

# South Devon – Wildlife in Tor Bay (Day Trip)

## Naturetrek Day Trip Report



Berry Head



Chil Bunting



White Rockrose



Harbour Porpoise



Small Blue

Report and images by Mike Langman



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Tour Participants: Mike Langman (tour leader) with 18 clients across four Day Trips.

## Friday 9th April

The Naturetrek day tour started with a cruise around Tor Bay on a beautiful still morning aboard Kelly's Hero boat. Some good wildlife sightings included a Great Northern Diver, Turnstones in summer plumage, Sandwich Terns, Gannets, Fulmars, Peregrine Falcons, Ravens, Harbour Porpoises & Grey Seals. A local fisherman showed off some Lobsters and Cuttlefish he had caught – one of the lobsters was promptly bought by one of the group!

After a picnic lunch at Berry Head, a stroll around the headland produced specialities including Cirl Buntings and the first flowering White Rockroses of the year. Other wildlife of note included Swallows and Sand Martins, Willow Warblers, Early Purple Orchids, plus the Guillemot colony. In the quarry, we enjoyed nesting Fulmars, Stonechats, Kestrel, Sparrowhawk and the Neptunian Dyke – a geological feature.

We finished the day with a visit to a rocky gully with courting Shags followed by a conservation arable field with plenty of Yellowhammers and more Cirl Buntings!

## Friday 30th April

A bright sunny morning greeted the Naturetrek day tour for a cruise around Tor Bay and out around Berry Head aboard Kelly's Hero boat. Some good wildlife sightings included Whimbrel, Sandwich Terns (some resting on the sea), Turnstones, Purple Sandpipers, Gannets, Fulmars, Peregrine Falcon, Harbour Porpoises & Grey Seals and a traditional Brixham trawler in full sail among the mothballed cruise ships.

After a picnic lunch at Berry Head, a stroll around the headland produced specialities including Cirl Bunting, the Guillemot Colony with Razorbills, Cowslips and White Rockroses. Other wildlife of note included Swallows in off the sea, Black Oil Beetle, Whitethroats and Early Purple & Green-winged Orchids. In the quarry, we enjoyed watching nesting Fulmars, Wheatear, Rock Pipit, Stonechats, and the Neptunian Dyke – a geological feature.

We finished the day with a visit to a rocky gully with nesting Shags, followed by the conservation arable field with Linnets, another Cirl Bunting and Yellowhammers.

## Thursday 6th May

The Naturetrek morning started with a calm Torbay cruise around Berry Head with Purple Sandpipers and Grey Seals, while the sea was alive with Guillemots. In Torbay, Gannets and a summer plumaged Great Northern Diver flew over. A local Peregrine was just visible on the nest.

Following on the cruise, we headed to Berry Head visiting 'Shag gully' and all were busy incubating. A Cirl Bunting added some colour a Wheatear popped up; three Great Northern Divers also flew past. After lunch, a stroll to botanise the headland as White Rockrose, Cowslips, Yellow Rattle, Early Purple and Green-winged Orchids were all found. The Guillemot colony also held Kittiwakes and Razorbills; Linnets, Goldfinches and Whitethroats were all on show in the scrub.

In quarry the sun came out, ideal for Small Blue butterflies and two were seen. A Kestrel's nest was discovered, Rock Pipit, Gannets and Fulmars were all noted.

The day finished with Blackcaps, more Cirl Buntings and a Buzzard being mobbed by the local Herring Gulls.

## Friday 7th May

A lovely still morning for the Naturetrek Tor Bay day tour. We started with the cruise first around Berry Head and saw a Grey Seal and a seabird feeding frenzy included many Guillemots. In Torbay, Fulmars, Gannets, Little Egrets and a nesting Peregrine – another young bird was discovered at another site before we cruised back to Brixham.

A visit to 'Shag gully' before our picnic found all of the birds incubating. In the afternoon, some botanising produced among others; White Rockrose, Carrot Broomrape, Cowslips, Common Gromwell, Early Purple and Green-winged Orchids. Also, of interest, a Wheatear and a Bloody-nosed Beetle, but most unexpected was a large Florida Kingsnake presumably deliberately released on the headland, it was soon captured by the rangers.

The sheltered and warm quarry enabled us to locate two Small Blue butterflies. Stonechat, Rock Pipit, Gannets and nesting Fulmars were also watched.

The day ended with hundreds of St Mark's Flies, Blackcaps, Chiffchaffs, Linnets, and lastly, a singing Cirl Bunting.

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