

Portland Heights Birdwatching Breaks
Friday January 9th – Sunday January 11th 2009

Saturday January 10th

Weather: Overcast with some brief sunny intervals, very cold especially in the morning.

Portland Bill, 0900

We started with a visit to Portland Bird Observatory (www.portlandbirdobs.org.uk) and luckily our visit coincided with one from a Peregrine, with close views had as it followed a flock of Wood Pigeons into the garden. The nearby Little Owl was at its usual perch in the quarry, with Sparrowhawk and Buzzard not far away.

Reaching the Bill we saw plenty of seabirds, the highlight being a Red-throated Diver flying past. Razorbills, Guillemots, Kittiwakes and a solitary Fulmar were also seen with 3 Purple Sandpipers on the shoreline.

Barleycrates Lane, 1100

A brief stop here after a Raven flew over the vehicle allowed us to get better views of the Raven and check through a small flock of Lapwings for Golden Plovers (which were missing).

Portland Castle, 1200

After a coffee break at the hotel we had our first look at Portland Harbour, producing Great Crested and Little Grebes as well as a few Red-breasted Mergansers.

Ferrybridge, 1300

Plenty of waders here, mostly Dunlins and Ringed Plovers with a single Curlew. A distant Mediterranean Gull was out on the Fleet, as were a couple of Lesser Black-backed Gulls.

Sandsfoot Castle, 1330

From the best viewpoint high over Portland Harbour we found a superb range of seabirds including a Great Northern Diver, 4 Black-necked Grebes and single Slavonian and Red-necked Grebes.

Butterstreet Cove, 1400

The highlight of an already very productive produced the star birds of the weekend – 4 Whooper Swans. These were in a huge flock of thousands of Wigeon, Pintail, Teal, Gadwall and Shoveler with another flock of Brent Geese giggling in the distance. If this wasn't enough a Kingfisher flashed past – one of those moments when you really didn't know where to look first!

Wyke Bridging Camp, 1530

No Short-eared Owl here but we did see some close Goldeneye and added more waders to the day's list with lots of Grey Plover and a few Bar-tailed Godwits out on the Fleet. Most of us were back in the vehicle talking about dinner and hot baths when one of the group found the second star bird of the day – a gorgeous male Black Redstart. Thanks Sardie!

Sunday January 11th

Weather: Sunny in the morning, overcast in the afternoon. Warmer but breezy.

East Weares 0900

We had a good view of a Sparrowhawk here but the real reason for the stop was to check on the group of 10 British Primitive Goats that Natural England have introduced here. We saw 9.

Chesil Cove, 0930

Lots of gulls here in the rough seas but nothing rarer than a few Kittiwakes.

Ferrybridge, 1000

With the tide dropping fast the mudflats were covered in birds with 20 or so Pale-bellied Brent Geese in the flock of several hundred Dark-bellied birds. Mediterranean Gulls outnumbered all other gulls with no less than 140 of them! Waders included lots of Ringed Plovers and a lone Curlew.

Lodmoor, 1100

Very little water here and lots of solid ice with ducks and waders (3 Black-tailed Godwits) skidding about all over the place. Snipe were everywhere but apart from that most of the birds had clearly left for softer feeding elsewhere, Even so we did manage a couple of first-rate sightings; a huge female Peregrine taking a swipe at a Wood Pigeon and an elusive Water Pipit which we did eventually track down and even 'scoped at close quarters.

Radipole, 1300

Here's where all the ducks were, including the beautiful little Hooded Merganser all the way from the USA (or Gloucestershire). But even this megastar was eclipsed by the Bittern which performed brilliantly right in front of us at the North Hide.

Rodwell, 1545

Probably the least expected sighting of the weekend happened when a Woodcock flew high over the vehicle just as we were pulling away from some traffic lights half a mile or so from the centre of Weymouth!

Reap Lane, 1600

I wish I could say that we finished on a high note with a Short-eared Owl cruising over the fields at Southwell or the Bill but it was not to be. Instead we consoled ourselves with a cream tea and reflected on all the superb birds we had seen over the weekend.

Looking forward to our next trip out together,

Bob

Birds: 93 species

<input type="checkbox"/>	Red-throated Diver	Portland Bill	<input type="checkbox"/>	Black-tailed Godwit	Radipole, Lodmoor
<input type="checkbox"/>	Great Northern Diver	Portland Harbour	<input type="checkbox"/>	Mediterranean Gull	Ferrybridge
<input type="checkbox"/>	Little Grebe	Radipole	<input type="checkbox"/>	Black-headed Gull	various sites
<input type="checkbox"/>	Great Crested Grebe	Portland Harbour	<input type="checkbox"/>	Common Gull	various sites
<input type="checkbox"/>	Slavonian Grebe	Portland Harbour	<input type="checkbox"/>	Lesser Black-backed Gull	Radipole
<input type="checkbox"/>	Black-necked Grebe	Portland Harbour	<input type="checkbox"/>	Herring Gull	various sites
<input type="checkbox"/>	Red-necked Grebe	Portland Harbour	<input type="checkbox"/>	Great Black-backed Gull	various sites
<input type="checkbox"/>	Fulmar	Portland	<input type="checkbox"/>	Kittiwake	Portland Bill
<input type="checkbox"/>	Gannet	Portland	<input type="checkbox"/>	Guillemot	Portland Bill
<input type="checkbox"/>	Cormorant	various sites	<input type="checkbox"/>	Razorbill	Portland Bill
<input type="checkbox"/>	Shag	Portland Bill	<input type="checkbox"/>	Little Owl	Portland Bill
<input type="checkbox"/>	Little Egret	Fleet, Radipole, Ferrybridge	<input type="checkbox"/>	Collared Dove	various sites
<input type="checkbox"/>	Grey Heron	Fleet, Lodmoor	<input type="checkbox"/>	Wood Pigeon	various sites
<input type="checkbox"/>	Bittern	Radipole	<input type="checkbox"/>	Kingfisher	Fleet
<input type="checkbox"/>	Mute Swan	Fleet, Radipole, Lodmoor	<input type="checkbox"/>	Skylark	Bill
<input type="checkbox"/>	Whooper Swan	Fleet	<input type="checkbox"/>	Water Pipit	Lodmoor
<input type="checkbox"/>	Canada Goose	Fleet, Lodmoor	<input type="checkbox"/>	Meadow Pipit	Portland
<input type="checkbox"/>	Dark-bellied Brent Goose	Ferrybridge	<input type="checkbox"/>	Rock Pipit	Portland
<input type="checkbox"/>	Pale-bellied Brent Goose	Ferrybridge	<input type="checkbox"/>	Pied Wagtail	various sites
<input type="checkbox"/>	Shelduck	Fleet, Radipole, Lodmoor	<input type="checkbox"/>	Wren	various sites
<input type="checkbox"/>	Wigeon	Fleet	<input type="checkbox"/>	Duncock	various sites
<input type="checkbox"/>	Gadwall	Fleet, Radipole, Lodmoor	<input type="checkbox"/>	Black Redstart	Fleet
<input type="checkbox"/>	Teal	Fleet, Radipole, Lodmoor	<input type="checkbox"/>	Robin	various sites
<input type="checkbox"/>	Mallard	Fleet, Radipole, Lodmoor	<input type="checkbox"/>	Stonechat	Fleet, Portland
<input type="checkbox"/>	Shoveler	Fleet, Radipole, Lodmoor	<input type="checkbox"/>	Blackbird	various sites
<input type="checkbox"/>	Pochard	Radipole	<input type="checkbox"/>	Song Thrush	various sites
<input type="checkbox"/>	Tufted Duck	Radipole	<input type="checkbox"/>	Mistle Thrush	Lodmoor
<input type="checkbox"/>	Ruddy Duck	Radipole	<input type="checkbox"/>	Redwing	Bill, Radipole
<input type="checkbox"/>	Goldeneye	Fleet	<input type="checkbox"/>	Cetti's Warbler (heard)	Radipole, Lodmoor
<input type="checkbox"/>	Red-breasted Merganser	Portland Harbour, Fleet	<input type="checkbox"/>	Goldcrest (heard)	Lodmoor
<input type="checkbox"/>	Hooded Merganser	Radipole	<input type="checkbox"/>	Blue Tit	various sites
<input type="checkbox"/>	Kestrel	various sites	<input type="checkbox"/>	Great Tit	various sites
<input type="checkbox"/>	Peregrine	Bill, Lodmoor	<input type="checkbox"/>	Long-tailed Tit	Lodmoor
<input type="checkbox"/>	Sparrowhawk	Portland	<input type="checkbox"/>	Bearded Tit (heard)	Radipole
<input type="checkbox"/>	Buzzard	Bill, Lodmoor	<input type="checkbox"/>	Magpie	various sites
<input type="checkbox"/>	Moorhen	Radipole, Lodmoor	<input type="checkbox"/>	Jackdaw	various sites
<input type="checkbox"/>	Coot	Fleet, Radipole, Lodmoor	<input type="checkbox"/>	Rook	Fleet
<input type="checkbox"/>	Water Rail	Radipole	<input type="checkbox"/>	Raven	Portland, Lodmoor
<input type="checkbox"/>	Lapwing	Portland, Radipole, Lodmoor	<input type="checkbox"/>	Carrion Crow	various sites
<input type="checkbox"/>	Grey Plover	Fleet	<input type="checkbox"/>	Starling	various sites
<input type="checkbox"/>	Ringed Plover	Ferrybridge, Lodmoor	<input type="checkbox"/>	House Sparrow	various sites
<input type="checkbox"/>	Dunlin	Ferrybridge	<input type="checkbox"/>	Chaffinch	various sites
<input type="checkbox"/>	Purple Sandpiper	Portland Bill	<input type="checkbox"/>	Greenfinch	various sites
<input type="checkbox"/>	Turnstone	Portland Castle	<input type="checkbox"/>	Bullfinch	Lodmoor
<input type="checkbox"/>	Snipe	Bill, Radipole, Lodmoor	<input type="checkbox"/>	Linnet	Portland Bill
<input type="checkbox"/>	Woodcock	Rodwell (Weymouth)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Goldfinch	Radipole
<input type="checkbox"/>	Oystercatcher	Portland Bill	<input type="checkbox"/>		
<input type="checkbox"/>	Curlew	Ferrybridge, Fleet	<input type="checkbox"/>		
<input type="checkbox"/>	Bar-tailed Godwit	Fleet	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Mammals: 3 species					
<input type="checkbox"/>	Rabbit	Lodmoor	<input type="checkbox"/>	Brown Rat	Radipole
<input type="checkbox"/>	British Primitive Goat	Portland (East Weares)	<input type="checkbox"/>		