

HEIGHTS HOTEL WILDLIFE BREAKS

Friday January 19th – Sunday January 21st 2018



Saturday January 20th

Weather: mostly calm and overcast but with some sunshine in the afternoon

Ferrybridge 0900

We started our weekend's birding with a brief stop at Ferrybridge to have a close look at a small group of dark-bellied Brent geese, one of which was one of the very few first-year birds seen this year.

Arne RSPB Reserve 1030

It was a beautifully calm morning at this superb reserve and thankfully remained dry. Our walk out to Shipstall Point was very productive with good views of treecreeper, nuthatch, coal tit and, best of all, a beautiful firecrest. The firecrest wasn't in view for long but still managed to give the whole group very close views as it hopped along a wire fence. Reaching the shores of Poole Harbour we had good views of several mergansers but only very distant views of a small group of goldeneye that were feeding out beyond Round Island. The hide at Shipstall Point was full up but from the ground-level screens we enjoyed great telescope views of several beautiful drake pintail and no less than twenty spoonbills.

After lunch we walked out to Coombe Heath hoping to see Dartford warblers. None showed up but we were more than happy with the thousands of waders that were feeding out in Middlebere Lake. Most were avocets but there were also large numbers of curlews, black-tailed godwits, redshanks and lapwings with smaller numbers of grey plovers and dunlins. The walk back to the car park produced a flock of meadow pipits and a very handsome herd of twenty or so sika deer.

Portland Bill 1730

We finished the day with a tour of the road between the Bill and Southwell looking for short-eared and barn owls, but none were out tonight.

Saturday January 21st

Weather: foggy with light rain in the morning, drier in the afternoon, wind south-westerly

Portland Bill 0900

A very damp Portland Bill gave us good views of guillemots, razorbills and gannets along with more distant views of fulmars and kittiwakes. On the land we found rock pipits and turnstones with two purple sandpipers flying past just offshore.

Chiswell 1030

A quick but very productive stop to see a black redstart which has been here all winter.

Portland Castle 1100

Our first look at Portland Harbour gave us exceptionally close views of a great northern diver with red-breasted mergansers and black-necked grebes further out.

Hamm Beach 1100

Looking out over the central area of Portland Harbour we found several more black-necked grebes along with a distant female common scoter.

Sandsfoot 1130

Moving on a half mile to the north added just a few more great crested grebes to the day's list and brought the black-necked grebe total up to seven.

Ferry bridge 1200

The small flock of brent geese here turned out to be all of the dark-bellied race. Out on the shoreline were a hundred or so dunlins and a single bar-tailed godwit. Probably the best bird here was the immature kittiwake that flew past very close being pursued by a very aggressive herring gull.

Bincleaves 1300

Our final look at Portland Harbour was over the northern corner which today only showed us a few great crested grebes and red-breasted mergansers.

Lodmoor RSPB Reserve 1400

Quite a few ducks were seen here including gadwall, pochard and tufted duck but not the scaup we hoped for. A very smart female-type male marsh harrier was a good second prize though.

Radipole RSPB Reserve, 1500

Mediterranean gulls were probably the most memorable birds here with a hundred or more seen as they passed through on their way to their roost in Weymouth Bay. Driving back through Weymouth we stopped to watch the impressive starling murmuration over the town centre, which all agreed was a very good way to end an excellent weekend.

Looking forward to the next time,

Bob

Birds:

Great Northern Diver	Portland Harbour
Little Grebe	Portland Harbour, Lodmoor
Black-necked Grebe	Portland Harbour
Great Crested Grebe	Arne, Portland Harbour
Fulmar	Portland Bill
Gannet	Portland Bill
Cormorant	Arne, Portland
Shag	Portland Bill
Spoonbill	Arne
Little Egret	Arne, Portland Harbour
Grey Heron	Arne, Portland Harbour, Radipole
Mute Swan	Radipole
Dark-bellied Brent Goose	Arne, Ferrybridge
Canada Goose	Arne
Shelduck	Arne, Radipole, Portland Harbour
Teal	Arne, Lodmoor, Radipole
Mallard	Arne, Lodmoor, Radipole
Shoveler	Lodmoor, Radipole
Gadwall	Lodmoor, Radipole
Wigeon	Arne
Pintail	Arne
Pochard	Lodmoor, Radipole
Tufted Duck	Lodmoor, Radipole
Red-breasted Merganser	Arne, Portland Harbour
Common Scoter	Portland Harbour
Goldeneye	Arne
Kestrel	Arne, Portland
Peregrine	Arne
Buzzard	Arne
Marsh Harrier	Lodmoor, Radipole
Pheasant	Arne
Coot	Lodmoor, Radipole
Moorhen	Lodmoor, Radipole
Water Rail	Radipole (heard)
Curlew	Arne
Oystercatcher	Arne, Ferrybridge
Avocet	Arne
Redshank	Arne
Bar-tailed Godwit	Ferrybridge
Black-tailed Godwit	Arne
Dunlin	Ferrybridge, Arne
Purple Sandpiper	Portland Bill
Lapwing	Arne, Lodmoor
Grey Plover	Arne
Snipe	Lodmoor
Turnstone	Portland Bill
Black-headed Gull	Ferrybridge etc
Mediterranean Gull	Radipole
Herring Gull	Ferrybridge etc
Great Black-backed Gull	Ferrybridge etc
Common Gull	Radipole
Kittiwake	Portland Bill, Ferrybridge
Razorbill	Portland Bill
Guillemot	Portland Bill
Wood Pigeon	Portland etc
Collared Dove	Dorchester
Feral Pigeon	Radipole
Green Woodpecker	Arne
Great Spotted Woodpecker	Arne
Skylark	Ferrybridge
Meadow Pipit	Arne

Rock Pipit	Portland Bill, Ferrybridge
Pied Wagtail	Arne, Ferrybridge
Duncock	Portland etc
Robin	Portland etc
Black Redstart	Chiswell
Blackbird	Portland etc
Song Thrush	Arne
Mistle Thrush	Arne
Cetti's Warbler	Radipole (heard)
Goldcrest	Arne
Firecrest	Arne
Long-tailed Tit	Arne, Bingleaves
Coal Tit	Arne
Blue Tit	Arne
Great Tit	Arne
Nuthatch	Arne
Treecreeper	Arne
Magpie	Portland etc
Jackdaw	Portland etc
Rook	Arne, Ferrybridge
Carrion Crow	Portland etc
Raven	Portland Bill, Arne
Starling	Weymouth
House Sparrow	Portland etc
Goldfinch	Arne, Portland Bill
Linnet	Arne
Chaffinch	Arne
Bullfinch	Arne