

HEIGHTS HOTEL WILDLIFE BREAKS

Friday January 10th – Sunday January 12th 2020



Saturday January 11th

Weather: a dull, cloudy day with a strong south westerly wind

Maiden Castle, 1000

A very productive start to the weekend with Golden Plover, the first of our two main targets, seen from the bus as we were still driving along the road to the car park. From the car park we had more views of the plovers but Corn Bunting, our second target, proved hard to track down even though we could hear them in the field. We persevered though and eventually we started to pick them out in the fodder crop the sheep were feeding on.

Arne RSPB Reserve, 1130

The clear highlight of our first day was the half hour we spent in the hide at Shipstall Point, with a pair of Peregrines creating havoc in the flocks of Wigeon, Pintail and Teal while even larger numbers of Curlew circled overhead. The star birds were the first to leave – a flock of 22 Spoonbills.

During our lunch stop the car park produced a good variety of woodland species, including Nuthatch, Great Spotted Woodpecker and, for some of us, Goldcrest and Firecrest.

After lunch we walked across Coombe Heath to Middlebere Lake. At low tide the birds were widely dispersed and we only managed to add a few birds to the list, including Mute Swan and Little Egret. Closer views of Curlew were had though with flocks of Brent Goose and Avocet flying past.



Sunday January 12th

Weather: sunny all day, wind south-south westerly decreasing during the day

Portland Bill, 0900

A windy but sunny morning with several Rock Pipits showing well even before we left the car park. Out at sea were hundreds of seabirds with plenty of Gannets and even larger numbers Guillemots and Razorbills constantly flying past along with a few Common Scoter and Kittiwakes. The lack of Purple Sandpipers was a bit of a disappointment but partly made up for by the incredible waves that were smashing into the cliffs.

Chesil Cove, 1030

We found the Black Redstart here almost as soon as we got off the bus, only to see it disappear before all the group could see it. Fortunately it soon appeared again and gave us excellently close views.

Portland Castle, 1100

We were delighted when a close Great Northern Diver showed up here but soon a second and then a third bird were found as well! Several Red-breasted Mergansers were seen, some at close quarters including one watched eating a pipe-fish.

Hamm Beach, 1200

Driving north up to the next vantage point on the shore of the harbour we eventually found the female Eider that has been here all winter, but only after an intensive search. See my video of this bird at https://youtu.be/vXH55jPgm_g

Ferrybridge, 1230

A good number of Dunlin were seen here with around a hundred birds on the shoreline but this paled into insignificance compared with the huge flock of several thousand Mediterranean Gulls that were feeding out on the Fleet. A small group of Skylarks were also very much appreciated as was the only Kestrel seen all weekend.

Sandsfoot Castle, 1330

A favourite spot to see Black-necked Grebes with five birds showing today, a good count for what has been a very poor winter for this species so far.

Bincleaves, 1400

Acting on a tip-off we visited the far north-western corner of Portland Harbour to look for a Black-throated Diver – and found two! Not only that but a Slavonian Grebe showed up as well. The Ravens croaking over our heads were pretty memorable as well.

Lodmoor RSPB Reserve, 1500

We started at the northern end of the reserve where a female Scaup soon gave itself up but proved very difficult to relocate. Walking round the rest of the reserve produced excellent views of Snipe as well as hundreds of Lapwings and one or possibly two Marsh Harriers. The finale to the weekend was the sight of thousands of birds circling overhead in a beautiful light from the low January sun.

Looking forward to the next time,

Bob



The weekend list:

Great Northern Diver	Portland Harbour
Black-throated Diver	Portland Harbour
Black-necked Grebe	Portland Harbour
Slavonian Grebe	Portland Harbour
Little Grebe	Lodmoor
Great Crested Grebe	Portland Harbour, Arne
Gannet	Portland Bill
Cormorant	Portland, Arne
Shag	Portland Harbour
Little Egret	Arne, Lodmoor
Grey Heron	Arne, Portland Harbour
Spoonbill	Arne
Mute Swan	Arne, Lodmoor
Black Swan	Lodmoor
Dark-bellied Brent Goose	Arne, Ferrybridge
Canada Goose	Arne
Shelduck	Arne, Lodmoor
Teal	Arne, Lodmoor
Wigeon	Arne
Pintail	Arne
Mallard	Arne, Lodmoor
Gadwall	Arne, Lodmoor
Shoveler	Lodmoor
Tufted Duck	Lodmoor
Scaup	Lodmoor
Pochard	Arne, Lodmoor
Common Scoter	Portland Bill
Red-breasted Merganser	Portland Harbour
Eider	Portland Harbour
Goldeneye	Arne
Kestrel	Ferrybridge
Peregrine	Arne, Chesil Cove
Buzzard	Arne
Marsh Harrier	Lodmoor
Pheasant	Arne
Coot	Arne, Lodmoor
Moorhen	Lodmoor
Oystercatcher	Arne, Portland Harbour

Avocet	Arne
Curlew	Arne
Lapwing	Arne, Lodmoor
Golden Plover	Maiden Castle
Snipe	Lodmoor
Dunlin	Ferrybridge, Lodmoor
Bar-tailed Godwit	Arne
Redshank	Arne
Black-headed Gull	Ferrybridge etc
Mediterranean Gull	Ferrybridge, Lodmoor
Herring Gull	Ferrybridge etc
Lesser Black-backed Gull	Arne
Great Black-backed Gull	Ferrybridge etc
Common Gull	Portland Bill, Ferrybridge
Kittiwake	Portland Bill
Guillemot	Portland Bill
Razorbill	Portland Bill
Stock Dove	Portland Bill
Collared Dove	Weymouth
Wood Pigeon	Portland etc
Feral Pigeon	Portland etc
Great Spotted Woodpecker	Arne
Skylark	Maiden Castle, Portland, Ferrybridge
Meadow Pipit	Maiden Castle, Arne
Rock Pipit	Portland Bill
Pied Wagtail	Portland etc
Wren	Portland etc
Duncock	Arne, Lodmoor
Robin	Portland etc
Black Redstart	Chesil Cove
Stonechat	Lodmoor
Blackbird	Portland etc
Cetti's Warbler	Lodmoor (heard)
Firecrest	Arne
Goldcrest	Arne
Long-tailed Tit	Arne, Lodmoor
Blue Tit	Arne
Great Tit	Arne
Coal Tit	Arne
Nuthatch	Arne
Magpie	Portland etc
Jackdaw	Portland etc
Rook	Sandsfoot
Carrion Crow	Portland etc
Raven	Arne, Portland, Bincleaves
Starling	Portland etc
House Sparrow	Portland etc
Goldfinch	Portland etc
Linnet	Maiden Castle
Chaffinch	Arne, Bincleaves
Corn Bunting	Maiden Castle
Grey Squirrel	Arne
Sika	Arne