

### **Saturday April 28th**

**Weather: overcast with intermittent light rain; wind light north-easterly.**

Creech Heath, 1100

We started our weekend on a search for Dartford Warblers on one of the few Dorset heaths that still holds a reasonable population after the recent run of cold winters. On a cold rainy morning this was not going to be an easy task but we eventually found a fine male sat up on a gorse bush – and what's more he stayed there long enough for us all to have a good look at him. The heath also produced several Stonechats and the first Swifts most of us had seen this year.

Arne RSPB Reserve, 1300

After lunch we walked across Coombe Heath to the hide overlooking Middlebere Lake. The area around the car park had already yielded a few woodland birds including both woodpeckers and a Nuthatch and we soon added Goldcrest to the list even though we never actually managed to see the bird. Reaching the shore of Poole Harbour we found lots of Oystercatchers and Shelducks with a few Teal and Little Egrets. From the hide we could also see a distant Yellow-legged Gull but the highlight was definitely the Whimbrel that appeared close in front of us on the edge of the creek.

### **Sunday April 29th**

**Weather: continuous rain all day, often heavy; wind strong north to east, backing off in the afternoon.**

Portland Bill, 0930

Not put off by the freezing, driving rain we headed straight for the most exposed point on the English coastline protected only by a hotel breakfast. Struggling across the hotel car park we could see Wheatears struggling just as much as we were in the vicious wind. As we reached the coast Swallows and Swifts were having so much trouble they were almost landing on our shoulders! Looking out to sea the most obvious birds were Gannets, flying and fishing unusually close inshore. Around them were dozens of Kittiwakes and Guillemots with the occasional Razorbills and Fulmars. However after half an hour of patient watching we saw nothing else so we decided to head off the Westcliffs.

Tout Quarry, 1030

Starting at the Westcliffs near Blacknor Point we could see just one Fulmar sheltering on a cliff-face that normally holds a dozen pairs. The others were probably out of sight in their nest holes between the rocks of the cliff. Nearby was a pair of Ravens, most likely an early-fledged pair of young birds.

Entering Tout Quarry we found just one very wet Robin, but we enjoyed looking at the sculptures including Anthony Gormley's *Still Falling*.

Heights Hotel, 1230

Deciding to eat out lunch indoors we spent a couple of hours looking at a variety of web sites, listed below:

Bob the Birders videos: <http://www.youtube.com/user/bobthebirder>

iSpot: <http://www.ispot.org.uk>

Portland Bird Observatory: [http://www.portlandbirdobs.org.uk/aa\\_latestnews.htm](http://www.portlandbirdobs.org.uk/aa_latestnews.htm)

Dorset Bird Club: <http://dorsetbirds.blogspot.co.uk>

Durlston Country Park: <http://www.durlston.co.uk>

Surfbirds: <http://www.surfbirds.com>

The Bagsy Blog: <http://bagsy-thecaptainslog.blogspot.co.uk>

Ferrybridge, 1530

The rain had stopped when we left the hotel but by the time we reached Ferrybridge it was pouring down again. Unperturbed we scanned the shore of Chesil Beach and found a selection of waders including Dunlin, Ringed Plover, Turnstone, Whimbrel and Bar-tailed Godwit. Out on the far shore of the Fleet some white dots resolved themselves in the telescope to be terns. In the end about 20 Sandwich Terns and 8 Little Terns were found.

Ferrybridge, 1830

A return visit to this great site allowed us to have a second look at all the waders we had seen previously plus a new bird for the weekend in the shape of a Great Crested Grebe out on the Fleet.

**Monday April 30th**

**Weather: dry with long sunny intervals in the afternoon, wind gale force south-east at first, dropping right off in the afternoon.**

Portland Bill, 0900

Our second visit to the Bill was in even windier conditions but at least it wasn't raining. Offshore a constant stream of Gannets were heading east along with a few Manx Shearwaters and large numbers of Fulmars and Kittiwakes. The highlight was when a superb Pomarine Skua flew past appearing in and out of the huge swell that the gale had blown up.

Chesil Cove, 1100

More seabirds here with Gannets, Fulmars and Kittiwakes heading east along with 3 more skuas – first a light-phase Arctic Skua followed later by a huge Great Skua close inshore and finally a distant dark-phase Arctic. The West Weares was probably the only sheltered spot on the island and held quite a few migrants including Common and Lesser Whitethroats, a Sedge Warbler and at least 3 Blackcaps.

Ferrybridge, 1300

Better views of Bar-tailed Godwits and Little Terns this time but no new birds for the list.

Lodmoor RSPB Reserve, 1400

After stopping at Radipole just long enough to buy a car park ticket and then find out that the reserve was closed we went on to Lodmoor. Some very tame Whimbrel here along with both species of Godwit and a Little Ringed Plover that shot past all too fast. Still some ducks left over from the winter including Pochard and Pintail. We finished with a real flourish though as a superb Hobby dashed past us just as we were about to leave!

**Birds: 91 species**

Great Crested Grebe	Ferrybridge
Fulmar	Portland Bill
Manx Shearwater	Portland Bill
Gannet	Portland Bill
Cormorant	Portland Bill
Shag	Portland Bill
Little Egret	Lodmoor, Arne
Grey Heron	Lodmoor, Arne
Mute Swan	Lodmoor, Radipole, Arne
Canada Goose	Lodmoor, Arne
Shelduck	Lodmoor, Ferrybridge, Arne
Gadwall	Lodmoor
Teal	Lodmoor
Mallard	Lodmoor, Arne
Pintail	Lodmoor
Tufted Duck	Radipole
Pochard	Lodmoor
Kestrel	Portland, Ferrybridge, Arne
Hobby	Lodmoor
Buzzard	Creech, Arne
Sparrowhawk	Creech
Pheasant	Creech
Moorhen	Lodmoor
Coot	Lodmoor, Radipole
Whimbrel	Arne, Ferrybridge, Lodmoor
Oystercatcher	Portland Bill, Arne, Ferrybridge, Lodmoor
Black-tailed Godwit	Lodmoor
Bar-tailed Godwit	Ferrybridge, Lodmoor
Dunlin	Ferrybridge, Lodmoor
Ringed Plover	Ferrybridge
Little Ringed Plover	Lodmoor
Redshank	Arne
Turnstone	Ferrybridge
Great Skua	Chesil Cove
Arctic Skua	Chesil Cove
Pomarine Skua	Portland Bill
Black-headed Gull	Lodmoor, Arne
Herring Gull	various sites
Great Black-backed Gull	various sites
Lesser Black-backed Gull	Lodmoor
Yellow-legged Gull	Arne
Kittiwake	Portland Bill, Chesil Cove
Sandwich Tern	Ferrybridge, Portland Bill, Chesil Cove
Little Tern	Ferrybridge
Guillemot	Portland Bill
Razorbill	Portland Bill
Feral Pigeon	Weymouth
Wood Pigeon	various sites
Collared Dove	Portland
Stock Dove	Lodmoor, Arne
Swift	various sites
Great Spotted Woodpecker	Arne (heard)
Green Woodpecker	Creech

Nuthatch	Arne
Rock Pipit	Portland Bill, Ferrybridge
Meadow Pipit	Creech, Arne
Pied Wagtail	Creech, Portland Bill
Skylark	Portland Bill, Ferrybridge
Swallow	various sites
House Martin	Ferrybridge, Creech
Wren	West Weares (heard)
Duncock	various sites
Stonechat	Arne, Creech, Lodmoor
Wheatear	Ferrybridge, Portland Bill, Chesil Cove
Robin	various sites
Blackbird	various sites
Song Thrush	Lodmoor (heard)
Mistle Thrush	Creech
Sedge Warbler	West Weares
Chiffchaff	Arne
Willow Warbler	West Weares
Dartford Warbler	Creech
Blackcap	West Weares
Whitethroat	West Weares
Lesser Whitethroat	West Weares
Long-tailed Tit	Arne
Coal Tit	Arne (heard)
Blue Tit	various sites
Great Tit	various sites
Nuthatch	Arne
Magpie	various sites
Jackdaw	various sites
Rook	Ferrybridge
Carrion Crow	various sites
Raven	Portland, Creech, Arne
Starling	various sites
House Sparrow	various sites
Greenfinch	various sites
Goldfinch	various sites
Chaffinch	various sites
Linnet	various sites
Siskin	Creech
Reed Bunting	Arne

**Mammals:**

Sika Deer	Arne
Rabbit	Portland, Lodmoor

**Insects:**

Small White	West Weares, Lodmoor
Peacock	West Weares

**Plants:**

Alexanders	Portland
Hoary Cress	Portland
Bulbous Buttercup	Portland
Thrift	Portland

Flowering Vetch  
Wood Spurge  
Heath Milkwort  
Wayfaring Tree  
Small-leaved Cottoneaster

Portland  
Portland  
Creech  
Portland  
Portland