



ORIOLE BIRDING



TOUR REPORT CORNWALL

12TH – 18TH OCTOBER 2020

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12th October

Gary travelled the night before to Exeter and met Christopher and Audrey at Exeter services the following morning heading on from there to Penzance to collect Kay from the railway station. The weather was somewhat wet for the majority of the journey, but as we left Penzance the rain had stopped and sun could be seen trying to poke through. We checked in at the guesthouse with the last of the group, Michael arriving shortly after we did. After a short break we headed off to the afternoons destination, nearby Kenidjack valley. Our first bird as we drove in along the entrance road was a Grey Wagtail, noted on the small stream running alongside us. We parked and walked along the track down the valley towards the sea, pausing to check the bushes as we went.

Blackbirds, Blackcaps and several Goldcrests were immediately obvious, along with several brief Redwings. A Peregrine came over, reappearing a bit later to give a slightly better view and a group of three vocal Choughs flew over too, with two of them, or two more appearing a bit later near the mouth of the cove. Two Ravens were also noted, one in the company of two common Buzzards, very highlighting the large size of the bird! The weather had been kind to us and the afternoon had flown past so we decided to spend the last 45 minutes of the day around the sewage treatment works (well it is a birding trip!). A Yellow-browed Warbler and Firecrest had been seen there during the afternoon, but the wind was clearly not going to make searching easy! A mixed tit flock was clearly active along the tree line and it was felt we could do lot worse by working our way through them as they moved along the edge. This proved a good strategy with several Gold crests, and a Chiffchaff found and then finally the Yellow-browed. Warbler Unfortunately very brief views with only Gary and Audrey successful in seeing it, but never the less an encouraging start to our trip and an enjoyable first afternoons birding.

Tuesday 13th October 2020

We woke as predicted to a Northwesterly wind, which with the rest of the week forecast as largely easterly left us with no option but to grab the opportunity and head out after breakfast for a sea watching session at Pendeen. Arriving and parking we were greeted by views of two more Choughs, before making our way down to the front of the lighthouse to join with the small band of birders

sheltered there. Gannets could be seen passing relatively close in front of the cliffs and lines of Auks, both Razorbills and Guillemots were noted further out. Smaller numbers of kittiwakes were also visible, though these were again more distant, passing the furthest side of the line of three rocks which were some 500 or so metres offshore. These rocks also revealed twenty or so perched Shags and a single adult Great Black-backed Gull. A small shearwater appeared, which lacked the contrasting black and white appearance of a Manx, its darker under wing and dirtier pale belly identifying it as a Balearic Shearwater. Shortly after a line of passing Auks were seen to contain two ducks, Common Scoter, and a dolphin appeared briefly for one of the group, Kay, with her conclusion being it was almost certainly a Bottle nosed Dolphin.

With us being virtually the last birders left still looking at the sea we decided to head back to the van for a warm up, after which we headed off to our next destination for the day, The Hayle Estuary.

We made several stops here during the course of the afternoon in the area viewing the estuary at several points and visiting Copper house Creek and The RSPB reserve at Ryan's Field. Our first stop gave us nice views of a perched Kingfisher, Shags and cormorants together, and our first Mediterranean Gulls, which were mainly adults.



Some nice views of Shags were achieved around the Hayle Estuary

Other birds encountered during our time here included a selection of waders, including Curlew Sandpiper, Greenshank, Ringed Plover, Curlew, Bar-tailed Godwit and Redshank, plus around 600 Wigeon, smaller numbers of Teal and four Shelduck. Gulls featured strongly with loafing mixed flocks invariably containing Mediterranean Gulls, the majority being adults. We also made a visit to the small local nature reserve at St Gothians sands, which basically consists of small lake and island set in amongst the coastal dunes. The hoped for Coot, a scarce bird in the region it seems, was soon found, with a total of five noted, with Tufted Duck also an addition to the trip list. A Northern Wheatear was found running around on the grass on the lake edge and both Rock and Meadow

Pipits fed together on the short grass on the island in the centre of the lake, offered a nice comparison of the two species.

We return back to the guesthouse stopping enroute briefly again the sewage works at Kenidjack Valley. The wind was still unfortunately on the strong side and the trees around the perimeter proved largely bird less, though some consolation came in the form of more overflying Choughs and Ravens.

Wednesday 14th October 2020

We woke to a bright morning, though unfortunately the wind was still on the stiff side. After breakfast as we head out to the load and board the van, Gary heard an interesting Sparrow chirping in the large bush in the corner of the garden, his suspicions being it was a Tree Sparrow. The bird unfortunately remained largely hidden, but allowed just good enough views to confirm its identity. Three House sparrows appeared at the top of the bush, and we waited patiently as the Tree Sparrow moved up the bush to join them and just as it looked like it was going to appear, they all promptly flew off together!

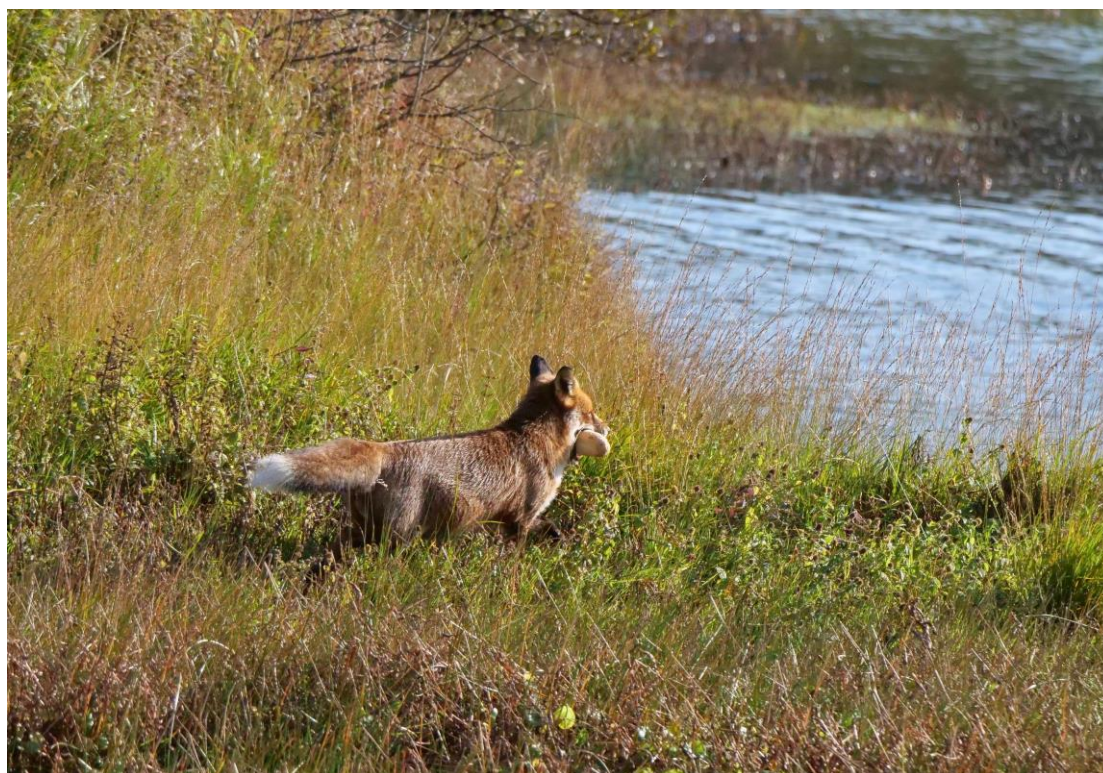
Our destination today was the Lizard Peninsula planning a 'loop' route heading North first to Stithians Lake then back south to the Lizard. Arriving at the lake all seemed quiet with the signs telling us the hides were shut, causing us some disappointment. We climbed out of the van anyway with a local woman stopping and chatting, and we quickly learnt the signs were put there to discourage the local youngsters, so were in fact open!

We walked the short distance along the track to the hide that overlooks the southern arm of the reservoir, which was disappointingly quiet, though a single Ruff found by Chris and a Snipe found by Kay were welcome trip ticks. We returned to the main road, crossed over to visit another small hide, that overlooked a flooded marsh with small trees and Willows interspersed in and around it. At first again things seemed quiet, with a few Mallard and Teal the only birds of note on the water. There were some feeders next to the hide and it wasn't long before birds started to return to them mainly Blue and Great Tits and later a few House Sparrows and Chaffinches. We then heard a familiar nasal call, a Willow Tit! The bird then appeared on the feeders allowing all the salient features to be noted, a somewhat surprising and welcome addition to the list to say the least!



A vocal Willow Tit, gave us good views on the feeders in front of the hide.

It was clear we needed eyes everywhere as Chris at the further end of the hide watched a Water Rail stroll across a small path running in front of the hide. This was shortly followed by a Fox carrying a loaf of bread, seemingly this wasn't his first, he looked very well fed!



Heading onto the Lizard our first stop was Church Cove, where on arrival in the Car Park a Yellow-browed Warbler could be heard calling feverishly above us. Unfortunately by the time we had parked and disembarked it had stopped. This coupled with the strong winds meant looking for smaller birds in the canopy was somewhat challenging to say the least! We spent the next hour or so exploring the Churchyard and checking the trees along the lane, with the best bird being a Great Spotted Woodpecker plus a puddle visiting Grey Wagtail. Lunch followed, again with us all spreading out to various spots to look for birds whilst we ate. With nothing new discovered we decided to head off to Lizard village to walk a section of the coast path. The route we took ran west along the coast, cutting back inland allowing us to re join the village, a pleasant couple of hours followed with the sun out and the wind behind us.

Rock Pipits again were obvious and showed well, single Shag was noted on the sea and a flock Barn Swallows came past heading east. We arrived back at the van, checking the nearby Starlings lined up on the wires for any paler cousins, and then enjoyed a Cornish Ice cream courtesy of Chris.

Our last stop of the day was a tree-lined lake on the edge of Helston called Loe Pool. Again a few new trip birds were found, namely Great-crested Grebe and Northern Shoveler and two more 'heards' included a Water Rail and Kingfisher.

Thursday 15th October 20

A change of strategy today and importantly new lucky boots for Gary! A bright sunny start and for the remainder of the day as it transpired with our first port of call, nearby Cot Valley. The wind had noticeably lessened in strength and as we parked and disembarked from the van, bird activity was evident all around us. It didn't take long to find our first Firecrest nearby, which was a very much a hoped for species and after checking the area around our parking spot further we headed off along a nearby path, which lead us across the top of the valley. As we looked down into the valley below at

least two Crossbills flew over call, though unfortunately not seen, due to the tree canopy above us. We carried on taking a route across some fields to drop down into the lower part of the valley. Several Greenfinches, a Great Spotted Woodpecker and good numbers of Meadow Pipits, Pied Wagtails and Skylarks were seen. It was a beautiful morning and we walked along for a couple of hours checking through the commoner birds we saw in the bushes and trees around us. At least two more Firecrests followed, (cracking views too!) with Grey Wagtail, Chiffchaff, Coal Tit and Chough also seen.



One of at least three Firecrests we saw during our time at Cot Valley.

Arriving back at the bus we re-boarded and headed off to our next destination, Drift Reservoir. A straightforward journey, aided by Chris's map reading, saw us utilising a picnic table overlooking the reservoir for lunch. After lunch we followed the riverside path to the small hide that overlooks the bay and area near the Northern end. Although the hide was shut we managed to view the area, adding Gadwall and Green Sandpiper to the trip list, along with a small selection of expected species such as Snipe, Wigeon, Mute swan and Grey Heron, plus surprisingly another fox!

We returned to the van where Gary checked his messages to find a Red-breasted Flycatcher had been found at Porthgwarra, so we were off, the afternoon's destination now decided.

Arriving at Porthgwarra birders and cars were evident and we ended up in the further second overflow car park. On speaking to several birders it was evident the bird hadn't been seen since this morning so we decided we best go try and find it ourselves. We didn't as it transpired, but we saw some nice bits all the same and enjoyed a leisurely couple of hours working our way round the site. Best find went to Chris, who disappeared into some path side Sallows and after some diligent searching found a Yellow-browed warbler. A confident bird, allowing us all to stand together (social distanced of course!) and enjoy some great views. A brief Water Rail, a flyover Redpoll and two more Choughs were amongst the other birds we saw during our walk along the lower part of the valley during the afternoon. Insects featured too, with several more Butterfly species added which included a Clouded Yellow and a Migrant Hawker Dragonfly.

We returned back to the car park to find a line of birders with scopes, peering up into the trees on the other side of the valley. The Red-breasted Flycatcher had reappeared! Although a fair way off,

the bird did the decent thing and perched out in full view on several occasions, meaning we all got to see it well.



A confiding Clouded Yellow at Porthgwarra

Friday 16th October 2020

Another bright and sunny start to the day with a small flock of Redwing seen by Gary as he loaded the van before breakfast. This was followed by a Sparrowhawk which was also seen by Audrey, hopefully signs of a good day ahead!

After breakfast we headed off to our first destination of the day Sennen Cove, with the objective being a circular walk to Lands End and back from there.

On arrival we spent a few minutes scanning the nearby rocks and the sea generally, picking out several Mediterranean Gulls, Shags, Gannets and a Grey Heron, which was tucked almost out of sight on a rocky outcrop. Choughs flew noisily around on some nearby houses, eight or so in number, with the majority colour ringed, allowing some nice views and photographic opportunities.



Two of the eight or so Choughs around the harbour

We climbed the steep path out of the car park to join the coastal path, enjoying views of two Ravens perched on the cliff edge. We branched off after a while to initially explore a line of bushes nearby, with it soon becoming apparent this joined an alternative path. We took this path with us completing our loop and returning back on the main coast path. The expected Stonechats, Robins and Pipits were encountered along the way plus several Blackbirds and a small flock of Long-tailed Tits. As we approached and looked out to Lands End a Short-eared Owl flew into view and as we scrambled to get scopes on it a second bird appeared, with them both settling on the ground and allowing us some nice views. We continued on our way hoping we see the Owls again as we got closer, which unfortunately didn't happen. Some minor compensation came in the form of two Fieldfare seen initially in flight, with them quickly landing deep in some nearby bushes. Gary returned back to where they had disappeared, with the birds calling and appearing near the top of one of the bushes. The group came back and managed to see them before they took off heading east. After a quick look at Lands End and use of the facilities, we returned back along the coast path aware we'd timed the visit just right with a growing number of people appearing along our route! Our next stop of the day was Marazion Marsh, well it was until Gary checked his phone; a White-tailed eagle had been reported some eight minutes east of there and apparently sat on some offshore rocks! We arrived to find no other birders or the bird, which was concerning and explained when we received an update several hours later saying the bird had flown off an hour before we arrive! We headed back to Marazion, where we parked and had lunch looking out along the beach and out to sea. Lots of people and windsurfers had seemingly impacted on the number of birds in the area, though we did manage to find four Sanderling on the shoreline, another new species for the trip.

We made the short walk to the entrance to Marazion Marsh, walking in and following the track around the east of the reserve, noting a single Snipe, a couple of Greenfinches and the inevitable Stonechats and Robins! It took a while to hear our first Cetti's Warbler though, with two different birds heard in the end, unsurprisingly remaining hidden. A small mixed tit flock, a Goldcrest and a calling Firecrest that stayed well hidden completed the remainder of the visit.

As we returned to the car park, several Turnstones were also noted feeding in amongst the seaweed that stretched along the shoreline near the road.

Our last stop of the day was a return visit to Hayle Estuary and Copperhouse Creek, where we enjoyed an hour searching through the mixture of birds there. Seven Pink footed Geese were found in amongst the large Canada Goose flock and were a new addition to the trip. A small group of five Grey Plover flew in to join the other waders present, which included eight Ringed Plover, a single Greenshank, two Bar-tailed Godwits, Redshank, Dunlin and a Curlew Sandpiper.

Saturday 17th October 2020

A change in weather today, with a grey and overcast start with a 50% chance of rain well into the afternoon as per the weather App. Fortunately we were in largely the 50% dry part of the forecast, so our day and birding wasn't really compromised! Our first stop today was Nanquidno Valley where on arrival it was clear there was birds to be seen, with the nearby fields revealing Blackbirds, Redwings and Song Thrushes and the bushes revealing more Robins and Chaffinches, Mike was on the ball, calling a female Bullfinch sat on a nearby hawthorn bush, which was quickly joined by a male and when they took flight they were joined by two more. We took a small path leading to the coastal path which gave us views of the sea, though we saw little more than a few distant Gannets, a mixture of gull species and Shags plus two Grey Seals. Stonechats and both Rock and Meadow Pipits were noted as we walked along, as were Chough and Raven. Suddenly a small raptor pursuing a Pipit flashed up ahead of us, a Merlin, the view brief but another new addition to the trip and one we'd hoped to see. We walked a short way on noting four corvids seemingly in pursuit of a bird of prey, the bird turned flashing its white rump, a ring tailed Hen Harrier! yet another new addition for the trip. We dropped back inland towards the area we parked the van, checking the garden trees and bushes as we walked along. A Fieldfare appeared and then promptly disappeared and again several Robins, Goldcrest and Chiffchaffs were noted. Then Gary caught sight of a warbler with a glaringly bright white belly in a nearby low tree, the view was brief as the bird hopped into view, a Siberian Chiffchaff! with a grey head and mantle, green edged wings and tail, and a buff supercilium, though unfortunately was not heard to call and it disappearing from view as quickly as it had appeared.



The mornings ring tailed Hen Harrier

We walked past the van and checked some areas further up the lane but with nothing to add we returned to the van to head onto our next destination, the village of Polgigga, for a walk round the lanes and a visit to Nanjizal Valley.

Lunch by the duck pond was followed by a walk along the scrub-lined lane leading down to Bosistow Farm. It was relatively quiet; though a roaming mixed tit flock was found to contain a couple of Chiffchaffs and a Yellow-browed Warbler. The highlight here though was a small flock of Crossbills that erupted noisily from some large pine trees that overhung the road as we walked under them. Hopes were raised when Gary thought he had found two Stock Doves on a roof of distant barn, a seemingly pale bill and a flock feral pigeons nearby left some doubts, and sure enough when the birds were seen properly their identification as the latter was confirmed.

We entered the mouth of Nanjizal Valley pausing to check several stubble fields as we went, to little avail, though a further stop was interrupted by a series of loud 'tack tack' calls, a Ring Ouzel! Which flew from cover landing at the edge of a nearby field giving us some great views and a bird Audrey particularly had hoped we would find.

Pleased with our success we headed back out the valley and taking a circular route to return to the van. We had one last stop in mind though, to search for a late Turtle Dove that had been in the company of Collared Doves at one of the nearby farms. We found the farm and at least fifty Collared Doves, but unfortunately no Turtle Dove!



A hoped for addition a Ring Ouzel which gave nice views through the scopes.

With the day nearly done Gary had suggested finishing the day at Kenidjack Valley but Mike then made the suggestion we attempted to see the Whooper Swans that seemingly had returned back to Drift Reservoir, a good idea, so off we went! We pulled up, climbed out the vehicles, set up the scopes, and there were the birds, in a field on the far side of the reservoir, it couldn't have been easier! A walk down to the dam revealed very little else apparent at the reservoir, so we returned back to the guesthouse to ready ourselves for our last evening's meal together.

Sunday 18th October 2020

Our last morning saw us heading back to the area around Polgigga with belated news having reached us of an Ortolan Bunting in the area the day before. We decided to walk some of the lanes we had been down the day before, as details on where the Bunting had been seen were a bit sketchy. This proved a good move with a nice selection of commoner birds such as Coal Tit, Great Spotted Woodpecker and Jay, plus two more Yellow-browed Warblers both of which showed very well for us.



As we were in the area we decided to revisit the farm to look for the Turtle Dove again, unfortunately we had the same result as yesterday, plenty of Collared Doves in around the farm but no sign of our quarry.

Gary had at this point seen a local birder he knew, who had updated us regarding the news on the Bunting. It seemingly had been seen a private area, something the bird news service had neglected to add. Sections of the area would though be viewable from a large concrete pad near the road. Adopting the attitude nothing ventured, nothing gained we decided to utilise the last thirty minutes of the morning looking, a nice idea but unfortunately nothing gained was the end result! With the morning having now slipped by, we returned back to the Guesthouse said our goodbyes and started our individual trips home.

SYSTEMATIC LIST

1. Greylag Goose
2. Canada Goose
3. Pink-footed Goose
4. Mute Swan
5. Whooper Swan
6. Common Shelduck
7. Northern Shoveler
8. Gadwall
9. Eurasian Wigeon
10. Mallard
11. Eurasian Teal
12. Tufted Duck
13. Common Scoter
14. Common Pheasant
15. Little Grebe
16. Great Crested Grebe
17. Balearic Shearwater
18. Northern Gannet
19. Great Cormorant
20. European Shag
21. Grey Heron
22. Little Egret
23. Eurasian Sparrowhawk
24. Hen Harrier
25. Common Buzzard
26. Water Rail
27. Common Moorhen
28. Eurasian Coot
29. Eurasian Oystercatcher
30. Grey Plover
31. Northern Lapwing
32. Common Ringed Plover
33. Eurasian Curlew
34. Bar-tailed Godwit
35. Ruddy Turnstone
36. Ruff
37. Sanderling
38. Dunlin
39. Curlew Sandpiper
40. Common Snipe
41. Green Sandpiper
42. Common Greenshank
43. Common Redshank
44. Razorbill
45. Common Guillemot

46. Black-legged Kittiwake
47. Black-headed Gull
48. Mediterranean Gull
49. Common Gull
50. Herring Gull
51. Lesser Black-backed Gull
52. Great Black-backed Gull
53. Rock Dove (Feral Pigeon)
54. Woodpigeon
55. Collared Dove
56. Short-eared Owl
57. Kingfisher
58. Great-spotted Woodpecker
59. Common Kestrel
60. Merlin
61. Peregrine
62. Eurasian Jay
63. Common Magpie
64. Red-billed Chough
65. Eurasian Jackdaw
66. Rook
67. Carrion Crow
68. Common Raven
69. Eurasian Skylark
70. Barn Swallow
71. Coal Tit
72. Eurasian Blue Tit
73. Great Tit
74. Willow Tit
75. Long-tailed Tit
76. Eurasian Wren
77. Goldcrest
78. Firecrest
79. Cetti's Warbler
80. Common Chiffchaff
81. Siberian Chiffchaff
82. Yellow-browed Warbler
83. Eurasian Blackcap
84. Red-breasted Flycatcher
85. European Robin
86. European Stonechat
87. Northern Wheatear
88. Ring Ouzel
89. Eurasian Blackbird
90. Fieldfare
91. Redwing
92. Song Thrush

- 93. Mistle Thrush
- 94. Common Starling
- 95. Dunnock
- 96. Grey Wagtail
- 97. Pied Wagtail
- 98. Meadow Pipit
- 99. Rock Pipit
- 100. Common Chaffinch
- 101. Eurasian Bullfinch
- 102. European Greenfinch
- 103. Common Linnet
- 104. European Goldfinch
- 105. Redpoll
- 100. Eurasian Siskin
- 106. Common Crossbill
- 107. House Sparrow
- 108. Tree Sparrow

Mammals

Bottle nosed Dolphin
Rabbit
Grey Squirrel
Red Fox
Grey Seal

Butterflies and Dragonflies

Peacock
Speckled Wood
Red Admiral
Small Copper
Large White
Clouded Yellow
Small Tortoiseshell
Migrant Hawker

