

Portland Heights Birdwatching Breaks Sunday May 10th - Tuesday May 12th 2009

Monday May 11th

Weather: Mostly sunny but with a cold easterly wind



Portland Bill, 0600

Our weekend started with a 90 minute sea-watch at the Bill which produced close views of Gannets, Razorbills, Guillemots, a Puffin and 2 Whimbrels. Further offshore were plenty of Manx Shearwaters whilst Rock Pipits were singing overhead.

A walk out to the seabird colony on the Westcliffs gave us more close views of Guillemots and Razorbills on the cliffs with Skylarks and Meadow Pipits nearby. Some notable species of plants were seen including Hoary Cress and Early Purple Orchid.

Kingbarrow Quarry, 0900

After viewing the stromatolitic tree bowls on the lower Purbeck beds we explored the gullies and tunnels of the Victorian tramway system that was used to transport the stone and overburden out of the quarry. Common Blue and Dingy Skippers were found in the grassy areas which also had a number of interesting plant species including Hairy Rock-cress, Mouse-ear Hawkweed and Rough Hawkbit.

Leaving the quarry to the east we found a large female Adder near the Eastcliffs and a remarkable group of at least 10 Slow-worms under a wooden sheet. The buildings of the High Angle Battery produced a fine male Yellowhammer, a Small Copper and an early Small Heath. Nearby at the northern edge of the Admiralty Quarries we found a beautiful specimen of a large ammonite.

Ferrybridge, 1330

A Little Egret and some Ringed Plovers could be seen on the shoreline here with a summer-plumaged Grey Plover on a sand spit in the distance behind.

Cheyne, 1430

The resident male Peregrine was at his usual perch and gave us a quick in-flight view as it flew over to check us out. Less expected was the female Broad-bodied Chaser settled on a Bramble next to the path. In the nearby Longstone Ope quarry we had excellent views of a male and 2 female Wall Lizards.

Topfields, 1600

A quiet end to the day with Red Admiral being added to the butterfly list and some close views of 2 Whitethroats.

Sunday May 10th

Weather: strong north easterly wind, warmer in the afternoon

Portland Bill, 0630

The near gale-force north-easterlies made it excruciatingly cold here this morning but we did enjoy some remarkably close views of Gannets. More waders were passing through than yesterday with 4 Whimbrel, 3 Turnstones and a Sanderling arriving from the south.



Durlston Country Park, 1030

A host of notable plants here, the best being Early Spider Orchid, Green-winged Orchid, Adderstongue Fern, Chalk Milkwort and Early Gentian. The clifftop path gave us close views of Guillemots and Razorbills with a pretty red and black Froghopper (not a click beetle as I said at the time!) in the vegetation at the side of the path.

Arne RSPB Reserve, 1330

Sadly no Dartfords but several Stonechats and a smart pair of Marsh Tits. The best plants included Tormentil and an Oak tree with a huge Oak Apple Gall (actually a wasp not a plant!). Several Sika Deer were seen well including 2 in the car park as we arrived! A Common Lizard posed nicely on a dead log for the camera and a huge Sand Wasp was seen hunting for caterpillars along the path.



Check out the list for a better impression of the enormous range of species we saw over these 2 remarkable days. Here's looking forward to the next time...

Bob Ford, May 12th 2009