

# Isles of Scilly

**Saturday 26 September – Saturday 3 October 2009**

## Trip Report

### Leader:

Will Wagstaff

### DAILY DIARY

#### Saturday 26 September

##### St Mary's

Everyone arrived at the heliport on St Mary's in the late afternoon and was soon settled in. That evening all attending my introductory slideshow about the islands wildlife.

#### Sunday 27 September

##### Seabird Boat Trip and St Mary's

The morning was spent cruising around the islands looking at a variety of sea and shore birds, finding a Whimbrel on a small outcrop near the uninhabited island of Samson, two Sanderlings on the shores of Tresco where a Peregrine flew overhead. Near Tean and St Helens small numbers of Grey Heron and Little Egret and a roost of Curlew were found. The Sandwich Terns roosting on the buoys in the harbour were one of the highlights of the trip.

We had our packed lunch overlooking Porth Cressa bay where Wheatear and White Wagtail were added to the list before walking along the coastal path out of Hugh Town and then following the Lower Moors Nature Trail where we found some sleeping Snipe. Willow Warbler and Chiffchaff were heard during the walk. On the way back via Old Town we found a Long-winged Conehead on the granite hedge.

#### Monday 28 September

##### Tresco

Following the short boat trip to Tresco we started our walk looking at the Great Pool where we found a flock of Wigeon, a Pintail and some Teal on the lake, plus a mixed group of roosting Redshank and Greenshank that included two Black-tailed Godwits. The rarest bird of the trip was the Long-billed Dowitcher we saw on the edge of the Abbey Pool. Sadly this American wader was rather inactive, staying asleep all the time we were there. The Pectoral Sandpiper was much more active but very elusive and the Little Stint was always on the far bank. Thankfully the Black-necked Grebe gave much better views out on the lake.

Following lunch, sat looking along the south beaches, we spent the afternoon exploring the famous Tresco Abbey Gardens with its amazing collection of flora from all over the world. The collection of Protea and banksias on the top terrace always catches the eye along with the Agaves and Furcraea that had flowered this year.

Then it was time to wander back to the quay following the route that overlooked Tresco Channel and the fields in which we found a Yellow Wagtail around the feet of the cattle.

#### Tuesday 29 September

##### Bryher

The morning walk around the south end of Bryher found Sparrowhawk and Skylark flying overhead, the only ones we would see all week. A Whinchat gave us excellent views compared to Stonechat in the lee of Samson Hill. We had our lunch overlooking Stony Porth where some Atlantic Grey Seals could be seen at the head of the

bay. Much closer to us was a large flock of Ringed Plover with a few Dunlin and Turnstone mixed in roosting on the pebbly beach. During the afternoon we walked up to Shipman Head Down via Stinking Porth and Popplestone Bay finding Wheatear and a few Stonechats on the way but the highlight was the Whimbrel that fed along the shore oblivious to our presence close by. On the way back we could see eleven Little Egrets roosting on one of the islands in mid channel.

### **Wednesday 30 September**

#### **St Mary's**

We started the day by catching a ride on the 'Country Bus' with its idiosyncratic driver and amazing door closing contraption! Having alighted at the 'Maypole Triangle' we headed downhill to start the Holy Vale/ Porth Hellick Nature Trail through the thick stand of Elm Trees. Water Rails were heard occasionally and we came across a small group of Chiffchaffs and Willow Warblers as we reached the more open area. Our first Stock Doves were two perched upon high with a flock of Wood Pigeon. A Blackcap gave us a game of hide and seek before we crossed the road heading towards the hides overlooking the pool. A Snipe jumped out of one of the cut areas and a few Swallows and House Martins were wheeling above us. Apart from two Teal there was not much activity on the water so we continued to overlook Porth Hellick beach where Redshank, Greenshank and some Ringed Plovers were feeding at the waters edge. Our route then took us around the coastal path via the Giants Castle Iron Age Hill fort and over the end of the airport before reaching Old Town where we had our lunch in the sun overlooking the bay.

### **Thursday 1 October**

#### **St Martins**

We landed at the western end of the island at Lower Town where having had a look across towards Tean and St Helens we walked to where we could overlook the St Martins flats. Along with the expected gulls and Oystercatchers we found a flock of Sanderling and our first Bar-tailed Godwits. Grey Herons and Little Egrets were feeding around the seaweed covered ledges and a few Curlew let us know they were there with their ringing calls as they flew.

We found a few Willow Warbler and Chiffchaff as we crossed the island to have our lunch on Flagstaff Hill overlooking Great Bay, Little Bay and across to White Island. It was so calm we spent a while looking for cetaceans but with no luck although we did see several Gannets.

On the way out to the eastern tip of the island we found a small flock of Golden Plover and some Wheatears on the Chapel Down. Just beyond the Daymark we had another seawatch but again with little to show for our efforts so adjourned to the tea rooms at Higher Town before having a look around the pool and cricket pitch area near the quay. Some White Wagtail and a Chiffchaff showed well before it was time for the boat trip back to St Mary's from Higher Town but all agreed Higher Town beach was definitely one of the best beaches on Scilly.

### **Friday 2 October**

#### **St Agnes and Gugh**

One the way across St Mary's Sound to St Agnes we found the only Kittiwake of the trip along with the usual groups of Shags. We took advantage of the low tide to start our day walking over the sand bar to the isle of Gugh. We had not gone far and were looking at a group of Greenfinch when a female Merlin flew off and over the hill. We explored the old field systems in the middle of the island where some elusive Chiffchaff and Willow Warblers were feeding before having a look at the standing stone known as the Old Man of Gugh and then some of the well preserved Bronze Age burial chambers that dot the northern part of this island. On the way down the hill we found a Lesser Whitethroat flitting about the Pittosporum bushes.

Once we were back on St Agnes we headed towards the western side of the island to have our lunch and to look at the beaches in this area. An immature male Merlin went whizzing over the island but we had much better views of a male Peregrine as it flew over us having tried to catching one of the small waders on the beach.

The last part of the day proved to be the most productive as we found a Spotted Flycatcher perched on the fence around the Tennis Court before watching a Pied Flycatcher and Reed Warbler along with a very tatty Chiffchaff in an area know as the 'Fruit Cage'. As we joined a small group of birders looking for a Red-breasted Flycatcher

we found it flitting around the elms in front of us. Although never on view for long we were able to say we had seen three species of flycatcher in twenty minutes before we headed for a well deserved café stop. It was then time to head for the quay and back to St Mary's.

### Saturday 3 October

#### Scilly to Cornwall and beyond

After all the calm weather during the week it was amore typical autumnal day as the group split up and headed for home.

I hope you all enjoyed your holiday on the Isles of Scilly and this report brings back some good memories.

#### BIRD LIST

<b>Pheasant</b>	<i>(Phasianus colchicus)</i>	Common on Tresco and one was on Bryher
<b>Canada Goose</b>	<i>(Branta canadensis)</i>	Five were on Tresco on 28 <sup>th</sup> .
<b>Mute Swan</b>	<i>(Cygnus olor)</i>	Twelve including some cygnets were on Tresco on 28 <sup>th</sup> .
<b>Gadwall</b>	<i>(Anas strepera)</i>	Thirty plus were on Tresco on 28 <sup>th</sup>
<b>Wigeon</b>	<i>(Anas penelope)</i>	Ten were on the Great Pool, Tresco on 28 <sup>th</sup>
<b>Mallard</b>	<i>(Anas platyrhynchos)</i>	One was seen on 27 <sup>th</sup> with many on Tresco on 28 <sup>th</sup>
<b>Pintail</b>	<i>(Anas acuta)</i>	A male was on the Great Pool on 28 <sup>th</sup>
<b>Common Teal</b>	<i>(Anas crecca)</i>	15+ were on Tresco on 28 <sup>th</sup> and two females were at Porth Hellick on 30 <sup>th</sup>
<b>Black-necked Grebe</b>	<i>(Podiceps nigricollis)</i>	One was on the Abbey Pool, Tresco on 28 <sup>th</sup>
<b>Grey Heron</b>	<i>(Ardea cinerea)</i>	Fifteen plus were noted on 27 <sup>th</sup> with between two and three daily thereafter.
<b>Little Egret</b>	<i>(Egretta garzetta)</i>	Six were seen on 27 <sup>th</sup> and 28 <sup>th</sup> with 11 on 29 <sup>th</sup> , one on 30 <sup>th</sup> and four plus on 1 <sup>st</sup>
<b>Northern Gannet</b>	<i>(Morus bassanus)</i>	Seen offshore in small numbers on 27 <sup>th</sup> and 30 <sup>th</sup> with many more on 1 <sup>st</sup> and 2 <sup>nd</sup>
<b>Cormorant</b>	<i>(Phalacrocorax carbo)</i>	Small numbers were noted offshore on four dates.
<b>Shag</b>	<i>(Phalacrocorax aristotelis)</i>	Commonly seen offshore from all islands
<b>Common Kestrel</b>	<i>(Falco tinnunculus)</i>	One was on St Mary's on 27 <sup>th</sup> and one on St Martin's on 1 <sup>st</sup>
<b>Merlin</b>	<i>(Falco columbarius)</i>	A female was seen over Gugh and an immature male was over St Agnes later on 2 <sup>nd</sup>
<b>Peregrine Falcon</b>	<i>(Falco peregrinus)</i>	Singles were seen from the Seabird Trip and over St Mary's in afternoon of 27 <sup>th</sup> and one was over St Agnes on 2 <sup>nd</sup>
<b>Sparrowhawk</b>	<i>(Accipiter nisus)</i>	One was seen over Bryher on 29 <sup>th</sup>
<b>Water Rail</b>	<i>(Rallus aquaticus)</i>	One was seen on Tresco and other heard on 28 <sup>th</sup> and birds were heard on St Mary's on 30 <sup>th</sup> and St Agnes on 2 <sup>nd</sup>
<b>Moorhen</b>	<i>(Gallinula chloropus)</i>	Seen in small numbers on ponds on all islands except Bryher and St Martin's
<b>Coot</b>	<i>(Fulica atra)</i>	Common on Tresco on 28 <sup>th</sup> and three were on St Mary's on 2 <sup>nd</sup>
<b>Oystercatcher</b>	<i>(Haematopus ostralegus)</i>	Seen daily on all islands, most often in flocks
<b>Golden Plover</b>	<i>(Pluvialis apricaria)</i>	Eleven were on Chapel Down, St Martin's on 1 <sup>st</sup>
<b>Ringed Plover</b>	<i>(Charadrius hiaticula)</i>	A large flock of 87 were on Bryher on 29 <sup>th</sup> followed by 10+ on St Mary's on 30 <sup>th</sup> , 30+ on St Martin's on 1 <sup>st</sup> and 30+ on St Agnes on 2 <sup>nd</sup>
<b>Common Snipe</b>	<i>(Gallinago gallinago)</i>	Five were on Lower Moors on 27 <sup>th</sup> and singles were on

		Tresco on 28 <sup>th</sup> , St Mary's on 30 <sup>th</sup> and on St Agnes on 2 <sup>nd</sup>
<b>Long-billed Dowitcher</b>	<i>(Limnodromus scolopaceus)</i>	A juvenile was on the Abbey Pool, Tresco on 28 <sup>th</sup>
<b>Black-tailed Godwit</b>	<i>(Limosa limosa)</i>	Two were on the Great Pool, Tresco on 28 <sup>th</sup>
<b>Bar-tailed Godwit</b>	<i>(Limosa lapponica)</i>	Eight were on St Martin's flats on 1 <sup>st</sup>
<b>Whimbrel</b>	<i>(Numenius phaeopus)</i>	One was seen from the seabird trip on 27 <sup>th</sup> and one showed very well on Bryher on 29 <sup>th</sup>
<b>Curlew</b>	<i>(Numenius arquata)</i>	Fifty plus were seen from the Seabird trip on 27 <sup>th</sup> , thirty plus from Bryher on 29 <sup>th</sup> ; three on St Martin's on 1 <sup>st</sup> and ten plus on St Agnes on 2 <sup>nd</sup>
<b>Redshank</b>	<i>(Tringa totanus)</i>	17 were on the Great Pool, Tresco on 28 <sup>th</sup> ; one at Porth Hellick on 30 <sup>th</sup> and two on St Agnes on 2 <sup>nd</sup>
<b>Greenshank</b>	<i>(Tringa nebularia)</i>	5 were on Tresco on 28 <sup>th</sup> , one on Bryher on 29 <sup>th</sup> , 3 on St Mary's on 30 <sup>th</sup> and one on St Martins on 1 <sup>st</sup>
<b>Common Sandpiper</b>	<i>(Actitis hypoleucos)</i>	Two were on the Abbey Pool, Tresco on 28 <sup>th</sup>
<b>Turnstone</b>	<i>(Arenaria interpres)</i>	Between five and forty were noted daily on rocky shores
<b>Sanderling</b>	<i>(Calidris alba)</i>	Two were seen from the seabird trip on 27 <sup>th</sup> and fifty plus were on St Martin's on 1 <sup>st</sup>
<b>Pectoral Sandpiper</b>	<i>(Calidris melanotos)</i>	A juvenile was seen on the Abbey Pool, Tresco on 28 <sup>th</sup>
<b>Dunlin</b>	<i>(Calidris alpina)</i>	Nine were on Tresco on 28 <sup>th</sup> , ten plus were on Bryher on 29 <sup>th</sup> and one on St Agnes on 2 <sup>nd</sup>
<b>Herring Gull</b>	<i>(Larus argentatus)</i>	Common, seen daily on all islands
<b>Lesser Black-backed Gull</b>	<i>(Larus fuscus graellsii)</i>	Up to ten per day noted on all islands apart from where absent on Bryher
<b>Great Black-backed Gull</b>	<i>(Larus marinus)</i>	Seen in small numbers daily
<b>Black-headed Gull</b>	<i>(Larus ridibundus)</i>	Small numbers seen on five dates with a max of 20+ on Tresco on 28 <sup>th</sup>
<b>Mediterranean Gull</b>	<i>(Larus melanocephalus)</i>	An adult was seen between Tresco and St Mary's on 28 <sup>th</sup>
<b>Kittiwake</b>	<i>(Rissa tridactyla)</i>	One was between St Agnes and St Mary's on 2 <sup>nd</sup>
<b>Sandwich Tern</b>	<i>(Sterna sandvicensis)</i>	Six were seen on 27 <sup>th</sup>
<b>Stock Dove</b>	<i>(Columba oenas)</i>	Two were seen in Holy Vale on 30 <sup>th</sup>
<b>Wood Pigeon</b>	<i>(Columba palumbus)</i>	Common on all islands
<b>Collared Dove</b>	<i>(Streptopelia decaocto)</i>	Common, seen daily in small numbers on all islands
<b>Carrion Crow</b>	<i>(Corvus corone)</i>	Seen daily on all islands
<b>Great Tit</b>	<i>(Parus major)</i>	Surprisingly elusive but heard and occasionally seen from most islands
<b>Blue Tit</b>	<i>(Parus caeruleus)</i>	After 4+ on St Mary's on 27 <sup>th</sup> only seen or heard occasionally
<b>Swallow</b>	<i>(Hirundo rustica)</i>	Up to ten plus seen daily on all islands
<b>House Martin</b>	<i>(Delichon urbica)</i>	Three over Holy Vale, St Mary's on 30 <sup>th</sup> was the only record
<b>Skylark</b>	<i>(Alauda arvensis)</i>	One was on Bryher on 29 <sup>th</sup>
<b>Reed Warbler</b>	<i>(Acrocephalus scirpaceus)</i>	One was on St Agnes on 2 <sup>nd</sup>
<b>Willow Warbler</b>	<i>(Phylloscopus trochilus)</i>	Seen and heard in small numbers on all islands
<b>Chiffchaff</b>	<i>(Phylloscopus collybita)</i>	Heard on St Mary's on 27 <sup>th</sup> ; with a few on St Martin's and St Agnes with 10+ in Holy Vale on 30 <sup>th</sup>
<b>Blackcap</b>	<i>(Sylvia atricapilla)</i>	Heard on Tresco and Bryher on 28 <sup>th</sup> and 29 <sup>th</sup> with singles seen on St Mary's on 30 <sup>th</sup> , St Martin's on 1 <sup>st</sup> and St Agnes on 2 <sup>nd</sup>

<b>Lesser Whitethroat</b>	<i>(Sylvia curruca)</i>	One was on Gugh on 2 <sup>nd</sup>
<b>Goldcrest</b>	<i>(Regulus regulus)</i>	Heard calling on Tresco on 28 <sup>th</sup> and on St Mary's on 30 <sup>th</sup>
<b>Wren</b>	<i>(Troglodytes troglodytes)</i>	Commonly seen and heard on all islands
<b>Starling</b>	<i>(Sturnus vulgaris)</i>	Common on all islands
<b>Blackbird</b>	<i>(Turdus merula)</i>	Common, seen daily
<b>Song Thrush</b>	<i>(Turdus philomelos)</i>	Common, seen on all islands except Bryher
<b>Robin</b>	<i>(Erithacus rubecula)</i>	Seen or heard in small numbers on all islands
<b>Whinchat</b>	<i>(Saxicola rubetra)</i>	One was on Bryher on 29 <sup>th</sup>
<b>Stonechat</b>	<i>(Saxicola torquatus)</i>	Pairs noted on all islands on coastal heath habitat
<b>Northern Wheatear</b>	<i>(Oenanthe oenanthe)</i>	Singles noted on St Mary's on 27 <sup>th</sup> and 30 <sup>th</sup> and on Bryher on 29 <sup>th</sup> with three on St Martin's on 1 <sup>st</sup> and St Agnes on 2 <sup>nd</sup>
<b>Spotted Flycatcher</b>	<i>(Muscicapa striata)</i>	One was on St Agnes on 2 <sup>nd</sup>
<b>Pied Flycatcher</b>	<i>(Ficedula hypoleuca)</i>	One was on St Agnes on 2 <sup>nd</sup>
<b>Red-breasted Flycatcher</b>	<i>(Ficedula parva)</i>	One was in Barnaby Lane, St Agnes on 2 <sup>nd</sup>
<b>House Sparrow</b>	<i>(Passer domesticus)</i>	Common on all islands
<b>Duncock</b>	<i>(Prunella modularis)</i>	Present on all islands in small numbers
<b>Yellow Wagtail</b>	<i>(Motacilla flava)</i>	One was heard on St Mary's on 27 <sup>th</sup> and one seen on Tresco on 28 <sup>th</sup>
<b>Grey Wagtail</b>	<i>(Motacilla cinerea)</i>	Singles were heard on St Mary's on 27 <sup>th</sup> and 30 <sup>th</sup> and one was seen on Tresco on 28 <sup>th</sup>
<b>White Wagtail</b>	<i>(Motacilla alba alba)</i>	6+ were on St Mary's on 27 <sup>th</sup> with 3 there on 30 <sup>th</sup> ; 4 on St Martin's on 1 <sup>st</sup> and 2 on St Agnes on 2 <sup>nd</sup>
<b>Meadow Pipit</b>	<i>(Anthus pratensis)</i>	Small groups were noted daily from 28 <sup>th</sup> on all islands
<b>Rock Pipit</b>	<i>(Anthus petrosus)</i>	Present around rocky shores on all islands except Tresco
<b>Chaffinch</b>	<i>(Fringilla coelebs)</i>	Three plus seen on Tresco on 28 <sup>th</sup> and one on St Martin's on 1 <sup>st</sup>
<b>Greenfinch</b>	<i>(Carduelis chloris)</i>	Seen on all islands in small groups of twenty or less
<b>Goldfinch</b>	<i>(Carduelis carduelis)</i>	Seen in small flocks on all islands except Tresco
<b>Linnet</b>	<i>(Carduelis cannabina)</i>	Noted in small numbers on all islands except Tresco

#### ANIMALS

<b>Lesser White-toothed Shrew</b>	<i>(Crocidura suaveolens)</i>	Single dead ones were found on Bryher on 29 <sup>th</sup> and St Agnes (half!) on 2 <sup>nd</sup>
<b>Atlantic Grey Seal</b>	<i>(Haliochoerus grypus)</i>	A few seen offshore on four dates
<b>Brown Rat</b>	<i>(Rattus norvegicus)</i>	Singles noted on Tresco and St Agnes
<b>House Mouse</b>	<i>(Mus musculus)</i>	One was on Tresco on 28 <sup>th</sup>
<b>Rabbit</b>	<i>(Oryctolagus cuniculus)</i>	Two on St Mary's on 27 <sup>th</sup> plus plenty of "evidence"!

#### AMPHIBIANS

<b>Common Frog</b>	<i>(Rana temporaria)</i>	A dead one was found on St Martin's on 1 <sup>st</sup>
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#### BUTTERFLIES

<b>Large White</b>	<i>(Pieris brassicae)</i>
<b>Small White</b>	<i>(Artogeia rapae)</i>
<b>Green-veined White</b>	<i>(Artogeia napi)</i>
<b>Clouded Yellow</b>	<i>(Colias croceus)</i>

- Small Copper** (*Lycaena phlaeas*)
- Peacock** (*Inachis io*)
- Red Admiral** (*Vanessa atalanta*)
- Painted Lady** (*Cynthia cardui*)
- Small Tortoiseshell** (*Aglais urticae*)
- Meadow Brown** (*Maniola jurtina*)
- Speckled Wood** (*Pararge aegeria insula*)

**MOTHS DRAGONFLIES AND OTHER INSECTS**

- Six-spot Burnet Moth** (*Zygaena filipendulae*)
- Convolvulus Hawk Moth** (*Agrius convolvuli*)
- Knotgrass Moth** (*Acronicta rumicis*)
- Migrant Hawker** (*Aeshna mixta*)
- Short-winged Conehead** (*Conocephalus dorsalis*)
- Long-winged Conehead** (*Conocephalus discolor*)
- Buff-tailed Bumble Bee** (*Bombus terrestris*)
- Green Shield Bug** (*Palomena viridissima*)
- Devil's Coach Horse** (*Staphylinus olens*)



**Speckled Wood**



**Group in Tresco Gardens**

**Will Wagstaff, October 2009**  
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