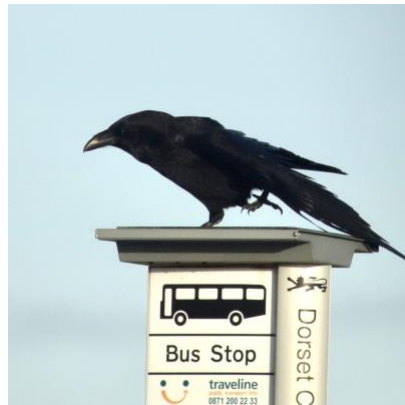


HEIGHTS HOTEL WILDLIFE BREAKS

Friday December 6th – Sunday December 8th 2019



Saturday December 7th

Weather: a bright day especially in the morning with a fresh westerly breeze

Portland Bill, 0900

On arriving at the southernmost point of Dorset we were still sat in the van when we made our first memorable sighting – a two-headed Raven! Closer inspection revealed two Ravens stood very close together, but it was still a great start to the day. Reaching the coast a few distant Gannets could be seen with larger numbers of auks, Guillemots and Razorbills, constantly flying past. The highlight here was the flock of at least seven Purple Sandpipers feeding on the shoreline along with three Turnstones.

Chesil Cove, 1030

Our quest for a Black Redstart eventually paid off but only when we were nearly back at the van after an hour's intensive searching. On the way we came across a very smart male Stonechat and a Fulmar circling a distant cliff.

Hamm Beach, 1200

Driving north up to a vantage point on the shore of the harbour we were lucky enough to catch a glimpse of a very elusive bird – a Black Guillemot. A couple of Eider and several Red-breasted Mergansers were also seen but everything was very far away and constantly being disturbed by all the sailing activities.

Ferrybridge, 1230

Just a handful of Dark-bellied Brent Geese here today along with few Oystercatchers and a huge flock of 350 Mediterranean Gulls.

Radipole RSPB Reserve, 1400

An enormous range of birds were seen here this afternoon including a long list of ducks and gulls along with a good variety of smaller birds such as Chiffchaffs and Long-tailed Tits. We spent some time looking for Bearded Tits but most of us only managed to hear a few calls. For me the highlight was watching the female Marsh Harrier flying around whilst being watched by two different males.

The Brown Rats provided us with an entertaining diversion from all the birds, see https://youtu.be/UaB7_vsVdnQ

Portland Bill, 1600

We finished with a quick and ultimately unsuccessful look for owls in the fields bordering the Bill road.

Sunday December 8th

Weather: very windy all day with sunny intervals and one very heavy shower in the afternoon

Wakeham - Pennsylvania Castle, 0900

An enchanting start to our second day with a group of twenty or more Long-tailed Tits giving excellent views at the Wakeham railway bridge. With them was a single Goldcrest and a few Great and Blue Tits. Nearby in some taller trees we found the rarest bird of the weekend, a Lesser Whitethroat of the Siberian race *blythi*.

Portland Castle, 1030

Our second visit to Portland Harbour gave us good views of a Great Northern Diver and several Red-breasted Mergansers as well as the chance to compare Shags and Cormorants for the first time this weekend.

Rodwell Trail, 1130

After a brief stop at the Sailing Academy to confirm that the windsurfers really had scared off all the birds we moved on to a quieter part of Portland Harbour where we soon found a female Eider fairly close in. Detailed scrutiny of the further reaches soon turned up a couple of Slavonian Grebes and the first Great Crested Grebes of the weekend.

Ferrybridge, 1200

With the tide somewhat lower than yesterday a good number of waders were present, comprising mostly Dunlin and Ringed Plovers with a few Oystercatchers and a single Turnstone.

Castle Cove Sailing Club, 1300

Always our favourite spot to view Portland Harbour from this very sheltered site turned up trumps again today with a great list of seabirds including Great Crested Grebe, Common Scoter and a very frustrating Black-throated Diver which, although remarkably close, only showed itself for a matter of seconds.

Lodmoor RSPB Reserve, 1330

We started at the north-western corner of the reserve hoping to see a Yellow-browed Warbler but having to be content with a single Chiffchaff. Walking round the rest of the reserve proved much more productive with a huge number of Snipe being found along with a single Avocet, a very rare bird in Weymouth. One of the group was lucky enough to find the female Garganey which has been here for some time but it had vanished before the rest of us arrived.

Looking forward to the next time,

Bob

The weekend list:

Great Northern Diver	Portland Harbour
Black-throated Diver	Portland Harbour
Slavonian Grebe	Portland Harbour
Little Grebe	Radipole
Great Crested Grebe	Portland Harbour
Fulmar	Chesil Cove
Gannet	Portland Bill
Cormorant	Portland, Lodmoor, Radipole
Shag	Portland Harbour
Little Egret	Ferrybridge
Grey Heron	Portland Harbour
Mute Swan	Radipole
Dark-bellied Brent Goose	Ferrybridge
Shelduck	Radipole
Teal	Lodmoor, Radipole
Garganey	Lodmoor
Mallard	Lodmoor, Radipole
Gadwall	Lodmoor, Radipole
Shoveler	Lodmoor, Radipole
Tufted Duck	Radipole
Pochard	Lodmoor
Common Scoter	Portland Harbour
Red-breasted Merganser	Portland Harbour
Eider	Portland Harbour

Kestrel	Portland, Ferrybridge
Buzzard	Chesil Cove
Marsh Harrier	Lodmoor, Radipole
Coot	Lodmoor, Radipole
Moorhen	Lodmoor, Radipole
Water Rail	Radipole (heard)
Oystercatcher	Portland Harbour, Portland Bill
Avocet	Lodmoor
Lapwing	Lodmoor
Ringed Plover	Ferrybridge
Snipe	Lodmoor
Dunlin	Ferrybridge, Lodmoor
Purple Sandpiper	Portland Bill
Turnstone	Portland Bill, Ferrybridge
Black-headed Gull	Ferrybridge etc
Mediterranean Gull	Ferrybridge, Radipole, Lodmoor
Herring Gull	Ferrybridge etc
Lesser Black-backed Gull	Radipole
Great Black-backed Gull	Ferrybridge etc
Common Gull	Portland Bill, Ferrybridge
Guillemot	Portland Bill
Razorbill	Portland Bill
Black Guillemot	Portland Harbour
Collared Dove	Wakeham
Wood Pigeon	Portland etc
Feral Pigeon	Radipole
Great Spotted Woodpecker (heard)	Radipole
Kingfisher	Radipole, Lodmoor
Skylark	Portland, Ferrybridge
Meadow Pipit	Portland Bill
Rock Pipit	Portland Bill
Pied Wagtail	Portland etc
Wren	Portland etc
Duncock	Radipole, Lodmoor
Robin	Portland etc
Black Redstart	Chesil Cove
Stonechat	Chesil Cove
Blackbird	Portland etc
Cetti's Warbler	Radipole (heard)
Eastern Lesser Whitethroat	Wakeham
Chiffchaff	Radipole, Wakeham, Lodmoor
Goldcrest	Wakeham
Long-tailed Tit	Radipole, Wakeham
Blue Tit	Portland, Radipole
Great Tit	Portland, Radipole
Bearded Tit	Radipole
Jay (heard)	Radipole
Magpie	Portland etc
Jackdaw	Portland Bill
Rook	Radipole
Carrion Crow	Portland etc
Raven	Portland Bill
Starling	Portland etc
House Sparrow	Portland, Rodwell Trail
Goldfinch	Portland etc
Linnet	Rodwell Trail
Greenfinch	Radipole, Rodwell Trail
Chaffinch	Portland
Reed Bunting	Radipole
Grey Squirrel	Wakeham
Brown Rat	Radipole