

HEIGHTS HOTEL WILDLIFE BREAKS

Friday September 14th – Sunday September 16th 2018

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Cattle Egrets at Radipole (photo by Ian West)

Saturday September 15th

Weather: some light cloud in the morning but otherwise warm sunshine all day

Portland Bill, 0900

We started our weekend with a few minutes sea-watching at the Bill. A few Gannets, Shags, Cormorants and Fulmars were all we could find though so we walked north along the Eastcliffs to look for migrants. At first we could only find Rock Pipits but soon Wheatears started to turn up and it wasn't long before we had seen ten or more. A flock of six Oystercatchers were found near the shoreline whilst overhead small flocks of Swallows and Meadow Pipits headed south along the cliffs. Looking downwards for once a couple of late-flowering Autumn Lady's Tresses were found in the grass at our feet. Calling in to Portland Bird Observatory we learnt that little had been seen that morning so we moved on to the Observatory Quarry in the hope of seeing the resident Little Owl. The bird was nowhere to be seen but we did see a Whitethroat and enjoyed a very close overhead view of a male Sparrowhawk. Some interesting insects were seen here too including a Small Copper, a Common Blue and a Roesel's Bush-cricket all on the same Greater Knapweed plant!

High Angle Battery, 1200

More Common Blues and Small Coppers here including some very fresh males. Speckled Wood, Small Heath and Red Admiral were also seen in a morning that was starting to produce more butterflies than birds.

Ferrybridge, 1300

Returning to bird-watching our lunch stop added lots of new species to the day's list including Sandwich Tern, Ringed Plover, Dunlin, Sanderling and a single Mediterranean Gull. The highlight was a first-year Yellow-legged Gull conveniently stood next to a young Herring Gull and an adult Great Black-backed Gull for comparison. Away from the shoreline a pair of Skylarks proved challenging to locate but in the end showed well.

Radipole RSPB Reserve, 1430

Arriving at this unique town-centre reserve we started out with a very brief but close view of a Kingfisher in a hurry. Then we were told that a Cattle Egret had been seen at the far northern end. So the group split into two halves, one choosing to stay and look for Bearded Tits and the other heading off to the North Screen. Both groups did well with the first group seeing or hearing Great Crested, Little Grebe, Bearded Tit and Cetti's Warbler while the second group found no less than five Cattle Egrets, at least twenty Yellow Wagtails and a very fine Wasp Spider.

Sunday September 16th

Weather: long sunny periods for most of the day

Arne RSPB Reserve, 1000

We had literally just got out of the van when one of the star birds of the weekend appeared in the shape of a Firecrest just outside the toilet block! "Flushed" with success we walked out to Shipstall Point where we were very lucky to get a quick glimpse of a fly-over Tree Pipit. Sadly the heathland around Arne Hill, normally a hot-spot for Dartford Warblers failed to produce even a single call, although conditions were perfect. Reaching the hide we found hundreds of Curlews, a single Redshank and a very impressive flock of twenty-six Spoonbills.

After lunch we spent the afternoon on Coombe Heath, stopping on the way to search for Raft Spiders. This was a successful search resulting in up to ten spiders being found, with the help of an RSPB volunteer. Reaching the tidal inlet known as Middlebere Lake a large flock of Black-tailed Godwits was found to be hiding several Knot. A Greenshank in the distance was the final addition to the weekend's impressive tally of nine species of waders.

The walk back to the van was in a strengthening wind and increasing cloud cover, spoiling our last chance of locating the secretive Dartford Warbler. A distant Buzzard sat on the Ospreys' favourite tree got us excited for a minute, but alas this species too failed to show up. However, our final total of 80 species of birds, along with many insects, mammals and plants shows what a productive weekend we had.

Looking forward to the next time,

Bob

The weekend's list of species:

Little Grebe	Radipole
Great Crested Grebe	Radipole
Gannet	Portland Bill
Cormorant	Portland Bill
Shag	Portland Bill
Fulmar	Portland Bill
Cattle Egret	Radipole
Grey Heron	Radipole, Arne
Little Egret	Ferrybridge, Radipole, Arne
Spoonbill	Arne
Mute Swan	Radipole
Canada Goose	Arne
Shelduck	Arne
Wigeon	Radipole

Teal	Radipole
Gadwall	Radipole
Shoveler	Radipole
Mallard	Radipole
Tufted Duck	Radipole
Kestrel	Portland, Ferrybridge, Arne
Buzzard	Portland, Arne
Sparrowhawk	Portland
Coot	Radipole
Oystercatcher	Portland, Arne
Curlew	Arne
Greenshank	Arne
Redshank	Arne
Ringed Plover	Ferrybridge
Black-tailed Godwit	Arne
Knot	Arne
Dunlin	Ferrybridge
Sanderling	Ferrybridge
Black-headed Gull	Ferrybridge, Radipole, Arne
Mediterranean Gull	Ferrybridge, Radipole
Herring Gull	Portland etc
Great Black-backed Gull	Portland etc
Lesser Black-backed Gull	Portland
Yellow-legged Gull	Ferrybridge
Sandwich Tern	Ferrybridge, Arne
Wood Pigeon	Portland etc
Feral Pigeon	Portland etc
Stock Dove	Portland
Kingfisher	Radipole
Great Spotted Woodpecker	Arne
Nuthatch	Arne
Treecreeper	Arne
Swallow	Portland etc
House Martin	Radipole
Skylark	Ferrybridge
Meadow Pipit	Portland
Tree Pipit	Arne
Rock Pipit	Portland Bill
Pied Wagtail	Ferrybridge
Yellow Wagtail	Radipole, Arne
Wren	Portland etc
Dunnock	Portland etc
Robin	Portland etc
Stonechat	Arne
Wheatear	Portland
Blackbird	Portland etc
Cetti's Warbler (heard)	Arne
Whitethroat	Portland
Chiffchaff	Radipole, Arne
Firecrest	Arne
Bearded Tit (heard)	Radipole
Long-tailed Tit	Arne

Coal Tit	Arne
Blue Tit	Portland etc
Great Tit	Portland etc
Jay	Arne
Rook	Arne
Magpie	Portland etc
Jackdaw	Portland etc
Carrion Crow	Portland etc
Raven	Arne
Starling	Portland etc
House Sparrow	Portland etc
Goldfinch	Portland
Chaffinch	Arne
Linnet	Portland, Ferrybridge

Mammals

Grey Squirrel	Arne
Roe Deer	Arne
Sika Deer	Arne
Grey Seal (?)	Arne

Spiders

Garden Cross Spider	Arne
Raft Spider	Arne
Wasp Spider	Radipole

Insects

Small White	Portland etc
Small Copper	Portland
Common Blue	Portland
Comma	Arne
Red Admiral	Portland etc
Speckled Wood	Portland etc
Wall	Portland
Small Heath	Portland
Common Darter	Radipole, Arne
Emperor	Radipole, Arne
Southern Hawker	Arne
Migrant Hawker	Radipole
Roesel's Bush-cricket	Portland

Plants

Beech Family:	Beech Pedunculate Oak Sweet Chestnut
Birch Family:	Silver Birch
Borage Family:	Comfrey
Buckthorn Family:	Purging Buckthorn
Carrot Family:	Alexanders

Daisy Family:	Greater Knapweed Hemp Agrimony Lesser Burdock Fleabane Perennial Sow-thistle
Dock Family:	Sorrel
Hazel Family:	Hazel Hornbeam
Heather Family:	Cross-leaved Heath
Iris Family:	Crocsmia Stinking Iris
Loosestrife Family:	Purple Loosestrife
Mint Family:	Wild Thyme
Orache Family:	Sea Purslane
Orchid Family:	Autumn Lady's Tresses
Pea Family:	Kidney Vetch Everlasting Pea
Pine Family:	Scots Pine
Reed-mace Family:	Greater Bulrush
Rose Family:	Burnet Rose
Teasel Family :	Teasel
Valerian Family:	Red Valerian