

## Portland Heights Birdwatching Breaks March 14<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> 2014



### **Saturday March 15<sup>th</sup>**

**Weather: fine all day, with a light but cold north-westerly wind**

#### Portland Bill, 0700

A beautiful and relatively calm morning at the Bill with lots of guillemots and razorbills off shore. A few gannets and fulmars were also seen but not much else in the way of seabirds in the calm conditions. Several ravens were patrolling the cliffs with a flock of 5 overhead at one point. Probably the most popular sighting was the Bird Observatory little owl, which gave us a really good performance this morning as it sat dozing on its rock. The only definite migrant seen though was a lone chiffchaff, feeding on the ground as they often do at this time of year before the leaves are out in the bushes.

#### Barleycrates Lane, 0930

Our walk along the Westcliffs was definitely the coldest part of the day but paid off when a pair of peregrines put on a spectacular display right in front of us. Skylarks and meadow pipits were everywhere and a pair of kestrels indulged in a bit of "romanticals".

#### Portland Castle, 1130

Our first look at Portland Harbour produced excellent views of red-breasted mergansers and the star bird of the day, the black guillemot.

#### Ferrybridge, 1230

We were pleased to see a few waders here even if they were only dunlins and ringed plovers. Brent geese were also seen here, but only from the car on the way home at the end of the day.

#### Sandsfoot Castle, 1330

Our second look at Portland Harbour gave us a distant view of a black-throated diver and even more distant views of what looked to be red-necked grebes. We decided to investigate further...

#### Bincleaves, 1430

Here at the northern end of the harbour we had excellent views of both red-necked and Slavonian grebes - 4 of each. The diver was seen again at slightly closer range.

#### Radipole RSPB Reserve, 1500

In lovely afternoon sunshine we had time for a leisurely exploration of all of this amazing reserve. First was a snipe feeding at the edge of the reeds not far from the car park. Then we found no less than 7 great-crested grebes, 2 of which were in full head-shaking display. Reaching the hide we were most surprised to see a flock of 20 black-tailed godwits rise from the north end of the reserve. Then a male sparrowhawk appeared just in front of the hide windows and proceeded to settle in a tree giving us superb views through the telescope. For me this was the highlight of the day. We finished with the welcome return of "hoodie" the hooded merganser and a real identification challenge in the shape of a first-winter Mediterranean gull doing its very best to look like a black-headed gull.

**Sunday March 16<sup>th</sup>**

**Weather: unbroken sunshine all day, fresh westerly wind**

Portland Bill, 0900

Wheatears were much in evidence here even before we had parked the van with at least 5 seen. From the Westcliffs we had good views of razorbills and shags on the breeding ledges, with fulmars flying about offshore.

Southwell, 1030

Excellent views here of both of the resident pair of peregrines sat on the cliffs.

East Weares, 1130

Just a few common birds here including chaffinch and wren.

Admiralty Quarries, 1200

We visited the highest point on the island to see if we could locate any singing yellowhammers, but had to be content with some exceedingly bright stock doves in the Verne ditch.

Ferrybridge, 1230

The waders were even more distant today with just turnstone added to the list. A female wheatear on Chesil Beach was a real bonus though.

Lodmoor RSPB Reserve, 1330

Nothing rare here but a huge variety of birds including a hunting female marsh harrier and a group of 3 greylags, rare visitors to this site. Waders were few and far between with a few snipe and lapwings and a couple of redshank that flew off before we could get a good look at them.

Maiden Castle, 1530

No sign of the hoped-for corn buntings here – until one perched right in front of the van! A great end to a wonderful weekend.

Looking forward to our next trip together,

Bob



**Birds: 81 species**

Black-throated Diver	Portland Harbour
Slavonian Grebe	Portland Harbour
Great Crested Grebe	Portland Harbour
Red-necked Grebe	Portland Harbour
Little Grebe	Radipole, Lodmoor
Fulmar	Portland Bill
Gannet	Portland Bill
Cormorant	Portland Bill
Shag	Portland Bill
Little Egret	Ferrybridge, Lodmoor
Grey Heron	Radipole, Lodmoor
Mute Swan	Radipole, Lodmoor
Brent Goose	Ferrybridge
Canada Goose	Lodmoor, Lodmoor
Greylag	Lodmoor
Shelduck	Radipole, Lodmoor
Shoveler	Lodmoor
Wigeon	Lodmoor
Teal	Radipole, Lodmoor
Mallard	Radipole, Lodmoor
Gadwall	Radipole, Lodmoor
Tufted Duck	Radipole, Lodmoor
Pochard	Lodmoor
Red-breasted Merganser	Portland Harbour
Hooded Merganser	Radipole
Sparrowhawk	Radipole
Kestrel	Portland
Peregrine	Portland
Marsh Harrier	Lodmoor
Buzzard	Lodmoor
Water Rail	Radipole (heard)
Moorhen	Radipole
Coot	Radipole
Oystercatcher	Portland Harbour
Lapwing	Lodmoor
Ringed Plover	Ferrybridge
Snipe	Radipole, Lodmoor
Redshank	Lodmoor
Black-tailed Godwit	Radipole
Dunlin	Ferrybridge
Turnstone	Ferrybridge
Common Gull	various sites
Black-headed Gull	various sites
Mediterranean Gull	Ferrybridge, Radipole
Herring Gull	various sites
Great Black-backed Gull	various sites
Guillemot	Portland Bill
Black Guillemot	Portland Harbour
Razorbill	Portland Bill
Wood Pigeon	various sites
Feral Pigeon	various sites
Stock Dove	Portland
Collared Dove	Radipole
Little Owl	Portland Bill
Skylark	Portland Bill, Maiden Castle
Rock Pipit	Portland Bill
Meadow Pipit	Portland Bill
Pied Wagtail	various sites
Wren	various sites
Duncock	various sites
Robin	various sites
Wheatear	Portland Bill, Ferrybridge
Blackbird	various sites
Song Thrush	Radipole (heard)
Cetti's Warbler	Radipole (heard)

Blackcap	Sandsfoot Castle (heard)
Chiffchaff	Portland Bill
Long-tailed Tit	Radipole, Lodmoor
Blue Tit	various sites
Great Tit	various sites
Raven	Portland
Magpie	various sites
Jackdaw	various sites
Carrion Crow	various sites
Starling	various sites
House Sparrow	various sites
Goldfinch	various sites
Greenfinch	various sites
Linnet	Portland
Chaffinch	various sites
Reed Bunting	Radipole
Corn Bunting	Maiden Castle

**Mammals:**

Roe Deer	Coombe Valley
----------	---------------

**Insects:**

Small Tortoiseshell	Portland
Peacock	Lodmoor