

The Best of Dorset's Wildlife

Naturetrek Tour Report

31st May – 3rd June 2022



Silver-studded Blue



Badger



Golden-ringed Dragonfly



Lulworth Skipper

Tour report and images by Rob Williams



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Tour participants: Rob Williams (Leader) with five Naturetrek clients.

Day 1

Tuesday 31st May

After meeting up at the hotel in West Knighton, we headed down to Weymouth and started our explorations at Lodmoor Reserve. Immediately, we found two Great White Egrets and the scope view revealed the green lores indicating they were in breeding plumage. The extensive reed beds held many European Reed Warblers, a few Common Reed Buntings and we saw a female Western Marsh Harrier drifting overhead. An initial brief sighting of a Bearded Tit was followed up by much better views of a pair with the male chasing the female right past us. The open mud held a few Common Shelduck, a single summer-plumaged Dunlin and a flock of gulls that contained several Mediterranean Gulls. The islands had good numbers of nesting Common Terns and Black-headed Gulls. Despite the cool weather we found a couple of Green-eyed (Norfolk) Hawkers and a few butterflies along the shaded path. A Common Kingfisher flashed past whilst several Cetti's Warblers were heard singing.

Heading onto Radipole it was even windier but fortunately the trails offered some shelter. The open water held a variety of waterfowl and the main lake area was teeming with hirundines all feeding at different heights; the Sand Martins skimming the water surface, the Barn Swallows a couple of metres up and above them the Common House Martins at treetop height. Several more Green-eyed Hawkers were on the wing. One of several Cetti's Warblers we heard showed briefly. We found an adult male Blue-headed Wagtail - the nominate Western European form of Yellow Wagtail, an unusual bird to see in the UK and a nice end to the first afternoon.

After dinner we wandered around the village, looking over neighbouring farmland where we saw a Fox. Near the pub we found a roost of Common Pipistrelles and watched about 30 come out.

Day 2

Wednesday 1st June

We started the day on Stoborough Heath. It was a bit cool for invertebrates and reptiles but we enjoyed good looks at some good birds. Several Dartford Warblers showed well in an area of gorse and several Tree Pipits were singing. We flushed two European Nightjars from gorse along one of the tracks and managed to see one of them again. A European Cuckoo called most of the morning and eventually it was nearby and then flew right past us.

We headed south past Corfe Castle and Swanage to Durlston Head. After some lunch with good views across to the Isle of Wight and the Old Harry rocks, we walked some of the coastal path south from the castle past the quarries. Good numbers of Common Guillemot and Razorbills were sitting on the sea and flying into the cliffs. Northern Fulmars and Northern Gannets were flying past at eye-level and the Gannets were plunge-diving off-shore. A female Peregrine flashed past a couple of times. The small valley below the lighthouse was a sheltered suntrap and there were a number of butterflies and bumblebees flying. We spent some time investigating and found Adonis, Small and Common Blues, Lulworth, Dingy and Large Skippers, in addition to Painted Lady, Small White and Small Heath.

In the late afternoon we headed to the Piddle Valley, stopping at a site where we found seven Corn Buntings. Further north we arrived at the badger-watching site. After a field dinner we headed to our hide. As we waited

we saw a pair of Bullfinches feeding on thistle heads, a distant singing Yellowhammer, several Roe Deer and even glimpsed a couple of Bank Voles. We saw three different Eurasian Badgers with brilliant views and took lots of photos as they fed in front of us. As dusk fell several Serotine Bats appeared and flew repeatedly around the hide. As we walked back to the van a Tawny Owl was seen sitting on a fence post.

Day 3

Thursday 2nd June

We started our day on Chesil Beach, walking west along the shingle overlooking the Fleet. A flock of eight Dunlin in summer plumage gleamed in the morning light. Soon we saw some Little Terns feeding offshore; this was our target bird here and we enjoyed great views of several incubating and others in flight, some bringing single Sand Eels into their mate or chicks. The warden told us there were 41 nests this year and of the struggles the species faces. The nesting area also held incubating Ringed Plover and Oystercatchers. The areas of vegetation held Linnets and Rock Pipits and several Skylarks were singing overhead. A pair of Sandwich Terns passed by as we headed back to the car park.

Portland is a unique place and we headed onto the Isle and straight to the Bill at the far end. As we walked past the lighthouse a flock of 12 Common Scoter passed the Bill and circled allowing good looks at these sea ducks. Offshore many Guillemots and Razorbills were flying past and loafing on the sea, allowing great scope views in fabulous light. Gannets passed and we also saw a couple of Black-legged Kittiwakes. A few Rock Pipits were singing near the Pulpit Rock.

We switched modes and checked the calcareous grasslands towards the bird observatory. A few Meadow Pipits, Common Whitethroat, Linnets and a couple of Stock Doves were the avian highlights, but it was the plants that stole the show. We found several Bee Orchids and then about a dozen Pyramidal Orchids, as well as a suite of other scarce plants. A few butterflies were on the wing, despite the bracing breeze. We lunched overlooking the sea and noticed a huge flock of gulls in a feeding frenzy over a shoal of fish. They were far offshore but careful studies of the flock produced a couple of Manx Shearwaters and occasional glimpses of Bottle-nosed Dolphins.

We headed inland to escape both the wind and the jubilee weekend crowds. Morden Bog National Nature Reserve is an overlooked gem and we spent the afternoon wandering the trails in this beautiful landscape. We found a European Nuthatch and Goldcrest in the trees at the north edge and glimpsed a Hobby. A male Sand Lizard basked on a track and a bit later Caroline spotted a Viviparous (Common) Lizard resting amongst some dried bracken. The decoy pond held several Tufted Ducks and a calling pair of Little Grebes. The heath held good numbers of Tree Pipits and Stonechats and a few Dartford Warblers. We investigated a few pools and found a good selection of dragonflies and damselflies and a single unidentified Newt. A Hobby was seen again and then a Peregrine tried and failed to catch a Mistle Thrush.

After dinner, four of us headed to Affpuddle forest and enjoyed a dusk walk seeing displaying Tree Pipits and a couple of Roe Deer and then watched day transition to night. Before it was dark the first European Nightjars started calling and we had great views of several flying right around us as they disputed territories and chased mates, or foraged over the heath. Tawny Owls called and we picked up Common and Soprano Pipistrelles and Noctule on the bat detector.

Day 4

Friday 3rd June

The morning started overcast and cool with showers, completely the opposite to what had been forecast. After breakfast we headed to Affpuddle forest. Birds were quite quiet but we picked up a Goshawk flying through the trees and a Honey Buzzard drifting away quite high. A Cuckoo showed well and a Common Crossbill and several Siskins flew over.

We headed on to Studland as the weather started improving. The views across Poole Harbour were spectacular. We enjoyed views of Dartford Warbler and Sandwich Terns fed off-shore. As it warmed up several Emperor Dragonflies and Four-potted Chasers appeared and then we found a small Sand Lizard and finally a fresh male Silver-studded Blue.

Driving towards the Frome estuary we spotted a very recently fledged Blackcap sitting on a small stick in the road. In imminent danger of being run-over, fortunately it was a quiet side road, we stopped to admire it and encouraged it into roadside vegetation where it had a better chance in life. A Spotted Flycatcher was seen briefly. Shortly after some Sika Deer were in a roadside field.

We walked out to Swineham Point, enjoying a chorus of Sedge, Reed and Cetti's Warblers as we went. Overlooking the reedbeds and harbour we heard Common Redshanks and saw a Northern Lapwing in flight. A male Marsh Harrier broke off its patrolling and was mobbing something large, a quick look revealed it to be the head of a juvenile White-tailed Eagle! Before we could get the scope on it, it took flight and frustratingly flew directly away from us, but it was still an impressive sight as we watched the Marsh Harrier, dwarfed by the eagle, continue to harass it. It eventually landed out of view and although we waited for a while, it never reappeared. It had been brief and a bit distant but it was also a remarkable ending to the trip and we headed back to the vehicle. A pair of Scarce Chasers were in tandem en route. After getting some lunch we headed back to West Knighton and said our goodbyes and headed home.

We had enjoyed a fabulous few days exploring some of the best, and least visited, wildlife sites in south Dorset. Despite the cool breeze we had found very respectable numbers of birds, butterflies, dragonflies and seen some great mammals and plants, but it was the experiences of some of the sightings that will remain in our memories.



Fledgling Blackcap

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Species lists

Birds (H = Heard only, I = Introduced)

			May/June 2022			
	Common name	Scientific name	31	1	2	3
1	Canada Goose - I	<i>Branta canadensis</i>	15			
2	Greylag Goose	<i>Anser anser</i>				3
3	Mute Swan	<i>Cygnus olor</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓
4	Common Shelduck	<i>Tadorna tadorna</i>	20			
5	Gadwall	<i>Mareca strepera</i>	1			
6	Mallard	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>	✓			
7	Eurasian Teal	<i>Anas crecca</i>			2	
8	Tufted Duck	<i>Aythya fuligula</i>	✓			
9	Common Scoter	<i>Melanitta nigra</i>			12	
10	Red-legged Partridge - I	<i>Alectoris rufa</i>		3		
11	Common Pheasant - I	<i>Phasianus colchicus</i>		5	2	2
12	Northern Fulmar	<i>Fulmarus glacialis</i>		5	2	
13	Manx Shearwater	<i>Puffinus puffinus</i>			2	
14	Little Grebe	<i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>			2	
15	Great Crested Grebe	<i>Podiceps cristatus</i>	4			
16	Grey Heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>	10		2	5
17	Great Egret	<i>Ardea alba</i>	3			
18	Little Egret	<i>Egretta garzetta</i>	6			3
19	Northern Gannet	<i>Morus bassanus</i>		20	10	
20	European Shag	<i>Gulosus aristotelis</i>		5	5	

	Common name	Scientific name	May/June 2022			
			31	1	2	3
21	Great Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>	5	2	2	5
22	Northern Goshawk	<i>Accipiter gentilis</i>				1
23	Western Marsh Harrier	<i>Circus aeruginosus</i>	2			1
24	Common Buzzard	<i>Buteo buteo</i>		5	4	6
25	Honey Buzzard	<i>Pernis apivorus</i>				1
26	White-tailed Eagle	<i>Haliaeetus albicilla</i>				1
27	Water Rail	<i>Rallus aquaticus</i>	H			1
28	Common Moorhen	<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>	8			
29	Eurasian Coot	<i>Fulica atra</i>	10			
30	Eurasian Oystercatcher	<i>Haematopus ostralegus</i>	1			
31	Northern Lapwing	<i>Vanellus vanellus</i>	1			1
32	Common Ringed Plover	<i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>			8	
33	Sanderling	<i>Calidris alba</i>			1	
34	Dunlin	<i>Calidris alpina</i>	1		8	
35	Common Redshank	<i>Tringa totanus</i>				10
36	Black-legged Kittiwake	<i>Rissa tridactyla</i>			5	
37	Black-headed Gull	<i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i>	✓		✓	✓
38	Mediterranean Gull	<i>Chroicocephalus melanocephalus</i>	15		1	2
39	Great Black-backed Gull	<i>Larus marinus</i>	2	2	4	
40	European Herring Gull	<i>Larus argentatus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓
41	Lesser Black-backed Gull	<i>Larus fuscus</i>		1		
42	Sandwich Tern	<i>Thalasseus sandvicensis</i>			2	6
43	Little Tern	<i>Sternula albifrons</i>			60	
44	Common Tern	<i>Sterna hirundo</i>	50		1	10
45	Common Guillemot	<i>Uria aalge</i>		100	100	
46	Razorbill	<i>Alca torda</i>		20	30	
47	Rock Dove (Feral)	<i>Columba livia</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓
48	Stock Dove	<i>Columba oenas</i>	1	6	2	
49	Common Wood Pigeon	<i>Columba palumbus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓
50	Eurasian Collared Dove	<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>		2		1
51	Common Cuckoo	<i>Cuculus canorus</i>		1	2	2
52	Tawny Owl	<i>Strix aluco</i>	H	1	H	
53	European Nightjar	<i>Caprimulgus europaeus</i>		2	7	
54	Common Swift	<i>Apus apus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓
55	Common Kingfisher	<i>Alcedo atthis</i>	1			
56	Great Spotted Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos major</i>		H		H
57	European Green Woodpecker	<i>Picus viridis</i>			1	
58	Common Kestrel	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>		1	2	
59	Eurasian Hobby	<i>Falco subbuteo</i>			2	
60	Peregrine Falcon	<i>Falco peregrinus</i>		1	1	
61	Eurasian Jay	<i>Garrulus glandarius</i>		2	1	1
62	Eurasian Magpie	<i>Pica pica</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓

	Common name	Scientific name	May/June 2022			
			31	1	2	3
63	Western Jackdaw	<i>Coloeus monedula</i>		✓	✓	✓
64	Rook	<i>Corvus frugilegus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓
65	Carrion Crow	<i>Corvus corone</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓
66	Northern Raven	<i>Corvus corax</i>			1	
67	Coal Tit	<i>Parus ater</i>		5	5	4
68	Eurasian Blue Tit	<i>Cyanistes caeruleus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓
69	Great Tit	<i>Parus major</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓
70	Bearded Reedling	<i>Panurus biarmicus</i>	3			
71	Eurasian Skylark	<i>Alauda arvensis</i>		3	5	2
72	Sand Martin	<i>Riparia riparia</i>	✓			1
73	Barn Swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓
74	Common House Martin	<i>Delichon urbicum</i>	✓	✓		✓
75	Cetti's Warbler	<i>Cettia cetti</i>	10		1	5
76	Long-tailed Tit	<i>Aegithalos caudatus</i>	4	5	5	5
77	Common Chiffchaff	<i>Phylloscopus collybita</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓
78	Sedge Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus schoenobaenus</i>				5
79	Eurasian Reed Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus scirpaceus</i>	✓			✓
80	Eurasian Blackcap	<i>Sylvia atricapilla</i>	3			3
81	Garden Warbler	<i>Sylvia borin</i>	1			
82	Lesser Whitethroat	<i>Curruca curruca</i>	1			1
83	Common Whitethroat	<i>Curruca communis</i>		5	2	1
84	Dartford Warbler	<i>Curruca undata</i>		6	4	2
85	Goldcrest	<i>Regulus regulus</i>			2	
86	Eurasian Wren	<i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>		2	2	5
87	Eurasian Nuthatch	<i>Sitta europaea</i>			1	1
88	Common Starling	<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓
89	Common Blackbird	<i>Turdus merula</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓
90	Song Thrush	<i>Turdus philomelos</i>		1		1
91	Mistle Thrush	<i>Turdus viscivorus</i>			2	
92	Spotted Flycatcher	<i>Muscicapa striata</i>				1
93	European Robin	<i>Erithacus rubecula</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓
94	European Stonechat	<i>Saxicola rubicola</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓
95	House Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓
96	Dunnock	<i>Prunella modularis</i>	2	5	5	4
97	White Wagtail	<i>Motacilla alba</i>	1	4	5	2
98	Blue-headed Wagtail	<i>Motacilla flava flava</i>	1			
99	Meadow Pipit	<i>Anthus pratensis</i>			5	
100	Tree Pipit	<i>Anthus trivialis</i>		10	10	5
101	Eurasian Rock Pipit	<i>Anthus petrosus</i>		3	5	
102	Common Chaffinch	<i>Fringilla coelebs</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓
103	Eurasian Bullfinch	<i>Pyrrhula pyrrhula</i>		2	1	1
104	European Greenfinch	<i>Chloris chloris</i>	H	4		2

	Common name	Scientific name	May/June 2022			
			31	1	2	3
105	Common Linnet	<i>Linaria cannabina</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓
106	European Goldfinch	<i>Carduelis carduelis</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓
107	Yellowhammer	<i>Emberiza citrinella</i>		2		2
108	Common Reed Bunting	<i>Emberiza schoeniclus</i>	3			
109	Corn Bunting	<i>Emberiza calandra</i>		7		

Others

		May/June 2022			
Common name	Scientific name	31	1	2	3
Mammals					
European Rabbit	<i>Oryctolagus cuniculus</i>		✓	✓	✓
European Badger	<i>Meles meles</i>		3		
Eurasian Pygmy Shrew	<i>Sorex minutus</i>		Dead		
European Mole	<i>Talpa europaea</i>			Hills	Hills
Red Fox	<i>Vulpes vulpes</i>	1		1	
European Roe Deer	<i>Capreolus capreolus</i>	1	8	3	2
Red Deer	<i>Cervus elaphus</i>				
Sika Deer	<i>Cervus nippon</i>				5
Bank Vole	<i>Myodes glareolus</i>		2		
Brown Rat	<i>Rattus norvegicus</i>	1			
Soprano Pipistrelle				5	
Common Pipistrelle	<i>Pipistrellus pipistrellus</i>	30	1		
Common Noctule	<i>Nyctalus noctula</i>			1	
Serotine			5		
Bottle-nosed Dolphin				3	
Reptiles					
Smooth Snake	<i>Coronella austriaca</i>			dead?	
Sand Lizard	<i>Lacerta agilis</i>			2	1
Common Lizard	<i>Zootoca vivipara</i>			1	
Amphibians					
Smooth/Palmate Newt	<i>Lissotriton vulgaris/helveticus</i>			1	
Dragonflies and Damselflies					
Emperor Dragonfly	<i>Anax imperator</i>		1		4
Green-eyed (Norfolk) Hawker	<i>Aeshna isosceles</i>	4			
Golden-ringed Dragonfly	<i>Cordulegaster boltonii</i>			1	
Broad-bodied Chaser	<i>Libellula depressa</i>			1	
Scarce Chaser	<i>Libellula fulva</i>				2
Four-spotted Chaser	<i>Libellula quadrimaculata</i>		1	10	4
Black-tailed Skimmer	<i>Orthetrum cancellatum</i>	1			
Blue-tailed Damselfly	<i>Ischnura elegans</i>	10	1		2
Azure Damselfly	<i>Coenagrion puella</i>			10	
Common Blue Damselfly	<i>Enallagma cyathigerum</i>				8
Large Red Damselfly	<i>Pyrrhosoma nymphula</i>			5	

Common name	Scientific name	May/June 2022			
		31	1	2	3
Butterflies					
Orange Tip	<i>Anthocharis cardamines</i>				1
Brimstone	<i>Gonepteryx rhamni</i>	1		1	2
Comma	<i>Polygonia c-album</i>				
Holly Blue	<i>Celastrina argiolus</i>	1			
Common Blue	<i>Polyommatus icarus</i>		5	2	
Adonis Blue	<i>Polyommatus bellargus</i>		3		
Small Blue	<i>Cupido minimus</i>		3		
Silver-studded Blue	<i>Plebejus argus</i>				1
Peacock	<i>Inachis io</i>	1			
Small Tortoiseshell	<i>Aglais urticae</i>			1	2
Speckled Wood	<i>Pararge aegeria</i>	5	1	1	3
Large White	<i>Pieris brassicae</i>	1			
Small White	<i>Pieris rapae</i>		1		1
Painted Lady	<i>Vanessa cardui</i>		3	1	
Red Admiral	<i>Vanessa atalanta</i>	2			1
Small Heath	<i>Coenonympha pamphilus</i>		5	3	
Meadow Brown	<i>Maniola jurtina</i>			2	1
Lulworth Skipper	<i>Thymelicus acteon</i>		1		
Dingy Skipper	<i>Erynnis tages</i>		3		
Large Skipper	<i>Ochlodes sylvanus</i>		1		
Green Hairstreak	<i>Callophrys rubi</i>			1	
Notable Plants					
Early Marsh Orchid	<i>Dactylorhiza incarnata pulchella</i>		✓		
Pyramidal Orchid	<i>Anacamptis pyramidalis</i>			✓	
Bee Orchid	<i>Ophrys apifera</i>			✓	
Round-leaved Sundew	<i>Drosera rotundifolia</i>		✓	✓	✓
Crosswort	<i>Cruciata laevipes</i>			✓	