

Portland Heights Birdwatching Breaks April 12th – 14th 2013

**Saturday April 13th,
weather: dry first thing, increasingly wet later**

Portland Bill, 0630

We started the weekend with a great sea-watch that included good views of a passing red-throated diver, plenty of guillemots, razorbills, fulmars and kittiwakes along with singles of puffin and Manx shearwater. Leaving the point we were walking past the car park when we were delighted to see a black redstart fly up onto a post where it stayed until we had all seen it well in the 'scopes.

Arne RSPB Reserve, 1100

After breakfast the weather was deteriorating fast so we decided to drive to Poole Harbour to see if we could outrun the rain. At first our plan worked and we spent a very pleasant half-hour bird watching in the beautiful birch and oak woodland at this amazing reserve. The

highlights were the pair of stock doves and the excellent view of a tree creeper. Reaching the shore of the harbour we were treated to the surprising sight of a great crested grebe stood upright on a sand bar. Then the rain started in earnest and we sought shelter in the hide at Shipstall Point. Here we added a number of species to the list including brent goose and black-tailed godwit.



On the way back in heavy rain we stopped to admire this birch woodland created 20 years ago when an area was surrounded by a deer fence.

Ferrybridge, 1600

Hoping that a few seabirds might be sheltering here from the bad weather we spent a very wet half hour searching the mud flats at the northern-most part of Portland. A few dunlin were feeding on the shoreline along with several ringed plovers and turnstones. Out on the waters of the Fleet we could see a number of red-breasted mergansers and a single great crested grebe. A single kittiwake was the only seabird taking the short-cut across the Fleet.

Heights Hotel, 1930

A most surprising addition to the day's list was added during dinner when a barn owl appeared briefly outside the Bistro window!

**Sunday April 14th,
weather: mostly dry in a fresh southerly wind**

Portland Bill, 0630

Revisiting the site of yesterday's sea-watch we were surprised to see how few seabirds there were in seemingly perfect conditions. Another red-throated diver, a common scoter and a very distant great skua were all we had to show for over an hour's sea-watching.

Portland Bill, 1000

Back at the Bill again we called in to the Bird Observatory only to find that they were catching very little. However all was not lost as the little owl was performing well in the Observatory Quarry and allowed me to film this short sequence of it dozing off, see http://youtu.be/vjGVj8_cf0Y



We walked back along the very stormy Eastcliffs adding whimbrel to the day's list. Crossing over to the Westcliffs we were a bit disappointed to see that the seabird colony was empty, but we did find a very smart pair of stonechats on the way.

Radipole RSPB Reserve, 1400

After lunch at Ferrybridge spent the afternoon at this outstanding RSPB reserve in the centre of Weymouth. From the north hide flooded we added several fairly mundane species to the list but then the real star of the day appeared in the shape of an osprey migrating north high overhead. Most of us were able to get brief views of Cetti's warblers as we walked round the reserve paths and we all stood and admired the resident pair of marsh harriers as they hunted over the reedbeds.

The final bird of the day was seen as we were actually pulling out of the car park – a fine male white wagtail just a few feet away from the van!

Birds: 100 species

Red-throated Diver	Portland Bill
Great Crested Grebe	Arne, Radipole
Little Grebe	Radipole
Fulmar	Portland Bill
Manx Shearwater	Portland Bill
Gannet	Portland Bill
Cormorant	Portland, Radipole
Shag	Portland Bill
Little Egret	Arne
Grey Heron	Radipole
Mute Swan	Radipole
Brent Goose	Arne
Canada Goose	Radipole, Arne
Shelduck	Arne
Shoveler	Radipole
Gadwall	Radipole
Teal	Radipole, Arne
Mallard	Radipole, Arne
Tufted Duck	Radipole
Pochard	Radipole
Common Scoter	Portland Bill
Hooded Merganser	Radipole
Red-breasted Merganser	Ferrybridge
Osprey	Radipole
Kestrel	Portland, Radipole
Peregrine	Portland Bill
Buzzard	Radipole, Arne
Sparrowhawk	Radipole
Marsh Harrier	Radipole
Water Rail	Radipole (heard)
Moorhen	Radipole
Coot	Radipole
Curlew	Arne
Whimbrel	Portland Bill
Oystercatcher	Arne, Ferrybridge
Avocet	Arne
Ringed Plover	Ferrybridge
Black-tailed Godwit	Arne
Turnstone	Ferrybridge
Dunlin	Ferrybridge, Arne
Redshank	Arne
Great Skua	Portland Bill
Common Gull	Portland Bill
Black-headed Gull	various sites
Kittiwake	Portland Bill
Herring Gull	various sites
Great Black-backed Gull	various sites
Lesser Black-backed Gull	Radipole
Sandwich Tern	Portland Bill, Arne
Puffin	Portland Bill
Guillemot	Portland Bill
Razorbill	Portland Bill
Stock Dove	Arne
Wood Pigeon	various sites
Feral Pigeon	Radipole
Barn Owl	Heights Hotel
Little Owl	Portland Bill
Green Woodpecker	Arne
Skylark	Portland Bill
Rock Pipit	Portland Bill
Meadow Pipit	Portland Bill
Pied Wagtail	various sites
White Wagtail	Radipole
Wren	various sites
Duncock	various sites
Robin	various sites
Black Redstart	Portland Bill
Stonechat	Portland Bill
Wheatear	Portland Bill
Blackbird	various sites
Song Thrush	Arne

Mistle Thrush	Arne
Cetti's Warbler	Radipole
Blackcap	Portland Bill, Arne
Willow Warbler	various sites
Chiffchaff	various sites
Goldcrest	Arne
Bearded Tit (heard)	Radipole
Blue Tit	Arne
Great Tit	Arne
Coal Tit	Arne
Nuthatch	Arne
Treecreeper	Arne
Swallow	Radipole, Portland
House Martin	Radipole
Sand Martin	Radipole
Swift	Radipole
Raven	Portland Bill
Magpie	various sites
Jackdaw	various sites
Rook	Arne
Carrion Crow	various sites
Starling	Portland Bill
House Sparrow	Portland Bill
Greenfinch	Portland Bill
Linnet	Portland Bill
Goldfinch	Portland Bill
Chaffinch	Portland Bill, Arne
Bullfinch	Radipole
Reed Bunting	Radipole

Mammals:

Brown Rat	Radipole
Water Vole	Radipole
Otter (spraint)	Radipole
Grey Squirrel	Arne
Sika Deer	Arne

below: a video of this scene is at <http://youtu.be/kQOHs5bSMXE>

