

WINGSPAN BIRD TOURS

BIRD-WATCHING HOLIDAY TO THE

ISLES OF SCILLY



OCTOBER 6TH - 13th 2020

TRIP REPORT

Contact: info@wingspanbirdtours.com

PLACES VISITED

DAY 1 - TUESDAY 6th

MORNING WALK ON PENZANCE COASTAL PATH TO MARAZION – FLIGHT TO ST MARY'S – AFTERNOON WALK TO PENINNIS HEAD – OLD TOWN BAY – LOWER MOORS – PORTHLOO BEACH – TOWN BEACH

DAY 2 - WEDNESDAY 7th

PELAGIC TRIP AROUND THE ISLANDS AND 9 MILES NORTH/EAST – OLD TOWN BEACH – LOWER MOORS – PORTHLOO BEACH

DAY 3 - THURSDAY 8th

ALL DAY ON ST MARY'S WITH VISITS TO :- LONGSTONES- HOLY VALE- HIGHER MOORS – PORTH HELICK POOL – PORTH HELICK BEACH – DEEP POINT – MAYPOLE – LOWER MOORS – OLD TOWN BEACH – HUGH TOWN

DAY 4 - FRIDAY 9th

ALL DAY ON TRESKO WITH VISITS TO: GREAT POOL - CASTLE DOWN - ABBEY POOL - HELIPORT - CARN NEAR

DAY 5 - SATURDAY 10th

PORTHLOO BEACH - PORTHCRESSA BEACH – BOAT TRIP TO BRYHER – GREAT POPPLESTONE BAY – RETURN TO ST MARY'S – MAYPOLE – SANDY LANE – PORTHLOO BEACH

DAY 6 - SUNDAY 11th

THE GARRISON – BOAT TRIP TO ST MARTINS – HIGHER AND MIDDLE TOWN – RETURN TO ST MARY'S – LOWER MOORS – DUMP CLUMP

DAY 7 - MONDAY 12th

ST MARY'S ALL DAY – COSTAL PATH WALK FROM HUGH TOWN TO WATERMILL COVE – INLAND TO MAYPOLE AND CARREG DHU

DAY 8 - TUESDAY 13th

THE GARRISON, ST MARY'S – FLIGHT TO LANDS END, TRAIN TO YEOVIL

PARTICIPANTS:

PETER & DINAH FRANCIS, VICKY WOODWARD, GUY CAMPBELL, DEBBIE WILLIAMS AND BRENDA STREETON

LEADER: BOB BUCKLER – WINGSPAN BIRD TOURS

SUMMARY:

It was another classic 'Isles of Scilly in October' Tour with plenty of exciting rare birds to look for, a variety of weather conditions to cope with and the ever-present outstanding beauty and tranquillity of this special place to enjoy and admire.

We listed 110 species and we all saw well the **Swainson's Thrush**, **Pectoral Sandpiper**, **American Golden Plover**, we had glimpses of the **Red-eyed Vireo** and we all caught up with the regular uncommon migrants such as: **Red-backed Shrike**, **Lapland & Snow Bunting**, **Jack Snipe**, **Red-breasted Flycatcher** and the **Siberian Lesser Whitethroat**. The island had an unprecedented influx of **Yellow-browed Warblers** on October 11th/12th, we saw 9 during the last two days of our trip but a conservative estimate of over 100 flooded the islands.

Other birds of note that were present for a short time during our trip were: **Black-and-white Warbler**, **Arctic Warbler**, **Wryneck**, **Iceland Gull**, **Common Nightingale**, **Radd's** and **Dusky Warblers**.

The most interesting and rarest (for Scilly) species to visit the islands this autumn was in fact a **GREYLAG GOOSE!!!** Two arrived in late September with a group of **Pink-footed Geese** and stayed for the duration of our tour.

DAILY TRIP REPORT

DAY 1 – TUESDAY 6TH OCTOBER 2020

MORNING WALK ON PENZANCE COASTAL PATH TOWARDS MARAZION – FLIGHT TO ST MARY'S – AFTERNOON WALK TO PENINNIS HEAD – OLD TOWN BAY – LOWER MOORS – PORTHLOO BEACH – PORTH MELLON BEACH AND TOWN BEACH

WEATHER: sunshine and showers very windy all day, gusts up to 40mph. Temp 14C



early morning light over the bay at Penzance looking towards St Michael's Mount

Six of us had arrived in Penzance yesterday so we had plenty of time this morning for a stroll along the seafront before our 1:15pm flight to St Mary's. We met up at 8:30am outside our hotel. It wasn't too windy first thing and our walk along the coastal path from Penzance was really quite pleasant, it felt warm if you found shelter from the cool breeze. We saw all of the same birds as we had done during our pre-tour visit yesterday afternoon, namely: **Ruddy Turnstone, Eider Duck, Northern Gannet, Dunlin, Sanderling, Ringed Plover** and **Northern Wheatear**.

At 11:15 all six of us boarded a minibus to be taken to the airport where we met Vicky the final member of our group. Our flight was a few minutes late in departing and despite the strong winds it was a relatively smooth flight and landing.



Is the air hostess bowing to the WINGSPAN GROUP as we board?

Once we had checked into our Guest House and dropped off our luggage we set off for an afternoon walk. The wind was quite strong by then and we didn't hold much hope of seeing much. It was so good to step out once again onto these beautiful islands, the colours were stunning in the afternoon light, it was so good to be back.

On a bench facing Porthcressa Beach we found shelter as we sat and ate our picnic lunch whilst watching a number of species along the shore. **Oystercatchers** and **Turnstones** were sifting through the piles of seaweed whilst **Grey Herons** sat on Rocks, **Sandwich Terns** sat on buoys and juvenile **Herring Gulls** begged us for morsels of food. We also saw **Greenfinch**, **Chaffinch**, **Rock Pipit**, **Song Thrush**, lots of **Northern Gannets** and a few **European Shags**.



Sanderling and **Ringed Plover** taken on Penzance Beach

The walk to Peninnis Head was unpleasant at times because the wind was very strong, sometimes you could hardly stand up. We searched for a **Snow Bunting** and a **Ring Ouzel**, both of which were recent sightings, unsurprisingly we found neither.



the rugged coastline looking towards Peninnis headland

It was much more sheltered as we walked to Old Town Bay, we found **Little Egret**, **Eurasian Curlew** and a couple of **Common Greenshanks**, a family party of four **Common Stonechats** joined some **Starlings** and **Blackbirds** feeding in the washed up kelp weed, but there was not a lot else. The reeds and pools at Lower Moors were a bit of a dead loss, again the wind spoilt our enjoyment. Four **Eurasian Wigeon** sat asleep whilst a dozen **Mallards** milled about in the water. Both the hides were covid-shut. From the blind at Shooter's Pool we saw a **Common Chiffchaff** and we heard a **Goldcrest** but did not see it.



Eurasian Curlew taken in Old Town Bay

In a pond along Porthloo Lane we added **Moorhen** to our day list and on Porthloo Beach we scoped Taylor's Island where we could see a group of roosting birds. It was very hard to keep the scopes still in the windy conditions but we managed to find twenty **Black-headed Gulls**, over 20 **Oystercatchers**, a single **Whimbrel** sat fast asleep and a **Bar-tailed Godwit** mingled with the **Oystercatchers**.

We walked back into Hugh Town and that concluded our afternoon birding session, it was great to get into the guest house and out of the wind! Despite the windy conditions we saw a respectable 51 species, the wind is forecast to die down tomorrow, let's hope we can find something exciting!

DAY 2 – WEDNESDAY 7TH OCTOBER 2020

PELAGIC TRIP AROUND THE ISLANDS AND 9 MILES NORTH/EAST – OLD TOWN BEACH – LOWER MOORS – PORTHLOO BEACH

WEATHER: a lovely morning with high cloud, some sunshine and much less wind. From 2pm it rained lightly and consistently for 3 hours. Temp 11 -16C

A last minute decision was made to take the pelagic trip around the islands as we were told that there wouldn't be another one during our stay. It was a great trip with moderately calm seas and lots of birds to see, the whole of the group loved it, so I was pleased.



St Mary's Harbour

We started listing at St Mary's Harbour with 3 **Sandwich Terns** and as we set off we saw **Oystercatcher** in flight and **Turnstone** on the rocks. Our first new birds came in the shape of geese, there was a group of 6 **Pale-bellied Brent Geese** sitting on the water about ½ a mile out, we got fairly close to them before they flew off towards Tresco.



some of the group on-board the Sapphire,
face coverings were compulsory until we hit the high seas

We sailed past Samson, and a few rocky outcrops, specifically Green Island where a **Eurasian Spoonbill** usually roosts, unfortunately today we did not see it. We did find **Grey Plover**, **Eurasian Curlew**, more **Oystercatchers**, **Turnstones** and dozens and dozens of **European Shags**. We sailed close to the shore along a couple of beaches on Tresco looking for more waders, we picked out **Bar-tailed Godwits** and nothing more that was new for our list. **Grey Herons** and **Little Egrets** were dotted all over the place with the former being far more common than the latter. **Grey Seals** bobbed their heads up and down from the surface of the water in many places like discarded buoys.



rocky islands were strewn with Shags, Waders and Herons

Once out onto the open ocean we were allowed to remove our face-masks and really enjoy the ocean, the crew started feeding the gulls from the rear of the boat and soon we had an entourage of many birds. Over the next three hours we enjoyed great views of several new species and with a relatively calm sea-state, we could stand up without being thrown overboard.



Northern Gannet

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A steady string of new species arrived behind the boat and we found many sitting on the water, **Guillemots** were fairly regular sightings and a single **Puffin** was an excellent find. Large numbers of **Gannets** were always in view and they were joined by **Fulmars**, **Kittiwakes** and all the common species of Gull except for **Lesser Black-backed Gull**. A single juvenile **Mediterranean Gull** appeared a couple of times before the real goodies started to appear.

I think there was 5 sightings of **European Storm Petrel**, we saw three of them, the same happened with **Manx Shearwaters**, we saw one of the two sightings. However, we did see both of the **SOOTY SHEARWATERS** that appeared, one of them came very close to the boat as did one of the 4 **Great Skuas**, that appeared.



Fulmar

Four hours quickly went by and before we knew it we turned and headed back towards the islands, we added **Common Dolphin** to the list and some of the group saw a **Risso's Dolphin**.

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As we neared the islands we could see a dark cloud-mass sitting over them so we guessed that we were in for a soaking. The last hour was quite miserable with drizzling rain spoiling our birding somewhat. We did however, pick up two new species on the way back, we had a single **Razorbill** sighting and a **Great Northern Diver**, everyone saw the latter.

Once back on terra firma we headed back to the guest house to eat our picnic lunch and by 3pm we were back out. During our absence a few goodies had turned up on the islands, the best were: **ARCTIC WARBLER**, **RED-EYED VIREO** and a **SWAINSON'S THRUSH**, wow!! We had time to look for the **Swainson's Thrush** as it was found on St Mary's, we were encouraged by the news of a recent relocation of the bird in Old Town.

We marched over to Old town and joined about 20 other birders spread out around a small copse, but after 30 minutes of standing in the rain the bird did not show and most of the group were cold and fed up, so we split up. I continued with two of the group and the other four went back to the guest house.



Bar-tailed Godwit - below you can see how it uses its long bill to its full extent



The three of us waited a little while longer before walking along Old Town Beach where we saw a **Greenshank** and then through Lower Moors where we saw nothing. In fact, the only birds we saw as we walked out to Porthloo Beach and then back to Hugh town were **Blue Tits**, **Great Tits**, a single **Goldcrest** and a **Moorhen**. On the beach at Porthloo we added **Bar-tailed Godwit** and a **White Wagtail** to our day list.

It had definitely been a day of two halves, lets hope the new arrivals stay until tomorrow at least!!

DAY 3 – THURSDAY 8TH OCTOBER 2020

ALL DAY ON ST MARY'S WITH VISITS TO :- LONGSTONES- HOLY VALE- HIGHER MOORS – PORTH HELICK POOL – PORTH HELICK BEACH – DEEP POINT – MAYPOLE – LOWER MOORS – OLD TOWN BEACH – HUGH TOWN

WEATHER; dull and cloudy to start with, some light rain, then it cleared into a wonderful bright day.
Top Temp 16C

It was a long and enjoyable day, lots of sightings, lots of walking and several very tired birders at the end of it. We set off in dull light and walked up to Longstones where we saw the 6 **Pink Footed Geese** that had been around for a few days, we also watched **Linnet**s, a single **Blackcap** and we heard **Common Crossbills** flying over but we did not see them.

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Two of the six **Pink-footed Geese** seen at Longstones

As we walked further along the track towards the Holy Vale we saw a single **GREYLAG GOOSE** fly over (**Greylag Geese** are very rarely seen on the Isles of Scilly and are much rarer than most birds currently present on the islands). Once we got into the wooded area of the Holy Vale we spent some time scanning the tree canopy for any movement, we saw **Blue Tit** and **Great Tit**, **Wren** and **Blackbird** before we found a **Common Chiffchaff** and then a **Spotted Flycatcher**. A little more perseverance produced another flycatcher found by Guy, this was a **Pied Flycatcher** and not the hoped for **Red-breasted Flycatcher**.

Before we moved on, Debbie mentioned a Moorhen-type bird she had seen skulking in the undergrowth, her description of the bird was perfect for **Spotted Crane**, but we never saw it again so we had to leave it off the list. At the end of Holy Vale we burst out of the wood and found ourselves in a reedy marsh area with stands of willow, this area is known as Higher Moors. We knew a **Yellow-browed Warbler** had been seen in the willows recently and that is where Guy relocated it. We all had great views of this little beauty.

From the same area we scanned a hillside and found two **Whinchats**, a **Stonechat** and another **Blackcap**. The track continued towards Porth Hellick Beach, we stopped at a place on a boardwalk where we could see some of the western end of Porth Hellick Pool and it was there that we found an American wader, the **PECTORAL SANDPIPER**, we all had good scope views of it and we also

found 5 **Common Snipe**, 2 **Eurasian Teal** and a **Mallard**. We heard a **Cetti's Warbler** and a **Water Rail** during the next part of the walk.



the hides are closed on ST Mary's so we had to scope this American visitor from the boardwalk -
Pectoral Sandpiper

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The very picturesque Porthellick Beach was a joy to look at, for me it is one of the most beautiful places on St Mary's. We watched **Oystercatchers**, **Turnstones**, **Greenshank**, **Ringed Plover**, **Shag** and a few **Gannets** were seen out at sea.



part of Porthellick beach - this photograph does not do it justice

The coastal path leads up to an ancient burial chamber and that is where we sat and ate our picnic lunch, it was another lovely site with commanding views all around, a very fitting place to be buried. Scanning the coastal path we found a bunch of **Meadow Pipits**, **Goldfinches**, **Linnets** and we

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picked out 3 **Northern Wheatears**. A **Raven** called as it flew towards Porth Hellick, the **Greylag Goose** flew over once more and 3 **Crossbills** called loudly as they dashed across the top of a row of pines.

We climbed up to the top of the hill over-looking Deep Point and it was Brenda who spotted a pod of **Harbour Porpoise**, there was about 12 of them. They had a large entourage of **Gannets** following them.



my group of six - L to R Brenda, Debbie, Guy, Dinah, Vicky and Peter

For the next hour we made our way back to Lower Moors by taking the main road that circles the island, we saw few birds during this period of the day, a **Common Kestrel** was the most noteworthy. By the time we reached the entrance to Lower Moors some of the group were very tired and they decided to leave us, the rest of us ploughed on, we found a couple of **Goldcrests** in the willow bushes and that was all.



This is the **Hornet Hoverfly** a female (*Volucella Zonaria*) - it is a continental species that is rapidly colonising southern Britain due to global warming. It mimics the hornet to protect itself from predators, it is harmless and does not sting. Photo taken by Guy.

At the Old Town 'end' of Lower Moors we joined a group of birders that was staking out a row of bushes hoping for a sighting of yesterday's star bird, the **SWAINSON'S THRUSH**. Luckily for me the bird showed and was visible from where I was standing, but unfortunately the other four members of the group were a little too far to the left of the main group and so they missed it. The bird did not show again whilst we were there.



a sleeping **Common Snipe** seen at Porthellick Pool

Walking back up the hill from Old Town Church towards Hugh Town we found yet another **Goldcrest** and to our great delight we found another **Yellow-browed Warbler**, very soon a small crowd appeared around us and so we moved on. It had been a long day with plenty of walking, we were all tired. We had a lovely dinner at the guest house, a cold beer went down a treat, and so did an early night.

DAY 4 – FRIDAY 9TH OCTOBER 2020

ALL DAY ON TRESCO WITH VISITS TO: GREAT POOL - CASTLE DOWN - ABBEY POOL - HELIPORT - CARN NEAR

WEATHER: it was much colder today, with a moderate wind and bright spells, a few short showers. Temp 12C

An early boat left St Mary's Quay today with us onboard, the boat was full of hopeful and expectant birders all anticipating a view of the magnificent **BLACK-AND-WHITE WARBLER** that had been seen by so many yesterday on Tresco. We saw nothing much on the way over except for sea-spray which soaked a few of us.

From the quay at New Grimsby on Tresco it was a short walk to Pool Lane where the American Warbler had been seen yesterday, there was about 45 'birders' on the boat and they all spread out along the Lane, staking out positions where hopefully the warbler would appear next.



the Great pool viewed from the David Hunt hide

We went straight into the Swarovski Hide for a quick scan of the Great Pool where we saw a few new species for the Scilly list, including **Gadwall**, **Common Pochard**, **Coot** and **Mute Swan**. We also noted **Mallard**, **Grey Heron**, **Common Snipe**, **Moorhen**, **Greenshank** and **Redshank**, the latter was also our first sighting on Scilly.



part of Pool Lane where **THE** Warbler was found yesterday

We then spent some time searching for the **Black-and-White Warbler**, it was quite sheltered from the wind along the lane and when the sun came out it was quite warm too. We found **Chiffchaff**, **Goldcrest** and all the common garden birds but there wasn't a sniff of the B&W Warbler.

Before we left Pool Lane we watched a **Sparrowhawk**, a **Common Kestrel** and a **Peregrine Falcon**, the falcon chased off the **Kestrel** or tried to catch it. Later we did see the Peregrine try to catch a **Wood Pigeon**, but it failed to do so.

Next we decided to walk up to Castle Down where an **American Golden Plover** had been frequenting for the last few days, it was a bit of a hard walk up to the Down with the wind in our faces but it remained sunny. We found the Plover, it was sitting with three **Eurasian Golden Plover** and showed very well once we got into the correct position.



the **American Golden Plover** with two **Eurasian Golden Plovers**

We walked further on the Down looking for a **Lapland Bunting** without success and later we learned that a **Snow Bunting** was also found up there. It was a big area with very few birders milling about. The views were magnificent and the scenery just superb, the exquisite light lifted the colours when the sun came out.



Speckled Wood

We decided to eat our picnic lunch in the shelter of some rocks whilst enjoying the scenery, during lunch we saw **Rock Pipit, Wren, Meadow Pipit, Northern Gannet** and a **Whimbrel** flew along the shore calling loudly.

During our return to Pool Lane we noted a few butterflies on the wing, we saw: **Speckled Wood, Small Copper, Red Admiral** and **Large White**. Along the lane we also found a **Red Squirrel** which delighted the group. We sat in the David Hunt Hide hoping for a view of a reported **SPOTTED CRAKE** but apparently it had not been seen today, we did hear a **Water Rail**.



the view from our lunch spot

The next hour was spent walking slowly back to Carn Near, where a concrete jetty was our pick up point, a few of us went over for a quick look at the Abbey Pool and the Heliport, neither of which produced anything new.



a view across to Bryher from Castle Down on Tresco

The journey back was much smoother, none of us got wet and we did see **Sandwich Terns** and a couple of **Mediterranean Gulls** which went onto the day list. It was 4 pm when we got back to the Guest House, most of the group went to their rooms for a rest, we had walked 5 1/2 miles today on hilly ground for the most part.



a nice find on Tresco was this Red Squirrel

Three of us ventured out to a nearby spot but added nothing new to the Scilly List and we quickly returned for a nice hot chocolate drink.

DAY 5 – SATURDAY 10TH OCTOBER 2020

PORTHLOO BEACH - PORTHCRESSA BEACH – BOAT TRIP TO BRYHER – GREAT POPPLESTONE BAY – RETURN TO ST MARY’S – MAYPOLE – SANDY LANE – PORTHLOO BEACH

WEATHER: a chilly day with a cold wind, but bright and sunny for most of the day, cloudy late afternoon.

We had a measure of success today, at last, with some nice additions to our list. Our first port of call was Porthloo Beach where a **Black Redstart** had been noted for the last couple of days and we hoped to see it. The wader numbers on the beach had increased, dozens of **Oystercatchers**, **Ruddy Turnstones** and a couple of **Bar-tailed Godwits** were now joined by a small group of 4 **Sanderlings** which was a nice addition to our list. We never found the **Redstart**.



the view from Porthloo Beach looking back to Hugh Town Harbour

Before walking around to the quay to catch a ferry-boat to Bryher we visited Porthcressa Beach, out on some rocks in the bay we found 3 **Sandwich Terns** and two **Mediterranean Gulls** with **Herring** and **Great Black-backed Gulls**. The ubiquitous **Oystercatchers** were strewn across the shoreline with **Ruddy Turnstones** and a couple of **Shags** were feeding out in the middle of the bay and **Gannets** were ever-present out to sea.



a Sanderling - a new species for our Scilly List seen on Porthloo beach

Our destination today was going to be St Martins, but as we walked towards the quay to catch the ferry-boat, news broke that a **SWAINSON'S THRUSH** had been found on Bryher. The group voted unanimously to take the boat to Bryher, which consequently, was packed with over 50 other birders all with the same intention, face-masked were compulsory during all boat trips.



Great Popplestone Bay on Bryher

During the speedy trip across to Bryher we noted a group of 8 **Pale-bellied Brent Geese**, **Grey Herons**, **Little Egrets**, **Curlews** and dozens of **European Shags**. Before too long we were on the jetty at Bryher and marching up and over the hill to Great Popplestone, a picturesque bay, on the other side of this small island.

We joined a throng of other birders, social distancing was maintained as much as possible and 90% of the birders wore their face-masks as we did. Over the next hour we had excellent views of the **SWAINSON'S THRUSH**, it was very showy, but at a distance of about 50 meters. The group had frustration at first but all them eventually had good views in the scope, it was so pleasing after our three failed attempts to see this species on St Mary's.



A phone-scoped picture of the **Swainson's Thrush**

It was just after 12 noon when we came away from the 'twitch' we walked a short distance and found a sheltered spot to eat our picnic lunch. During lunch we noted **Common Kestrel**, **Meadow Pipit**, **Common Stonechat** and several other common species. Before we returned to the quay we stopped at 'Fraggle Rock' Cafe for a quick hot drink.



our view from Faggie Rock Cafe across to Tresco

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The return boat left the quay at 2:15pm and we made sure that we were near the front of the queue, from the quayside we scope the rocks in the Tresco Channel and found **Greenshanks** with all the common waders, we searched for an **ICELAND GULL** which had been seen earlier without success.



the queue for the returning boats to St Mary's from Bryher

Our packed boat left on time, we added **Eurasian Spoonbill** to the list along the way whilst a second boat behind us, carrying those from the back of the queue saw the **ICELAND GULL** (sometimes it pays to be last).

Once we were back on St Mary's we decided to march up to Maypole to look for a **Red-backed Shrike**, we spent a good ½ an hour walking up there and then a further ½ hour looking for the bird. Finally, we saw it, it was distance but a **Red-backed Shrike** went onto our list, hooray! During our vigil we noted 3 **Crossbills**, a **Sparrowhawk** and lots of **House Sparrows** and **Common Starlings**.

From Maypole we walked down a steep lane to Holy Vale and then up a steep, dirt track called Sandy Lane. From a five-barred gate we watched a **LAPLAND BUNTING** feeding alone in a grass meadow. Well, that was mission accomplished, we walked back to Hugh Town, first along Sandy Lane which took us to the main road at Rose Cottage. This cottage has a unique hedge around it because the hedge was known to harbour a colony of **UNARMED STICK INSECTS**, we saw 3 of them, a green one and two brown ones.

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Stick Insects at Rose Cottage



In the field opposite Rose Cottage was a gaggle of geese, 7 **Pink-footed Geese** and a **Greylag Goose**, some people often scoff at Greylag sightings because so many are domesticated. However, on the rarity scale for the Isles of Scilly, the Greylag is a much rarer sighting than the **Swainson's Thrush!!!**



Ringed Plover seen on Porthloo Beach

At Porthloo Lane the group split up and only three of us went to Porthloo Beach for a second attempt at seeing the **Black Redstart**, the others went back to the guest house. We failed once again to see the Redstart but the waders on the beach were terrific to watch. We saw 8 **Sanderlings**, 3 **Ringed Plover**, a single **Dunlin**, two **Bar-tailed Godwits**, two **Curlews** and good numbers of **Oystercatchers** and **Turnstones**.



Bar-tailed Godwit seen on Porthloo Beach

The light began to fade, so we returned to the guest house at 6:30pm. Dinner was taken at 8 in the Atlantic Hotel in Hugh Town, this was because our hosts do not serve dinner on Saturdays, Sundays or Mondays.

DAY 6 – SUNDAY 11TH OCTOBER 2020

THE GARRISON – BOAT TRIP TO ST MARTINS – HIGHER AND MIDDLE TOWN – RETURN TO ST MARY'S – LOWER MOORS – DUMP CLUMP

WEATHER: still a cold wind, but it remained dry all day, cloudy at first but sunny spells later. Temp 12C

The Garrison is a huge fortification that sits on the hill above Hugh Town it takes just five minutes to walk up there, there are cannons mounted at many stations, pointing in all directions, a formidable place. A **Siberian Lesser Whitethroat** has taken up temporary accommodation along the south face so we marched up there to look for it.



view of Tresco from St Martins

Having walked past the 'Whitethroat site' we unwittingly discovered a large section of the Garrison before we realised our mistake, so we marched back to almost the beginning of our walk and found the correct place. Within minutes the bird appeared, it showed fleetingly and not very well two or three times. We also saw **Blackcap, Wren, Robin, Song Thrush** and **Blackbird** in the same area.

From the Garrison we walked down to the quay to catch a boat to St Martins, quite a few of other people had the same idea, the first boat was full and only three of us got on it, but a second boat followed immediately afterwards. We watched a **Peregrine** and a smaller falcon, which was possibly a **Merlin**, during the crossing and we added **Common Scoter** to the list.



it was so clear that you see the Cornish Coastline from St Martins

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Once on dry land we all met up on the quay and walked to Middle Town to a stand of pines where a **RED-EYED VIREO** had been seen over the last three days. We saw many **Goldcrests** in the pines it was full of them and during sunny spells we saw a few butterflies, such as, **Peacock, Red Admiral, Speckled Wood** and **Small White**.

After about an hour some of the group wandered off to find a coffee, two of us stayed and you can guess what happened next! The bird started showing, a beautiful **Red-eyed Vireo** was seen very well, especially by Guy. The picture below was taken by a birder standing just in front of me.



back of camera view of the **Red-eyed Vireo** taken by Austin Morely

We all met at the Seven Stones Pub for a coffee and then spent another hour looking for the VIREO for a second time, but alas it did not show again. So, we wandered off birding the tracks and trails as we made our way back to the quay at Higher Town. We saw many common species and we searched the small fields for pipits and finches and the hedges for warblers but we came up with nothing new for the list.



some of our group walking across the cricket pitch on St Martins

During the return boat trip we saw two **Mediterranean Gulls** a few **Grey Seals**, a **Greenshank** flew over the boat and many **Oystercatchers**, **Shags** and **Ruddy Turnstones** sat on the rocks.

Throughout the day many reports of sightings were coming through of **YELLOW-BROWED WARBLERS**, it seemed that the islands were crammed packed with them. A conservative estimate was of 50-60 on St Mary's alone!!! That was amazing and unprecedented.



two pictures of **Yellow-browed Warbler** taken through the scope with my Samsung s8+ phone



Our late afternoon walk was to look for **Jack Snipe**, two of them had been sighted at Lower Moors, so that is where we headed. It was 4pm when we set off, Lower Moors is a 15 minute walk from our Guest House. Along the trail into the Moors we found 3 **Yellow Browed Warblers** and a couple of **Goldcrests**. From the 'blind' next to the hide at the first pool we saw the two **JACK SNIPE** with two **Common Snipe**, the group marvelled at the 'bobbing' action of the **Jack Snipe**, they looked like clockwork toys. We also heard **Water Rail** but did not see one.

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Jack Snipe taken at Lower Moors

On the way back we took a small detour to look for a **Common Nightingale** which had been 'resident' in an area near the local dump for the last week, it had shown well earlier today. We never saw the Nightingale, I think it was too late in the day, but we did see another two **Yellow-browed Warblers**.



Jack Snipe and **Common Snipe** - need I point out which is which?

Tomorrow is our last full day, we intend to stay on St Marys and look for a few species missing from our list such as **Wryneck**, **Barred Warbler** and **Snow Bunting**.

DAY 7 – MONDAY 12TH OCTOBER 2020

ST MARY'S ALL DAY – COSTAL PATH WALK FROM HUGH TOWN TO WATERMILL COVE – INLAND TO MAYPOLE AND CARREG DHU

WEATHER: pretty miserable for most of the day, dull & cloudy, thick mist, drizzling rain driven by a brisk wind. Temp 10C

This was our longest walk so far, we covered 8.5 miles and most of it was along the rugged coastline in very poor weather conditions, hence our bird list was pretty poor too. We set off from Porthcressa Beach and headed out to Peninnis Head to look for a **Snow Bunting**, but we never saw it, we found **Common Stonechat**, **Northern Wheatear** and lots of **Meadow Pipits**. Having left Peninnis Head we walked towards Old Town Bay, a message came through that the **Snow Bunting** was showing again so we climbed back up the rugged path for a second attempt. This time we got the bird, but it did not show well and kept mostly hidden behind the rocks.



the foggy start to the day, you cannot even see the airport above Old Town Bay

Our walk through Old Town and out to the airport produced very little until we walked past the end of the runway, no planes were flying today because of the abysmal weather. Just passed the runway there is a large area of gorse and heather, a small heathland, that is where we found a **Ring Ouzel**, we only had two short views of it and we heard it call so that was enough. We also found more **Wheatears** and **Pipits**.



my motley crew

In Porth Hellick we sat in the shelter of a row of pine trees and ate our lunch, a couple of **Goldcrests** flitted about above us whilst we ate. Walking along Porth Hellick beach we scanned

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the fresh water pool behind the beach and found **Common Snipe**, **Eurasian Wigeon**, **Moorhen**, **Mallard** and we heard a **Cetti's Warbler** calling several times.

The walk from the Porth Hellick to Deep Point was much more pleasant as the rain stopped and we were out of the wind, we spent a while in a disused quarry looking for a **Wryneck** that did not appear, but we did find two **Whimbrels** on the rocks below us a little further along the coastline.



a dry time - this is where we found the **Ring Ouzel**

The rain returned as we approached Watermill Cove it was a relief to head inland and find shelter below the trees. Over the next hour we walked to Newford Ponds and onto to Maypole. At the ponds we found a **Yellow-browed Warbler** and the usual dodgy ducks called loudly hoping to be fed. Just before Maypole we looked into a field and found our second **Lapland Bunting** of the trip. This one was much more obliging as it fed just twenty meters from us.



one of the two **Whimbrels** seen on the rocks near Watermill Cove

At Maypole we spent a little time looking for the almost 'resident' **Red-backed Shrike**, Guy missed it during our last visit and he missed it again this time. Debbie and I were only ones to carry scopes today and the bird only showed fleetingly, you needed a scope to see it. We did see a flock of **Siskins** flying around and Guy heard **Crossbills** once again.

Before we stopped at Carreg Dhu Gardens Guy found yet another **Yellow-browed Warbler**. In the gardens at Carreg Dhu we looked for a **Firecrest** that had been reported earlier today but nothing showed except a very tame **Blackbird** with a broken wing, it would feed from your hand, I am sure the same bird was there last and the year before.



Lapland Bunting seen at Borough Farm near Maypole

We arrived back in Hugh Town around 6pm, it had been a long day and long walk, we were all tired, we ate dinner in town, everyone recovered as we ate, we had a nice relaxing drink before retiring at 10pm. Our last day was over but we still had time for one last excursion tomorrow before our 1pm flight.

DAY 8 – TUESDAY 13TH OCTOBER 2020

THE GARRISON ST MARY'S – FLIGHT TO LANDS END, TRAIN TO YEOVIL

WEATHER: dry with sunny spells, windy again. Temp. 14C

Our last morning was as exciting as our first and my group was just as enthusiastic as that first afternoon when we arrived. There is always something good to see on Scilly and today was no exception. A **RED-BREASTED FLYCATCHER** had been found on the Garrison which is just a few minutes' walk from our guest house, so we opted to go and look for that. The path takes you along the Lower Broom battlements which overlook Hugh Town, large bastions project from the defensive wall, they are strewn with ancient cannons that offered excellent protection in all directions in years gone by. As we walked through an area of woodland along the wall we heard **Yellow-browed Warblers** and **Goldcrests**, we saw three of each over the next 15 minutes.

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Looking from the Garrison over Hugh Town

The Flycatcher stakeout was manned by a dozen or so birders who had seen the bird not 10 minutes ago, we joined them for a while before moving back along the path to a more sheltered area. Over the next 30 minutes we had lots of sightings of the **RED-BREASTED FLYCATCHER**, some were excellent views and some were fleeting glimpses, but eventually all of the group had it in their bins, a great result.



Hugh Town and Porthcressa Beach seen from the garrison Wall

In addition to the flycatcher there was a **Siberian Lesser Whitethroat** (blythi) still showing on the other end of the garrison, we had all seen it before except for Brenda, so we walked round to the

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site near the Pottery and stood in anticipation. We didn't have to wait long, the bird showed in the same place as before and this time we had better views and even Brenda got it in her bins.



a **Stonechat** and a rainbow

Whilst watching the **Whitethroat** a message came through of a **Ring Ouzel** sighting back at Lower Broom so we walked back round there in the hope of seeing it. We had even better views of the **Red-breasted Flycatcher** and of two more **Yellow-browed Warblers** but the **Ring Ouzel** did not re-appear whilst we were there.

Our time was soon up, we had to walk back to the guest house, load our luggage onto the minibus and set off for the airport. The flight was on time and we landed perfectly, a heavy rain shower greeted us as we disembarked and gave us a soaking, perhaps a reminder that we had been spoilt somewhat over the last few days as far as the weather was concerned.



my last photograph of the trip - a **Ruddy Turnstone** outside the train station at Penzance

We said our goodbyes at Penzance, the group disbanded, the trip was over. Our bird tally was typically around 100 species including half a dozen excellent rare or uncommon birds. The tranquillity, the colours and the magnificent scenery of the Isles of Scilly was enjoyed by all and along with our bird sightings made for a wonderful trip. I love the Isles of Scilly and will most definitely return next year for another wonderful autumn break, come and join me!

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CHECKLIST OF SPECIES:

110 SPECIES OF BIRDS WERE RECORDED AND ARE LISTED BELOW:

X = seen by one or more of the group

X* = seen on the mainland during transition to/from Penzance to St. Mary's

H = heard only

LO = seen by the leader only

	SPECIES	SCIENTIFIC NAME	6 TH	7 TH	8 TH	9 TH	10 TH	11 TH	12 TH	13 TH
	ANSERIFORMES: Anatidae									
1	Pale-bellied Brent Goose	<i>Brenta bernicla/hrota</i>		X			X			
2	Greylag Goose	<i>Anser anser</i>			X		X			
3	Pink-footed Goose	<i>Anser brachyrhynchus</i>			X		X			
4	Mute Swan	<i>Cygnus olor</i>	X*			X				
5	Common Shelduck	<i>Tadorna tadorna</i>		X			X			
6	Gadwall	<i>Anas strepera</i>				X				
7	Eurasian Wigeon	<i>Anas penelope</i>	X		X	X			X	
8	Mallard	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
9	Eurasian Teal	<i>Anas crecca</i>								
10	Common Pochard	<i>Aythya ferina</i>				X	X			
11	Common Eider Duck	<i>Somaterla mollissima</i>	X*							
12	Common Scoter	<i>Melanitta nigra</i>						LO		
	GALLIFORMES: Phasianidae									
13	Common Pheasant	<i>Phasianus colchicus</i>			X	X	X	X		
	COLUMBIFORMES: Columbidae									
14	Rock Dove/Feral Pigeon	<i>Columba livia</i>	X		X	X	X	X	X	X
15	Common Woodpigeon	<i>Columba palumbus</i>	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
16	Stock Dove	<i>Columbus oenus</i>	X						X	
17	Eurasian Collared Dove	<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
	GRUIFORMES: Rallidae									
18	Water Rail	<i>Rallus aquaticus</i>			H	H		H		
19	Common Moorhen	<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>	X	X	X	X			X	
20	Eurasian Coot	<i>Fulica atra</i>				X				
	GAVIIFORMES: Gaviidae									
21	Great Northern Diver	<i>Gavia immer</i>		X						
	PROCELLARIIFORMES: Hydrobatidae									
22	European Storm Petrel	<i>Hydrobates pelagicus</i>		X						
	PROCELLARIIFORMES: Procellariidae									
23	Fulmar	<i>Fulmaris glacialis</i>		X						
24	Manx Shearwater	<i>Puffinus puffinus</i>		X						
25	Sooty Shearwater	<i>Puffinus griseus</i>		X						
	PELECANIFORMES: Ardeidae									
26	Grey Heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>	X	X		X	X	X	X	X
27	Little Egret	<i>Egretta garzetta</i>	X	X		X	X			
	PELECANIFORMES: Threskiornithidae									

28	Eurasian Spoonbill	<i>Platalea leucorodia</i>					X			
	PELECANIFORMES: Sulidae									
29	Northern Gannet	<i>Morus bassanus</i>	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
	PELECANIFORMES: Phalacrocoracidae									
30	European Shag	<i>Phalacrocorax aristotelis</i>	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
31	Great Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>	X*				X		X	
	CHARADRIIFORMES: Haematopodidae									
32	Oystercatcher	<i>Haematopus ostralegus</i>	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
	CHARADRIIFORMES: Charadriidae									
33	Grey Plover	<i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>		X						
34	Eurasian Golden Plover	<i>Pluvialis apricaria</i>				X				
35	American Golden Plover	<i>Pluvialis dominicus</i>				X				
36	Common Ringed Plover	<i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>	X*	X	X		X	X		
	CHARADRIIFORMES: Scolopacidae									
37	Whimbrel	<i>Numenius phaeopus</i>	X			X			X	
38	Eurasian Curlew	<i>Numenius arquata</i>	X	X			X			
39	Bar-tailed Godwit	<i>Limosa lapponica</i>	X	X			X			
40	Ruddy Turnstone	<i>Arenaria interpres</i>	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
41	Sanderling	<i>Calidris alba</i>	X*					X		
42	Dunlin	<i>Calidris alpina</i>	X*					X		
43	Pectoral Sandpiper	<i>Calidris melanotos</i>			X					
44	Common Snipe	<i>Gallinago gallinago</i>			X	X		X	X	
45	Jack Snipe	<i>Lymnocyrtus minimus</i>						X		
46	Common Greenshank	<i>Tringa nebularia</i>	X	X	X	X	X	X		
47	Common Redshank	<i>Tringa tetanus</i>				X				
	CHARADRIIFORMES: Alcidae									
48	Common Guillemot	<i>Uria aalge</i>		X						
49	Razorbill	<i>Alca torda</i>		X						
50	(Atlantic) Puffin	<i>Fratecula arctica</i>		X						
	CHARADRIIFORMES: Stercorariidae									
51	Great Skua	<i>Stercorarius skua</i>		X						
	CHARADRIIFORMES: Laridae									
52	Black-legged Kittiwake	<i>Rissa tridactyla</i>		X				X		
53	Black-headed Gull	<i>Larus ridibundus</i>	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
54	Mediterranean Gull	<i>Larus melanocephalus</i>		X		X	X	X		
55	Lesser Black-backed Gull	<i>Larus fuscus</i>	X						X	
56	Herring Gull	<i>Larus argentatus</i>	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
57	Great Black-backed Gull	<i>Larus marinus</i>	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
58	Sandwich Tern	<i>Sterna sandvicensis</i>	X	X		X	X	X		
	ACCIPITRIFORMES: Accipitridae									
59	Eurasian Sparrowhawk	<i>Accipiter nisus</i>				X	X		X	
60	Common Buzzard	<i>Buteo buteo</i>								X*
	CORACIIFORMES: Alcedinidae									
61	Common Kingfisher	<i>Alcedo atthis</i>			X					
	FALCONIFORMES: Falconidae									
62	Common Kestrel	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>	X*		X	X	X	X		X*
63	Merlin	<i>Falco columbarius</i>							X	
64	Peregrine Falcon	<i>Falco peregrinus</i>				X		X		

	PASSERIFORMES: Vireonidae									
65	Red-eyed Vireo	<i>Vireo olivaceus</i>						X		
	PASSERIFORMES: Laniidae									
66	Red-backed Shrike	<i>Lanius collurio</i>					X		X	
	PASSERIFORMES: Corvidae									
67	Common Magpie	<i>Pica pica</i>	X*							X*
68	Eurasian Jackdaw	<i>Corvus monedula</i>	X*							X*
69	Rook	<i>Corvus frugilegus</i>	X*							
70	Common Raven	<i>Corvus corax</i>			X					
71	Carrion Crow	<i>Corvus corone</i>	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
72	Hooded Crow	<i>Corvus cornix</i>	LO							
	PASSERIFORMES: Prunellidae									
73	Dunnock	<i>Prunella modularis</i>	X		X	X	X	X	X	X
	PASSERIFORMES: Passeridae									
74	House Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
	PASSERIFORMES: Motacillidae									
75	Meadow Pipit	<i>Anthus prtaensis</i>	X		X	X	X	X	X	
76	Rock Pipit	<i>Anthus petrosus</i>	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
77	Grey Wagtail	<i>Motacilla cinerea</i>						X		
78	White/Pied Wagtail	<i>Motacilla alba/yarellii</i>		X	X			X	X	
	PASSERIFORMES: Fringillidae									
79	Common Chaffinch	<i>Fringilla coelebs</i>	X							
80	European Greenfinch	<i>Carduelis chloris</i>	X	X	X			X	X	
81	Eurasian Linnet	<i>Carduelis cannabina</i>	X		X	X	X	X	X	
82	European Goldfinch	<i>Carduelis carduelis</i>	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
83	Siskin	<i>Carduellis spinus</i>							X	
84	Common Crossbill	<i>Loxia curvirostra</i>			H				X	
	PASSERIFORMES: Calcariidae									
85	Lapland Longspur	<i>Calcarius lapponicus</i>					X		X	
86	Snow Bunting	<i>Plectrophenax nivalis</i>							X	
	PASSERIFORMES: Paridae									
87	Blue Tit	<i>Cyanistes caeruleus</i>		X	X	X	X	X	X	X
88	Great Tit	<i>Parus major excelsus</i>		X	X	X		X	X	X
	PASSERIFORMES: Hirundinidae									
89	House Martin	<i>Delichon urbicum</i>	LO							
90	Barn Swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>	X	X	X	X			X	X
91	Sand Martin	<i>Riparia riparia</i>	X		X					
	PASSERIFORMES: Phylloscopidae									
92	Yellow-browed Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus inornatus</i>			X			X	X	X
93	Common Chiffchaff	<i>Phylloscopus collybita</i>	X		X	X			H	X
	PASSERIFORMES: Scotocercidae									
94	Cetti's Warbler	<i>Cettia cetti</i>			H				H	
	PASSERIFORMES: Sylviida									
95	Blackcap	<i>Sylvia atricapilla</i>			X			X		X
96	(Sibe) Lesser Whitethroat	<i>Sylvia curruca/blythi</i>						X		X
	PASSERIFORMES: Regulidae									
97	Goldcrest	<i>Regulus regulus</i>	H	X	X	X		X	X	
	PASSERIFORMES: Troglodytidae									

98	Eurasian Wren	<i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
	PASSERIFORMES: Sturnidae									
99	Common Starling	<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
	PASSERIFORMES: Muscicapidae									
100	Spotted Flycatcher	<i>Muscicapa striata</i>			X					
101	European Robin	<i>Erithacus rubecula</i>	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
102	Red-breasted Flycatcher	<i>Ficedula parva</i>								X
103	European Pied Flycatcher	<i>Ficedula hypoleuca</i>			X					
104	Whinchat	<i>Saxicola rubetra</i>			X					
105	Common Stonechat	<i>Saxicola torquata</i>	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
106	Northern Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe oenanthe</i>	X*		X				X	
	PASSERIFORMES: Turdidae									
107	Swainson's Thrush	<i>Catharus ustulatus</i>			LO		X			
108	Song Thrush	<i>Turdus philomelos</i>	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
109	Eurasian Blackbird	<i>Turdus merula</i>	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
110	Ring Ouzel	<i>Turdus torquatus</i>							X	
BUTTERFLIES-MAMMALS-CETACEANS-REPTILES – AMPHIBIANS – AND OTHER INTERESTING SPECIES										
111	Speckled Wood	<i>Pararge aegeria</i>	X							
112	Holly Blue	<i>Celastrina argiolus</i>	X							
113	Large White	<i>Pieris brassicae</i>	X							
114	Small White	<i>Pieris rapae</i>	X							
115	Red Admiral	<i>Vanessa vulcania</i>	X							
116	Peacock	<i>Aglais io</i>	X							
117	Small Copper	<i>Lycaena phlaeas</i>	X							
118										
119	Rabbit	<i>Oryctolagus cuniculus</i>	X							
120	Brown Rat	<i>Rattus norvegicus</i>	X							
121	Red Squirrel	<i>Sciurus vulgaris</i>	X							
122	Grey Seal	<i>Halichoerus grypus</i>	X							
123	Common Dolphin	<i>Delphinus delphis</i>	X							
124	Harbour Porpoise	<i>Phocoena phocoena</i>	X							
125										
126	Common Darter	<i>Sympetrum striolatum</i>	X							
127	Southern Hawker	<i>Aeshna cyanea</i>	X							
128										
129	Unarmed Stick Insect	<i>Acanthoxyla inermis</i>	X							
130										
131	Hornet Hoverfly (mimic)	<i>Volucella zonaria</i>	X							
132										