

Portland Heights Birdwatching Breaks April 24th - April 26th 2009

Saturday April 25th

Weather: Mostly sunny in a fresh south westerly wind

Portland Bill, 0630 (photo on right by Lez Warren)

Our weekend got off to a remarkable start with a splendid sighting of a Great Skua landing on the sea just off the coast. Offshore we could see dozens of Manx Shearwaters, a constant stream of Gannets and hordes of Kittiwakes feeding in the rough waters stirred up by the south-westerly wind. Razorbills, Guillemots and Fulmars were much in evidence with a few Whimbrels and Scoter also seen.



Old Hill, 0900

The area north of the hotel looked a hopeful spot for migrants with Sycamores providing ample feeding areas sheltered from the fresh winds. Our best sighting was a Lesser Whitethroat (see photon left by Lez Warren), with Blackcaps and Chiffchaffs heard singing in the trees. A Peregrine was seen stooping at a flock of racing pigeons but most memorably we saw a very young Fox cub totally absorbed in eating something unidentifiable in the grass just below the path.

Kingbarrow Quarry, 1100

A very charming Little Owl was our first find here followed by a Wheatear and a singing Whitethroat soon after. Walking on to the East Cliffs we had impressive views of both Buzzard and Sparrowhawk – from above. Lunch was had in the unusual surroundings of the High Angle Battery – or “Ghost Tunnels” as the local children call the site.

Ferrybridge, 1400

Very quiet here with just a few Little Terns and Ringed Plovers on the shoreline.

Radipole, 1500

A really excellent final visit with a beautiful male Marsh Harrier from the North Hide, along with a host of other sightings including Sand and House Martins and a pair of Garganey. And of course the long-staying but slightly dubious Hooded Merganser.



Heron and Marsh Harrier, photos by Bob Ford

Sunday April 26th

Weather: Largely overcast in a fresh south easterly wind

Portland Bill, 0630

Another skua off the Bill this morning, this time a dark-phase Arctic heading east just off the rocks. Apart from this, much the same as yesterday with plenty of Gannets and shearwaters along with all the commoner seabirds. On the land were a few Wheatears and Rock Pipits (*photo on right by Lez Warren*).



Wareham Forest, 1030

The highlight here was an Osprey high overhead, or perhaps it was the pair of Cuckoos, or the male Redstart, or the male Grey Wagtail, or the Little Grebe on its nest! Clearly an outstanding morning at this amazing site.

Arne, 1400

Lunch was taken in warm sunshine watching Nuthatches and Coal Tits on the feeders, after which we walked out towards Middlebere Lake. The Osprey appeared again, this time along with a Peregrine and a flock of Black-tailed Godwits. Our final sighting for the weekend was a pair of Spoonbills, sadly only seen asleep in the hazy distance.

The final total was an impressive 95 species seen, with several more heard.

Looking forward to meeting you all again, in the not-too-distant future I hope,

Bob



Osprey and Peregrine, photos by Bob Ford