

Isles of Scilly

Naturetrek Tour Report

10 - 17 May 2008

Report compiled by Paul Dukes



Naturetrek Cheriton Mill Cheriton Alresford Hampshire SO24 0NG England

T: +44 (0)1962 733051

F: +44 (0)1962 736426

E: info@naturetrek.co.uk

W: www.naturetrek.co.uk

Tour Leader: Paul Dukes

Participants: David Sills
Dorothy Sills
Michelle Parry
Jane Bett
Margaret Arnold
Peter La Trobe
Sheelagh La Trobe
Margaret Reed
Bernice Hartley

Day 1

Saturday 10th May

After travelling to Penzance, from various parts of the country, most of the Naturetrek group made their way to the Lighthouse pier bright and early to board the Scillonian 111 ferry. It was a very foggy spring morning with poor visibility which represented no problem great for the steamship but did threatened to delay the journey of Margaret and Bernice, who had opted to travel to Scilly by air.

Eventually the ropes were cast off and we began the three hour sailing to St Mary's, although it was soon apparent that we were unlikely to see many birds on the crossing today as the swirling fog restricted observations to just a few hundred metres. Despite the conditions we had barely left Mount's Bay when the vessel passed a group of birds bobbing in the water which to my great surprise turned out to be Puffins. It is by no means usual to see these appealing little auks so close to the mainland but sadly I barely had time to call out the name before they were swallowed up in the fog and only Michelle managed to get a brief view.

As we made our way parallel with the South Cornish coast the cliffs were hidden in the mist but as we progressed into more open sea there were occasions when visibility improved, only to deteriorate again as we met further patches of fog. During these clearances we were able to see a few of the many Gannets which were doubtless fishing these fish-rich seas. A dozen or more Manx Shearwaters scudded over the waves at one stage and the occasional Fulmar glided effortlessly in our wake.

Eventually the Eastern Isles came into view with the distinctive red and white day-mark on St Martin's visible behind the cluster of islands. Visibility had greatly improved and fittingly the sun was valiantly trying to shine as the Scillonian docked at St Mary's. Making our way through throng of people at the harbour side we left the daily chaos and hubbub that greets the arrival of the steamer and walked through Hughtown to Sallyport, where we were staying at the Santa Maria Guest House. Introductions were made by the proprietors Jackie and Andy who ran through the daily routine at the establishment and sorted out the room allocation.

After a break for everyone to settle in and purchase lunch in 'town', we reassembled outside the Santa Maria at 3pm to take an afternoon walk around the Garrison headland. We were still missing Margaret and Bernice who were on a delayed helicopter flight from Penzance, but we set off on our stroll in the hope that they might catch up later.

A tight squeeze through a low and narrow passageway links Sallyport with the Garrison footpath but we negotiated this without too many groans of complaint and began a clock-wise circuit of the old garrison walls which took us along the coast opposite St Agnes and the adjacent island of Gugh. Very distant Kittiwakes could be seen swirling around their cliff colony on Gugh but in fairness it was not the best of views on a hazy afternoon and I do not blame any doubters who were unconvinced by the identification! There was no doubt, however, about the Stonechats scolding us from the gorse where youngsters were concealed.

An early surprise was a fine immature Iceland Gull which Dorothy spotted perched on a rock at Morning Point as we discussed the finer points of Cormorant and Shag identification. This pale creamy brown visitor from the Arctic had been around Scilly for some weeks but it was good fortune to find it in such a convenient place for telescope scrutiny. A diversion was provided soon after by a spectacular albino Blackbird which looked like a negative image of the usual thing!

Rock Pipits 'parachuting' song flight brought attention to these rather drab inhabitants of the rocky coastline and other more familiar birds such as Wren and Robin joined in the afternoon chorus. Holly Blue and Small Copper butterflies were enjoying the moments of sunshine. In general birdlife around the Garrison was rather sparse and we met with few migrants apart from numerous Swallows hawking for insects. We soon encountered the first of many Linnets, which proved to be abundant everywhere we went. Some other typical Scilly residents also introduced themselves during the walk; the absurdly tame Song Thrushes which are such a feature of the islands, the distinctly orange-billed local Blackbirds, and groups of Oystercatchers noisily displaying on the shore. Most of the gulls were either Lesser Black-backed or Herring but several Greater Black-backs stood around among their smaller relatives looking suitably menacing as befits a bird capable of swallowing Puffins in one gulp!

Great thickets of Hottentot Fig growing on sunny banks were testament to the mild climate which makes Scilly such an attractive place for plants. Three exotic garden species were much in evidence throughout the islands; the tall spikes of Tree Echium, much beloved by bees, rows of purple Whistling Jacks and the strange Giant Herb-Robert (*Geranium maderense*) each plant a mass of pretty flowers supported by a cluster of buttressed roots. Dorothy, who was already establishing her credentials as a very competent botanist, drew our attention to the scarce Western Clover growing on top of the Garrison Wall.

We paused at the top of Star Castle Hill, which on a clearer day affords superb views of the many islands comprising the archipelago, and spent some time identifying the major islands. Treco with its abundance of trees, and St Martins with distinctive red & white day-mark were easy to pick out whilst Bryher was partially obscured by the twin hills of Samson from this position. The myriad of uninhabited islands scattered around the larger islands are described in relation to their compass alignment thus those clustered around the tip of St. Martins are known as the Eastern Isles and the jumble of granite outcrops several kilometres beyond St. Agnes are called the Western Rocks, pointing towards the Bishop Rock Lighthouse, standing isolated against the might of the Atlantic breakers although on this misty afternoon the lighthouse was completely obscured by a bank of fog which lingered on the horizon as if preparing to roll back over the islands.

Fortunately Margaret and Bernice had arrived during the afternoon and after a tasty evening meal at the Santa Maria Guest House we joined an almost full audience in the Church Hall for Will Wagstaff's talk on the Wildlife of Scilly. His slides depicted the many seasonal natural history delights to be found on Scilly and we wondered what surprises awaited us during the next few days.

Day 2

Sunday 11th May

A pattern for the week was established as I set out at 0615 to walk around Peninnis Head in a pre-breakfast search for migrant birds. It was still very foggy but that didn't stop two Cuckoos from challenging each other from the narrow belt of rather shattered pine trees mid way along the headland, and as usual at this early hour, plenty of Song Thrushes and Blackbirds were on the footpaths taking advantage of the early worms (and snails). Heading back to Hughtown along the track which leads from the hospital to the point, I saw another birdwatcher ahead of me looking intently at the ground between us. At first I couldn't see what was warranting this prolonged scrutiny then to my surprise I noticed a small grey-brown bird in the middle of the dusty track and realized that it was a Short-toed Lark. This rare visitor from southern Europe was gradually heading in my direction so I carefully retreated back the way I had come and ran back to town hoping I might meet another tour member along the way. I did pass a lot of dog walkers but sadly no tour people so it was not until breakfast that I was able to impart the news. Unfortunately it transpired that Jane had missed me by minutes when I departed and would otherwise have been there for the encounter with the lark.

A Bee-eater had been seen for the last few days on St Agnes so this became our destination for the day. St Agnes is my favourite island, and in my biased opinion never disappoints, but nevertheless I was glad of reasonable conditions to show it off. Twenty minutes after leaving Hughtown we stepped ashore on the recently renovated Porth Conger quay St Agnes and began our exploration of this small island by following an anti-clockwise route around the northern coastline. The fog had mostly dispersed and it was a pleasant morning with promise of sunshine later. Scanning the expanse of seaweed and rocks exposed by the retreating tide in Porth Killier Bay we found that the tideline ribbon of decomposing seaweed was providing insect prey for Rock Pipits and one or two Wheatears as well as such residents as Song Thrush, Blackbird, Robin & Wren. A small flock of about twenty Turnstones, some in handsome summer plumage, were also finding plenty to eat among the weedy rocks.

Continuing past the small freshwater pool, which today was covered with bathing and preening gulls, we inhaled the scent of Camomile from the short turf around the cricket pitch and listened to the song of a migrant Willow Warbler from a distant hedgerow. A few birders have travelled over with us to look for the Bee-eater and from one of these we gathered that the colourful visitor had been seen briefly but not for some while. We made a perfunctory scan of a few hedges then continued on our way resolving to have a longer look on our way back.

Passing through the yard of Troytown Farm, which now supplies milk, dairy products, meat and even ice-cream by way of diversification, we arrived at the wild western extremity of the island characterised by a chaos of granite boulders scattered randomly over the landscape, ranging in size from modest rocks to great monoliths towering twenty or thirty metres above the gorse and bracken. Out to the west, the jumble of uninhabited rocky islands known as the Western Isles, stretched away towards the isolated white finger of the Bishop Rock lighthouse, surely one of the loneliest of postings in the days when the light was manned.

As we lay in the grass looking out towards the seabird island of Annet, covered by carpets of pink thrift, we saw plenty of seabird activity but no sign of the few Puffins still breeding there each year. Two immature or winter plumage Great Northern Divers caused frustration by their constant diving but eventually everyone managed to get telescope views, albeit mostly brief ones.

We continued to follow the cliff path, stopping en route to look at the often pictured Troytown maze (labrynth) and more song-fighting Rock Pipits, before rejoining the one concrete road on the island near the historic old lighthouse which is a distinctive feature of St Agnes. It was at this juncture that an excited birdwatcher shouted to us that the Bee-eater was in view perched on a pile of wood across the field and with great timing we joined him to enjoy prolonged observations of this superb bird. At times it chose to perch on the other side of the woodpile out of view but after each aerial sortie after insects it returned to the heap of branches and was then often in the open providing excellent views of both upperparts and underparts. Encouraged by the afternoon sunshine it was very active and in addition to catching bees we also saw it capture and eat a butterfly.

Some say that all roads lead to a pub and so it is with the St Agnes A1 which runs through the centre of the island to the quay conveniently leading us to lunch in the Turk's Head. This island hostelry had recently changed hands but was as busy as ever and although pasties were off the menu today there were plenty of alternatives on offer as we celebrated a triumphant morning.

After the meal we ventured onto Wingletang Downs, the gorse and heather moorland leading to Horse Point, the southern most extremity of the archipelago. Here the scenery becomes even more dramatic with further scatterings of granite boulders and huge outcrops which have been eroded into fantastic shapes. Numerous yellow Grass Eggar caterpillars at the sides of the path were tempting fare for any passing Cuckoo but sadly these most impressive of summer visitors were evidently in short supply this spring and whereas three or four would normally be a regular May total on Wingletang, the familiar call was not heard today. Earlier however we did hear one near the Lighthouse so our day was not entirely devoid of this archetypal summer sound. Other birds seen during the afternoon included Razorbills off Gugh, a pair of Common Terns and a few Common Wheatears. As we made our way back to the quay for the return to St Mary's large numbers of Swallows and House Martins were noticeable over the island, no doubt north-bound birds that had been held up for a few days by the recent foggy weather.

Day 3

Monday 12th May

I was once again on my own for a pre-breakfast visit to Peninnis and found that the Short-toed Lark had moved into an adjacent ploughed field where it was busily feeding. Several Wheatears were also present and before I left, three summer-plumaged Golden Plover flew in from the airfield direction and nervously melted into a nearby grassy field.

After breakfast we made our way down to the quay and boarded a tripper boat for a cruise around the Eastern Isles followed by landing on St Martin's. This is an excursion that can be prone to cancellation if weather or tides are unsuitable and my usual policy is to take this trip at the first opportunity. With boatman Gerald as our skipper we set off to navigate around the scatter of islands known as the Eastern Isles. Close up views of Shags, Cormorants, Razorbills, Fulmars and three gull species were all enjoyable but the star performers were undoubtedly the Grey Seals which as usual seemed to play to the audience. We saw about 50 animals in total, many loafing about on the rocks where they viewed our passing in a mixture of curiosity and mild alarm. Some huge bulls were present but many of the seals were females or immatures. It was an enchanting encounter and after completing a circuit of the last island it was a happy crew of passengers that headed back to land on the quay at Higher Town.

Not all the birds seen were seabirds and our Eastern Isles tally also included a lone immature Heron causing panic among the gulls and a Peregrine perched high on a rocky outcrop. Several Whimbrel were also feeding among the seaweed on one beach but not all the group managed to see them before we had slipped by in the boat.

A few Common Terns were fishing the shallow waters off St Martin's but clearly most of the nesting population had still to arrive from their African sojourn. Back on terra firma we made our way around the eastern extremity of the island taking in fine views of the Eastern Isles from the land. Birds were none too plentiful but we enjoyed the walk and an increasingly warm morning brought out a number of Small Coppers to add their colour to the short turf beside the paths. We decided not to divert to the Daymark and skirting Little Arthur Farm returned to Highertown across the fields adding several Speckled Woods to the day's butterfly list. In a change of tradition, we bought lunch at the bakery and sat outside in the sun to enjoy our purchases whilst a Song Thrush and numerous Sparrows rushed to snatch each falling crumb.

After this picnic, Bernice and Margaret elected to go back to St Mary's on the early afternoon boat and the rest of us headed towards the western end of the island where the settlement of Lowertown and the St Martin's Hotel are situated. In pleasant sunshine we made our way from the cultivated southern side of the island to the gorse and heather expanse which cloaks the central and northern portions of St Martin's following a footpath which bisected the two habitats with moorland to our left and fields to the right. The scenery was magnificent as we looked down over the white sands and azure sea of Great Bay towards White Island in the distance. Later the views to the south and west were just as impressive as large expanses of white sand were revealed by the retreating tide and it almost looked possible to walk across to Tresco, as indeed it is on certain occasions. Apart from noticeable numbers of hirundines, the inevitable Linnets and a few Wheatears, we saw few birds but this was a day to just enjoy the island and birds were almost secondary.

At Lowertown we paused for refreshments at the Seven Stones pub then made our way back to the central spine of the island where the moorland begins. David spotted a Little Egret feeding in a bay below the cliffs and I was just about to set the telescope on this elegant heron when a flash of white caught my attention on the other side of a field and to our surprise revealed itself as a superb male Woodchat Shrike. The Egret was suddenly demoted in importance and we focused on the delightful little Shrike as it obligingly perched on stone walls and bushes just the width of a field from our position. Through the telescope every detail was visible and it certainly added the ornithological cream to a very enjoyable island visit. Reluctantly leaving the Shrike to hunt for prey, we continued along the footpath to Highertown once again and arrived back at the quay in good time for the 1645 boat. The return walk was enlivened by still more Swallows and House Martins, a good showing of Red Admirals and Small Coppers, a few more Wheatears and a fat Oil-beetle dragging its bloated body across the path.

This was not to be the only outing of the day, for after another excellent evening meal, several of the group joined Will Wagstaff's evening 'Shearwater Special' The aim of these boat trips is to witness the assemblies of Manx Shearwaters off the seabird island of Annet where these vulnerable birds go ashore to nesting burrows after dark to avoid predation. As we navigated from St Mary's to Annet, Great Northern Divers were suddenly on either side of the boat and no less than eight individuals were passed, three quarters of which were adults in summer plumage. Guillemots, Razorbills and a few Kittiwakes were also encountered and a large raft of fishing Shags. The pink Thrift looked even more vivid as we neared Annet and we could see plenty of bird activity in the gullery but unfortunately the island Puffins remained resolutely out of sight.

Many of the passengers join these trips to see the Puffins, Will decided to try another nesting site on a small island to the south of Annet and this ploy proved successful as we soon had several of these small but sturdy Little Auks in view. Whilst manoeuvring to get closer to the Puffins, Will noticed some waders on a shelf just above the water and these proved to be Purple Sandpipers although the difficult viewing conditions meant that for most of us they were no more than shapes moving amongst the seaweed. Light was quickly fading and we sped back towards Annet and an area of sea where the shearwaters often congregate. There was none tonight but eagle-eyed Will picked out a few very distant birds and after a bit of a chase we finally caught up with about a dozen Manx Shearwaters on the sea which allowed a fairly close approach before flying off. This was the cue to return back to St Mary's and the novelty of docking in the dark at the conclusion of an enjoyable few hours. On the way back we passed a group of about 15-20 Terns roosting around the edge of a marker buoy in mid-channel, the largest assembly Will had seen this spring.

Day 4

Tuesday 13th May

I was pleased to welcome Jane on the pre-breakfast walk and we were rewarded by the Short-toed Lark once again in the fields at Peninnis, a Cuckoo and one or two Wheatears. It promised to be a fine day and later became hot and sunny as we explored the interior and south coast of St Mary's.

Our walk took us along Rocky Hill to Holy Vale then down the Porth Hellick Nature Trail finally following the coastal footpath beside the airfield to Old Town where we paused for lunch at the Tolman's Café. At Holy Vale we heard the distinctive tones of a Stock Dove hidden in the canopy and as we walked along the nature trail through a belt of mature Elms, both Blackcaps and Chiffchaffs were singing. A number of Gadwall were scattered on Porth Hellick Pool and several flotillas of small Mallard ducklings with anxious mothers in attendance keeping a wary eye on two Herons standing in the reeds. A Cuckoo was calling on the downs and a Sand Martin joined the Swallows and House Martins over the water. A Willow Warbler added his contribution to the bird song whilst one or two Reed Warblers could also be heard. One of the resident Ringed Plovers landed in front of us on the beach but an inspection of the mud exposed by the retreating tide failed to reveal any other waders today.

As we followed the footpath south along the edge of the cliffs we found a number of Green Tiger Beetles enjoying the sunny conditions along the track. The café at Old Town has new owners and I noticed quite a few changes not least the rather impressive décor of the toilets! The menu was also different and we quickly discovered that the sandwiches consisted of huge slices of home made bread which challenged even the biggest of appetites. After the meal we meandered to nearby Old Town churchyard to see Harold Wilson's grave then entered the Lower Moors Nature Trail where we spent a little time looking out of the hides. A very close Greenshank was sitting in the sun at the edge of the water before eventually beginning to search for food.

Apart from some large eels, a few Gadwall and Mallard there did not appear to be much else in residence so we elected to finish the day with a walk around Peninnis Head to enable the rest of the group to catch up on the Short-toed Lark. Fortunately it was still in one of the ploughed fields along with a Wheatear and we were also glad to see four Whimbrels which paid a brief visit to the same ploughed strip. Stonechats in the gorse at the tip added to the afternoon bird list.

Day 5

Wednesday 14th May

As a change, Jane and I visited Lower Moors for the early excursion and were entertained en route by two Little Egrets having a bit of a disagreement with a bullying juvenile Grey Heron in Old Town Bay. There were no surprises in Lower Moors but it was nice to see the reed-bed occupants busily seeking their first meals of the day including the hirundines hawking insects over the water.

After a mostly sunny few days it was somewhat cooler and cloudier today with a threat of rain in the air. We caught a boat to Tresco in the hope that the weather would improve during our visit but the knowledge that we could always shelter in bird hides if it didn't! We eventually arrived at New Grimsby Quay and made our way around to the Great Pool, pausing for a while to scan over the pool but apart from the customary Gadwall and Mallards and a few Canada Geese on the shore, not a lot was apparent. A Blackcap gamely sang from the trees beside the track and proved remarkably adept at keeping hidden amid the foliage.

By popular consensus we hastened to the famous Abbey Gardens where the group opted to spend the remainder of the morning touring the grounds although not before a cup of tea in the restaurant. Leaving the others to enjoy the sub-tropical plants in the gardens, I continued birding along the southern edge of the Great Pool but I have to admit that it was not the most productive of excursions although a few Goldcrests were singing and once or twice a Reed Warbler piped up from the reeds. Returning to the restaurant for lunch I met up with the others, who had enjoyed their time in the gardens, and we competed with the throng of visitors for a bite to eat.

Later we followed a very scenic route along the eastern side of the Island towards Borough Farm. Once again the scenery was superb with changing perspectives of the views across towards St Martin's and frequent glimpses of the long white beach which extends virtually the length of the shoreline on this side of Tresco. Before reaching Old Grimsby we cut inland and followed the side of the discreetly hidden rubbish tip back to the edge of the Great Pool. En route we heard more Goldcrests and several Blackcaps but viewing the singers was more difficult.

A final spell in the new hide at the farm end of the Great Pool concluded a slightly disappointing day for birds but everyone seemed to have enjoyed their visit to this most famous of Scillonian islands and the only complaint was about the cost of entering the gardens. Although overall the birds had been in short supply for mid-May we did record one new species for the week in the scythe shape of two Swifts, and Golden Pheasants in the shrubbery were decorative if not exactly wild!

Back at the Santa Maria I was fortunate to be looking out of my room window at exactly the right moment as a Hobby glided past following the Garrison Wall, then circled back at speed passing right over the guest house roof. By then it had become quite misty once again and perhaps the falcon had just dropped in. The Santa Maria does not serve an evening meal on Wednesdays and this gave us the opportunity to eat out in Hughtown. Our venue was the Pilot's Gig near the harbour, a fine restaurant owned by Scillonian birder, and one of the best bird photographers in Britain, Bryan Thomas. A convivial time was had by all and it was an opportunity for us to discuss the week's sightings.

Day 6

Thursday 15th May

After breakfast we boarded the rickety old Community Bus outside the Town Hall and travelled to the north end of the island at the start of another day on St Mary's. This service is a real boon to visitors, departing at set times from Hughtown and following a circular route around the island for a very reasonable maximum fare of £1.50. Sadly it was another damp, foggy morning but undeterred we alighted at Holy Vale and walked down to Watermill Bay, a delightful little sheltered cove which affords access to the coastal footpath. At Innisidgen we paused to inspect the 2,000 year old Burial chambers and tried to imagine what life must have been like in those far distant times but concluded that the cafes were probably better in present day Scilly. A few Razorbills were bobbing on the sea and birds along the rocky shoreline included Shelducks, Oystercatchers and a little party of four Curlew.

Moving around the coastline we visited another archaeological site at Bant Carn ancient village, where a singing Whitethroat added bird interest, then made our way across the famous St Mary's Golf Course, once beloved by Harold Wilson, to Juliet's Garden Café for lunch. This superbly appointed establishment overlooking Hugh town harbour is arguably the best of all the many eating places on Scilly and certainly the one with the finest outlook. It was pretty crowded but we enjoyed a typically excellent meal although the views today were marred by the persistent mist.

Some of the party returned to Hughtown after lunch whilst the rest of us paid another visit to Lower Moors encouraged by a sighting there of a Bluethroat the previous evening. This time there was a noticeable influx of Sedge Warblers with half a dozen or more in evidence around the pools and several Reed Warblers were also on view. The Greenshank was again wading in the shallows and two rather smart White Wagtails were feeding on the muddy banks. Sadly the Bluethroat did not oblige but that would have been more than we could have hoped for!

Day 7

Friday 16th May

For a change the dawn patrol tried the Garrison walk today but a male Stonechat was all I recorded in my notes. The main destination for later was the pretty little island of Bryher. It was overcast but warm and we enjoyed a different approach to the island by passing on the seaward side of Samson where some of the passengers were taken by dinghy to spend the day in castaway mode. During the navigation we cruised past a partial summer plumaged Great Northern Diver and both Sandwich and Common Terns were fishing the channels.

Once ashore on Bryher we meandered to the western coast of the island via a brief stop to look around the church. In the rough pasture area maintained by the Wildlife Trust for the preservation of the very rare Dwarf Pansy we resorted to a hands and knees forensic search of the area but felt we deserved rather more than an abundance of rabbit droppings. Winter storms had driven the sea over this area which is usually protected by dunes and as a consequence the tiny flowers had proved even more difficult to find so it was perhaps not surprising that we failed. Fortunately the population of Grey Bush Crickets in this area did survive the flood and as we crawled around we saw dozens of tiny nymphs among the grass stalks. A clump of Sea Holly nearby was another reward for our efforts.

From Rushy Bay we continued to file around the coastline with the bracken and gorse covered Samson Hill to our left. As so often on Scilly, the walk revealed more stunning vistas of the islands, this time the twin peaks of Samson, the more distant islets of the northern rocks and to the east, the long sandy coastline of Tresco. As the tide receded numerous sandy islets were exposed between islands and large flocks of gulls congregated on these temporary refuges. We stopped for lunch at the Vine Café, a slightly less grand venue than the Hell Bay Hotel at the other end of the island but somewhat cheaper and always reliable for good wholesome food. The negative aspect is that the lady who runs the café does all the food preparation herself and this can make lunch a lengthy process but today we were lucky with our timing and the various orders were served fairly quickly.

Some of the party elected to return to St Mary's on a 2pm boat while the rest of us took the coastal footpath around the base of Shipman Hill. This walk eventually affords wonderful views over Hell Bay and Shipman Head, the former looking rather tranquil in calm afternoon sunshine. A few Wheatears were noted during the walk and arriving at the island pool opposite the Hell Bay Hotel, we saw a rather flighty little group of about four Common Redpolls, a very local bird on Scilly. There were plenty of hirundines over the island and with them at least ten Swifts indicating a distinct influx of these aerial birds.

Time remained for a gentle stroll back to the quay to catch the 1645 boat to St Mary's. We had enjoyed the opportunity to explore this small but picturesque north-western island which is well known to many people as the setting for the popular cinema film 'When the Whales Came'. Sadly no whales today, nor Dwarf Pansys but we did see a few interesting birds and flowers during our visit.

Day 8

Saturday 17th May

Our final day and sadly time for Margaret and Bernice to take their leave after breakfast to catch a late morning helicopter flight. For the rest of us it was a day to potter about in various ways, which for some included a visit to the excellent Museum and a little shopping. A hot and sunny day encouraged a final look at Porth Hellick where a Spotted Flycatcher along a row of pines was evidence that at least one new migrant had arrived.

Eventually it was time to board the Scillonian and watch the islands recede into the distance as we sailed back to Penzance. It was somewhat clearer conditions than the outward journey and the various landmarks on the Cornish coast were easy to see as we headed towards Mounts Bay. Seabirds were sparse but 20-30 Manx Shearwaters were observed, most during the last hour of the sailing.

It had not been the most bird-filled weeks on Scilly, due mainly to the prevailing conditions but I hope everyone enjoyed the week as much as I did. Special thanks are due to Dorothy who contributed her botanical knowledge to each excursion and compiled the list of flowers at the end of this report.

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Species Lists

Birds

Great Northern Diver	<i>Gavia immer</i>	Two off Annet May 11 and 8 on 12th
Fulmar	<i>Fulmarus glacialis</i>	A few during crossings and around islands
Manx Shearwater	<i>Puffinus puffinus</i>	c15 on crossing, 13 off Annet
Gannet	<i>Sula bassanus</i>	Common on crossing and a few around islands
Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>	Nesting Eastern Isles, small numbers elsewhere
Shag	<i>P. aristotelis</i>	Common around islands, rafts of several hundred
Little Egret	<i>Egretta garzetta</i>	Singles St Martins, Tresco & 2+ St Marys
Heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>	Up to 2 around St Mary's and one Eastern Isles
Mute Swan	<i>Cygnus olor</i>	One Porth Hellick and several Tresco
Canada Goose	<i>Branta Canadensis</i>	Four plus Tresco
Shelduck	<i>Tadorna tadorna</i>	Mostly in pairs around coastlines, total 10+
Gadwall	<i>Anas strepera</i>	Tresco, Porth Hellick, Lower Moors
Mallard	<i>A. platyrhynchos</i>	A few on each island, many Tresco
Kestrel	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>	Three singles
(Hobby	<i>F. subbuteo</i>	One Garrison PAD only)
Peregrine	<i>F. peregrinus</i>	One maybe two Eastern Isles
Pheasant	<i>Phasianus colchicus</i>	Tresco
Moorhen	<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>	Pairs on most island pools
Coot	<i>Fulica atra</i>	Tresco & Porth Hellick
Oystercatcher	<i>Haematopus ostralegus</i>	Common around coastlines
Ringed Plover	<i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>	Porth Hellick beach
(Golden Plover	<i>Pluvialis apricaria</i>	Three Peninnis PAD only)
Purple Sandpiper	<i>Calidris maritima</i>	Two plus Western Isles
Curlew	<i>Numenius arquata</i>	One off Tresco and 4 North coast of St Marys
Whimbrel	<i>N. phaeopus</i>	A few St Marys, several Eastern Isles
Greenshank	<i>Tringa nebularia</i>	One Lower Moors
Turnstone	<i>Arenaria interpres</i>	30+ St Agnes
Lesser Black-backed Gull	<i>Larus fuscus</i>	Common and widespread
Herring Gull	<i>L. argentatus</i>	Common and widespread
Great Black-backed Gull	<i>L. marinus</i>	Locally common
Iceland Gull	<i>L. glaucooides</i>	Immature Morning Point St Marys
Kittiwake	<i>Rissa tridactyla</i>	A few during crossings and also around islands
Sandwich Tern	<i>Sterna sandvicensis</i>	Several in vicinity of Tresco/Bryher
Common Tern	<i>S. hirundo</i>	Just a few around islands, mostly off St Martin's but 15-20 crowded onto buoy as we headed back to St Mary's at dusk after the 'Shearwater Special' & c25 off Bryher/Tresco
Guillemot	<i>Uria aalge</i>	Plentiful on crossing but just a few around islands
Razorbill	<i>Alca torda</i>	Small numbers around islands, especially Eastern Isles
Puffin	<i>Fratercula arctica</i>	3+ near Penzance on May 10 & 3-4 near Annet on 12th
Stock Dove	<i>Columba oenas</i>	Heard Holy Vale and 1 seen
Woodpigeon	<i>C. palumbus</i>	Common and widespread
Collared Dove	<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>	Seen in small numbers most days and on all islands
Cuckoo	<i>Cuculus canorus</i>	Heard or seen most days on St Mary's (Peninnis/Garrison) (2-3+) fewer than previous years with just one St Agnes
Swift	<i>Apus apus</i>	Two Tresco, 10+ Bryher
Bee-Eater	<i>Merops apiaster</i>	One St Agnes
Short-toed Lark	<i>Calandrella brachydactyla</i>	One Peninnis May 11-13
Sand Martin	<i>Riparia riparia</i>	One Porth Hellick 13th
Swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>	Seen daily but only in generally small numbers but influx towards end of week
House Martin	<i>Delichon urbica</i>	A few from 11 th but distinct influx later in week when many over St Agnes & Bryher
Meadow Pipit	<i>Anthus pratensis</i>	One Peninnis Head
Rock Pipit	<i>A. petrosus</i>	Distributed around coasts in small numbers
Pied Wagtail	<i>Motacilla alba</i>	Single on 4 days St Mary's and 2 White Wags Lower Moors
Wren	<i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>	Very common
Woodchat Shrike	<i>Lanius senator</i>	Male St Martins
Dunnock	<i>Prunella modularis</i>	Common throughout

Robin	<i>Erithacus rubecula</i>	Common
Stonechat	<i>Saxicola torquatus</i>	Pairs and families seen at several gorse sites
Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe oenanthe</i>	Small numbers only, no more than 15-20 birds in total
Blackbird	<i>Turdus merula</i>	Very common
Song Thrush	<i>T. philomelos</i>	Very common
Sedge Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus schoenobaenus</i>	6-7 Lower Moors 15th
Reed Warbler	<i>A. scirpaceus</i>	Heard Lower Moors, Tresco & P Hellick
Blackcap	<i>Sylvia atricapilla</i>	Heard Tresco & several places St Mary's, also St Agnes
Chiffchaff	<i>Phylloscopus collybita</i>	A few seen and heard around islands
Willow Warbler	<i>P. trochilus</i>	Heard St Agnes & St Mary's
Goldcrest	<i>Regulus regulus</i>	A number heard and 1-2 seen Tresco
Spotted Flycatcher	<i>Muscicapa striata</i>	Singles Bryher & Porth Hellick
Blue Tit	<i>Parus caeruleus</i>	One or two seen during week
Great Tit	<i>P. major</i>	Several seen and heard during week
Carrion Crow	<i>Corvus corone</i>	A few most days
Raven	<i>C. corax</i>	Two St Martin's
Starling	<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>	Common
House Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>	Common
Chaffinch	<i>Fringilla coelebs</i>	Small numbers St Mary's & Tresco
Greenfinch	<i>Carduelis chloris</i>	Fairly plentiful
Goldfinch	<i>C. carduelis</i>	Encountered fairly frequently
Linnet	<i>C. cannabina</i>	Numerous
Common Redpoll	<i>Acanthis flammea</i>	Four plus Bryher

Mammals

Grey Seal	35+ Eastern Isles, a few around other islands	Rabbit	Common
White-toothed Shrew	One dead St Martins	Brown Rat	

Butterflies

Holly Blue	Red Admiral
Speckled Wood	Small Copper
Large White	Painted Lady
Peacock	

Moths

Cinnabar Moth	Grass Eggar caterpillar
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Other invertebrates

Oil Beetle	Green Tiger Beetle
Grey Bush Cricket nymph	

Plants - kindly compiled by Dorothy Sills

Creeping buttercup	<i>Ranunculus acris</i>	Cow parsley	<i>Anthriscus sylvestris</i>
Bulbous buttercup	<i>Ranunculus bulbosus</i>	Wild carrot	<i>Daucus carota</i>
Prickly fruited buttercup	<i>Ranunculus muricatus</i>	Pignut	<i>Conopodium majus</i>
Lesser Spearwort	<i>Ranunculus flammula</i>	Hemlock water dropwort	<i>Oenanthe crocata</i>
Lesser celandine	<i>Ranunculus ficaria</i>	Fennel (not in flower)	<i>Foeniculum vulgare</i>
Common fumitory	<i>Fumaria officinalis</i>	Angelica	<i>Angelica sylvestris</i>
White ramping fumitory	<i>Fumaria capriolata</i>	Alexanders	<i>Smyrniolum olusatrum</i>
Common Nettle	<i>Urtica dioica</i>	Rock samphire (not flowering)	<i>Crithmum maritimum</i>
Sea beet	<i>Beta vulgaris ssp maritima</i>	Sea holly (not in flower)	<i>Eryngium maritimum</i>
Red campion	<i>Silene dioica</i>	Field forget-me-not	<i>Myosotis arvensis</i>
Sea campion	<i>Silene uniflora</i>	Water forget-me-not	<i>Myosotis scorpioides</i>
Small flowered catchfly	<i>Silene gallica</i>	Borage	<i>Borago officinalis</i>
Common chickweed	<i>Stellaria media</i>	Greater periwinkle	<i>Vinca major</i>
Common mouse-eared chickweed	<i>Cerastium fontanum</i>	Ground ivy	<i>Glechoma hederacea</i>
Sea sandwort	<i>Honkenya peploides</i>	Balm-leaved figwort	<i>Schrophularia scorodonia</i>
Rock sea spurrey	<i>Spergularia rupicola</i>	Ivy leaved toadflax	<i>Cymbalaria muralis</i>

Broad leaved dock	<i>Rumex obtusifolius</i>	Foxglove	<i>Digitalis purpurea</i>
Curled dock	<i>Rumex crispus</i>	Lousewort	<i>Pedicularis sylvatica</i>
Common sorrel	<i>Rumex acetosa</i>	Eyebright	<i>Euphrasia nemorosa</i>
Sheep's sorrel	<i>Rumex acetosella</i>	Great Mullein	<i>Verbascum thapsus</i>
Wire plant	<i>Muehlenbeckia complexa</i>	Germander speedwell	<i>Veronica chamaedrys</i>
Japanese knotweed	<i>Fallopia japonica</i>	Thyme leaved speedwell	<i>Veronica serpyllifolia</i>
Thrift	<i>Armeria maritima</i>	Common field speedwell	<i>Veronica persica</i>
Tree mallow	<i>Lavatera arborea</i>	Ivy leaved speedwell	<i>Veronica hederifolia</i> ssp <i>lucorum</i>
Common mallow	<i>Malva sylvestris</i>	Ribwort plantain	<i>Plantago lanceolata</i>
Dog violet	<i>Viola riviniana</i>	Greater plantain	<i>Plantago major</i>
Field pansy	<i>Viola arvensis</i>	Buckshorn plantain	<i>Plantago coronopus</i>
Hedge mustard	<i>Sisymbrium officinale</i>	Sheepsbit	<i>Jasione montana</i>
Wild radish	<i>Raphanus raphanistrum</i>	Cleavers	<i>Galium aparine</i>
Common watercress	<i>Rorippa nasturtium</i> <i>aquatica</i>	Heath bedstraw	<i>Galium saxatile</i>
Wavy bittercress	<i>Cardamine flexuosa</i>	Field madder	<i>Sharadia arvensis</i>
Shepherd's purse	<i>Capsella bursa-pastoris</i>	Honeysuckle	<i>Lonicera periclymenum</i>
Common scurvy grass	<i>Cochliaria officinalis</i>	Red valerian	<i>Centranthus ruber</i>
Cuckoo flower (Lady's smock)	<i>Cardamine pratensis</i>	Daisy	<i>Bellis perennis</i>
Ling (not yet in flower)	<i>Calluna vulgaris</i>	Oxeye daisy	<i>Leucanthemum vulgare</i>
Bell heather (in flower)	<i>Erica cinerea</i>	Scentless mayweed	<i>Tripleurospermum</i> <i>inodorum</i>
Primrose	<i>Primula vulgaris</i>	Chamomile	<i>Chamaemelum nobile</i>
Scarlet pimpernel	<i>Anagallis arvensis</i>	Yarrow	<i>Achillea millefolium</i>
Biting stonecrop	<i>Sedum acre</i>	Corn marigold	<i>Chrysanthemum segetum</i>
English stonecrop	<i>Sedum angelicum</i>	Pineappleweed	<i>Matricaria discoidea</i>
Silverweed	<i>Potentilla anserina</i>	Groundsel	<i>Senecio vulgaris</i>
Tormentil	<i>Potentilla erecta</i>	Lesser burdock	<i>Arctium minus</i>
Parsley piert	<i>Aphanes arvensis</i>	Spear thistle	<i>Cirsium vulgare</i>
Spring beauty	<i>Claytonia perfoliata</i>	Dandelion	<i>Taraxacum officinale</i>
Birdsfoot	<i>Ornithopus perpusillus</i>	Catsear	<i>Hypochaeris radicata</i>
Common vetch	<i>Vicia sativa</i>	Mouse-ear hawkweed	<i>Pilosella officinarum</i>
Birdsfoot trefoil	<i>Lotus corniculatus</i>	Smooth sow thistle	<i>Sonchus oleraceus</i>
Spotted medick	<i>Medicago arabica</i>	Hottentot fig	<i>Carpobrotus edulis</i>
Black medick	<i>Medicago lupulina</i>	English bluebell	<i>Hyacinthoides non-scriptus</i>
Lesser trefoil	<i>Trifolium dubium</i>	Spanish bluebell	<i>Hyacinthoides hispanica</i>
Hop trefoil	<i>Trifolium campestre</i>	Spring squill	<i>Scilla verna</i>
Red clover	<i>Trifolium pratense</i>	Star of Bethlehem	<i>Ornithogalum</i> <i>angustifolium</i>
White (Dutch) clover	<i>Trifolium repens</i>	Three cornered garlic (leek)	<i>Allium triquetrum</i>
Western clover	<i>Trifolium occidentale</i>	Rosy garlic	<i>Allium roseum</i>
Birdsfoot clover (Fenugreek)	<i>Trifolium ornithopodiodes</i>	Yellow flag	<i>Iris pseudocorus</i>
Petty spurge	<i>Euphorbia peplus</i>	Rare (large) Lords and Ladies	<i>Arum italicum</i>
Sea spurge	<i>Euphorbia paralias</i>	Broom	<i>Cytisus scoparius</i>
Common milkwort	<i>Polygala vulgaris</i>	Tree lupin	<i>Lupinus arboreus</i>
Bermuda buttercup	<i>Oxalis pes-caprae</i>	Gorse	<i>Ulex europaeus</i>
Pink sorrel	<i>Oxalis articulata</i>	Greater Tussock sedge	<i>Carex paniculata</i>
Spreading yellow sorrel	<i>Oxalis corniculata</i>	Hartstongue	<i>Phyllitis scolopendrium</i>
Herb robert	<i>Geranium robertianum</i>	Male fern	<i>Dryopteris filix-mas</i>
Dove's foot cranesbill	<i>Geranium molle</i>	Lady fern	<i>Athyrium filix-femina</i>
Cut-leaved cranesbill (not in flower)	<i>Geranium dissectum</i>	Royal fern	<i>Osmunda regalis</i>
Common storksbill	<i>Erodium cicutarium</i>	Broad buckler fern	<i>Dryopteris dilatata</i>
Musk storksbill	<i>Erodium mocchatum</i>	Bracken	<i>Pteridium aquilinum</i>
Hogweed	<i>Heracleum sphondylium</i>		

Naturalised escapes and introductions seen included:

Dewplants	<i>mesembryanthemums spp.</i>	African lily	<i>Agapanthus praecox</i>
Cliff Pasty eg:	<i>Aeonium arboreum</i>	Chilean iris	<i>Libertia formosa</i>
Giant Herb Robert	<i>Geranium maderense</i>	Blue Corn-lily	<i>Aristea ecklonii</i>
Giant Viper's Bugloss	<i>Echium pininana</i>	Red Corn-lily	<i>Ixia campanulata</i>
Cineraria	<i>Pericallis hybrida</i>	Bugle lily	<i>Watsonia borbonica</i>
Chilean Giant Rhubarb	<i>Gunnera tinctoria</i>	Whistling Jacks	<i>Gladiolus communis ssp. byzantinus</i>
Scilly white daffodil	<i>Narcissus tazetta</i>	Arum lily	<i>Zantedeschia aethiopica</i>

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