

The Best of Dorset's Wildlife

Naturetrek Tour Report

17 - 20 June 2019



Common Guillemots colony at Durlston Cliffs



European Badger



Smooth Snake



Chiffchaff family

Report & photos compiled by Byron Palacios



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Tour participants: Byron Palacios (Leader) with eight Naturetrek clients

Day 1

Monday 17th June

Portland Bill – Purbeck Peninsula

After collecting a few of our fellow participants from different train stations, the group gathered together after lunch time at the hotel in Broadmayne. After checking in, we set off to our first destination, Portland Bill. The 30-minute drive was filled by a good chat while enjoying the sites passing by, especially the views of the Island of Portland from the Southern Ridgeway right after we left the village of Broadmayne, followed by stunning views of the Jurassic coast and particularly the spectacular Chesil Beach and the Fleet which links Portland to the mainland. Once in Portland, we passed the abandoned quarries from which all the Portland Limestone has been quarried over centuries and sent all over Britain in order to be used to build or refurbish iconic buildings.

We drove down to the lighthouse car park from where we explored the Bill, finding plenty of interesting birds such as Northern Raven, Rock Pipits, and colonies of Guillemots and Razorbills, both showing really well on the cliff edges, alongside European Shags. We continued our walk watching an amazing gathering of sea birds fishing in the middle distance, including Herring Gulls, Black-legged Kittiwakes, Lesser Black-backed Gulls and a few Northern Gannets; it was a nice spectacle to watch!

Turning inland and walking amongst meadows and hedges, we found more birds such as Lesser Whitethroats, Linnets, Goldfinches, Great and Blue Tits, Dunnock, Starlings, Blackbird, Jackdaws, Eurasian Magpies, Carrion Crows, Eurasian Kestrels and Rooks, amongst others. The beautiful Skylarks were displaying right above our heads delighting us with their melodic calls. We also had a good selection of butterflies such as Western Marbled Whites, Meadow Browns, Grayling, Small Heath and a Small Skipper.

After having a good time walking here, we started to make our way back to our hotel making a quick photo stop at the top of Old Hill in order to get some beautiful panoramic views of Portland harbour, Chesil Beach and Weymouth old harbour. Once at our hotel, we gathered together to enjoy dinner.

Day 2

Tuesday 18th June

Moreton Woods (River Frome) – Kimmeridge – Piddle Valley (badger hide)

After a short drive, we took a nice stroll in Moreton and over the River Frome where we had great views of Goldcrest, Common Buzzard, Long-tailed Tit, Common Chiffchaff, Long-tailed Tit, Blackcap, Nuthatch, Great Spotted Woodpecker and Kingfisher. We also visited the beautiful church of Moreton which delighted us all!

After this interesting morning, the rain was a bit persistent so we found the right place to enjoy of a delicious lunch in the village of Kimmeridge, visiting the Museum of Jurassic Marine life which was very interesting for all of us. This unique modern collection of the marine life of Jurassic Dorset was put together by Steve Etches (who started collecting fossils at the age of 5) and is a comprehensive explanation of the life and death in the Kimmeridgian Seas 157 million years ago during the age of the dinosaurs.

After this very interesting visit, we drove down to the coast to see the lovely Kimmeridge Bay and had a little stroll down the bay and sea shore. We then drove back to our hotel in Broadmayne in order to take a break and relax before going out again.

In the late afternoon, we drove towards the Piddle Valley making a quick stop which produced great views of Corn Buntings and Yellowhammer, then we drove to a nice local pub to enjoy a delicious early dinner. Once in the Piddle Valley, we set ourselves up in the hides and quietly waited for the elusive badgers, and after an hour or so a family of five individuals turned up, giving us fantastic close views for nearly one hour! We enjoyed these beautiful animals until it was almost dark, with a thin layer of mist, and drove back to our hotel with smiles on our faces after a fantastic day!

Day 3

Wednesday 19th June

Arne, Hartland Moor and Durlston Cliffs

After breakfast, we drove towards the Isle of Purbeck, in order to visit the RSPB Arne Reserve where one of the reserve's volunteers took us for a nice walk which produced beautiful reptiles such as Smooth Snake, a few Slow Worms and a Grass Snake. We also had great views of Tree Pipit, Dartford Warbler and a pair of European Nightjars which we flushed up. We then returned to the reserve's cafe where we had a break over a nice lunch while watching the bird feeders which produced Great Spotted Woodpeckers, Siskin and Chaffinch, amongst others.

After lunch, we set off towards Swanage making a quick stop in the lovely Hartland Moor National Nature Reserve in order to get photos of the picturesque Corfe Castle. This stop produced a pair of beautiful European Stonechat and a gorgeous family of Common Chiffchaff feeding five lovely chicks!

After this nice stop, we continued into Swanage and eventually to the beautiful Durlston Cliffs. We took a nice walk around the reserve with ranger Ally who kindly showed us and shared with us the main wonders of this lovely reserve. We had great views of a large colony of Guillemots and also lots of Razorbills, alongside European Shag, Rock Pipit, Eurasian Kestrel and Peregrine Falcon. We carried on with our lovely walk, ending it by exploring a beautiful meadow with lots of wildflowers and butterflies.

After an enjoyable day, we drove back to our hotel in order to take a little break followed by a delicious dinner.

Day 4

Thursday 20th June

Lodmoor Marshes – Radipole Lake – Hardy's Monument

Our last day dawned with a nice warm and sunny start as we set off towards Lodmoor Marshes in the Weymouth area. We started our walk which produced very interesting birds such as Lesser Whitethroat, Eurasian Reed Warbler, and flocks of Common and Sandwich Terns. We also found Common Shelduck, a pair of Black-tailed Godwits, Mallard, Eurasian Coot, Common Moorhen, Black-headed, Herring and Mediterranean Gulls, Great Cormorants, Eurasian Kestrel and the always handsome European Oystercatchers. In a corner of the trail we found a pair of two fantastic Western Marsh Harriers which we all enjoyed watching! We also found Reed Buntings and had great views of the loud, but elusive, Cetti's Warblers.

After a productive walk in Lodmoor, we continued to Radipole Lake after a very short drive through Weymouth's sea front. A short walk produced more Eurasian Reed Warblers, Mute Swans, Black-headed and Herring Gulls, alongside Common Pochards, Tufted Ducks, Mallards and Great Crested Grebe. We had flocks of Long-tailed Tits, Blue and Great Tits going along, also Great Cormorants and Little Egrets; a fast Eurasian Sparrowhawk flew by over the reed bed too. By one of the canals, we tried for the elusive Bearded Reedlings and we finally found a group of four which we enjoyed watching on two occasions, so the hard work definitely paid off!

Satisfied and happy, we left RSPB Radipole Lake grabbing some lunch on the way and driving to the area of Winterbourne St. Martin (Martinstown) from where we went up to the hilltop until we got to Hardy's Monument. It was windy over here, and after enjoying our lunch, we had a little walk which produced birds such as Yellowhammer, European Stonechat, Common Whitethroat and Eurasian Blackcap, amongst others. Some of us climbed to the top of the monument to enjoy the lovely view of Chesil Beach area from up there.

This very last visit was a great finale and a great way to end a few days in the superb county of Dorset! We started our drive back to our base in Broadmayne making a couple of stops at both of Dorchester's train stations in order to drop off three of our companions, wishing them all the best and a safe journey home. The rest of the group returned to the hotel where we had our final farewell after enjoying the gorgeous Dorset countryside...

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Species Lists

Birds (✓=recorded but not counted; h = heard only)

	I = Introduced species		June			
	Common name	Scientific name	17	18	19	20
1	Canada Goose - I	<i>Branta canadensis</i>				✓
2	Mute Swan	<i>Cygnus olor</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓
3	Common Shelduck	<i>Tadorna tadorna</i>				✓
4	Mallard	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>	✓		✓	✓
5	Common Pochard	<i>Aythya ferina</i>				✓
6	Tufted Duck	<i>Aythya fuligula</i>				✓
7	Common Pheasant - I	<i>Phasianus colchicus</i>	✓	✓	✓	
8	Northern Fulmar	<i>Fulmarus glacialis</i>	✓			✓
9	Great Crested Grebe	<i>Podiceps cristatus</i>				✓
10	Grey Heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>			✓	✓
11	Little Egret	<i>Egretta garzetta</i>				✓
12	Northern Gannet	<i>Morus bassanus</i>	✓			
13	European Shag	<i>Phalacrocorax aristotelis</i>	✓			✓
14	Great Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>	✓		✓	✓
15	Eurasian Sparrowhawk	<i>Accipiter nisus</i>				✓
16	Western Marsh Harrier	<i>Circus aeruginosus</i>				✓
17	Common Buzzard	<i>Buteo buteo</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓
18	Water Rail	<i>Rallus aquaticus</i>				h
19	Common Moorhen	<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>				✓
20	Eurasian Coot	<i>Fulica atra</i>				✓
21	Eurasian Oystercatcher	<i>Haematopus ostralegus</i>				✓
22	Northern Lapwing	<i>Vanellus vanellus</i>			✓	✓
23	Black-tailed Godwit	<i>Limosa limosa</i>				✓
24	Black-legged Kittiwake	<i>Rissa tridactyla</i>	✓			
25	Black-headed Gull	<i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓
26	European Herring Gull	<i>Larus argentatus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓
27	Lesser Black-backed Gull	<i>Larus fuscus</i>	✓			✓
28	Sandwich Tern	<i>Thalasseus sandvicensis</i>			✓	✓
29	Common Tern	<i>Sterna hirundo</i>				✓
30	Common Guillemot	<i>Uria aalge</i>	✓		✓	
31	Razorbill	<i>Alca torda</i>	✓		✓	
32	Rock Dove	<i>Columba livia</i>	✓			
33	Stock Dove	<i>Columba oenas</i>			✓	
34	Common Wood Pigeon	<i>Columba palumbus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓
35	Eurasian Collared Dove	<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓
36	Tawny Owl	<i>Strix aluco</i>		✓		
37	European Nightjar	<i>Caprimulgus europaeus</i>	✓		✓	
38	Common Swift	<i>Apus apus</i>			✓	✓
39	Common Kingfisher	<i>Alcedo atthis</i>		✓		
40	Great Spotted Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos major</i>		✓	✓	
41	European Green Woodpecker	<i>Picus viridis</i>			✓	
42	Common Kestrel	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>	✓		✓	✓
43	Peregrine Falcon	<i>Falco peregrinus</i>			✓	
44	Eurasian Jay	<i>Garrulus glandarius</i>		✓	✓	
45	Eurasian Magpie	<i>Pica pica</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓
46	Western Jackdaw	<i>Coloeus monedula</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓
47	Rook	<i>Corvus frugilegus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓

	I = Introduced species		June			
	Common name	Scientific name	17	18	19	20
48	Carrion Crow	<i>Corvus corone</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓
49	Northern Raven	<i>Corvus corax</i>	✓		✓	
50	Coal Tit	<i>Pariparus ater</i>		✓	✓	✓
51	Eurasian Blue Tit	<i>Cyanistes caeruleus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓
52	Great Tit	<i>Parus major</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓
53	Bearded Reedling	<i>Panurus biarmicus</i>				✓
54	Woodlark	<i>Lullula arborea</i>			h	
55	Eurasian Skylark	<i>Alauda arvensis</i>	✓		✓	✓
56	Sand Martin	<i>Riparia riparia</i>				✓
57	Barn Swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓
58	Common House Martin	<i>Delichon urbicum</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓
59	Cetti's Warbler	<i>Cettia cetti</i>				✓
60	Long-tailed Tit	<i>Aegithalos caudatus</i>		✓	✓	✓
61	Common Chiffchaff	<i>Phylloscopus collybita</i>		✓	✓	h
62	Eurasian Reed Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus scirpaceus</i>				✓
63	Eurasian Blackcap	<i>Sylvia atricapilla</i>		✓	✓	✓
64	Lesser Whitethroat	<i>Sylvia curruca</i>	✓			✓
65	Common Whitethroat	<i>Sylvia communis</i>		✓	✓	✓
66	Dartford Warbler	<i>Sylvia undata</i>			✓	
67	Goldcrest	<i>Regulus regulus</i>		✓		
68	Eurasian Wren	<i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>		✓	✓	
69	Eurasian Nuthatch	<i>Sitta europaea</i>		✓	✓	
70	Eurasian Treecreeper	<i>Certhia familiaris</i>		h		
71	Common Starling	<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓
72	Common Blackbird	<i>Turdus merula</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓
73	Song Thrush	<i>Turdus philomelos</i>			h	
74	European Robin	<i>Erithacus rubecula</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓
75	European Stonechat	<i>Saxicola rubicola</i>			✓	✓
76	House Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓
77	Dunnock	<i>Prunella modularis</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓
78	White Wagtail	<i>Motacilla alba</i>	✓		✓	✓
79	Tree Pipit	<i>Anthus trivialis</i>			✓	
80	Eurasian Rock Pipit	<i>Anthus petrosus</i>	✓		✓	
81	Common Chaffinch	<i>Fringilla coelebs</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓
82	Eurasian Bullfinch	<i>Pyrrhula pyrrhula</i>		h	h	
83	European Greenfinch	<i>Chloris chloris</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓
84	Common Linnet	<i>Linaria cannabina</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓
85	European Goldfinch	<i>Carduelis carduelis</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓
86	Yellowhammer	<i>Emberiza citrinella</i>		✓	✓	✓
87	Common Reed Bunting	<i>Emberiza schoeniclus</i>				✓

Mammals

1	European Rabbit	<i>Oryctolagus cuniculus</i>	✓	✓	✓	
2	European Badger	<i>Meles meles</i>		6		
3	European Roe Deer	<i>Capreolus capreolus</i>		✓		
4	Red Deer	<i>Cervus elaphus</i>			✓	
5	Fallow Deer	<i>Dama dama</i>			✓	
6	Sika Deer	<i>Cervus nippon</i>		✓	✓	
7	Brown Rat	<i>Rattus norvegicus</i>	✓			
8	Common Pipistrelle	<i>Pipistrellus pipistrellus</i>		✓		
9	Common Noctule	<i>Nyctalus noctula</i>		✓		

Common name	Scientific name	June			
		17	18	19	20

I = Introduced species

Reptiles

1	Grass Snake	<i>Natrix natrix</i>			1	
2	Smooth Snake	<i>Coronella austriaca</i>			1	
3	Slow worm	<i>Anguis fragilis</i>			4	

Dragonflies and Damselflies

1	Emperor Dragonfly	<i>Anax imperator</i>				✓
2	Keeled Skimmer	<i>Orthetrum coerulescens</i>				✓
3	Black-tailed Skimmer	<i>Orthetrum cancellatum</i>				✓

Butterflies

1	Holly Blue	<i>Celastrina argiolus</i>	✓			
2	Common Blue	<i>Polyommatus icarus</i>				✓
3	Silver-studded Blue	<i>Plebejus argus</i>			✓	
4	Small Tortoiseshell	<i>Aglais urticae</i>				✓
5	Speckled Wood	<i>Pararge aegeria</i>			✓	
6	Large White	<i>Pieris brassicae</i>			✓	
7	Painted Lady	<i>Vanessa cardui</i>			✓	
8	Red Admiral	<i>Vanessa atalanta</i>				✓
9	Small Copper	<i>Lycaena phlaeas</i>			✓	



Watching Badgers