

Portland Heights Birdwatching Breaks Friday May 21st – Sunday May 23rd

Saturday May 22nd

Weather: Warm and sunny all day, light north-easterly breeze

Portland Bill, 0630

Our weekend got off to a great start with a spot of sea-watching at the Bill. A Puffin found amongst the flocks of Guillemots and Razorbills was the best sighting especially when we looked down on it from the Westcliffs. Offshore Gannets were fishing along with the resident Kittiwakes and Fulmars. The quarry at the Bill held a smart female Wheatear and several Rock and Meadow Pipits.

Kingbarrow Quarry, 0930

The Little Owl here was hard to find but eventually gave us a brief flight view. The warm sun brought out few butterflies including Dingy Skippers, Common Blues, Holly Blues and a very smart Small Blue.

Southwell, 1100

The male Peregrine put on a good show for us as it chased pigeons over the sea. Several Whitethroats gave us good views as they sang from the bramble bushes.

Ferrybridge, 1300

A few Little Terns were seen here along with a pair of late Red-breasted Mergansers and a nice selection of waders including Whimbrel, Sanderling, Turnstone, Dunlin and Ringed Plovers.

Lodmoor RSPB Reserve, 1400

Even more waders here with both Bar and Black-tailed Godwits, Whimbrel, Common Sandpiper and, best of all, 2 superb Grey Plovers close-by. Plenty of Reed and Sedge Warblers were seen along with several Reed Buntings and a surprising number of House sparrows feeding in the reeds.

Radipole RSPB Reserve, 1600

Our final stop added lots of new birds to the list, in particular a juvenile Bearded Tit that we eventually located after a great deal of patient watching. The Great-crested Grebes were particularly handsome and we were entertained by a couple of fighting Coots. (photo by Bob Ford)



Sunday May 23rd

Weather: Warm and sunny again all day, with a slightly stronger north-easterly breeze

Portland Bill, 0630

A quick visit to the Bird Observatory to see their ringing activities drew a blank but we did get a good view of a Spotted Flycatcher while we were waiting. A long way offshore a flock of Common Scoter flew past east on their way to their Baltic breeding grounds. The front garden of the Observatory held a singing Willow Warbler and on the cliffs the Puffin was in the same spot where we left him yesterday!

Maiden Castle, 1000

A flying visit here just to see the Corn Buntings that live under the ramparts of the famous hill-fort. (Photo by Roy Rainford)



Arne, 1100

A stop at a likely Woodlark site was disappointing but did produce an extremely bright Green Hairstreak. Leaving the car park we found both Green and Great Spotted Woodpeckers and some of us managed a brief view of a Nuthatch. A female Sika Deer with her year-old fawn let us approach quite closely. Next stop was at a heathland pond where there were some beautiful Four-spotted Chasers and a pair of Large Red Damselflies. Nearby was a splendid Small Copper. (photos by Bob Ford)



Small Copper at Arne



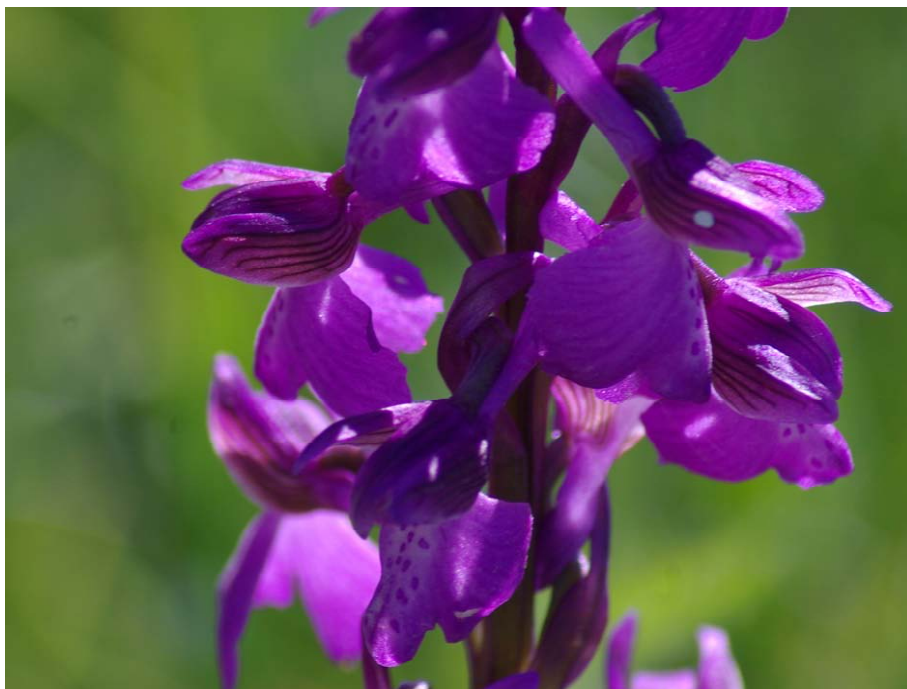
Brown Argus at Durlston

The Middlebere Heath path failed to produce any Dartford Warblers but we did see a family of Stonechats and had a very pleasant lunch overlooking Poole Harbour. Several Yellow-legged Gulls were marauding around the mudflats here and some distant Buzzards made up for the general lack of raptors over the weekend. From a viewpoint overlooking Middlebere Lake we saw some distant Redshank and a flying Little Egret.

Durlston Country Park, 1500

The Early Spider Orchids here were beyond flowering but we did manage to find a specimen with seed-heads. The Early Purple Orchids were more showy and the Green-winged Orchids were at their peak. The highlight here was a superb Brown Argus that had us chasing it around the meadow along with several Dingy Skippers and a Burnet Companion. The only bird here of any note was a Jay, the final species for the weekend's list, just one short of a hundred!

Bob Ford,
24 May 2010



Green-winged Orchid, photo by Sally Seager

Mammals: 5 species

Field Mouse	Portland
Rat	Radipole
Bunny	Portland
Brown Hare	Arne
Sika Deer	Arne

Fish: 4 species

Rudd	Radipole
Grey Mullet	Radipole
Carp	Radipole
Sand Eel	Portland

Fossils:

Cretaceous Tree	Portland
<i>Protocupressinoxylon purbeckensis</i>	

Notable Plants:

Portland:

Hoary Cress
Hairy Rockcress
Germander Speedwell
Green Alkanet
Bulbous Buttercup
Wallflower
Red Campion
White Campion
Thrift
Red Valerian
Alexanders
Wayfaring Tree
Weld
Common Milkwort
Birdsfoot Trefoil
Horseshoe Vetch
Meadow Vetchling
Mouse-ear Hawkweed
Winter Heliotrope

Radipole:

Comfrey
Fennel
Three-cornered Leek
Lesser Reedmace

Durlston:

Early Spider Orchid
Early Purple Orchid
Green-winged Orchid
Rough Hawkbit