

Portland Heights Birdwatching Breaks

Friday October 16th – Sunday October 18th 2009

Saturday October 17th

Weather: Bright sunshine all day but with a cold north-easterly breeze

Inmosthay & Kingbarrow Quarries, 0715

We started our weekend with a walk round the quarries next to the hotel. Right from the start there were flocks of Redwings overhead, occasionally joined by a Fieldfare or two. The quarries held more Redwings as well as a couple of Chiffchaffs but very little else. A Kestrel and a Sparrowhawk could be seen hunting in the distance and, even further away, a Raven was seen landing on a tower. As we walked back to the hotel we started seeing finches going over with some good-sized flocks of Goldfinches, joined by a few Greenfinches and, very briefly, 3 Redpolls.

Portland Bill, 0900

Surprisingly, given the northerly wind, there were a few seabirds to be seen off the Bill. As well as the usual Gannets we saw a Common Scoter, 3 Brent Geese and several auks, probably Guillemots. Along the Eastcliffs were plenty of Rock Pipits and a very handsome bull Grey Seal. Next was a visit to the Bird Observatory in the hope of seeing some birds in the hand. Unfortunately they weren't catching anything today but we did see a Goldcrest in the front garden and a Turtle Dove in the field opposite.

Tout Quarry, 1200

Our search for Ring Ouzels was in vain but we took the opportunity to explore the quarry and the remnants of the quarrying industry. A Kestrel sat in a tree allowed itself to be digiscoped.

Ferrybridge, 1330

Several Mediterranean Gulls were seen here along with a dozen or so Ringed Plovers and the first Red-breasted Merganser of the winter.

Radipole Lake RSPB Reserve, 1500

This superb reserve produced a host of memorable sightings including 2 Kingfishers, the Hooded Merganser (of unknown origin) and 3 Ruddy Shelducks (probably genuine vagrants). No less than 3 Water Rails were seen as well as a superb Marsh Harrier floating over the reedbeds. We finally found some Bearded Tits just as we were getting ready to depart but sadly only managed distant views.

Sunday October 18th

Weather: Calm with mostly overcast skies.

Pennsylvania Castle, 0715

We should probably have stayed in bed this morning as there were hardly any birds to see at all, just a Fieldfare (minus tail) and the first Chaffinches of the weekend.

Ferrybridge, 0930

The first significant arrival of Brent Geese of the autumn with 80 or so Dark-bellied birds and 3 of the Pale-bellied race. A count of the Mediterranean Gulls came to an astounding 80 birds.

Lodmoor, 1000

Bird of the Weekend has to go to the smart Water Pipit we found here, which gave repeated and, for a Water Pipit, prolonged views. The 10 Black-tailed Godwits were also worth stopping here for,

especially when they were joined by a Bar-tailed Godwit. Entertainment was provided by a Cormorant eating a large Eel and the flock of Long-tailed Tits that entertained the group while I went to fetch the bus.

Arne RSPB Reserve, 1300

A range of woodland species paraded in front of us while we ate our sandwiches including Nuthatch and Coal Tit. Later on both Green and Great-spotted Woodpeckers were heard with a distant view of the latter as well. The woods held a number of squealing Sika Deer, this being their rutting season. Reaching the heathland we took a while to find the number one target, Dartford Warbler, but eventually we had good views of a juvenile and an adult male. From the hide the usual Yellow-legged Gull could be seen as well as a good variety of ducks and waders including the only Pintails of the weekend. A grey lump sat in a dead tree turned out to be a huge female Peregrine. A Sandwich Tern was a very unexpected late migrant.

Our impression of the weekend was that there was not a great deal about, but our final list of 95 species seen would seem to indicate otherwise. Here's to the next time!

Bob

Birds: 95 species

Little Grebe	Radipole, Ferrvbridge
Great Crested Grebe	Radipole
Gannet	Portland Bill
Cormorant	various sites
Shag	Portland Bill
Little Egret	Radipole, Arne, Lodmoor
Grev Heron	Radipole, Arne, Lodmoor
Mute Swan	Radipole, Lodmoor
Canada Goose	Arne, Lodmoor
Dark-bellied Brent	Ferrvbridge
Pale-bellied Brent	Ferrvbridge
Ruddy Shelduck	Radipole
Shelduck	Radipole, Arne
(digiscoped)RWigeon	Radipole, Arne
Gadwall	Radipole, Lodmoor
Teal	Radipole, Lodmoor, Arne
Pintail	Arne
Mallard	Radipole, Lodmoor, Arne
Common Scoter	Portland Bill
Shoveler	Radipole, Lodmoor
Tufted Duck	Radipole
Red-breasted Merganser	Ferrvbridge
Hooded Merganser	Radipole
Marsh Harrier	Radipole
Buzzard	Radipole, Lodmoor, Arne
Kestrel	various sites
Peregrine	Arne
Sparrowhawk	Portland
Water Rail	Radipole, Lodmoor
Moorhen	Radipole
Coot	Radipole
Oystercatcher	Portland Bill, Ferrvbridge
Ringed Plover	Ferrvbridge
Lapwing	Lodmoor
Curlew	Arne
Dunlin	Lodmoor

photos taken over the weekend:



*Ruddy Shelducks,
photo by Yvonne Simmonds (digiscoped)*



*Hooded Merganser,
photo by Yvonne Simmonds*

Redshank	Arne (heard)
Snipe	Radipole
Black-tailed Godwit	Lodmoor. Arne
Bar-tailed Godwit	Lodmoor
Mediterranean Gull	Ferrybridge. Radipole
Black-headed Gull	various sites
Lesser Black-backed	Ferrybridge
Herring Gull	various sites
Great Black-backed	various sites
Yellow-legged Gull	Arne
Common Gull	Ferrybridge. Radipole
Sandwich Tern	Arne
Guillemot	Portland Bill
Wood Pigeon	various sites
Feral Pigeon	Radipole
Turtle Dove	Portland
Collared Dove	various sites
Kingfisher	Radipole
Great-spotted	Arne
Green Woodpecker	Arne (heard)
Nuthatch	Arne
Skylark	Portland. Ferrybridge
Swallow	Portland. Radipole. Arne
Meadow Pipit	various sites
Rock Pipit	Portland Bill
Water Pipit	Lodmoor
Pied Wagtail	various sites
Grey Wagtail	Radipole
Wren	various sites
Duncock	various sites
Robin	various sites
Stonechat	Portland. Radipole. Arne
Wheatear	Portland
Redwing	Portland
Fieldfare	Portland
Blackbird	various sites
Mistle Thrush	Arne
Cetti's Warbler	Radipole
Dartford Warbler	Arne
Chiffchaff	Portland
Goldcrest	Portland. Arne
Bearded Tit	Radipole
Long-tailed Tit	Radipole. Lodmoor. Arne
Coal Tit	Arne
Blue Tit	various sites
Great Tit	various sites
Magpie	various sites
Jackdaw	various sites
Rook	Radipole
Carrion Crow	various sites
Raven	Portland. Arne
Starling	various sites
House Sparrow	various sites
Chaffinch	Portland. Arne
Greenfinch	various sites
Goldfinch	various sites
Linnet	Portland
Siskin	Portland
Redpoll	Portland
Bullfinch	Radipole
Reed Bunting	Lodmoor



*Common Snipe,
photo by Bob Ford (digiscoped)*



*Turtle Dove,
photo by Yvonne Simmonds (digiscoped)*

Mammals: 6 species

Brown Rat	Radipole
Grey Squirrel	Portland, Arne
Sika Deer	Arne
Roe Deer	Arne
Grey Seal	Arne
Rabbit	Portland, Lodmoor

Insects: 6 species

Small White	Portland
Red Admiral	Portland
Painted Lady	Portland
Fox Moth	Portland
Migrant Hawker	Radipole
Common Darter	Radipole