



ORIOLE BIRDING



TOUR REPORT HAMPSHIRE & DORSET 6TH – 10TH AUGUST 2017

W: www.oriolebirding.com T: 0800 999 3036 E: info@oriolebirding.com



SUNDAY 6TH AUGUST – *Moderate SW winds, 18C*

After we had all successfully negotiated the traffic around London and down the M3, we made our 1700 rendezvous at our Lyndhurst guest house and after a quick turn around, were soon enjoying a drink and early dinner at one of the local hostelry's. This was with a view to kicking off the tour with a **Nightjar** session on one of the local heaths, and with the wind dropping right off, a full moon and clear skies, it was perfect for it. The temperature really dropped as dusk fell though, and we heard and saw nothing during that period of expectation just as the light began to fade. Amazingly, the first sign or sound we had of any **European Nightjars** was to hear wing clapping coming from a fair distance down the path, so we moved our position. We heard the clapping again, but bizarrely no flight calling or churring at all. This time the bird was much closer and we picked up the distinctive white wing and tail flashes of a male **Nightjar** chasing a second bird low over the heather and bracken. These two birds, both males, then went on to give us a fantastic twenty minute display, constantly wing clapping and chasing back and forth low in front of us. At one point, one settled in a small tree next to us and began churring, while the second bird danced around the tree in agitated fashion. It then dropped down and landed on the wide grassy track right in front of us! Amazing views and an absolute treat to start off the trip. Even as we left in the pitch dark, they were still going at it – and by now two others could be heard in the distance. The International Space Station whizzing overhead was a nice bonus, too!

MONDAY 7TH AUGUST – *Overcast with showers turning to sunny spells, 18C*

An excellent day in the field today despite the weather forecast not looking as if it would give us much of a chance with the bugs. We actually ended up breaking into double figures for odonata including most of the key species, and an absolutely brilliant list of birds! We started down at Acres Down, where a walk down through the forest was particularly productive. We began to pick up **Spotted Flycatchers**, roving parties of tits and Willow Warblers, family parties of Bullfinch and our first flyover **Common Crossbills**, just a few yards from the car park! We could hear a **Eurasian Hobby** calling, and found two birds perched in a clearing just off the track. Through the scope, we enjoyed superb views of an adult sitting right out in the open, red trousers and all! A group of Common Stonechats were also here, and the woodland edge was buzzing with more sightings of Bullfinch, plus a nice Marsh Tit. **Common Crossbills** were pretty much constant overhead in small groups of 2-3 birds at a time, and we picked up Eurasian Siskin too. As we headed back out to the main track, a distinctive sharp piercing call was noted – and two **Hawfinch** appeared from the trees and flew low past us. We often encounter this secretive resident in the forest, but we rarely see it in any other way than just flying over. At least these views were close enough to see the distinctive short-tailed, front heavy and broad-winged silhouette. Further down the track, and a juvenile **Common Crossbill** obliged with some good perched views, and we were able to get the scope on it long enough for everyone to get a decent look. Blackcap and some lovely lemon Willow Warblers were seen in another tit flock, and a family of **Spotted Flycatchers** included one which sallied out for a moth and landed on the track about 5m in front of us! **Firecrest** was a target bird for this walk and inevitably we bumped into a couple – the first was a tricky adult bird flitting among dense, shady oak foliage, the second was a juvenile tagging along with another roving group of tits. It had been an excellent and bird-filled walk though, and we returned to the parking area about 11am for a brew just as the first serious rain of the day moved through. Afterwards, we walked up onto the down, as it had now warmed up a touch and dried out – we hoped one or two raptors might have appeared. They didn't, though we did see one of the **Hobbies** again in flight and had our first Common

Buzzard.

Next stop was Upper Crockford Stream, an excellent site for odonata. The sun was shining by the time we had eaten our lunch and headed down towards the brook, picking up our first Gatekeeper and Red Admiral butterflies in the process. Two **Golden-ringed Dragonfly** delighted us at close range down along the stream, and soon we had added our two main targets – **Small Red Damselfly**, and **Southern Damselfly**. Beautiful **Demoiselle** was also seen, with several lovely males dancing along over the water, but in truth we didn't see big numbers of any species. Single Common Darter was also noted, and a juvenile **Dartford Warbler** popped up right in front of us among the gorse. We followed it for a bit as it associated with the Common Stonechats, and eventually saw a second one a bit further up on the heath among the more mature stands of gorse. A **Eurasian Hobby** flashed through, and simultaneously a **Wood Sandpiper** called twice – the second time it was right overhead, but we couldn't see it. Perhaps the falcon had flushed it off one of the larger ponds further upstream. **Silver-studded Blue** and **Grayling** butterflies were welcome additions to the list on the walk back, and we also saw a couple of scarce plants including Coral Necklace.



Small Red Damselfly – this dainty insect was found at two sites in the forest today

Hatchet Pond is always a must visit due to its attractiveness to dragonflies in particular, but we actually ended up with a better bird list from the site today! **Small Red-eyed Damselfly** was on the wing here, and we saw just a couple on the lily pads. Odonata were otherwise scarce – though we did have excellent views of both **Emperor** and **Migrant Hawker**. Walking towards the far end of the pond, we picked a large raptor up coming across the Brockenhurst road – it was a **European Honey Buzzard**! The bird was flapping with measured elastic wing beats, and gliding on long flat wings in between. Such a distinctive silhouette and flight action. Its long narrow tail was held closed all the time in this active flight, and large pale underwing patches could be picked out in the inner primaries. It drifted off over the distant woodland and was lost to view – a real bonus! Continuing around the

pond, we went on to get superb views of a male and female **Common Redstart**, with the latter dropping down onto the track in front of us before flicking back up with shimmering tail.



Grayling – the master of disguise was seen at Upper Crockford Stream

It was gone 1600 by now, so we just about had time to squeeze one more site out of the day. With the forecast not looking amazing for the coming days, we were keen to make hay while the sun shone! This took us to Matley Bog, and soon we were watching more **Common Redstarts**, **Spotted Flycatchers** and **Willow Warblers** feeding along the woodland edge on our way out to the bog. The craters in the heather formed by WW1 bombing practice are now filled with water, and prove attractive to several species of dragonfly. The **Emerald Damselfly** is one such species, and we saw several examples of both male and female. **Small Red Damselfly** was seen again, but the star of the show was a fine mature male **Black Darter** which posed for everyone nicely. With that one in the bag, we had time to explore a bit more of the heath on the way back up – we were rewarded with superb views of three **Woodlarks** first foraging on the track in front of us, and then flying past us in perfect light. A great way to end a top, top day.

TUESDAY 8TH AUGUST – *Sunny spells in morning, overcast afternoon with showers, 19C*

The forecast suggested that we were really going to have our work cut out today, as another largely overcast day with plenty of rain around, possibly brightening later, was on the cards.

With the following day forecast to be even worse, we knew this would be our only chance to get down to Dorset and try for the key butterfly targets that we had, and so we made our way down towards Weymouth thinking we would first start with a bit of birding. However, as we got nearer, the rain stopped and the sun was trying to break through thinning cloud, so we made a quick decision to head straight down to Lulworth Cove to try the coastal grassland there for the Lulworth Skipper and chalk grassland blues. As we walked up the valley behind the car park, it felt very warm, and our spirits were raised further as we saw **Small Heath**, **Common Blue** and **Brown Argus** in quick succession. There were several **Wall Brown** about too, and along the lower path among the clumps of bramble and rank grass we found **Small Skipper**, a beautiful **Clouded Yellow** and **Adrian** and **Ashley** both had good views of our main target, the **Lulworth Skipper**. However, the next hour proved typical for this species – several brief sightings which took flight and immediately disappeared! So we never did manage to get everyone onto one! Compensation was plentiful though and came in the dazzling format of a fresh male **Adonis Blue** which pitched up in front of us – unlike the skippers this beauty performed on and off for half an hour and we really were able to soak up its gorgeousness to the full. A **Chalkhill Blue** was also seen, and was also a beautiful fresh example. **Small Copper** and **Small Tortoiseshell** boosted our list further, but with black clouds looming we decided to make haste back to the car park for coffee.



Adonis Blue, Lulworth Cove 8th August

A forty-five minute drive north took us to Hazelbury Bryan and the excellent reserve at Alner's Gorse to look for the Brown Hairstreak. We were not lucky here with the weather – we had blanket cloud the whole time – but we were rather fortunate with our quarry. Heading down the track in light rain we managed Speckled Wood and Green-veined White, and taking the path to the left we met two people who were watching a **Purple Hairstreak**. We would never have seen it without them – the only example we saw all afternoon and it was sitting perfectly still on a fairly low Oak leaf. Continuing on we scanned the blackthorn bushes and adjacent blossoms for **Brown Hairstreak**, and eventually found one crawling around on bramble flower. A rather worn male, it was nevertheless obliging and remained on the same flowers for well over an hour! Extraordinary! Despite the weather warming up a bit, we didn't see another one. We did, however, have excellent views of **Brown Hawker**, add Large White and Comma to the list, and saw both **Southern and Migrant Hawkers** too. Two **Silver-washed Fritillary** included one rather worn specimen which perched briefly for us before thinking better of it and heading back to the canopy. Not a bad day at all, considering we were trying to find butterflies mainly in heavy cloud and occasionally in rain!

WEDNESDAY 8TH AUGUST – *Heavy rain in light NW winds, 14C*

A really difficult day with an intense weather front moving through slowly and bringing at times absolute deluges of rain – it certainly wasn't the weather for bugging! Instead we took a bird-orientated approach to the days itinerary and headed first down to Blashford Lakes near Ringwood. At least here we could park close to a spacious hide and spend an hour or so birding in the relative dry [though it was driving in through the flaps!]. Highlights were provided by singles of Common Sandpiper and **Little-ringed Plover**, and thousands of hirundines over Ibsley Water – mainly Sand Martins driven down low to feed by the weather. Great Crested and Little Grebes, Common Pochard, Little Egret and a solitary Dunlin were also noted.



Juveniles of *limosa* [left] and *islandica* Black-tailed Godwits, Titchfield Haven 8th Aug

Next we drove back across the forest and down past Southampton to Titchfield Haven, a site which has proved a reliable wet weather location for us in the past and which added a good selection of waterbirds for us today too. The tide was high, meaning small groups of Ruddy Turnstone and Common Ringed Plover were up on the beach and lots of Common Terns were around the river mouth. We braved the walk round to Meon Shore Hide, and here we enjoyed a good selection – Common Teal, Northern Shoveler, Gadwall, Common Shelduck, Common Redshank, nine Dunlin, a couple of Common Ringed Plover and about sixty **Black-tailed Godwits**. These were mostly adults or second year birds of the race *islandica*, busy moulting and looking rather scruffy. One or two were still in full breeding plumage, sporting a bright chestnut head and breast and upperparts barred with black and gold. A really nice surprise were two grey juveniles of the continental race *limosa*, which we were able to compare with a typically bright and orange-washed juvenile *islandica*. A useful lesson and one for folk to hopefully take home and practice on their own local patches! Further round at the farthest hide, we added a juvenile **Marsh Harrier**, two more Common Sandpipers and a nice **Green Sandpiper**. Sedge Warbler, Sandwich Tern and a **Mediterranean Gull** were also noted, before we headed back to the car for late lunch. We took our time over this, but the weather didn't clear, and so we headed back to base around 1600 to dry out.

THURSDAY 10TH AUGUST - *Sunny spells in fresh NW winds, 18C*

Our efforts today would focus on Stockbridge Down in the hope of connecting with the sun-loving Silver-spotted Skipper and hopefully a decent selection of other chalk grassland butterflies. It was actually really cool and windy as we arrived at the site, and for two hours we wandered around slowly combing every inch of the down without a huge amount of success. Eventually, things started to warm up and the Chalkhill Blues were on the wing – several of these beautiful butterflies were seen flitting across the grassland. Common Blue, **Brown Argus**, **Small Heath**, Red Admiral, Peacock, Small & Large Whites were also seen but there was still no sign of our quarry. We were by now ready for a coffee, so began to make our way down the hill towards the car park. En route, a shout of 'skipper!' went up from one of the crew but the wind took it immediately and we had a feeling of déjà vu all over again after our Lulworth experience! But thankfully this time we were more fortunate, and a quick comb around all the knapweed blooms yielded the target – a lovely **Silver-spotted Skipper**! We only had a few moments to enjoy it though, as an over-friendly horse appeared and flushed it away never to be seen again! Our coffee went down well after this success, and we had time to check the buddleia in the lower car park before lunch – several Brimstone, lots of Large White, Green-veined White, Red Admiral and a single **Silver-washed Fritillary** rounding off the trip nicely. From here it was goodbye and time for everyone to head their separate ways home.

SYSTEMATIC LIST

BIRDS

1. Great Crested Grebe
2. Little Grebe
3. Grey Heron
4. Little Egret
5. Mute Swan
6. Greylag Goose

7. Egyptian Goose
8. Mallard
9. Gadwall
10. Northern Shoveler
11. Common Teal
12. Tufted Duck
13. Common Pochard
14. Common Buzzard
15. Eurasian Sparrowhawk
16. Common Kestrel
17. Eurasian Hobby
18. Red Kite
19. European Honey Buzzard
20. European Oystercatcher
21. Northern Lapwing
22. Dunlin
23. Common Ringed Plover
24. Little-ringed Plover
25. Common Sandpiper
26. Green Sandpiper
27. Wood Sandpiper [H]
28. Black-tailed Godwit
29. Common Redshank
30. Ruddy Turnstone
31. Black-headed Gull
32. Mediterranean Gull
33. Herring Gull
34. Lesser Black-backed Gull
35. Great Black-backed Gull
36. Common Tern
37. Sandwich Tern
38. Woodpigeon
39. Stock Dove
40. Collared Dove
41. European Nightjar
42. Common Swift
43. Great-spotted Woodpecker
44. Green Woodpecker [H]
45. Woodlark
46. Meadow Pipit
47. Pied Wagtail
48. Barn Swallow
49. House Martin
50. Sand Martin
51. Winter Wren
52. European Robin
53. Dunnock
54. Stonechat
55. Common Redstart
56. Common Blackbird
57. Song Thrush
58. Mistle Thrush
59. Dartford Warbler
60. Sedge Warbler
61. Blackcap
62. Willow Warbler
63. Common Chiffchaff
64. Firecrest
65. Goldcrest
66. Spotted Flycatcher
67. Coal Tit

68. Blue Tit
69. Great Tit
70. Marsh Tit
71. Long-tailed Tit
72. European Nuthatch
73. Common Treecreeper
74. Eurasian Jay
75. Black-billed Magpie
76. Rook
77. Carrion Crow
78. Western Jackdaw
79. Common Starling
80. House Sparrow
81. Chaffinch
82. Greenfinch
83. Goldfinch
84. Linnet
85. Eurasian Siskin
86. Bullfinch
87. Hawfinch
88. Common Crossbill
89. Yellowhammer

ODONATA

1. Common Blue Damselfly
2. Blue-tailed Damselfly
3. Southern Damselfly
4. Small Red Damselfly
5. Emerald Damselfly
6. Beautiful Demoiselle
7. Small Red-eyed Damselfly
8. Southern Hawker
9. Migrant Hawker
10. Brown Hawker
11. Emperor
12. Golden-ringed Dragonfly
13. Common Darter
14. Black Darter

BUTTERFLIES

1. Small Skipper
2. Silver-spotted Skipper
3. Lulworth Skipper
4. Clouded Yellow
5. Brimstone
6. Large White
7. Small White
8. Green-veined White
9. Purple Hairstreak
10. Brown Hairstreak
11. Small Copper
12. Silver-studded Blue
13. Brown Argus
14. Common Blue
15. Chalkhill Blue
16. Adonis Blue
17. Red Admiral
18. Small Tortoiseshell
19. Peacock

20. Comma
21. Silver-washed Fritillary
22. Speckled Wood
23. Wall Brown
24. Marbled White
25. Grayling
26. Gatekeeper
27. Meadow Brown
28. Small Heath