

Saturday April 12th

Weather: sunny all day but in a cool westerly wind

Portland Bill, 0700

We started our weekend with an hour of seabird-watching. Razorbills and guillemots predominated with a supporting cast of kittiwakes, shags and fulmars. The most popular sighting was probably the pod of ten gannets that cruised past Pulpit Rock but the most unusual was certainly the great crested grebe that flew east a bit further out.



Portland Bill, 0930

After breakfast we returned to the Bill, this time watching the breeding seabirds from a point above their nesting ledges on the Westcliffs. Overhead the sky was full of singing skylarks and migrating swallows. Walking on to the Bird Observatory we were lucky enough to see both chiffchaff and willow warbler in the hand. The route back to the bus took us past the Observatory Quarry where the resident little owl was just visible crouching in its rocky home. The same quarry also produced a couple of willow warblers and a fine male blackcap.

Below: chiffchaff (left) and willow warbler at Portland Bird Observatory



Eastcliffs, 1130

A fly-by merlin was the best bird seen on our walk along the cliff path, but sadly only a few of the group were lucky enough to catch it. Having initially found the resident pair of peregrines absent, on our return to their nest site we had good views of the male, or it's back at least. A raven's nest was also found here, along with close views of a kestrel.

Ferrybridge, 1300

Food and coffee were the main priorities here but we also saw ringed plovers and dunlins, even if they were a bit distant and a bit fuzzy due to the heat-haze. Which was somewhat ironic considering we were all feeling frozen in the cold wind.

Portland Harbour, 1400

A busy spot to be during the 'Fish and Ships' festival but we still found some late red-breasted mergansers and a great-crested grebe.

Bower's Quarry, 1500

More geology than birds here (we found some excellent examples of late Jurassic salt pseudomorphs) until we reached the Westcliffs where we had close views of the fulmar colony. Raven and kestrel were also seen at close quarters.

Pennsylvania Castle, 1600

A quiet end to the day in a very beautiful corner of the island, with just a chaffinch to add to the day's list.

Sunday April 13th

Weather: clear skies with a fresh westerly wind

Portland Bill, 0700

With the sea considerably choppy than yesterday the guillemots and razorbills were less visible than yesterday. The highlight was a close fly-past by a female eider, followed later by a distant diver, most likely a great northern.

Verne Naval Cemetery, 1000

In beautifully warm spring weather we enjoyed a very pleasant walk under the cliffs of the Verne, the highest point of Portland. Much of our time was spent watching the antics of a pair of peregrines that were nesting high on the cliffs above us. The undercliffs were largely free from migrant birds apart from a blackcap and a willow warbler.

Admiralty Quarries, 1130

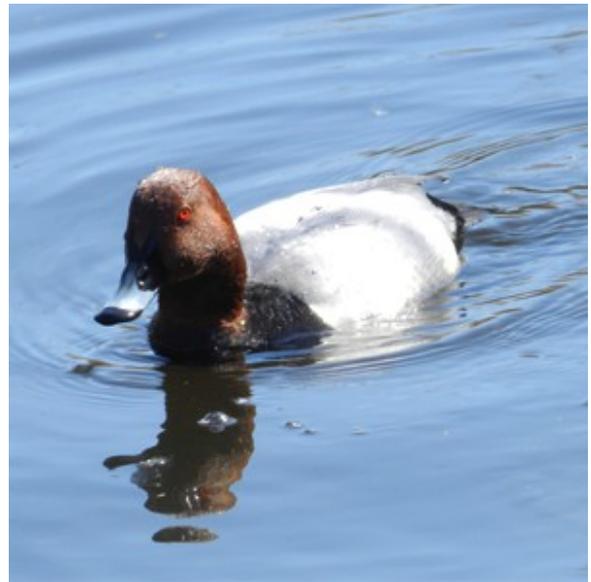
At last we found some wheatears – a group of five exceptionally smart birds that appeared on the top of the stack of rock known as Nicodemus Knob. Earlier we had found no less than 18 slow-worms together under a metal sheet. Nearby was a couple of common lizards.

Lodmoor RSPB Reserve, 1400

A quick stop here added a lot of birds to our weekend list including sedge warbler and greylag goose. A lesser whitethroat was heard but not seen. Several butterflies were seen here including a beautiful male orange-tip.

Radipole Lake RSPB Reserve, 1500

Difficult to single out a highlight here but the series of close views of Cetti's warblers that we had were most unusual. Then there was the pair of marsh harriers we watched for at least 30 minutes from the north hide. But my favourite was the exquisitely-marked alder-fly we found on the path.



Looking forward to the next time,

Bob Ford, April 14th 2014

Birds: 84 species

Great Northern Diver	Portland Bill
Great Crested Grebe	Portland Bill
Little Grebe	Radipole (heard)
Fulmar	Portland Bill
Gannet	Portland Bill
Cormorant	Portland Harbour
Shag	Portland Bill
Little Egret	Lodmoor
Grey Heron	Lodmoor
Mute Swan	Radipole, Lodmoor
Greylag Goose	Lodmoor
Canada Goose	Lodmoor
Shelduck	Lodmoor
Shoveler	Lodmoor
Teal	Lodmoor
Mallard	Radipole, Lodmoor
Gadwall	Radipole, Lodmoor
Tufted Duck	Radipole, Lodmoor
Pochard	Radipole, Lodmoor
Red-breasted Merganser	Portland Harbour
Eider	Portland Bill
Kestrel	Various sites
Peregrine	Portland
Merlin	Portland
Sparrowhawk	Portland
Buzzard	Portland
Marsh Harrier	Radipole
Moorhen	Radipole
Coot	Radipole
Oystercatcher	Lodmoor
Dunlin	Lodmoor
Ringed Plover	Ferrybridge
Common Gull	Portland Bill
Black-headed Gull	Lodmoor
Herring Gull	various sites
Great Black-backed Gull	various sites
Lesser Black-backed Gull	Radipole
Kittiwake	Portland Bill
Guillemot	Portland Bill
Razorbill	Portland Bill
Wood Pigeon	various sites
Feral Pigeon	various sites
Stock Dove	Portland
Collared Dove	Portland
Little Owl	Portland Bill
Skylark	Portland Bill
Rock Pipit	Portland Bill
Meadow Pipit	Portland Bill
Pied Wagtail	Portland Bill
Swallow	various sites
Sand Martin	Portland Bill
House Martin	Portland Bill
Wren	Radipole
Dunnock	various sites
Robin	Lodmoor

Stonechat	Portland
Wheatear	Portland
Blackbird	various sites
Song Thrush	Radipole
Cetti's Warbler	Radipole
Sedge Warbler	Radipole
Reed Warbler	Radipole (heard)
Blackcap	Portland Bill
Lesser Whitethroat	Lodmoor (heard)
Chiffchaff	various sites
Willow Warbler	Portland
Goldcrest	Lodmoor (heard)
Bearded Tit	Radipole
Long-tailed Tit	Radipole
Blue Tit	various sites
Great Tit	various sites
Raven	various sites
Magpie	various sites
Jackdaw	various sites
Rook	Portland Bill
Carrion Crow	various sites
Starling	various sites
House Sparrow	various sites
Goldfinch	various sites
Greenfinch	various sites
Linnet	Portland
Chaffinch	various sites
Bullfinch	Portland
Reed Bunting	Radipole

Mammals:

Rabbit	Portland
--------	----------

Insects:

Small Tortoiseshell	Portland
Peacock	Lodmoor
Speckled Wood	Portland
Orange-tip	Lodmoor
Small White	Portland
Green-veined White	Portland
Oak Eggar	Portland
Alder Fly	Radipole
Solitary Bee	Portland

Reptiles:

Common Lizard	Portland
Slow-worm	Portland

Plants:

Alexanders	Portland
Russian Comfrey	Portland