

Saturday January 21st

Weather: Overcast with a strong north-westerly wind.

Portland Bill, 0930

We started our weekend's birdwatching in very windy conditions that forced us to seek shelter in the lee of the lighthouse. From here we could see an enormous flock of many hundreds of seabirds feeding over the rough waters of Portland Race. Gannets, Kittiwakes, Guillemots and Razorbills made up most of the birds along with a few Herring, Great Black-backed and Common Gulls and of course plenty of Cormorants and Shags.

Southwell, 1100

Moving a mile or so further north along the Eastcliffs we came across what was undoubtedly the highlight of the weekend when a pod of 10 Bottle-nosed Dolphins moved past at high speed heading south. Anything else was going to be insignificant compared to this but we still enjoyed the sight of the Gannets diving into the sea in the feeding frenzy which was still very much going on offshore.

Grove Point, 1200

The resident Peregrine was not at his usual perch on the cliffs and for a while we had to be content with watching the Fulmars circling around the cliff-face below us. Soon the Peregrine appeared though and later re-appeared with a pigeon in its talons.



Kestrel at Grove Point



Red-breasted Merganser in Portland Harbour

Portland Castle, 1300

From our lunch stop at the southern end of Portland Harbour we had good views of dozens of Red-breasted Mergansers and were able to compare Cormorants and Shags side-by-side.

Underbarn, 1400

Overlooking the opposite corner of Portland Harbour we found a distant Slavonian Grebe, an even more distant flock of Black-necked Grebes and no less than 20 Great Crested Grebes. A group of Dark-bellied Brent Geese were a surprise find on the beach below Sandsfoot Castle.

Lodmoor RSPB Reserve, 1500

Lots of new birds here including plenty of wildfowl and waders including a Green Sandpiper and several Snipe.

Radipole Lake RSPB Reserve, 1600

From the visitor centre we had a great opportunity to sort out the identification of a variety of gulls including Common, Mediterranean and Lesser Black-backed. A flock of Black-tailed Godwits here as well as our old friend Hoodie the Hooded Merganser. The walk out to the North Hide produced brief views of a high-flying Marsh Harrier and the only Pochard of the weekend. The view from the hide was very quiet but we did see a total of 10 Little Egrets flying off to the nearby roost. The day ended in fine style for one of us when a Bittern appeared in the rapidly diminishing light as it flew to roost over the reedbeds.

Sunday January 22nd

Weather: brighter and warmer than yesterday, but still a fresh north-westerly wind

Arne RSPB Reserve, 1000

Having decided to spend the whole day at this superb reserve we spent the morning exploring the northern part, walking through the wooded areas out to Shipstall Point. Nuthatch and Treecreeper were seen while we were still in the car park with Coal Tit and Redwing added soon after. Reaching the shore of Poole Harbour gave us the chance to add a whole load more species to the list including Goldeneye, Curlew and Redshank. Walking across the heath were surprised to see a colony of Wood Ants basking in the sunshine. The Shipstall hide produced a Grey Plover and a Goosander along with excellent views of several Sika stags.

As usual the feeders next to the car park provided great entertainment while we ate our lunch with several Coal Tits and Nuthatches seen fleetingly here. The afternoon was spent walking out to Middlebere Lake where we saw a good range of birds including Black-tailed Godwits and several hundred Avocets. From the Middlebere hide we could see a large flock of Brent Geese sharing a field with Lapwings and a pair of foxes. An adult Yellow-legged Gull was at its usual post at the head of the creek with another feeding amongst the Brents.



Radipole Lake RSPB Reserve, 1600

We just couldn't resist another look at the gulls here but sadly neither a Ring-billed or an Iceland Gull turned up this afternoon, so we called it quits and returned to the hotel for our cream teas.

Slavonian Grebe	Portland Harbour	Kittiwake	Portland Bill
Great Crested Grebe	Portland Harbour	Guillemot	Portland Bill
Black-necked Grebe	Portland Harbour	Razorbill	Portland Bill
Little Grebe	Radipole	Wood Pigeon	various sites
Fulmar	Portland Bill	Stock Dove	Arne
Gannet	Portland Bill	Feral Pigeon	Radipole
Cormorant	Portland, Radipole	Collared Dove	Portland
Shag	Portland Bill	Green Woodpecker	Arne (heard)
Bittern	Radipole	Treecreeper	Arne
Little Egret	Radipole, Arne	Nuthatch	Arne, Arne
Grey Heron	Radipole	Rock Pipit	Portland Bill
Mute Swan	Radipole	Meadow Pipit	Arne
Brent Goose	Portland Harbour, Arne	Pied Wagtail	Portland
Canada Goose	Lodmoor	Wren	various sites
Shelduck	Radipole, Arne	Dunnock	various sites
Shoveler	Radipole	Robin	various sites
Gadwall	Radipole	Blackbird	various sites
Wigeon	Arne	Mistle Thrush	Arne
Teal	Radipole, Arne	Song Thrush	Arne
Mallard	Radipole, Lodmoor	Fieldfare	Poxwell
Tufted Duck	Radipole	Redwing	Arne
Pochard	Radipole	Cetti's Warbler	Radipole (heard)
Hooded Merganser	Radipole	Goldcrest	Arne
RB Merganser	Portland Harbour	Bearded Tit	Radipole (heard)
Goosander	Arne	Long-tailed Tit	Radipole, Arne
Goldeneye	Arne	Coal Tit	Arne
Kestrel	Portland	Blue Tit	various sites
Peregrine	Portland	Great Tit	various sites
Buzzard	Portland, Arne	Raven	Portland
Sparrowhawk	Portland	Magpie	various sites
Marsh Harrier	Radipole	Jackdaw	various sites
Pheasant	Wool	Rook	Wool
Water Rail	Radipole	Carrion Crow	various sites
Moorhen	Radipole	Starling	various sites
Coot	Radipole	House Sparrow	various sites
Curlew	Arne	Greenfinch	various sites
Oystercatcher	Portland Bill, Arne	Goldfinch	various sites
Avocet	Arne	Chaffinch	various sites
Snipe	Radipole, Lodmoor	Reed Bunting	Radipole (heard)
Black-tailed Godwit	Radipole, Arne		
Grey Plover	Arne	Insects: 1 species	
Lapwing	Lodmoor, Arne	Wood Ant	Arne
Dunlin	Arne		
Green Sandpiper	Lodmoor	Mammals: 6 species	
Redshank	Arne	Grey Squirrel	Arne
Common Gull	Radipole	Bottle-nosed Dolphin	Portland
Black-headed Gull	various sites	Sika Deer	Arne
Mediterranean Gull	Radipole	Brown Rat	Radipole
Herring Gull	various sites	Red Fox	Arne
G Black-backed Gull	various sites	Rabbit	Lodmoor
L Black-backed Gull	Radipole		