

Isles of Scilly

Naturetrek Tour Report

14th – 21st April 2023



Puffin



Woodchat Shrike



Rock Pipit



Razorbill

Tour report and images by Rob Williams



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Tour participants: Rob Williams (leader) with 10 Naturetrek clients

Day 1

Friday 14th April

We met at Penzance on a blustery morning as the overnight rain passed. It was unseasonably cold and very un-spring-like. A male Common Eider and Sandwich Tern passed the Scillonian and a Grey Seal fished nearby, as we waited to sail. The gales of the previous days had blown a lot of birds into the English Channel and as we headed out of Mount's Bay, good numbers of Gannets, Kittiwakes, Manx Shearwaters and Guillemots were joined by a few Razorbills, a single European Storm Petrel and both Black-throated and Great Northern Divers. The trip across to Scilly was a bit lumpy and very refreshing on deck, but we enjoyed the Manx Shearwaters, Fulmars and Gannets that displayed their mastery of such conditions and two distant Puffins were seen. Arriving in St Mary's a Common Kestrel and a Peregrine were both seen.

In the afternoon, in brightening but still blustery conditions we took a walk on St Mary's making a loop around old Town and lower Moors to Porthloo. The highlights were all at one small field of unimproved pasture with cattle grazing. Two Cattle Egrets accompanied them and a female Woodcut Shrike fed actively, presumably making up for lost time of the last days of stormy weather, from the adjacent hedge, and a Tree Pipit flew over calling. Elsewhere, things were quiet as most smaller birds were still within dense cover in the windy conditions.

Day 2

Saturday 15th April

The next morning we awoke to a transformed panorama. A gentle breeze and bright sunshine gave St Mary's a Caribbean feel as we gathered for a boat trip to the Western Rocks. We headed up through the Roads where we saw three Great Northern Divers and a couple of Shelduck. Moving north of Samson, the sea was still quite active and we enjoyed a few minutes marvelling at the power of the waves until we entered the lee of Minicarlo island. Here rafts of auks were mostly Razorbills and Common Guillemots, but we also found good numbers of Puffins with them, and also several Northern Fulmars. We moved south to Annet where a Peregrine was perched, two Purple Sandpipers were on off-shore rocks and numerous Grey Seals were on a beach and the water around the boat.

We went ashore on St Agnes and after a nice lunch at the Turk's Head, we walked to Wingletang Down to search for migrants and some plants. We failed to find the rare Least Adder's Tongue Fern, which had possibly died off for the year, we did however find several other nice flowers. A Heron flushed from Beady Pool and as we watched it fly towards Gugh, we realised it was a Purple Heron. Two migrant male White-Wagtails were with a British subspecies Pied Wagtail on the beach at Porth Askin. Heading north up the western side of the island we found few migrants but enjoyed nice looks at some of the resident species. A few Swallows and a House Martin moved through just before we stopped for a well-earned ice cream.

Day 3

Sunday 16th April

Sunday was overcast and cool in the morning, clearing later. We worked our way around the southern coast of St Mary's noting more migrants in, especially good numbers of Willow Warblers. We found our first Wheatear in Salakee Down and then after a look at the Bronze Age site on Porth Hellick down we spent some time watching a 1st year male Woodchat Shrike at Porth Wreck quarry. We lunched at Care Near tea rooms and then walked

Day 8

Friday 21st April

Our final day started sunny and slightly less windy. We walked up past Porthloo picking up a Bar-tailed Godwit and a couple of Common Sandpipers on the beach with the Oystercatchers and a couple of Little Egrets. We searched around the golf course and found a few Meadow Pipits and Wheatears. A Fieldfare - a rare bird for Scilly, was loitering in a bulb field along Porthloo Lane. We enjoyed some time in town having lunch and doing some last-minute shopping. As we waited for the Scillonian to sail, four Cattle Egrets could be seen distantly and a Common Swift foraged with hirundines across the bay. The trip back to Penzance was calm and sunny and we enjoyed nice looks at many Gannets, Manx Shearwaters and Guillemots with a few Kittiwakes, a couple of Puffins and a couple of Common Terns adding variety. We saw Common Dolphins a couple of times distantly.

We had enjoyed a good week on Scilly with sunny but slight cold and windy weather. We never had a massive fall of migrants but there was a steady trickle and we teased out some nice birds. Rare migrants seen included: three Woodcut Shrikes, Purple Heron, Tawny Pipit. These were complemented by several scarce migrants including three Blue-headed Wagtails and four White Wagtails.

Birds (H = Heard, I = Introduced)

Common name	Scientific name	April 2023							
		14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21
Canada Goose - I	<i>Branta canadensis</i>						2		
Mute Swan	<i>Cygnus olor</i>						5		
Common Shelduck	<i>Tadorna tadorna</i>		4				2	2	1
Gadwall	<i>Mareca strepera</i>			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Mallard	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>	✓	10	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Eurasian Teal	<i>Anas crecca</i>					2			
Common Pochard	<i>Aythya ferina</i>						1		
Common Eider	<i>Somateria mollissima</i>	1							
Golden Pheasant - I	<i>Chrysolophus pictus</i>						2		
Lady Amherst's Pheasant - I	<i>Chrysolophus amherstiae</i>						1		
Common Pheasant - I	<i>Phasianus colchicus</i>	H	H	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Red-legged Partridge - I	<i>Alectoris rufa</i>					1		2	
Common Swift	<i>Apus apus</i>								1
Rock Dove	<i>Columba livia</i>	✓							
Stock Dove	<i>Columba oenas</i>								
Common Wood Pigeon	<i>Columba palumbus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Eurasian Collared Dove	<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Common Moorhen	<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>		3		2	2	10	5	
Eurasian Coot	<i>Fulica atra</i>						5		
Eurasian Oystercatcher	<i>Haematopus ostralegus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Common Ringed Plover	<i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>					2		1	
Eurasian Whimbrel	<i>Numenius phaeopus</i>						1	5	10
Eurasian Curlew	<i>Numenius arquata</i>								2
Bar-tailed Godwit	<i>Limosa lapponica</i>								1

Common name	Scientific name	April 2023								
		14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	
Ruddy Turnstone	<i>Arenaria interpres</i>	✓	20			2	2		2	
Sanderling	<i>Calidris alba</i>		4					2		
Dunlin	<i>Calidris alpina</i>		25							
Purple Sandpiper	<i>Calidris maritima</i>		2							
Common Snipe	<i>Gallinago gallinago</i>					2	1			
Common Sandpiper	<i>Actitis hypoleucos</i>								2	
Common Greenshank	<i>Tringa nebularia</i>			3	2	1				
Black-legged Kittiwake	<i>Rissa tridactyla</i>	✓					2		10	
Great Black-backed Gull	<i>Larus marinus</i>	10	30	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
European Herring Gull	<i>Larus argentatus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Lesser Black-backed Gull	<i>Larus fuscus</i>	1	20		2		30	2	4	
Sandwich Tern	<i>Thalasseus sandvicensis</i>	2						1	1	
Common Tern	<i>Sterna hirundo</i>								2	
Common Guillemot	<i>Uria aalge</i>	✓	✓			10	5	2	✓	
Razorbill	<i>Alca torda</i>	10	✓		2				2	
Atlantic Puffin	<i>Fratercula arctica</i>		30						2	
Black-throated Diver	<i>Gavia arctica</i>	1								
Great Northern Diver	<i>Gavia immer</i>		3				1			
European Storm Petrel	<i>Hydrobates pelagicus</i>	1								
Northern Fulmar	<i>Fulmarus glacialis</i>	30	20	4	5	10	2	1	5	
Manx Shearwater	<i>Puffinus puffinus</i>	✓			1		2		200	
Northern Gannet	<i>Morus bassanus</i>	50	2				2	1	100	
Great Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>	2	5	3	2	1	2	1	3	
European Shag	<i>Gulosus aristotelis</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Purple Heron	<i>Ardea purpurea</i>		1							
Grey Heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>		1	1	1		2	2		
Little Egret	<i>Egretta garzetta</i>		2	1		2	2	1	3	
Cattle Egret	<i>Bubuculus ibis</i>	2					1	4	4	
Common Buzzard	<i>Buteo buteo</i>								1	
Common Kestrel	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>	1		2	1	1			2	
Peregrine Falcon	<i>Falco peregrinus</i>	1	1	1						
Merlin	<i>Falco colombarius</i>							1		
Woodchat Shrike	<i>Lanius senator</i>	1		2	1			1		
Western Jackdaw	<i>Coloeus monedula</i>	2								
Carrion Crow	<i>Corvus corone</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Eurasian Blue Tit	<i>Cyanistes caeruleus</i>	2		2	2		2			
Great Tit	<i>Parus major</i>	2		5	1		2		2	
Sand Martin	<i>Riparia riparia</i>				1		5	5	2	
Barn Swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>		5	4	6	4	20	12	10	
Common House Martin	<i>Delichon urbicum</i>		1			1	8	8		
Wood Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus sibilatrix</i>							1		
Willow Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus trochilus</i>		H	15	3		2			

Common name	Scientific name	April 2023								
		14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	
Common Chiffchaff	<i>Phylloscopus collybita</i>	H	H	10	2	1	5	2	1	
Sedge Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus schoenobaenus</i>			H		H				
Eurasian Reed Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus scirpaceus</i>	H			H	H				
Cetti's Warbler	<i>Cettia cetti</i>	H		H		H				
Eurasian Blackcap	<i>Sylvia atricapilla</i>	H	2	1	1		2			
Goldcrest	<i>Regulus regulus</i>				1		4			
Eurasian Wren	<i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Common Starling	<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Song Thrush	<i>Turdus philomelos</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Common Blackbird	<i>Turdus merula</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Ring Ouzel	<i>Turdus torquatus</i>						3		1	
Fieldfare	<i>Turdus pilaris</i>								1	
European Robin	<i>Erithacus rubecula</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
European Stonechat	<i>Saxicola rubicola</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Northern Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe oenanthe</i>		3	4	4	8	2	15	3	
House Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Dunnock	<i>Prunella modularis</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
"Blue-headed" Western Yellow Wagtail	<i>Motacilla flava flava</i>						2	3		
Pied Wagtail	<i>Motacilla alba yarrellii</i>		1		2					
White Wagtail	<i>Motacilla alba alba</i>		2					1		
Tawny Pipit	<i>Anthus campestris</i>			1						
Meadow Pipit	<i>Anthus pratensis</i>		1	6	2	2	25	50	10	
Tree Pipit	<i>Anthus trivialis</i>					1	2			
European Rock Pipit	<i>Anthus petrosus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Common Chaffinch	<i>Fringilla coelebs</i>	H		1	2		1	1	1	
European Greenfinch	<i>Chloris chloris</i>	1		1				2		
Common Linnet	<i>Linaria cannabina</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
European Goldfinch	<i>Carduelis carduelis</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	

Mammals (I = Introduced)

Common name	Scientific name	April 2023								
		14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	
European Rabbit - I	<i>Oryctolagus cuniculus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Western European Hedgehog	<i>Erinaceus europaeus</i>					1				
Lesser Shrew	<i>Crocidura suaveolens</i>			1						
Eurasian Red Squirrel	<i>Sciurus vulgaris</i>						✓			
Grey Seal	<i>Halichoerus grypus</i>	2	100	2	5		1	2	2	
Short-beaked Common Dolphin	<i>Delphinus delphis</i>								5	

Butterflies

Common name	Scientific name	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21
Small White	<i>Pieris rapae</i>				1				
Holly Blue	<i>Celastrina argiolus</i>				1				
Common Blue	<i>Polyommatus icarus</i>				1				
Speckled Wood	<i>Pararge aegeria</i>		1	1	1		1		
Small Tortoiseshell	<i>Aglais urticae</i>						1	1	1

Notable plants

Dwarf Pansy

Orange Bird's-Foot

Spring Squill

Other wildlife

Notable other wildlife included:

Vagrant Emperor - one seen on Bryher, though a few other brief dragonfly sightings were probably the same species.

Violet Oil Beetle

Green Tiger Beetle

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