

Portland Heights Butterfly Break
Friday June 26th – Sunday June 28th 2009

Saturday June 27th

Weather: Dense fog in the early morning, clearing with warm sunny intervals

Portland Bill, 0600

The fog was clear enough at the Bill to try a spot of sea-watching but there was little about apart from a few Gannets, Kittiwakes and Guillemots.

Over at the Bird Observatory the warden Martin Cade showed us the overnight catch from the moth-traps. Dominating the list was a huge Eyed Hawk-moth with a Lesser Swallow Prominent an unexpected rarity.

Portland Bill, 0930

Once the fog had cleared properly we returned to the Bill to start the butterfly list. Meadow Browns were the most numerous species but we were particularly please to see the first Lulworth Skippers of the year. A few tatty Small and Common Blues were also seen here. Flowers were abundant with Yellow-wort and Burnet Saxifrage at their best.

Admiralty Quarries, 1130

Our main target here was the Silver-studded Blues but the male Adonis Blue was a real bonus. Several Dingy Skippers were found but were well past their best, as was the single Burnet Companion. Much smarter was the gorgeous Scarlet Tiger, pictured below. A huge female Adder was at her usual spot and the various shelters revealed around 15 Slow-worms.



Scarlet Tiger



Adonis Blue

Ferrybridge, 1430

Very few birds here apart from a distant Greenshank. Across the road at Ham Beach we enjoyed the freshly-opened flowers of the Sea Holly and saw a number of Broomrapes that may have been the rare Yarrow Broomrape but were too old to identify. An immaculate Painted Lady here must have been the offspring from the wave of immigrants earlier in the summer.

Kingbarrow Quarry, 1630

With the bus out of action some of the group explored the quarry next to the hotel and saw 10 species of butterflies and some Bee Orchids that were still in flower.

Sunday June 28th

Weather: cloudier and breezier but still very warm in the sunny intervals

Powerstock, 1030

Even though it was still cloudy when we arrived the butterflies were out in huge numbers at this outstanding site, with literally hundreds of Meadow Browns, Ringlets and Marbled Whites. Several surprisingly fresh Wood Whites were seen as well and we eventually found a superb male Silver-washed Fritillary, but sadly it didn't hang around for long and only 3 of us managed to see it. Dragonflies were represented by a Four-spotted Chaser, a Large Red Damselfly, a few Azure Damselflies and a pair of huge Golden-ringed Dragonflies. The flora at this site was truly outstanding with countless Common Spotted Orchids, many Twayblades and a single Birdsnest Orchid. The taste of the Wild Strawberries will long be remembered as well. I would rather forget the numerous Clegs that bothered us all morning.



Wood White



Tiger Beetle



Longhorn Beetle

Hogcliff Down, 1400

No Marsh Fritillaries here but the real surprise was a fresh Grizzled Skipper. The tatty Fragrant Orchid was the first ever seen on a Heights weekend.



Grizzled Skipper



Golden-ringed Dragonfly

Broadcroft Quarry, 1600

We hoped to finish off with some Small Blues but it had become too cloudy and we had to be content with a Glow-worm instead.

The other half of the group explored Portland and found an early Gatekeeper and several new birds including a Peregrine and a Little Owl. A damselfly seen away from water may well have been a Scarce Blue-tailed Damselfly. Another rarity-that-might-have-been was the possible Essex Skipper. Next time...

The weekend's list of species:

Birds: 47 species

Fulmar
Gannet
Cormorant
Shag
Buzzard
Kestrel
Peregrine
Greenshank
Black-headed Gull
Herring Gull
Great Black-backed Gull
Kittiwake
Sandwich Tern
Guillemot
Razorbill
Stock Dove
Wood Pigeon
Collared Dove
Little Owl
Swift
Nuthatch
Skylark
Swallow
Meadow Pipit
Rock Pipit
Pied Wagtail
Wren
Dunnock
Robin
Blackbird
Stonechat
Reed Warbler
Whitethroat
Lesser Whitethroat
Blackcap
Willow Warbler
Coal Tit
Great Tit
Magpie
Jackdaw
Rook
Carrion Crow
Starling
House Sparrow
Chaffinch
Greenfinch
Goldfinch
Linnet
Yellowhammer

Butterflies: 24 species

Dingy Skipper
Grizzled Skipper
Large Skipper
Small Skipper
Lulworth Skipper
Small White
Green-veined White
Large White
Wood White
Common Blue
Silver-studded Blue
Adonis Blue
Small Blue
Silver-washed Fritillary
Red Admiral
Painted Lady
Peacock (larva)
Small Tortoiseshell
Small Heath
Meadow Brown
Gatekeeper
Speckled Wood
Marbled White
Ringlet

Moths: 32 species

Bordered Sallow
Burnet Companion
Bright-line Brown-eye
Brown-line Bright-eye
Brown-tail
Buff Ermine
Cinnabar
Clay
Common Wainscot
Cream-spot Tiger
Crescent Dart
Dark Arches
Drinker
Eyed Hawk-moth
Fox Moth (larva)
Flame
Garden Tiger
Heart and Club
Heart and Dart
Large Yellow Underwing
Lesser Swallow Prominent
Oncocera semirubella
Pale Tussock
Scarlet Tiger
Setaceous Hebrew Character
Shoulder-striped Wainscot
Shuttle-shaped Dart
Six-spot Burnet
Silver Y
Small Elephant Hawk-moth
Smoky Wainscot
Thistle Ermine

Dragonflies: 5 species

Azure Damselfly
Large Red Damselfly
(Scarce?) Blue-tailed Damselfly
Four-spotted Chaser
Golden-ringed Dragonfly

Other insects:

Ephemera danica (a mayfly)
Common Field Grasshopper
Meadow Grasshopper
Dark Bush-cricket
Speckled Bush-cricket
Summer Chafer
Rose Chafer
7-spot Ladybird
Staphylinus caesareus (a large rove-beetle)
Thick-kneed Beetle
Cryptocephalus sericeus (a green Leaf Beetle)
Wasp Beetle
Strangalia maculata (a long-horn beetle)
Hornet
Tachina fera (a predatory fly)
Hoverflies:
Dronefly
Helophilus pendulus
Volucella bombylans
Chrysotoxum cautum

Other invertebrates:

Leech
Pisaura mirabilis (a wolf spider)

Reptiles:

Slow-worm
Adder

Mammals:

British Primitive Goat
Bunny
Grey Squirrel

Plants: selected species

Bedstraw Family:

Lady's Bedstraw
Wild Madder

Bogbean Family:

Bogbean

Bindweed Family:

Bellbine

Borage Family:

Common Gromwell
Viper's Bugloss

Broomrape Family:

Ivy Broomrape

Cabbage Family:

Hoary Cress
Perennial Wall Rocket
Wild Radish

Carrot Family:

Burnet Saxifrage
Carrot
Longleaf
Rock Samphire
Sea Holly
Wild Parsnip

Daisy Family:

Black Knapweed
Butterbur
Carline Thistle
Fleabane
Golden Samphire
Greater Knapweed
Hemp Agrimony
Marsh Thistle
Meadow Thistle
Mouse-ear Hawkweed
Ploughman's Spikenard
Rough Hawkbit
Slender Thistle
Wetted Thistle
Woolly Thistle
Wormwood
Yarrow

Elm Family:

Wych Elm

Figwort Family:

Balm-leaved Figwort
Common Toadflax
Broad-leaved Eyebright

Yellow Rattle

Flax Family:

Pale Flax

Geranium Family:

Common Storksbill

Grass Family:

Cocksfoot
Crested Dogstail
False Brome
False Oat-grass
Meadow Barley
Quaking Grass
Red Fescue
Sea Couch
Tall Fescue
Upright Brome
Yellow Oat-grass
Yorkshire Fog

Honeysuckle Family:

Elder
Honeysuckle
Wayfaring Tree

Lily Family:

Crow Garlic

Mallow Family:

Common Mallow
Musk Mallow

Mignonette Family:

Weld

Milkwort Family:

Common Milkwort

Mint Family:

Betony
Hedge Woundwort
Marsh Woundwort
Marjoram
Self-heal
Thyme
Wild Clary
Wood Sage

Orache Family:

Sea Beet
Sea Purslane
Shrubby Seablite

Orchid Family:

Bee Orchid
Birdsnest Orchid
Common Spotted Orchid
Fragrant Orchid
Pyramidal Orchid
Twayblade

Pea Family:

Birdsfoot Trefoil
Dyer's Greenweed
Greater Birdsfoot Trefoil
Hop Trefoil
Horseshoe Vetch
Kidney Vetch
Meadow Vetchling
Sea Clover

Plantain Family:

Buck's-horn Plantain
Sea Plantain

Poppy Family:

Yellow Horned-poppy

Rock-rose Family:

Common Rock-rose

Rose Family:

Agrimony
Burnet Rose
Entire-leaved Cotoneaster
Wild Strawberry

Sea-Lavender Family:

Thrift

Sedge Family:

Glaucous
Pendulous Sedge

Spurge Family:

Portland Spurge

St John's Wort Family:

Rose of Sharon
Stinking Tutsan

Stonecrop Family:

Biting Stonecrop
Rock Stonecrop

Teasel Family:

Devil's Bit Scabious
Small Scabious
Teasel