



### **Saturday February 28th**

**Weather: overcast with occasional light drizzle, wind fresh westerly**

Portland Bill, 0900

With the rain clearing just as we got out of the bus we were clearly in for a weekend of good luck. Before we saw any birds at all we were treated to the sound of skylarks singing overhead. Soon we were watching them at close quarters and getting overhead views of both meadow and rock pipits. Walking out to the cliffs we found that the guillemots and razorbills were already starting to sort out their places on the breeding ledges as were the fulmars cruising past at cliff top height. Reaching the Bill itself we had first a distant view of a gannet and then a much closer one, both traveling east. A small flock of goldfinches were a very attractive sight as they perched close to us. Kestrel and Peregrine were both seen by a few lucky members of the group (but not me!).

Grove Point, 1030

Our second target was the hooded crow that for some time has been resident on the Grove playing fields. We soon found it amongst a large flock of carrion crows and relished the opportunity of watching what has for a long time been a very rare visitor indeed to southern England. We then walked along the coastal path overlooking the East Weares and the track of the old Weymouth to Portland railway line. Buzzards and fulmars were seen here but the star sightings were both mammals - a very rare Portland grey squirrel and the flock of introduced British primitive goats.

Portland Castle, 1200

Another quick success here as we found the long-staying black guillemot in what has been his regular spot for two winters now. Around him were dozens of red-breasted mergansers, some of which came unusually close to us.

Ferrybridge, 1300

A fairly quiet scene confronted us after we had finished our lunch with just a lone bar-tailed godwit instead of the usual wader flock. Just a few Mediterranean gulls were here today but one of them was an outstanding adult in breeding plumage.

Sandsfoot Castle, 1400

A close black-necked grebe in transitional plumage was followed by two far more distant birds in very smart breeding plumage. We then moved on to the far northern end of Portland Harbour which produced no less than twenty four great crested grebes and five slavian grebes.

Radipole RSPB Reserve, 1530

We finished the day with a very productive walk round this outstanding reserve. Even though the marsh harriers and the bearded tits failed to show up we saw an excellent range of wildfowl including a flock of ten pochard. A close goldcrest was an unexpected sight as was the wintering chiffchaff calling nearby - or it would have been had we actually seen it. The North Hide gave us excellent views of buzzard and heron and a brief view of a sparrowhawk.

### **Sunday March 1st**

**Weather: as yesterday rain at start and end of day, wind increasingly strong westerly**

Wareham Forest, 1030

A very pleasant walk in beautiful surroundings with lots of new birds for the weekend, the best by far being a very confident woodlark. Two more wood larks were also seen later on with a couple of Dartford warblers showing briefly at the same time. Most of the time we were there buzzards were soaring overhead and displaying to their partners. A huge wood ant nest gave some variety to the natural history content of the morning.

Arne RSPB Reserve, 1400

After a very pleasant lunch watching nuthatches and coal tits on the bird feeders we walked out onto Coombe Heath overlooking the tidal mudflats of Middlebere Lake. The first spoonbill was seen flying away from us but we soon realised that there were more down on the shoreline and before long we had seen at least six of these beautiful birds. Curlews and redshank were here in abundance along with one of the largest flocks of brent geese I have ever seen. In the distance a pair of very smart yellow-legged gulls were found in their usual spot at the head of the creek but sadly no harriers were seen. The mammal list was greatly improved when we saw first a red fox and shortly afterwards a brown hare in the fields across the creek. A group of sika deer seen on the way back to the bus were the fifth mammal species for the weekend.

Looking forward to the next time,

Bob

### **Birds: 82 species**

Slavonian Grebe	Portland Harbour
Great Crested Grebe	Portland Harbour, Radipole
Black-necked Grebe	Portland Harbour
Little Grebe	Radipole
Fulmar	Portland Bill
Gannet	Portland Bill
Cormorant	Portland, Radipole
Shag	Portland
Little Egret	Ferrybridge, Radipole, Arne
Grey Heron	Radipole
Spoonbill	Arne
Mute Swan	Radipole
Dark-bellied Brent Goose	Ferrybridge, Arne
Canada Goose	Radipole, Arne
Shelduck	Radipole, Arne
Teal	Radipole, Arne
Mallard	Radipole, Arne
Gadwall	Radipole, Arne
Wigeon	Arne
Shoveler	Radipole
Pochard	Radipole
Tufted Duck	Radipole
Red-breasted Merganser	Portland Harbour
Kestrel	Portland, Arne
Peregrine	Portland Bill
Buzzard	Portland, Wareham Forest
Sparrowhawk	Radipole, Portland

Pheasant	Poxwell
Coot	Radipole
Moorhen	Radipole
Curlew	Arne
Oystercatcher	Arne, Portland Bill
Redshank	Arne
Bar-tailed Godwit	Ferrybridge
Common Gull	various sites
Black-headed Gull	various sites
Mediterranean Gull	Ferrybridge, Radipole
Herring Gull	various sites
Great Black-backed Gull	various sites
Lesser Black-backed Gull	Portland Harbour
Yellow-legged Gull	Arne
Guillemot	Portland Bill
Black Guillemot	Portland Harbour
Razorbill	Portland Bill
Wood Pigeon	various sites
Feral Pigeon	Radipole
Green Woodpecker	Radipole (heard)
Great Spotted Woodpecker	Arne (heard)
Nuthatch	Arne
Woodlark	Wareham Forest
Skylark	Ferrybridge, Portland Bill
Rock Pipit	Portland Bill
Meadow Pipit	Portland Bill
Grey Wagtail	Wareham Forest
Pied Wagtail	various sites
Wren	various sites
Dunnock	Radipole (heard)
Robin	various sites
Stonechat	Wareham Forest
Blackbird	various sites
Song Thrush	Portland
Mistle Thrush	Wareham Forest
Cetti's Warbler	Radipole (heard)
Dartford Warbler	Wareham Forest
Goldcrest	Radipole
Long-tailed Tit	Wareham Forest
Coal Tit	Wareham Forest, Arne
Blue Tit	various sites
Great Tit	various sites
Raven	Arne, Portland
Magpie	various sites
Jackdaw	various sites
Rook	Poxwell
Carrion Crow	various sites
Hooded Crow	Portland
Starling	various sites
House Sparrow	various sites
Goldfinch	Portland
Chaffinch	Portland
Greenfinch	Arne
Siskin	Arne
Reed Bunting	Wareham Forest (heard)

**Mammals: 5 species**

Grey Squirrel  
British Primitive Goat  
Sika Deer  
Brown Hare  
Red Fox

Portland  
Portland  
Arne  
Arne  
Arne

**Insects: 1 species**

Wood Ant

Arne