

Dorset

Monday May 2nd – Thursday May 5th 2011



Tuesday May 3rd

Weather: Bright sunshine all day with a cool south-easterly breeze

West Fleet, 0900

We started out with a walk from the hotel along the shores of the Fleet lagoon, walking west towards Herbury Gore and on to Rodden Hive. Whitethroats were everywhere, their song mixing with the occasional Blackcap and the resident Dunnocks. Linnets too were noisily evident in most of the hedgerows and, along with a Goldfinch or two, were giving good close views. Overhead Skylarks were singing and Buzzards and Kestrels soared. On this warm spring day insects were much in evidence as well with Orange-tip male and female seen along the coastal path. A colony of sun-bathing Lackey moth caterpillars stopped us in our tracks and made an unusual subject to photograph.



Orange-tip female



Lackey moth caterpillars

Reaching Herbury Gore we found our first waders of the week as a mixed flock of Bar-tailed Godwits and Dunlins flew in. Most of the godwits were in full summer plumage and looked gorgeous against the blue waters of the Fleet. A little further on we found a pair of Red-breasted Mergansers, an unusual sight this late in the year. Several Brown Hares were seen, one of which almost ran into us as it shot out of the crop pursued by a very determined dog!

The westernmost publicly accessible part of the Fleet, Rodden Hive, has produced an enormous list of rarities over the years but was quiet today with just of flock of 20 Whimbrel to impress us, although a local resident did report that she had seen an exhausted Hobby in her garden that morning.

The walk back to the hotel and our sandwiches produced one or two Wall butterflies and more views of the Brown Hares in the fields. More hares were seen as we sat on the patio of the hotel enjoying our lunch in the sunshine (and the wind!).

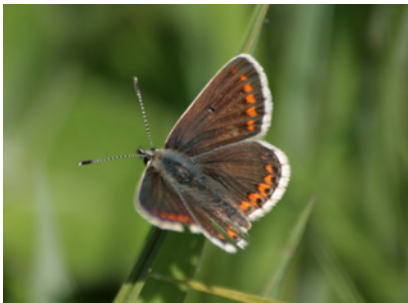
West Bexington, 1400

After a lovely lunch we drove off west along the coast road to the coastal village of West Bexington, home of the red-hot Chilli Peppers – no not the rock band but the Dorset Naga Chilli, officially the hottest in the world. And it was a bit chilly this afternoon in the strong south-easterly wind but we soon left the coast and explored the fields and hedgerows just inland. One of the first birds we heard was a Lesser Whitethroat, but sadly only one of us actually managed to see the bird (and not the leader this time!). Cetti's Warblers were also in good voice, but as usual with this species only a brief view was obtained.

Butterflies were a real highlight here with some early Common Blues and a splendid Brown Argus chasing each other round one of the more sheltered corners. Green-veined White, Small Tortoiseshell and Speckled Wood were also seen in these fields, as was a large moth caterpillar that was identified later as a Drinker.

Botanically this area is very interesting with Sea Kale and Sea Campion on the beach and Southern Marsh Orchid in the damper patches in the fields.

Back at the car park we watched Gannets migrating along the coast along with one or two Common Gulls. Another insect was added to the list when a beautiful Pebble Prominent moth was found in the Gents toilets!



Brown Argus male



Common Blue male



Pebble Prominent

Lodmoor RSPB Reserve, 1600

Our final stop for the day was this superb RSPB reserve where we were able to compare Bar and Black-tailed Godwits alongside each other. Other waders present included a Grey Plover in very nearly full summer plumage with a pair of Ringed Plovers and a summer plumaged Dunlin. Our wildfowl list took a boost with Pochard, Gadwall and Tufted Duck added.

Wednesday May 4th

Weather: Much cooler today, overcast with a cold south-easterly breeze

Ferrybridge, 0930

Very quiet here with just a few Little Terns to see and even they were not close.

Portland Bill, 1000

Our hour's sea-watch here was undoubtedly one of the highlights of the weekend. We started with Rock Pipit and Wheatear right next to the car park adding Razorbill, Guillemot and Kittiwake as soon as we reached the sea. Terns were feeding everywhere, mostly Common but a search of the nearest of several flocks produced a splendid summer Black Tern. The star birds though were the two skuas that we saw; one each of Pomarine and Arctic! Feeding amongst the terns were several shearwaters – two each of Manx and Balearic. All the time Gannets were flying past, often very close indeed.

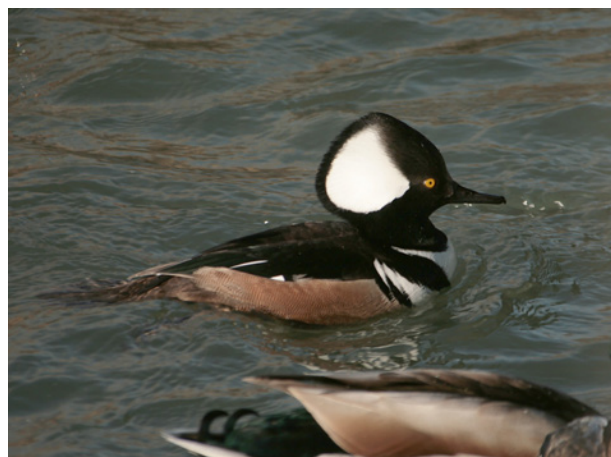
A short walk to the north brought us to the seabird breeding colony on the Westcliffs where we obtained excellent views of Guillemots on the ledges and Fulmars in flight below us.

Grove Point, 1200

The resident Little Owl was not in residence this morning but we did see a pair of Ravens and a large bull Grey Seal “bottling” in the sea a couple of hundred feet below us. Particularly pleasing were the numbers of Wall Browns that were feeding on the Wallflowers growing on the sides of the quarry.

Ferrybridge, 1330

Still very quiet here with just a few Little Terns and Bar-tailed Godwits on the shoreline.



Radipole, 1430

The long-staying Hooded Merganser showed up very quickly with a brief view as it flew past with a couple of Tufted Ducks but resisted our subsequent efforts to relocate it. From the North Hide we had excellent views of the male Kingfisher as it captured and delivered fish for its mate in the nest burrow. A pair of Garganey looked very exotic amongst the Mallard and Gadwall.

Our walk round the rest of the reserve produced only a few distant calls from the breeding Bearded Tits but two of us did manage close views of a Cetti's Warbler. The vandal-proof viewpoint proved to be a good place to be as the male Marsh Harrier quartered the reed-beds and even collected a bird (unidentified) for its mate on the nest.

Thursday May 5th

Weather: Warm and sunny, with just a light easterly breeze.

Furzebrook Heath, 1030

Walking out into this prime habitat it wasn't long before we had found the Dartford Warblers. Whilst none gave really close views we did see at least 5 individuals on many different occasions, mostly adult males in song. It was good to see that they had survived the recent spate of bad winters, at least at this site. Stonechats were much in evidence as well but the star bird had to be the Cuckoo which allowed itself to be lured in towards us with some very amateurish imitations of its call. Soon another bird joined it and we left them calling frantically to each other.

Creech Heath, 1200

Having heard a Woodlark singing in the distance from Furzebrook we relocated to Creech to see if we could find it, but alas it had gone away for lunch. We did find another superb Dartford Warbler though, this time sat at least 20 foot up on a pine tree! Siskins were heard repeatedly here but not seen. A Willow Warbler gave us very good views here – remarkably the only one seen all weekend.

Arne, 1330

This just a lunch stop really but we did another “heard” to the list - Great-spotted Woodpecker.

Middlebere Farm, 1430

A superb end to the weekend as we sat in the hide overlooking the sunny aspect of Middlebere Lake, a tidal inlet at the north-western corner of Poole Harbour. Yellow-legged Gull was probably the rarest species seen here but the summer-plumaged Golden Plover was a close second as it was of the northern race, with very smart black underparts. Redshank and Whimbrel were also seen well here as were several Buzzards and a distant Sparrowhawk.

Bob Ford, May 5th 2011

Birds – 104 species

Great Crested Grebe	Radipole
Fulmar	Portland Bill
Gannet	Portland Bill, West Bexington
Manx Shearwater	Portland Bill
Balearic Shearwater	Portland Bill
Cormorant	Portland Bill, Radipole
Shag	Portland Bill
Grey Heron	Lodmoor, Fleet, Radipole
Little Egret	Fleet, Radipole, Middlebere
Mute Swan	Lodmoor, Radipole,
Canada Goose	Lodmoor, Radipole, Middlebere
Shelduck	Fleet, Lodmoor, Radipole, Middlebere
Mallard	Lodmoor, Radipole, Middlebere
Gadwall	Lodmoor, Radipole
Shoveler	Radipole
Teal	Middlebere
Garganey	Radipole
Tufted Duck	Lodmoor, Radipole
Pochard	Lodmoor, Radipole
Red-breasted Merganser	Fleet
Hooded Merganser	Radipole
Kestrel	various sites
Marsh Harrier	Radipole
Buzzard	Fleet, Middlebere
Sparrowhawk	Middlebere
Pheasant	Fleet
Moorhen	Lodmoor, Radipole
Coot	Lodmoor, Radipole
Oystercatcher	Lodmoor, Middlebere
Ringed Plover	Lodmoor
Grey Plover	Lodmoor
Golden Plover	Middlebere
Bar-tailed Godwit	Fleet, Lodmoor
Black-tailed Godwit	Lodmoor
Whimbrel	Fleet, Portland, Lodmoor, Middlebere
Curlew	Middlebere
Redshank	Middlebere
Dunlin	Ferrybridge
Arctic Skua	Portland Bill
Pomarine Skua	Portland Bill
Common Gull	Portland Bill
Black-headed Gull	various sites
Yellow-legged Gull	Middlebere
Lesser Black-backed Gull	various sites
Herring Gull	various sites
Great Black-backed Gull	various sites

Kittiwake	Portland Bill
Black Tern	Portland Bill
Common Tern	Portland Bill, Lodmoor, Radipole
Little Tern	Ferrybridge
Guillemot	Portland Bill
Razorbill	Portland Bill
Kingfisher	Radipole
Wood Pigeon	various sites
Feral Pigeon	Radipole
Collared Dove	various sites
Stock Dove	Fleet
Swift	Radipole
Green Woodpecker	Creech (heard)
Great Spotted Woodpecker	Arne (heard)
Cuckoo	Furzebrook
Skylark	Fleet, Portland Bill
Woodlark	Furzebrook (heard)
Swallow	various sites
House Martin	Radipole
Sand Martin	Radipole
Rock Pipit	Portland Bill
Meadow Pipit	Portland Bill
Pied Wagtail	Lodmoor, Fleet, Portland Bill
Duncock	various sites
Wren	various sites
Starling	various sites
Robin	various sites
Stonechat	Fleet, Creech, Furzebrook
Wheatear	Fleet, Portland Bill
Blackbird	various sites
Song Thrush	various sites
Cetti's Warbler	West Bexington, Radipole
Reed Warbler	West Bexington, Lodmoor, Radipole, Fleet
Sedge Warbler	Lodmoor, Radipole, Fleet
Whitethroat	various sites
Lesser Whitethroat	West Bexington, Radipole
Dartford Warbler	Furzebrook, Creech
Blackcap	various sites
Willow Warbler	Creech
Chiffchaff	various sites
Blue Tit	Various sites
Great Tit	Various sites
Coal Tit	Furzebrook (heard)
Long-tailed Tit	various sites
Magpie	Various sites
Jackdaw	Various sites
Rook	Ferrybridge
Raven	Portland
Carrion Crow	Various sites

Starling	Various sites
House Sparrow	Various sites
Chaffinch	Various sites
Greenfinch	Various sites
Goldfinch	Various sites
Linnet	Various sites
Siskin	Creech
Bullfinch	Radipole
Reed Bunting	Radipole
Yellowhammer	West Bexington (heard)

Mammals – 7 species

Brown Rat	Radipole
Brown Hare	Fleet
Rabbit	Fleet
Grey Squirrel	Middlebere
Grey Seal	Portland
Roe Deer	Fleet
Sika Deer	Arne

Butterflies – 11 species

Brimstone	Middlebere
Orange-tip	Fleet
Green-veined White	West Bexington
Speckled Wood	West Bexington
Wall	Portland
Brown Argus	West Bexington
Common Blue	West Bexington
Small Copper	Middlebere
Red Admiral	Middlebere
Peacock	Middlebere
Small Tortoiseshell	Fleet

Moths – 4 species

Drinker	West Bexington
Lackey	Fleet
Pebble Prominent	West Bexington
Silver Y	West Bexington

Notable Plants

Marsh Orchid	West Bexington
Sea Campion	West Bexington
Sea Kale	West Bexington
Hoary Cress	Portland
Wallflower	Portland
Milkwort	Furzebrook