

# Isles of Scilly

## 6 - 13 May 2006

### Trip Report

#### Leaders:

Will Wagstaff  
Phil Read

#### Saturday 6 May

There were no weather hold ups as we all arrived by helicopter 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 7 May

Before breakfast we set out on a short walk to the Garrison where a flyover Raven was a surprise but we could find very few migrants.

The morning was spent around the coast and nature trails near to Hugh Town where again migrants were hard to find.

After a picnic lunch we ventured out on the "Seabird Special" boat trip around the islands. This is an excellent way to get a feel of the layout of all the islands and also discover what's lurking around on some of the uninhabited rocks and islands.

We saw a selection of migrant waders around the shores of Tresco including Whimbrel and Sanderling.

The pair of Marsh Harriers showed well as we past Tean before we headed out into unsheltered water and rather choppy seas. The Razorbills on Men-a vaur posed happily for their photos to be taken but the few Puffins around were rather more camera shy.

After dinner we strolled around the Lower Moors nature trail. Displaying Snipe were a surprise but unfortunately the identification a small heron landing in the reeds at dusk eluded us.

As darkness fell we attempted to identify the few bats flying around with the help of a bat detector. They were Pipistrelle 45, one of two species of Pipistrelle on the islands.

#### Monday 8 May

Our early morning walk to Porth Loo was quiet apart from a few migrants including Whimbrel and Wheatear.

The main part of the day was spent on Tresco. We started by looking at the Great Pool, the largest area of fresh water on the islands, and were immediately surprised to find a superb male Garganey. Other ducks present included a male Pintail.

A scattering of commoner migrants were seen around the island as well as the long staying Spoonbill taking an afternoon siesta by the Great Pool.

The group split during the afternoon with most enjoying the world famous sub tropical garden whilst others looked for birds with Will.

After dinner we set sail again for the “Shearwater Special”. This proved to be an epic trip, for the distant covered if nothing else, as we scoured everywhere for the elusive shearwaters in rather choppy seas. We failed to find them and only saw one Puffin but most, if not all, of the group enjoyed the evening cruise out to the Western Rocks and Annet.

### **Tuesday 9 May**

Those who ventured out before breakfast were rewarded with excellent views of the fine Iceland Gull as it stood on the rocks just off the Garrison as well as close views of Cuckoo.

The day was spent on Bryher where the main interest was in the flowers. Two of Britain’s rarest, and smallest, flowers can be found here: the Dwarf Pansy and Orange Birdsfoot. Both are extremely small and require much groveling around on the ground to see, but are no less beautiful for that.

### **Wednesday 10 May**

We again visited Lower Moors for our pre-breakfast walk where we were able to watch Sedge Warbler in full song and in display flight but where the singing Reed Warblers were far less showy.

St Agnes is many people’s favourite island on the Scillies and we were blessed with fine weather to stroll around this wonderful place with its mixture of stunning rocky coastline and enchanting small bulb fields.

The highlight of the walk was a young male Golden Oriole which gave us the run around as is usual for this species but did remain perched long enough for most of the group to obtain reasonable views.

Our attempts at “fin watching” were rewarded with relatively close views of Harbour Porpoise.

Our evening outing to watch the Ladies Gig Racing was a disaster! Thick fog prevented us from seeing the sea, let alone any gigs that might be passing.

### **Thursday 11 May**

Sadly the fog persisted into Thursday so we had rather a dull walk around St Mary’s with birds hard to find apart from a pair of Bar Tailed Godwit and a few Whimbrel. However the fog didn’t prevent us from broadening our horizons and inspecting a few very interesting archaeological sites.

### **Friday 12 May**

Our last day and our last island. St Martin’s is one of the largest and least developed of the Scillies. Perhaps it lacks some of the charm of the smaller islands but has some of the finest beaches and certainly some of the best views anywhere on Scilly.

We scoured the large expanse of sandy shore and found amongst the waders a flock of Sanderling, a few Dunlin and a very distant Grey Plover.

Friday night is Men's Gig Night and this time we could actually see the sea. We watched with awe at the speed the six man crews rowed these streamlined boats from St Agnes to St Mary's.

### **Saturday 13 May**

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

### **BIRDS**

**Great Northern Diver:** One summer-plumaged bird was seen briefly from the boat during the "Seabird Special" trip. Another seen distantly from Tresco on 8th.

**Fulmar:** Seen offshore in small numbers on most days.

**Manx Shearwater:** Disappointingly we failed to see any during the "Shearwater Special" trip despite extensive searching. However 17 flew past Horse Point, St Agnes during a short seawatch on 10<sup>th</sup>.

**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:** 3 seen on 7<sup>th</sup> and one on 11<sup>th</sup>. (Hérons do not breed on the islands.)

**Little Egret:** Four sightings of single birds during the week.

**Spoonbill:** The immature bird was seen in typical Spoonbill pose ( i.e. asleep) on the Great Pool, Tresco.

**Mute Swan:** Common on the Great Pool, Tresco where it breeds.

**Canada Goose:** The five residents were seen on Tresco.

**Common Shelduck:** Seen daily. This duck breeds on the islands often in the area of the beaches and sand dunes.

**Gadwall:** Common on the Great Pool. A few seen elsewhere, including on salt water.

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

**Pintail:** One male on the Great Pool.

**Garganey:** A superb male on the Great Pool on 8<sup>th</sup>.

**Marsh Harrier:** The resident pair gave excellent views alongside the boat during the "Seabird Special" trip. Two other sightings during the week.

**Common Buzzard:** Some of the group (whilst the rest were in the gardens) saw the long staying bird on Tresco.

**Kestrel:** Three sightings of single birds during the week.

**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.

**Moorhen:** Seen in suitable habitat around the islands.

**Coot:** Common on the Great Pool. One on St Agnes.

**Oystercatcher:** Common, widespread and noisy around the islands. A number of flocks of non breeding birds were seen.

**Grey Plover:** One migrant, in non breeding plumage, watched at great distance on St Martins.

**Ringed Plover:** Seen well. Breeds on some of the sandy beaches.

**Bar tailed Godwit:** 2 seen on the shore near Bar Point, St Mary's on 11<sup>th</sup>.

**Whimbrel:** Migrants seen daily. Highest daily count was 12 on 8<sup>th</sup>.

**Curlew:** A few seen from the boat during the "Seabird Special". 2 on St Agnes on 10<sup>th</sup>.

**Greenshank:** One heard on Bryher on 9<sup>th</sup>.

**Turnstone:** Rather fewer than usual. Only seen on two days.

**Common Snipe:** 2 at Lower Moors, St Mary's were seen to carry out a rather strange display flight (not the usual "drumming") at dusk on 7<sup>th</sup>.

**Sanderling:** A flock of around 20 birds, moulting into summer plumage, were seen from the boat on 7<sup>th</sup> and from St Martin's on 12<sup>th</sup>.

**Dunlin:** Only a few migrants seen. Highest count was 3 on St Martin's.

**Herring Gull:** Very common breeding bird.

**Iceland Gull:** A fine immature bird was seen well by those on the pre-breakfast walk on 9<sup>th</sup>.

**Lesser Black Backed Gull:** Common breeding bird.

- Great Black Backed Gull:** Seen daily. Breeds on the islands.
- Black headed Gull:** One sighting was of a single bird on Bryher. (This species does not breed on the islands).
- Kittiwake:** Seen almost daily around the islands in small numbers.
- Sandwich Tern:** Migrant birds seen between the islands in small numbers on most days.
- Common Tern:** Increasing numbers of this summer visitor and breeding bird were seen during the week.
- Common Guillemot:** Seen on three days. Close views from the boats on a few occasions.
- Razorbill:** Seen between the islands on most days. Excellent views from the boats on a number of occasions.
- Puffin:** Disappointingly few sightings. One seen near the boat during the "Shearwater Special" trip.
- Feral Pigeon:** A few dubious looking characters seen during the week.
- Wood Pigeon:** Seen daily.
- Turtle Dove:** 2 were seen on the Garrison by a few of the group during the pre-breakfast walk on 7<sup>th</sup>. 3 were seen briefly in flight on St Agnes.
- Collared Dove:** Seen daily.
- Cuckoo:** Heard most days and we enjoyed some excellent views of perched birds.
- Swift:** Seen daily but in very small numbers.
- Sand Martin:** A few feeding over the Great Pool on Tresco, otherwise very few sightings.
- Swallow:** Seen daily.
- House Martin:** Seen daily but in very small numbers.
- White Wagtail:** Two sightings of single birds seen during the week.
- Pied Wagtail:** Four sightings of single birds seen during the week.
- Tree Pipit:** Three sightings, but all rather brief.
- Meadow Pipit:** 2 on St Agnes, where there is a breeding pair and 3 on St Mary's were the only sightings.
- Rock Pipit:** Common breeding bird around the rocky coasts.
- Wren:** Extremely common and widespread.
- Dunnock:** Very common.
- Blackbird:** Very common.
- Redwing:** One, a very late migrant, seen on St Agnes on 10<sup>th</sup>.
- Song Thrush:** Still very common and delightfully tame.
- Robin:** Seen or heard most days.
- Stonechat:** Seemingly far less common or widespread than in the past, however recorded daily.
- Northern Wheatear:** Migrant birds seen in ones and twos daily.
- Sedge Warbler:** Seen well in song at Lower Moors.
- Reed Warbler:** Heard well but only seen briefly at Lower Moors.
- Willow Warbler:** Heard or seen on four days.
- Common Chiffchaff:** Recorded daily.
- Blackcap:** Seen or heard on four days.
- Common Whitethroat:** One heard briefly on St Martin's.
- Lesser Whitethroat:** One singing on the Garrison 11<sup>th</sup> was only seen by Audrey and Will.
- Goldcrest:** Only seen on Tresco.
- Spotted Flycatcher:** Only record was one on St Agnes on 10<sup>th</sup>.
- Great Tit:** Common on St Mary's and Tresco.
- Blue Tit:** Common on St Mary's and Tresco.
- Magpie:** The one, and only, was briefly seen on St Martin's. (This lone bird has been marooned on the islands since March 2001.)
- Jackdaw:** One on Tresco and one on Bryher were the only sightings. These are the only two Jackdaw on the islands!
- Carrion Crow:** Common and widespread.
- Raven:** One flew over the Garrison on 7<sup>th</sup>. One on Men-a-vaur on 7<sup>th</sup> and one briefly on St Martin's on 12<sup>th</sup>.
- Golden Oriole:** One was seen fleetingly by a few of the group on Bryher. An immature male gave reasonably good and prolonged views (by Golden Oriole standards) on St Agnes on 10<sup>th</sup>.
- Starling:** Common and widespread.
- Chaffinch:** Common on St Mary's and Tresco.
- Greenfinch:** Seen daily.
- Goldfinch:** Seen daily.
- Linnet:** Very common and widespread.
- House Sparrow:** Still very common and widespread.

## MAMMALS

**Lesser White-toothed Shrew:** We had excellent views of this diminutive creature (due to the fact all our sightings were of deceased individuals). Scilly is the only place in Britain this mammal occurs.

**Common Pipistrelle:** Our efforts with a bat detector at Lower Moors were rewarded with identifying the bats there as Pipistrelle 45's.

**Grey Seal**

**Harbour Porpoise:** During a short seawatch off Horse Point, St Agnes we were rewarded with relatively close and prolonged views of at least 6.

**Brown Rat**

**Rabbit**

## BUTTERFLIES

**Large white**

**Small white**

**Small copper**

**Holly blue**

**Peacock**

**Red admiral**

**Painted lady**

**Speckled wood**

## DRAGONFLIES

**Blue-tailed Damselfly**

## PLANT LIST

**Royal Fern**

**Bracken**

**Monterey Pine**

**Lodge Pole Pine**

**Monterey Cypress**

**Creeping Buttercup**

**Bulbous Buttercup**

**Prickly-fruited Buttercup**

**Lesser Celandine**

**Yellow-horned Poppy**

**Common Ramping Fumitory**

**Sea Radish**

**Sea Kale**

**Common Scurvy Grass**

**Danish Scurvy Grass**

**Common Watercress**

**Heath Dog Violet**

**Dwarf Pansy**

**Heath Milkwort**

**Tamarisk**

**Sea Campion**

**English Catchfly**

**Red Campion**

**Mouse-ear Chickweed**

**Hottentot Fig**

**Sea Beet**

**Tree Mallow**

**Smaller Tree Mallow**

**Dove's Foot Cranesbill**

**Common Storksbill**

**Wall Oxalis**

*Osmunda regalis*

*Pteridium aquilinum*

*Pinus radiata*

*P. contorta*

*Cupressus macrocarpa*

*Ranunculus repens*

*R. bulbosus*

*R. muricatus*

*R. ficaria*

*Glaucium flavum*

*F. muralis*

*Raphanus maritimus*

*Crambe maritima*

*Cochlearia officinalis*

*C. danica*

*Rorippa nasturtium-aquaticum*

*Viola canina*

*V. kitaibeliana*

*Polygala serpyllifolia*

*Pittosporum crassifolium*

*Tamarix gallica*

*Silene maritima*

*Silene gallica*

*Silene dioica*

*Cerastium holosteoides*

*Carpobrotus edulis*

*Beta vulgaris subsp. maritima*

*Lavatera arborea*

*Lavatera cretica*

*G. molle*

*Erodium cicutarium*

*Oxalis megalorrhiza*

<b>Pink Oxalis</b>	<i>O. articulata</i>
<b>Bermuda Buttercup</b>	<i>O. pers-caprae</i>
<b>Sycamore</b>	<i>Acer psuedo-platanus</i>
<b>Euonymus</b>	<i>Euonymus japonicus</i>
<b>Tree Lupin</b>	<i>Lupinus arboreus</i>
<b>Common Gorse</b>	<i>Ulex europaeus</i>
<b>Broom</b>	<i>Sarothamnus scoparius</i>
<b>Spotted Medick</b>	<i>Medicago arabica</i>
<b>Red Clover</b>	<i>Trifolium pratense</i>
<b>Subterranean Clover</b>	<i>T. subterraneum</i>
<b>White Clover</b>	<i>T. repens</i>
<b>Hop Trefoil</b>	<i>T. campestre</i>
<b>Common Birdsfoot Trefoil</b>	<i>Lotus corniculatus</i>
<b>Greater Birdsfoot Trefoil</b>	<i>L. uliginosus</i>
<b>Common Birdsfoot</b>	<i>Ornithopus perpusillus</i>
<b>Orange Birdsfoot</b>	<i>O. pinnatus</i>
<b>Common Vetch</b>	<i>V. sativa</i>
<b>Blackberry</b>	<i>Rubrus fruticosus</i>
<b>Silverweed</b>	<i>Potentilla anserina</i>
<b>Tormentil</b>	<i>P. erecta</i>
<b>English Stonecrop</b>	<i>Sedum anglicum</i>
<b>Wall Pennywort</b>	<i>Umbelliscus rupestris</i>
<b>Escallonia</b>	<i>Aeonium sp.</i>
<b>Ivy</b>	<i>Escallonia micrantha</i>
<b>Sea Holly</b>	<i>Hedera helix</i>
<b>Alexanders</b>	<i>Eryngium maritimum</i>
<b>Hemlock Water Dropwort</b>	<i>Smyrniolum olusatrum</i>
<b>Fennel</b>	<i>Oenanthe crocata</i>
<b>Wild Angelica</b>	<i>Foeniculum vulgare</i>
<b>Hogweed</b>	<i>Angelica sylvestris</i>
<b>Wild Carrot</b>	<i>heracleum sphondylium</i>
<b>Rock Samphire</b>	<i>Daucus carota</i>
<b>Portland Spurge</b>	<i>Crithmum maritimum</i>
<b>Sea Spurge</b>	<i>Euphorbia portlandica</i>
<b>Wood Spurge</b>	<i>E. paralias</i>
<b>Japanese Knotweed</b>	<i>E. amygdaloides</i>
<b>Sheep's Sorrel</b>	<i>Polygonum cuspidatum</i>
<b>Common Sorrel</b>	<i>Rumex acetosella</i>
<b>Pelitory of the Wall</b>	<i>R. acetosa</i>
<b>Common Nettle</b>	<i>Parietaria diffusa</i>
<b>Common Elm</b>	<i>Urtica dioica</i>
<b>Fig</b>	<i>Ulmus procera</i>
<b>Oak</b>	<i>Ficus carica</i>
<b>Grey Sallow</b>	<i>Quercus rober</i>
<b>Rhododendron</b>	<i>Salix cinerea</i>
<b>Ling</b>	<i>Rhododendron ponticum</i>
<b>Bell Heather</b>	<i>Calluna vulgaris</i>
<b>Thrift</b>	<i>Erica cinerea</i>
<b>Primrose</b>	<i>Armeria maritima</i>
<b>Scarlet Pimpernel</b>	<i>Primula vulgaris</i>
<b>Greater Periwinkle</b>	<i>Anagallis arvensis</i>
<b>Changing Scorpion Grass</b>	<i>Vinca major</i>
<b>Tree Echium</b>	<i>Mysotis discolor</i>
<b>Sea Bindweed</b>	<i>Echium sp.</i>
<b>Foxglove</b>	<i>Calystegia soldanella</i>
<b>Germander Speedwell</b>	<i>Digitalis purpurea</i>
<b>Hedge Veronica</b>	<i>Veronica chamaedrys</i>
<b>Lousewort</b>	<i>Hebe x franciscana</i>
<b>Ground Ivy</b>	<i>Pedicularis sylvatica</i>
<b>Woodsage</b>	<i>Glechoma hederacea</i>
<b>Plantain sp.</b>	<i>Teucrium scorodonia</i>
	<i>Plantago sp.</i>

<b>Cleavers</b>	<i>Galium aparine</i>
<b>Tree Bedstraw</b>	<i>coprosma repens</i>
<b>Elder</b>	<i>Sambucus nigra</i>
<b>Honeysuckle</b>	<i>Lonicera periclymenum</i>
<b>Red Valerian</b>	<i>Centranthus ruber</i>
<b>German Ivy</b>	<i>S. mikanoides</i>
<b>Winter Heliotrope</b>	<i>Petasites fragrans</i>
<b>Hedge Ragwort</b>	<i>Brachyglottis repanda</i>
<b>Daisy</b>	<i>Bellis perennis</i>
<b>Olearia</b>	<i>Olearia traversii</i>
<b>Sweet Chamomile</b>	<i>Chamaemelum nobile</i>
<b>Yarrow</b>	<i>Achillea millefolium</i>
<b>Scentless Mayweed</b>	<i>Tripleurospermum maritimum</i>
<b>Corn Marigold</b>	<i>Chrysanthemum segetum</i>
<b>Common Dandelion</b>	<i>Taraxacum officinale</i>
<b>New Zealand Flax</b>	<i>Phormium tenax</i>
<b>Vernal Squill</b>	<i>Scilla verna</i>
<b>Bluebell</b>	<i>Endymion non-scriptus</i>
<b>Spanish Bluebell</b>	<i>E. hispanicus</i>
<b>Babbington's Leek</b>	<i>Allium babbingtonii</i>
<b>Rosy Garlic</b>	<i>A. roseum</i>
<b>Three-cornered Leek</b>	<i>A. triquetrum</i>
<b>Blue Lily</b>	<i>Agapanthus praecox</i>
<b>Tubular Corn Lily</b>	<i>Ixia paniculata</i>
<b>Harlequin Flower</b>	<i>Sparaxis grandiflora</i>
<b>Stinking Iris</b>	<i>Iris foetidissima</i>
<b>Yellow Flag</b>	<i>I. pseudacorus</i>
<b>Montbretia</b>	<i>Crocosmia x crocosmiflora</i>
<b>Whistling Jacks</b>	<i>Gladiolus byzantinus</i>
<b>Wild Arum</b>	<i>Arum italicum</i>
<b>Reed</b>	<i>Phragmites communis</i>
<b>Marram</b>	<i>Ammophila arenaria</i>

*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. Also by having by far the best pre-breakfast attendance record of any group I have ever taken to the Scillies.*

*Phil Read May 2006*

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