

Saturday September 22nd

Weather: dry with long sunny intervals; wind fresh easterly.



Short-billed Dowitcher at Lodmoor. Photo: [Brett Spencer](#)

Portland Bill, 0700

Our weekend got off to a cold and breezy start at the Bill. The sea looked promising with Gannets coming past at regular intervals but after 10 minutes or so nothing else had been seen so we carried on towards the Bird Observatory. On the way we saw plenty of Wheatears on the ground with a continuous stream of Swallows and House Martins heading east overhead. The star bird was a Hobby that suddenly appeared over the common chasing wagtails.

Reaching the Observatory the warden, Martin Cade, showed us the night's moth catch which included several very well-marked Beautiful Gothics. Then Peter Morgan appeared with a superb Spotted Flycatcher that he had just caught in one of the mist-nets.

Ferrybridge, 1000

A very worthwhile and efficient stop as we very quickly added Dunlin, Sanderling, Bar-tailed Godwit and, best of all, Curlew Sandpiper to the list.

Lodmoor, 1030

Pretty well the first bird we looked at here was the mega-rare Short-billed Dowitcher, the second record for Britain. With it was a flock of 20+ Mediterranean Gulls, a Common Gull and a Sandwich Tern.

Arne RSPB Reserve, 1200

Before lunch we walked across Coombe Heath to the hide overlooking Middlebere Lake. On the way we found a pair of displaying Goldcrests and this strange insect, which turned out to be a Velvet Ant (a type of wasp).



Velvet Ant, see iSpot at <http://www.ispot.org.uk/node/296281>

From the hide we added Black-tailed Godwit to the list and enjoyed watching a pair of female Sika Deer quietly feeding in the rushes with their half-grown young. Walking along the path a short way we reached a point overlooking the end of the creek where we could see a distant Yellow-legged Gull.

Eating lunch near the bird-feeders we managed to see a few woodland birds including Nuthatches, Coal Tits and a Mistle Thrush.

Stoborough Heath, 1500

It was quite a long walk here to see just one Stonechat and a Great-spotted Woodpecker but the huge number of flowers of the rare Dorset Heath were a bonus.

Furzebrook Heath, 1600

We finished the day with 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. In the end our search was fruitless but we did find another Stonechat and had our first good view of a Buzzard. The Fox Moth caterpillars were an attractive sight in the heather with their black and gold stripes.

Sunday September 23rd

Weather: strong easterly winds with frequent periods of rain

Portland Bill, 0930

In appalling conditions we braved the weather and spent a very productive hour sheltering behind an ancient stone fisherman's hut at the Bill watching the Gannets stream past at close quarters. A few shearwaters put in an all-too brief appearance, just long enough to identify one as a Manx Shearwater and the rest as Balearics.

Chesil Cove, 1200

After a coffee break at the hotel we stopped of in the village of Chiswell and walked along the edge of Chesil Beach to see if anything had been blown in. It hadn't but we did see a Peregrine fly in off the sea and found Rock Pipits and Turnstones on the beach.

Ferrybridge, 1330

For me the highlight of the weekend with a superb hour spent watching waders and gulls dropping for a quick bit of shelter from the vicious winds. On arriving we spotted a Curlew Sandpiper then immediately realised it was just one of no less than five of these beautiful birds. Each time the wader flock flew off it returned to land just in front of us and each time it contained a new species; first some Sanderlings then a few Knot and finally an adult Turnstone. Over the beach a pair of Ravens glided past then a Hobby appeared hunting low over the seaward side. As if this wasn't enough a superb first-year Yellow-legged Gull arrived just as we were leaving.



Lodmoor RSPB Reserve, 1500

In unexpectedly dry conditions we enjoyed another look at the Short-billed Dowitcher and added the last few species to the weekend's list including Snipe, Gadwall, Common Sandpiper and Whimbrel.

At our cream tea back at the hotel we counted up a very impressive total of 89 species seen or heard – and we were still dry! Looking forward to the next time,
Bob Ford

Birds: 89 species

Little Grebe	Radipole
Great Crested Grebe	Radipole
Manx Shearwater	Portland Bill
Balearic Shearwater	Portland Bill
Gannet	Portland Bill
Cormorant	various sites
Shag	Portland Bill
Little Egret	Lodmoor, Arne
Grey Heron	Lodmoor
Mute Swan	Radipole
Canada Goose	Lodmoor
Shelduck	Lodmoor
Wigeon	Arne
Gadwall	Lodmoor
Teal	Lodmoor, Arne
Mallard	Lodmoor, Arne
Buzzard	Furzebrook
Kestrel	various sites
Peregrine	Chesil Cove
Hobby	Portland Bill, Ferrybridge
Water Rail	Lodmoor
Moorhen	Lodmoor
Coot	Lodmoor
Short-billed Dowitcher	Lodmoor
Oystercatcher	Portland, Arne
Ringed Plover	Ferrybridge, Lodmoor
Lapwing	Lodmoor
Knot	Ferrybridge, Lodmoor
Dunlin	Ferrybridge, Lodmoor
Curlew Sandpiper	Ferrybridge
Sanderling	Ferrybridge
Redshank	Lodmoor
Common Sandpiper	Lodmoor
Whimbrel	Lodmoor
Snipe	Lodmoor
Black-tailed Godwit	Lodmoor
Bar-tailed Godwit	Ferrybridge
Yellow-legged Gull	Arne, Ferrybridge
Mediterranean Gull	Ferrybridge, Lodmoor
Black-headed Gull	various sites
Herring Gull	various sites
Lesser Black-backed Gull	Portland
Great Black-backed Gull	various sites
Common Gull	Lodmoor
Sandwich Tern	Ferrybridge, Lodmoor
Common Tern	Lodmoor
Little Tern	Portland Bill
Wood Pigeon	various sites
Feral Pigeon	Weymouth
Stock Dove	Portland Bill
Collared Dove	Portland
Green Woodpecker	Arne (heard)
Great-spotted W'pecker	Stoborough
Sand Martin	Portland
Swallow	various sites
House Martin	Portland
Meadow Pipit	various sites
Rock Pipit	Portland Bill

Pied Wagtail	various sites
Wren	Portland
Duncock	various sites
Robin	various sites
Stonechat	Stoborough, Furzebrook
Wheatear	Portland
Blackbird	various sites
Mistle Thrush	Arne
Chiffchaff	various sites
Goldcrest	Arne
Spotted Flycatcher	Portland Bird Observatory
Long-tailed Tit	Stoborough
Coal Tit	Arne
Blue Tit	various sites
Great Tit	various sites
Nuthatch	Arne
Jay	Arne, Stoborough
Raven	Ferrybridge
Magpie	various sites
Jackdaw	various sites
Rook	Ferrybridge
Carrion Crow	various sites
Starling	various sites
House Sparrow	various sites
Siskin	Portland (heard)
Chaffinch	Portland
Greenfinch	Portland
Goldfinch	various sites
Linnet	Portland

Butterflies:

Red Admiral	various sites
Painted Lady	Portland
Large White	Portland
Small White	Portland
Small Copper	Lodmoor
Speckled Wood	Stoborough

Moths:

Angle Shades	PBO moth trap
Beautiful Gothic	PBO moth trap
Brimstone	PBO moth trap
Common Marbled Carpet	PBO moth trap
Common Wainscot	PBO moth trap
Feathered Brindle	PBO moth trap
Fox Moth	Furzebrook, Arne
Garden Carpet	PBO moth trap
L-album Wainscot	PBO moth trap
Large Yellow Underwing	PBO moth trap
New Zealand Apple Moth	PBO moth trap
Setaceous Hebrew Character	PBO moth trap
Silver Y	PBO moth trap
Square-spot Rustic	PBO moth trap
White-point	PBO moth trap
Willow Beauty	PBO moth trap

Other Insects:

Common Darter	Stoborough
Migrant Hawker	Stoborough

Emperor
Tawny Cockroach
Velvet Ant
Wood Ant

Stoborough
Arne
Arne
Arne

Mammals:

Sika Deer
Rabbit

Arne
Stoborough

Plants:

Dorset Heath
Rock Samphire

Stoborough
Portland Bill