

Portland Heights Birdwatching Breaks
Friday January 21st – Sunday January 23rd 2011

Saturday January 22nd

Weather: Overcast at first with long sunny intervals later, very cold northerly wind.

Kingbarrow Quarry, 0900

Our first stop was just next to the hotel but the Little Owl wasn't there today. However we had already seen Sparrowhawk and Raven whilst eating breakfast!

Portland Bill, 1000

Next we dropped in to Portland Bird Observatory to check out the latest news. Not much had been seen but we did have a close view of a female Blackcap near the bird feeders.

Reaching the Bill we saw plenty of seabirds, including 3 Common Scoter flying past. Razorbills, Guillemots, Kittiwakes, Gannets and Fulmars were all seen feeding offshore with several Mediterranean Gulls flying past closer. The highlight though was not a seabird but a pair of Peregrines hunting auks low over the sea. Looking west we saw that the Guillemots had already taken up residence on their nesting ledges (photo by Martin Harrison).



Grove Point, 1100

The fulmars here gave us some very close views, flying just below us as we stood on the cliffs above their breeding colony. On the way back we found a very confiding Dunnock perched on a bramble at the edge of a garden (photos by Peter Martin).



Ferrybridge, 1200

A quick but very productive stop with plenty of Little Grebes and Red-breasted Mergansers along with 3 Goldeneyes, several Curlews and perhaps 100 or more Mediterranean Gulls. The Brent Geese were distant so we had to just assume that they were all dark-bellied.

Sandsfoot Castle, 1230

From the best viewpoint high over Portland Harbour we found a superb range of birds including 2 Goosanders, about 14 Black-necked Grebes and 2 very close Slavonian Grebes.

Radipole Lake, 1300

After lunch, during which we saw Water Rail, Snipe and Mediterranean Gull, we set off for the North Hide, adding Hooded Merganser and male Marsh Harrier to the list. At the hide we had even better views of Marsh Harrier, this time the female of the pair. A Stonechat on a bramble next to the hide was a rare site after 3 cold winters in a row. Returning to the visitors centre we found 2 old favourites "*Hannibal the Cannibal*" the Water Rail and "*Hoodie*" the Hooded Merganser (photos by Peter Martin).



Stood in the car park was a colour-ringed Black-headed Gull that turned out to have been hatched in Denmark nearly 18 years ago! First ringed at Worthing in November 1993, the bird spends every winter at Radipole, returning to Copenhagen every March, mostly to an area of lakes just west of the city. For a full life-history see my note on iSpot at <http://www.ispot.org.uk/node/108777#comment-30898> (photo by Bob Ford)



Lodmoor, 1530

Sadly no Dowitcher but we did find Wigeon, Buzzard and lots of Lapwings as well as another view of the male Marsh Harrier we had seen at Radipole. This time it appeared high over the reserve, looking as if it was getting ready to start its dramatic “roller-coaster” display flight.

Bowleaze, 1600

A failed attempt to see Barn Owls here, possibly because of the pair of Buzzards that appeared to have taken up residence in the area.

Sunday January 23rd

Weather: Very similar to yesterday, not quite so cold

Kingbarrow Quarry, 0900

Another no-show for the Little Owl – but we did see a very impressive Raven.

Portland Castle, 1000

A cold and choppy Portland Harbour produced very little apart from a few Mergansers.

Ferrybridge, 1030

Pretty much the first bird we looked at here, and just in front of the van, was a splendid Black Brant – probably the best bird seen all weekend and by far the closest view any of us have ever had (photos by Peter Martin).



Moonfleet Manor, 1100

No sign of the bustards but we did add a few new birds to the list including Pheasant and Stock Dove.

Abbotsbury Swannery, 1300

In relatively warm and sunny conditions we enjoyed our lunch and the view over the Fleet. A Great Spotted Woodpecker showed up in a tree not far away and 3 or 4 Buzzards flapped around the fields.

West Bexington, 1400

Our target here, a flock of Velvet Scoter, was found almost right away, along with 20 or more Common Scoter and 2 Red-throated Divers. Walking along towards the Mere we had good views of some Redwings and a Reed Bunting put in a brief appearance.

Wyke Bridging Camp, 1600

Curlews and Little Egrets were the highlights here, but nothing new for the list.

Ferrybridge, 1630

We finished off with a last look down the Fleet and found no less than 6 Goldeneye and several Curlew. A group of 3 Ravens drinking from puddles in the car park provided an excellent end to a great weekend.



*Debbie and Martin demonstrating how to watch a great-spotted woodpecker
(photo by Bob Ford)*

Birds: 83 species

<input type="checkbox"/>	Red-throated Diver	West Bexington	<input type="checkbox"/>	Curlew	Fleet
<input type="checkbox"/>	Little Grebe	Ferrybridge	<input type="checkbox"/>	Snipe	Radipole
<input type="checkbox"/>	Great Crested Grebe	Portland Harbour	<input type="checkbox"/>	Lapwing	Lodmoor
<input type="checkbox"/>	Slavonian Grebe	Portland Harbour	<input type="checkbox"/>	Mediterranean Gull	Ferrybridge
<input type="checkbox"/>	Black-necked Grebe	Portland Harbour	<input type="checkbox"/>	Black-headed Gull	various sites
<input type="checkbox"/>	Fulmar	Portland	<input type="checkbox"/>	Common Gull	various sites
<input type="checkbox"/>	Gannet	Portland	<input type="checkbox"/>	Herring Gull	various sites
<input type="checkbox"/>	Cormorant	various sites	<input type="checkbox"/>	Great Black-backed Gull	Portland Bill
<input type="checkbox"/>	Shag	Portland Bill	<input type="checkbox"/>	Kittiwake	Portland Bill
<input type="checkbox"/>	Little Egret	Ferrybridge	<input type="checkbox"/>	Guillemot	Portland Bill
<input type="checkbox"/>	Grey Heron	Lodmoor	<input type="checkbox"/>	Razorbill	Portland Bill
<input type="checkbox"/>	Mute Swan	Radipole, Lodmoor, West	<input type="checkbox"/>	Feral Pigeon	various sites
<input type="checkbox"/>	Black Brant	Ferrybridge	<input type="checkbox"/>	Collared Dove	various sites
<input type="checkbox"/>	Dark-bellied Brent Goose	Ferrybridge	<input type="checkbox"/>	Wood Pigeon	Fleet
<input type="checkbox"/>	Canada Goose	Lodmoor, West Bexington	<input type="checkbox"/>	Stock Dove	Fleet
<input type="checkbox"/>	Shelduck	Radipole, Lodmoor	<input type="checkbox"/>	Green Woodpecker	Abbotsbury (heard)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Wigeon	Lodmoor, West Bexington	<input type="checkbox"/>	Great-spotted Woodpecker	Abbotsbury
<input type="checkbox"/>	Gadwall	Radipole, Lodmoor	<input type="checkbox"/>	Meadow Pipit	Portland
<input type="checkbox"/>	Teal	Radipole, Lodmoor	<input type="checkbox"/>	Pied Wagtail	various sites
<input type="checkbox"/>	Mallard	Radipole, Lodmoor	<input type="checkbox"/>	Wren	West Bexington
<input type="checkbox"/>	Shoveler	Radipole, Lodmoor	<input type="checkbox"/>	Duncock	various sites
<input type="checkbox"/>	Tufted Duck	Radipole, West Bexington	<input type="checkbox"/>	Robin	various sites
<input type="checkbox"/>	Pochard	Radipole, West Bexington	<input type="checkbox"/>	Stonechat	Radipole, West Bexington
<input type="checkbox"/>	Goosander	Portland Harbour	<input type="checkbox"/>	Blackbird	various sites
<input type="checkbox"/>	Red-breasted Merganser	Portland Harbour	<input type="checkbox"/>	Song Thrush	various sites
<input type="checkbox"/>	Hooded Merganser	Radipole	<input type="checkbox"/>	Redwing	West Bexington
<input type="checkbox"/>	Common Scoter	West Bexington, Portland Bill	<input type="checkbox"/>	Blackcap	Portland Bill
<input type="checkbox"/>	Velvet Scoter	West Bexington	<input type="checkbox"/>	Blue Tit	various sites
<input type="checkbox"/>	Goldeneye	Ferrybridge	<input type="checkbox"/>	Great Tit	various sites
<input type="checkbox"/>	Kestrel	various sites	<input type="checkbox"/>	Long-tailed Tit	Abbotsbury
<input type="checkbox"/>	Peregrine	Portland	<input type="checkbox"/>	Magpie	various sites
<input type="checkbox"/>	Sparrowhawk	Portland	<input type="checkbox"/>	Jackdaw	various sites
<input type="checkbox"/>	Buzzard	Portland, Fleet	<input type="checkbox"/>	Rook	Abbotsbury
<input type="checkbox"/>	Marsh Harrier	Radipole, Lodmoor	<input type="checkbox"/>	Raven	Portland
<input type="checkbox"/>	Moorhen	Radipole, Lodmoor	<input type="checkbox"/>	Carrion Crow	various sites
<input type="checkbox"/>	Coot	Radipole, Lodmoor	<input type="checkbox"/>	Starling	various sites
<input type="checkbox"/>	Water Rail	Radipole	<input type="checkbox"/>	House Sparrow	various sites
<input type="checkbox"/>	Pheasant	Fleet	<input type="checkbox"/>	Chaffinch	various sites
<input type="checkbox"/>	Oystercatcher	Ferrybridge	<input type="checkbox"/>	Greenfinch	Portland
<input type="checkbox"/>	Turnstone	Ferrybridge	<input type="checkbox"/>	Goldfinch	Portland
<input type="checkbox"/>	Dunlin	Ferrybridge	<input type="checkbox"/>	Linnet	Fleet
<input type="checkbox"/>			<input type="checkbox"/>	Reed Bunting	West Bexington

Mammals: 3 species

<input type="checkbox"/>	Rabbit	Fleet	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Hare	Fleet	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Roe Deer	Fleet	<input type="checkbox"/>