

Portland Heights Birdwatching Breaks
Friday May 8th – Sunday May 10th 2009



Eastern Subalpine Warbler, Portland Bill, May 9th 2009

Saturday May 9th

Weather: Mostly sunny in a cold north westerly breeze

Portland Bill, 0600

Our weekend started with an hour's sea-watch at the Bill which produced Razorbills, Guillemots, Fulmars and Kittiwakes in abundance. The star birds were the 3 summer-plumaged Great Northern Divers that flew almost over our heads and the Balearic Shearwater just offshore.

But this proved to be just the supporting cast to the main attraction which was the Eastern Subalpine Warbler we found near the Bird Observatory. This rarity soon produced a considerable crowd of birders and continued to give good views all day. This was the 17th Subalpine Warbler seen on Portland but only the 6th of the Eastern European race, the last being in 1996.

Kingbarrow Quarry, 0900

The resident Little Owl was our first find here followed by lots of Whitethroats, 2 Whinchats and a Spotted Flycatcher. Other wildlife interest was represented well and included a large female Adder and a host of butterflies including a male Adonis Blue and a Dingy Skipper.



Westcliffs, 1200

From the clifftop path we had a good view of the Fulmar colony but sadly the Ravens did not appear.

Ferrybridge, 1330

Very quiet here with just a few Little Terns and Ringed Plovers on the shoreline. One of the Rooks watching us eat our lunch had a very odd-shaped bill.

Radipole, 1430

As well as the expected Hooded Merganser we had some excellent views of Bearded Tits and a brief view of a Cetti's Warbler. On the way back a particularly fine male House Sparrow posed for a photo.



Lodmoor, 1700

Just 2 new birds added here, Common Tern and Shoveler.

Sunday May 10th

Weather: a cold morning with a fresh north easterly wind, warmer in the afternoon

Portland Bill, 0600

A 90 minute sea-watch finally produced close views of a Puffin as well as a Whimbrel, 2 Scoter and lots of Manx Shearwaters. One flock of Kittiwakes came past particularly close.



Cheyne, 0900

As expected the male Peregrine was sat on his usual perch on the cliff, with the female presumably on the nest. 2 female Wall Lizards were found near the road.

Grove Point, 1100

A family of 4 young Ravens with 2 adults were seen on the shoreline below the cliffs with a pair of Peregrines seemingly very disturbed by 2 paragliders just above their nest site.

Ferrybridge, 1200

A small flock of Dunlins were the only waders here apart from a few Oystercatchers and Ringed Plovers. A Peregrine was an unexpected sight as it flew over. The Starling pictured right was so tame it was actually running around under our feet!



Langton Herring, 1300

This beautiful site was fairly quiet this afternoon but we did manage good views of Blackcap and Chiffchaff and added Teal, Pheasant, Mistle Thrush and Red-legged Partridge to the weekend list.

Ridgeway, 1500

Lots of Buzzards and breathtaking views were the most memorable aspects of our walk on this most historic track. Excellent views of Yellowhammers made up for the lack of Corn Buntings.

At the concluding cream tea our total of 91 species seen only did partial justice to a remarkable weekend's birdwatching. Here's looking forward to the next time...

Bob Ford, May 10th 2009