

Saturday April 21st

Weather: Mostly sunny apart from some heavy showers at midday; wind fresh north-westerly.



see <http://youtu.be/r6P9a22ZbHM> for a video of shearwaters and gannets off the Bill

Portland Bill, 0630

Our weekend started with an hour's sea-watching at one of the best vantage points in the UK. Guillemots and Razorbills were everywhere with Gannets further out and Manx Shearwaters milling around closer in. The highlight was when a superb dark-phase Arctic Skua appeared just in front of us and started chasing the Kitiwakes that were floating past on the sea.

Radipole RSPB Reserve, 0930

Our main aim here was to find some Bearded Tits, which we certainly achieved but with only distant flight views. The best bird was the resident male Marsh Harrier which put on a splendid show for us in front of the North Hide. Several Cetti's Warblers were seen well and one or two of the many Reed Warblers present also showed themselves briefly.

Lodmoor RSPB Reserve, 1230

It started raining here not long after we arrived and we spent most of the time hurrying to shelter of one sort or another. We did see a large flock of 20-odd Whimbrel as well as one of the brightest Dunlins any of us can remember seeing. On the way back before a very heavy shower stopped our activities we managed to see some more distant Bearded Tits and were pleased to see the male Marsh Harrier again – it had followed us over from Radipole!

Ferrybridge, 1430

A few more waders here in the shape of a small flock of Ringed Plovers and Dunlins with some Turnstones nearby and several distant Sandwich Terns flying over the Fleet. On the grassy edges of Chesil Beach were some very smart Wheatears and a pair of Skylarks.

Barleycrates Lane, 1500

We visited this normally very productive site on an unusually quiet afternoon and only managed to add Stonechat and Stock Dove to the day's list. However, none of us will forget the moment of excitement when a huge female Peregrine overshot a dive at some Carrion Crows and very nearly ended up right in the middle of the group! The sound of its wings as it sped overhead will be with me for a very long time.

Topfields, 1600

Another very quiet spot with just a passing House Martin to show for our efforts. At least it didn't rain on us though!

Sunday April 22nd

Weather: Mostly sunny in the morning then very showery in the afternoon; wind fresh westerly.



See <http://youtu.be/D4PeyXLFdY8> for a video of this bird

Portland Bill, 0630

Manx Shearwaters were much in evidence again this morning with at least a thousand birds feeding in an area encompassing several square miles around the tidal race off the Bill. After half an hour of searching no new birds could be found that we had not seen yesterday apart from a handful of Whimbrel heading west. So we explored the Eastcliffs and were delighted to find a late pair of Purple Sandpipers feeding on the rocks. Turning our backs on these birds to head back to the bus we almost tripped over a very pale Rock Pipit, a rare individual that had undergone a moult into a summer plumage. This is common in the Scandinavian population but very rare in UK birds. It is quite possible that this bird was one of the Scandinavian *littoralis* population or perhaps from the similar population from Brittany.

Creech Heath, 1100

Parking at Furzebrook Village Hall we set off across this prime example of Dorset heathland in search of Dartford Warblers. We blamed our lack of luck on the strong wind but in truth this species is now very difficult to find in Dorset after several hard winters. They are still present in some numbers but with a population now much thinned out there is less competition for breeding sites and consequently much less singing from the males. We did see a very fine male Siskin though and a number of Stonechats. A large herd of Sika Deer were an unexpected find for this site.

Hartland Moor, 1230

Another site that failed to show us any Dartfords but we were more than compensated by the amazing views had of a pair of Woodlarks. A singing Chiffchaff closely followed by a singing Willow Warbler was another nice pair.

Arne RSPB Reserve, 1400

We were indeed fortunate to be close to the bus having our lunch when a particularly heavy downpour crossed this part of Dorset. Luck smiled on us again when we had just reached the Middlebere Hide as the next downpour reached us. The hide produced an early Little Tern and some very smart summer-plumaged Black-tailed Godwits. Walking back in what was now merely a light drizzle we stopped to search through the gulls on Middlebere Lake and found two handsome adult Yellow-legged Gulls.

Always good to finish a weekend with a new gull!

Birds: 99 species

Great Crested Grebe	Radipole	Cetti's Warbler	Radipole, Lodmoor
Little Grebe	Radipole	Sedge Warbler	Radipole (heard)
Fulmar	Portland Bill	Reed Warbler	Radipole
Manx Shearwater	Portland Bill	Chiffchaff	various sites
Gannet	Portland Bill	Willow Warbler	various sites
Cormorant	Radipole	Dartford Warbler	Creech, Arne (hear
Shag	Portland Bill	Blackcap	Portland
Little Egret	Lodmoor, Arne	Goldcrest	Arne
Grey Heron	Lodmoor, Radipole	Firecrest	Arne (heard)
Mute Swan	Lodmoor, Radipole	Long-tailed Tit	Radipole
Canada Goose	Lodmoor, Radipole, Arne	Bearded Tit	Radipole
Shelduck	Lodmoor, Radipole, Arne	Coal Tit	Arne
Gadwall	Radipole	Blue Tit	various sites
Teal	Lodmoor, Radipole	Great Tit	various sites
Mallard	Radipole, Arne	Magpie	various sites
Shoveler	Lodmoor, Radipole	Jackdaw	various sites
Tufted Duck	Radipole	Rook	Radipole
Pochard	Radipole	Carrion Crow	various sites
Kestrel	Portland	Raven	Portland, Creech
Peregrine	Portland	Starling	various sites
Marsh Harrier	Radipole	House Sparrow	various sites
Buzzard	Portland, Radipole, Creech,	Greenfinch	various sites
Sparrowhawk	Portland, Radipole	Goldfinch	various sites
Pheasant	Portland Bill, Creech	Chaffinch	various sites
Moorhen	Lodmoor, Radipole	Linnet	various sites
Coot	Lodmoor, Radipole	Siskin	Creech
Curlew	Arne	Reed Bunting	Radipole
Whimbrel	Portland Bill, Lodmoor		
Oystercatcher	Portland, Arne	Mammals:	
Black-tailed Godwit	Arne	Sika Deer	Creech
Purple Sandpiper	Portland Bill	Rat	Barleycrates La
Dunlin	Lodmoor, Ferrybridge	Rabbit	Portland
Ringed Plover	Ferrybridge	Red Fox	Arne
Lapwing	Arne		
Turnstone	Ferrybridge		
Great Skua	Portland Bill		
Arctic Skua	Portland Bill		
Black-headed Gull	Lodmoor, Arne		
Herring Gull	various sites		
Great Black-backed Gull	various sites		
Lesser Black-backed Gull	Portland Bill		
Yellow-legged Gull	Arne		
Kittiwake	Portland Bill		
Sandwich Tern	Ferrybridge		
Little Tern	Arne		
Guillemot	Portland Bill		
Razorbill	Portland Bill		
Feral Pigeon	Radipole		
Wood Pigeon	various sites		
Collared Dove	Portland		
Stock Dove	Portland		
Kingfisher	Radipole		
Great Spotted Woodpecker	Arne		
Green Woodpecker	Creech (heard)		
Nuthatch	Arne		
Rock Pipit	Portland Bill		
Meadow Pipit	Portland Bill, Creech, Arne		
Pied Wagtail	Portland Bill		
Skylark	Portland Bill, Ferrybridge		
Woodlark	Creech Heath		
Swallow	various sites		
House Martin	Barleycrates Lane, Creech,		
Wren	various sites		
Duncock	various sites		
Whinchat	Portland Bill		
Stonechat	Portland, Creech		
Wheatear	Ferrybridge		
Robin	various sites		
Blackbird	various sites		
Song Thrush	Lodmoor		
Mistle Thrush	Creech, Arne		

