Pembrokeshire in Early Summer

Naturetrek Tour Report

5th - 9th June 2023





Puffin

Beautiful Demoiselle





Spring Squill

Barafundle Bay with Viper's Bugloss

Tour report by David Gibbs, images by David Gibbs and Mick Durham



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Tour Participants - David Gibbs & Mick Durham (Leaders) with 14 Naturetrek clients

Day 1 Monday 5th June

Everyone had arrived at the Beggars Reach Hotel by 5pm, and soon afterwards we met to introduce ourselves and talk over the itinerary for the next four days. After the first of many excellent meals a few of us took our bat detectors into the garden to see what might be around. Despite the cold conditions for the time of year, at about 9.45 the detectors picked up a Noctule Bat overhead and soon afterwards we spotted it high over the adjacent field. It was not long before Common Pipistrelle was out with two to three of them flying along the hedge row giving good views. Finally, the detectors picked up a Soprano Pipistrelle flying in the same area.

Day 2 Tuesday 6th June

Today was Skomer day, the highlight of the trip. But before that there was the moth trap to check, although the cold night did not encourage optimism. However, there were a few nice species to be seen including Brussels Lace, The Spectacle, Peppered Moth and White Ermine. After breakfast we set off to Martin's Haven, the embarkation point for Skomer, calling in at a supermarket in Milford Haven for our picnic lunch. Arriving at Martin's Haven we immediately heard a Grasshopper Warbler reeling in the scrub right opposite the ticket office. Unfortunately it kept itself hidden as they usually do. While waiting for our boat we watched a male Stonechat, a couple of Whitethroat gave excellent views and a pair of Chough showed briefly over the deer park.

Once on the boat we were soon in amongst rafts of auks, including many Puffins. After docking on Skomer and negotiating the 90-odd steps and listening to the wardens talk, we set off towards the farm, pausing to watch Wheatears, Sedge Warblers and a pair of Curlew with a recently hatched chick. From the farm we headed west to Skomer Head, stopping at the hide overlooking a pool where Moorhens and a drake Shoveler were present. At Skomer Head we stopped for our lunch with a view out to Grassholm and beyond to the Smalls lighthouse. Gannets were feeding out to sea, but none very close, and we were entertained by a very active family of Ravens, a Wall butterfly and a quick fly-pass from a Peregrine.

After lunch we made our way around the south of the island where a Red Kite, which we had seen earlier, was easily spotted by the noisy Oystercatchers in close attendance. Near The Wick we spent more time with the Puffins, watching them flying in with fish, bill-fencing and digging their burrows. From the opposite cliffs rang out the calls of Guillemots and Kittiwakes, with the quieter Razorbills and Fulmars nesting amongst them. The weather had remained perfect, the swathes of Red Campion, clear blue skies and sea and rugged coastline making for amazing scenery.

After dinner we again looked for bats around the hotel. The Noctule was soon noted as were several pipistrelles. On at least three occasions, using four different bat detectors, we recorded a bat peaking at 39Hz, strongly suggestive of the little known Narthusius's Pipistrelle.

Day 3 Wednesday 7th June

The day started with a look at the moth trap, with several species not seen the previous morning. Of particular note was the huge Privet Hawkmoth, the broken-twig imitating Buff-tip and a splendid Pebble Prominent.

By 8.30 we were on the road to Stackpole Quay arriving well before most of the beach-going visitors. Walking down the wooded path to the steps a Chiffchaff was singing intermittently and a Blackcap gave a few bursts of song. Once on Stackpole Warren we soon found a pair of Chough feeding in the short calcareous grassland allowing excellent views. The cliff tops here were decorated with large stands of Viper's Bugloss, Greater Knapweed and Thrift, while hiding in the short grassland we found Eyebight, Wild Thyme and even a few spring Squill still in flower.

Walking towards Stackpole Head several pairs of Skylark sang overhead, while Wheatear and Rock Pipits foraged on the turf. At Stackpole head we found the endemic Welsh Sea-Lavender, although only a single flower was open. On the cliffs Razorbills, Guillemots and a single Shag afforded excellent views. On the return journey we watched one of our largest Sphecid wasps, the Hairy Sand Wasp, searching for prey on a rocky bank, and at the top of the steps were patches of the wonderfully named Squinancywort. Back at Stackpole Quay we lunched at the very pleasant National Trust café as Chaffinches scrounged crumbs around us.

In the afternoon we visited the lily ponds at Bosherston where we soon got splendid views of Emperor Dragonfly and Four-spotted Chaser and a little further on several Black-tailed Skimmers. Through the crystal-clear water some rather large Roach were seen, probably a favoured meal for the Grey Herons along the shore of the pond. A little off the path we came across a grassy glade containing many Common Spotted and Southern Marsh Orchids as well as hybrids between these two. Birds were rather few this afternoon, but a male Stonechat perched up nicely and a Blackcap allowed some to get views.

The batting session this evening was less productive with just three or four Common Pipistrelles performing for us.

Day 4

Thursday 8th June

Pre-breakfast moth trap opening was good with several very nice species, notably Eyed and Elephant Hawkmoths and a stunning Scallop Shell.

After a hearty breakfast we set off to the north of Pembrokeshire and the Teifi Marshes. Our first stop was a flower-rich meadow opposite the visitor centre where Meadow Brown, Large Skipper and some splendid Common Spotted and Southern Marsh Orchids were to be seen. In the main part of the reserve, we called in at Kingfisher hide where, unfortunately no Kingfishers were evident while we were there. A single Lapwing and a few Moorhens were present as was an abundance of dragonflies including a single male Broad-bodied Chaser. Along the trail a splendid male Reed Bunting gave excellent views, and Reed and Cetti's Warblers could be heard in the surrounding habitat. Along the path we came across an extensive stand of Common Meadow-rue.

After lunch we walked down to the river where we were able to watch a female Goosander feeding amongst the rocks in the company of Mallards. Also here was a very active group of Banded Demoiselles.

We then moved on to Lower Town, Fishguard where a Dipper gave excellent views close to the bridge. A little further up the Afon Gwaun we came across a pair of Grey Wagtails collecting food for their young and allowing

prolonged views. Unfortunately Goldcrest and Great Spotted Woodpecker remained elusive, only being heard by a few of us.

Day 5 Friday 9th June

Moth trap pre-breakfast produced nine new species for the week, with Sandy Carpet and Middle-barred Minor being the most interesting. There was also a single large, Black Sexton Beetle *Nicrophorus humator* hiding in one egg carton.

As usual we were on our way by 8.30, today to Rosebush, a small village adjacent to an old slate quarry nestled in the southern slopes of the Preseli Mountains. Even before we left the car park, we had added a few new birds to the week's list including Long-tailed Tit, Willow Warbler and even Starling that had been notably absent over the last four days. A little further along the old railway line a Bullfinch flew over, a species that proved to be quite plentiful here, and a Garden Warbler was calling from deep inside the trackside vegetation. Soon we came across the star of our morning's walk, a family of Redstarts, with the male particularly performing wonderfully for us. In an adjacent sallow their newly fledged chick waited to be fed.

Along small streams near the path we found a male Large Red Damselfly and a couple of Beautiful Demoiselles very much living up to their name. In a rather murky pond a couple of male Palmate Newts could be seen while a Broad-bodied Chaser quartered the banks over the stands of Marsh St John's-wort. A little further on we came across two Golden-ringed Dragonflies and nectaring on swathes of Ragged Robin were numerous *Volucella bombylans*, a hoverfly that very passably mimics more than one species of bumblebee.

And so ended a very enjoyable and successful tour of some of Pembrokeshire's most diverse and productive habitats, and all in the most perfect weather conditions one could hope for.

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Species lists

Birds (h = Heard only, I - Introduced)

		June 2023			3		
Common name	Scientific name	5	6	7	8	9	
Canada Goose - I	Branta canadensis		✓		✓		
Mute Swan	Cygnus olor			4+5	4		
Common Shelduck	Tadorna tadorna		2		1		
Shoveler	Spatula clypeata		1				
Mallard	Anas platyrhynchos		2+3		√		
Goosander	Mergus merganser				1f		
Common Pheasant - I	Phasianus colchicus		2				
Northern Fulmar	Fulmarus glacialis		√	√			
Grey Heron	Ardea cinerea			2	3		
Northern Gannet	Morus bassanus		√	1			
European Shag	Gulosus aristotelis			2			
Great Cormorant	Phalacrocorax carbo			1			
Eurasian Sparrowhawk	Accipiter nisus				1		
Red Kite	Milvus milvus		3		1	1	
Common Buzzard	Buteo buteo		5	1	6	√	
Common Moorhen	Gallinula chloropus		3	4+5	4		
Eurasian Oystercatcher	Haematopus ostralegus		√	1	<u> </u>		
Northern Lapwing	Vanellus vanellus				1		
Eurasian Curlew	Numenius arquata		2+1		•		
Black-legged Kittiwake	Rissa tridactyla						
Black-headed Gull	Chroicocephalus ridibundus		2				
Great Black-backed Gull	Larus marinus		<u>∠</u> ✓	√	1		
European Herring Gull	Larus argentatus		√	✓ ✓		√	
Lesser Black-backed Gull	Larus fuscus		✓	✓ ✓	✓		
Common Murre	Uria aalge		_		V		
Razorbill	Alca torda		√ √	√ √			
Atlantic Puffin	Fratercula arctica		✓ ✓	V			
Rock Dove - I	Columba livia var. domestica		V	,			
Stock Dove	Columba iivia var. domestica Columba oenas			√ 1	✓	✓	
Common Wood Pigeon			1	-			
Eurasian Collared Dove	Columba palumbus		1	√	√	3	
	Streptopelia decaocto			1	1		
Crost Spotted Woodparker	Apus apus			1	1		
Great Spotted Woodpecker	Dendrocopos major		1		h		
Peregrine Falcon	Falco peregrinus		1				
Eurasian Jay	Garrulus glandarius				2		
Eurasian Magpie	Pica pica		4	√	✓	✓	
Red-billed Chough	Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax		7	4			
Western Jackdaw	Coloeus monedula		✓	√	✓	✓	
Rook	Corvus frugilegus		✓	1	✓	✓	
Carrion Crow	Corvus corone		✓	✓	✓	✓	
Northern Raven	Corvus corax		10	3			
Coal Tit	Periparus ater					3	
Eurasian Blue Tit	Cyanistes caeruleus			2	✓	✓	
Great Tit	Parus major			1	✓	✓	
Eurasian Skylark	Alauda arvensis		3	8			
Barn Swallow	Hirundo rustica	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Common House Martin	Delichon urbicum		2	4	5		

Common name		June 2023				
	Scientific name	5	6	7	8	9
Long-tailed Tit	Aegithalos caudatus					5
Willow Warbler	Phylloscopus trochilus					6
Common Chiffchaff	Phylloscopus collybita	1		5	√	√
Sedge Warbler	Acrocephalus schoenobaenus		5			
Eurasian Reed Warbler	Acrocephalus scirpaceus				3h	
Common Grasshopper Warbler	Locustella naevia		h			
Eurasian Blackcap	Sylvia atricapilla			2	√	5
Common Whitethroat	Curruca communis		7	h		3
Goldcrest	Regulus regulus				h	h
Eurasian Wren	Troglodytes troglodytes		8	√	√	√
Eurasian Nuthatch	Sitta europaea				h	
Common Starling	Sturnus vulgaris					9
Common Blackbird	Turdus merula		√	√	√	√
Song Thrush	Turdus philomelos			1	5	√
Mistle Thrush	Turdus viscivorus	2	1			1
European Robin	Erithacus rubecula	h	1	4	√	√
Common Redstart	Phoenicurus phoenicurus					2+2
European Stonechat	Saxicola rubicola		3	1		5
Northern Wheatear	Oenanthe oenanthe		12	1		
White-throated Dipper	Cinclus cinclus				2	
House Sparrow	Passer domesticus		4	6	√	√
Dunnock	Prunella modularis		1	h	1	1
Grey Wagtail	Motacilla cinerea				5	
White Wagtail	Motacilla alba yarrellii		2	3	2	√
Meadow Pipit	Anthus pratensis		√	√		
Eurasian Rock Pipit	Anthus petrosus		2	6		
Common Chaffinch	Fringilla coelebs	h	h	4	√	√
Eurasian Bullfinch	Pyrrhula pyrrhula					8
Common Linnet	Linaria cannabina		10	12	1	
European Goldfinch	Carduelis carduelis		6	6	2	
Eurasian Siskin	Spinus spinus					2
Common Reed Bunting	Emberiza schoeniclus				2	1

Other vertebrates

			une 202	23		
Common name	Scientific name	5	6	7	8	9
European Rabbit	Oryctolagus cuniculus		2	3		6
Eastern Grey Squirrel - I	Sciurus carolinensis			1	1	
Noctule	Nyctalus noctula	1	1	1		
Common Pipistrelle	Pipistrellus pipistrellus	2	3	3		
Pygmy Pipistrelle	Pipistrellus pygmaeus	1				
Nathusius's Pipistrelle	Pipistrellus nathusii		1?			
Herps						
Common Lizard	Zootoca vivipara			1		
Palmate Newt	Lissotriton helveticus					2

Butterflies and Dragonflies

Common name		June 2023			23	}	
	Scientific name	5	6	7	8	9	
Common Blue	Polyoppostus isomus		6				
	Polyommatus icarus		0				
Red Admiral	Vanessa atalanta	2					
Meadow Brown	Maniola jurtina			12	2		
Small Heath	Ceononympha pamphilus		2				
Speckled Wood	Parare aegeria aegeria		6	4	2		
Wall Brown	Lassiommata megera	1					
Large Skipper	Ochlodes sylvanus		1	1			
	'						
Beautiful Demoiselle	Calopteryx virgo			1	2		
Banded Demoiselle	Calopteryx splendens			6			
Large Red Damselfly	Pyrrhosoma nymphula				2		
Azure Damselfly	Coenagrion puella		✓	√			
Common Blue Damselfly	Enallagma cyathigerum		✓	√	✓		
Blue-tailed Damselfly	Inchnura elegans		✓	√	✓		
Emperor Dragonfly	Anax imperator		✓	✓			
Golden-ringed Dragonfly	Cordulegaster boltonii				2		
Four-spotted Chaser	Libellula quadrimaculata		√	✓	3		
Broad-bodied Chaser	Libellula depressa			3	1		
Black-tailed Skimmer	Orthetrum cancellatum		√	√			

Other invertebrates

Common name	Scientific name
Moths	
Spindle Ermine Moth	Yponomeuta cagnagella
Dingy Flat-body	Depressaria daucella
Hook-marked Straw Moth	Agapeta hamana
Light Brown Apple Moth	Epiphyas postvittana
Small Magpie	Anania hortulata
Garden Grass-veneer Moth	Chrysoteuchia culmella
Meadow Grey	Scoparia pyralella
Olive Pearl	Udea olivalis
Green Carpet	Colostygia pectinataria
Silver-ground Carpet	Xanthorhoe montanata
Yellow Shell	Camptogramma bilineata
Common Marbled Carpet	Dysstroma truncata
Grass Rivulet	Perizoma albulata
Small Rivulet	Perizoma alchemillata
Sandy Carpet	Perizoma flavofasciata
Foxglove Pug	Eupithecia pulchellata
Common Pug	Eupithecia vulgata
Scallop Shell	Rheumaptera undulata
Brussels Lace	Cleorodes lichenaria
Mottled Beauty	Alcis repandata
Peppered Moth	Biston betularia
Common Heath	Ematurga atomaria
Clouded Border	Lomaspilis marginata

Common name	Scientific name
Brimstone Moth	Opisthograptis luteolata
Brown Silver-line	Petrophora chlorosata
Privet Hawkmoth	Sphinx ligustri
Eyed Hawk-moth	Smerinthus ocellata
Elephant Hawk-moth	Deilephila elpenor
Pale Tussock	Calliteara pudibunda
White Ermine	Spilosoma lubricipeda
Buff-tip	Phalera bucephala
Pebble Prominent Moth	Notodonta ziczac
Buff Ermine	Spilosoma lutea
Cinnabar Moth	Tyria jacobaeae
Heart And Dart	Agrotis exclamationis
Flame Shoulder	Ochropleura plecta
Common Wainscot	Mythimna pallens
Setaceous Hebrew Character	Xestia c-nigrum
Square-spot Rustic	Xestia xanthographa
Flame	Axylia putris
Lychnis	Hadena bicruris
Middle-barred Minor	
Treble Lines	Oligia fasciuncula
	Charanyca trigrammica Rivula sericealis
Straw Dot	
The Spectacle	Abrostola tripartita
Silver Y	Autographa gamma
Beetles	
False Oil Beetle	0-1
	Oedemera nobilis
7-spot Ladybird	Coccinella septempunctata
Dune Chafer	Anomala dubia
Black Sexton Beetle	Nicrophorus humator
Il	
Hymenoptera	Dameh wa marka mura
Early Bumblebee	Bombus pratorum
Red-tailed Bumblebee	Bombus lapidarius
Common Carder Bee	Bombus pascuorum
Buff-tailed Bumblebee	Bombus terrestris
Small Garden Bumblebee	Bombus hortorum
Hairy Sand Wasp	Podalonia hirsuta
Red Banded Sand Wasp	Ammophila sabulosa
Western Honey Bee	Apis mellifera
Red Mason Bee	Osmia bicornis
Large Rose Sawfly	Arge pagana
Diptera	
Dune Robberfly	Philonicus albiceps
a hoverfly	Volucella pellucens
a hoverfly	Volucella pellucens
Cleg	Haematopota pluvialis
Caddisflies	
Cinnamon Sedge	Limnephilus lunatus

Selected Flora

Common name	Scientific name
Stonewort sp	Charales sp
Soft Shield Fern	Polystichum setiferum
Columbine	Aquilegia vulgaris
Common Meadow-rue	Thalictrum flavum
Climbing Corydalis	Ceratocapnos claviculata
White Water-lily	Nymphaea alba
Sea Radish	Raphanus raphanistrum subsp. maritimus
Wild Mignonette	Reseda lutea
Weld	Reseda luteola
Common Milkwort	Polygala vulgaris
Tutsan	Hypericum androsaemum
Marsh St John's-wort	Hypericum elodes
Red Campion	Silene dioica
Ragged-Robin	Silene flos-cuculi
Bladder Campion	Silene vulgaris
Greater Stitchwort	Stellaria holostea
Tree-mallow	Malva arborea
Common Rest-harrow	Ononis repens
Red Clover	Trifolium pratense
Common Bird's-foot-trefoil	Lotus corniculatus
Common Vetch	Vicia sativa
Burnet Rose	Rosa spinosissima
Tormentil	Potentilla erecta
Salad Burnet	
	Poterium sanguisorba Sedum acre
Biting Stonecrop	
White Stonecrop	Sedum album
English Stonecrop Navelwort	Sedum anglicum
	Umbilicus rupestris
Sanicle	Sanicula europaea
Hemlock Water-dropwort	Oenanthe crocata
Portland Spurge	Euphorbia portlandica
Amphibious Bistort	Persicaria amphibia
Common Sorrel	Rumex acetosa
Welsh Sea-Lavender	Limonium cambrense
Sea Thrift	Armeria maritima
Yellow Pimpernel	Lysimachia nemorum
Scarlet Pimpernel	Anagallis arvensis
Yellow-wort	Blackstonia perfoliata
Common Centaury	Centaurium erythraea
Viper's-bugloss	Echium vulgare
Bittersweet	Solanum dulcamara
Water Figwort	Scrophularia auriculata
Common Figwort	Scrophularia nodosa
Ivy-leaved Toadflax	Cymbalaria muralis
Brooklime	Veronica beccabunga
Germander Speedwell	Veronica chamaedrys
Yellow-rattle	Rhinanthus minor
Foxglove	Digitalis purpurea
Ivy Broomrape	Orobanche hederae
Common Broomrape	Orobanche minor
Wild Thyme	Thymus polytrichus
Ground-ivy	Glechoma hederacea

Common name	Scientific name
Buck's-horn Plantain	Plantago coronopus
Sheep's-bit	Jasione montana
Squinancywort	Asperula cynanchica
Wild Madder	Rubia peregrina
Lady's Bedstraw	Galium verum
Cleavers	Galium aparine
Elder	Sambucus nigra
Dwarf Elder	Sambucus ebulus
Honeysuckle	Lonicera periclymenum
Red Valerian	Centranthus ruber
Winter Heliotrope	Petasites fragrans
Hemp-agrimony	Eupatorium cannabinum
Marsh Thistle	Cirsium palustre
Greater Knapweed	Centaurea scabiosa
Nipplewort	Lapsana communis
Beaked Hawksbeard	Crepis vesicaria
Sea Arrowgrass	Triglochin maritima
Spring Squill	Scilla verna
Ramsons	Allium ursinum
Yellow Iris	Iris pseudacorus
Black Bryony	Tamus communis
Common Spotted-orchid	Dactylorhiza fuchsii
Southern Marsh-orchid	Dactylorhiza praetermissa
Pyramidal Orchid	Anacamptis pyramidalis