

HEIGHTS HOTEL WILDLIFE BREAKS
Friday January 11th – Sunday January 13th 2019



The Ring-necked Duck, as seen in the October Birdbreak (left) and as photographed by Debby Saunders this week (right)

Saturday January 12th

Weather: cloudy but mild in a fresh northerly wind

Kingbarrow Quarry, 0900

We started our weekend with a fruitless search for little owls in the quarry next to the hotel. Searching the owls' favoured rocks did turn up a very attractive pair of stock doves though.

Portland Bill, 1030

Rock pipits on the ground and gannets out at sea started off our observations at this premier bird-watching site. Other seabirds present included shag, cormorant, razorbill and guillemot with kittiwakes passing through further offshore. The highlight of our sea-watch was a red-throated diver flying east at some height. Walking north along the Eastcliffs we failed to find any purple sandpipers but did see several oystercatchers and turnstones. A black redstart was the first uncommon land bird of the weekend.

Portland Castle, 1200

Close views of a "feeding frenzy" of red-breasted mergansers were had here with a much more distant black-necked grebe and great crested grebe being seen as well.

Ferrybridge, 1230

A flock of 350 Mediterranean gulls here contained a few wearing green rings, indicating that they were from breeding colonies in France. Just in front of the bus a flock of five or six skylarks gave us unusually close views.

Radipole RSPB Reserve, 1400

Our main target here was the male ring-necked duck, which one half of the group searched for and managed to find very quickly. Meanwhile the other half enjoyed good views of a yellow-browed warbler. No bearded tits were seen but a couple of male Cetti's warblers were watched at close quarters as they noisily chased each other through the bushes.

Lodmoor RSPB Reserve, 1600

Remarkably we saw a second yellow-browed warbler here and, after quite a trek, the other hoped for rarity – the lesser yellowlegs. Its companion, a male ruff, also gave very good views.

Bowleaze Cove, 1700

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

Sunday January 13th

Weather: very windy but mild

Portland Bill, 0900

A second search for the purple sandpipers failed again but with the increasingly strong wind we did enjoy much closer views of gannets.

Portland Harbour, 1030

Searching the harbour from Bincleaves we soon found a Slavonian grebe, helpfully in close proximity to a great crested grebe for comparison. Further searching eventually turned up a distant great northern diver and a flock of ten black-necked grebes.

Portesham, 1200

Expecting it to be very difficult to get good views of the cattle egrets here we were very pleased when we found a pull-in opposite the field where they were feeding, all twenty of them!

Abbotsbury Beach, 1230

A pleasantly sheltered spot for lunch gave us good views of several buzzards and the only sparrowhawk seen all weekend.

Abbotsbury Swannery, 1330

The dipper didn't show here but we were much luckier with the long-tailed duck, even though the views were distant, in poor light and very brief!

Maiden Castle, 1500

It was really far too windy to expect much to show up here but some of us did manage to see one or two corn buntings and a stonechat.

Portland Bill, 1600

Once again we finished the day with an unsuccessful search for owls, but the afternoon was saved by the purple sandpipers which showed themselves at last.

Looking forward to the next time,

Bob

The weekend list:

Great Northern Diver	Portland Harbour
Red-throated Diver	Portland Bill
Little Grebe	Radipole
Slavonian Grebe	Portland Harbour
Black-necked Grebe	Portland Castle
Great Crested Grebe	Portland Harbour
Gannet	Portland Bill
Cormorant	Portland Bill
Shag	Portland Bill
Little Egret	Ferrybridge
Cattle Egret	Portesham
Grey Heron	Radipole
Mute Swan	Radipole
Canada Goose	Lodmoor
Shelduck	Radipole, Lodmoor
Teal	Radipole, Lodmoor
Mallard	Radipole, Lodmoor
Shoveler	Radipole, Lodmoor
Gadwall	Radipole, Lodmoor
Wigeon	Abbotsbury
Tufted Duck	Radipole
Ring-necked Duck	Radipole
Pochard	Radipole
Long-tailed Duck	Abbotsbury
Red-breasted Merganser	Portland Harbour, Abbotsbury
Kestrel	Portland
Buzzard	Portland, Abbotsbury
Sparrowhawk	Abbotsbury
Pheasant	Abbotsbury, Portland
Coot	Radipole
Moorhen	Radipole
Water Rail (heard)	Radipole
Oystercatcher	Portland Bill
Purple Sandpiper	Portland Bill
Ruff	Lodmoor
Lesser Yellowlegs	Lodmoor
Lapwing	Lodmoor
Black-headed Gull	Ferrybridge etc
Mediterranean Gull	Ferrybridge
Herring Gull	Ferrybridge etc
Great Black-backed Gull	Ferrybridge etc
Common Gull	Ferrybridge
Lesser Black-backed Gull	Portland Bill
Kittiwake	Portland Bill
Guillemot	Portland Bill
Razorbill	Portland Bill
Wood Pigeon	Portland etc
Collared Dove	Dorchester
Feral Pigeon	Radipole
Stock Dove	Portland

Green Woodpecker (heard)	Bincleaves
Great Spotted Woodpecker	Abbotsbury
Skylark	Ferrybridge
Meadow Pipit	Maiden Castle
Rock Pipit	Portland Bill
Pied Wagtail	Ferrybridge
Wren	Portland, Radipole
Duncock	Radipole
Robin	Portland etc
Stonechat	Radipole, Maiden Castle
Black Redstart	Portland Bill
Song Thrush	Lodmoor
Blackbird	Portland etc
Cetti's Warbler	Radipole
Yellow-browed Warbler	Radipole, Lodmoor
Blue Tit	Radipole
Great Tit	Radipole
Long-tailed Tit	Lodmoor
Magpie	Portland etc
Jackdaw	Portland etc
Rook	Portesham
Carrion Crow	Portland etc
Raven	Portland Bill
Starling	Weymouth
Goldfinch	Radipole
Linnet	Maiden Castle
Chaffinch	Radipole
House Sparrow	Radipole
Reed Bunting	Radipole
Corn Bunting	Maiden Castle