

HEIGHTS HOTEL WILDLIFE BREAKS

Friday March 13th – Sunday March 15th 2020



Bearded Tit by Dave Pearson and Jean Tye

Saturday March 14th

Weather: a sunny morning that developed into a more cloudy afternoon, wind fresh south westerly

Radipole RSPB Reserve, 0930

When we heard the report of a Penduline Tit at Radipole we changed our plans to start at Portland Bill and instead headed off into Weymouth. Once there it wasn't long before we started hearing Bearded Tits and even had a few brief glimpses of them. As we reached the North Screen a male Marsh Harrier appeared high overhead, the first of a superb range of raptors. The next was a male Sparrowhawk sat on a gate, followed by a circling flock of no less than nine Buzzards which were then joined by a Peregrine! A pair of Stonechats also turned up and we enjoyed good views of three Roe Deer. Back at the concrete bridge one of our group had got close enough to the Penduline Tit to hear it calling from the reeds, but it was never seen. We all had good views of Bearded Tit though, resulting in some excellent photos. A Sand Martin was also seen by one of us; another of the group may well have seen a Bittern.

Portland Harbour, 1200

From a high view point in Wyke Regis we searched the central area of the harbour and found a distant Black-necked Grebe in full breeding plumage. Just next to us a very smart male Greenfinch was singing from a bramble.

Ferrybridge, 1230

Lunch was had here to the sound of singing Skylarks. Out on the mudflats a small group of Dark-bellied Brent Geese were feeding along with a few Oystercatchers. The fifth species of raptor was added to the list when a male Kestrel was seen hovering over the car park.

Portland Castle, 1400

Our target here, Great Northern Diver, was soon found along with some very close Red-breasted Mergansers. We watched the diver at fairly close quarters for some time as it moved in and out of the boats in the marina.

Portland Bill, 1500

We finished the day with a really excellent sea-watch in the shelter of the Trinity House obelisk, the most southerly point in Dorset. A wonderful range of seabirds were seen with the Gannets giving us particularly close views. The highlight came when a group of three or four Manx Shearwaters flew past unusually close for these normally very distant birds. We were just about to leave when a huge Bottle-nosed Dolphin breached in the rough waters of Portland Race, soon followed by several more of these amazing animals. A truly amazing end to the day!



Spoonbills by Jean Tye

Sunday March 15th

Weather: mostly overcast with some sunny intervals, wind strong southerly decreasing during the day

Arne RSPB Reserve, 1000

This morning's highlight had to be the Peregrine chasing the Curlews at Shipstall Point. Before it arrived the three Spoonbills there gave us a nice demonstration of their feeding technique. The Great Northern Diver in the waters in front of Round Island was an unexpected bonus but the strong wind meant that very few small birds could be seen in the woods and out on the heath.

After lunch we walked out onto Coombe Heath, pausing at the RSPB Visitor Centre to add Siskin and Coal Tit to the list. The weather was wet but calm and as the rain stopped the conditions were just right for a Dartford Warbler to pop up, and that's just what happened as we left the viewing screen on the shore of Middlebere Lake. In the distance a large white bird could be seen; through the telescope it was clearly a Great White Egret. This bird turned up again as we overlooked the end of Middlebere, in the company of Little Egrets and a Spoonbill! Walking back we found the fifth mammal species of the weekend – Sika deer. The final bird species added was just before we reached the bus when a Mistle Thrush was found perched high up on an Oak at the edge of the car park.

Looking forward to the next time,

Bob



Mistle Thrush by Jean Tye

Bird list:

Great Northern Diver	Portland Harbour, Arne
Black-necked Grebe	Portland Harbour
Little Grebe	Radipole
Great Crested Grebe	Portland Harbour, Radipole, Arne
Manx Shearwater	Portland Bill
Fulmar	Portland Bill
Gannet	Portland Bill
Cormorant	Portland, Radipole
Shag	Portland Harbour
Little Egret	Arne, Radipole
Great White Egret	Arne
Grey Heron	Radipole
Spoonbill	Arne
Mute Swan	Radipole
Dark-bellied Brent Goose	Arne, Ferrybridge
Canada Goose	Arne, Radipole
Shelduck	Arne, Radipole
Teal	Arne, Radipole
Wigeon	Arne, Radipole
Pintail	Arne
Mallard	Arne, Radipole
Gadwall	Radipole
Shoveler	Radipole
Tufted Duck	Radipole
Pochard	Radipole
Common Scoter	Portland Bill
Red-breasted Merganser	Arne, Portland Harbour
Sparrowhawk	Radipole
Kestrel	Ferrybridge
Peregrine	Arne, Radipole
Buzzard	Radipole
Marsh Harrier	Radipole
Pheasant	Arne, Radipole
Water Rail	Radipole (heard)
Coot	Radipole
Moorhen	Radipole
Oystercatcher	Arne, Ferrybridge
Curlew	Arne
Snipe	Radipole
Purple Sandpiper	Portland Bill
Black-tailed Godwit	Arne
Redshank	Arne
Black-headed Gull	Ferrybridge etc
Mediterranean Gull	Ferrybridge
Herring Gull	Ferrybridge etc
Lesser Black-backed Gull	Radipole
Great Black-backed Gull	Ferrybridge etc
Common Gull	Ferrybridge
Guillemot	Portland Bill
Razorbill	Portland Bill
Kingfisher	Radipole
Collared Dove	Wool
Wood Pigeon	Portland etc
Feral Pigeon	Portland etc
Great Spotted Woodpecker	Arne
Green Woodpecker	Arne (heard)
Skylark	Ferrybridge
Sand Martin	Radipole
Meadow Pipit	Radipole, Arne
Rock Pipit	Portland Bill
Pied Wagtail	Ferrybridge
Wren	Radipole etc

Duncock	Radipole etc
Robin	Radipole etc
Stonechat	Radipole
Blackbird	Radipole etc
Song Thrush	Arne
Mistle Thrush	Arne
Cetti's Warbler	Radipole
Dartford Warbler	Arne
Chiffchaff	Radipole
Goldcrest	Arne
Penduline Tit	Radipole (heard)
Bearded Tit	Radipole
Long-tailed Tit	Arne, Radipole
Blue Tit	Arne, Radipole
Great Tit	Arne, Radipole
Coal Tit	Arne
Nuthatch	Arne (heard)
Magpie	Radipole etc
Jackdaw	Radipole etc
Rook	Wool
Carrion Crow	Radipole etc
Raven	Ferrybridge
Starling	Radipole etc
House Sparrow	Radipole etc
Goldfinch	Radipole etc
Siskin	Radipole
Greenfinch	Wyke Regis
Linnet	Ferrybridge
Chaffinch	Arne, Radipole
Reed Bunting	Arne, Radipole

Mammal list:

Grey Squirrel	Arne
Sika	Arne
Roe Deer	Radipole
Brown Rat	Radipole
Bottle-nosed Dolphin	Portland Bill

Ship list:

HMS Prince of Wales
RFA Tidespring
RFA Mounts Bay
Ex-RFA Sir Tristram