

Tour Report UK – Wild Pembrokeshire 11 - 15 July 2022

Atlantic puffin



Grassholm



Chough



Small red damselfly



Compiled by Barry Embling

Day 1: Dowrog Common**Monday 11 July 2022***Weather: sunny 28°C*

After a cup of tea, we headed out onto the open common, with gorgeous rough pasture, fen and wet heath all around us. Our first birds encountered were linnet, great-spotted woodpecker and goldfinch. Insects abounded, with emperor dragonflies, butterflies included small and large skippers, ringlet and meadow brown. We spent time checking the orchids and saw heath-spotted and likely heath x common spotted orchid hybrid, we were delighted to see bog asphodel alongside cotton grass. A distant hobby was disappointingly not seen by all of our group at first, then we encountered one a little later that dashed past us at low level and high speed! Followed up by sticklebacks in the river and blue-tailed damselfly, we had seen a few specialities of this glorious wildlife site, as we returned a good hour before dinner to unpack and shower – though some of us no doubt worked carefully through our field guides too!

Day 2: Skomer Island**Tuesday 12 July 2022***Weather: overcast, a light shower 20° C*

Our 10:00 boat departure from Martin's Haven left on time, and as we entered North Haven our boat was surrounded by puffins on the sea and flying all around us. Our walk up onto the plateau was interrupted by stopping and looking at puffins, including seeing a dead puffin chick being eaten by a lesser black-backed gull. Much of the centre of the island was now covered with bracken, obscuring the thousands of Manx shearwater nest holes, with the only evidence of these nocturnal visitors being the white stains of their droppings, and some remains of adults predated on by gulls. Sedge warblers and whitethroats were still singing, and we had views of each, together with a curlew, wood pigeons and both of the black-backed gulls and their now fledging chicks. From the most northerly point of the island, we looked onto the Garland Stone, with over twenty hauled-out Atlantic grey seals. The outgoing tide rushed west past the point, with many auks floating past with gannets and fulmars. Three choughs were feeding nearby, which we saw again later, that ended up being a pair feeding a juvenile. Moving on around we lunched on one of the westerly rocky outcrops, overlooking yet more busy puffins burrows, with birds, like sentinels, standing over each burrow. At The Wick, we took some time to experience more close-up puffins and all of the cliff-nesting seabirds, including kittiwakes. The whitened rocks, mostly from the nesting guillemots, were looking whiter than ever, as many of the birds had vacated the cliffs and gone to sea. We completed our navigation of the island via the impressive Mew Stone, the most southerly point. After a calm crossing and a cup of tea, we headed to the local village of Dale and the Gann estuary. A little drizzle greeted us but was only a mild inconvenience as we explored the area, encountering many interesting wildflowers and discovering good numbers of birds at what was by now high tide. Greenshank, redshank and a couple of dunlin were seen, as were little egrets, Mediterranean gulls in all plumages and a flock of six Sandwich terns dropped in. This concluded our satisfying day on the Marloes Peninsula.

Day 3: Grassholm and Ramsey**Wednesday 13 July 2022***Weather: sunny and mostly clear skies 22° C*

Today we had an early start for our disembarkation to Grassholm. A wind from the north meant some discomfort facing the waves on the return trip was considered, and we decided to proceed on a lovely mild and clear morning. Grassholm was a hive of life, first seeing a few gannets, then the sky was full of them, with great views of the colony as we circumnavigated the island. Guillemots, kittiwakes, raven and Atlantic grey seals were also seen. Being by such a remote island, an RSPB reserve, and having the whole experience to ourselves was a privilege that will live a long time in our memory. We returned in choppy seas back to the Sound of Ramsey on an ebbing tide. In the Sound of Ramsey we searched and eventually saw harbour porpoise on an ebbing tide, with water dramatically rushing south over the rock formation the Bitches. Our landing on Ramsey followed and was a chance to recover from a choppy and lengthy trip, and relax and have a cup of tea before moving off to explore the island. Moving north to Aber Mawr, we encountered

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choughs and wheatears and a rock pipit on the short grass. At Aber Mawr we lunched and took in the dramatic scenery and geology, and looked for a peregrine on the cliff and a red deer was spotted walking around Carn Ysgibor. A walk in perfect weather around the whole of the island was punctuated by stops looking at rock falls and at the end, a long search for one of the resident little owls was eventually successful!

Day 4: Stackpole Estate

Thursday 14 July 2022

Weather: Sunny 21° C

We moved to the south of the county today, and the Bosherton area, visiting the National Trust's Stackpole Estate. Arriving at Broad Haven car park, we couldn't go into the Castlemartin military ranges, due to it being out of bounds today. We first explored the dunes behind Broad Haven beach and then headed for Stackpole Head on the eastern side of the beach. The rich dune flora was enjoyed by all, as were the invertebrates that included many solitary bees and an unidentified robber fly species. On the top of the cliffs, we soon started seeing a variety of butterflies, including dark-green fritillaries, that we eventually got to see resting. Choughs were again conspicuous, with young and were a constant passing feature, and we also saw kestrel and our first red kite. We took lunch at the cliff top and enjoyed the specialist flora, which featured the beautiful rock sea lavender. All was quiet at sea, with only the odd passing gull, but the scenery was spectacular and we had distant views of Lundy. We had a dip in the sea on the beach and returned to the bus for a refreshing cup of tea.

The next stop was the hotel in St David's before most of us headed back to Dowrog Common to check out some ponds. Here we encountered many new plants, including bog pimpernel and ragged robin. Our hoped-for damselfly, the small red, was seen well and was even abundant alongside blue-tailed damselflies and a four-spotted chaser. A grasshopper warbler was heard, which a couple of us looked for over some very rough ground and eventually saw it! A hard-earned last tick of the trip!

Day 5: Llangloffan Fen

Friday 15 July 2022

Weather: Sunny 23° C

Our last morning together was spent on this site of special scientific interest. Mostly surrounded by fields or intensively managed grassland, though to the east is continuous fen and eventually with the Cleddau Estuary. Amongst the species present, we saw marsh cinquefoil, yellow flag, tall fen meadows dominated by meadowsweet and areas of 1-2 metres high tussocks of greater tussock-sedge, the latter perhaps the penultimate star of the show, as we finally saw a large stand of rare pillwort, a most un-fern like fern! Interestingly the site once drained west into the sea, but was modified by glacial meltwater and ultimately blocked by glacial deposits thereby reversing the flow and flowing east and inland. After seeing some breeding warblers and passing ravens, we had a cup of tea before returning to St David's for a noon finish. Thus concluded our tour, with some luck with the weather, much leaned by all, all islands seen and experienced - and some laughs along the way.

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Checklist



	Common Name	Scientific Name	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5
	BIRDS	<i>AVES</i>					
1	Canada goose	<i>Branta canadensis</i>		✓			
2	Mute swan	<i>Cygnus olor</i>		✓		✓	
3	Common shelduck	<i>Tadorna tadorna</i>		✓			
4	Mallard	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>				✓	
5	Grey heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>		✓			✓
6	Little egret	<i>Egretta garzetta</i>		✓			
7	Northern gannet	<i>Morus bassanus</i>		✓	✓	✓	
8	Great cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>		✓	✓		
9	European shag	<i>Gulosus aristotelis</i>		✓	✓		
10	Eurasian sparrowhawk	<i>Accipiter nisus</i>		✓			
11	Common buzzard	<i>Buteo buteo</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
12	Red kite	<i>Milvus milvus</i>				✓	
13	Common moorhen	<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>		✓			

14	Eurasian oystercatcher	<i>Haematopus ostralegus</i>		✓	✓	✓	
15	Eurasian curlew	<i>Numenius arquata</i>		✓	✓		
16	Dunlin	<i>Calidris alpina</i>		✓			
17	Common redshank	<i>Tringa totanus</i>		✓			
18	Common greenshank	<i>Tringa nebularia</i>		✓			
19	Black-legged kittiwake	<i>Rissa tridactyla</i>		✓	✓		
20	Black-headed gull	<i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i>		✓	✓	✓	
21	Mediterranean gull	<i>Ichthyaetus melanocephalus</i>		✓			
22	Great black-backed gull	<i>Larus marinus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	
23	European herring gull	<i>Larus argentatus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	
24	Lesser black-backed gull	<i>Larus fuscus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	
25	Sandwich tern	<i>Thalasseus sandvicensis</i>		✓			
26	Common guillemot	<i>Uria aalge</i>		✓	✓		
27	Razorbill	<i>Alca torda</i>		✓	✓		
28	Atlantic puffin	<i>Fratercula arctica</i>		✓	✓		
29	Northern fulmar	<i>Fulmarus glacialis</i>		✓	✓		
30	Manx shearwater	<i>Puffinus puffinus</i>			✓		
31	Rock dove	<i>Columba livia</i>		✓	✓	✓	

32	Common wood pigeon	<i>Columba palumbus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
33	Eurasian collared dove	<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>		✓	✓	✓	
34	Little owl	<i>Athene noctua</i>			✓		
35	Common swift	<i>Apus apus</i>		✓	✓	✓	
36	Great spotted woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos major</i>		✓			
37	Common kestrel	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>		✓	✓	✓	
38	Peregrine falcon	<i>Falco peregrinus</i>			✓		
39	Eurasian magpie	<i>Pica pica</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
40	Western jackdaw	<i>Coloeus monedula</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
41	Rook	<i>Corvus frugilegus</i>	✓	✓	✓		✓
42	Carrion crow	<i>Corvus corone</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
43	Northern raven	<i>Corvus corax</i>		✓	✓		✓
44	Blue tit	<i>Cyanistes caeruleus</i>					✓
45	Eurasian skylark	<i>Alauda arvensis</i>		✓		✓	
46	Barn swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
47	Common house martin	<i>Delichon urbicum</i>	✓		✓		
48	Cetti's warbler	<i>Cettia cetti</i>				H	
49	Willow warbler	<i>Phylloscopus trochilus</i>					✓

50	Common chiffchaff	<i>Phylloscopus collybita</i>	✓	✓	✓		✓
51	Sedge warbler	<i>Acrocephalus schoenobaenus</i>		✓			✓
52	Common grasshopper warbler	<i>Locustella naevia</i>				✓	
53	Eurasian blackcap	<i>Sylvia atricapilla</i>	H				H
54	Common whitethroat	<i>Sylvia communis</i>	✓	✓			✓
55	Eurasian wren	<i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>	H	✓	H	✓	✓
56	Common starling	<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>		✓			
57	Common blackbird	<i>Turdus merula</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓
58	Song thrush	<i>Turdus philomelos</i>		✓	✓		
59	European stonechat	<i>Saxicola rubicola</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	
60	Northern wheatear	<i>Oenanthe oenanthe</i>		✓	✓	✓	
61	House sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>	✓	✓	✓		✓
62	Dunnock	<i>Prunella modularis</i>		✓	H		✓
63	Pied Wagtail	<i>Motacilla alba s sp yarellii</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓
64	Meadow pipit	<i>Anthus pratensis</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
65	European rock pipit	<i>Anthus petrosus</i>			✓		
66	Common chaffinch	<i>Fringilla coelebs</i>				✓	
67	Common linnet	<i>Linaria cannabina</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

68	European goldfinch	<i>Carduelis carduelis</i>	✓		✓	✓	
69	Common reed bunting	<i>Emberiza schoeniclus</i>	✓	H			
	MAMMALS	MAMMALIA					
1	Harbour porpoise	<i>Phocoena phocoena</i>				✓	
2	Atlantic grey seal	<i>Halichoerus grypus</i>		✓	✓		
3	Red deer	<i>Cervus elaphus</i>				✓	
4	Rabbit	<i>Oryctolagus cuniculus</i>		✓	✓		
	AMPHIBIANS	AMPHIBIA					
1	Common frog	<i>Rana temporaria</i>				✓	

	FISH	
1	Three-spined stickleback	<i>Gasterostius aculeata</i>
2	Grey mullet	<i>Mugil spp</i>
	INVERTEBRATES	
	Cnidarians	
1	Moon jellyfish	<i>Aurelia aurica</i>
2	Compass jellyfish	<i>Chrysaora hysoscella</i>
	BUTTERFLIES	RHOPALOCERA
1	Large skipper	<i>Ochlodes venata</i>
2	Small skipper	<i>Thymelicus sylvestris</i>
3	Green-veined white	<i>Pieris napi</i>
4	Red admiral	<i>Vanessa atalanta</i>
5	Dark-green fritillary	<i>Argynnis aglaja</i>
6	Small heath	<i>Coenonympha pamphilus</i>
7	Meadow brown	<i>Pararge aegeria</i>
8	Gatekeeper	<i>Pyronia tithonus</i>
9	Meadow brown	<i>Maniola jurtina</i>
10	Ringlet	<i>Aphantopus hyperantus</i>
	MOTHS	LEPIDOPTERA
1	Six spot burnet	<i>Zygaena filipendulae</i>
2	Five-spot burnet	<i>Zygaena trifolii</i>
3	Cinnabar	<i>Tyria jacobaeae</i>
4	Common footman	<i>Eilema lurideola</i>
	SPIDERS	
1		<i>Agelina labarinthica</i>
	DRAGONFLIES	ANISOPTERA
1	Four-spotted chaser	<i>Libellula quadrimaculata</i>
2	Emperor dragonfly	<i>Anax imperator</i>

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3	Beautiful demoiselle	<i>Calopteryx virgo</i>
4	Common blue damselfly	<i>Enallagma cyathigerum</i>
5	Blue-tailed damselfly	<i>Ischnura elegans</i>
6	Small red damselfly	<i>Ceriagrion tenellatum</i>
SOME OBSERVED PLANTS		
1	Water plantain	<i>Alisma plantago</i>
2	Lords-and-ladies	<i>Arum maculatum</i>
3	Branched bur-reed	<i>Sparganium erectum</i>
4	Common reedmace	<i>Typha latifolia</i>
5	Black bryony	<i>Tamus communis</i>
6	Pyramidal orchid	<i>Anacamptis pyramidalis</i>
7	Heath spotted orchid	<i>Dactylorhiza fuchsii</i>
8	Southern marsh orchid	<i>Dactylorhiza praetermissa</i>
9	Sea campion	<i>Silene uniflora</i>
10	Common sorrel	<i>Rumex acetosa</i>
11	Rock sea-lavender	<i>Limonium binervosum</i>
12	Square-stalked St John's Wort	<i>Hypericum tetrapterum</i>
13	Cross-leaved heath	<i>Erica tetralix</i>
14	English stonecrop	<i>Sedum anglicum</i>
15	Silverweed	<i>Potentilla anserina</i>
16	Marsh cinquefoil	<i>Potentilla palustris</i>
17	Meadowsweet	<i>Filipendula ulmaria</i>
18	Purple loosestrife	<i>Lythrum salicaria</i>
19	Marsh willowherb	<i>Epilobium palustre</i>
20	Common stork's-bill	<i>Erodium cicutarium</i>
21	Upright hedge parsley	<i>Torylis japonica</i>
22	Sea holly	<i>Eryngium maritimum</i>
23	Viper's bugloss	<i>Echium vulgare</i>

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24	Wild marjoram	<i>Origanum vulgare</i>
25	Sea plantain	<i>Plantago maritima</i>
26	Bucks horn plantain	<i>Plantago coronopus</i>

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