

Portland Heights Birdwatching Breaks

Thursday November 12th – Sunday November 15th 2009

Friday November 13th

Weather: Very wet for most of the day, but at the same time warm and calm.

Kingbarrow Quarry, 0700

We started our weekend with a walk round the quarries next to the hotel. A Kestrel and a Sparrowhawk were hunting in the quarry and the resident Little Owl was on its usual perch on a rock face. 7 Fieldfares flew over us but the best bird was a Woodcock which a few of us saw on a couple of occasions flying along the path in front of us.

Portland Bill, 0900

This famous sea-watching point produced several Gannets as well as 3 Purple Sandpipers and several auks, mostly Razorbills. Along the Eastcliffs were a few Rock Pipits and a Turnstone. Next was a visit to Portland Bird Observatory in the hope of seeing some birds in the hand. Unfortunately they weren't catching anything today but we did see a couple of Buzzards in the field opposite. The nearby quarry held our second Little Owl of the day.

Ferrybridge, 1300

A distant Mediterranean Gull was the first of many seen today and several Red-breasted Mergansers were even further away in the Fleet. Across the road in Portland Harbour were some much closer mergansers and a very distant Black-throated Diver.

Radipole Lake RSPB Reserve, 1500

This superb reserve produced a host of memorable sightings including dozens of Mediterranean Gulls, the Hooded Merganser (of unknown origin) and a brief view of a Peregrine. At least one of us glimpsed a Water Rail but we all had superb views of a dark-phase male Marsh Harrier floating over the reedbeds.

One of the Med Gulls was wearing a red colour-ring with the number HE50. When this number was sent in to the Euring co-ordinator in France the details revealed that the bird was ringed as a chick on June 10th 2009 in Hungary at 47°12'55"N 19°07'54"E - one thousand miles away! Previously it had been seen at Folkestone on Sept 20th 2009.

Saturday November 14th

Weather: Storm force southerly winds, with some heavy showers in the morning

Portland Castle, 0900

In extreme birdwatching condition we did well just to stand up, and birds were very difficult to find in a very choppy harbour. Eventually we found a Great Northern Diver and had some close but brief views. A Little Egret entertained us with its attempts to fly into the vicious wind.

Ferrybridge, 1100

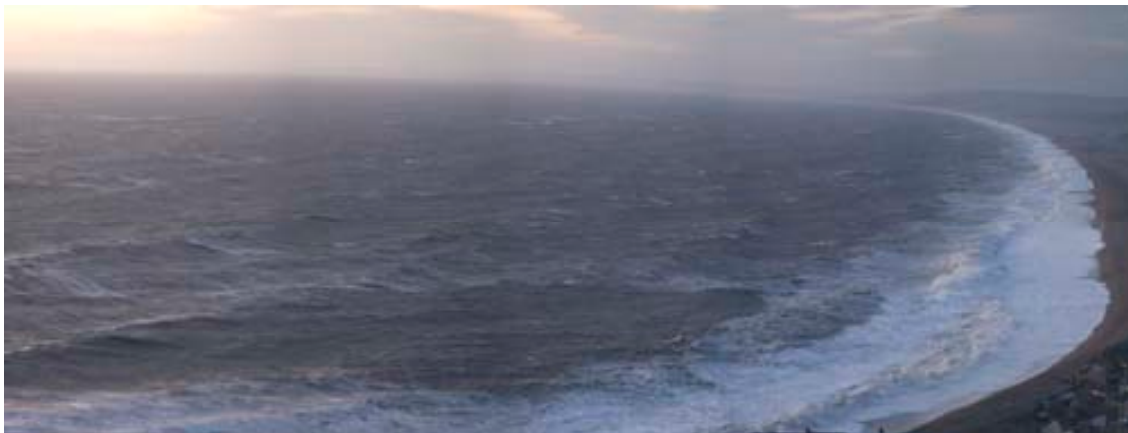
Without doubt the highlight of the day with no less than 3 Great Skuas giving superb views just in front of us as they harried the gulls on Chesil Beach. The flock of Dark-bellied Brent Geese contained one or two Pale-bellied Brent Geese.

Newton's Cove, 1230

Another Great Northern Diver was the highlight here, with a number of other good sightings including a close Guillemot, a Grey Wagtail, and several Turnstones and Rock Pipits.

Lodmoor RSPB Reserve, 1500

With the winds still at storm force small birds were hard to find but we did manage to see a number of new species for the weekend including Lapwing and Shelduck. An adult Little Gull put in a brief appearance shortly followed by a pair of first-year Spoonbills which gave excellent views as the flew past.



Sunday November 15th

Weather: Light westerlies with some warm sunny intervals

Arne RSPB Reserve, 1030

In gorgeous weather conditions we greatly enjoyed our walk around one of the RSPB's top reserves. Our main target, Dartford Warblers, took a while to find but our perseverance was rewarded with mostly distant views of at least 10 individuals, including at least one adult male. Middlebere Lake held huge flocks of Black-tailed Godwits and Teal, with good numbers of Lapwings and Wigeon as well. Several Pintail were seen along with a couple of Yellow-legged Gulls and plenty of Curlew. The other side of the reserve produced a few Bramblings as well as most of the usual woodland birds including 5 species of thrush, Nuthatch and both woodpeckers.



Stag Sika Deer (digiscoped)



Photographing fungi



Parasol Mushrooms

Birds: 95 species

Little Grebe	Radipole, Portland Harbour
Great Crested Grebe	Radipole, Arne
Great Northern Diver	Portland Harbour
Black-throated Diver	Portland Harbour
Gannet	Portland Bill
Cormorant	various sites
Shag	Portland Bill
Little Egret	Portland, Arne, Lodmoor
Grey Heron	Radipole, Arne, Lodmoor
Spoonbill	Lodmoor
Mute Swan	Radipole
Canada Goose	Lodmoor
Dark-bellied Brent Goose	Ferrybridge
Pale-bellied Brent Goose	Ferrybridge
Shelduck	Lodmoor, Arne
Wigeon	Radipole, Arne
Gadwall	Radipole, Lodmoor
Teal	Radipole, Lodmoor, Arne
Pintail	Arne
Mallard	Radipole, Lodmoor
Shoveler	Radipole, Lodmoor
Pochard	Radipole
Tufted Duck	Radipole
Red-breasted Merganser	Portland Harbour
Hooded Merganser	Radipole
Marsh Harrier	Radipole
Buzzard	Portland, Arne
Kestrel	various sites
Peregrine	Radipole
Sparrowhawk	various sites
Pheasant	unknown site
Water Rail	Radipole
Moorhen	Radipole, Lodmoor
Coot	Radipole, Lodmoor
Oystercatcher	Ferrybridge
Ringed Plover	Ferrybridge
Lapwing	Lodmoor, Arne
Curlew	Arne
Dunlin	Lodmoor, Ferrybridge
Purple Sandpiper	Portland Bill
Turnstone	Portland Bill
Redshank	Lodmoor
Snipe	Radipole, Lodmoor
Woodcock	Kingbarrow Quarry Portland
Black-tailed Godwit	Arne
Great Skua	Ferrybridge
Little Gull	Lodmoor
Mediterranean Gull	Ferrybridge, Radipole
Black-headed Gull	various sites
Lesser Black-backed Gull	Radipole
Herring Gull	various sites
Great Black-backed Gull	various sites
Yellow-legged Gull	Arne
Common Gull	Ferrybridge, Radipole
Kittiwake	Ferrybridge
Guillemot	Weymouth Harbour

Razorbill	Portland Bill
Wood Pigeon	various sites
Feral Pigeon	Radipole
Collared Dove	various sites
Little Owl	Portland
Great-spotted Woodpecker	Arne
Green Woodpecker	Arne
Nuthatch	Arne
Meadow Pipit	various sites
Rock Pipit	Portland Bill
Pied Wagtail	various sites
Grey Wagtail	Radipole
Wren	various sites
Dunnock	various sites
Robin	various sites
Stonechat	Arne
Song Thrush	Portland
Redwing	Portland, Arne
Fieldfare	Portland
Blackbird	various sites
Mistle Thrush	Arne
Cetti's Warbler	Radipole
Dartford Warbler	Arne
Goldcrest	Radipole
Bearded Tit	Radipole
Long-tailed Tit	Radipole
Coal Tit	Arne
Blue Tit	various sites
Great Tit	various sites
Magpie	various sites
Jackdaw	various sites
Rook	Radipole
Carrion Crow	various sites
Starling	various sites
House Sparrow	various sites
Chaffinch	Radipole, Arne
Greenfinch	various sites
Goldfinch	Lodmoor
Linnet	Portland
Reed Bunting	Radipole, Lodmoor

Mammals: 6 species

Grey Squirrel	Arne
Sika Deer	Arne
Grey Seal	Portland
Rabbit	Arne, Lodmoor

Insects: 4 species

Red Admiral	Arne
Dor Beele	Arne
Migrant Hawker	Arne
Common Darter	Arne