

Portland Heights Birdwatching Breaks
Friday May 20th – Sunday May 22nd 2011

Saturday May 21st

Weather: Mostly sunny in a very light north westerly breeze

Portland Bill, 0600

Our weekend started with an hour's sea-watch at the Bill which produced Gannets, Razorbills, Guillemots, Fulmars and Kittiwakes in abundance. The star bird was the Puffin that floated past in the current just offshore.

The Admiralty Slopes just to the north produced Rock and Meadow Pipits as well as a large colony of the rare Small Blue butterfly. Our vantage point on the Westcliffs here gave us good views of the seabird colony.

Grove Point, 0900

A family party of Ravens was our first find here followed by the resident Little Owl sat on the edge of a quarry

Portland Bill, 1000

This time we walked north to the Bird Observatory and then on to the adjacent fields where we found a fine Slow-worm and a family of Stonechats.

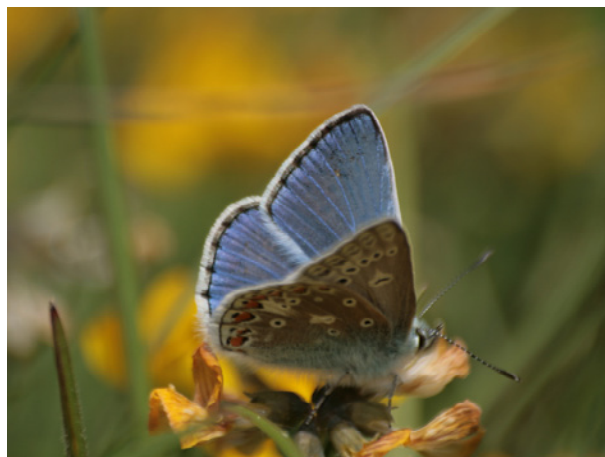
Cheyne Point, 1100

Our aim here was to see the resident pair of Peregrines and we certainly weren't disappointed with great views of both the male and female at rest and in flight.



High Angle Battery, 1200

Our picnic lunch was taken in warm sunny conditions amongst a host of butterflies including Dingy Skipper, Adonis Blue (see photo on the left) and Common Blue (photo on the right).



Ferrybridge, 1330

The heat haze made birding here very difficult but we did manage to identify Little Terns and Dunlin on the shoreline along with a few Sanderlings, Ringed Plovers and a lone Grey Plover.

Radipole, 1430

Mostly we had brief views of difficult birds here including a male Bearded Tit and Reed, Sedge and Cetti's Warblers singing. A group of fish milling around near a bridge seemed to be a mixture of Grey Mullet and the rare Sea Trout.



From the hide we were treated to a very close view of a Grey Heron and were honoured to be amongst the first people to witness the occupation of the RSPB's new Sand Martin wall.



Sunday May 10th

Weather: cold at first in a strong north westerly wind, warmer in the afternoon

Portland Bill, 0600

A 90 minute sea-watch in very windy conditions produced lots of Manx Shearwaters and plenty of very close Gannets.

Ferrybridge, 0900

A brief stop here to check the waders gave us much better views of Dunlin and Sanderling than we had yesterday.

Ringstead, 0930

We may have heard a distant Nightingale here or we may not have, but we did see a very bright Yellowhammer and several Buzzards.

Furzebook Heath, 1100

No Dartfords here but we did see several singing Stonechats and a very close Buzzard.

Arne, 1300

Lunch was had here in the company of an enormous Hornet, after which we visited a pond with a good selection of dragonflies including Downy Emerald, Four-spotted Chaser and Large Red Damselfly.



Just round the corner a scratchy song alerted us to the presence of our main target. After an extended wait we finally obtained glimpses of it - a Dartford Warbler singing in a gorse bush just a few yards away. Having exorcised this jinx we carried on with the birding and enjoyed comparing 3 Bar-tailed Godwits with the dozens of Black-tailed Godwits that were feeding just in front of the screen overlooking Middlebere Lake.

Maiden Castle, 1600

The Corn Buntings here were showing themselves off at close quarters even before we stopped the bus. In the end we saw 4 or 5 of this declining species.

**Ferrybridge, 1700**

Our final stop allowed us to count the breeding population of Little Terns as they all took to the air – a total of 18 birds this year.

At the concluding cream tea I couldn't help thinking how many more our total of 86 species would have been if it weren't for the windy conditions. Still, a good variety of birds were seen and some real favourites seen well. Here's looking forward to the next time...

Bob

Birds: 86 species

Great Crested Grebe Radipole
 Little Grebe Radipole
 Manx Shearwater Portland Bill
 Fulmar Portland Bill
 Gannet Portland Bill
 Cormorant Radipole
 Shag Portland Bill
 Little Egret Arne
 Grey Heron Radipole
 Mute Swan Radipole
 Canada Goose Radipole, Arne
 Shelduck Ferrybridge, Radipole, Arne
 Gadwall Radipole
 Mallard Radipole
 Tufted Duck Radipole
 Pochard Radipole
 Peregrine Portland
 Kestrel Portland
 Buzzard Arne
 Pheasant Portland Bill
 Moorhen Radipole
 Coot Radipole
 Oystercatcher Portland, Arne
 Black-tailed Godwit Arne
 Bar-tailed Godwit Arne
 Sanderling Ferrybridge
 Dunlin Ferrybridge
 Ringed Plover Ferrybridge
 Grey Plover Ferrybridge
 Black-headed Gull Radipole, Arne
 Herring Gull various sites
 Great Black-backed Gull various sites
 Lesser Black-backed Gull Radipole
 Kittiwake Portland Bill
 Common Tern Radipole
 Little Tern Ferrybridge
 Guillemot Portland Bill
 Razorbill Portland Bill
 Puffin Portland Bill
 Wood Pigeon various sites
 Collared Dove Portland
 Stock Dove Portland, Ringstead
 Feral Pigeon Radipole
 Little Owl Portland
 Swift Arne, Radipole
 Great Spotted Woodpecker Arne
 Rock Pipit Portland Bill
 Meadow Pipit Portland Bill
 Pied Wagtail Portland Bill
 Skylark Portland Bill
 Sand Martin Radipole
 Swallow various sites
 House Martin Radipole
 Wren various sites
 Dunnock various sites
 Stonechat Arne, Furzebrook, Portland
 Robin various sites
 Blackbird various sites
 Song Thrush Radipole, Arne
 Cetti's Warbler Radipole
 Sedge Warbler Radipole
 Reed Warbler Radipole
 Chiffchaff Radipole
 Willow Warbler Arne
 Whitethroat Portland
 Lesser Whitethroat Radipole

Blue Tit various sites
 Great Tit various sites
 Magpie various sites
 Jackdaw various sites
 Rook Ferrybridge
 Carrion Crow various sites
 Raven Portland, Arne
 Jay Arne
 Starling various sites
 House Sparrow various sites
 Greenfinch various sites
 Goldfinch various sites
 Chaffinch various sites
 Linnet various sites
 Yellowhammer Ringstead
 Reed Bunting Radipole, Lodmoor
 Corn Bunting Maiden Castle

Other Insects: 7 species

Large Red Damselfly Arne
 Four-spotted Chaser Arne
 Downy Emerald Arne
 Emperor Dragonfly Portland, Arne
 Hornet Arne
 Wood Ant Arne
 Lackey Moth Portland

Butterflies: 9 species

Dingy Skipper Portland
 Small White Portland
 Small Copper Portland
 Adonis Blue Portland
 Common Blue Portland
 Small Blue Portland
 Small Tortoiseshell Portland
 Small Heath Portland
 Wall Portland

Mammals: 4 species

Fox Preston
 Grey Squirrel Arne
 Bunny Portland
 Sika Deer Ringstead, Arne

Fish: 3 species

Sea Trout Radipole
 Grey Mullet Radipole
 Carp Radipole

Reptiles: 1 species

Slow-worm Portland

Notable Plants:

Southern Marsh Orchid Radipole
 Vipers Bugloss Portland
 Wild Carrot Portland
 Heath Milkwort Furzebrook
 Lousewort Furzebrook
 Dodder Arne

