

## Tour Report Wild Pembrokeshire 15 – 19 July 2024

Puffin



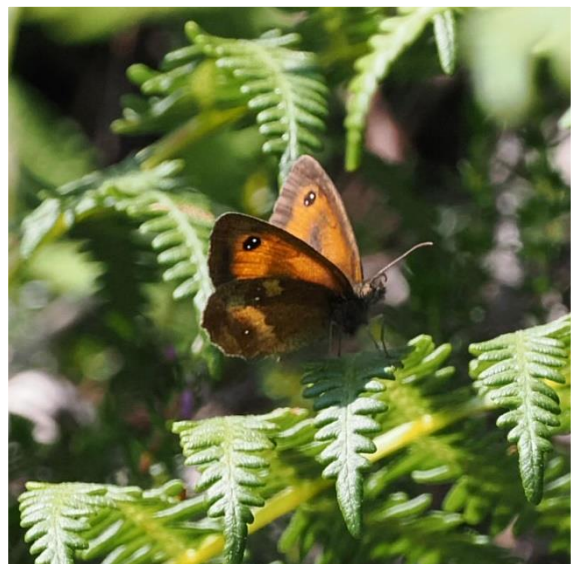
Grey heron



Chough



Gatekeeper



Compiled by Barry Embling

**Day 1:**  
St David's Cathedral

**15 July 2024**

Due to extremely wet weather conditions, watching wildlife wasn't going to be an option, so we headed for the beautiful St David's Cathedral – just a short walk away. Prior to embarking, we discussed our upcoming week in Pembrokeshire and what we would see when the sun came out – which it did, everyday for the rest of the tour!

**Day 2:**  
Skomer – Gann Estuary

**16 July 2024**

Our day began with clearing skies as the heavy rain had fallen all through the night before, and it had been a yellow weather warning. Arriving at Martin's Haven, we collected our tickets and, during our crossing of the Jack Sound, we started seeing our first seabirds, and arriving at North Haven when approaching Skomer, we were met by puffins, razorbills and guillemots on the cliffs, in the air and on the sea. Exploring the island after ascending the steps, we met the wardens and were soon we heading to the most northerly part, the Garland Stone via the farm with its loos. On the way we heard and saw a sedge warbler, goldfinches, swallows and we walked past gull colonies on nearby rocky promontories with young lesser black-backed and herring gulls, many taking their very first flights. At the Garland Stone we saw a couple of grey seals and there were puffins still feeding young, passing with beaks full of sandeels and sprats. Proceeding around the western coast we stopped at various high points and inlets, viewing ravens, and we saw the odd passing chough and lunched in some gorgeous scenery overlooking cliffs and a blue sea surrounded by thrift and flowering scentless mayweed. Afterwards we were soon in the vicinity of 'puffin central' at The Wick. Once at this spectacular location we took in the scenery and with it the sun came out and we had some time to ingest their characterful behaviours and comings and goings. The smell and sounds of this large seabird colony with fulmars, kittiwakes and auks, combined with the dramatic sheer cliffs, and by this time the developed clear blue sky was glorious. Choughs made brief appearances, and on our return walk we saw stonechats. After a visit to Lockley Lodge with its shop, we headed for Dale and The Gann estuary, where the tide was going out. Here we relaxed over a cup of tea and biscuits before a look around for birds where we saw curlews, whimbrels, oystercatches and heard a passing greenfinch. This concluded our wildlife watching on what had been a wonderful day in all regards.

**Day 3:**  
Ramsey Island

**17 July 2024**

Our first boat departure this morning was a tour along around Ramsey Island, and entering the Sound of Ramsey on this fine and still summers day, we saw the tide was going out and passing south over the line of rocks known as The Bitches. Passing these we headed in a clockwise direction, and we saw a grey seal pup on the 'bachelor' beach, that was unexpected and early, amongst the first of over eight hundred pups born during late summer to autumn on this island each year. We also saw some interesting volcanic rock formations and now dwindling numbers of the guillemots and razorbills on the cliffs. A family of kestrels had just fledged. Going round to the north side, the geology changed to sedimentary, and at one point we entered a beautiful sea cave, and being at the foot of steep cliffs we saw freshwater seepages with beautiful ferns, mosses and other plants, with attendant rock pipits. After a most enjoyable tour, we returned to St Justinian's and picked up more passengers before heading across to Ramsey around noon. We decided to walk to the south of the island first and enjoy the spectacular scenery. Lunch was taken on thrift 'cussions' as we looked out onto Grassholm, some eight miles further out to sea. Some of our group preferred to return to the vicinity of the farmhouse, while two of us headed north on the circular route around the island. At Aber Mawr we heard and then saw newly fledged peregrines that were very close, and an adult was flying around with food. Ramsey is very different to Skomer, more peaceful with just one boatload of visitors today and smaller seabird colonies. But there are many more choughs, ravens and wheatears – seen gloriously well in the summer sun. Rabbit numbers seemed to have reached a high population this year, with various

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beige, black and white morphs seen in addition to the hundreds of normally coloured animals. Our walk around the island was quite spectacular with the scenery and near solitude most times. After refreshments back at the RSPB farm, we headed back across to St Justinians on a now low tide, and took the short drive back to St Davids to conclude a full and most enjoyable day.

**Day 4:**

**17 July 2024**

Stackpole estate and St Govan's

We headed south today to the opposite side of Pembrokeshire, our first stop being the Stackpole Estate and Bosherton Lakes. On our walk down to the eight arches bridge and the lily ponds, we saw house martins by the car park, and on reaching the lily ponds we had a wonderful view of a hunting grey heron. Moving on, we arrived at nearby Broadhaven for a comfort stop and tea break, overlooking the beautiful and empty beach to the sound of choughs calling on the other side of the bay. A little walk from the car park looking for dark-green fritillary was unsuccessful, though we did see a pyramidal orchid. Afterwards, we headed for Castlemartin and St Govan's head. Walking out to the head itself for lunch we saw cliff-nesting swifts, a heath spotted orchid and a couple of family parties of choughs. From the headland we saw a passing Manx shearwater, gannets, three Mediterranean gulls and the odd guillemot. On the walk back we looked at the plants in more detail and saw restharrow, rock sea lavender, red bartsia, betony and great knapweed in this limestone landscape. Our mission was to see the tiny and enchanting chapel of St Govan's, though between us and it were 69 steps (counted by Anthony, thank you), which only a couple of us attempted. Descending the steps we looked at the wildflowers and saw common birds-foot trefoil, greater knapweed, and wild carrot. This concluded our day, and we headed back to the hotel to start thinking about packing. Our last evening meal and checklist was taken together.

**Day 5:**

**19 July 2024**

Llangloffan Fen

With some of the group heading home, two of us headed for this nearby local wildlife trust wetland reserve. We were soon seeing whitethroats, reed buntings, a sedge warbler and red kites. The fenland vegetation was at its peak, with sedges, reeds and grasses, coloured with purple loosestrife and meadowsweet. Following the nature trail through boardwalks we passed under the willow carr, heavily grazed by willow leaf moth – which had now long gone. We payed homage to the sacred stand of tussock sedge, some standing at over five feet tall. Another botanical highlight was the rare pillwort, a bizarre fern that grows in one of the ponds here. After our last cup of tea, we headed back to the hotel, and along the way, as if some kind grand finale, we saw a weasel cross the road in front of us. Thus ended a fun tour, thanks to everyone for their contributions, and Wildlife Worldwide hope to see you again soon.

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# Checklist for Wild Pembrokeshire



	Common Name	Scientific Name	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5
	<b>BIRDS</b>						
1	Northern fulmar	<i>Fulmarus glacialis</i>		✓	✓		
2	Manx shearwater	<i>Puffinus puffinus</i>				✓	
3	Gannet	<i>Morus</i>		✓	✓	✓	
4	Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocoracidae</i>		✓	✓		
5	Shag	<i>Phalacrocorax aristotelis</i>		✓	✓		
6	Grey heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>		✓		✓	
7	Mute swan	<i>Cygnus olor</i>				✓	
8	Mallard	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>				✓	
9	Red kite	<i>Milvus milvus</i>			✓	✓	✓
10	Buzzard	<i>Buteo buteo</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓
11	Sparrowhawk	<i>Accipiter nisus</i>		✓			
12	Kestrel	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>			✓		
13	Peregrine	<i>Falco peregrinus</i>			✓		
14	Moorhen	<i>Gallinula</i>				✓	✓
15	Oystercatcher	<i>Haematopus</i>		✓	✓		
16	Curlew	<i>Numenius</i>		✓	✓		
17	Whimbrel	<i>Numenius phaeopus</i>		✓	✓		
18	Herring gull	<i>Larus argentatus</i>		✓	✓	✓	
19	Lesser black-backed gull	<i>Larus fuscus</i>		✓	✓	✓	
20	Great black-backed gull	<i>Larus marinus</i>		✓	✓		
21	Kittiwake	<i>Rissa</i>		✓	✓		
22	Puffin	<i>Fratercula</i>		✓	✓		
23	Guillemot	<i>Uria</i>		✓	✓	✓	
24	Razorbill	<i>Alca torda</i>		✓	✓		

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25	Woodpigeon	<i>Columba palumbus</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓
26	Stock dove	<i>Columba oenas</i>				H	
27	Swift	<i>Apus apus</i>				✓	
28	Great-spotted woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos major</i>			H		
29	Swallow	<i>Hirundinidae</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓
30	House martin	<i>Delichon urbicum</i>		✓	✓	✓	
31	Meadow pipit	<i>Anthus pratensis</i>		✓	✓		
32	Rock pipit	<i>Anthus petrosus</i>		✓	✓		
33	Pied wagtail	<i>Motacilla alba</i>		✓	✓		
34	Wren	<i>Troglodytes</i>		✓	H	H	✓
35	Dunnock	<i>Prunella modularis</i>		✓		H	
36	Robin	<i>Erithacus rubecula</i>				H	
37	Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe</i>		✓	✓		
38	Stonechat	<i>Saxicola</i>		✓	✓		
39	Blackbird	<i>Turdus merula</i>			✓		✓
40	Blackcap	<i>Sylvia atricapilla</i>			H		
41	Whitethroat	<i>Sylvia communis</i>		✓			✓
42	Sedge warbler	<i>Acrocephalus schoenobaenus</i>		✓			H
43	Reed warbler	<i>Acrocephalus scirpaceus</i>		H			
44	Chiffchaff	<i>Phylloscopus collybita</i>				✓	✓
45	Goldcrest	<i>Regulus regulus</i>				H	
46	Great tit	<i>Parus major</i>				✓	
47	Blue tit	<i>Cyanistes caeruleus</i>				✓	
48	Treecreeper	<i>Certhia familiaris</i>				H	
49	Magpie	<i>Pica pica</i>		✓		✓	✓
50	Carrion crow	<i>Corvus corone</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓
51	Rook	<i>Corvus frugilegus</i>		✓		✓	✓
52	Jackdaw	<i>Coloeus</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓
53	Raven	<i>Corvus corax</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓
54	Chough	<i>Pyrrhocorax</i>		✓	✓	✓	
55	Jay	<i>Garrulus glandarius</i>		✓			
56	Starling	<i>Sturnus</i>		✓			
57	House sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>		✓	✓		
58	Chaffinch	<i>Fringilla coelebs</i>			✓		
59	Linnet	<i>Linaria cannabina</i>		✓	✓		

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60	Goldfinch	<i>Carduelis carduelis</i>		✓			
61	Greenfinch	<i>Chloris chloris</i>		H			
62	Reed bunting	<i>Emberiza schoeniclus</i>				✓	✓
	<b>MAMMALS</b>						
1	Rabbit	<i>Oryctolagus cuniculus</i>		✓	✓		
2	Grey squirrel	<i>Sciurus carolinensis</i>					
3	Grey seal	<i>Halichoerus grypus</i>		✓	✓		
4	Weasel	<i>Mustela</i>				✓	✓

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