

# The Best of Dorset's Wildlife

Naturetrek Tour Report

30th May – 2nd June 2023

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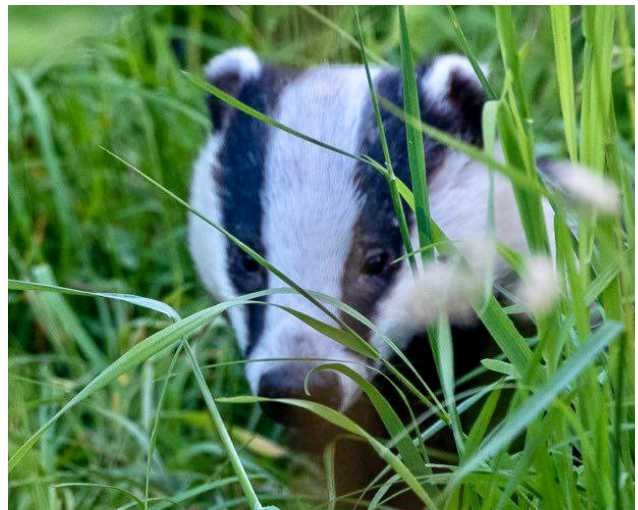
Bearded Tit



Smooth Snake



Dartford Warbler



European Badger

Tour report and images by Byron Palacios



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Tour Participants: Byron Palacios (Leader) with seven Naturetrek clients

## Day 1

**Tuesday 30th May**

### Lodmoor Marshes – Affpuddle Forest

After all the participants made it to Dorset from different parts of the UK, the group gathered together after lunch time at our lodge base in the beautiful village of West Knighton. After a brief welcoming chat over a refreshing drink, we set off to our first destination, Lodmoor Marshes. The 15-minute drive was filled by a good chat while enjoying the breathtaking landscapes passing by, especially the views of Weymouth Bay and the Isle of Portland from the top of Ridgeway, all under a nice sunny afternoon. We parked nearby the marshes and started our walk following the track that surrounds the main reed beds where some species such as Common Whitethroat, Blackcap, House Sparrow, Starling, Common Swift, Herring Gull, House Martin and Barn Swallow were seen. We spotted a pair of Western Marsh Harriers flying over the reed beds showing themselves very well! Eurasian Reed Warblers were also seen on this part of the trail.

Further up, Black-tailed Godwit, Mediterranean Gulls and Common Shelducks were spotted amongst Little Egrets, Great Cormorants and Lesser Black-backed Gulls. The islands in the water were full of Common Terns, Black-headed and Lesser Black-backed Gulls, with a few Canada Geese nearby. The bushes nearby produced great views of Greenfinch and Common Whitethroat which were nesting in the area. Right at the end of the trail, we managed to see a Sedge Warbler amongst a few more European Reed Warblers.

After having a good time walking here, we started to make our way back to our lodge in order to take a break and dinner, followed by our evening excursion to the area of Affpuddle Forest. The late evening turned out to be windy and even a bit stormy; dry though, and it wasn't long before we managed to hear the first churring of a male European Nightjar. We managed to see it coming out the woods and he perched on a nearby tree branch very nicely, giving us tremendously good views! We also managed to hear and see glimpses of Eurasian Woodcock popping out the long grass and flying across the track. It was a terrific first day and we happily returned to our lodge for a good night sleep.

## Day 2

**Wednesday 31st May**

### Wareham Forest (ARC Trust Reserve) – Rhododendron Mile – Piddle Valley

After a delicious breakfast, we drove eastwards following the road to the Purbeck Peninsula and Wareham Forest. Here, ARC-ORG (Amphibians and Reptile Conservation) representatives Gary and James walked us around their reserve in search of key species of reptiles. The first sightings were of a few female Slow Worm which were very nice and beautiful! Later on, we were lucky enough to find the rare Smooth Snake, two females and one male, all found in three different spots along our walk! We struggled to get full views of the rare Sand Lizard, but we managed to have quick views of three different individuals, they were very elusive for us this morning. We also managed to get great views of Dartford Warblers, Tree Pipits and Golden-ringed Dragonfly, amongst others.

After a great morning with our friends from ARC, we drove to Wareham where we grabbed a quick lunch overlooking this picturesque village, followed by a 20-minute drive to the area of Puddletown Forest. We explored

the surroundings of Rhododendron Mile which produced plenty of Common Chiffchaffs, European Siskin, Firecrest, European Stonechat and Goldcrest. After the walk, we drove back to our lodge in order to get ready for our excursion in the Piddle Valley. We made a stop along the way in the village of Piddlehinton where we enjoyed a truly delicious early supper, making it in time to be at the badger hide before 7pm.

The early evening was spectacular, Dorset's gorgeous countryside blended with the pure sounds of the surrounding nature. This place was a fantastic spot, and the scenery was truly breathtaking; lots of Blackcaps, Pied Wagtails, Linnets and Great Tits were seen by the feeder. Later on, a badger's head emerged from the long grass and then a second badger turned up as well. They stayed around for a while eating lots and jumping in and out from the long grass several times for nearly two hours. We saw four different individuals in total; a great moment!

After an enjoyable time, we left the hide and headed towards our van listening to a rather noisy Barn Owl interacting around its nesting site. Some of us saw glimpses of it. After a very exciting day, we drove back to our lodge in order to take a well-deserved rest!

## Day 3

Thursday 1st June

### Culpeppers Dish – Durlston Cliffs

After a delicious breakfast, we drove a bit north-eastwards to the area known as Culpeppers Dish. We took a nice stroll here which produced great birds such as several Spotted Flycatchers, Firecrest, Goldcrest, Coal, Great, Blue and Long-tailed Tits, Eurasian Siskin, Linnets, European Stonechats, Greenfinch, Yellowhammer, amongst others. An adjacent woodland produced a very active nest of Great Spotted Woodpecker which kept us busy for a bit. European Jays and Northern Ravens were spotted hanging around this area, making the woodpecker parents a bit weary of their presence. Not far from here, a Northern Treecreeper nest was also found, and we had the pleasure to watch the amazing activity of the busy parents looking after the nest. We continued with our walk onto a semi-open area which produced very active European Stonechats, Tree Pipits, Linnets and a very beautiful Woodlark! Lots of Common Buzzards were also seen here.

After a terrific morning in this area, we drove to the Purbeck Peninsula making a lunch stop along the way. Once fed and happy, we continued our drive through the small seaside town of Swanage as far as the area of Durlston Cliffs. We had a great walk here exploring the different paths and meadows of this gorgeous reserve enjoying the wildlife and the spectacular views of the Purbecks and the Jurassic Coast. We found lovely butterflies and invertebrates as well as interesting birds such as Rock Pipit, Northern Gannets, Northern Fulmar and a nesting colony of Razorbills and Common Guillemots which we enjoyed watching! There were also European Shags and a very active pair of Peregrine Falcons hunting around and feeding over the cliffs...fantastic!

After enjoying this great day from start to finish, we drove back to our lodge in the early evening in order to enjoy a delicious dinner and drinks!

## Day 4

Friday 2nd June

### Radipole Lake – Portland Bill

After breakfast, we started our drive towards the Isle of Portland making a stop at Radipole Lake. The weather was nice and sunny in the area and lots of birds such as Greenfinch, Goldfinch, Common Whitethroat, European Reed Warbler, Dunnock and Cetti's Warbler also seen! We had great views of lots of Sand Martins around their nesting banks; not far from there, a group of Bearded Tits were heard and seen very close afterwards, just great views of such an amazing bird! There were plenty of other birds such as Tufted Duck, Mallard, Grey Heron and Little Egret, amongst others.

We continued with our drive further south and into the Isle of Portland. We drove all the way down to Portland Bill from where we took a good walk which produced Northern Wheatear, Black Redstart, Rock Pipit and plenty of Linnets. The rocky coastline produced more interesting birds such as Black-legged Kittiwake, Northern Gannets, Northern Fulmar, Common Guillemots, Razorbills, European Shag and lots of Herring, Lesser and Greater Black-backed Gulls flying around. We checked a couple of small quarries finding a beautiful Little Owl in one of them, a gorgeous bird which was very obliging for us! We took a little break at the bird observatory watching Blackcaps, Greenfinch, Linnets and other species moving around its gorgeous gardens.

After this enjoyable morning, we drove to the Heights from where you can enjoy full 180-degrees views of the unique Chesil Beach and the Jurassic Coast – a perfect place to enjoy our lunch with stunning views of this gorgeous area of the Dorset west coast! After lunch, we started our drive back to our lodge in West Knighton in order to finish the tour. We all said our farewells wishing all the best to each other after sharing a very enjoyable few days together!

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## Species lists

Birds (H = Heard only, I = Introduced)

		May - June 2023			
Common name	Scientific name	30	31	1	2
Canada Goose - I	<i>Branta canadensis</i>	✓			✓
Mute Swan	<i>Cygnus olor</i>	✓			✓
Common Shelduck	<i>Tadorna tadorna</i>	✓			✓
Gadwall	<i>Mareca strepera</i>	✓			✓
Mallard	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓
Tufted Duck	<i>Aythya fuligula</i>	✓			✓
Red-legged Partridge - I	<i>Alectoris rufa</i>		✓		
Common Pheasant - I	<i>Phasianus colchicus</i>		✓		
Northern Fulmar	<i>Fulmarus glacialis</i>			✓	✓
Little Grebe	<i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>	✓			
Great Crested Grebe	<i>Podiceps cristatus</i>				✓
Grey Heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓
Little Egret	<i>Egretta garzetta</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>		✓		
Western Marsh Harrier	<i>Circus aeruginosus</i>	✓			
Common Buzzard	<i>Buteo buteo</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓
Water Rail	<i>Rallus aquaticus</i>				H
Common Moorhen	<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>	✓			✓
Eurasian Coot	<i>Fulica atra</i>	✓			✓
Eurasian Oystercatcher	<i>Haematopus ostralegus</i>	✓			✓
Black-tailed Godwit	<i>Limosa limosa</i>	✓			
Dunlin	<i>Calidris alpina</i>	✓			
Eurasian Woodcock	<i>Scolopax rusticola</i>	✓			
Common Snipe	<i>Gallinago gallinago</i>	✓			
Common Sandpiper	<i>Actitis hypoleucos</i>	✓			
Common Greenshank	<i>Tringa nebularia</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>	✓		✓	✓
Sandwich Tern	<i>Thalasseus sandvicensis</i>	✓			
Common Tern	<i>Sterna hirundo</i>	✓			✓
Common Guillemot	<i>Uria aalge</i>			✓	✓
Razorbill	<i>Alca torda</i>			✓	✓
Rock Dove	<i>Columba livia</i>			✓	✓

		May - June 2023			
Common name	Scientific name	30	31	1	2
Stock Dove	<i>Columba oenas</i>			✓	
Common Wood Pigeon	<i>Columba palumbus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓
Eurasian Collared Dove	<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓
Common Cuckoo	<i>Cuculus canorus</i>			H	
Barn Owl	<i>Tyto alba</i>		✓		
Tawny Owl	<i>Strix aluco</i>	H	H		
Little Owl - I	<i>Athene noctua</i>				✓
European Nightjar	<i>Caprimulgus europaeus</i>	✓			
Common Swift	<i>Apus apus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓
Common Kingfisher	<i>Alcedo atthis</i>	H			
Great Spotted Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos major</i>		✓	✓	
European Green Woodpecker	<i>Picus viridis</i>		H		
Common Kestrel	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>				✓
Peregrine Falcon	<i>Falco peregrinus</i>			✓	
Eurasian Jay	<i>Garrulus glandarius</i>		✓	✓	
Eurasian Magpie	<i>Pica pica</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>		✓	✓	
Eurasian Blue Tit	<i>Cyanistes caeruleus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓
Great Tit	<i>Parus major</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓
Bearded Tit	<i>Panurus biarmicus</i>				✓
Woodlark	<i>Lullula arborea</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>	✓	✓	✓	✓
Cetti's Warbler	<i>Cettia cetti</i>	H		H	✓
Long-tailed Tit	<i>Aegithalos caudatus</i>	✓		✓	✓
Common Chiffchaff	<i>Phylloscopus collybita</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓
Sedge Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus schoenobaenus</i>	✓			
Eurasian Reed Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus scirpaceus</i>	✓			✓
Eurasian Blackcap	<i>Sylvia atricapilla</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓
Lesser Whitethroat	<i>Curruca curruca</i>			H	
Common Whitethroat	<i>Curruca communis</i>	✓		✓	✓
Dartford Warbler	<i>Curruca undata</i>		✓		
Goldcrest	<i>Regulus regulus</i>		✓	✓	
Eurasian Wren	<i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>	H	H	✓	
Eurasian Treecreeper	<i>Certhia familiaris</i>			✓	
Common Starling	<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓



		May - June 2023			
Common name	Scientific name	30	31	1	2
Common Blackbird	<i>Turdus merula</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓
Song Thrush	<i>Turdus philomelos</i>			✓	
Mistle Thrush	<i>Turdus viscivorus</i>		✓	✓	✓
Spotted Flycatcher	<i>Muscicapa striata</i>			✓	
European Robin	<i>Erithacus rubecula</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓
European Stonechat	<i>Saxicola rubicola</i>		✓	✓	✓
Northern Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe oenanthe</i>				✓
House Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓
Dunnock	<i>Prunella modularis</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓
Grey Wagtail	<i>Motacilla cinerea</i>			✓	
Pied Wagtail	<i>Motacilla alba</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓
Meadow Pipit	<i>Anthus pratensis</i>	✓			
Tree Pipit	<i>Anthus trivialis</i>		✓	✓	
Eurasian Rock Pipit	<i>Anthus petrosus</i>			✓	✓
Common Chaffinch	<i>Fringilla coelebs</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓
Eurasian Bullfinch	<i>Pyrrhula pyrrhula</i>			✓	
European Greenfinch	<i>Chloris chloris</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓
Common Linnet	<i>Linaria cannabina</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓
European Goldfinch	<i>Carduelis carduelis</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓
Yellowhammer	<i>Emberiza citrinella</i>		✓	✓	✓
Reed Bunting	<i>Emberiza schoeniclus</i>	✓			

## Other vertebrates

		May - June 2023			
Common name	Scientific name	30	31	1	2
<b>Mammals</b>					
European Hare	<i>Lepus europaeus</i>	1			
European Rabbit	<i>Oryctolagus cuniculus</i>	✓	✓		✓
European Badger	<i>Meles meles</i>		4		
Red Fox	<i>Vulpes vulpes</i>		✓		
European Roe Deer	<i>Capreolus capreolus</i>		✓	✓	
Sika Deer	<i>Cervus nippon</i>			✓	
Common Pipistrelle (BD)	<i>Pipistrellus pipistrellus</i>	✓	✓		
Soprano Pipistrelle (BD)	<i>Pipistrellus pygmaeus</i>	H			
Common Noctule (BD)	<i>Nyctalus noctula</i>	✓	✓		
Brown Long-eared Bat (BD)	<i>Plecotus auritus</i>	H			
Barbastelle (BD)	<i>Barbastellus barbastellus</i>	H			
Alcathoe Bat (BD)	<i>Myotis alcathoe</i>	H			
Leisler's Noctule (BD)	<i>Nyctalus leisleri</i>	H			
<b>*BD = Bat Detector readings - courtesy of tour participant Sian Pettman</b>					

		May - June 2023			
Common name	Scientific name	30	31	1	2
Reptiles					
Smooth Snake	<i>Coronella austriaca</i>		4		
Slow worm	<i>Anguis fragilis</i>		3		
Sand Lizard	<i>Lacerta agilis</i>		2		

## Invertebrates

Common name	Scientific name
<b>Dragonflies and Damselflies</b>	
Emperor Dragonfly	<i>Anax imperator</i>
Keeled Skimmer	<i>Orthetrum coerulescens</i>
Broad-bodied Chaser	<i>Libellula depressa</i>
Hairy Dragonfly	<i>Brachytron pratense</i>
Downy Emerald	<i>Cordulia aenea</i>
Four-spotted Chaser	<i>Libellula quadrimaculata</i>
Blue-tailed Damselfly	<i>Ischnura elegans</i>
Azure Damselfly	<i>Coenagrion puella</i>
Common Blue Damselfly	<i>Enallagma cyathigerum</i>
Variable Damselfly	<i>Coenagrion pulchellum</i>
Large Red Damselfly	<i>Pyrrhosoma nymphula</i>
Small Red Damselfly	<i>Ceragrion tenellum</i>
<b>Butterflies</b>	
Orange Tip	<i>Anthocharis cardamines</i>
Brimstone	<i>Gonepteryx rhamni</i>
Comma	<i>Polygonia c-album</i>
Holly Blue	<i>Celastrina argiolus</i>
Common Blue	<i>Polyommatus icarus</i>
Peacock	<i>Inachis io</i>
Small Tortoiseshell	<i>Aglais urticae</i>
Speckled Wood	<i>Pararge aegeria</i>
Large White	<i>Pieris brassicae</i>
Green-veined White	<i>Pieris napi</i>
Painted Lady	<i>Vanessa cardui</i>
Red Admiral	<i>Vanessa atalanta</i>
Small Copper	<i>Lycaena phlaeas</i>