

Portland Heights Birdwatching Breaks October 24th – 26th 2008

Saturday October 25th

Weather: Largely overcast with brief sunny intervals mainly in the morning, increasingly windy throughout the day.

Kingbarrow Quarry, 0730

A somewhat uninspiring start to the weekend with very little to see at all, apart from a close view of a very handsome Red Fox.

Portland Bill, 0900

We were hoping for plenty of seabirds here but the winds weren't really strong enough to blow the birds in. Searching the rough patch of water known as the *Portland Race* we could see lots of gulls with the occasional Gannet and Kittiwake. Walking round to the east side we found 6 Oystercatchers feeding on the rocks and had fleeting views of several Rock Pipits. A visit to the Bird Observatory produced no good news but the fields opposite had Skylarks, a Buzzard and 2 Ravens.

Grove Point, 1200

The target here was the resident Peregrine which was sat at his usual perch on the cliffs. Looking over the wall onto the tops of some Sycamores gave us a unique opportunity to look down onto a flock of Goldcrests at very close quarters. Apart from the birdlife we also found all 10 of the recently introduced flock of British Primitive Goats.

Ferrybridge, 1300

Turnstones, Dunlins and Ringed Plovers were in good numbers on the mudflats here until an over-flying Peregrine frightened them all off. Nearby a pair of Ravens patrolled Chesil Beach.

Portland Castle, 1400

2 Little Grebes were the only birds on the water here but this was made up for by good views of a pair of Rock Pipits on the walls of the castle.

Radipole Lake, 1500

From the reserve centre we were pleased to see several Snipe feeding at the edge of the reeds and at least 5 Mediterranean Gulls. On the way to the North Hide another 5 Mediterranean Gulls were seen and a group of Swallows hawked over the reeds. The hide produced good views of a Buzzard as well as 3 Stonechats and a Little Egret. Walking back another 10 Mediterranean Gulls dropped in and we had a brief view of a Cetti's Warbler. A final look at the gull flock by the car park added even more Med Gulls, bringing the afternoon's total up to at least 40 birds!

Sunday October 26th

Weather: Light drizzle throughout the day.

Kingbarrow Quarry, 0700

The least said about this pre-breakfast walk the better, although it was nice to see the fox again (and even nicer to get back to the hotel for breakfast).

Arne RSPB Reserve, 1000

A good choice to spend the whole day here as the weather was much better than it was on Portland. We started with a walk out to Shipstall point where we had lunch in the hide overlooking Poole Harbour. On the way we had seen a few woodland birds (mainly in the reserve car park!) and plenty of wetland birds including Curlew, Black-tailed Godwits, Brent Geese and Red-breasted Mergansers. Mammals were good too with lots of Grey Squirrels, several superb Sika stags and, best of all, a Grey Seal at the entrance to Middlebere Channel. Shipstall hide produced a record number of Spoonbills – an incredible 15! Pintail and Wigeon were present in good numbers as well, with a small flock of 8 Avocet the first of many seen today.

After lunch we walked out to the Middlebere Hide where the bird of the day was seen – a ringtail Hen Harrier hunting over the reedbeds. A fly-by Merlin was another fine sighting with Kestrel, Buzzard and Peregrine bringing the day's raptor list to an impressive 5 species – 6 if you count the Tawny Owl calling near the car park. Walking back we found where all the Avocets were when we noticed a distant white mist which turned out to be a massive feeding flock of perhaps 1,000 birds feeding 2 channels away.

A selection of fungi from Arne:

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Chicken of the Woods
Laetiporus sulphureus



Tufted Bell-cap
Mycena inclinata



Wood Blewit
Lepista nuda

Here's to our next time out together,

Bob

Birds: 86 species

Little Grebe	Radipole, Portland Castle
Great Crested Grebe	Radipole, Arne
Gannet	Portland Bill
Cormorant	various sites
Shag	Portland Bill
Little Egret	Radipole, Arne
Grey Heron	Radipole, Arne
Mute Swan	Radipole
Canada Goose	Radipole, Arne
Shelduck	Radipole, Arne
Wigeon	Arne
Gadwall	Radipole, Arne
Teal	Radipole, Arne
Pintail	Arne
Mallard	Radipole, Arne
Common Scoter	Portland Bill
Shoveler	Radipole
Tufted Duck	Radipole
Red-breasted Merganser	Arne
Hooded Merganser	Radipole
Hen Harrier	Arne
Buzzard	Radipole, Arne, Portland
Kestrel	various sites
Peregrine	Portland, Ferrybridge, Arne
Merlin	Arne
Pheasant	Arne
Water Rail	Radipole (heard)
Moorhen	Radipole
Coot	Radipole
Oystercatcher	Portland Bill, Arne
Ringed Plover	Ferrybridge
Grey Plover	Arne
Curlew	Arne
Dunlin	Ferrybridge
Redshank	Arne
Avocet	Arne
Snipe	Radipole
Black-tailed Godwit	Arne
Turnstone	Ferrybridge
Mediterranean Gull	Radipole
Black-headed Gull	various sites
Kittiwake	Portland Bill
Lesser Black-backed Gull	Radipole
Herring Gull	various sites
Great Black-backed Gull	various sites
Yellow-legged Gull	Arne
Common Gull	Radipole
Guillemot	Portland Bill
Stock Dove	Portland
Wood Pigeon	various sites
Collared Dove	Wool
Tawny Owl	Arne (heard)
Great-spotted Woodpecker	Arne (heard)
Green Woodpecker	Arne
Treecreeper	Arne (heard)
Nuthatch	Arne
Skylark	Portland
Swallow	Portland, Radipole, Arne
House Martin	Portland
Meadow Pipit	Portland, Radipole, Arne
Rock Pipit	Portland Bill
Bird Westail	various sites

Duncock	various sites
Robin	various sites
Stonechat	Portland, Radipole
Redwing	Arne
Blackbird	various sites
Mistle Thrush	Arne
Cetti's Warbler	Radipole
Goldcrest	Portland, Arne
Bearded Tit	Radipole (heard)
Long-tailed Tit	Arne
Marsh Tit	Arne
Coal Tit	Arne
Blue Tit	various sites
Great Tit	various sites
Magpie	various sites
Jackdaw	various sites
Rook	Arne, Ferrybridge
Carrion Crow	various sites
Raven	Portland, Ferrybridge
Jay	Arne (heard)
Starling	various sites
House Sparrow	Portland
Chaffinch	Portland, Arne
Greenfinch	Portland
Goldfinch	Portland
Linnet	Portland
Bullfinch	Arne

Mammals: 8 species

Brown Rat	Radipole
Grey Squirrel	Arne
Sika Deer	Arne
Roe Deer	Arne
British Primitive Goat	Portland
Grey Seal	Arne
Red Fox	Portland
Rabbit	Portland, Arne

Insects: 2 species

Hornet	Arne
Red Admiral	Radipole

Notable Plants:

Rock Samphire	Portland
Golden Samphire	Portland
Dorset Heath	Arne
Black Spleenwort	Arne

Fungi:

	(all at Arne)
Chicken of the Woods	<i>Laetiporus sulphureus</i>
Tufted Bell-cap	<i>Mycena inclinata</i>
Wood Blewit	<i>Lepista nuda</i>
Shaggy Ink Cap	<i>Coprinus comatus</i>
Common Earthball	<i>Scleroderma citrinum</i>
Parasol Mushroom	<i>Lepiota procera</i>
Sulphur Tuft	<i>Hypholoma fasciculare</i>