

ISLES OF SCILLY

23 to 30 September 2006

Leaders:

Phil Read
Will Wagstaff

PROGRAMME

Saturday 23 September

There were no weather hold ups as we all arrived by various means of travel on St Mary's. As is customary the first evening was spent at Will's Isles of Scilly slideshow. This gives an excellent introduction to the wildlife of the islands.

Sunday 24 September

Our first pre-breakfast walk took us around the Garrison on St Mary's. The highlight was a fine adult Mediterranean Gull offshore.

We took advantage of the glorious weather to spend the day on Tresco. As usual the two pools held interesting species. On the Great Pool we watched the long staying Spoonbill feeding with a Little Egret nearby. Amongst the duck we found a female Pintail whilst two Marsh Harriers hunted over the nearby reedbeds. Waders included a fine, if rather distant, Pectoral Sandpiper on the Great Pool and two Knot on the Abbey Pool.

In the afternoon the group took the opportunity to visit the world famous sub tropical gardens.

Monday 25 September

Our pre-breakfast Hoopoe hunt to Peninnis was unsuccessful but we did see another Mediterranean Gull.

St Agnes is a lovely island and even more so on a glorious day. We started well with prolonged, if rather distant, views of a Wryneck. An interesting trio of waders on the pool was made up of a Pectoral Sandpiper, Little Stint and Dunlin.

The highlight of the day was excellent views of a Western Bonelli's Warbler in the Parsonage garden. In the afternoon we headed out onto the rugged south side of the island and a short seawatch was rewarded with the sight of three Harbour Porpoises.

An after dinner bat hunt was successful, with the help of a bat detector, in identifying the Pipistrelles on the Garrison as Pipistrelle 45's.



Birding on St Agnes 25th Sept

Tuesday 26 September

A highly successful pre-breakfast stroll to Lower Moors produced excellent views of Water Rail, Kingfisher and Sedge Warbler.

The weather was again glorious and we all enjoyed the wonderful views on Bryher. Although birds were hard to find they did include a fine juvenile Red Backed Shrike and one of the Marsh Harriers wandering from Tresco.

As a change from hunting for birds we spent a while searching for Prickly Stick-insects at a recently discovered site. (N.B. Stick-insects can be found in a number of places on Scilly). We also used a bat detector to search out the elusive Grey Bush Crickets which inhabit part of the island.

Wednesday 27 September

The weather forecast was poor with rain expected to spread in from the south accompanied by high winds. Unfortunately the forecast proved correct, but not before we had walked around a large part of St Mary's. The birds, however, were rather elusive in the windy conditions and we returned to base early, rather wet and having seen little.

Thursday 28 September

One of my favourite parts of the Scillies trip is the "Seabird Special" and thankfully conditions were fine enough for this to take place. We cruised around the rocks and islets off the shores of Samson and Tresco before heading out into the open water around Round Island where we enjoyed a short bumpy ride before returning to the calm waters of the Tresco channel. We always keep a sharp lookout for wading birds on this trip and we were rewarded with views of Whimbrel, Sanderling and Bar Tailed Godwit as well as the more regular waders. A Peregrine looked very regal perched on a rock alongside the boat and a young Mediterranean Gull also showed well.

The afternoon was spent strolling around Bryher again. This time we were successful in finding one, probably two, Rose Coloured Starlings. Unfortunately juveniles at this time of year don't live up to their name, being rather dull and sandy coloured. Nevertheless a rare and interesting bird to see. We also watched a Turtle Dove at close quarters, a bird so rarely seen on the mainland these days.

Friday 29 September

Our final day and our final island. St Martin's is the most remote of the inhabited islands and rather exposed. However the sheltered trees near the quay did harbour both Pied and Spotted Flycatchers and a Garden Warbler. We spent a while seawatching from the exposed headland by the Daymark and were rewarded with distant views of a few Harbour Porpoise and a very brief Dolphin.

As the weather took a turn for the worst we hastily headed for the boat back to St Mary's.

Having returned without getting too wet we ventured out to Peninnis Head to watch an Ortolan Bunting showing well on the path

Saturday 30 September

Fine weather enabled us to leave the islands bright and early at the start of the journey home.

BIRDS

Fulmar: One flew past St Agnes on 25th. This species is usually absent from the islands at this time of year..

Gannet: Seen daily offshore in small numbers.

Cormorant: Recorded daily in small numbers.

Shag: A very common and visible bird around the islands with large fishing flocks seen daily.

Grey Heron: Seen daily. A relatively common visitor in autumn although this species does not breed on the island.

Little Egret: Mainly seen in the channel between Bryher and Tresco where groups of around ten birds were present. Ten also seen near St Helen's during the Seabird Special.



Spoonbill, Tresco 24th September.

Spoonbill: An immature bird was seen well, and awake, on the Great Pool on 24th.

Mute Swan: Family party with four young on the Great Pool. These birds were also seen on the pool on Bryher.

Canada Goose: The four residents were seen on Tresco.

Gadwall: Common on the Great Pool.

Common Teal: Only seen on the Abbey Pool, Tresco.

Mallard: Very common on the Great Pool. A few seen elsewhere, often on salt water.

Pintail: One female on the Great Pool.

Marsh Harrier: The resident female together with this year's offspring was seen on Tresco. Female also seen on Bryher on 26th.

Sparrowhawk: Two on Tresco on 24th. One on Bryher on 26th.

Kestrel: Up to three individuals seen most days.

Merlin: One, very briefly, on St Mary's on 27th.

Peregrine: One on Peninnis on 25th during the pre-breakfast walk. One gave excellent prolonged views perched on a rock during the "Seabird Special".

Red Legged Partridge: Introduced birds seen on Tresco.

Common Pheasant: Common on Tresco. Also seen on St Mary's and Bryher.

Golden Pheasant: Recently released (and therefore rather tame) birds seen on Tresco. The males are rather smart though, despite their origins.

Water Rail: Seen well from the hides on Lower Moors.

Moorhen: Seen in suitable habitat around the islands.

Coot: Common on the Great Pool.

Oystercatcher: Common and widespread around the coasts.

Golden Plover: Four seen on the maritime heathland on St Martin's.

Ringed Plover: Seen daily in small numbers.

Black Tailed Godwit: One on Tresco on 24th.

Bar tailed Godwit: Seven seen from the boat during the "Seabird Special".

Whimbrel: One seen from the boat during the "Seabird Special".

Curlew: Around fifty seen from the boat during the "Seabird Special". Otherwise seen daily in small numbers.

Redshank: Seen on Tresco and St Agnes.

Greenshank: Seen most days in small numbers.

Turnstone: A relatively common bird around the rocky coasts and beaches.

Common Snipe: Only seen on three days with a highest count of two birds.

Knot: Two on the Abbey Pool, Tresco on 24th

Sanderling: Around 25 birds were seen from the boat on 28th.

Little Stint: A very smart juvenile was seen on the pool on St Agnes.

Pectoral Sandpiper: This transatlantic migrant was seen rather distantly on Tresco on 24th. Another bird was seen well on St Agnes on 25th accompanied by the Little Stint and a Dunlin.

Dunlin: Only a few migrants seen.

Arctic Skua: A dark phase bird flew past the boat on 28th.

Herring Gull: Very common.

Lesser Black Backed Gull: Seen daily.

Great Black Backed Gull: Seen daily.

Mediterranean Gull: A few sightings during the week of birds in both adult and first winter plumages.

Black Headed Gull: Seen daily.

Sandwich Tern: Recorded daily. Around twenty seen during the "Seabird Special" cruise.

Common Tern: Seen on four days with a highest count of five birds.

Stock Dove: Only sighting was a flock of twenty on St Mary's.

Wood Pigeon: Seen daily.

Turtle Dove: A rather dark and sad looking example was seen at close quarters on Bryher.

Collared Dove: Seen daily.



Kingfisher, Lower Moors 26th September

Kingfisher: One was seen at very close quarters from a hide on Lower Moors during the pre-breakfast walk on 26th.

Hoopoe: This was due reward for Tony and Judith who ventured out in unpromising weather for a pre-breakfast walk to Peninnis on 28th.

Wryneck: One showed well, if rather distantly, on St Agnes on 25th. Another was seen fleetingly on the same island by a few of the group later in the day.

Sand Martin: Very few sightings apart from twelve over Lower Moors on the morning of 29th.

Swallow: Seen daily.

White Wagtail: A few migrants seen most days.

Pied Wagtail: Only seen on two days.

Grey Wagtail: One at Lower Moors on 26th.

Meadow Pipit: Over 20 on St Agnes otherwise seen daily in small numbers.

Rock Pipit: Seen daily around the rocky coasts.

Red Backed Shrike: A juvenile bird seen well on Bryher.

Wren: Extremely common and widespread.

Dunnock: Very common.

Blackbird: Very common.

Song Thrush: Still very common and delightfully tame.

Robin: Seen or heard daily.

Whinchat: Up to six sightings on five days.

Stonechat: Seen daily in small numbers.

Northern Wheatear: Seen daily in small numbers.

Sedge Warbler: One at Lower Moors on 26th.

Reed Warbler: A few heard and occasionally seen during the week.

Willow Warbler: Seen on five days.

Common Chiffchaff: Heard or seen on four days.

Wood Warbler: We enjoyed excellent views of one on the Garrison on 28th.

Western Bonelli's Warbler: A very distinctly plumaged bird gave us excellent close views in the Parsonage garden on St Agnes on 25th.

Garden Warbler: One on St Martin's on 29th.

Common Whitethroat: Two sightings in the week.

Goldcrest: Seen on four days in small numbers.

Firecrest: One on Bryher on 26th and one on St Mary's on 27th.

Spotted Flycatcher: Up to two seen on three days.

Pied Flycatcher: Commoner than Spotted and seen well on occasions.

Great Tit: Common on St Mary's and Treco.

Blue Tit: Common on St Mary's and Treco.

Jackdaw: Two on Treco and one (of these two) on Bryher. There are only two Jackdaws on the islands!

Carrion Crow: Common and widespread.

Raven: Two on St Agnes on 25th and one on St Mary's on 27th.



“It’s behind you!”

Rose Coloured Starling (with Common Starling) Bryher 28th Sept

Rose Coloured Starling: Probably two different juveniles were seen on the rooftops of Bryher on 28th.

Starling: Common and widespread.

Ortolan Bunting: One was seen well on the ground on Peninnis.

Lapland Bunting: One was seen well on the ground on the Garrison.

Chaffinch: Only a few sightings, away from the tearooms!, during the week.

Greenfinch: Seen daily.

Goldfinch: Seen daily.

Linnet: Very common and widespread.

House Sparrow: Still very common and widespread.

MAMMALS

Common Pipistrelle: Our efforts with a bat detector at Lower Moors and on the Garrison were rewarded with identifying the bats there as Pipistrelle 45’s.

Grey Seal

Harbour Porpoise: Three sightings of up to three individuals seen during the week.

Brown Rat

Rabbit

BUTTERFLIES



Small Copper, St Agnes

Large white

Small white

Clouded Yellow

Small copper

Peacock

Red admiral

Painted lady

Meadow brown

Speckled wood

DRAGONFLIES

Migrant Hawker
Common Darter

OTHER INSECTS



Grey Bush-cricket, Bryher



Prickly Stick-Insect, Bryher

Grey Bush Cricket: Seen at close quarters on Bryher after being found using a bat detector.

Prickly Stick Insect: Nine were found on a bramble bush on Bryher. This is a new site on Scilly for this alien colonist.

As always I am indebted for Will for sharing his enthusiasm and knowledge of the islands with us.

I thank the group for their interest and excellent company!

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