

Portland Heights Birdwatching Breaks Friday November 12th – Sunday November 14th

Saturday November 13th

Weather: Largely overcast in totally calm conditions.

Portland Bill, 0900

Our first visit was to the Bird Observatory where we were lucky enough to arrive just as the Warden Martin Cade caught a fine male Brambling in the fields opposite. Searching these fields with the telescope produced several more.



Walking down to the Eastcliffs we found a Purple Sandpiper along with 3 turnstones and 2 Oystercatchers feeding on the

rocks as well as great views of several Rock Pipits. Reaching the Bill we found a large feeding flock of gulls including 50 or so Mediterranean Gulls with a few Gannets further out.

Chesil Cove, 1200

Reports of a Grey Phalarope led us to this classic site for the species but sadly the bird was nowhere to be seen. Time for lunch.

Ferrybridge, 1230

The highlight here was a group of 4 Goosanders feeding just offshore, along with dozens of Red-breasted Mergansers. The huge flock of Dark-bellied Brent Geese included 3 Pale-bellied birds and one Black Brant.

Portland Castle, 1330

A very distant diver proved to be of the Great Northern variety. Probably.

Sailing Academy, 1400

More distant divers.

Bincleaves, 1430

At last some better views of divers – 4 or 5 Great Northerns and a Black-throated.

Radipole Lake, 1500

Fairly quiet here until we reached the hide where we found 4 Whooper Swans, probably the best birds of the day. On the way back a couple of the group had a brief view of a Water Rail.

Weymouth Bay, 1700

A beautiful end to the day as the sun set over Weymouth and the gulls collected in the calm waters of the Bay.

Sunday November 14th

Weather: A day of continuous drizzle, relieved only by periods of heavier rain.

Wareham Forest, 1030

In disgraceful weather it was always going to be difficult to see any Dartford Warblers, but in the end we did manage very brief views of 2 or 3 birds. Apart from a few Coal Tits and a Tree Creeper there was not much else to show for over an hour walking in the rain!

Arne RSPB Reserve, 1200

Great-spotted Woodpecker and Nuthatch were seen while we ate our rapidly dissolving sandwiches before we set out for Coombe Heath. Heading across the heath in worsening conditions we saw very little, but as soon as we got to the hide we could see why we came here. In front of us were several hundred Avocets, at least a hundred Redshank, as well as dozens of Curlew, Dunlin and Black-tailed Godwits. At the far end of Middlebere Lake (actually an inlet of Poole Harbour) was a fine adult Yellow-legged Gull and both Sika Deer and Brown Hare were seen in the fields opposite.

As we left the hide we noticed that the rain had almost stopped and birdwatching conditions had improved considerably. We had only walked a few yards when a Dartford Warbler flew along the path in front of us, soon to be joined by at least one other bird. There then followed a very pleasant five minutes while we watched the two warblers flitting around the gorse bushes giving a series of excellent views. Well, excellent for this species anyway.

Middlebere Farm, 1500

Driving round to the other side of the creek we finished our weekend with what must surely be considered the highlight of the two days. With the sun at last peeping out from under the clouds the birds on the mudflats in front of us were beautifully lit and the colours in the landscape were truly luscious. We spent 30 minutes or so searching through the waders before a flight of four huge white birds appeared before us. The Spoonbills circled around before landing right in front of the hide. They were soon joined by a fifth bird, and later 5 more we seen to fly in from the east. Ten Spoonbills! What a way to end the weekend!



Birds 88 species

Great Northern Diver	Portland Harbour
Black-throated Diver	Portland Harbour
Great Crested Grebe	Radipole
Gannet	Portland Bill
Cormorant	various sites
Shag	Portland Bill
Little Egret	Radipole, Arne
Grey Heron	Radipole, Bincleaves
Spoonbill	Middlebere
Mute Swan	Radipole
Whooper Swan	Radipole
Canada Goose	Wareham Forest
Dark-bellied Brent Goose	Ferrybridge
Pale-bellied Brent Goose	Ferrybridge
Black Brant	Ferrybridge
Shelduck	Radipole, Arne
Wigeon	Arne
Pintail	Arne
Teal	Radipole, Arne
Mallard	Radipole, Arne
Gadwall	Radipole
Tufted Duck	Radipole
Pochard	Radipole
Red-breasted Merganser	Ferrybridge, Portland Harbour
Goosander	Ferrybridge
Sparrowhawk	Radipole
Buzzard	Portland Bill, Arne
Kestrel	various sites
Pheasant	Middlebere
Water Rail	Radipole
Moorhen	Radipole
Coot	Radipole,
Oystercatcher	Portland Bill, Arne
Ringed Plover	Ferrybridge
Grey Plover	Arne
Lapwing	Arne
Dunlin	Arne, Ferrybridge
Purple Sandpiper	Portland Bill
Redshank	Arne
Avocet	Arne
Black-tailed Godwit	Radipole
Curlew	Arne
Turnstone	Ferrybridge, Portland Bill
Mediterranean Gull	Ferrybridge, Radipole, Portland Bill
Black-headed Gull	various sites
Common Gull	Portland Bill
Lesser Black-backed Gull	Portland Bill
Herring Gull	various sites
Yellow-legged Gull	Arne
Great Black-backed Gull	various sites
Guillemot	Portland Bill
Razorbill	Portland Harbour
Wood Pigeon	various sites
Collared Dove	Portland
Green Woodpecker	Arne
Great Spotted Woodpecker	Arne
Skylark	Ferrybridge
Meadow Pipit	Arne
Rock Pipit	Portland Bill
Pied Wagtail	various sites

Wren	Portland
Dunnock	various sites
Robin	various sites
Stonechat	Radipole
Redwing	Portland
Song Thrush	Portland
Blackbird	various sites
Cetti's Warbler	Radipole (heard)
Dartford Warbler	Arne, Wareham Forest
Goldcrest	Arne, Wareham Forest
Long-tailed Tit	Arne
Coal Tit	Arne, Wareham Forest
Blue Tit	Arne, Wareham Forest
Great Tit	various sites
Nuthatch	Arne, Wareham Forest
Treecreeper	Wareham Forest
Magpie	various sites
Jackdaw	various sites
Raven	Heights Hotel
Rook	Radipole
Carrion Crow	various sites
Starling	various sites
House Sparrow	various sites
Chaffinch	Portland Bill
Brambling	Portland Bill
Greenfinch	Portland Bill
Goldfinch	Portland Bill
Linnet	Portland Bill
Siskin	Portland Bill

Mammals: 5 species

Rabbit	Portland
Brown Hare	Arne
Sika Deer	Arne
Red Fox	Portland
Grey Squirrel	Wareham Forest

Notable Plants: 1 species

Golden Samphire	Portland
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