

Saturday November 10th

Weather: dry with long sunny intervals; wind light north-westerly.

Kingbarrow Quarry, 0700

A quiet start to the weekend but nevertheless a very pleasant walk round this Dorset Wildlife Trust reserve. We struggled to find very many birds until and returned to the hotel with just a few Redwings for our efforts. At least we had worked up an appetite for breakfast!

Ferrybridge, 0900

During breakfast we had already noticed that there were a lot of Brent Geese at Ferrybridge so we headed off there as soon as we could. A hundred or so geese were there when we arrived, mostly Dark-bellied Brents with 5 or 6 Pale-bellied Brents. Over a hundred Mediterranean Gulls were on the shoreline with a good selection of waders including 5 Bar-tailed Godwits.



Portland Harbour, 1000

News of a Red-throated Diver had us walking across the road from Ferrybridge onto the old railway line connecting Weymouth to Portland. Before long we had found the diver and soon added a distant Great Northern Diver as well. Nearby was a lone Slavonian Grebe and in the far distance a couple of Black-necked Grebes.

Portland Bill, 1100

Examining the far horizon from the Bill we could see a few Gannets fishing offshore along with rather more Kittiwakes and Common Gulls. Every now and again a Guillemot would fly past but otherwise very little found.

Walking along the Eastcliffs towards the Bird Observatory the star find was a very close and very large bull Grey Seal. Plenty of Rock Pipits were to be seen here, most of them obligingly tame for once. A very noisy Raven was not far away at the edge of the car park.



Walking back another highlight was the Little Owl that was squinting at us from the depths of his home in the Obs Quarry.

Southwell, 1330

Eating our lunch on the very picturesque Eastcliffs we had good views of the resident pair of Peregrines, but sadly no sign of the dolphins that had been seen earlier.

Radipole RSPB Reserve, 1500

The day finished with close but brief views of Kingfisher and Marsh Harrier from the North Hide with a close Cetti's Warbler glimpsed on the way there. Back at the car park we just had enough light to see the famous Hooded Merganser.

Sunday November 11th

Weather: dry and sunny all day; wind light north-westerly.

Tout Quarry, 0730

A beautiful calm morning but just a few birds seen – but all good ones! First was a fine female Sparrowhawk soaring high over the Westcliffs. Next a couple of Siskins flew in high over the quarry followed by a single Brambling which we heard but could not see. Finally a Fieldfare flew just over the hotel as we were returning for breakfast.

Ferrybridge, 0930

A quick scan of the Brent flock failed for a second day to find the fabled Black Brant that we were seeking. However a count of no less than 25 Coot was possibly an all-time record for Portland!

West Bexington, 1030

A walk along the north-western end of Chesil Beach added several new birds including Common Scoter, Buzzard and Snipe, as well as the only insects of the weekend in the shape of Common Darter and Red Admiral. The highlight was seen by one lucky member of the group - the first ever Harvest Mouse seen on a Heights Weekend.

Rodden Hive, 1400

Parking in the lovely village of Langton Herring we had a muddy walk out to the shores of the Fleet, but it was well worth it when we got there. A record number of 30 Redshank looked beautiful in the strong sunlight as did the 200 or so Pintail stretched out along the far shore. Just as a couple of Snipe emerged from the reeds a Kingfisher suddenly appeared apparently terrifying one of the Snipe which very nearly stood on its head in a bizarre defensive posture.

Maiden Castle, 1600

Our finale was a lovely half hour in the shadow of England's largest ancient hill-fort watching Starlings fly to roost as the temperature dropped. The reward for our vigil came when we found a distant brown patch in a ploughed field in front of the village of Poundbury – a wintering flock of Golden Plover.

Here's to the next time we meet,

Bob

Birds: 91 species

Great Northern Diver	Portland Harbour
Red-throated Diver	Portland Harbour
Slavonian Grebe	Portland Harbour
Black-necked Grebe	Portland Harbour
Little Grebe	Radipole
Great Crested Grebe	Portland Harbour, Radipole
Gannet	Portland Bill
Cormorant	various sites
Shag	Portland Bill
Little Egret	Rodden
Grey Heron	Radipole, West Bexington
Mute Swan	Radipole
Brent Goose	Ferrybridge
Shelduck	Rodden
Gadwall	Radipole
Shoveler	Radipole, Rodden
Teal	Radipole, Rodden
Mallard	Radipole, Rodden
Pintail	Radipole, Rodden
Wigeon	Radipole, Rodden
Tufted Duck	Radipole, West Bexington
Hooded Merganser	Radipole
Red-breasted Merganser	Portland Harbour
Common Scoter	West Bexington
Buzzard	West Bexington
Sparrowhawk	Portland
Kestrel	various sites
Peregrine	Portland
Marsh Harrier	Radipole
Pheasant	Rodden
Water Rail	Radipole, West Bexington
Moorhen	Radipole, West Bexington
Coot	Radipole, Ferrybridge
Oystercatcher	Portland Bill
Golden Plover	Maiden Castle
Ringed Plover	Ferrybridge
Lapwing	Rodden
Redshank	Rodden
Dunlin	Ferrybridge
Snipe	Rodden, West Bexington
Bar-tailed Godwit	Ferrybridge
Mediterranean Gull	Radipole, Ferrybridge
Black-headed Gull	various sites
Herring Gull	various sites
Lesser Black-backed Gull	Radipole
Great Black-backed Gull	various sites
Common Gull	Radipole, West Bexington
Kittiwake	Portland Bill
Guillemot	Portland Bill, Portland Harbour
Wood Pigeon	various sites
Feral Pigeon	Weymouth
Collared Dove	various sites
Little Owl	Portland Bill
Kingfisher	Radipole, Rodden

Green Woodpecker	Rodden
Great-spotted Woodpecker	Rodden
Skylark	Portland Bill
Meadow Pipit	various sites
Rock Pipit	Portland Bill
Pied Wagtail	various sites
Wren	Portland
Duncock	various sites
Robin	various sites
Stonechat	Radipole, West Bexington,
Fieldfare	Portland
Blackbird	various sites
Song Thrush	Radipole, Rodden
Redwing	Portland, Rodden
Cetti's Warbler	Radipole
Goldcrest	Rodden
Long-tailed Tit	Rodden
Blue Tit	various sites
Great Tit	various sites
Jay	Rodden
Raven	Portland, Ferrybridge
Magpie	various sites
Jackdaw	various sites
Rook	Ferrybridge
Carrion Crow	various sites
Starling	various sites
House Sparrow	various sites
Siskin	Portland
Redpoll	Portland
Brambling	Portland (heard)
Chaffinch	various sites
Greenfinch	various sites
Goldfinch	various sites
Linnet	Portland
Reed Bunting	West Bexington
Reed Bunting	West Bexington

Mammals:

Rabbit	Portland, West Bexington
Grey Seal	Portland
Brown Rat	Radipole
Harvest Mouse	West Bexington

Insects:

Red Admiral	various sites
Common Dater	West Bexington