

Durlston

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Durlston Country Park Bird Report 2008



Chaffinch taken by
Simon Kidner (copyright)

Compiled and written by Jol Mitchell

Acknowledgements

Durlston are indebted to Jol Mitchell for his time and effort spent going through the weekly summary sheets, Hamish's obscure notes, various websites and Dorset bird records to produce this systematic list of bird recorded at Durlston.

We would also like to thank Joan Harrison who painstakingly transfers the daily diary information into weekly summary sheets.

Our gratitude also goes to all those who have provided us with records of the birds seen and heard here during 2008.

SYSTEMATIC LIST OF SPECIES RECORDED IN 2008

The records presented in this Systematic List are based largely on the Park Rangers' daily Diary entries with additional information from various websites and records submitted to the Dorset County Bird Recorder. In comparison with some other Dorset sites (such as Portland Bill and Hengistbury Head), there is little systematic seawatching undertaken at Durlston with the result that sea passage is greatly under-recorded.

In describing the status of species at Durlston, the following terms (based on those used in *The Birds of Dorset* (Green G., 2004) are used:

Common	occurs regularly at Durlston in large or fairly large numbers during the appropriate period or is widely distributed in suitable habitat; there is a good chance that the species would be seen on most visits during that period.
Fairly common	occurs in moderate numbers at Durlston during the appropriate period in suitable habitat; there is a reasonable chance that the species would be seen on visits during that period.
Uncommon	occurs annually in small numbers at Durlston during the appropriate period; would not be expected to be seen on most visits.
Scarce	a species that can be seen in most years at Durlston, but records are few in number (one to ten).
Rare	a species that occurs at Durlston on a less than annual basis.

The List follows the sequence and scientific names given in *The British List: A Checklist of Birds of Britain (7th edition July 2006)* published in Ibis Volume 148: 526-563 by the British Ornithologists' Union (BOU), updated by the BOU Records Committee's 37th Report (October 2008) published in Ibis Volume 151: 224-230.

Tables and Graphs are presented for some species. These show the number of 'bird-days' per week or month (a bird-day is one bird present for one day; hence, two bird-days could be one bird present for two days, or two birds present for one day).

GREATER CANADA GOOSE *Branta canadensis*

Rare, passing offshore or overhead.

There was one record: of two passing birds on 26th March.

BRENT GOOSE (Dark-bellied) *Branta bernicla*

Fairly common, passing offshore mainly in autumn and winter.

The main wintering areas for Brent Geese in Dorset are Poole Harbour and The Fleet. Birds seen at Durlston are probably moving between these and other sites, or taking part in coastal passage during spring and autumn. The last record of the first winter period was on the early date of 1st March; the first record of the second winter period was on 2nd October. The maximum count was of 60 birds on 14th January, in three skeins.

COMMON SHELDUCK *Tadorna tadorna*

Uncommon, passing offshore in spring, autumn and winter.

Shelduck can normally be seen at Durlston (usually single birds or pairs flying down the coast) at any time of the year, other than in July and August. There were, however, only seven records in 2008: on 26th January; 13th (six birds) and 17th February; 11th April (two); 4th May (two); 26th June (two) and 31st December (four).

EURASIAN WIGEON *Anas penelope***Scarce, passing offshore in spring, autumn and winter.**

There were three records of birds flying past offshore: on 13th February (seven birds), 2nd October (six) and 4th November (seven).

COMMON TEAL *Anas crecca***Scarce, passing offshore mainly in winter.**

Three birds passed offshore on 3rd November.

MALLARD *Anas platyrhynchos***Uncommon, passing offshore.**

A pair of Mallard were occasionally seen on the pond in the Wildlife Area. More unusual was a bird flying past offshore on 4th May.

NORTHERN SHOVELER *Anas clypeata***Scarce, passing offshore mainly in winter.**

A bird passed offshore on 1st September.

COMMON EIDER *Somateria mollissima***Uncommon, passing offshore in spring, autumn and winter.**

There were only two records in 2008: single birds flying past offshore on 15th and 16th November.

COMMON SCOTER *Melanitta nigra***Fairly common winter visitor and passage migrant.**

This species is generally under-recorded at Durlston; the Table below shows the trends in numbers. Twenty-seven birds passed on 16th August. The maximum count was of 30 birds on 24th December.

Monthly counts (bird-days):

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
61	25	23	69	27	45	37	64	53	47	27	57

VELVET SCOTER *Melanitta fusca***Scarce, passing offshore mainly in winter.**

There was one record: three birds flying west on 31st December.

RED-BREASTED MERGANSER *Mergus serrator***Uncommon, passing offshore in spring, autumn and winter.**

The Fleet/Portland Harbour combined site and Poole Harbour hold nationally important populations (over 100) of Red-breasted Mergansers, the second and third largest in Britain respectively. Birds seen at Durlston are possibly moving between these and other sites, or taking part in coastal passage during spring and autumn. In the first winter period, birds were recorded on: 1st January; 17th (two birds), 19th (two) and 27th February; 9th and 28th March; and 29th April. Records in the second winter period were on: 8th and 17th November; and 15th and 21st December.

RED-LEGGED PARTRIDGE *Alectoris rufa***Scarce visitor.**

There were eleven records in 2008 (compared with three in 2006 and one in 2007). Single birds or pairs were recorded on: 9th and 16th March; 3rd, 5th, 8th and 16th April; 3rd May; 19th and 20th June; and 12th and 14th July.

GREY PARTRIDGE *Perdix perdix***Scarce visitor.**

There was one record: a bird on 12th May.

QUAIL *Coturnix coturnix***Rare visitor.**

Two birds were flushed on 17th April.

COMMON PHEASANT *Phasianus colchicus***Common feral resident.**

There is an established population of this gamebird on the Park. Four to five males held 'territory' and females generally outnumbered males. Successful breeding was proven with chicks seen on 13th June.

RED-THROATED DIVER *Gavia stellata***Uncommon, passing offshore in spring, autumn and winter.**

Red-throated is the commonest diver seen at Durlston (and at the other coastal watch-points in Dorset). Peak numbers were in January with a high count of 40 birds passing on 23rd. The last record of the first winter period was on 1st May; the first record of the second winter period was on 7th October.

Monthly counts (bird-days):

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
62	16	9	16	1	0	0	0	0	5	7	37

BLACK-THROATED DIVER *Gavia artica***Scarce, passing offshore in spring, autumn and winter.**

Black-throated is the scarcest diver seen off Durlston, and in Dorset. All records are given: 23rd and 24th January; 21st (seven birds) and 26th April; 8th and 27th November; and 31st December (two birds).

GREAT NORTHERN DIVER *Gavia immer***Uncommon winter visitor and offshore passage migrant.**

Five birds were recorded on 23rd January. The last record of the first winter period was on 21st May; the first record of the second winter period was on 24th October. An unusual record was of a bird overflying the Observation Point on 28th November.

Monthly counts (bird-days):

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
11	2	2	2	4	0	0	0	0	3	4	6

GREAT CRESTED GREBE *Podiceps cristatus***Scarce, passing offshore in winter.**

There were two records: single birds seen passing on 28th January and 20th December.

FULMAR *Fulmarus glacialis***Common breeding resident and passage migrant.**

Fulmars are seen for most of the year along the cliff-face, although they are generally scarce or absent between mid-July and mid-November. As usual, breeding numbers were difficult to assess. However, there was one apparently occupied site at Earth Rock, and four birds at two apparently occupied sites at the central part of Ragged Rocks.

CORY'S SHEARWATER *Calonectris diomedea***Rare, passing offshore mainly in autumn.**A bird passed on 31st July.**SOOTY SHEARWATER *Puffinus griseus*****Scarce, passing offshore mainly in autumn.**A poor year with only three records: on 5th and 23rd September and 7th October.**MANX SHEARWATER *Puffinus puffinus*****Uncommon, passing offshore in spring, summer and autumn.**

Manx Shearwaters are generally under-recorded at Durlston. The species was first reported on the unusually early date of 13th January and then on the more usual date of 8th March. Numbers of passing birds continued to increase, with peak movements in early July. A pronounced movement occurred on 9th July when, at one stage, more Manx Shearwaters were passing than Gannets (50 per hour compared with 30 per hour). The last record was of two birds on 5th October.

Monthly counts (bird-days):

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
1	0	3	11	92	102	177	12	24	2	0	0

BALEARIC SHEARWATER *Puffinus mauretanicus***Uncommon, passing offshore mainly in late summer and autumn.**

There was a significant increase in the number of Balearic Shearwaters reported at Durlston compared with the previous two years. A total of 97 bird-days were recorded (compared with 12 in 2007 and 26 in 2006). This was partly because of an unprecedented early winter influx; this was also seen off Portland where there was a count of 50 birds on 13th January. Birds were seen off Durlston until 7th February when two birds were seen close-in, weaving in and out of a flock of gulls. Birds were then seen from 2nd July to 26th October. The maximum count was of 19 birds on 16th August.

Monthly counts (bird-days):

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
20	5	0	0	0	0	21	30	13	8	0	0

The SeaWatch SW Project (<http://www.seawatch-sw.org>) is an initiative designed to collect important information about some of the UK's most threatened marine animals including the Balearic Shearwater. The project is entirely volunteer-based, and is supported by a number of major conservation and scientific organisations, including the National Oceanography Centre at Southampton, the RSPB and the Marine Conservation Society. One of the main aims of SeaWatch SW is to provide a central point for Balearic Shearwater recording in UK waters.

EUROPEAN STORM-PETREL *Hydrobates pelagicus***Scarce, passing offshore mainly in summer and autumn.**

The species is generally under-recorded at Durlston. There was a good series of records in 2008, particularly in the first two weeks of July. Non-July records were as follows: on 24th and 26th May (five birds), 3rd June and 20th October. July records were as follows: 8th (six), 9th (eleven, including several birds which spent a long time resting on the water, one particularly close-in to the cliffs), 10th, 12th (a bird lingering off Durlston Head, appearing as a black speck on the water for much of the time) and 14th (two).

NORTHERN GANNET *Morus bassanus***Fairly common, passing offshore.**

Gannets can be seen off Durlston at any time of the year but are most abundant in spring/early summer (April to June) and autumn (August to October) with slightly fewer birds in mid-summer

(July) and a much smaller population offshore in winter (November to March). Birds involved in feeding movements during the summer months almost certainly come from the closest colonies on Alderney and Sept Iles in Brittany. The peak counts in 2008 of passing birds were of over 1000 birds on 13th January, and on 9th and 11th July when 200 and 150 birds respectively were seen. Hundreds of birds were present in a large flock offshore on 31st July.

GREAT CORMORANT *Phalacrocorax carbo*

Common coastal resident.

As usual, there were no breeding Cormorants at Durlston in 2008, but there were regular sightings of birds on the rocks below the Observation Point and flying past on the way to and from their breeding sites on the cliffs at Ballard Down. Birds of the white-headed Continental race *sinensis* were seen on 15th January and 9th March. A large flock of Cormorants was recorded in various locations including Studland and Swanage Bays during the last week of November. What were presumably the same birds (which included a high percentage of young birds) were recorded flying around Durlston Bay on 27th November and flying east past Durlston Head on 1st December.

SHAG *Phalacrocorax aristotelis*

Common coastal resident.

Shags are seen throughout the year at Durlston, mostly close to the cliffs. The maximum counts were of eleven birds on 11th February and 28th July. Five nests were noted between Durlston Head and Ragged Rocks, west of Anvil Point.

LITTLE EGRET *Egretta garzetta*

Scarce, passing offshore.

The Little Egret was a national rarity until 1990; it is now more numerous than the Grey Heron in Poole Harbour with breeding taking place, or attempted, on Brownsea Island DWT Reserve since 1996. Birds seen flying past Durlston or on the rocks in Durlston Bay are almost certainly from the Poole Harbour population. There were twelve records: on 25th January, 27th February, 1st and 31st May, 6th June, 14th July, 9th and 16th August, 8th and 15th October, 8th November and 20th December.

GREY HERON *Ardea cinerea*

Uncommon visitor.

Grey Herons can be seen at Durlston at any time of the year, although they are not common with only eleven records in 2008. Records are normally of single birds or pairs flying down the coast. Birds were recorded on 16th February; 6th and 28th June; 2nd July; 6th August; 9th, 13th and 22nd September; 4th and 6th October; and 30th December.

EUROPEAN HONEY-BUZZARD *Pernis apivorus*

Rare passage migrant.

There were two records. A bird was recorded on 3rd May heading north in the afternoon (as was a bird on the same date in 2007). A pale, white-headed juvenile bird was recorded over the Large Copse just after midday on 26th September.

RED KITE *Milvus milvus*

Scarce passage migrant.

A bird came in over the sea and headed north on 4th April.

MARSH HARRIER *Circus aeruginosus*

Scarce passage migrant and winter visitor.

A bird was seen on 14th May.

HEN HARRIER *Circus cyaneus***Scarce passage migrant and winter visitor.**A ring-tailed bird was seen on 22nd September.**MONTAGU'S HARRIER *Circus pygargus*****Rare passage migrant.**A female was seen in the late morning of 31st May.**NORTHERN GOSHAWK *Accipiter gentilis*****Rare visitor.**

An adult male was observed soaring slowly along the Landslip area above Durlston Bay on 4th October. The Goshawk was chased briefly by a female Sparrowhawk, giving an excellent comparison which highlighted the size and bulk of the Goshawk.

EURASIAN SPARROWHAWK *Accipiter nisus***Breeding resident and passage migrant.**

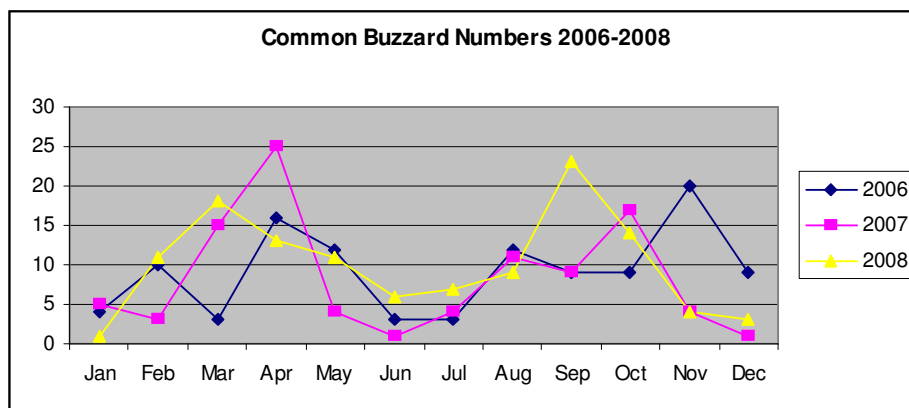
Birds were regularly seen hunting in the Park throughout the year, although sightings decreased during the breeding season (see Table). Records increased in October as birds were observed hunting the migrating passerine flocks. A male was displaying over the Landslip on 2nd March; young birds were heard calling on 3rd and 12th August. These records are suggestive of local breeding. Birds were seen bathing in the Wildlife Pond at the Visitor Centre on a few occasions.

Monthly counts (bird-days):

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
8	17	15	10	8	8	7	16	21	34	21	16

COMMON BUZZARD *Buteo buteo***Uncommon resident, breeding in the wider area.**

Although frequently seen in other parts of Purbeck, the Common Buzzard was, until the last couple of years, relatively uncommon in the Durlston area. The number of bird-days over the last three years has averaged approximately 110 and shown a relatively consistent pattern with more birds seen in spring and autumn (see Graph), presumably linked to displaying and young birds respectively.



Peak counts in 2008 were of seven birds over the Large Copse on 19th September, six birds on 21st September and five on 11th October. Birds were seen carrying various prey items – a pigeon on 17th April and a rabbit on 16th September.

Monthly counts (bird-days):

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
1	11	18	13	11	6	7	9	23	14	4	3

OSPREY *Pandion haliaetus***Scarce passage migrant.**

There were two records: a bird flew west high along the coast in the mid-afternoon on 9th April and a bird headed south on 13th September at the unusually early time of 0700hrs.

COMMON KESTREL *Falco tinnunculus***Fairly common breeding resident and passage migrant.**

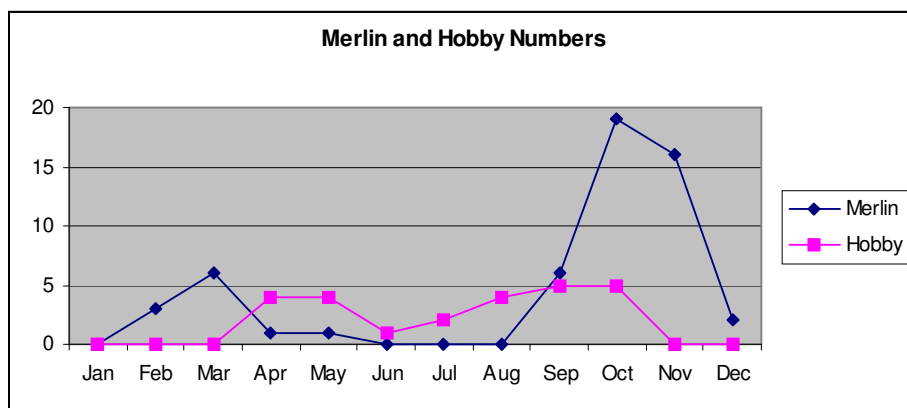
Kestrels were seen throughout the year in all areas of the Park. Young birds were seen in July and August. Six birds were reported on 16th October with four on 21st October. An extraordinary sight on 7th November was of a Kestrel attempting to drive a Peregrine Falcon off the carcass of a Short-eared Owl (see Short-eared Owl section for a full account).

MERLIN *Falco columbarius***Uncommon passage migrant and winter visitor.**

Merlins are most likely to be seen at Durlston during the passage periods, particularly in the autumn (see Table and Graph). Birds were also recorded in February including two on 16th February. A late spring passage bird was recorded on 6th May. The first autumn passage bird was on 12th September and birds were recorded from then until 21st December. Higher numbers were recorded in November than in 2006 and 2007; three birds were recorded on 3rd November. Merlins are often seen flying low across the ground, and Meadow Pipits are a favoured prey. A bird was seen over Durlston Head on 16th October lying in wait for straggling migrants in the manner of a Peregrine Falcon. A bird was seen over the Landslip on 8th November pursuing a flock of Starlings, and a bird was seen diving into a flock of Long-tailed Tits in the Gully on 14th November.

Monthly counts (bird-days):

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
0	3	6	1	1	0	0	0	6	19	16	2

**HOBBY *Falco subbuteo*****Uncommon summer visitor and passage migrant.**

The first record of the year was on 17th April and birds were seen intermittently until 15th October including a bird coming in over the sea on 6th June. Hobbies are less common at Durlston than Merlins during passage periods (see Graph above).

Monthly counts (bird-days):

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
0	0	0	4	4	1	2	4	5	5	0	0

PEREGRINE FALCON *Falco peregrinus***Fairly common breeding resident.**

Peregrines can be seen throughout the year at Durlston and are the most regularly seen bird of prey. One of the best places to see a Peregrine in Dorset is from the Coast Path, just to the west of the Dolphin Watch Hut. Birds are often perched on the ledge on Durlston Head to the east of the Observation Point and can also be seen hunting. Late summer normally provides good opportunities to see the parent birds teaching their young to hunt; three or more birds can sometimes be seen in the air together. Two chicks were raised this year. An extraordinary sight on 7th November was of a Kestrel attempting to drive a Peregrine Falcon off the carcass of a Short-eared Owl (see Short-eared Owl section for a full account).

OYSTERCATCHER *Haematopus ostralegus***Uncommon visitor and passage migrant.**

Oystercatchers are the commonest wader seen at Durlston. Birds are normally seen flying past offshore at any time of the year, either singularly or in twos or threes. They are also sometimes seen on rocks along the coast.

GREAT RINGED PLOVER *Charadrius hiaticula***Scarce, passing offshore in spring and autumn.**

There were only two records: a bird flying past offshore on 20th June and, more unusually, a bird passing over long Meadow on 23rd September.

EUROPEAN GOLDEN PLOVER *Pluvialis apricaria***Scarce passage migrant and winter visitor.**

All records were of birds passing overhead: on 17th February; 13th, 27th (two birds) and 28th September; 17th, 18th, 19th and 21st October; and 2nd and 5th November.

GREY PLOVER *Pluvialis squatarola***Uncommon passage migrant, mainly in spring.**

There were five records of birds flying past offshore: on 21st April, 4th May, 26th August, 25th October and 31st December.

NORTHERN LAPWING *Vanellus vanellus***Scarce passage migrant and winter visitor.**

There were five records of birds flying over: on 17th February (eight birds), 1st March, 12th May, 5th November (15) and 10th December.

SANDERLING *Calidris alba***Scarce passage migrant, passing offshore mainly in late spring.**

There were three records of birds flying past offshore: on 30th April, 10th May and two birds on 21st May.

DUNLIN *Calidris alpina***Scarce, passing offshore spring, autumn and winter.**

There were four records of birds flying past offshore: on 29th April (five birds), 4th May (four), 31st July (two) and 5th September (eight).

COMMON SNIFE *Gallinago gallinago***Scarce passage and winter visitor.**

There were three records: two birds put up by cattle as they wandered across Centenary Meadow on 14th February, what may have been the same two birds two days later, and a bird flying over on 27th October.

WOODCOCK *Scolopax rusticola***Scarce autumn migrant and winter visitor.**

There were six records of single birds: a bird flushed from the Gully on 1st March, a series of records in November (4th, 5th, 9th and 10th), and a further bird flushed from the top of the Gully on 5th December.

BAR-TAILED GODWIT *Limosa lapponica***Uncommon, passing offshore mainly in spring.**

There were only two records in 2008: a flock of 40 birds 'moving like a small cloud across the horizon' on 26th April, and a flock of 20 birds on 3rd May.

WHIMBREL *Numenius phaeopus***Uncommon passage migrant, mainly in spring.**

The first record was of a bird on 30th March with peak passage during the typical period of late April/early May; eight birds passed on 29th April. Return passage commenced with an early bird on 20th June and continued until 2nd October; nine birds passed on 29th August.

Monthly counts (bird-days):

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
0	0	1	44	11	4	3	18	10	1	0	0

EURASIAN CURLEW *Numenius arquata***Uncommon passage migrant and winter visitor.**

There were four records of passing birds: on 9th March (two birds), 2nd April, and 4th and 15th July.

COMMON SANDPIPER *Actitis hypoleucos***Uncommon passage migrant and summer visitor.**

There were eight records, a mixture of single or two birds flying past offshore, on the rocks below the Observation Point, at Tilly Whim or in Holcombe Cove. Common Sandpipers were recorded on the typical dates of 29th April, 7th and 10th May, 3rd June, 10th and 12th July, and 8th and 11th August.

GREEN SANDPIPER *Tringa ochropus***Rare passage migrant.**

A bird flew over the Visitor Centre on 28th July.

GREENSHANK *Tringa nebularia***Scarce passage migrant.**

There were two records of birds flying over: on 14th July and 6th August.

WOOD SANDPIPER *Tringa glareola***Rare passage migrant.**

A bird flew over on 25th August.

REDSHANK *Tringa totanus***Scarce passage migrant.**

There were two records of birds flying past offshore: on 11th July and 8th September.

GREY PHALAROPE *Phalaropus fulicarius*

A bird was seen off Durlston Head on 5th September, with a further bird close in off Durlston Head on 7th October, a day when nine birds were recorded at Lodmoor.

POMARINE SKUA *Stercorarius pomarinus***Scarce offshore passage migrant.**

There were six records: three birds on 3rd and 4th May (the latter including a very obliging bird which almost flew over the observer's head), and single birds on 19th May (the bird landed on the water, took off and landed again not far offshore), 6th and 10th September and 5th October.

ARCTIC SKUA *Stercorarius parasiticus***Uncommon offshore passage migrant.**

Arctic Skuas are the most frequently seen skua species off Durlston, followed by Great, Pomarine and Long-tailed. Birds were recorded on four days during the first half of the year with the first record on 21st April, and on 22 days in the second half with the last record of three birds on 10th October. Highest daily counts were of eleven birds on 5th September and eight on 5th October.

Monthly counts (bird-days):

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
0	0	0	2	2	1	6	10	26	13	0	0

GREAT SKUA *Catharacta skua***Uncommon, passing offshore in spring, autumn and winter.**

There was a significant increase in the number of sightings of Great Skua in 2008 compared with the previous two years. There were 42 bird-days in 2008 (compared with seven and six in 2006 and 2007 respectively). Birds were recorded on: 11th and 19th April; 4th and 26th May; 31st July; 9th, 16th and 27th August; 1st, 2nd (two birds), 5th, 10th and 26th September; 5th (24 birds), 7th, 20th and 26th October; and 29th December. The 24 birds passing on 5th October were seen during a 4.5 hour seawatch in a strong south-westerly gale with heavy rain. Other skuas that day included eight Arctic, one Pomarine and five unidentified birds, one of which was possibly a Long-tailed Skua.

BLACK-LEGGED KITTIWAKE *Rissa tridactyla***Fairly common visitor and offshore passage migrant.**

In 2008, over 20 pairs of Kittiwakes bred to the east of Durlston at Blackers Hole, a large sea cave near Dancing Ledge. Some of the birds seen passing Durlston, particularly in the summer, are no doubt these local breeding birds, but others are on passage or wintering in the area. Peak movements were in January between 9th and 14th with over 1000 birds on 13th and 500 on 14th.

BLACK-HEADED GULL *Chroicocephalus ridibundus***Common visitor and offshore passage migrant.**

The peak count was of 300 birds in a group offshore on 23rd January. Spring passage occurs between March and April. Some birds seen passing Durlston may be from the breeding population in Poole Harbour.

LITTLE GULL *Hydrocoloeus minutus*

Uncommon, passing offshore mainly in autumn and winter.

There were seven records: 23rd and 29th January; 11th March; 7th, 13th and 20th October; and 8th November.

MEDITERRANEAN GULL *Larus melanocephalus*

Uncommon offshore visitor and passage migrant.

There were more records in January and February 2008 than in 2007 but significantly fewer in October and November (in 2007, 49 and 34 bird-days respectively were recorded in those months). Records relate to either passing birds, or birds feeding with other gulls.

Monthly counts (bird-days):

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
7	10	1	0	0	0	2	3	11	9	12	6

COMMON GULL *Larus canus*

Fairly common winter visitor and offshore passage migrant.

Common Gulls are seen offshore on most days between mid-September and May, and occasionally at other times. Common Gulls are the fifth most frequently-seen gull species at Durlston; the order is as follows: Herring, Great Black-backed, Black-headed, Kittiwake, Common, Lesser Black-backed and Mediterranean. Peak counts were of over 40 birds on 25th January and over 50 on 8th November.

LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL *Larus fuscus*

Fairly common visitor and offshore passage migrant.

This species is seen in small numbers throughout the year, peaking in late summer and autumn. There was a marked easterly movement of Lesser Black-backed Gulls on 17th February. Several birds of the *intermedius* or *fuscus* races, which have darker mantles and wings than the birds of the *graellsii* race which breed in Great Britain were seen on 25th January.

HERRING GULL *Larus argentatus*

Common coastal resident and cliff-nesting species.

There were three to four nests between Durlston Head and Tilly Whim with another one to the west between Tilly Whim and Ragged Rocks. Three nests were visible from the cliff-top path with a total of five chicks. There is evidence of large offshore movements (mainly west) in October. One hundred and ten birds were reported on 15th April.

YELLOW-LEGGED GULL *Larus michahellis*

Rare visitor.

An adult was offshore on 21st July.

ICELAND GULL *Larus glaucooides*

Rare visitor.

A second winter bird passed heading east on 28th January.

GLAUCOUS GULL *Larus hyperboreus*

Rare visitor.

A second winter bird flew west past Tilly Whim on 8th March.

GREAT BLACK-BACKED GULL *Larus marinus*

Fairly common coastal resident and cliff-nesting species.

Great Black-backed Gulls are seen on, and around, the cliffs throughout the year. Two nests were noted at Durlston Head.

LITTLE TERN *Sterna albifrons*

Scarce offshore passage migrant.

There were two records: on 26th April and 16th August.

BLACK TERN *Chlidonias niger*

Scarce offshore passage migrant.

There were four records: on 26th April, 3rd May (two birds), 27th August and 6th September.

SANDWICH TERN *Sterna sandvicensis*

Fairly common summer visitor and offshore passage migrant.

Sandwich Terns are the commonest tern species seen at Durlston. The first record was on 14th March with birds seen from then until 19th October. Some of the birds may be from the nearest breeding colony, on Brownsea Island in Poole Harbour. Highest counts were of over 30 and 50 birds on 2nd and 5th September respectively.

COMMON TERN *Sterna hirundo*

Fairly common summer visitor and offshore passage migrant.

Birds were recorded from 26th April (five birds) onwards with the last record of three birds on 28th September. Some of the birds may be from the nearest breeding colony, on Brownsea Island in Poole Harbour. Peak counts were of 20 birds on 26th August and 30 birds on 10th September.

ROSEATE TERN *Sterna dougallii*

Rare offshore passage migrant.

A bird off Tilly Whim on 21st June was the first record for several years.

ARCTIC TERN *Sterna paradisaea*

Scarce offshore passage migrant.

There were seven records: on 29th April, 4th May (four birds), 9th (two) and 31st July, 6th August, 2nd September (two) and 5th October.

COMMON GUILLEMOT *Uria aalge*

Common coastal resident, winter visitor and offshore passage migrant.

The annual seabird counts recorded 319 Guillemots (including an apparent pair of bridled birds) at Durlston compared with 422 in 2007 and 602 in 2006. However, counts using the camera of the upper ledge recorded a maximum of 343 birds on 10th April and over 60 on the lower ledge. Over 400 birds were regularly counted; the numbers on the ledges seen through the camera have increased over the last 15 years. The breeding season began with eggs being laid very early – two were seen on 18th April; the weather on this day was poor and the birds were not settled. These two eggs were abandoned later in the day (all the birds left the ledge) and the eggs were then eaten by Herring Gulls. The next eggs were not seen until 24th April. The first chicks hatched on 26th May with 25 chicks on the upper ledge by 2nd June. For the sixteenth year running, 'Tufty' returned to his 'spot' just underneath the rock. Once again, an egg was laid from which the chick successfully fledged. A feeding survey was undertaken on 5th and 9th June, studying an area containing 38 chicks. Chicks started to leave the ledges by 22nd June with only five remaining two days later. By 12th July, there were no adults or chicks left on the upper ledge; three days later, only one adult and one chick remained on the lower ledge. Birds had started to return to the cliffs by the end of November with over 150 birds noted on 29th. By

the beginning of December, most were in breeding plumage. On 22nd December, over 200 birds were on the ledges, with another 20 on the water.

RAZORBILL *Alca torda*

Common coastal resident. winter visitor and offshore passage migrant.

Two birds were recorded at two apparently occupied sites during the Seabird Count on 10th June. Two pairs were later noted high up on the cliff; on 19th June, a fish was brought in, possibly indicating that a chick was present. Although four pairs represents an increase from the one pair recorded in 2007, this is still a decrease from the seven pairs recorded in 2006. There were some spectacular offshore movements of Razorbills in January. A stream of auks travelled west on 9th January at a rate of 1500 per hour; approximately 90% of these were Razorbills. On 13th, birds were estimated to be passing at the rate of 1600 per hour, giving a total estimate for the morning of 8000 birds. In contrast to the Guillemots, only 1% were in adult or summer plumage. One thousand birds passed on 14th and 17th January (when a 'large number' were also just offshore); over 2000 birds headed west on 23rd January. Less spectacular movements occurred at the end of the year. Of 400 auks flying east on 29th December, 70% were Razorbills and of over 300 auks also flying east two days later, the majority were Razorbills. Closer inshore, 29 birds were off Durlston Head on 29th December. Birds had returned to the cliffs by 12th December.

ATLANTIC PUFFIN *Fratercula arctica*

Uncommon summer visitor and offshore passage migrant.

Around 10-15 pairs of Puffins nest to the west of Durlston, primarily at Dancing Ledge. The majority of the birds seen at Durlston are likely to be from that population. There were eight records in 2008, mainly of passing birds, but very occasionally of birds close-in on the sea. Birds were recorded on: 5th January; 6th and 10th March; 26th April; 31st May (five birds); and 3rd (three birds), 6th and 10th June. The latter record was of a bird on the water below the Dolphin Watch Hut. Birds were seen regularly on the Friday evening summer Seabird Boat Trips to Dancing Ledge.

FERAL ROCK DOVE (Feral Pigeon) *Columba livia*

Common coastal resident.

A population of Feral Pigeons live on the cliffs throughout the year, breeding successfully. Many are taken as prey by the resident Peregrine Falcons.

STOCK DOVE *Columba oenas*

Uncommon passage migrant, mainly in autumn.

Two birds were seen coming in off the sea on 6th March, but Stock Doves are normally seen at Durlston in flocks of migrating Wood Pigeons in autumn. The highest count in 2008 was of 11 birds on 17th and 25th October, very low numbers compared with previous years.

WOOD PIGEON *Columba palumbus*

Common breeding resident, passage migrant and winter visitor.

As normal, Wood Pigeon migration began around the third week of October. Highest counts in 2008 were on 27th and 28th October (270 and 250 birds) and 12th November (350). Numbers were lower than those in 2007 (8,000 birds passed over on 13th November 2007) and significantly lower than in 2005 when there was a peak daily count of 72,000 birds.

COLLARED DOVE *Streptopelia decaocto*

Common breeding resident and uncommon passage migrant

There is some evidence of spring migration. Two or three pairs bred.

TURTLE DOVE *Streptopelia turtur***Uncommon summer visitor and passage migrant.**

There were eight records, mainly of birds in the Gully: on 29th April (two); 8th, 12th and 14th May; 31st July; and 2nd and 29th August. The final record was of a bird flying over on 10th September, although a bird was reported from just off the Park on 24th September. This is a declining species at Durlston, and in Dorset generally.

COMMON CUCKOO *Cuculus canorus***Uncommon summer visitor and passage migrant.**

The first record was of a bird on the relatively late date of 28th April. Further birds were recorded on 6th and 12th May, 6th June (a close view of a bird in the Wildlife Area) and a further bird there on 30th July. The Cuckoo is a declining species at Durlston.

BARN OWL *Tyto alba***Rare visitor.**

An unusual, and very sad, sight was that of a dead Barn Owl in the grass in Back Meadow on 26th June.

LITTLE OWL *Athene noctua***Uncommon visitor and resident in the wider area.**

There were nine records: on 7th April; 12th May, 15th June (probably a young bird, indicating breeding nearby); 31st August; 11th, 21st and 22nd October; and 7th and 21st December.

TAWNY OWL *Strix aluco***Breeding resident.**

Unusually, birds were mostly heard (at night and during the day), or very occasionally seen, in all months of the year. Most records came from the Castle Woods, but a bird was seen flying across the meadows in the evening of 21st May. There are thought to be at least two pairs resident at Durlston.

Monthly counts (bird-days):

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
5	5	5	1	1	5	5	1	1	7	4	5

SHORT-EARED OWL *Asio flammeus***Scarce winter visitor and passage migrant, mainly in autumn.**

There were two records in spring: on 8th April and 9th May. The first autumn record was on 29th September and started an excellent series of records. Birds were recorded on seven days in October, five in November (all in the first eight days), and three days in the last week of December. Two birds were mobbed by Ravens over the Castle on 6th November; in the late afternoon, three birds were seen hunting over rough grassland at Saxon Strips. One bird was forced down by Carrion Crows and appeared to be injured. By the time the Rangers arrived, a female Peregrine Falcon was plucking the by-then dead bird. The Peregrine was reluctant to leave until the Rangers approached very closely and then only flew off to sit on a nearby gate. Having ascertained that the owl was dead, the Rangers left the Peregrine to resume her meal, although she wasn't left in peace as a Kestrel then proceeded to try to drive her off, wheeling around and making close passes.

EUROPEAN NIGHTJAR *Caprimulgus europaeus***Rare Passage migrant.**

There were two records: a bird flying up the milepost slope towards the Visitor Centre on 21st May and a bird in the Gully on 22nd September.

COMMON SWIFT *Apus apus***Common summer visitor and passage migrant.**

The first record was on the late date of 1st May with 40 birds seen on 12th May. Towards the end of July, Swifts gather in flocks prior to departure after breeding; records then decline and most birds have departed by the beginning of September. Unusually, a small group of Swifts was seen circling high above the Visitor Centre on 29th September.

HOOPOE *Upupa epops***Rare passage migrant.**

A bird was reported in Saxon Field on 25th September.

WRYNECK *Jynx torquilla***Scarce passage migrant, mainly in autumn.**

There were two records this year. The first was of a bird seen on 29th and 30th August and 1st September. On the second day, it was seen sunning itself in an isolated blackthorn bush between Durlston and Townsend. The second record was on 14th September.

GREEN WOODPECKER *Picus viridis***Fairly common breeding resident.**

Green Woodpecker is the commonest woodpecker seen at Durlston. Young birds seen on 8th and 31st August suggested successful local breeding.

GREAT SPOTTED WOODPECKER *Dendrocopos major***Uncommon breeding resident.**

Great Spotted Woodpeckers are seen in the woodland areas at Durlston; drumming birds heard in spring (for example on 6th and 9th March, 10th April and 13th May) suggest the possibility of breeding in the woodland areas, but no young birds were seen. The 2008 visible migration surveys revealed movements of Great Spotted Woodpeckers. A total of 38 birds were recorded between 8th September and 12th November. On 2nd October, a bird was seen to make five attempts to fly out to sea, turning back each time. On 9th October, over a period of 2.5 hours, six birds were recorded flying due south in a straight line over Long Meadow. It is not known if they continued over the Channel.

WOOD LARK *Lullula arborea***Uncommon passage migrant, mainly in autumn.**

Two birds were recorded flying over Long Meadow on 1st March with a further bird the next day. The first autumn record was on 28th September. The main passage was in October with birds recorded on 3rd (two birds), 10th, 13th (two), 17th (two), 18th, 24th, 25th, 27th (three) and 28th (five). There were three November records: on 5th, 7th and 15th.

SKY LARK *Alauda arvensis***Fairly common breeding resident, winter visitor and passage migrant.**

Spring passage started on 7th February. Birds were singing from 9th February until 27th July with a maximum of eight birds heard on 13th June. The first brood of young birds was recorded on 9th June. The main autumn passage occurred during the last two weeks of October and the first week of November with peak visible migration counts of 37, 43, 42 and 32 birds passing overhead on 13th, 18th, 25th and 27th October respectively; 34 birds passed over on 5th November.

SAND MARTIN *Riparia riparia***Fairly common passage migrant.**

The first record was on the typical date of 14th March. Return passage was evident from the end of July, although 15 birds passed over on 4th July. Peak movements were on 30th August

(over 400 birds), 13th September (over 400 birds) and 8th October (300 birds). The last record was on the late date of 25th October.

BARN SWALLOW *Hirundo rustica*

Common summer visitor and passage migrant.

The first record was on 25th March and birds kept moving north throughout May. Return movement started to become noticeable from mid-August and was obvious until the third week of October. The last record was on 15th November. Peak movements were in the last two weeks of September with pronounced movements on 12th and 13th (over 1000 birds), 21st (when the estimate for the whole day was over 10000 birds passing east), 25th (1200), 26th (4500), 28th (1500), 29th (2000) and 30th (3000). Over 1600 birds moved through on 14th October. A Peregrine was seen hunting a flock of Swallows and House Martins on 3rd October.

HOUSE MARTIN *Delichon urbicum*

Common summer visitor and passage migrant.

The first record was on 16th April, around three weeks later than normal. Movement north continued to the end of May. The main passage was in the last week of September. Peak counts were on: 13th (over 2000 birds), 21st (1200), 23rd (2900), 26th (2100) and 29th (1600) September. Birds were still moving through in significant numbers in October: 900 on 13th, over 950 the next day and over 250 on 21st. The last record was on 7th November.

RICHARD'S PIPIT *Anthus richardi*

Rare passage migrant.

A bird flew over the Gully on 13th October.

OLIVE-BACKED PIPIT *Anthus hodgsoni*

Rare passage migrant.

An Olive-backed Pipit was sound recorded just after 0800 on 13th October as it rounded Durlston Head. The bird, which was not seen, called about seven times – three descending 'zzzz' and four very unobtrusive Blue Tit-like 'sip' notes, both too high-pitched for Tree Pipit. Details were verified with sonagrams later. This is only the sixth Dorset record, the first away from Portland, and the first since October 1992.

TREE PIPIT *Anthus trivialis*

Uncommon passage migrant.

Spring passage consisted of a few records between 23rd April and 17th May. Return passage commenced on 24th July and continued until mid October; the last record was on 13th October. The numbers of birds recorded were small other than on 8th and 12th September when 52 and 15 birds respectively passed overhead.

MEADOW PIPIT *Anthus pratensis*

Fairly common breeding resident, common passage migrant and winter visitor.

Birds bred on the Downs and were back on territory by the third week of February. Birds started moving north in January, becoming more obvious through February (for example, 20 birds passed overhead on 27th February), and peaking in March and early April. Significant spring passage movements occurred on 13th and 31st March (130 and over 100 birds respectively), and 3rd and 5th April when over 100 birds passed on both days. Movements of Meadow Pipits and other passerines attract raptors and Meadow Pipits were taken by a Peregrine Falcon on 6th March and a Merlin ten days later. Return passage became evident from mid-September with 120 birds passing on 12th September. Passage peaked at the end of September; significant movements took place on 24th, 25th and 26th September when 270, 860 and 390 birds respectively passed overhead. Numbers declined from mid-October onwards when 160 birds passed on 14th and 16th. The last evident movement was on 5th November when 48 birds were recorded.

ROCK PIPIT *Anthus petrosus***Common coastal breeding resident and uncommon passage migrant.**

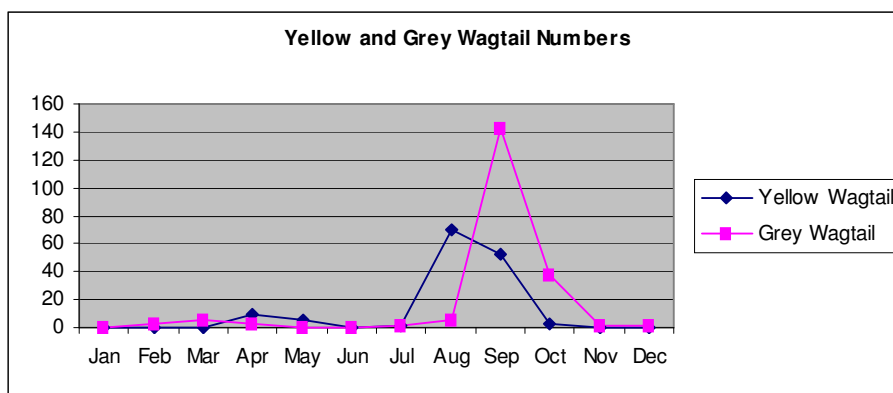
It is estimated that between five and eight pairs of Rock Pipit breed at Durlston. As elsewhere in Dorset, spring passage of Rock Pipits is rarely detected at Durlston. Autumn passage is more obvious and birds passed overhead between 28th September and 15th November, generally in small numbers. Exceptions were on 2nd, 8th and 13th October when 29, 25 and 30 birds respectively passed overhead.

WATER PIPIT *Anthus spinoletta***Rare Passage migrant.**

A summer-plumaged bird at the Tilly Whim end of the Gully on 30th April was only the second Durlston record.

YELLOW WAGTAIL *Motacilla flava***Fairly common passage migrant.**

The first record of the year was on 4th April; no further birds were recorded until 21st April. Birds were seen passing overhead occasionally and in small numbers until the first week of May. There were then no records until the autumn passage which peaked during the end of August and the first two weeks of September (see Graph); 30 birds were recorded on 30th August. The last record was of two birds on 6th October.

**GREY WAGTAIL *Motacilla cinerea*****Uncommon passage migrant and winter visitor.**

Grey Wagtails show a different occurrence pattern to the previous species. Birds may be seen at any time of the year, although they are normally absent from mid-May to mid-July. There is a marked autumn passage before numbers decline to those of very low numbers or single birds. Peak passage was in September with 28 birds on 12th, 40 on 13th and 16 on 21st. The total number of bird-days recorded in 2008 was more than double that recorded in 2007.

PIED WAGTAIL *Motacilla alba yarrellii***Occasional breeding resident, common passage migrant and uncommon winter visitor.**

Pied Wagtails can be seen at Durlston at any time of the year, commonly around the Visitor Centre. Autumn passage is noticeable; peak passage was from the end of September to mid-October. Significant movements occurred on 29th September and 13th October when 225 and 454 birds respectively were recorded.

(Winter) WREN *Troglodytes troglodytes***Common breeding resident and occasional passage migrant.**

There are estimated to be approximately 20 pairs of Wrens breeding at Durlston.

HEDGE ACCENTOR (Dunnock) *Prunella modularis***Common breeding resident.**

The Dunnock is a common and widespread breeding bird at Durlston with a population of over 20 pairs. There is no real evidence of any passage. An unusual sight on 12th November was of a Stoat being mobbed by Dunnocks and Stonechats by the Small Copse.

ROBIN *Erithacus rubecula***Common breeding resident, passage migrant and winter visitor.**

The Robin is a common and widespread breeding bird at Durlston with a population of over 25 pairs. There is some evidence of autumn passage, particularly during October and November although this was also evident in mid-September when an apparent increase in numbers on 13th September suggested an influx.

RUFIOUS NIGHTINGALE (Nightingale) *Luscinia megarhynchos***Scarce passage migrant.**

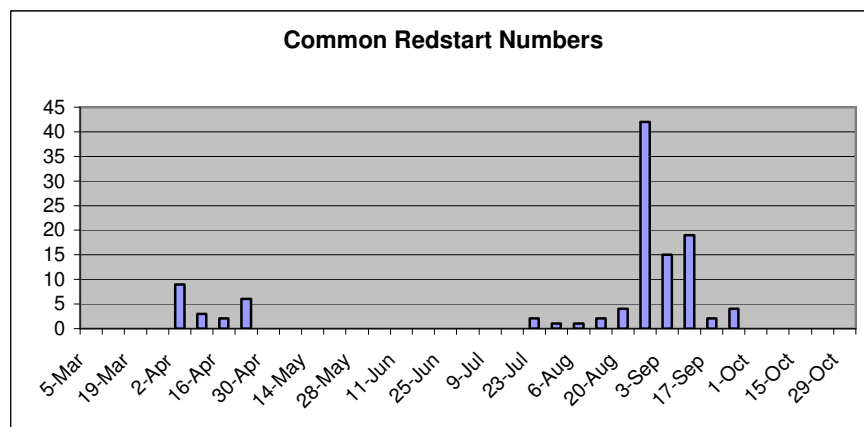
There was one record: a bird typically heard from deep in scrub on 15th August.

BLACK REDSTART *Phoenicurus ochuros***Uncommon passage migrant and winter visitor.**

Durlston is a reliable place to see wintering and autumn passage Black Redstarts. A male was regularly seen between January and March, gradually coming into breeding plumage. The favoured locations were the grassy slopes of the Gully and the ledges at Tilly Whim where it occasionally perched on the rock bearing the 'Look Round and Read Great Natures Open Book' inscription. It was joined on 2nd March by a female, raising hopes of possible breeding. It, or other birds, were seen up to 8th April with an immature male or a female present on 2nd April. There were no further records until a bird passed through on 16th May. The first bird of the autumn passage was recorded on 14th October. There was a pronounced passage this year with birds present on 24 days between mid-October and mid-November, normally the main passage period for this species. Records continued up to the end of the year, indicative of wintering bird(s).

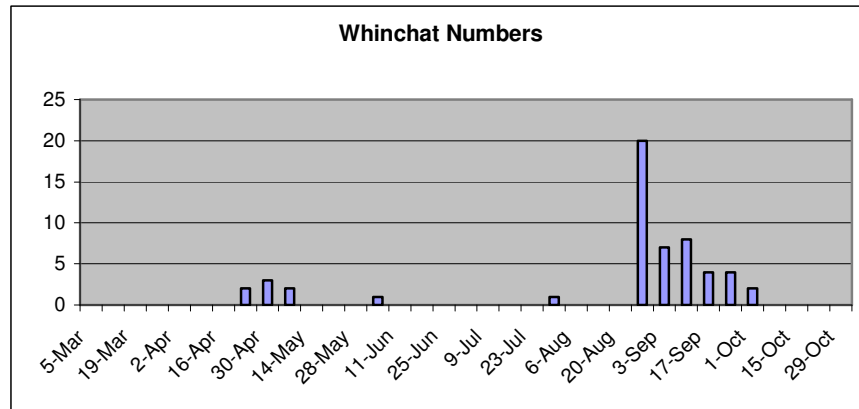
COMMON REDSTART *Phoenicurus phoenicurus***Fairly common passage migrant.**

The first spring passage record was on the 3rd April; passage was relatively short with no records after the end of April. The autumn passage of Redstarts at Durlston is normally noticeably heavier than in spring; this was particularly evident in 2008 (see Graph, which shows numbers on a weekly basis). Passage commenced on 27th July. Peak passage was in the last week of August and the first two weeks of September with 15 birds on 29th August and 16 on the next day. The last record was on 29th September.



WHINCHAT *Saxicola rubetra***Uncommon passage migrant.**

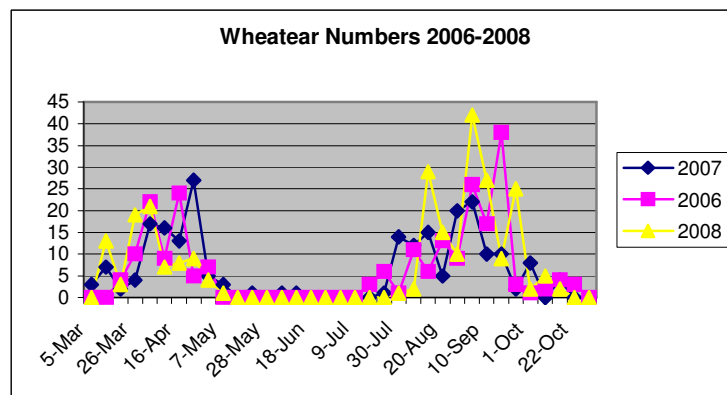
The first spring passage record was on 23rd April; birds passed through until 10th May with a late record on 6th June. Autumn passage commenced on the early date of 1st August, there were no further records until 28th August. Nine birds were recorded on 29th August, with six the next day. The last record was on 3rd October. The Graph shows numbers on a weekly basis.

**COMMON STONECHAT *Saxicola torquata*****Common breeding resident and passage migrant.**

Birds bred on the Downs, in the Gully and along the coastpath west of the Lighthouse. Spring passage was evidenced by an increase in mid-March; birds were seen away from their usual locations, for example, two were present in the Wildlife Area by the Visitor Centre on 14th March. Fledglings were already out of the nest and harassing their parents for food on 2nd June. Counts of birds on the Downs and elsewhere suggested a good breeding season. Autumn passage was apparent by mid-September. Peak counts were of 12 birds on 24th September, 14 on 14th October and over 15 on 17th October. An unusual sight on 12th November was of a Stoat being mobbed by Dunnocks and Stonechats by the Small Copse.

NORTHERN WHEATEAR *Oenanthe oenanthe***Fairly common passage migrant.**

Northern Wheatear is one of the commonest passerine passage migrants at Durlston and normally the first to arrive from Africa. The first spring record was of a bird on 13th March. Peak spring passage was during the first week of April. Return passage commenced at the end of July, peaking in the first week of September with 20 birds on 7th. The last record was on 18th October. The 2008 autumn passage was comparable to 2006, after an apparent light passage in 2007 (see Graph).



RING OUZEL *Turdus torquatus***Uncommon passage migrant.**

There were no spring records. The first autumn bird was on the typical date of 16th September. Birds (all singles) were recorded on four more days in September, six in October and four in November. The last record was on 9th November.

BLACKBIRD *Turdus merula***Common breeding resident, passage migrant and winter visitor.**

There are estimated be approximately 15 pairs of Blackbirds breeding at Durlston. Numbers built up from early November as migrants from continental Europe arrived.

FIELDFARE *Turdus pilaris***Uncommon passage migrant and winter visitor.**

Fieldfares are not as common at Durlston as Redwings and there were only intermittent records up to 1st March. Birds were seen in the second winter period from 21st October onwards, with the frequency of sightings peaking between late October and mid-November, indicating that the Fieldfare is mainly a passage bird at Durlston.

SONG THRUSH *Turdus philomelos***Common breeding resident and passage migrant.**

This species has shown an upturn in fortunes in recent years at Durlston with a breeding population now estimated to be over 12 pairs. A bird was heard singing on 5th January. Autumn movements were light with no significant movements recorded – the highest visible migration counts were of 14 birds on 13th November, 30 on 14th and 20 on 15th. Some of these had a greyish colouration showing that they were continental visitors mixing with the resident population.

REDWING *Turdus iliacus***Fairly common passage migrant and uncommon winter visitor.**

Redwings are more common at Durlston than Fieldfares and birds were recorded during the first winter period up to 7th April. The first record in the second winter period was of two birds on 27th September; birds were then seen regularly until the end of the year. As with the Song Thrush, autumn movements were generally light with no significant movements recorded other than 45 birds on 25th October, 60 on 5th November and 120 three days later.

MISTLE THRUSH *Turdus viscivorus***Occasional breeder, common visitor and uncommon passage migrant.**

As with the other thrushes, birds are seen far more frequently in the second winter period with passage birds seen regularly from mid-October onwards. Visible migration counts were of 15 birds on 9th October and nine on 13th November.

GRASSHOPPER WARBLER *Locustella naevia***Uncommon passage migrant.**

The first spring passage record was on 13th April. Compared with 2007, spring passage was light. Return passage commenced on 18th July; the last record was on 25th September. All records were of single or two birds. Monthly totals are given in the Table below.

Monthly counts (bird-days):

	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Totals
Grasshopper Warbler	5	2	0	7	10	8	32
Sedge Warbler	4	6	0	8	19	3	40
Reed Warbler	2	16	7	2	3	6	36

SEDGE WARBLER *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus***Uncommon passage migrant.**

The first record of the spring was on 23rd April. Passage continued during April and May, albeit in low numbers, until 29th May. Return passage commenced on 19th July with peak passage in August with three birds on 29th. The last record was on 13th September. Monthly totals are given in the Table above.

MARSH WARBLER *Acrocephalus palustris***Rare passage migrant.**

Marsh Warbler is a very rare visitor to Durlston and Dorset. A bird was seen and heard in the north-west corner of Saxon Field on 27th May.

REED WARBLER *Acrocephalus scirpaceus***Uncommon passage migrant.**

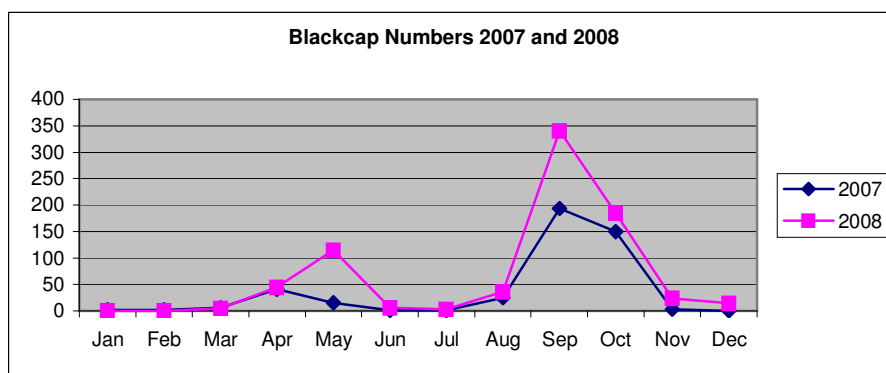
The first record of the spring was on 23rd April. As is normal with this species, spring passage was protracted and lasted until 21st June. Return passage, limited though it is, commenced on 30th July; records continued very intermittently until 22nd September. Reed Warblers are normally significantly less common at Durlston than Grasshopper and Sedge Warblers, primarily because of the lack of reedbed habitat. However, this pattern was not particularly apparent in 2008 and the species was the most common of the three in the spring (see Table above).

BLACKCAP *Sylvia atricapilla***Fairly common breeding summer visitor and common passage migrant.**

No over-wintering birds were recorded in January or February; the first record on 14th March may have been an early migrant. A total of 773 bird-days were recorded in 2008, significantly greater than the 439 recorded in 2007. This was particularly evident in May and September as shown in the Graph. Highest counts in autumn were of 45 and 80 birds on 12th and 27th September respectively. Birds continued to be seen through December.

Monthly counts (bird-days):

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
0	0	5	45	115	6	3	36	340	185	24	14	773

**GARDEN WARBLER *Sylvia borin*****Occasional breeding summer visitor and uncommon passage migrant.**

The first record was on 25th April; the main spring passage was in May. Return passage commenced at the start of August, but birds were never common; in total there were 72 bird-days. The last record was of two birds on the late date of 17th October.

Monthly counts (bird-days):

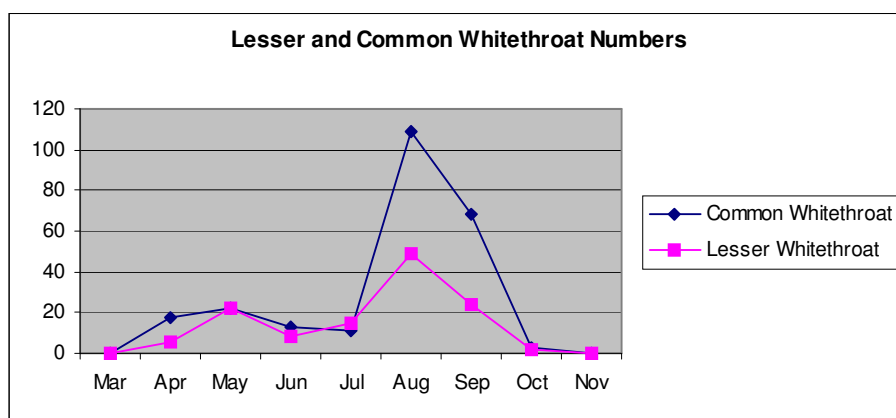
Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Total
0	6	13	1	2	29	18	3	0	72

LESSER WHITETHROAT *Sylvia curruca***Fairly common breeding summer visitor and passage migrant.**

The first spring record was on 22nd April. Eight birds were present on 8th May. Birds were recorded throughout the summer and breeding occurred in hedgerows and scrub in the farmland areas of the Park. As with many spring records of warbler species, it is difficult to separate passage birds from resident breeders. However, the frequency of records declined in June and July as birds had either moved through, or had become less evident during breeding. Return passage started at the end of July; ten birds were recorded on 31st July. The main passage was in August; eight birds were present on 4th August and eleven on 30th. The last record of the autumn passage was on 11th October. Lesser Whitethroats are not as common at Durlston as Common Whitethroats; there was a total of 126 bird-days compared with 244 bird-days for Common Whitethroat (see below).

Monthly counts (bird-days):

Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Total
0	6	22	8	15	49	24	2	0	126

**COMMON WHITETHROAT *Sylvia communis*****Common breeding summer visitor and passage migrant.**

The first spring record was on the early date of 3rd April and birds were then seen on an almost daily basis throughout May and into June. Young birds were seen from mid-June onwards. Common Whitethroats were significantly more common than Lesser Whitethroats during the autumn passage (see Graph). Peak passage was during August with over 30 birds being reported on two days at the beginning and end of the month. The last record was on 11th October. In total, there were 244 bird-days.

Monthly counts (bird-days):

Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Total
0	18	22	13	11	109	68	3	0	244

DARTFORD WARBLER *Sylvia undata***Uncommon breeding resident and autumn visitor.**

A pair held territory west of the Lighthouse with young seen; a further pair was present on the Diagonal Path from Tilly Whim.

YELLOW-BROWED WARBLER *Phylloscopus inornatus***Scarce autumn passage vagrant.**

There were two records. The first, on 8th October, was of a bird seen briefly and heard with a mixed flock of tits, crests and warblers in Large Copse. There was a further sighting an hour later of presumably the same bird about 600m to the west. The second record, on 17th October, was by the Castle amongst a flock of 30 Goldcrests and two Firecrests.

WOOD WARBLER *Phylloscopus sibilatrix***Scarce passage migrant.**

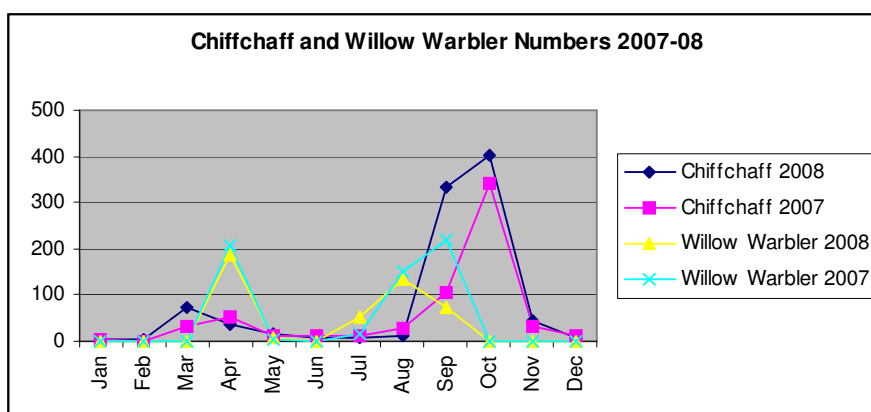
There were two records: a bird in Large Copse on 9th August and a bird on 12th September.

COMMON CHIFFCHAFF *Phylloscopus collybita***Common breeding summer visitor and passage migrant; scarce in winter.**

Chiffchaffs overwinter at Durlston with birds seen occasionally in January and February. It is never clear when wintering birds are replaced by migrants, but the Graph shows the influx of migrants in March and April. A bird was singing on 28th February. Chiffchaff autumn passage is later than the closely-related Willow Warbler and peaked in October with 60 birds on 6th and 11th October; there was also a significant movement earlier with over 90 birds on 12th September. Chiffchaffs were seen up to the end of the year. A total of 958 bird-days were recorded in 2008, an increase of almost 50% on 2007. This was primarily because of greater numbers of birds present in September 2008.

Monthly counts (bird-days):

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
6	3	73	36	18	9	10	13	334	403	44	9	958

**WILLOW WARBLER *Phylloscopus trochilus*****Occasional breeding summer visitor and common passage migrant.**

The first spring record was on 2nd April with a significant arrival two days later when over 100 birds were present. High numbers were also seen that day at Portland; 370 birds were present at Christchurch Harbour the next day. The Graph above shows the more pronounced spring migration of Willow Warblers compared with Chiffchaffs. The Graph also shows the earlier return passage of Willow Warblers which commenced in mid-July and continued until 25th September. The peak count was of 40 birds on 4th August. There was a late record on 18th October. Overall, numbers were approximately 25% down on 2007.

Monthly counts (bird-days):

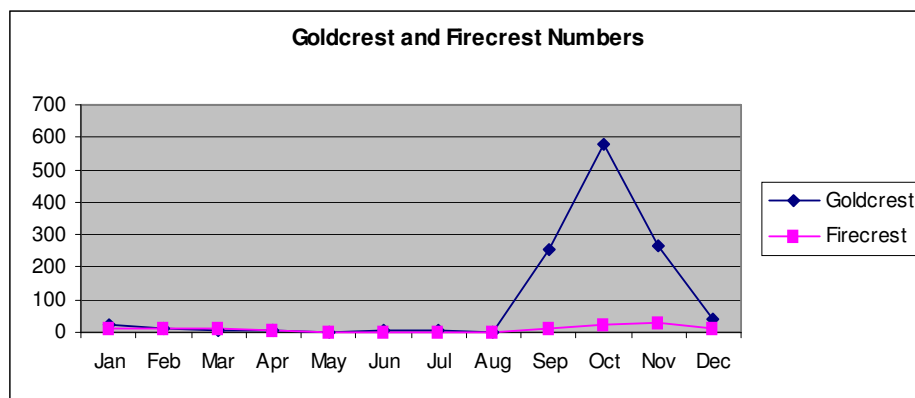
Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
0	0	0	188	7	0	51	134	73	0	0	0	453

GOLDCREST *Regulus regulus***Uncommon breeding resident, common passage migrant and winter visitor.**

Two to three males held territory. Goldcrests can be seen in any month but the numbers of resident birds are significantly increased by autumn migrants (see Graph). The peak count was of 70 birds on 11th October.

Monthly counts (bird-days):

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
25	14	8	5	2	3	3	0	252	576	264	42	1194



FIRECREST *Regulus ignicapillus*
Uncommon migrant and winter visitor.

Firecrests were seen intermittently throughout the first winter period up to 21st April with an unusual record on 21st June. The first autumn record was on 8th September. Birds were seen regularly until the end of the year with a peak in sightings in October and November. Five birds were reported on 14th November.

Monthly counts (bird-days):

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
14	10	12	5	0	1	0	0	9	26	31	14	122

SPOTTED FLYCATCHER *Muscicapa striata*
Fairly common passage migrant.

Spotted Flycatcher is a late migrant and the first spring passage record was on 3rd May with birds seen intermittently up to 29th June. Return passage commenced on 12th August and continued to 25th September. There was a total of eleven bird-days in spring and 51 in the autumn. Peak counts were of 14 and 11 birds on 29th and 30th August, and ten on 12th September.

PIED FLYCATCHER *Ficedula hypoleuca*
Uncommon passage migrant.

There were two records in spring: on 22nd and 23rd April. Return passage commenced on 31st July and was the forerunner of an excellent series of records. There were eleven bird-days in August, and seven in September, significantly more than in 2006 and 2007 when there were a total of six and five autumn bird-days respectively. Highest counts were of five birds on 30th August, and three on 12th September. The last record was of two birds on 25th September.

LONG-TAILED TIT *Aegithalos caudatus*
Common breeding resident.

At least three pairs held territory. A flock seen on 20th May contained many newly-fledged and still slightly fluffy young birds. Over 50 birds were seen on 14th November.

BLUE TIT *Cyanistes caeruleus*
Common breeding resident.

A family were raised in the nest box with a camera attached to the hide wall. Many more broods were raised elsewhere in the Park - young families of Blue and Great Tits were seen moving through the flowering Elder and Dog Rose on 11th June. Unusually, three Blue Tits were mixed in among the migrating flocks of passerines on 27th October, passing in a group high above Long Meadow (in continental Europe, many of the tits are migrants).

GREAT TIT *Parus major***Common breeding resident.**

Great Tits are found all across Durlston – particularly in hedgerows and woodland. Bollards by the Diagonal Path and by Tilly Whim were successfully used for nesting. A pair bred in a nest box.

COAL TIT *Parus ater***Uncommon breeding resident and passage migrant.**

Breeding occurred in the woodland. Continental birds were seen on 2nd (three), 3rd (two), 4th, 14th, 16th and 17th October.

EUROPEAN NUTHATCH *Sitta europaea***Scarce visitor.**

There was one record: a bird on 11th October.

EURASIAN TREECREEPER *Certhia familiaris***Uncommon breeding resident and visitor.**

Treecreepers were seen fairly regularly in the woods throughout the year. Four birds in a family party were seen on 5th September flitting from tree to tree, keeping in contact by their high-pitched calls.

EURASIAN GOLDEN ORIOLE *Oriolus oriolus***Rare passage migrant.**

There was one record: a female flying out of Reservoir Copse on 29th May. The bird was also seen the next day.

EURASIAN JAY *Garrulus glandarius***Fairly common breeding species and passage / irruptive migrant.**

As normal, Jays were particularly evident in the autumn, as they collected acorns from the many Holm Oaks around the Park. Numbers started to increase from mid-October onwards with over 20 birds seen on many days between mid-October and mid-November.

MAGPIE *Pica pica***Common breeding resident.**

Magpies were recorded daily and were seen perched on the back of cattle on a number of occasions. There was successful breeding again. On 16th July, a bird was seen with a Slow-worm in its beak. The Slow-worm's tail came off and the Magpie dropped the rest, leaving it to slither into the undergrowth, the tail sacrificed. Forty birds were recorded on 15th November.

EURASIAN JACKDAW *Corvus monedula***Common breeding resident and passage migrant.**

At Durlston, Jackdaws mostly breed on the cliff-face. Forty-two birds were recorded on 6th January with 40 on 23rd August and 10th November. Jackdaws move through Durlston in autumn; over 700 birds passed overhead on 25th October, with over 100 on 27th October and 5th and 7th November.

ROOK *Corvus frugilegus***Uncommon non-breeding visitor.**

Rooks are seen at Durlston primarily in the autumn, and usually in the meadows. A flock of over 70 birds was seen on the Park on 8th November. Highest visible migration counts were of over 150 birds on 25th October and over 70 on 8th November.

CARRION CROW *Corvus corone***Common breeding resident.**

Carrion Crows nest in the Gully and various wooded areas. Thirty birds were seen on 29th March.

COMMON RAVEN *Corvus corax***Fairly common visitor.**

Ravens are normally seen at Durlston as single birds or pairs; the maximum count was a family party of five on 14th July.

COMMON STARLING *Sturnus vulgaris***Uncommon breeding resident, passage migrant and winter visitor.**

A general increase in Starling numbers was noticeable by mid-October. On 30th October, 1,100 birds arrived from the south in one hour; this is the largest migration count for a number of years. Other significant movements were on 3rd, 4th and 7th November (130, 150 and 120 birds respectively).

HOUSE SPARROW *Passer domesticus***Uncommon breeding resident and passage migrant.**

House Sparrows are much less numerous at Durlston than 15 years ago when they bred at the Visitor Centre and Bungalow.

TREE SPARROW *Passer montanus***Scarce passage migrant.**

Records were confined to birds passing overhead in autumn: on 29th September (two birds); 9th (two), 11th (three) and 27th (four) October; and 4th November (two).

COMMON CHAFFINCH *Fringilla coelebs***Common breeding resident, passage migrant and winter visitor.**

Breeding occurs on the Park amongst the hedgerows and in the Gully. Significant visible migration movements were noted on 8th (627 birds), 25th (650) and 28th (530) October; and 4th, (535), 5th (815) and 12th November (660).

BRAMBLING *Fringilla montifringilla***Uncommon passage migrant mainly autumn and winter visitor.**

There were seven records in the first half of the year (more than in 2006 and 2007): on 9th (two birds) and 16th January; 5th, 29th and 31st March; and 5th and 7th April. As with other finch species, autumn passage is always more pronounced. Autumn passage commenced on 2nd October and lasted until 8th December. Significant visible migration movements were noted on 25th October (42 birds), and 5th and 12th November (32 and 42 respectively).

EUROPEAN SERIN *Serinus serinus***Scarce passage migrant, mainly in spring.**

There was one spring record: a bird heard on 6th May as it flew in off the sea, perched briefly in a Sycamore below the Lighthouse before continuing. There were two autumn records: a bird in Saxon Field on 21st September, and a bird passing over on 13th October.

GREENFINCH *Carduelis chloris***Common breeding resident, passage migrant and winter visitor.**

The Greenfinch is a commonly-seen species throughout the year. The breeding population is estimated to be over ten pairs. Although still numerous as a passage migrant, Greenfinches do

not move through Durlston in the numbers associated with species such as Chaffinch, Linnet and Goldfinch. Peak counts were of 56 and 55 birds on 9th and 16th October respectively.

GOLDFINCH *Carduelis carduelis*

Breeding resident, common passage migrant and winter visitor.

The Goldfinch is a commonly-seen species throughout the year. Breeding occurred with young noted during July. Significant visible migration movements were noted on: 29th September (718 birds); 4th (840), 10th (874) and 25th (1420) October; 3rd (1525), 4th (960) and 9th (720) November.

SISKIN *Carduelis spinus*

Fairly common passage migrant, particularly in autumn.

In the first half of the year, Siskins were recorded from 21st January to 3rd May. Autumn passage birds were seen from 8th September onwards; early passage birds seen at the beginning of July may have been from local breeding populations. There was a pronounced autumn passage in 2008. Significant visible migration movements were noted on September 25th (240 birds) and on the following days in October: 6th (360), 10th (334), 11th (316), 13th (428), 14th (349), 16th (227), 21st (246), 22nd (214) and 25th (335).

LINNET *Carduelis cannabina*

Breeding resident and common passage migrant.

The breeding population of Linnets has reduced significantly and is now estimated to be approximately six pairs. Autumn passage was evident from the end of September, with over 300 birds moving through on 29th September. Significant visible migration movements were noted on the following days in October: 4th (545), 9th (282), 10th (540), 11th (590), 13th (515), 19th (379), 23rd (610) and 25th (605). A count of 340 birds on 5th November was the last significant movement of the autumn.

LESSER REDPOLL *Carduelis carbaret*

Fairly common passage migrant mainly in late autumn.

There were five spring records: on 21st January, 27th February and 3rd, 5th and 9th March (two birds). Significant visible migration movements were noted on the following days in October: 8th (48 birds), 17th (81), 21st (52), 22nd (47) and 25th (68).

MEALY REDPOLL *Carduelis flammea*

Rare passage and winter visitor.

A bird was reported on wires on 11th October. Two birds sound-recorded passing over on 29th September may have been 'Greater' or 'North-western' Redpolls of one of the *rostrata* or *islandica* races.

COMMON CROSSBILL *Loxia curvirostra*

Uncommon passage migrant and irruptive visitor.

Compared with 2006 and 2007, a large number of Crossbills passed over Durlston in 2008 between 5th June and 14th November. Birds were recorded on 45 days (compared with seven in 2006 and two in 2007). Peak counts were: 23 on 25th July, 29 on 6th August, 20 on 3rd September and 20 on 11th October. Monthly bird-days are given in the Table below.

Monthly counts (bird-days):

Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Total
5	44	53	55	106	23	286

COMMON BULLFINCH *Pyrrhula pyrrhula***Breeding resident and uncommon passage migrant.**

The Bullfinch is a secretive and often under-recorded species; between four and seven pairs bred at Durlston. There were relatively high numbers of Bullfinches around in both winter periods. In the second winter period, over 20 birds were present in the Gully on 18th October and 15 on 27th November. Some of these birds may have been a result of a good breeding season. Peak counts during visible migration watches were of over 30 birds on 18th October, 22 on 25th October and 18 on 5th November.

HAWFINCH *Coccothraustes coccothraustes***Scarce passage migrant.**

There were no records in the first half of the year. Although numbers were not as great as in October 2005, autumn passage was more pronounced than in 2006 (three records) and 2007 (one record). In 2008, a total of eleven birds passed over on eight days in October, and six birds on four days in November.

LAPLAND BUNTING *Calcarius lapponicus***Scarce passage migrant.**

There were four records: birds passing overhead on 25th September, 14th October, and 5th and 13th November.

SNOW BUNTING *Plectrophenax nivalis***Rare passage migrant.**

A bird passed over the Castle on 23rd October.

YELLOWHAMMER *Emberiza citronella***Fairly common breeding resident and passage migrant.**

At least ten males held territory. Highest visible migration count was of 12 birds on 5th November.

ORTOLAN BUNTING *Emberiza hortulana***Scarce passage migrant.**

There were three records: a bird flying over Long Meadow on 13th September, one on 20th September in Saxon Field, and one over Long Meadow on 8th October.

REED BUNTING *Emberiza schoeniclus***Uncommon passage migrant, mainly in autumn.**

There were five spring records: on 17th February; 13th, 26th and 31st March; and 3rd April. A bird was in the Gully on 7th July. As with other finch species, autumn passage is always more pronounced than in spring and records consisted predominantly of small numbers of birds moving overhead. Reed Buntings were recorded on five days in September, 19 in October, 13 in November and one in December.