

Heights Hotel Birdwatching Breaks

Friday February 18th – Sunday February 20th 2011

Saturday February 18th

Weather: Mostly overcast with sunny intervals in the afternoon, wind very light.

Ferrybridge, 0930

We started our weekend with an unscheduled stop at Ferrybridge on one of the highest tides of the year. The Brent Geese were forced to feed right next to the car park and gave us excellent views of all 3 races – Dark-bellied (about 100), Pale-bellied (2) and Black Brant (2). About 50 Mediterranean Gulls in 3 different plumages were also close at hand with 2 Little Grebes and several Red-breasted Mergansers further away up the Fleet. A familiar call made us look up just in time to see a Curlew passing high overhead. A lone Kestrel was hovering near the main road to Portland and several Skylarks were seen over Chesil Beach.

Wareham Forest, 1100

Starting out in a light drizzle we needed the sun to come out to tempt the Woodlarks into song. In the end this didn't happen and we only managed to hear some very distant birds. Other species were more slightly more co-operative with brief views of Siskin and, the star bird of the day, a distant Great Grey Shrike.

Arne, 1400

As usual the feeders next to the car park provided great entertainment while we ate our lunch with several Coal Tits and an outstandingly bright male Great Spotted Woodpecker. Marsh Tit and Nuthatch were also seen fleetingly here. Walking out to Middlebere Lake we came across a colony of Wood Ants basking in the weak sunshine. From the hide we saw a good range of birds including Black-tailed Godwits, Curlew and Redshank. An adult Yellow-legged Gull was at its usual post at the head of the creek.

Hartland Moor, 1600

By now the sky had cleared and we enjoyed beautiful evening sunshine while we waited for the expected Hen Harrier to appear. No bird appeared but we did find a very active Goldcrest and watched a female Sika Deer cross the moor with a youngster in tow.

Sunday February 18th

Weather: Colder in a fresh easterly wind and continuous cloud cover.

Portland Bill, 0700

On a surprisingly rough morning the Purple Sandpipers gave themselves up pretty easily and the nearby Turnstones were also new to the list. From the Bill we watched hundreds of Guillemots and Razorbills streaming past in all directions, mostly in summer plumage. The local Kittiwakes didn't seem to be in such of a hurry to start the breeding season as there was still only a handful present, and some of those were first-years. Fulmars and Gannets were also seen, both in small numbers.

Grove Point, 0930

A quick stop here to see the resident pair of Peregrines, the male of which gave us excellent views. The displaying pair of Kestrels and the Raven were a bonus.

Portland Castle, 1000

Sadly the only divers we saw here were the ones getting changed in the car park but we did see a distant Razorbill and some much closer Mergansers and Rock Pipits.

National Sailing Academy, 1030

Too much disturbance here in the run-up to the 2012 Olympics and we only managed very distant views of Mergansers.

Ferrybridge, 1100

Another chance to compare the 3 different types (species?) of Brent Geese here with even more Mediterranean Gulls than yesterday, perhaps as many as 100. 2 of them were colour ringed (Green W63 and Green R13U). These numbers have been reported to the University of Copenhagen which co-ordinates ringing recoveries in Europe. I will update the online version of this report with the birds' details when I receive them. (*see end of this report - I said they were quick!*)

Rodwell Trail, 1200

From the best viewpoint high over Portland Harbour we found a record number of at least 15 Black-necked Grebes, 1 of which was in almost full summer plumage.

Underbarn, 1230

Here at the most sheltered northern corner of Portland Harbour we found 3 extremely smart Slavonian Grebes along with 20 or more Great Crested Grebes and, a little further out, a Great Northern Diver.

Radipole RSPB Reserve 1300

Although this was really just a lunch stop we did add a few birds to the list including the famous "Hoodie", now in his 4th year at Radipole.

Lodmoor RSPB Reserve 1400

Here we found the star bird of the weekend, *Dowie*, the long-staying Long-billed Dowitcher. Like Hoodie, Dowie is a visitor from the States, but unlike Hoodie he is of a species that is never kept in captivity so is much more likely to have made his way over on his own steam, or wings. Also like Hoodie Dowie is a real show-off and even cut short a visit to nearby Poole so we could see him. Thanks Dowie. At last we found a few wader species with Black-tailed Godwit, Curlew, Lapwing, Oystercatcher, Snipe and Dunlin all giving good views. One of the Godwits was wearing more than its fair share of shackles, with orange and black rings on its left leg and no less than 3 green rings on its right leg. These details have been sent to the Wader Study Group at the BTO and again I will publish details online when I receive them.

Radipole RSPB Reserve 1530

Hide-locking duties determined that this had to be our last port of call but it proved to be a good one, the highlight being a female Goosander seen very closely from the North Hide. Back at the car park yet another colour-ringed bird was seen, this time an old friend in the shape of JYY, the Danish Black-headed Gull which is on its 18th winter holiday at Radipole. I've written up his story on the iSpot web site at <http://www.ispot.org.uk/node/108777>. As we approached our vehicle we added one more final species to the list, Reed Bunting.

Over a cream tea back at the hotel we added up the list and found that we had seen no less than 89 species, with another 5 heard. Well done everybody and here's to the next time we can go out birwatching together.

Bob Ford

Birds: 94 species

<input type="checkbox"/>	Great Northern Diver	Portland Harbour	<input type="checkbox"/>	Common Gull	various sites
<input type="checkbox"/>	Little Grebe	Ferrybridge	<input type="checkbox"/>	Lesser Black-backed Gull	Radipole, Ferrybridge
<input type="checkbox"/>	Great Crested Grebe	Portland Harbour	<input type="checkbox"/>	Herring Gull	various sites
<input type="checkbox"/>	Slavonian Grebe	Portland Harbour	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yellow-legged Gull	Arne
<input type="checkbox"/>	Black-necked Grebe	Portland Harbour	<input type="checkbox"/>	Great Black-backed Gull	Portland Bill
<input type="checkbox"/>	Fulmar	Portland Bill	<input type="checkbox"/>	Kittiwake	Portland Bill
<input type="checkbox"/>	Gannet	Portland Bill	<input type="checkbox"/>	Guillemot	Portland Bill
<input type="checkbox"/>	Cormorant	various sites	<input type="checkbox"/>	Razorbill	Portland Bill
<input type="checkbox"/>	Shag	Portland Bill	<input type="checkbox"/>	Feral Pigeon	various sites
<input type="checkbox"/>	Little Egret	Arne, Radipole	<input type="checkbox"/>	Collared Dove	various sites
<input type="checkbox"/>	Grey Heron	Lodmoor, Radipole	<input type="checkbox"/>	Wood Pigeon	various sites
<input type="checkbox"/>	Mute Swan	Lodmoor, Radipole	<input type="checkbox"/>	Green Woodpecker	Wareham Forest (heard)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Black Brant	Ferrybridge	<input type="checkbox"/>	Great-spotted Woodpecker	Arne
<input type="checkbox"/>	Pale-bellied Brent Goose	Ferrybridge	<input type="checkbox"/>	Skylark	Ferrybridge
<input type="checkbox"/>	Dark-bellied Brent Goose	Ferrybridge, Arne	<input type="checkbox"/>	Woodlark	Wareham Forest (heard)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Canada Goose	Lodmoor, Radipole, Arne	<input type="checkbox"/>	Meadow Pipit	Arne
<input type="checkbox"/>	Shelduck	Lodmoor, Radipole, Arne	<input type="checkbox"/>	Rock Pipit	Portland
<input type="checkbox"/>	Wigeon	Radipole, Arne	<input type="checkbox"/>	Pied Wagtail	various sites
<input type="checkbox"/>	Gadwall	Lodmoor, Radipole, Arne	<input type="checkbox"/>	Treecreeper	Wareham Forest (heard)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Teal	Lodmoor, Radipole, Arne	<input type="checkbox"/>	Nuthatch	Arne
<input type="checkbox"/>	Mallard	Lodmoor, Radipole, Arne	<input type="checkbox"/>	Wren	Hartland Moor
<input type="checkbox"/>	Shoveler	Lodmoor	<input type="checkbox"/>	Dunnock	various sites
<input type="checkbox"/>	Tufted Duck	Lodmoor, Radipole, Morden Bog	<input type="checkbox"/>	Robin	various sites
<input type="checkbox"/>	Pochard	Lodmoor, Radipole	<input type="checkbox"/>	Stonechat	Portland Heights
<input type="checkbox"/>	Goosander	Radipole	<input type="checkbox"/>	Blackbird	various sites
<input type="checkbox"/>	Red-breasted Merganser	Portland Harbour, Arne	<input type="checkbox"/>	Song Thrush	various sites
<input type="checkbox"/>	Hooded Merganser	Radipole	<input type="checkbox"/>	Mistle Thrush	Wareham Forest, Arne
<input type="checkbox"/>	Kestrel	Portland	<input type="checkbox"/>	Fieldfare	Portland Bill
<input type="checkbox"/>	Peregrine	Portland	<input type="checkbox"/>	Redwing	Portland
<input type="checkbox"/>	Buzzard	Portland, Arne	<input type="checkbox"/>	Cetti's Warbler	Radipole (heard)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Moorhen	Lodmoor, Radipole	<input type="checkbox"/>	Goldcrest	Hartland Moor
<input type="checkbox"/>	Coot	Lodmoor, Radipole	<input type="checkbox"/>	Coal Tit	Wareham Forest, Arne
<input type="checkbox"/>	Pheasant	Portland Bill	<input type="checkbox"/>	Marsh Tit	Arne
<input type="checkbox"/>	Red-legged Partridge	Wareham Forest (heard)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Blue Tit	various sites
<input type="checkbox"/>	Oystercatcher	Portland Bill	<input type="checkbox"/>	Great Tit	various sites
<input type="checkbox"/>	Purple Sandpiper	Portland Bill	<input type="checkbox"/>	Long-tailed Tit	Wareham Forest, Arne
<input type="checkbox"/>	Dunlin	Arne, Lodmoor	<input type="checkbox"/>	Magpie	various sites
<input type="checkbox"/>	Redshank	Arne	<input type="checkbox"/>	Jackdaw	various sites
<input type="checkbox"/>	Curlew	Arne, Lodmoor, Ferrybridge	<input type="checkbox"/>	Rook	various sites
<input type="checkbox"/>	Black-tailed Godwit	Arne, Lodmoor	<input type="checkbox"/>	Raven	Portland, Arne
<input type="checkbox"/>	Long-billed Dowitcher	Lodmoor	<input type="checkbox"/>	Carrion Crow	various sites
<input type="checkbox"/>	Lapwing	Lodmoor	<input type="checkbox"/>	Starling	various sites
<input type="checkbox"/>	Mediterranean Gull	Ferrybridge, Radipole	<input type="checkbox"/>	House Sparrow	various sites
<input type="checkbox"/>	Black-headed Gull	various sites	<input type="checkbox"/>	Chaffinch	various sites
<input type="checkbox"/>			<input type="checkbox"/>	Greenfinch	Hartland Moor, Radipole
<input type="checkbox"/>			<input type="checkbox"/>	Goldfinch	various sites
<input type="checkbox"/>			<input type="checkbox"/>	Reed Bunting	Radipole

Mammals: 6 species

<input type="checkbox"/>	Hare	Arne	<input type="checkbox"/>	Brown Rat	Radipole
<input type="checkbox"/>	Roe Deer	Arne	<input type="checkbox"/>	Grey Squirrel	Hartland Moor
<input type="checkbox"/>	Sika Deer	Hartland Moor	<input type="checkbox"/>	Rabbit	Lodmoor

Notable Plants: 2 species

<input type="checkbox"/>	Rustyback Fern	Weymouth	<input type="checkbox"/>	Sweet Violet	Lodmoor
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Insects: 1 species

<input type="checkbox"/>	Wood Ant	Arne	<input type="checkbox"/>		
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R13U Left pullus Paris FS71963 15/06/2009 Oye Plage, Les Huttes d'Oye,
Pas-de-Calais, FRANCE 50,59N 2,03E

ringed by team Cap Ornis Bagueage

vv	06/08/2009	Saint-Vaast-la-Hougue, 'Pont de Saire', Manche, FRANCE	49,36N 1,15W	Radola, Virginie
vv	11/10/2009	Radipole Lake, Weymouth, Dorset, GB	50,37N 2,28W	Phillips, Luke
vv	23/11/2009	Radipole Lake, Weymouth, Dorset, GB	50,37N 2,28W	Chown, David J.
vv	02/02/2010	Radipole Lake, Weymouth, Dorset, GB	50,37N 2,28W	Chown, David J.
vv	27/07/2010	Le Portel, Pas-de-Calais, FRANCE	50,42N 1,34E	Duponcheel, Camille
vv	03/09/2010	Warsash, Hampshire, England, GB	50,51N 1,18W	Tindale, Ad
vv	03/09/2010	Warsash, Hampshire, England, GB	50,51N 1,18W	Tindale, Antony
vv	02/10/2010	Radipole Lake, Weymouth, Dorset, GB	50,37N 2,28W present until 08/10/2010	Phillips, Luke
vv	10/10/2010	Portland, Ferrybridge, Dorset, GB	50,32N 2,27W	Taylor, Richard
vv	20/02/2011	Portland, Ferrybridge, Dorset, GB	50,32N 2,27W	Ford, Robert

W63 Left pullus Paris FS71834 12/06/2009 Conchil le Temple, Pas de
Calais, FRANCE 50,22N 1,4E

ringed by team Cap Ornis Bagueage

vv	09/08/2009	Port d'Antifer, Saint-Jouin-Bruneval, Seine-Maritime, FRANCE	49,39N 0,09E	Lamperière, Alexandre
vv	07/11/2009	Grouville Bay, Jersey, GB	49,1N 2,02W	Paintin, Tony
vv	20/11/2009	Radipole Lake, Weymouth, Dorset, GB	50,37N 2,28W	Dodd, Ian
vv	29/12/2009	Radipole Lake, Weymouth, Dorset, GB	50,37N 2,28W	Chown, David J.
vv	06/02/2010	Radipole Lake, Weymouth, Dorset, GB	50,37N 2,28W	Phillips, Luke
vv	08/02/2010	Portland, Ferrybridge, Dorset, GB	50,32N 2,27W	Gladman, Chris
vv	17/02/2010	Radipole Lake, Weymouth, Dorset, GB	50,37N 2,28W	Chown, David J.
vv	15/12/2010	Radipole Lake, Weymouth, Dorset, GB	50,37N 2,28W	Donohue, Teresa
vv	16/12/2010	Radipole Lake, Weymouth, Dorset, GB	50,37N 2,28W	Chown, David J.
vv	20/02/2011	Portland, Ferrybridge, Dorset, GB	50,32N 2,27W	Ford, Robert

W63 Left pullus Paris FS71834 12/06/2009 Conchil le Temple, Pas de Calais, FRANCE 50,22N 1,4E

ringed by team Cap Ornis Bague

vv 09/08/2009 Port d'Antifer, Saint-Jouin-Bruneval, Seine-Maritime, FRANCE 49,39N 0,09E
vv 07/11/2009 Grouville Bay, Jersey, GB 49,1N 2,02W
vv 20/11/2009 Radipole Lake, Weymouth, Dorset, GB 50,37N 2,28W
vv 29/12/2009 Radipole Lake, Weymouth, Dorset, GB 50,37N 2,28W
vv 06/02/2010 Radipole Lake, Weymouth, Dorset, GB 50,37N 2,28W
vv 08/02/2010 Portland, Ferrybridge, Dorset, GB 50,32N 2,27W
vv 17/02/2010 Radipole Lake, Weymouth, Dorset, GB 50,37N 2,28W
vv 15/12/2010 Radipole Lake, Weymouth, Dorset, GB 50,37N 2,28W
vv 16/12/2010 Radipole Lake, Weymouth, Dorset, GB 50,37N 2,28W
vv 20/02/2011 Portland, Ferrybridge, Dorset, GB 50,32N 2,27W