

# Pembrokeshire in Early Summer

Naturetrek Tour Report

19th – 23rd June 2023

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Golden-ringed Dragonfly by Richard Symonds



Dipper (juvenile) by Richard Symonds



Puffin by Mary Lewis



Sulphur Beetle by Sue Michelmores

Tour report by Samuel Levy



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Tour participants: Samuel Levy and Paul Tucker (leaders) with 14 Naturetrek clients

## Day 1

**Monday 19th June**

Today we arrived at our accommodation in the afternoon and met up for a quick spot of tea and cake before setting out a mile down the road to Rooseferry Farm Wood. We headed into what was a glorious bit of the remnants of Ancient temperate rainforest, with mosses and ferns growing everywhere. The main tree species was Larch, and Oaks mixed with the odd Ash, Beach, and Sweet Chestnut. Holly and Ivy running wild. We hadn't gone far when we stumbled upon a pair of Spotted Flycatchers and in doing so saw our first Marsh Tit of the trip. They didn't sit still for long, and we soon headed on our way passing Goldcrests, Nuthatch and Treecreepers calling whilst the shadows of a Buzzard drifted over the woodland and a Sparrowhawk zipped through the canopy. We headed right down to the end of the woodland and it dropped us out in the estuary. It was quite an incredible area with a pair of Goldfinch seen well by the little house at the end. Mute Swan, Black-headed Gull and Herring Gull added themselves to the trip list and some fish were breaking the surface from time to time remained unidentifiable.

It was then time to head back to the hotel for our evening meal but not before passing Chiffchaffs and Blackcaps and getting good views of the Spotted Flycatchers again. When we got back to the van the Sparrowhawk flew through again being mobbed by every Swallow possible. Now I am not forgetting the jumpy fairy insects in the canopy, but since I cannot figure out what they are they will always remain a mystery. I suspect they might be some sort of Longhorn beetle, but we may never know! We then settled down to have dinner at 630pm.

## Day 2

**Tuesday 20th June**

We had an early breakfast and set out at 8am for Martins Haven and the Marloes Peninsular for our excursion to Skomer. This was quite an incredible day and probably the peak of the tour, albeit a bit early in our trip.

Along the way, we drove down the wiggly windy tracks with both guides squeezing the vehicles through several tight situations. We passed Marloes Haven and added Sand Martin to the trip list. We arrived nice and early at Lockley Lodge to the sound of Meadow Pipits, Skylarks, Linnets and Goldfinches all around us. Once we had checked in for our boats, we went on a short walk up to the Wooltack Point watch tower. On the way we passed Stonechats, Linnets, Whitethroats and Dunnocks before stopping in our tracks to watch a female type Black Redstart which was blocking our way as it fed on the track. Apparently, a rare bird for the area and it even made it out onto the UK wide news services. After this we watched as a flock of Chough tumbled and turned in the distance and both Cormorant and Shag were seen on the sea. It was soon time to get the boat over to Skomer and we departed Martins Haven with Rock Pipits and Wrens singing us goodbye.

It wasn't long before we were out on the water and surrounded by swarms of Guillemots, Razorbills and of course the long awaited for Puffins! As we headed onto the island, they were all either side of the stairs. We had the welcome talk and then proceeded straight to the visitor centre to have lunch surrounded by the constant sound of Sedge Warblers, Meadow Pipits, Whitethroats and of course Skomer Wren with it's 60% longer song than those on the mainland with the extra trills and thrills. We had lunch around the visitor centre and watched the Swallows visiting a nest inside the walls of the buildings in cracks in the structure. We then headed round for the full Skomer experience which included Herring, Lesser Black-backed and Great Black-backed Gulls just loafing around in their colonies. Wheatears dotted around with lots of flashing white rumps chasing after one another and looking after

their now well grown youngsters. Seabirds were the main highlight of course, with colonies of all the targets seen - Kittiwakes, Guillemots, Razorbills, Fulmar and of course Puffins seen well. Rabbits were also seen as was a group of 21 Grey Seal. A Barrel Jellyfish was encountered by some of the group while one lucky member of the group made us all extremely jealous by spotting a Skomer Vole - an endemic race of Bank Vole. Corvids on the island included Magpie, tonnes of Jackdaws, cronking Ravens and our first good views of Chough on this trip.

Heading further on, we found some randomly placed Tree Pipits singing and displaying from what is a treeless island. I do wonder what draws them here as their neighbours are all Meadow Pipits. We spent some time in the main Puffin colony before we then headed off for a treat. The islands researchers from Oxford University kindly offered to give us a demonstration of the Manx Shearwater research they are doing and talk to us about their work. After having only seen dead *Puffinus puffinus* around the island, we were able to see one while they performed a nest check. For many this was the best view of Manx Shearwater they will ever have, and I think it's safe to say that the group was stunned by the sheer quality of the bird. They are weirdly proportioned birds with their feet right at the back of their bodies (The bird was handled under a BTO license). It was an absolute privilege that somehow came about because of Cheese...

After this we jumped on the boat back to the mainland and headed back to the hotel for dinner at 7pm. However not all of us made it to the end of the meal! A tiring day in the warm sunshine, we couldn't have asked for a better day to visit.

## Day 3

## Wednesday 21st June

Today we left the hotel at 9am and headed to Tesco for some supplies before continuing onto Stackpole Quay. The car park was fairly busy when we arrived, and we saw a Cinnabar Moth on the way down to the toilet block. We then headed up onto the cliff top where we found Jackdaws, Rooks, Linnets, and Goldfinches. Meadow Browns and Red Admiral were also seen before we headed down into Barafundle Bay passing Ivy Broomrape and the first pyramidal Orchids of the trip. While passing colonies of Mining Bees in the sandy soil. Bee Wolves were patrolling the burrows and a Robber fly was also seen.

We then continued up onto the cliffs on the other side finding Razorbill and Fulmars on the cliffs along with Rock Pipit and the odd Wheatear. A group of six Chough flew in briefly before departing to our West. Plenty of butterflies were on offer in the meadows with Common Blue, Small White, Small Heath, tonnes of Meadow Browns, Large Skipper and a few Dark Green Fritillaries seen dancing around the cliff. Summer Chafers landed on most of us at some point during the trip while a Harvestman turned up on the underside of my hat. Six-spot Burnet were seen along with an array of meadow flower species including Common Spotted Orchid, Vipers Bugloss, Yellow Rattle, Lady's Bedstraw, Common Agrimony, Greater Knapweed, Scarlet Pimpernel, Wild Thyme, Birds-foot Trefoil to name just a few.

After this we retraced our steps to the National Trust café at the car park before making sure we left the car park before the 15:40 bus arrived.

We drove a short way to Stackpole Barn Visitor Centre car park which was almost deserted. We were told that we had made the correct choice as Bosherton was full. We then headed down the track to the Eight-Arch Bridge and the Lily Ponds. We spent the next two hours looking for dragonflies finding six species with Emperor Dragonfly,

Four-spot Chaser, Black-tailed Skimmer, Azure Blue, Common Blue and Blue-tailed Damselfly. There were three pairs of Mute Swans on the lake with two sets of cygnets. Moorhens were numerous and Grey Herons could be seen and heard making their dinosaur-esque calls from the heronry. The last remaining herons had almost fledged and occasionally an adult would be chased by branch hopping youngsters through the trees, while the heads of less mobile youngsters just turned and watched.

Several toads were seen hopping through the undergrowth, while both Sparrowhawk and Hobby flew through the lakes. At one stage two Hobbies zipped through and when, on the final bridge, a Hobby flew right up close to the group albeit briefly before realising its mistake and darting away from us. After this we headed back to the minibuses and headed towards Stack Rocks. It was closed when we arrived unfortunately, so we headed back to the hotel for a nice rest before dinner at 7pm.

## Day 4

## Thursday 22nd June

For our final full day, we were in for a treat as we headed up into the Preseli Hills to Rosebush. This was to be an interesting day. But first we added another Tesco to the list as we stopped off at the Haverfordwest Metro.

When we arrived at Rosebush, we headed down the track and encountered the first Willow Warblers and Chiffchaffs of the day singing and occasionally showing themselves. Chaffinches were abundant and as we headed off, a tit flock appeared by the side of the path. Long-tailed, Coal, and the first Great Tits of the trips were seen before suddenly a small tit with white flashes in the wing and a black cap zipped past and into a nearby willow tree. It was soon relocated calling from the top of a Scots Pine. It was a Willow Tit and was the first that I had ever seen and only Paul's second! Quite incredible really. It soon zipped off with the flock and we were left in shock.

Evan then called us over to have a look at a dragonfly he had found. We were all surprised when we saw what greeted us. A Golden-ringed Dragonfly. It was quite incredibly joined by a second briefly before they chased each other off. A new dragonfly for many. We headed further along and heard a distant Grasshopper Warbler reeling from the grassland. Siskin and Bullfinch were about along with the abundant song of Willow Warbler and Wren. Red Kite, Raven and Common Buzzard were using the thermals and a Grey Heron flew over. Just before we headed back to the minibuses, a Male Lesser Redpoll flew over calling and a Crossbill 'plinked' its way over, even circling briefly as it continued its journey higher into the mountains. Odonata-wise, we added Large Red Damselfly and Broad-bodied Chaser to the trip list. Butterflies included many Meadow Browns, Ringlet, Speckled Wood and a Large Skipper while we also added the scarce Yellow-barred Peat Hoverfly and the Bee Mimic *Merodon equestris*. After this we headed back to the vans and continued on to Teifi Marshes and the Welsh Wildlife Centre. We had some incredible views and scenery along the way. When we arrived, we headed to the visitor centre to have our packed lunches overlooking the masses of Canada Geese down on the marsh.

After lunch we had a walk down to look at orchids. We had Great Spotted, Greater Butterfly, Common Spotted and a Marsh Orchid in the same patch of meadow. We then had a short walk out into the main reserve where we added a family of Moorhen to our list and heard plenty of Reed Warblers. Reed Buntings zipped about as did the abundant odonata life with plenty of Black-tailed Skimmer, Broad-bodied Chaser, Four-spot Chaser, Common Blue and Azure Blue Damselfly.

After this we headed back into the vans to temporarily leave Pembrokeshire on the way to Fishguard. Here we had one target and soon enough we were watching a freshly independent Dipper. It gave great views before we headed up for a little wander. An adult Dipper flew past heading down stream while Chiffchaff, Blackcap and Wrens sung from the woodland surrounding us. A Buzzard passed overhead before we turned around and stumbled upon two independent juvenile Dippers that put on a show for us. The adult was briefly seen underneath the bridge but flew off before we could read the colour rings.

We then carried on for a quick pitstop at Goodwick where we added Oystercatcher and Mistle Thrush to the day list. After this we climbed the steep and winding tracks that lead us to Strumble Head the final stop of the day. It was a glorious afternoon with hardly a breath of wind and clear sky. We headed down to the watch point and sat watching the comings and goings. Razorbills, Guillemots, Kittiwakes and Gannets were almost a constant, with the odd Cormorant and Shag. Eventually we picked up several distant rafts of Manx Shearwaters sat on the sea, but they were extremely mobile and often had disappeared by the time we had trained the scope onto them. The most excitement came about when a group of Kittiwakes came through with four terns in tow. To all of our surprises they turned out to be Roseate Terns with their glistening white wings. What was even more shocking was the this would be a lifer for Paul meaning that both guides would end the day with a new bird for the trip which is quite something! Just before we headed off, we picked up a few more Barrel Jellyfish and a Grey Seal popped its head up to say hello. Rock Pipits and Stonechats were picked up along the cliff face along with Linnets, a Dark Green Fritillary and a Rose Chafer.

After this it was time to pack up and head for the hotel in order to make sure we were ready for dinner at 7pm. It was quite an exceptional day, and we await to find out if there has ever been an occasion in the UK where both leaders have had a lifer in the same day of a trip!

## Day 5

## Friday 23rd June

The day dawned wet, stormy and windy a complete change from the other days of the trip. We left the hotel at 9am and headed to Dowrog Common.

When we arrived, the rain was blowing sideways, and it was quite unpleasant, so we decided to head down to St David's instead for a chilled morning. Upon arrival, we sheltered under the open boot of the vans and then headed down into the centre of the City. The Cathedral was unfortunately closed for a funeral on our arrival, so we headed to a local café for tea, coffee and cake. After this we explored the city and then headed back to the Cathedral for its opening. Swifts flew overhead while Blue Tits and Great Tits could be found in the garden. Unfortunately, the weather decided not to clear so we made the journey back to the hotel. This marked the end of an incredible trip. With 80 species of birds, 12 species of Butterfly and 9 species of odonata. There were new birds, insects and plants for almost all on this trip, including the guides!

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## Species lists

Birds (h = Heard only)

Common name	Scientific name	June 2023			
		19	20	21	22
Canada Goose - I	<i>Branta canadensis</i>		✓		✓
Mute Swan	<i>Cygnus olor</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓
Mallard	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>			✓	✓
Common Pheasant - I	<i>Phasianus colchicus</i>		✓		
Northern Fulmar	<i>Fulmarus glacialis</i>		✓	✓	
Manx Shearwater	<i>Puffinus puffinus</i>		✓		✓
Grey Heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>			✓	✓
Northern Gannet	<i>Morus bassanus</i>		✓		✓
European Shag	<i>Phalacrocorax aristotelis</i>		✓		✓
Great Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>		✓	✓	✓
Eurasian Sparrowhawk	<i>Accipiter nisus</i>	✓		✓	✓
Red Kite	<i>Milvus milvus</i>			✓	✓
Common Buzzard	<i>Buteo buteo</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓
Common Moorhen	<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>			✓	✓
Eurasian Oystercatcher	<i>Haematopus ostralegus</i>		✓		✓
Black-legged Kittiwake	<i>Rissa tridactyla</i>		✓		✓
Black-headed Gull	<i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i>	✓			✓
Great Black-backed Gull	<i>Larus marinus</i>		✓	✓	✓
European Herring Gull	<i>Larus argentatus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓
Lesser Black-backed Gull	<i>Larus fuscus</i>		✓	✓	✓
Roseate Tern	<i>Sterna dougallii</i>				✓
Common Murre	<i>Uria aalge</i>		✓		✓
Razorbill	<i>Alca torda</i>		✓	✓	✓
Atlantic Puffin	<i>Fratercula arctica</i>		✓		

Common name	Scientific name	June 2023			
		19	20	21	22
Rock Dove - I	<i>Columba livia</i> var. <i>domestica</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓
Common Wood Pigeon	<i>Columba palumbus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓
Eurasian Collared Dove	<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>		✓	✓	
Common Swift	<i>Apus apus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓
Hobby	<i>Falco subbuteo</i>			✓	
Common Kestrel	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>				✓
Peregrine Falcon	<i>Falco peregrinus</i>		✓		
Eurasian Jay	<i>Garrulus glandarius</i>			✓	✓
Eurasian Magpie	<i>Pica pica</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓
Red-billed Chough	<i>Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax</i>		✓	✓	
Western Jackdaw	<i>Coloeus monedula</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓
Rook	<i>Corvus frugilegus</i>		✓	✓	
Carrion Crow	<i>Corvus corone</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓
Northern Raven	<i>Corvus corax</i>		✓	✓	✓
Coal Tit	<i>Parus ater</i>	✓		✓	✓
Marsh Tit	<i>Poecile palustris</i>	✓			
Willow Tit	<i>Poecile montanus</i>				✓
Eurasian Blue Tit	<i>Cyanistes caeruleus</i>	✓		✓	✓
Great Tit	<i>Parus major</i>				✓
Eurasian Skylark	<i>Alauda arvensis</i>	✓	✓	✓	
Sand Martin	<i>Riparia riparia</i>		✓		
Barn Swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓
Common House Martin	<i>Delichon urbicum</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓
Long-tailed Tit	<i>Aegithalos caudatus</i>				✓
Willow Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus trochilus</i>				✓
Common Chiffchaff	<i>Phylloscopus collybita</i>	✓		✓	✓
Sedge Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus schoenobaenus</i>		✓		
Eurasian Reed Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus scirpaceus</i>				✓
Common Grasshopper Warbler	<i>Locustella naevia</i>				h
Eurasian Blackcap	<i>Sylvia atricapilla</i>	✓		✓	✓
Common Whitethroat	<i>Curruc communis</i>		✓		✓
Goldcrest	<i>Regulus regulus</i>	✓			h
Eurasian Wren	<i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓
Eurasian Nuthatch	<i>Sitta europaea</i>	✓			
Eurasian Treecreeper	<i>Certhia familiaris</i>	✓			
Common Starling	<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>		✓		✓
Common Blackbird	<i>Turdus merula</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓
Song Thrush	<i>Turdus philomelos</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓
Mistle Thrush	<i>Turdus viscivorus</i>				✓
Spotted Flycatcher	<i>Muscicapa striata</i>	✓			
Black Redstart	<i>Phoenicurus ochruros</i>		✓		
European Robin	<i>Erithacus rubecula</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓
European Stonechat	<i>Saxicola rubicola</i>		✓		✓
Northern Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe oenanthe</i>		✓	✓	
White-throated Dipper	<i>Cinclus cinclus</i>				✓
House Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓
Dunnock	<i>Prunella modularis</i>		✓	✓	✓
White Wagtail	<i>Motacilla alba yarrellii</i>		✓	✓	✓
Meadow Pipit	<i>Anthus pratensis</i>		✓	✓	
Tree Pipit	<i>Anthus trivialis</i>		✓		
Eurasian Rock Pipit	<i>Anthus petrosus</i>		✓	✓	✓

Common name	Scientific name	June 2023			
		19	20	21	22
Common Chaffinch	<i>Fringilla coelebs</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓
Eurasian Bullfinch	<i>Pyrrhula pyrrhula</i>				✓
Common Linnet	<i>Linaria cannabina</i>		✓	✓	✓
Lesser Redpoll	<i>Acanthis cabaret</i>				✓
European Goldfinch	<i>Carduelis carduelis</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓
Eurasian Siskin	<i>Spinus spinus</i>		✓		✓
Common Crossbill	<i>Loxia curvirostra</i>				✓
Common Reed Bunting	<i>Emberiza schoeniclus</i>				✓

## Mammals

Common name	Scientific name	June 2023			
		19	20	21	22
European Rabbit	<i>Oryctolagus cuniculus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓
Eastern Gray Squirrel - I	<i>Sciurus carolinensis</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓
Least Weasel	<i>Mustela nivalis</i>		✓		
Grey Seal	<i>Halichoerus grypus</i>		✓		✓
Skomer Vole			✓		

## Butterflies

Common name	Scientific name	June 2023			
		19	20	21	22
Small White	<i>Artogeia rapae</i>			✓	✓
Small Copper	<i>Lycaena phleas</i>		✓		
Common Blue	<i>Polyommatus icarus</i>		✓	✓	✓
Red Admiral	<i>Vanessa atalanta</i>		✓	✓	✓
Small Tortoiseshell	<i>Aglia urticae</i>				✓
Painted Lady	<i>Vanessa cardui</i>				✓
Dark Green Fritillary	<i>Argynnis aglaja</i>		✓	✓	✓
Ringlet	<i>Aphantopus hyperantus</i>		✓		✓
Meadow Brown	<i>Maniola jurtina</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓
Small Heath	<i>Ceononympha pamphilus</i>			✓	
Speckled Wood	<i>Pararge aegeria aegeria</i>		✓	✓	✓
Large Skipper	<i>Ochlodes sylvanus</i>			✓	✓

## Odonata

Common name	Scientific name	June 2023			
		19	20	21	22
Large Red Damselfly	<i>Pyrrhosoma nymphula</i>				✓
Azure Damselfly	<i>Coenagrion puella</i>			✓	✓
Common blue Damselfly	<i>Enallagma cyathigerum</i>			✓	✓
Blue-tailed Damselfly	<i>Inchnura elegans</i>			✓	✓
Emperor Dragonfly	<i>Anax imperator</i>		✓	✓	✓
Golden-ringed Dragonfly	<i>Cordulegaster boltonii</i>				✓
Four-spotted Chaser	<i>Libellula quadrimaculata</i>			✓	✓
Broad-bodied Chaser	<i>Libellula depressa</i>				✓
Black-tailed Skimmer	<i>Orthetrum cancellatum</i>			✓	✓



## Others

	June 2023			
Common name	19	20	21	22
Cinnabar Moth		✓	✓	C
6-spot Burnet		✓	✓	
Barrel Jellyfish		✓		✓
Pyramidal Orchid			✓	
Common Spotted Orchid			✓	✓
Sulphur Beetle			✓	
Ivy Broomrape			✓	
Vipers Bugloss			✓	
Yellow-rattle			✓	
Lady's Bedstraw			✓	
Common Agrimony			✓	
Greater Knapweed			✓	
Scarlet Pimpernel			✓	
Wild Thyme			✓	
Water Lily			✓	
Birds foot-trefoil			✓	
Summer Chafer		✓	✓	
Bee Wolf			✓	
Robber Fly			✓	
Drone Fly			✓	
Rose chafer		✓	✓	
Toad			✓	
Greater Butterfly Orchid				✓
Yellow-barred Peat Hoverfly				✓
Volucella bombylans				✓
Bog Aspidal				✓
Wild Strawberry				✓
St John's Wort				✓
Ragwort				✓