

HEIGHTS HOTEL WILDLIFE BREAKS

Friday February 23rd – Sunday February 25th 2018



Saturday February 24th

Weather: sunny all day in a very cold north-easterly wind

Portland Bill, 0900

In very cold conditions we started the weekend with excellent views of gannets feeding out at sea. The chance to compare several confusion species side by side was very much appreciated with shag next to cormorant and raven next to crow. Rock pipits and meadow pipits were also seen well with skylarks singing overhead. Several kestrels were watched hovering at very close proximity.

Ferrybridge, 1030

Our first stop here was mainly to see if the Ross's gull had turned up; it hadn't but we did find a small flock of brent geese and a few ringed plovers.

Portland Castle, 1100

In painfully cold and windy weather the southern end of Portland Harbour managed to produce a few red-breasted mergansers and a solitary heron.

Chesil Cove, 1130

Walking to the very start of Chesil Beach we soon found a couple of purple sandpipers feeding on the rocks just above the sea. The slopes above held a pair of stonechats and more close views of rock pipits were enjoyed. A group of six shelduck out in Lyme Bay was a very unusual record for this site.



Purple sandpiper, see video at <https://youtu.be/O1ecWeCzXfl>

Ferrybridge, 1230

Still no sign of the Ross's gull but we did enjoy our lunch here accompanied by some very friendly pied wagtails.

Sandsfoot, 1400

Searching the middle section of Portland Harbour produced several black-necked grebes, the closest of which was in its superbly coloured breeding plumage.

Radipole RSPB Reserve, 1500

Luck was really with us today when we noticed a crowd of birdwatchers stood next to the visitors' centre as we were driving past on the way to Lodmoor. After a quick U-turn we arrived in the car park just in time to see the Ross's gull before it moved on again. Several snipe were here as well along with tufted duck, teal and shelduck. The far end of the reserve produced more ducks and a pair of marsh harriers. Back at the car park some very smart Mediterranean gulls were seen.

Portland Topfields 1630

We finished the day by looking for short-eared and barn owls, but sadly none were out tonight.

Sunday February 25th

Weather: sunny all day in a very cold north-easterly wind

Maiden Castle, 0930

Huge numbers of golden plovers were seen here, but only in flight. Several corn buntings were seen one of which gave good views from the van.

Lytchett Matravers, 1100

Our visit to the Church of St Mary the Virgin failed to show us any of the hawfinches which had been seen recently but we did add several new birds to the weekend's list which including greenfinch and great spotted woodpecker.

Arne RSPB Reserve, 1030

Our walk out to Shipstall Point was very quiet but once we reached the shores of Poole Harbour we had distant views of a good range of waders including curlew and avocet. In the channel between us and Round Island a seal was seen briefly. This may well have been a common seal, a species rare in Dorset.

Next we walked across Arne Hill where a couple of Dartford warblers appeared intermittently in the gorse bushes. The hide at Shipstall Point gave us great telescope views of wigeon, curlew and peregrine.

We finished the day with a very beautiful male firecrest that we found feeding in the holly bushes at the side of the car park, a fantastic end to a very memorable weekend.

Looking forward to the next time,

Bob

The weekend list:

Little Grebe	Radipole
Black-necked Grebe	Portland Harbour
Great Crested Grebe	Ferrybridge
Gannet	Portland Bill
Cormorant	Arne, Portland
Shag	Portland Bill
Little Egret	Arne, Ferrybridge
Grey Heron	Portland Harbour, Radipole
Mute Swan	Radipole
Dark-bellied Brent Goose	Ferrybridge
Shelduck	Arne, Radipole, Chesil Cove
Teal	Arne, Radipole
Mallard	Arne, Radipole
Shoveler	Radipole
Gadwall	Radipole
Wigeon	Arne
Tufted Duck	Radipole
Red-breasted Merganser	Arne, Portland Harbour
Kestrel	Portland
Peregrine	Arne
Buzzard	Portland
Marsh Harrier	Radipole
Sparrowhawk	Weymouth
Pheasant	Portland
Coot	Radipole
Moorhen	Radipole
Water Rail	Radipole (heard)
Curlew	Arne
Oystercatcher	Arne, Portland Harbour
Avocet	Arne
Redshank	Arne
Purple Sandpiper	Chesil Cove
Ringed Plover	Ferrybridge
Lapwing	Maiden Castle
Golden Plover	Maiden Castle
Snipe	Radipole
Black-headed Gull	Ferrybridge etc
Mediterranean Gull	Radipole
Herring Gull	Ferrybridge etc
Great Black-backed Gull	Ferrybridge etc
Common Gull	Radipole
Lesser Black-backed Gull	Radipole
Ross's Gull	Radipole
Guillemot	Portland Bill
Wood Pigeon	Portland etc
Collared Dove	Dorchester
Feral Pigeon	Radipole
Stock Dove	Portland
Great Spotted Woodpecker	Lychett Matravers (heard)
Skylark	Portland Bill, Maiden Castle

Meadow Pipit	Portland Bill, Maiden Castle
Rock Pipit	Portland Bill
Pied Wagtail	Ferrybridge, Maiden Castle
Wren	Portland, Arne
Dunnoek	Lychett Matravers
Robin	Portland etc
Stonechat	Chesil Cove
Blackbird	Portland etc
Song Thrush	Radipole
Cetti's Warbler	Radipole (heard)
Dartford Warbler	Arne
Firecrest	Arne
Coal Tit	Lychett Matravers
Blue Tit	Arne
Great Tit	Arne
Magpie	Portland etc
Jackdaw	Portland etc
Rook	Lychett Matravers
Carrion Crow	Portland etc
Raven	Portland Bill, Ferrybridge
Starling	Weymouth
Greenfinch	Lychett Matravers
Goldfinch	Portland Bill
Linnet	Portland Bill
Chaffinch	Radipole, Lychett Matravers
Bullfinch	Radipole
Reed Bunting	Radipole
Corn Bunting	Maiden Castle