring-necked-duck.php*](http://www.natureportfolio.co.uk/birdbreaks/2018/nov18/ring-necked-duck.php)

Portland Bill, 1600

Our final mission was to look for the Short-eared Owls that have been seen hunting over the Admiralty Slopes near the Bill. The conditions proved too windy this afternoon but we did see a Buzzard and a number of Kestrels.

**Sunday November 4th**

**Weather: wet in the morning but dry and calm in the afternoon**

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Ferrybridge, 0900

In horribly wet conditions we sought the “shelter” of the Chesil Beach Centre’s birdwatching platform and added a number of birds to the weekend list including Bar-tailed Godwit and Dark-bellied Brent Goose, the latter being several hundred strong. Our fish list started and finished here with a very fine Sea Bass brought in by a lucky fisherman.

Abbotsbury, 1000

The weather was still very wet as we reached the northern end of the Fleet so we decided to stay in the van and drive up and down looking for the Cattle Egrets that have been here for a week or so. The strategy worked excellently as we found a flock of 37 of these lovely birds, the biggest flock ever seen in Dorset.

Cattle Egret *(photo by John Thompson)*

Arne RSPB Reserve, 1130

After lunch we walked out to Shipstall Point where we found lots of Curlews and a very impressive flock of around a thousand Avocets. We never did identify the species of seal that popped up in the channel in front of Round Island but we did recognise the distinctive sounds of a Sika stag in rut. On the way to the hide both woodpeckers were seen along with five or six Jays. At the hide the second and third Peregrines of the weekend were seen here as well as a range of waterbirds including Pintail, Common Scoter and Great Crested Grebe.

Portland Bill, 1600

We finished the weekend with another search for owls but it was still too windy. We did get very close views of a pair of Ravens though and the briefest of glimpses of a Merlin dashing past the Higher Light.

Back at the hotel over a cream tea we discovered that we had amassed a very respectable total of 90 species of birds, seen and heard.

Looking forward to the next time,

Bob

**The weekend’s list of species:**

Little Grebe Radipole

Great Crested Grebe Arne, Radipole

Gannet Portland Bill

Cormorant Arne, Radipole, Portland Bill

Shag Portland Bill

Grey Heron Lodmoor, Arne, Radipole,

Little Egret Ferrybridge, Lodmoor, Radipole, Arne

Cattle Egret Abbotsbury

Mute Swan Radipole

Canada Goose Lodmoor, Radipole

Dark-bellied Brent Goose Arne, Ferrybridge

Shelduck Arne, Radipole

Wigeon Arne

Teal Lodmoor, Arne, Radipole

Gadwall Radipole

Shoveler Lodmoor, Radipole

Mallard Lodmoor, Arne, Radipole

Pintail Arne

Tufted Duck Radipole

Pochard Radipole

Common Scoter Arne

Red-breasted Merganser Ferrybridge

Marsh Harrier Radipole

Peregrine Portland Bill, Arne, St John’s Church Weymouth

Merlin Portland Bill

Kestrel Portland

Buzzard Portland

Sparrowhawk Portland Bill

Pheasant Abbotsbury

Water Rail Radipole (heard)

Moorhen Lodmoor, Radipole

Coot Lodmoor, Radipole

Oystercatcher Portland Bill, Arne

Avocet Arne

Curlew Arne

Redshank Arne

Greenshank Lodmoor

Lesser Yellowlegs Lodmoor

Ringed Plover Ferrybridge

Black-tailed Godwit Lodmoor, Arne, Radipole

Bar-tailed Godwit Ferrybridge, Arne

Snipe Lodmoor, Radipole

Lapwing Lodmoor, Portesham

Dunlin Ferrybridge, Lodmoor

Turnstone Ferrybridge, Portland Bill

Black-headed Gull Ferrybridge, Lodmoor, Radipole, Arne

Mediterranean Gull Ferrybridge, Lodmoor, Radipole, Portland Bill

Herring Gull Portland etc

Glaucous Gull Portland Bill

Great Black-backed Gull Portland etc

Lesser Black-backed Gull Ferrybridge

Common Gull Ferrybridge, Lodmoor, Radipole

Little Gull Lodmoor

Kittiwake Portland Bill

Guillemot Portland Bill

Wood Pigeon Portland etc

Feral Pigeon Portland etc

Collared Dove Portland

Great Spotted Woodpecker Arne

Green Woodpecker Arne

Skylark Ferrybridge

Meadow Pipit Ferrybridge

Rock Pipit Portland Bill

Pied Wagtail Portland etc

Grey Wagtail Nottington

Wren Portland etc

Dunnock Portland etc

Robin Portland etc

Song Thrush Portland

Mistle Thrush Abbotsbury

Blackbird Portland etc

Cetti’s Warbler Radipole (heard)

Chiffchaff Radipole (heard)

Goldcrest Arne

Long-tailed Tit Radipole, Arne

Coal Tit Arne

Blue Tit Portland etc

Great Tit Portland etc

Jay Arne

Rook Portland, Abbotsbury

Magpie Portland etc

Jackdaw Portland etc

Carrion Crow Portland etc

Raven Portland Bill

Starling Portland etc

House Sparrow Portland

Chaffinch Portland, Radipole, Lodmoor, Arne

Goldfinch Portland, Radipole, Lodmoor

Linnet Portland, Ferrybridge, Lodmoor

Greenfinch Lodmoor

**Mammals**

Grey Squirrel Portland, Arne

British Primitive Goat Portland

lSeal spp Arne

Sika Arne

**Fish**

Bass Ferrybridge

**Insects**

Peacock Portland etc

Red Admiral Portland etc

Flame Brocade Portland Bird Observatory

Angle Shades Portland Bird Observatory

Large Yellow Underwing Portland Bird Observatory

Ichneumon Wasp Portland Bird Observatory

Common Wasp Portland Bird Observatory

Migrant Hawker Lodmoor