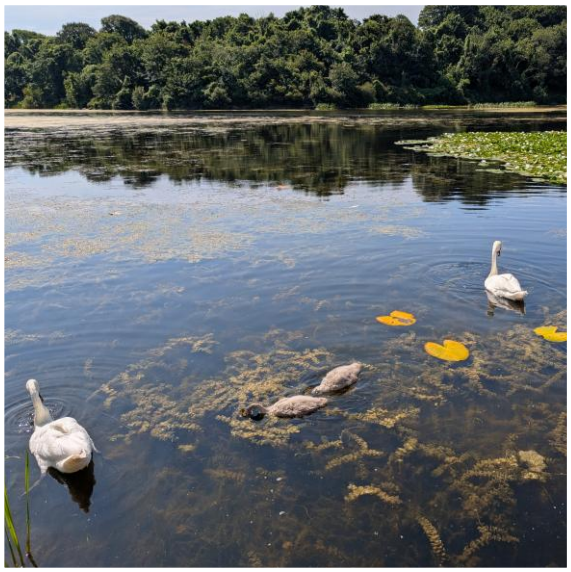
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Tour Report
Wild Pembrokeshire
13 – 17 July 2026

Bosherston Lily Pond & Swans



Puffin



Chough



Guillemot



Compiled by Matt Collis

Monday 13 July 2026

Day 1:

We met in the hotel lounge at 2 pm and shared some of our hopes for the trips and a bit about ourselves. With two guests stuck in traffic, we headed off to make the best of the short afternoon before dinner and headed for a lovely coastal walk at St. Davids Head. It was a scorching day, something which would be a theme for our entire week, so we took the path slowly, stopping for regular breaks as we took the undulating path. With much of the inland fields parched due to persistent sun for the last month, it was a relief and joy to see so many wildflowers growing along the path. Knapweed, chamomile and wild carrot were particularly abundant and attracting lots of insects, including hundreds of painted ladies, red admirals and a rather attractive sulphur beetle. Dragonflies were also active here, with ruddy darter and emperors spotted at various stages. We also encountered several shrubs with the large web sheets and tunnels of the labyrinth spider and successfully tickled one out from its lair so we could grab a brief glimpse.

Despite the strong heat, we did manage to spot several birds along the way, including several stonechats and wheatears, both of which had dependent young with them. One valley produced both a whitethroat and a Dartford warbler in quick succession, and the cliff tops produced our first Chough with a group of four foraging in the rabbit-kept lawns of the headland. It was a delightful first exploration of this stunning coastline and a great start to the trip. We ended the day back at the hotel for some dinner and to meet the remainder of our group.

Tuesday 14 July 2026

Day 2:

A much-anticipated day trip to Skomer Island was scheduled for today, and with good weather and seas, we boarded the boat shortly before 10 am. The short crossing through Jack Sound into North Haven was arguably one of the highlights of the day, as we were soon surrounded by the sights and smells of a busily active bird-infested island. Puffins were either floating close or whizzing by our heads as we made our way to the landing steps built into the cliffs. Thousands of guillemots, razorbills and various gulls all made for a seabird spectacular and we hadn't even stepped foot off the boat yet. Once docked, we scaled the steps up to the meeting area, a walk which seemed to take an age due to the constant distraction of puffin burrows immediately adjacent to you. Following a thorough briefing, we then spent the day exploring the island and walking some of the set paths in search of wildlife. We tackled the inner island first, passing thousands upon thousands of burrow holes occupied by Manx shearwaters. As a nocturnally active bird, we saw little of them except for the many bodily remains of predated adults too late in their return. A fascinating insight into the brutal ecology of the island. At the island centre, we enjoyed watching both swallows and house martins nesting within the buildings and searched for short-eared owls, but no luck. We did get excellent views of sedge warblers and watched many a meadow pipit with a mouth full of food. The dominant sound here was most definitely gulls, with both herring and lesser black-backed gulls with large fledged chicks which called insistently for food.

As we headed to walk the coast, we encountered small groups of grey seals at various stages, hauled out on the rocks waiting for a change in tides. Rock pipits became more numerous, as did wheatears and stonechats. We also picked up our next group of chough, which flew overhead when we stopped for some lunch. We finished our day by passing The Wick, potentially the most impressive and active seabird area on the island. Its sheer face was alive with birds, mainly breeding guillemots, razorbills and kittiwakes, but with the odd fulmar nest picked out using the scope. The flat-topped grasslands directly in front were peppered with puffins reaching all the way up to the path. It's a breathtaking sight and a special moment when a puffin emerges from the very burrow you're standing in front of. We spent a wonderful twenty minutes just soaking up the sight before returning to the boat and our vehicle.

We'd walked a good distance in hot conditions, and so we gladly retreated to the hotel for a rest before dinner. Buoyed by our exciting day, we decided to end our day with a short walk to the Cathedral at dusk to see if we could spot any bats. Once the light had truly dropped, our bat detector began to sing, detecting

mainly a variety of pipistrelles which fed around the grounds.

Wednesday 15 July 2026

Day 3:

Boat tour around Ramsey from St. Tristianians. Very informative commentary and an enjoyable 90 minutes. Ramsey Island's dramatic coast is shaped by the fierce contrast between hard volcanic rocks and softer sedimentary rocks. Centuries of powerful Atlantic waves have carved these diverse rock types into spectacular coastal features, including the towering Western cliffs, sea caves and chasms. We started at the famous Bitches Reef and travelled clockwise round the island. We saw plenty of grey seals, mostly resting up on the small beaches in preparation for the pupping season beginning in August. Nesting seabirds appeared to be at a crucial point where some colonies had departed for the Atlantic, while others remained loud and full of birds, mainly guillemots, razorbills and kittiwakes. We did spot a few individual and more unusual birds along the way, including Mediterranean gull, common sandpiper and red kite flying over the island. Rock pipit and an adult greater black-backed gull eating a rabbit were also notable.

Our walk on the island focused on the southern loop. A particularly productive stop was at Aber Myharan, where we had our lunch and looked out at the monstrous power of the Ramsey Passage as water piled out of the sound towards low tide. We watched several gannets plunge fishing from here and also managed to track a small pod of harbour porpoises. Choughs flew over our heads several times, and we also spotted a peregrine falcon family, three juveniles and one adult, perched on the cliffs, who called relentlessly. The remainder of our loops was a pleasant walk-through heathland pulsating with butterflies and moths. Swallows were persistently swooping to feast on the moth snowstorm of mainly Silver Y's. Other highlights included families of wheatear, stonechat and a close perching female kestrel. We tried for both little owl and short-eared owl; however, on returning to the ranger's office, they informed us that both have been largely absent from the island this summer despite typically having a few breeding pairs. The house martin nesting under the eaves of the offices were also very entertaining, with chicks bursting at the entrances every time an adult flew by.

Thursday 16 July 2026

Day 4:

Today we travelled down to Stackpole and walked a couple of loops around the National Trust estate, starting with the Bosherston Lily Pools. It was a wonderful, looped walk featuring several narrow bridges which took you out into the expanse of white-water lilies. The lake is large at 74 acres, and it took us several hours to walk the main pool and admire it from its many viewing points. Using a special set of macro binoculars, we took a close look at the many dragonflies which were close to the edge, including thousands of blue-tailed and azure damselflies. We saw a couple of larger dragonflies, including emperor, ruddy darter and black-tailed skimmers. The amount of fish was very notable, with rudd, perch and roach spotted at various times. Coot, moorhen and mallard were the most abundant birds on the water, but hunting grey heron and a young swan family were also present. The adjacent wooded scrub, notably suffering badly from Ash die-back, produced a few avian delights, including spotted flycatchers, a great spotted woodpecker and a gleaming male bullfinch. The usual array of butterflies was seen, but we did spend some extra time watching a colony of beewolves, which were found nesting on the path by a limestone outcrop. Despite the pool's fame for producing otters, sightings were limited to a few spraint spots, one of which was tantalisingly fresh, potentially just a day or so old.

After lunch, we took a looped walk starting at Stackpole Quay and down towards the gorgeous beach of Barafundle. As we passed over the cliffs, we noted some new wildflowers for our trip, including lots of greater knapweed and a large patch of betony which was particularly delightful. We took a group photo on the cliffs before heading down to the beach where we spotted two hummingbird hawkmoths foraging the slopes. We then crossed back through the dunes and into some woodland to take some shade. Whilst the woodland wasn't particularly diverse, dominated by sycamore with the odd plantation pine, we did

encounter a few nice species including treecreeper and stock dove. We completed our loop crossing through mixed arable and pasture fields before rehydrating with an ice cream.

Our final activity of the day was an evening walk at Dowrog. The intention was to explore some of the mire pools in search of pillwort and other delights; however, the presence of cows meant we were largely limited to viewing from the road and around the stiles. This proved not to be too much of a problem as our star encounter decided to show right by the road. Two grasshopper warblers engaged in a prolonged sing-off and, with a bit of patience, we managed some brief views of one bird as it moved from scrub patch to scrub path. It teased, singing loud and proud but stuck to the densest parts of each bush. Still, it was a very joyful encounter with this hard-to-see bird.

Friday 17 July 2026

Day 5:

With two guests having a long return journey ahead, they decided to end their tour at breakfast, delighted with the trip they'd been involved in up to this point. For the remainder of us, we headed to north Pembrokeshire to explore around Fishguard. We started with a slow walk around a small wetland area known as Goodwick Moor. Once again, we were surrounded by butterflies which were particularly attracted to the many Budleigh along the entrance track. The reserve itself was fairly quiet except for the odd short song of reed warbler and the occasional passing great, blue or long-tailed tit. At a small pontoon over open water, a stunning golden-ringed dragonfly decided to hang from some flowering grey club-rush, which was a treat. As we headed back towards the coast, we got a brief view of a kingfisher and a couple of foraging chiffchaffs chasing each other through the scrub. For the second part of our walk, we headed out along the harbour wall and enjoyed the view of several compass jellyfish hunting in the seaweed. Several meadow pipits were feeding in the tussocky grassland, and cormorants were spotted fishing in the harbour itself. As we headed back to the bus, we collected an ice cream for the road. It wasn't long before we reached the hotel, at which point we said our thank-yous and goodbyes following a wonderful tour.

Cover images by Matt Collis

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Checklist for Wild Pembrokeshire

	Common Name	*Scientific Name*	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5
	BIRDS						
1	Little grebe	*Tachybaptus ruficollis*				✓	
2	Northern fulmar	*Fulmarus glacialis*		✓	✓		
3	Sandwich tern	*Thalasseus sandvicensis*	✓				
4	Gannet	*Morus bassanus*		✓	✓		
5	Cormorant	*Phalacrocorax carbo*	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
6	Shag	*Phalacrocorax aristotelis*		✓	✓		
7	Little egret	*Egretta garzetta*				✓	
8	Grey heron	*Ardea cinerea*				✓	✓
9	Mute swan	*Cygnus olor*				✓	
10	Mallard	*Anas platyrhynchos*		✓		✓	✓
11	Tufted duck	*Aythya fuligula*				✓	
12	Red kite	*Milvus milvus*			✓		
13	Buzzard	*Buteo buteo*		✓	✓	✓	
14	Sparrowhawk	*Accipiter nisus*				✓	
15	Kestrel	*Falco tinnunculus*	✓	✓	✓		
16	Peregrine	*Falco peregrinus*			✓		
17	Moorhen	*Gallinula chloropus*				✓	
18	Eurasian coot	*Fulica atra*				✓	
19	Oystercatcher	*Haematopus ostralegus*	✓	✓	✓		
20	Herring gull	*Larus argentatus*	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
21	Lesser black-backed gull	*Larus fuscus*		✓	✓		
22	Great black-backed gull	*Larus marinus*		✓	✓		
23	Black-headed gull	*Chroicocephalus ridibundus*	✓			✓	
24	Mediterranean gull	*Larus melanocephalus*			✓		
25	Kittiwake	*Rissa tridactyla*		✓	✓		
26	Puffin	*Fratercula arctica*		✓	✓		

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27	Guillemot	*Uria aalge*		✓	✓		
28	Razorbill	*Alca torda*		✓	✓		
29	Woodpigeon	*Columba palumbus*	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
30	Stock dove	*Columba oenas*				✓	
31	Rock dove/Feral	*Columba livia*	✓		✓		
32	Collared dove	*Streptopelia decaocto*	✓			✓	
33	Swift	*Apus apus*	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
34	Common kingfisher	*Alcedo atthis*					✓
35	Great-spotted woodpecker	*Dendrocopos major*				✓	
36	Skylark	*Alauda arvensis*		✓		✓	
37	Swallow	*Hirundinidae*	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
38	House martin	*Delichon urbicum*	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
39	Sand martin	*Riparia riparia*				✓	
40	Meadow pipit	*Anthus pratensis*	✓	✓	✓	✓	
41	Rock pipit	*Anthus petrosus*	✓	✓	✓		
42	Pied wagtail	*Motacilla alba*	✓	✓	✓	✓	
43	Wren	*Troglodytes troglodytes*	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
44	Dunnock	*Prunella modularis*	✓		✓		✓
45	Robin	*Erithacus rubecula*				✓	✓
46	Wheatear	*Oenanthe oenanthe*	✓	✓	✓		
47	Stonechat	*Saxicola rubicola*	✓	✓	✓		✓
48	Song thrush	*Turdus philomelos*	✓			✓	
49	Mistle thrush	*Turdus viscivorus*				✓	
50	Blackbird	*Turdus merula*	✓	✓		✓	✓
51	Dartford warbler	*Curruca undata*	✓			✓	
52	Blackcap	*Sylvia atricapilla*	✓		✓	✓	✓
53	Whitethroat	*Sylvia communis*	✓		✓	✓	✓
54	Sedge warbler	*Acrocephalus schoenobaenus*		✓			✓
55	Reed warbler	*Acrocephalus scirpaceus*					✓
56	Grasshopper warbler	*Locustella naevia*				✓	
57	Cetti's warbler	*Cettia cetti*					✓
58	Chiffchaff	*Phylloscopus collybita*		✓			✓
59	Spotted flycatcher	*Muscicapa striata*				✓	
60	Goldcrest	*Regulus regulus*		✓		✓	

61	Great tit	*Parus major*				✓	✓
62	Blue tit	*Cyanistes caeruleus*				✓	✓
63	Long-tailed tit	*Aegithalos caudatus*				✓	✓
64	Nuthatch	*Sitta europaea*				✓	
65	Treecreeper	*Certhia familiaris*				✓	
66	Magpie	*Pica pica*	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
67	Carrion crow	*Corvus corone*	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
68	Rook	*Corvus frugilegus*			✓	✓	
69	Jackdaw	*Coloeus monedula*	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
70	Raven	*Corvus corax*		✓	✓		
71	Chough	*Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax*	✓	✓	✓		
72	Starling	*Sturnus vulgaris*	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
73	House sparrow	*Passer domesticus*	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
74	Chaffinch	*Fringilla coelebs*				✓	
75	Linnet	*Linaria cannabina*	✓	✓	✓	✓	
76	Goldfinch	*Carduelis carduelis*	✓	✓			
77	Bullfinch	*Pyrrhula pyrrhula*				✓	