

Isles of Scilly

Saturday 25 September – Saturday 2 October 2010

Leader:

Will Wagstaff

Daily Diary

Saturday 25 September

It was late in the day by the time we were all on Scilly and following dinner at the guest house all attended my 'Wildlife on Scilly' slideshow in the church hall. Following this we had a chat about our plans for the week

Sunday 26 September

Tresco

It was a short walk through Hugh Town to the quay where we boarded our boat for the island of Tresco. An adult Mediterranean Gull flew close to the boat as we neared the southern end of Tresco Channel where a few Little Egrets were roosting on the mid channel islets.

We walked from New Grimsby to the Great Pool where a flock of Greenshank were flying about over the water before settling near a few Redshanks. A Sand Martin was with the mixed group of Swallows and House Martins flying low over the water. A few Gadwall and Teal were with the Mallard, Mute Swan and Coot on the main part of the pool. Walking along the Abbey Drive a Goldcrest showed us why it is so called as it popped its head out of the bush close to the drive. More Teal and Gadwall were on the eastern end of the Great Pool and several hirundines were hawking overhead.

We then walked over to the nearby Abbey Pool where a Yellow Wagtail flew overhead whilst on the pool apart from a few Great-blacked Gulls bathing and a scattering of Coot there was not much happening so we headed to the south beach where we stopped for lunch.

A few Curlews were on the islands exposed at low tide. We also saw a small flock of Turnstone, a distant Sandwich Tern and as we finished eating two Bar-tailed Godwits were found feeding along the waters edge.

Our destination this afternoon was the world famous Tresco Abbey Gardens. We spent most of the afternoon wandering this amazing place looking at a wide range of exotic plants that call this sheltered site home. Some of the King Protea were still in flower along with a few other plants that make up the 'fynbos' habitat in South Africa. The Amaryllis belladonna were the most colourful flowers at this time of year and made quite a spectacle as they lined so many of the paths. Once we had left the old abbey site we encountered a pair of the introduced Golden Pheasants where the male was really strutting his stuff showing off to the female for all he was worth. She seemed to be trying to ignore him as much as possible and carried on feeding which meant they stayed with us for some time. Although not wild it was the most colourful bird of the day. We walked back the quay for the boat home overlooking Tresco Channel finding a pair of Stonechats close to the road and a flock of six Wigeon on the Great Pool as we passed by. It was a pleasant trip back on calm seas to the quay at the end of an interesting first day. That evening we ate out at the Pilots Gig restaurant.

Monday 27 September

St Agnes

It was a much brighter day today and even calmer with a light south-easterly wind. A small group of Kittiwakes were with a larger flock of Shags in mid channel when we looked back from St Agnes. On Porth Killier, our first beach a very nice male White Wagtail was close to the wall along with two Turnstones whilst on the far bank a small group of Redshank were with some Curlew and a larger flock of Oystercatcher. A Grey Wagtail flew over calling as is so typical of this species on Scilly and we spent a while with the bat detector trying to find some of the singing Short-winged Coneheads that we could hear with the device but to no avail.

The big pool on the western side of the island contained a few Moorhen and Coot and a single female Wigeon. High over the fields a male Sparrowhawk was circling much to the annoyance of the Starlings and Linnets feeding in the area. Our first Wheatear was on one of the beaches and a small group of Turnstone and Ringed Plover were on Periglis. Four Lesser Black-backed Gulls were roosting on the edge of the bay.

We then headed for the field systems and found a Spotted Flycatcher in the first one and a small group of Chiffchaffs a little later. This was followed by a more elusive Reed Warbler and then a Pied Flycatcher in the Parsonage garden. It was then time for lunch which we had in Warnar's Cove looking out towards the Western Rocks. We had seen a few Peacock Butterflies during the morning, particularly on the Ivy and we saw several more apparently coming in from the west as we ate. A Whimbrel and then a Curlew were seen in the bay along with up to three Grey Herons.

As we left the bay we had a look at Warnar's Well and then headed out onto Wingletang Down where Wheatears soon became a common bird. Whilst trying to re-find the Whimbrel we saw a Herring Gull catch and then eat a Starfish. A Kestrel showed a few times during the afternoon as it hovered over the heath. We spent a while seawatching on Horse Point, the southern tip, to little avail but did find some very smart Six spot Burnet Moths.

Just round the corner we saw a small group of Lapland Buntings that were typically crawling around in the long grass and heather. We eventually had good views of this delightful species along with a Stonechat and yet more Meadow Pipits. Some Yellow-horned Poppies were still in bloom on Beady Pool as we passed on our way to Cove Vein. We found more Meadow Pipits and Linnets on the heath and heard one more Lapland Bunting before walking around the back of the cove and up to the café for a break. Once refreshed we had a little more time before the boat so walked back through the middle of the island past the Parsonage where the Pied Flycatcher showed very well. We had time for a quick look at Porth Killier but there was little new so headed back to the quay and the boat home to St Mary's.

Tuesday 28 September

Bryher

It was a rather dull overcast day but thankfully the forecast heavy rain did only appear, there was only some light drizzle in late afternoon. The Little Egrets were again in evidence as we cruised up Tresco Channel on our way to the main quay on Bryher.

We set off towards the south end of the island hearing yet more Robins calling, they seemed to be the commonest bird on Scilly during our week. A few Goldcrest were heard but not seen and the same can be said for the Chiffchaffs. We had an unsuccessful look for the resident Prickly Stick Insects before reaching the open shores on the edge of Samson Hill. In the distance the summering Spoonbill could be seen perched on its favourite rock. A little further around the southern tip of Bryher we came to Stony Porth where a few Atlantic Grey Seals could be seen with their heads out of the water or hauled out on the more distant Northern Rocks. The island in the middle of the bay contained a roost of Oystercatcher and Curlew plus four Bar-tailed Godwits. Our first Whinchat of the trip showed well on a rock beside the path as we walked out to

our lunch spot on Heathy Hill. Several Small Copper butterflies were flitting around close at hand as we sat although they could prove elusive when the cameras came out!

The first part of the afternoon was spent looking over Great Bay where a Greenshank was feeding before heading towards Stinking Porth. It was here that Pamela found the bird of the day in the shape of a Wryneck that perched on a nearby post before feeding in one of the short grassy fields giving us excellent views of this cryptically plumaged member of the woodpecker family.

We then had a look around some of the small overgrown daffodil fields which were quiet until we found another Whinchat. Our route then took us out onto Shipman Head Down overlooking Hell Bay where we found two Skylarks and a scattering of Linnets and Meadow Pipits. As the misty drizzle was now coming down we headed for the café before catching the boat from the quay close at hand –“Anna quay” named after the builder of the original quay there Aneka Rice.

Our meal out tonight was in the Kavorna Restaurant a short walk through town from the guest house.

Wednesday 29 September

St Mary's

We followed the beaches as we left Hugh Town on a bright sunny morning with a small flock of Sandwich Terns perching on the buoys in the harbour and a group of singing Long-winged Coneheads we found with my bat detector. On the last of the beaches, Porth Loo, we found a Whimbrel feeding with a couple of Curlew at the top of the strand. Below us some Wheatears were flying back and forth as if behaving territorially. There were many more Wheatears on the Golf Course as we walked towards Telegraph, the highest place of Scilly. Having passed Argimore Pools we followed the road through Borough Farm where a juvenile Turtle Dove was perched on an overhead wire.

Upon reaching Holy Vale, the most wooded part of the island a brief view of a flycatcher caused us to stop and then have lunch sat in the sun waiting for it to come out again which it failed to do.

A good number of Chiffchaffs were in the willows on the more open section of the Higher Moors trail and a Sparrowhawk was creating mayhem in the Swallows overhead when a Siskin was heard calling. The pool at the end of the trail gave us our two American waders of the week in the form of a distant Pectoral Sandpiper and a well behaved Spotted Sandpiper that walked right in front of the hide. As this was by far the rarer of the two we were very satisfied with our views. We also saw a Common Snipe on the far side, two Teal on the island and a Migrant Hawker Dragonfly zoomed past the hide.

Sadly the beach was rather disturbed with pony trekkers and a chap collecting seaweed so we moved on which put us in the right place to look out to sea where two Minke Whales began breaching, leaping high out of the water creating a tremendous splash. A small group of Common Dolphins were also nearby although they did not stay around. If there had been birds on the beach we would have stayed longer, so in this case the disturbance did us a favour.

The walk around the coast saw us watching more Gannets out to sea and yet more Wheatears on the Airport before we reached the welcome café at Old Town. There was not much activity in Lower Moors so we continued back towards Hugh Town at the end of a varied day.

Thursday 30 September

St Martin's

The few swallows feeding in the lee of the hill at Higher Town quay, as we landed, started to give an alarm call and we soon saw the reason why as a Sparrowhawk went zooming through. We started by having a look at the sheltered area of Elms behind the cricket pitch but apart from a Grey Wagtail on the pool and a flock of Linnets there was not much moving. The immanent arrival of heavy showers caused us to shelter for a while before moving on again when we saw a Raven perched on a boulder outcrop only having to take shelter as another belt of rain arrived, so we had lunch sheltering under an old pine tree.

Once the rain had eased we came back out onto the main coastal path from where we could see a mixed flock of waders on the beach that included our first Sanderling and Dunlin, the former in a large flock for Scilly. We then headed towards the Chapel Down to have a look at the 2000 year old idol from where we could see a group of Atlantic Grey Seals hauled out on the Eastern Isles. Two Golden Plover were hiding in the heather and a single Wheatear was also seen as we walked up to the Daymark. From here we found a group of Gannets that as we made our way along the ridge of the island we could see were feeding in close association with a pod of Harbour Porpoise. Although typically the Gannets were a lot easier to see than the porpoise! A large flock of Meadow Pipits were feeding in the grass fields as we approached Higher Town where we took a café stop before making our way down the island passing the junior school before looking out over the St Martins flats where Greenshank, Curlew were noted and another Sparrowhawk flew over us. Before we headed for the quay at the end of the day we had a look out over the islands of Tean and St Helen's and found a very distant perched Peregrine Falcon that did not stay long before heading towards Treско.

Our evening meal was taken at the Pilots Gig Restaurant again.

Friday 1 October

Tresco

Our last day had a delayed start due to the heavy overnight rain continuing into the morning. The museum was a popular way of spending a couple of hours before we met just before noon to catch the next boat to Treско. Although there were one or two 'clearing showers' it was not long before it was a warm sunny afternoon. A Whimbrel and two Sandwich Terns were in Treско Channel along with the now expected Little Egrets.

We had our lunch in the quay waiting room at New Grimsby before walking up onto the Castle Down and heading towards King Charles Castle. As we neared the fort an immature male Peregrine came into view and glided away over the heath disturbing crowds of Meadow Pipits and Linnets. We had a look out from the castle with its super views out over towards Bryher before crossing the Down to the eastern shores where there was a large swell crashing in.

It was a birds of prey afternoon as we found Kestrel and the resident Common Buzzard in Gimble Porth. There was a single Whimbrel in one of the fields plus a flock of Linnets and two Ravens flew over. We had a walk around the cricket pitch area at Old Grimsby and found the group of three Jackdaws that have summered on Scilly.

Our path then took us along the seaward side of Borough Farm to overlook the grand sweep of Pentle Bay where two Migrant Hawkers were noted before we turned inland to have a look at the Abbey Pool as we had on day one. Apart from two Teal there was little activity here so we returned to the shore and Gleaner Beach. At the far end there was a mixed group of waders containing some Sanderling plus a flock of Black-headed Gulls in the shallows and an immature Mediterranean Gull flew along the shore.

It was then time to take the short walk to the quay at Carn Near for our final boat ride home.

Before dinner we did our final log call and found our bird list had reached a very respectable eighty one species plus a good range of other flora and fauna.

Saturday 2 October

Back to the Mainland

It was a fine sunny day as everyone left Scilly at the end of a very enjoyable week. I hope this report brings back some happy memories of a very special place.

BIRD LIST

Pheasant (*Phasianus colchicus*) Common on Tresco on 26th and 1st

Canada Goose (*Branta canadensis*) Four were on Tresco on 26th.

Mute Swan (*Cygnus olor*) Ten plus were on Tresco on 26th and four were there on 1st

Gadwall (*Anas strepera*) Twenty plus were on Tresco on 26th

Wigeon (*Anas penelope*) Six were on the Great Pool, Tresco on 26th and one was on St Agnes on 27th

Mallard (*Anas platyrhynchos*) Many were on Tresco on 26th; six on St Agnes on 27th; 3 on St Mary's on 29th and ten plus on Tresco on 1st.

Common Teal (*Anas crecca*) 15+ were on Tresco on 26th, two were at Porth Hellick on 29th and two were on Tresco on 1st.

Eurasian Spoonbill (*Platalea leucorodia*) One was seen roosting near Samson from Bryher on 28th.

Grey Heron (*Ardea cinerea*) Two or more were seen daily on all islands with a max of nine seen from Bryher on 28th

Little Egret (*Egretta garzetta*) Nine were off Tresco on 26th, with ten off Bryher on 28th, one from St Martins on 30th and nine from Tresco again on 1st.

Northern Gannet (*Morus bassanus*) Unusually absent until seen daily from 29th often in small groups.

Cormorant (*Phalacrocorax carbo*) One to two seen daily from all islands

Shag (*Phalacrocorax aristotelis*) Seen daily from all islands, often in small flocks

Common Kestrel (*Falco tinnunculus*) Two were on St Agnes on 27th; one on Bryher on 28th; two on St Mary's on 29th; two on Tresco on 30th and one on Tresco on 1st.

Peregrine Falcon (*Falco peregrinus*) A female was seen at distance from St Martins on 30th and a male showed well on Tresco on 1st

Sparrowhawk (*Accipiter nisus*) Singles were seen on St Agnes on 27th; a female was on St Mary's on 29th and an immature male was on St Martin's on 30th.

Common Buzzard (*Buteo buteo*) The resident male on Tresco was seen on 26th and 1st

Water Rail (*Rallus aquaticus*) Birds were heard squealing on St Mary's on 29th

Moorhen (*Gallinula chloropus*) Seen in small numbers on Tresco, St Agnes and St Mary's

Coot (*Fulica atra*) Common on Tresco on 26th; two were on St Agnes on 27th and six plus were on Tresco on 1st.

Oystercatcher (*Haematopus ostralegus*) Seen daily on all islands, most often in roosting flocks at high tide

Golden Plover (*Pluvialis apricaria*) Two were on Chapel Down, St Martin's on 30th

Ringed Plover (*Charadrius hiaticula*) Seen on all islands but Bryher with max counts of 50+ on Tresco 26th and 40+ on St Martin's on 30th

Common Snipe (*Gallinago gallinago*) One at Porth Hellick on 29th was the only record

Bar-tailed Godwit (*Limosa lapponica*) Two were on Tresco on 26th and four were off Bryher on 28th

Whimbrel (*Numenius phaeopus*) Singles were seen on St Agnes on 27th; St Mary's on 29th with two on Tresco on 1st

Curlew (*Numenius arquata*) Small numbers seen daily except where absent on 1st and max count of twenty plus off Bryher on 28th

Redshank (*Tringa totanus*) Seven were on Tresco on 26th and four were on St Agnes on 27th

Greenshank (*Tringa nebularia*) Two were on Tresco on 26th; one on Bryher on 28th; three on St Mary's on 29th; three on St Martin's on 30th and one on Tresco on 1st.

Spotted Sandpiper (*Actitis macularius*) A juvenile of this American species was at Porth Hellick, St Mary's on 29th

Turnstone (*Arenaria interpres*) Up to twenty were noted most days although none were noted on Bryher

Sanderling (*Calidris alba*) One hundred and five were on St Martin's on 30th and four were on Tresco on 1st

Pectoral Sandpiper (*Calidris melanotos*) A juvenile was at Porth Hellick, St Mary's on 29th

Dunlin (*Calidris alpina*) Four plus were on Tresco on 1st

Herring Gull (*Larus argentatus*) Common, seen daily on all islands

Lesser Black-backed Gull (*Larus fuscus graellsii*) One was on Tresco on 26th and four on St Agnes on 27th

Great Black-backed Gull (*Larus marinus*) Seen in small numbers daily

Black-headed Gull (*Larus ridibundus*) Small numbers seen daily with a max of 40+ on Tresco on 1st

Mediterranean Gull (*Larus melanocephalus*) An adult was seen on the way to Tresco on 26th and an immature was off Tresco on 1st

Kittiwake (*Rissa tridactyla*) Three were between St Agnes and St Mary's on 27th

Sandwich Tern (*Sterna sandvicensis*) One was off Tresco on 26th; twelve plus off Bryher on 28th; a flock of 18 were off St Mary's on 29th; two were off St Martin's on 30th and five from Tresco on 1st.

Wood Pigeon (*Columba palumbus*) Very common on all islands

European Turtle Dove (*Streptopelia turtur*) One was at Borough Farm, St Mary's on 29th

Collared Dove (*Streptopelia decaocto*) Common, seen daily in small numbers on all islands

Wryneck (*Jynx torquilla*) One showed well on Bryher on 28th

Jackdaw (*Corvus monedula*) The only three on Scilly were seen on Tresco on 1st

Carrion Crow (*Corvus corone*) Seen daily on all islands with a max of twelve plus on Tresco on 1st

Raven (*Corvus corax*) One was seen on St Martins on 30th and two were on Tresco on 1st

Great Tit (*Parus major*) Seen and heard daily in small numbers except when not noted on Tresco on 1st.

Blue Tit (*Parus caeruleus*) One was on Tresco on 26th, another heard on Bryher on 28th and three were on St Mary's on 29th

Sand Martin (*Riparia riparia*) One was on Tresco on 26th

Swallow (*Hirundo rustica*) Thirty plus were on Tresco on 26th and St Mary's on 29th with up to ten per day otherwise

House Martin (*Delichon urbica*) Ten plus were over Tresco on 26th and four plus were over St Mary's on 29th

Skylark (*Alauda arvensis*) Two were on Bryher on 28th and one over St Martins on 30th

Reed Warbler (*Acrocephalus scirpaceus*) One was on St Agnes on 27th

Chiffchaff (*Phylloscopus collybita*) Seen and often heard on all islands with a max of 10+ on St Mary's on 29th

Blackcap (*Sylvia atricapilla*) A female was on Tresco on 26th, 2 were heard on St Agnes on 27th and 6+ were on St Mary's on 29th

Goldcrest (*Regulus regulus*) One showed well and several were heard on Tresco on 26th with others heard on Bryher on 28th, St Mary's on 29th and St Martins on 30th

Wren (*Troglodytes troglodytes*) Commonly seen and heard on all islands

Starling (*Sturnus vulgaris*) Common on all islands

Blackbird (*Turdus merula*) Common, seen daily but not abundant

Song Thrush (*Turdus philomelos*) Common, seen on all islands, most common on Tresco and St Mary's

Robin (*Erithacus rubecula*) More than usual, seen and heard in all vegetated habitats on all islands

Whinchat (*Saxicola rubetra*) Two were on Bryher on 28th

Stonechat (*Saxicola torquatus*) Seen on all islands except St Martins with a max of six on Bryher on 28th

Northern Wheatear (*Oenanthe oenanthe*) Ten plus were on St Agnes on 27th; three on Bryher on 28th; thirty plus on St Mary's on 29th; three on St Martins on 30th and three on Tresco on 1st

Spotted Flycatcher (*Muscicapa striata*) One was at Lower Town, St Agnes on 27th

Pied Flycatcher (*Ficedula hypoleuca*) One was in the Parsonage garden on St Agnes on 27th

House Sparrow (*Passer domesticus*) Common on all islands

Dunnock (*Prunella modularis*) Present on all islands in small numbers

Yellow Wagtail (*Motacilla flava*) One flew over calling on Tresco on 26th

Grey Wagtail (*Motacilla cinerea*) Three were on St Agnes on 27th with singles then on Bryher on 28th and St Mary's on 29th, two were on St Martin's on 30th and one on Tresco on 1st

White Wagtail (*Motacilla alba alba*) One was on Tresco on 26th; five on St Agnes on 27th and two were on St Mary's on 29th

Meadow Pipit (*Anthus pratensis*) Small groups were noted daily on all islands with larger flocks on St Martins on 30th

Rock Pipit (*Anthus petrosus*) Present around coasts on all islands

Chaffinch (*Fringilla coelebs*) Rather scarce after noted as scarce on Tresco on 26th one was on Bryher on 28th and one heard on Tresco on 1st

Greenfinch (*Carduelis chloris*) Present in small numbers on Tresco, St Mary's and St Martins

Siskin (*Carduelis spinus*) One was heard calling as it flew over Holy Vale on 29th

Goldfinch (*Carduelis carduelis*) Seen in small flocks or noted flying over on all islands except Tresco on 1st

Linnet (*Carduelis cannabina*) Small flocks of up to 40+ seen on all islands.

Lapland Bunting (*Calcarius lapponicus*) A flock of at least ten were at Horse Point, St Agnes on 27th

ANIMALS

Atlantic Grey Seal (*Haliochoerus grypus*) One was off Tresco on 26th; 10+ off Bryher on 28th; 20+ from St Martins on 30th and one from Tresco on 1st

Common Dolphin (*Delphinus delphus*) A group of about twenty were seen South east of St Mary's on 29th

Harbour Porpoise (*Phocoena phocoena*) 8-10 were feeding in Great Bay, St Martins on 30th

Minke Whale (*Balaenoptera acutorostrata*) Two were seen breaching south east of St Mary's on 29th

Brown Rat (*Rattus norvegicus*) One was seen on St Mary's on 29th

Rabbit (*Oryctolagus cuniculus*) One was on Tresco on 26th; three on St Mary's on 29th and one on St Martin's on 29th

BUTTERFLIES

Large White (*Pieris brassicae*)

Small Copper (*Lycaena phlaeas*)

Common Blue (*Polyommatus icarus*)

Peacock (*Inachis io*)

Red Admiral (*Vanessa atlanta*)

Speckled Wood (*Pararge aegeria insula*)

MOTHS, DRAGONFLIES AND OTHER INSECTS

Six-spot Burnet Moth (*Zygaena filipendulae*)

Migrant Hawker (*Aeshna mixta*)

Great Green Bush Cricket (*Platycelis albopunctata*)

Short-winged Conehead (*Conocephalus dorsalis*)

Long-winged Conehead (*Conocephalus discolour*)

Buff-tailed Bumble Bee (*Bombus terrestris*)

Vestal Cuckoo Bee (*Psithyrus vestalis*)

(*Staphylinus sp*)

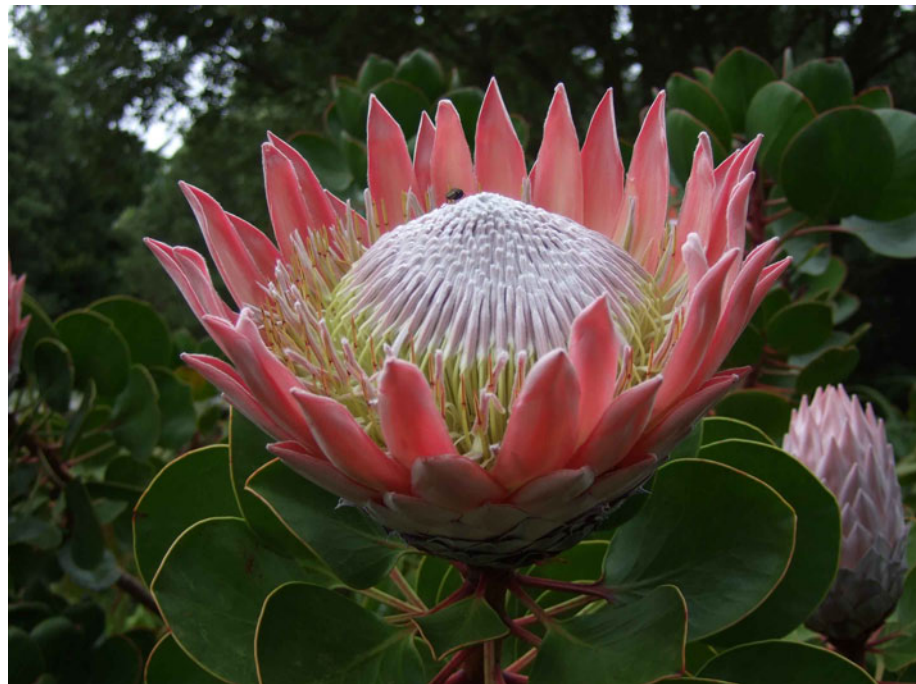
OTHER TAXA

Common Starfish (*Asterias rubens*)

Common Shore Crab (*Carcinus maenas*)



Tresco Gardens with Amaryllis borders



King Protea in Tresco Gardens



Looking West towards Bishop Rock over the Western Rocks from St Agnes



Spotted Sandpiper- photo by Judith Robinson



Lapland Bunting – photo by Judith Robinson

**Will Wagstaff, October 2010, ©
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