

Durlston

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Durlston

National Nature Reserve

Bird Report 2009



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 birds 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 2009

SYSTEMATIC LIST OF SPECIES RECORDED IN 2009

The records presented in this Systematic List are based largely on the Park Rangers' daily Diary entries with additional information from various websites and other sources including Warren Clayton. 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.

60

In describing the status of species at Durlston, the semantic terms presented below 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; the species 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.

These terms are based on those used in *The Birds of Dorset* (Green G., 2004).

The List follows the sequence and scientific names given in the British List: A Checklist of Birds of Britain (7th edition) published in Ibis Volume 148 (3), 526-563 by the British Ornithologists' Union (BOU), updated by the British Ornithologists' Union Records Committee: 36th Report (November 2007) published in Ibis (2008) 150, 218-220.

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).

Unidentified GREY GOOSE *anser spp*

Rare, passing offshore or overhead.

Four unidentified grey geese passed, heading east on 9th November.

GREATER CANADA GOOSE *Branta canadensis*

Rare, passing offshore or overhead.

There were two records: seven birds passed Durlston Head on 12th April and two passed on 21st July.

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 12th March; the first record of the second winter period was on 7th October. Maximum counts of passing birds were of 21 on 29th October and 52 on 24th December.

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. An unusual sight on 11th January was of three Shelducks flying above the Visitor Centre in the direction of Durlston Bay. Subsequent records conformed to the normal pattern – two birds on 19th January; four on 11th February; two on 6th, two on 29th and two on 31st March; one on 13th April; two each on 3rd and 4th May; two on 14th June; two on 17th and one on 30th October; two on 12th November; and two each on 12th and 24th December.

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

There was one record: of four birds passing at sea on 18th September.

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

There were three records of birds passing offshore: three birds on 17th April, one on 19th October and four on 1st November.

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

Varying numbers and combinations of birds (normally three) were seen visiting the Wildlife Pond by the Visitor Centre on three days in February, and one in March, April and May. A pair was on the Dew Pond on 4th December. Other records were of passing birds: two on 28th August, one on 23rd October, two on 4th and five on 9th November.

NORTHERN PINTAIL *Anas acuta***Rare, passing offshore in spring, autumn and winter.**

There were four records of birds passing offshore: one on 5th January, four on 9th November, one on 13th December and two on 15th.

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

There were two records of birds passing offshore in March: three on 5th and two on 20th.

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

There were three records of birds passing offshore: two on 22nd January, two on 15th July and one on 24th December.

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. The number of bird-days in March was heavily influenced by the presence offshore on 29th March of a large distant raft of over 200 Scoters which then flew off east.

Monthly counts (bird-days):

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
38	23	293	41	29	62	48	43	26	51	29	77

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

There were four records, more than in recent years. A group of eight birds were seen on the sea off Durlston Head on 4th January before flying off. Further records were of two birds on 25th January, two on 2nd November and one on 14th December.

LONG-TAILED DUCK *Clangula hyemalis***Rare, passing offshore in spring, autumn and winter.**

There was one record: a bird passing east on 30th 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. An unusual record was of a bird flying overland on 16th October.

Monthly counts (bird-days):

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

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

Following the eleven records in 2008, numbers of records in 2009 returned to those of 2006 and 2007 with birds only recorded on two occasions: on 20th February and 4th May.

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

There were three records: two birds on 2nd and 4th April, and one on 30th June.

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

A significant population of this gamebird has become established on the Park. Four to five males held 'territory'; females generally outnumbered males other than in winter in the vicinity of the Visitor Centre when males were more common.

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

Red-throated is by far the commonest diver seen at Durlston (and at the other coastal watch-points in Dorset). Numbers in the first winter period were significantly higher than in 2006-08 with 32 birds reported on 13th January and 31 on 2nd February; high numbers were also noted at Portland Bill. The last record of the first winter period was on 8th April; the first record of the second winter period was on 16th October. A total of 313 bird-days were recorded.

Monthly counts (bird-days):

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
144	91	17	4	0	0	0	0	2	6	17	32

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: 5th January, 1st February, 8th March and 29th November.

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

During the first half of the year, birds were recorded intermittently up to 4th May with two further records on 27th May and, very unusually, on 28th June. The first record of the second winter period was on 12th November. A total of 29 bird-days were recorded, similar to 2006-08.

Monthly counts (bird-days):

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
2	5	2	3	4	1	0	0	0	0	5	7

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

There were four records: single birds seen passing on 19th February, and 1st, 2nd and 24th December.

RED-NECKED GREBE *Podiceps auritus***Rare, offshore in winter.**

A bird offshore on 17th January was the first record for many years.

SLAVONIAN GREBE *Podiceps auritus***Rare, offshore in winter.**

A bird was seen in Durlston Bay on 4th February; as with the previous species, this was the first record for many years. There is a small wintering population in Poole Bay and Poole Harbour; this bird may have originated from there.

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

Fulmars are seen for most of the year at Durlston 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, but there were four apparently occupied sites.

SOOTY SHEARWATER *Puffinus griseus***Scarce, passing offshore mainly in autumn.**

There were only two records: three birds on 1st September, and 11 birds heading west the next day. These birds were part of a record-breaking down-Channel movement with 177 Sooty Shearwaters noted at Portland Bill (the previous highest day total there was 118 on 29th September 1963, whilst the previous highest annual total was only 156).

MANX SHEARWATER *Puffinus puffinus***Uncommon, passing offshore in spring, summer and autumn.**

The species is generally under-recorded at Durlston. The species was first reported on 29th March. Numbers of passing birds then continued to increase, with peak movements in late May with 100 birds passing on 26th and 68 the next day. The last record was of two birds on 6th October.

Monthly counts (bird-days):

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
0	0	1	77	248	6	66	7	1	2	0	0

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

In 2008, there was a significant increase in the number of Balearic Shearwaters reported at Durlston compared with the previous two years, partly because of an unprecedented early winter influx. A total of 97 bird-days were recorded in 2008 (compared with 28 in 2006 and 12

in 2007). In 2009, total numbers (at 29 bird-days) were comparable with 2006 and 2007. Other than a bird on 18th January, the first record was on 18th May. Six birds were recorded on 15th July; the last record was on 21st October.

Monthly counts (bird-days):

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
1	0	0	0	1	2	12	5	5	3	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. One was reported from a boat on 17th June off Durlston Head.

LEACH'S STORM-PETREL *Oceanodroma leucorhoa*
Scarce, passing offshore mainly in autumn and winter.

One of the most significant ornithological events to occur in Dorset in recent years was the 'wreck' of Leach's Storm-petrels on 29th November. Birds were reported from all along the coast from Burton Bradstock in the west to Christchurch Harbour in the east. The 'epicentre' was at Chesil Cove and Portland Bill with up to 1,000 and 600 birds respectively. These are unprecedented numbers. At Durlston, 30 birds were recorded, with single birds also previously recorded on 25th and 28th November.

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 2009 were on 12th January when birds were moving west at the rate of 210 per hour, on 15th July (120 birds) and on 11th August (150 birds).

GREAT CORMORANT *Phalacrocorax carbo*
Common coastal resident.

There were no breeding Cormorants at Durlston in 2009, 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. An unusual record was of 25 birds flying west overland on 18th October.

SHAG *Phalacrocorax aristotelis*
Common coastal resident.

Shags are seen throughout the year at Durlston, mostly close into the cliffs. The maximum counts were of 12 birds on 13th June. On 18th February, several Shags were seen flying into the cliffs with large beakfuls of sticks and seaweed for nest-building. Three nests were noted between Durlston Head and west of Anvil Point. Cursory attempts at nest-building had started again by 28th December.

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 and can be seen at any time of the year. There were eleven records in 2009 ; four birds were seen on 12th and 27th October.

GREAT WHITE EGRET *Ardea alba*

Rare passage migrant.

A Great White Egret was seen well, early in the morning of 6th April near the western boundary of the Park. It was flying low eastwards and the following features were noted: large size (approximately that of a Grey Heron), very bulging neck, definitely no yellow colouration on the feet, very distinctive long legs trailing beyond the tail, a large bill which appeared dark, and slow 'stately' wingbeats. It, or a further bird, was seen at Lodmoor on the same day.

GREY HERON *Ardea cinerea*

Uncommon visitor.

Grey Herons can be seen at Durlston at any time of the year, although they are not common. There were 22 records in 2009, approximately double the number recorded in 2006-08. More unusual records were as follows: one chased off the pond by the Visitor Centre by gulls on 8th January, a bird in one of the roadside trees on 26th January, and a bird struggling up the Gully on 27th April against the wind, 'veering back and forth like a tacking yacht'.

EUROPEAN HONEY-BUZZARD *Pernis apivorus*

Rare passage migrant.

There were four records in 2009. The first was of a bird flying north on 20th May, one of the local Common Buzzards rose up to join it, allowing a good comparison. A bird flew east on 14th September. A juvenile bird was watched over southern Swanage on 26th September, flying directly east. This bird frequently twisted its tail; a habit that Honey Buzzards share with kites, but one that is not exhibited by Common Buzzards. The last record was of a bird flying east along the coast on 28th October. This is the latest ever Dorset record by over a week (and also probably the last record in the country in 2009).

RED KITE *Milvus milvus*

Scarce passage migrant.

A bird was seen from Durlston as it flew from the area of the tip towards Langton Matravers on 10th March.

MARSH HARRIER *Circus aeruginosus*

Scarce passage migrant and winter visitor.

There were three records: a bird headed in from offshore on 16th March, one was seen heading north on 29th August, and a bird was seen on 16th September.

HEN HARRIER *Circus cyaneus*

Scarce passage migrant and winter visitor.

A male was seen on 22nd October.

NORTHERN GOSHAWK *Accipiter gentilis*

Rare visitor.

A Goshawk was seen briefly over Durlston Bay before being chased off by a pair of Ravens on 20th March. A further bird was reported on 29th September.

EURASIAN SPARROWHAWK *Accipiter nisus*

Breeding resident and passage migrant.

Birds were regularly seen hunting in the Park throughout the year, although as usual, sightings decreased during the breeding season (see Table). Birds were observed bathing in the pond by the Visitor Centre on various dates. Records increased significantly in September and October as birds were observed hunting the migrating passerine flocks; three or more birds were reported on 20 days between mid-September and the end of October. On 28th July, a young Sparrowhawk was observed harassing a Raven, triggering a sparring match which ended when the hawk gave up. A young bird was heard calling from scrub on 30th July and young birds were seen on 5th August. All this is highly suggestive of local breeding.

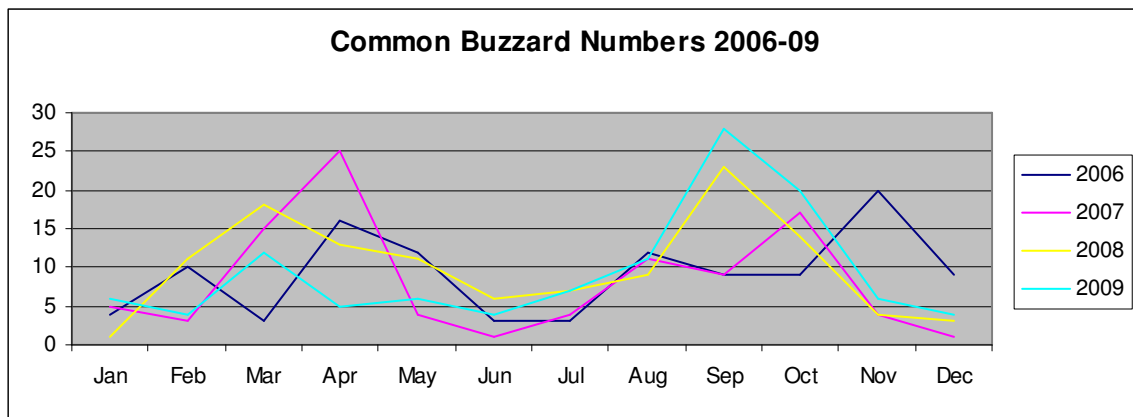
Monthly counts (bird-days):

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
15	10	15	8	6	5	6	12	44	61	27	27

COMMON BUZZARD *Buteo buteo*

Uncommon resident, breeding in the wider area.

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



Monthly counts (bird-days):

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
6	4	12	5	6	4	7	11	28	20	6	4

OSPREY *Pandion haliaetus*

Scarce passage migrant.

There was one record: a bird flying low over the Gully on 30th August.

COMMON KESTREL *Falco tinnunculus*

Fairly common breeding resident and passage migrant.

Kestrels were seen throughout the year in all areas of the Park. A juvenile was reported on 25th June, with two birds the next day. An unusual record was of a bird heading due south, straight out to sea on 25th September.

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). There was no evidence of any spring passage this year and records from

the first winter period were few in number with the last bird recorded on 30th March. The first autumn passage bird was on 4th September and birds were recorded from then up to 10th December. On 8th October, three Merlins were seen circling around the Castle, patrolling in search of exhausted or unwary migrant birds.

Monthly counts (bird-days):

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	9	23	11	4

HOBBY *Falco subbuteo*

Uncommon summer visitor and passage migrant.

The first record of the year was of a bird coming in over the coast from offshore on 13th April. In autumn, a bird was watched heading straight out to sea on 3rd October and a very late bird was over the Landslip on 28th October.

Monthly counts (bird-days):

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
0	0	0	3	3	2	1	3	6	4	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. Peregrines hunt and catch a variety of prey at Durlston. On 29th March, a Peregrine was seen taking a Magpie in mid-air, then struggling back to the cliffs as the hapless crow desperately tried to peck its would-be assassin. On 24th April, a Great Black-backed Gull was watched relentlessly harrying a Peregrine as it swooped low through the Gully, a pigeon clutched in its talons, eventually forcing the Peregrine to drop its prey and escape around Tilly Whim. Two birds were watched attacking flocks of Wood Pigeons on 30th October. As with other raptors such as Sparrowhawk and Merlin, one of the features of the autumn is the number of Peregrines around. Three or more birds were recorded on 12 occasions between October and mid-December including four birds on 9th and 28th October and on 27th November.

OYSTERCATCHER *Haematopus ostralegus*

Uncommon visitor and passage migrant.

Oystercatchers are the commonest wader seen at Durlston. Birds are normally seen passing offshore at any time of the year, either singularly or in twos or threes. However, as the only wader species to occur in any numbers along the rocky coasts in Dorset, they are sometimes seen on rocks along the coast.

AVOCET *Recurvirostra avosetta*

Rare passage migrant.

One passed on 21st October.

GREAT RINGED PLOVER *Charadrius hiaticula*

Scarce, passing offshore in spring and autumn.

There was only one record: a bird passing offshore on 2nd September.

EUROPEAN GOLDEN PLOVER *Pluvialis apricaria*

Scarce passage migrant and winter visitor.

All records were of birds passing overhead: three on 6th February (in a mixed flock with ten Lapwings); 5th, 14th, 18th, 22nd and 28th September; 7th, 12th, 17th (two), 21st (four), 25th (three), 28th and 30th October; and two on 6th November.

GREY PLOVER *Pluvialis squatarola*

Scarce passage migrant, mainly in spring.

There were four records of birds passing offshore: 19th August, 22nd October, 12th November and 1st December.

NORTHERN LAPWING *Vanellus vanellus*

Scarce passage migrant and winter visitor.

There were six records of birds flying over: on 8th January (two), 2nd February (eleven), 6th February (ten with three Golden Plovers), 17th and 21st December (four on both days) and two on 24th December. In addition, there was an unusual record on 10th January of a Lapwing with a pair of Snipe in a field west of the Lighthouse.

SANDERLING *Calidris alba*

Scarce passage migrant, passing offshore mainly in late spring.

There were three records of birds passing during seawatches in May: on 6th (two), 19th (four) and 20th.

JACK SNIPE *Lymnocyptes minimus*

Rare winter visitor.

A bird was flushed from a tussock of Tor Grass on the Downs on 15th January.

COMMON SNIPE *Gallinago gallinago*

Scarce passage and winter visitor.

There were six records: two birds in a field west of the Lighthouse on 10th January, two over high on 19th October, single birds over on 26th October and 21st December, an unusual total of 11 seen heading west on 24th December, and a further bird on the Park on the same day.

WOODCOCK *Scolopax rusticola*

Scarce autumn migrant and winter visitor.

There were three records in February: on 6th, 18th (three birds flying across Long Meadow) and 19th. The first bird of the autumn was in the Gully on 31st October, one was over Long Meadow on 27th November and a bird was seen on 9th December.

BLACK-TAILED GODWIT *Limosa limosa*

Rare, passing offshore on passage and winter.

A bird passed on 30th August.

BAR-TAILED GODWIT *Limosa lapponica*

Uncommon, passing offshore mainly in spring.

There was only one record: of eight birds passing offshore on 5th May.

WHIMBREL *Numenius phaeopus*

Uncommon passage migrant, mainly in spring.

The first record was of four birds on 13th April; spring passage in 2009 was very light (a total of 13 bird-days compared with 53 in 2008). A bird was in the meadows on 4th May. Return passage commenced with an early bird on 15th June; no birds were seen after 29th August.

Monthly counts (bird-days):

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
0	0	0	11	2	1	2	15	0	0	0	0

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

There were seven records of single passing birds: on 11th February, 6th March, 27th June, 6th August, 19th August, 14th November and 20th November.

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

There were twelve records, normally of single birds passing offshore, but sometimes on the rocks in Durlston Bay or in the Tilly Whim area. Common Sandpipers were recorded on the typical dates of 27th April, 16th June, 28th June, 12th and 25th July (two). There was a good sequence of August records: 4th, 9th, 19th (two), 20th, 25th and 26th. The final record was of a bird at Tilly Whim on 18th September.

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

There were two records of birds flying over: on 28th June and 26th July.

REDSHANK *Tringa totanus***Scarce passage migrant and winter visitor.**

There were four records of birds mainly passing offshore: on 14th June, on 26th September, on 16th October and one on 27th October high overhead.

TURNSTONE *Arenaria interpres***Uncommon, passing offshore in spring, autumn and winter.**

There were five records of birds passing offshore: on 27th April, 13th May, 5th and 6th August (four both days) and ten on 7th August.

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

There were five records: one on 18th May, three on 20th May close inshore enough to clearly see the tail feather 'spoons', one on 26th May, one on 27th May and one on 29th 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. During spring passage, birds were recorded from 17th April to 10th June with three on 15th May. Birds were seen very intermittently from 27th June until 29th October. The 2009 autumn passage represents a significant decrease on 2008, when there were a total of 55 bird-days between July and October.

Monthly counts (bird-days):

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
0	0	0	3	9	4	2	5	1	2	0	0

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

After an increase in 2008 to a total of 42 bird-days (compared with seven in 2006 and six in 2007), numbers in 2009 returned to levels comparable with 2006 and 2007. There were eight records of single birds: on 9th April; 5th, 20th, 26th and 30th August; 29th October; 29th November and 24th December.

BLACK-LEGGED KITTIWAKE *Rissa tridactyla*

Fairly common visitor and offshore passage migrant.

Kittiwakes breed 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. In winter, birds were passing at the rate of 360 per hour on 12th January; 120 passed on 20th and 22nd January; 200 passed on 26th January. One hundred Kittiwakes were in a large feeding gull flock off Durlston Head on 17th January with a further 100 plus birds feeding amongst the white water on 25th January. An unusual record on 30th April was of a bird perched on the cliffs – it is almost 20 years since they last bred at Durlston.

BLACK-HEADED GULL *Chroicocephalus ridibundus*

Common visitor and offshore passage migrant.

Spring passage occurs between March and April. Some birds seen passing Durlston may be from the breeding population in Poole Harbour. Over 300 birds were in Durlston Bay on 20th October; 450 were in Durlston Bay on 4th November.

LITTLE GULL *Hydrocoloeus minutus*

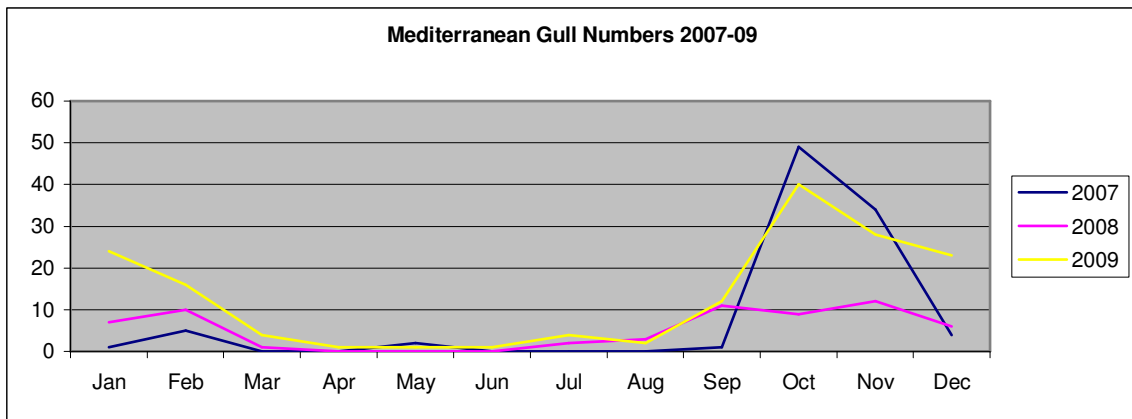
Uncommon, passing offshore mainly in autumn and winter.

There were thirteen records, almost double the number in 2006-08. There were three records in February: three birds on 1st, and single birds on 2nd and 6th. There were no records during April, normally a peak month for the species in Dorset. Two birds were recorded on both 28th and 29th September. There were eleven bird-days in October: a single bird on 5th, five on 9th, three on 19th and two on 20th. In November, birds were recorded on 14th, 15th, 17th and 29th. Durlston Bay is a good site for Little Gulls.

MEDITERRANEAN GULL *Larus melanocephalus*

Uncommon offshore visitor and passage migrant.

The number of Mediterranean Gull bird-days in 2009 was 156, an increase from 61 in 2008 and 96 in 2007. Birds were recorded in all months of the year; the pattern of previous years was repeated with an October peak (see Graph). In 2009, numbers in January and February were higher than in previous years.



Monthly counts (bird-days):

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
24	16	4	1	1	1	4	2	12	40	28	23

COMMON GULL *Larus canus*

Fairly common winter visitor and offshore passage migrant.

Common Gulls are seen offshore at Durlston on most days between mid-September and May. A bird seen on 14th July was very unusual. First winter period peak counts were of over 150 birds on

17th January, 50 on 20th, 40 on 22nd; 70 on 2nd February and 50 on 7th February. In October, 20 birds were recorded on 19th and 27th; 32 were recorded on 11th December and 27 on 24th.

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. For example, ten birds moved through on 26th July. Several darker birds, possibly of the continental race *L. f. intermedius*, were noted on 4th January.

HERRING GULL *Larus argentatus*

Common coastal resident and cliff-nesting species.

There was a total of 12 nests in the Durlston Head area. A feeding gull flock off Durlston Head on 17th January included over 400 Herring Gulls with 100 birds five days later. There is evidence of large offshore movements (mainly west) in October – 120 birds were recorded on 31st October, and on 2nd and 6th November.

YELLOW-LEGGED GULL *Larus michahellis*

Rare offshore visitor.

There were two records of birds offshore: a first summer bird on 17th August, and one on 29th August. July and August are the peak months for this species in Dorset.

GLAUCOUS GULL *Larus hyperboreus*

Rare offshore winter visitor.

One, and then two adult Glaucous Gulls were present in the Swanage area from around mid-January until the end of February. One of the birds was first seen from Durlston on 7th February in a large flock of over 500 gulls and other seabirds feeding off Durlston Head. Other records were all in February: on 8th (when a bird was present all morning, occasionally associating with a large mixed feeding flock of gulls), 9th, 10th, 12th (when a bird was present on the edge of the cliffs between a Herring Gull and a Great Black-backed Gull), 16th, 18th, 19th, 20th and 21st.

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. There were two nests in the Durlston Head area. Thirty-five birds were noted on 19th October.

SANDWICH TERN *Sterna sandvicensis*

Fairly common summer visitor and offshore passage migrant.

The first record was of a bird on 16th March with birds seen from then until 18th October. Some of the birds may be from the nearest breeding colony, on Brownsea Island in Poole Harbour. The highest count was of 12 birds in Durlston Bay on 15th July.

COMMON TERN *Sterna hirundo*

Fairly common summer visitor and offshore passage migrant.

Birds were recorded from 17th April onwards. Records continued through the summer; the last record was on 30th August. Some of the birds may be from the nearest breeding colony, on Brownsea Island in Poole Harbour.

ARCTIC TERN *Sterna paradisaea*

Scarce offshore passage migrant.

Records during the spring passage comprised three birds on both 15th and 18th May. Autumn passage consisted of birds on 7th, 21st, 22nd and 25th October.

LITTLE TERN *Sterna albifrons*

Scarce offshore passage migrant.

There were three records: on 27th April (two birds), 29 April and 1st May.

BLACK TERN *Chlidonias niger*

Scarce offshore passage migrant.

Two birds passed on 13th May. A bird on 2nd September was the only passing tern.

COMMON GUILLEMOT *Uria aalge*

Common coastal resident, winter visitor and offshore passage migrant.

On 12th January, there was a large westwards movement of 3,800 auks per hour which encompassed approximately 60% Razorbills and 40% Guillemots. On 25th January, there was a bizarre record of a Guillemot in a hedge near the Large Copse. The bird had presumably been blown inland overnight; a closer inspection revealed a small patch of oil on its flank. This is potentially fatal, as the birds cannot avoid ingesting the oil while preening. After careful cleaning, the bird was released into Durlston Bay. The breeding ledges were packed tight on 3rd January. The first egg was noted on 24th April, the first chick on 25th May. By 2nd June, 246 adults were counted on the top ledge. Twenty eight chicks were recorded via the cliff camera with 50 on 4th June. The data for the 2009 breeding season is not as robust as in previous years but a total of 420 adult birds were counted on the ledges; birds on the main ledge produced approximately 64 chicks. Chicks started to leave the ledges by 23rd June. By 9th July, the top ledge was completely empty; 26 adults were counted on the lower ledge along with two chicks. Guillemots returned to Durlston by 10th November, with 12 on the water below the cliffs. Birds were reported on the ledges on 1st December, the majority of these birds were in 'summer' (ie breeding) plumage but some, approximately 25%, were in 'winter' plumage.

RAZORBILL *Alca torda*

Common coastal resident. winter visitor and offshore passage migrant.

There were some spectacular Razorbill movements in January. On 12th January, there was a large westwards movement of 3,800 auks per hour which encompassed approximately 60% Razorbills and 40% Guillemots. On 17th January, there were over 600 Razorbills on the sea in large 'rafts'; 10% of these birds were in breeding plumage. In addition, approximately 500 birds moved westwards. On 22nd January, over 1,000 birds passed by heading west (with a few heading east); over 350 were on the water. On 25th January, there were at least 1,000 birds passing by, and resting and feeding on the water just off Durlston Head. Twelve hundred birds headed west the next day with large numbers also on the sea. Five hundred birds were recorded on 8th February. Four pairs of birds were noted on 18th February engaged in courtship behaviour; this had risen to nine pairs (plus a few single birds) by 16th March. There were ten apparently occupied sites, the highest count for many years. Ten birds were still present on the sea on 3rd July.

LITTLE AUK *Alle alle*

Rare passage migrant and winter visitor, usually storm driven.

There was one record: of a bird offshore on 15th May.

ATLANTIC PUFFIN *Fratercula arctica*

Uncommon summer visitor and offshore passage migrant.

Around 10-15 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, normally of passing birds: on 12th and 26th January (a bird on the water close in), 17th April, 15th May, 27th May, 3rd July, and 28th and 29th November. Birds were seen regularly on the summer evening Seabird Boat Trips to Dancing Ledge.

FERAL ROCK DOVE (Feral Pigeon) *Columba livia*

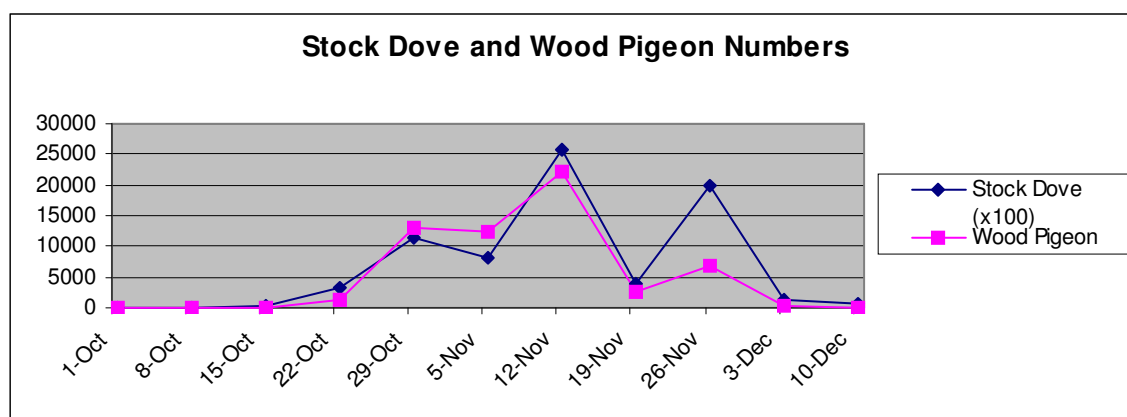
Common coastal resident.

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

STOCK DOVE *Columba oenas*

Uncommon passage migrant, mainly in autumn.

Stock Doves are often seen in flocks of migrating Wood Pigeons. In 2009, the approximate ratio of Stock Doves to Wood Pigeons was 1:80. The Graph below shows the close relationship between the weekly totals of the two species, other than in the week beginning 26th November when the Stock Dove total was significantly influenced by a large movement of 159 birds on 26th November. Note that the Stock Dove numbers in the Graph have been multiplied by a factor of 100 to give a comparable scale. The peak Stock Dove movement was on 17th November when 243 birds passed over (with 21,000 Wood Pigeons).



WOOD PIGEON *Columba palumbus*

Common breeding resident, passage migrant and winter visitor.

The first real Wood Pigeon movement of the autumn was of 815 birds on 26th October. Four days later, 2,195 birds passed over. Other significant November counts were on 2nd (5,560 birds), 4th (3,400), 7th (3,650), 17th (21,000) and 26th (4,160). The final significant movement of the autumn was on 1st December when 1,575 birds passed over. The total number of Wood Pigeons counted passing over between the beginning of October and mid-December was 58,673 (compared with 749 Stock Doves). On 7th November, one flock of 450 Wood Pigeons flew out to sea for approximately one mile before turning around, flying inland and settling back in their night-time roost. Thousands of roosting Wood Pigeons were noted on the Landslip on 18th November. Two Peregrine Falcons were watched harassing flocks of Wood Pigeons on 26th November.

COLLARED DOVE *Streptopelia decaocto*

Common breeding resident and uncommon passage migrant

Two pairs bred. There is some evidence of autumn migration. Five high-flying birds were noted on 3rd October; visible migration surveys between mid-September and mid-December recorded a total of 21 birds in October, 17 in November and four in December.

TURTLE DOVE *Streptopelia turtur*

Uncommon summer visitor and passage migrant.

The first record was of a bird flying in over the sea on 7th May. There were a series of sightings in May, although it is not clear how many birds were involved: on 13th, 18th, 21st, 22nd (two birds), 23rd, 24th, 25th (a singing bird) and 28th. There were two records in late summer: on 7th and 22nd August. The Turtle Dove is a declining species at Durlston.

ROSE-RINGED PARAKEET (Ring-necked Parakeet) *Psittacula krameri*

Scarce visitor from local feral breeding population.

Rose-ringed Parakeets recorded at Durlston almost certainly originate from the small colony at Studland, although this seems to have decreased in size in recent years. Two birds were seen on 13th and 23rd January, five on 10th June, two on 11th June and three on 24th October.

COMMON CUCKOO *Cuculus canorus*

Uncommon summer visitor and passage migrant.

The first record was of a bird on the late date of 8th May; there were only two further records: on 21st and 29th June. The Cuckoo is a declining species at Durlston.

BARN OWL *Tyto alba*

Rare visitor.

One was seen in the evening of 12th February.

LITTLE OWL *Athene noctua*

Uncommon visitor and resident in the wider area.

There were three records: on 4th, 25th and 27th October.

TAWNY OWL *Strix aluco*

Uncommon breeding resident.

There were 14 records of birds heard or seen up to 7th April. There were two summer records: a bird seen at night on 29th June and one hooting in Castle Woods in broad daylight on 30th August. There were only three records in the autumn and winter: on 23rd September and 11th and 30th December.

SHORT-EARED OWL *Asio flammeus*

Scarce winter visitor and passage migrant, mainly in autumn.

A bird was patrolling up and down the Gully on 4th January; what was probably the same bird was hunting over the farmland the next day. Further records in the first half of the year were on 2nd February, one over the Gully on 25th March, what was probably the same bird on 28th March in Johnston Meadow, and one over the Gully on 9th April. There were four autumn records: birds flushed from the Gully on 21st September on 16th October, and birds on 25th October and 5th November.

EUROPEAN NIGHTJAR *Caprimulgus europaeus*

Rare passage migrant.

A Nightjar was flushed from the Gully in broad daylight on 24th August.

COMMON SWIFT *Apus apus*

Common summer visitor and passage migrant.

The first record was on 25th April with 30 birds on 4th May. Towards the end of July, Swifts gather in flocks prior to departure after breeding; records then decline and the last record was on 2nd September.

EUROPEAN BEE-EATER *Merops apiaster*

Rare passage migrant, mainly in spring.

One flew west on 23rd June.

WRYNECK *Jynx torquilla*

Scarce passage migrant, mainly in autumn.

A bird was seen near the western boundary on 29th August, and it, or a further bird, was seen in the area of the Gully on 31st August. A very showy bird was present on the Coast Path near the western boundary on 27th September and for the next three days. It, or a further bird, was seen in the car parks on 1st October.

GREEN WOODPECKER *Picus viridis*

Fairly common breeding resident.

Green Woodpecker is the commonest woodpecker at Durlston. Two young birds were seen on 28th June and an adult with four young birds were seen on 31st July, one of them on a turret of the Castle. These records are indicative of successful local breeding.

GREAT SPOTTED WOODPECKER *Dendrocopos major*

Uncommon breeding resident.

Drumming birds heard in winter and spring (for example on 16th March) suggest the possibility of breeding in the woodland areas, but no young birds were seen. An unusual sight on 17th August was of a Great Spotted Woodpecker deserting the woodland and joining a Green Woodpecker on the downland. An interesting feature of the visible migration studies undertaken at Durlston in autumn 2009 was the number of Great Spotted Woodpeckers recorded. Between mid-September and 21st November (when the last bird was reported), a total of 74 birds were recorded. Six birds were recorded on 23rd October.

WOODLARK *Lullula arborea*

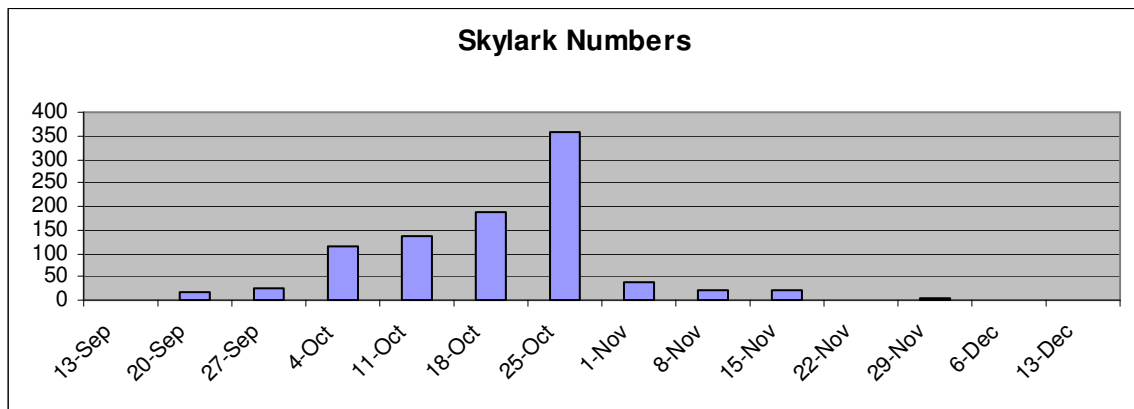
Uncommon passage migrant, mainly in autumn.

One passed overhead on 17th April, the only record of the first half of the year. A bird was recorded on 9th August, possibly dispersing from a local breeding site; the next record was of four birds on 28th September heralding the start of the autumn passage. October is the main passage period for Woodlarks; a total of 39 birds were recorded passing over including eleven on 25th October and seven together over The Globe on 31st. A Woodlark flew in off the sea chased by a Peregrine on 27th October. Three birds passed over in November and the last record was of a single bird on 1st December. The total of 47 birds was more than double that of 2008.

SKYLARK *Alauda arvensis*

Fairly common breeding resident, winter visitor and passage migrant.

The first singing bird was heard on the early date of 26th January from the Saxon Field. Spring passage was evident on 8th February when 15 birds passed over. Autumn passage peaked in the last week of October with 114 birds on 23rd and 137 on 30th; numbers then dropped significantly (see Graph).



SAND MARTIN *Riparia riparia*

Fairly common passage migrant.

The first record was of ten birds on the typical date of 16th March followed by sporadic spring records. Over 20 birds were seen heading out to sea on 28th June; two hundred birds passed over on 31st July. Peak autumn passage movements were in mid-September with 300 birds per hour passing over on 15th September and 360 two days later. The last record was on 17th October.

BARN SWALLOW *Hirundo rustica*

Common summer visitor and passage migrant.

The first record was of two birds on 18th March. Spring passage continued with 50 birds on the 31st March and many over the meadows on 17th April. Return passage peaked in mid-September with 2,700 birds per hour moving through on 15th September and 1,500 birds two days later. Counts of over 1,000 birds were made on 19th, 21st, 24th, 27th and 29th September, and on 3rd and 11th October. The last record was on 27th November.

HOUSE MARTIN *Delichon urbicum*

Common summer visitor and passage migrant.

The first record was of two birds on 25th March. Over 20 birds were recorded on 4th May. Return passage peaked in mid-September with 2,000 birds per hour moving through on 14th September and 4,900 birds per hour the next day. The last record was on 2nd November.

RED-RUMPED SWALLOW *Cecropis daurica*

Rare passage migrant.

A Red-rumped Swallow was seen flying over Long Meadow on 29th October with three Barn Swallows – it was easily picked out, even at a distance. What was presumably the same bird appeared again over the Landslip 10 minutes later with more Barn Swallows.

TAWNY PIPIT *Anthus campestris*

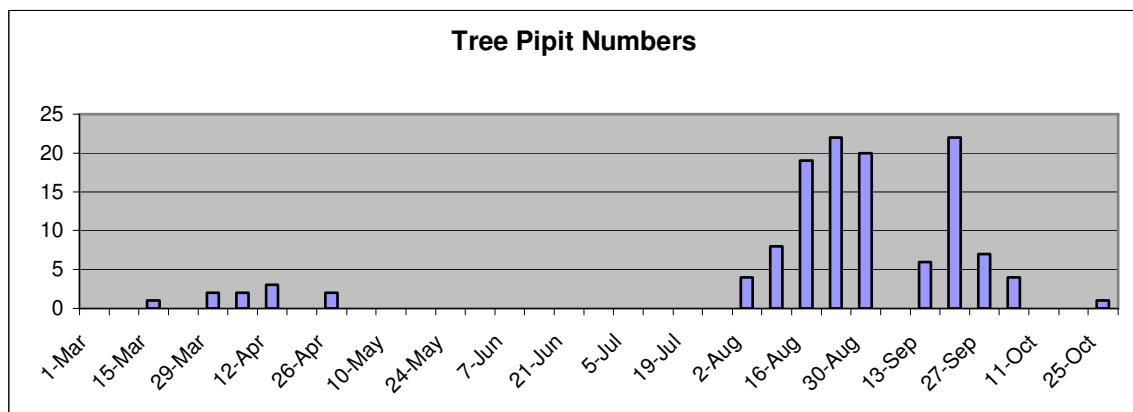
Rare passage migrant.

A Tawny Pipit was seen briefly on the arable field at 12.30 on 23rd September before flying east (towards Poole Harbour), calling loudly.

TREE PIPIT *Anthus trivialis*

Uncommon passage migrant.

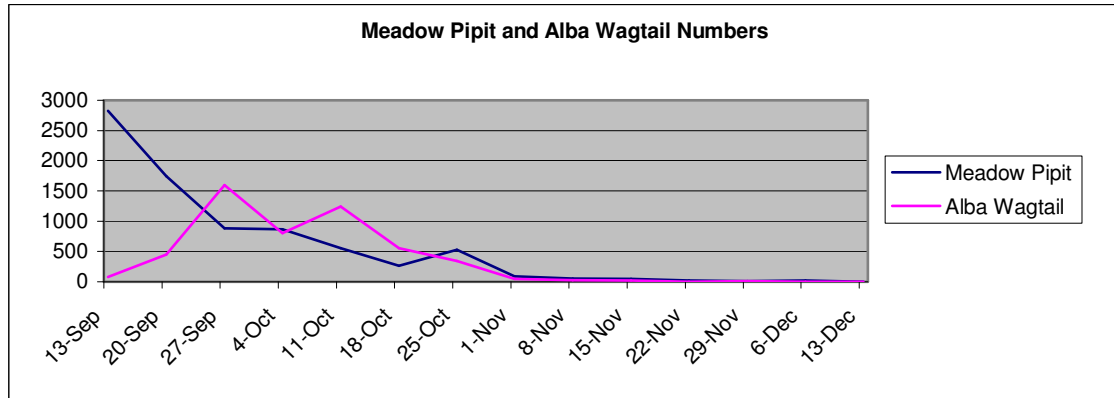
The first bird was reported on the very early date of 16th March (very early birds were also reported from Worth Matravers and Arne). Return passage commenced on 6th August with a maximum count of nine birds on 22nd August. The last record was on 25th October.



MEADOW PIPIT *Anthus pratensis*

Uncommon breeding resident, common passage migrant and winter visitor.

Movement became apparent at the end of January when nine birds passed overhead on 28th, followed by six on 8th February and 20 on 11th March. A significant movement occurred on 18th March when 100 birds moved north. Return passage became evident in mid-September and there were significant movements of 1,420 birds on 19th and 960 on 21st. Numbers then gradually reduced (see Graph). The total number of birds counted moving overhead during visible migration surveys between mid-September and mid-December was 7,900. This does not include a large flock of around 200 birds present on the Park on 19th, 21st and 24th October.



ROCK PIPIT *Anthus petrosus*

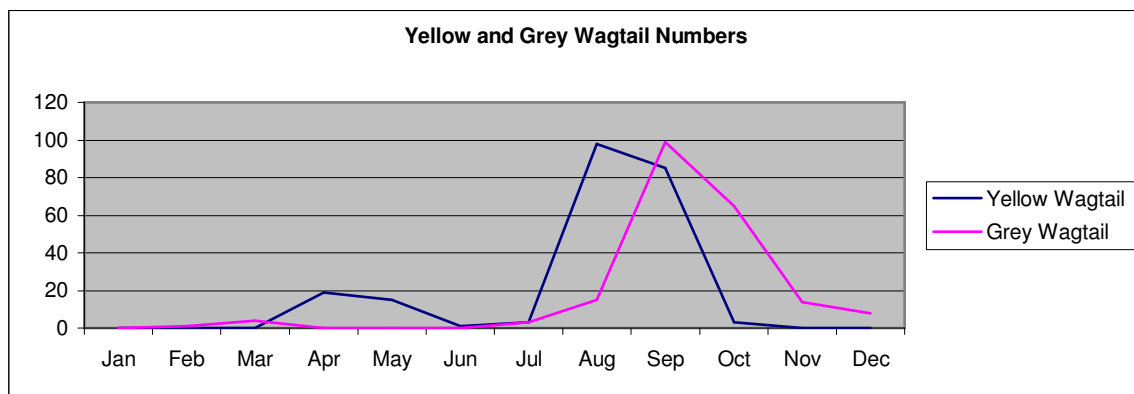
Common coastal breeding resident.

It is estimated that between five and eight pairs of Rock Pipit breed at Durlston. Eighteen birds were counted along the coast on 10th May. Visible migration surveys between the third week in September and the end of December recorded a total of 33 birds in September, 134 birds in October, 53 in November and three in December.

YELLOW WAGTAIL *Motacilla flava*

Fairly common passage migrant.

The first record of the year was on 5th April with birds seen passing overhead regularly, albeit in small numbers (other than six on 25th April and 4th May), until 25th May. There was a late bird on 10th June. Three birds were recorded on 14th July with a single bird on 3rd August. Autumn passage commenced in mid-August peaking between the last week in August and the third week in September; 20 birds were recorded on 25th and 29th August. The last record was on 17th October. The total number of bird-days was 224.



GREY WAGTAIL *Motacilla cinerea*

Uncommon passage migrant and winter visitor.

Grey Wagtails show a different occurrence pattern to Yellow Wagtails (see Graph above). 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. The Graph shows the later autumn passage compared with Yellow Wagtail. One in the woodland on 6th December was unusual. The total number of bird-days was 209.

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. Breeding may have occurred in 2009. A White Wagtail (of the Continental race *M.a.alba*) was noted on 8th March. Such birds also move through on autumn migration but it is not possible to distinguish them from the British race as they pass overhead; birds are collectively referred to during visible migration studies as 'alba wagtails'. The first real autumn movement was on 19th September when 64 birds flew east. Significant movements occurred on 28th September (382 birds) and 1st October (388 birds). The last significant movement was of 195 birds on 18th October; numbers then declined (see Graph of Meadow Pipit and Pied Wagtail numbers above).

(Winter) WREN *Troglodytes troglodytes*

Common breeding resident and occasional passage migrant.

There are estimated to be between 20 and 40 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 40 pairs. There is no real evidence of any passage, although in 2009, there was a marked increase in sightings at the end of September; over 25 birds were noted on 21st and 24th September.

ROBIN *Erithacus rubecula*

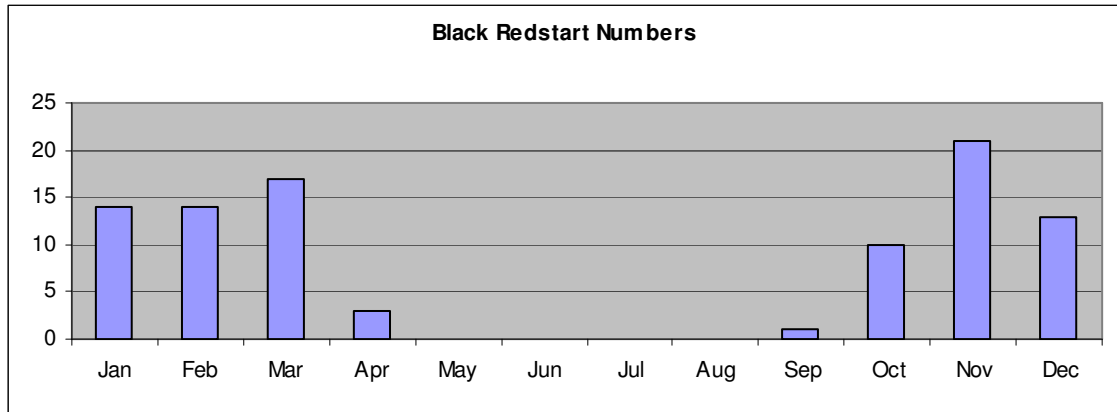
Common breeding resident, passage migrant and winter visitor.

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.

BLACK REDSTART *Phoenicurus ochuross*

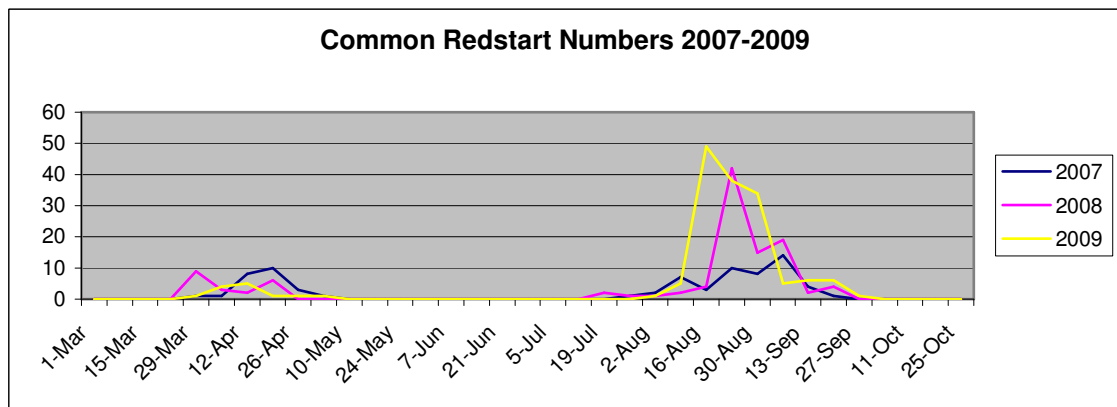
Uncommon passage migrant and winter visitor.

The favoured locations for Black Redstarts at Durlston are Tilly Whim and the grassy slopes of the Gully, although a bird was on the Visitor Centre roof in the early morning of 20th February. A dead bird was found near the Lighthouse on 4th January. Black Redstarts were seen regularly up to 3rd April. It is not clear how many birds were involved. There were no more records until autumn, suggesting that the bird(s) had been wintering and moved on. The first bird of the autumn passage was recorded on 16th September. Records continued up to the end of the year, indicative of wintering bird(s). The Graph shows evidence of passage in November; there was a bizarre record of a bird inside the Castle on 19th November.



COMMON REDSTART *Phoenicurus phoenicurus*
Fairly common passage migrant.

The first record of a light spring passage (see Graph) was on the 1st April; birds passed through intermittently until 6th May. The autumn passage of Redstarts at Durlston is normally noticeably heavier than in spring; the peak count was on 22nd August when 35 birds were recorded. The last record was on 28th September.



WHINCHAT *Saxicola rubetra*
Uncommon passage migrant.

The first spring passage record was on 20th April with two birds present; the number of bird-days in April and May was three and eleven respectively. Autumn passage commenced on 30th July and continued until 1st October (the only record in October). The number of bird-days in August and September was eleven and seven respectively.

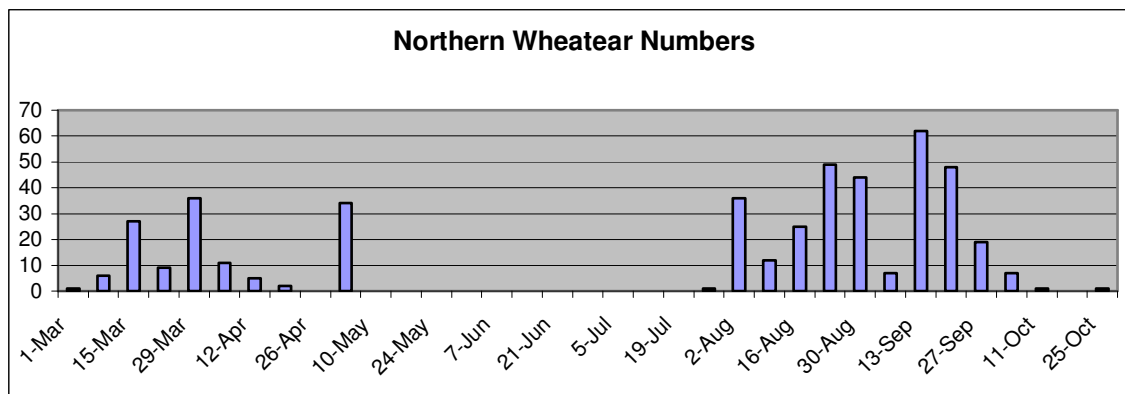
COMMON STONECHAT *Saxicola torquata*
Common breeding resident and passage migrant.

Birds bred on the Downs, in the Gully and along the Coast Path west of the Lighthouse. It was a good breeding year for the species - on 28th June, a large family of newly-fledged Stonechats in the Gully was being fed by harassed parents – this was at least the second brood produced by this particular pair. Over 20 young were noted on 17th August. Autumn passage peaked at the end of September with 18 birds recorded on 26th, and 20 on 27th and 30th.

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 7th March;

20 birds were present on 16th March. There was a second spring peak in the first week of May (see Graph) - 15 birds were present on 7th. This may have been associated with a passage of birds of the Greenland race *O.o.leucorhoa*. Return passage commenced at the end of July; peaking in the third week of September. Twenty birds were recorded on 8th and 29th August and 14th September. The total number of birds-days in 2009 (443) was almost double that in 2006-08 (an average of 235).



Monthly counts (bird-days):

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
0	0	67	30	34	0	1	134	163	14	0	0	443

RING OUZEL *Turdus torquatus*

Uncommon passage migrant.

There was only one spring record: of a bird on 31st March. Autumn passage of Ring Ouzels at Durlston is invariably stronger than the spring passage and commenced on 15th September, continuing until 10th November (the only record in November) The number of bird-days in September and October was three and eighteen respectively.

BLACKBIRD *Turdus merula*

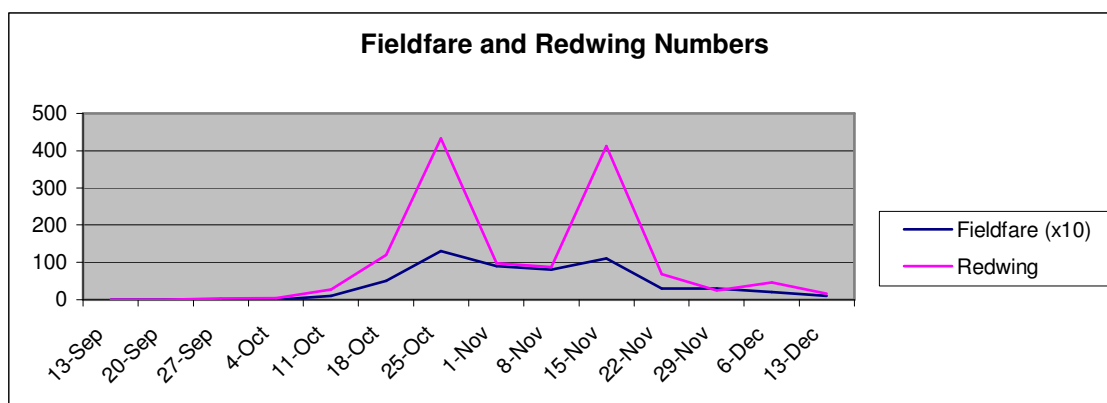
Common breeding resident, passage migrant and winter visitor.

There are estimated to be approximately 15 pairs of Blackbirds breeding at Durlston. Peak counts in the autumn and early winter were of 35 birds on 16th October, 60 on 31st after a marked arrival two days earlier, and 100 on 10th November. The majority of these are likely to have been migrants from continental Europe.

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 3rd April. Birds were seen in the second winter period from 16th October onwards, with the frequency of sightings peaking in late October to the third week of November, indicating that the Fieldfare is mainly a passage bird at Durlston (see Graph, note that the Fieldfare numbers have been multiplied by a factor of 10 to give a comparable scale to Redwing).



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 around 12 pairs. Over 80 birds were recorded on the fields of the Park on 31st October; 120 birds were recorded on 10th November. There was an apparent influx of birds from the Continent on 20th November with over 80 of these birds (which are greyer than UK birds) in sheltered areas of the Park. Forty-five birds were present on 24th December.

REDWING *Turdus iliacus*

Fairly common passage migrant and uncommon winter visitor.

Redwings are more common at Durlston than Fieldfares, significantly so in 2009 (see Graph above). Birds were recorded during the first winter period up to 2nd April. The first record in the second winter period was of three birds on 28th September; birds were then seen regularly until the end of the year. Visible migration surveys between mid-September and mid-December recorded a total of 1,339 Redwings (compared with 56 Fieldfares). The peak daily count was of 210 birds on 29th October.

MISTLE THRUSH *Turdus viscivorus*

Occasional breeder, common visitor and uncommon passage migrant.

As with the other thrushes, birds are seen more frequently in the second winter period with passage birds seen regularly from mid-October onwards.

GRASSHOPPER WARBLER *Locustella naevia*

Uncommon passage migrant.

The first spring passage record was on 6th April. The main passage period was from then until the start of May, although there was a late record on 22nd May. A young bird was reported on 27th May; its origins are unknown. Return passage commenced on 25th July; the last record was on 22nd September. The total number of bird-days was 58, approximately double that of the numbers recorded in 2007 and 2008.

SEDGE WARBLER *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus*

Uncommon passage migrant.

The first record of the spring was on 17th April. Passage continued during April and May (with three birds on 4th and 5th May), until 2nd June. Return passage commenced on 26th July with peak passage in August (27 bird-days). The last record was on 24th September.

REED WARBLER *Acrocephalus scirpaceus*

Uncommon passage migrant.

Reed Warblers normally arrive later than Sedge Warblers, and the first record was on 30th April. As is normal with this species, spring passage is protracted and lasted until 27th June. Return passage, limited though it is, commenced on 6th August; there were four birds present the next day. Reed Warblers are normally significantly less common at Durlston than Grasshopper and Sedge Warblers, primarily because of the lack of the favoured reedbed habitat. Records continued very intermittently until 25th September.

Monthly counts (bird-days):

	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Totals
Grasshopper Warbler	12	7	0	7	27	5	58
Sedge Warbler	6	15	1	3	27	5	57
Reed Warbler	1	8	12	0	13	3	37

DARTFORD WARBLER *Sylvia undata*

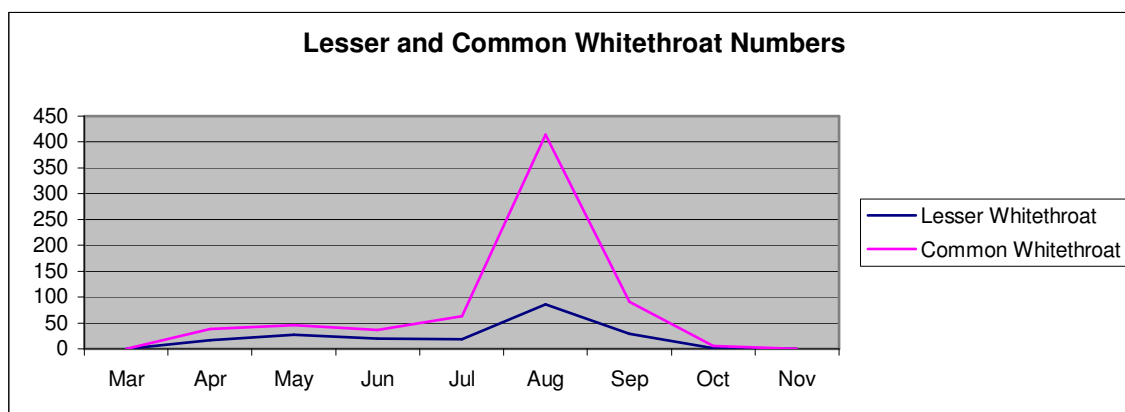
Uncommon breeding resident and autumn visitor.

Two pairs bred, one on the Coast Path and the other on the Diagonal Path. Seven birds were recorded on 17th October, including one singing.

LESSER WHITETHROAT *Sylvia curruca*

Fairly common breeding summer visitor and passage migrant.

The first spring record was on 11th April. Birds were recorded throughout the summer and breeding occurred in hedgerows and scrub in the farmland areas of the Park. The last record of the autumn passage period was on 2nd October. Less common at Durlston than Common Whitethroat (see Graph), there was a total of 198 bird-days, representing a significant increase on the numbers recorded in 2007 (93) and 2008 (126). 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.



Monthly counts (bird-days):

Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Total
0	16	27	20	19	86	29	1	0	198

COMMON WHITETHROAT *Sylvia communis*

Common breeding summer visitor and passage migrant.

The first spring record was on 8th April with ten birds on 17th; birds were seen from then onwards on an almost daily basis throughout May and June, more commonly than Lesser Whitethroats. This is particularly evident during the autumn passage (see Graph above). Young birds were seen in the hedges and scrub around the meadows and downs including a newly-fledged family being fed by adults on 13th June. Peak counts were of 55 birds on 13th August and 50 on 22nd. The last record was on 10th October. In total, there were 692 bird-days. As with Lesser

Whitethroat, this represents a significant increase on the numbers recorded in 2007 (192) and 2008 (244).

Monthly counts (bird-days):

Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Total
0	38	45	36	63	414	91	5	0	692

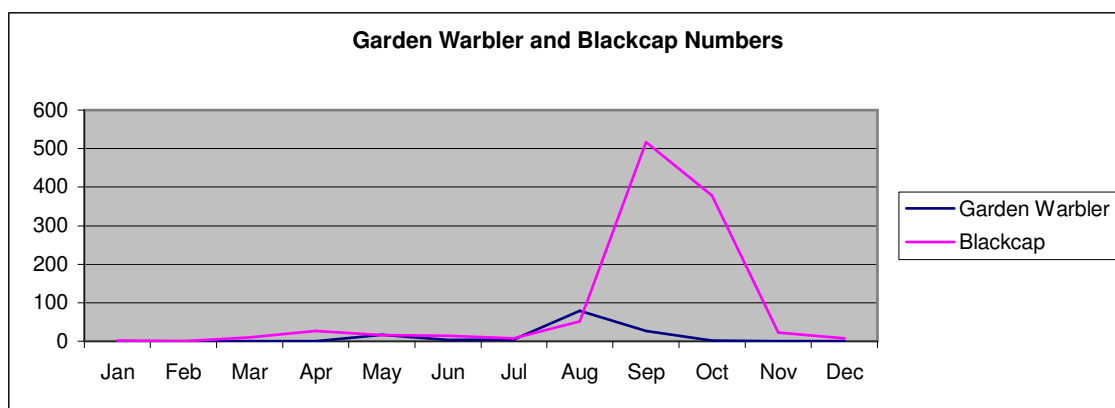
BLACKCAP *Sylvia atricapilla*

Fairly common breeding summer visitor and common passage migrant.

There was only record of an over-wintering bird, on January 26th. The first spring passage birds were recorded on 23rd March. Autumn passage peaked in September; 60 birds were recorded on 5th and 65 on 24th. Numbers were still high in October (see Graph); fifty birds were recorded on 4th October. Numbers declined through November and December; a bird was recorded on 30th December. Always more common than Garden Warblers, a total of 1048 bird-days were recorded.

Monthly counts (bird-days):

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
1	0	10	26	15	14	7	51	517	378	22	7	1048



GARDEN WARBLER *Sylvia borin*

Occasional breeding summer visitor and uncommon passage migrant.

The first record was not until the late date of 1st May. Return passage commenced at the end of July but birds are never common; the peak count was of 12 birds on 6th August. In total, there were 130 bird-days, significantly greater than that recorded in 2007 (66) and 2008 (72). The last record was on 1st October.

Monthly counts (bird-days):

Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Total
0	0	17	3	4	79	26	1	0	130

YELLOW-BROWED WARBLER *Phylloscopus inornatus*

Scarce autumn passage vagrant.

There was one record: of a bird at the end of Caravan Terrace on 7th November.

WOOD WARBLER *Phylloscopus sibilatrix*

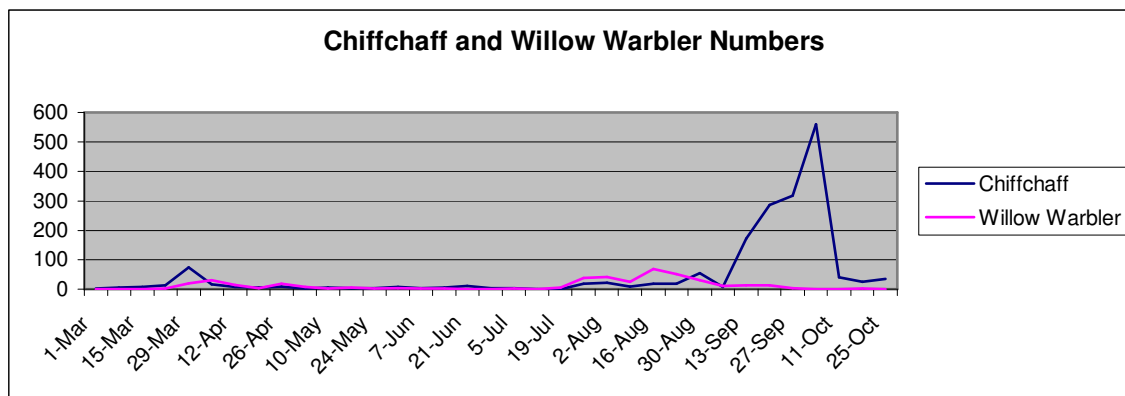
Scarce passage migrant.

There were two records: on 3rd May and a bird in the wood by the carpark on 18th May.

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; 30 birds were recorded on 30th March. Chiffchaff autumn passage is later and significantly stronger than the closely-related Willow Warbler and peaked in October with 150 birds on 4th, and 120 on 5th and 6th. Chiffchaffs were seen up to the end of the year. In total, there were 1,847 bird-days, significantly greater than that recorded in 2007 (644) and 2008 (958). A very distinctive and showy bird was seen near the Castle on 2nd November. It was very pale, greyish, with a marked supercilium and a slight wingbar. Unfortunately, the bird did not call but was probably of the *tristis* race.



Monthly counts (bird-days):

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
1	8	79	58	19	26	21	71	680	817	48	19	1847

WILLOW WARBLER *Phylloscopus trochilus*

Occasional breeding summer visitor and common passage migrant.

The first spring record was on 24th March; passage was relatively weak compared with previous years with a peak count of 12 birds on 1st May. Willow Warblers migrate earlier in the autumn than Chiffchaff; this can be seen in the Graph above which shows peak passage in August and September with an increase in numbers first noted towards the end of July. The total number of bird-days of 414 was lower than in 2007 (601) and 2008 (453). The last record was on the late date of 22nd October.

Monthly counts (bird-days):

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
0	0	17	60	29	6	45	193	63	1	0	0	414

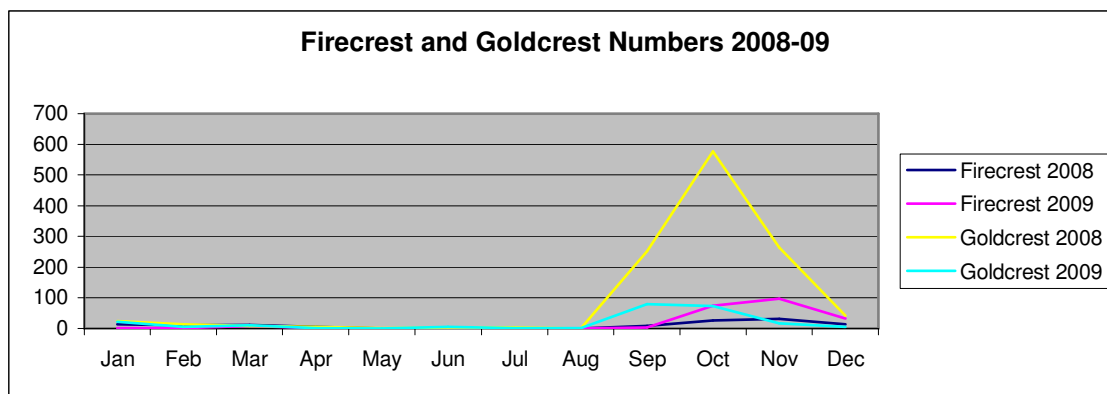
GOLDCREST *Regulus regulus*

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 Table and Graph). However, the 2009 autumn passage was significantly reduced compared with 2008. The maximum count was of 14 birds on 10th October (compared with a daily peak of 70 birds in 2008 and 120 in 2006). The total of bird-days for 2009 was 226 (compared with 1,194 in 2008).

Monthly counts (bird-days):

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
22	6	11	2	0	5	1	2	80	73	18	6	226



FIRECREST *Regulus ignicapillus*

Uncommon migrant and winter visitor.

Firecrests were seen intermittently throughout the first winter period up to 2nd April. The first autumn record was on 17th September. Birds were seen regularly until the end of the year with a peak in sightings in October and November. Ten birds were reported on 21st October and 9th November. The total number of bird-days was very similar to that for Goldcrests and almost double that recorded in 2008.

Monthly counts (bird-days):

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
2	1	8	1	0	0	0	0	3	74	98	33	220

SPOTTED FLYCATCHER *Muscicapa striata*

Fairly common passage migrant.

Spotted Flycatcher is a late migrant and the first spring passage record was on 9th May with birds seen intermittently up to 15th June. Return passage commenced on 7th August and continued to 26th September. Peak counts were of seven birds on 22nd August and 4th September. There was a total of 14 bird-days in spring and 47 in autumn.

PIED FLYCATCHER *Ficedula hypoleuca*

Uncommon passage migrant.

There were five records in spring: on 5th, 19th and 24th April and 4th and 5th May. Return passage commenced on 9th August and was the forerunner of an excellent series of records. There were 13 bird-days in August, and six in September, similar to 2008 when significantly more bird-days were recorded than in 2006 and 2007 (six and five autumn bird-days respectively). Three birds were recorded on 4th September and the last record was on 24th September.

LONG-TAILED TIT *Aegithalos caudatus*

Common breeding resident.

At least three pairs held territory and bred. Forty birds were seen on 8th December.

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.

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. An apparent influx was noted on 30th September when 35 birds were recorded.

COAL TIT *Parus ater*

Uncommon breeding resident and passage migrant.

Breeding occurred in the woodland.

EUROPEAN NUTHATCH *Sitta europaea*

Scarce visitor.

There was a slightly bizarre record of a bird flying south-west high over Durlston on 12th November.

EURASIAN TREECREEPER *Certhia familiaris*

Uncommon breeding resident and visitor.

Treecreepers were seen intermittently in the woodland. Four recorded on 28th June may have been indicative of local breeding. An unusual record was of a bird on 26th September away from the normal woodland habitat.

RED-BACKED SHRIKE *Lanius collurio*

Scarce passage migrant.

An immature bird was found on a barbed wire fence by the Coast Path, one wall in from the western boundary on 19th September. This is the first record since 2006.

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.

MAGPIE *Pica pica*

Common breeding resident.

Magpies were recorded daily, with regular counts of eight to ten birds together. There was successful breeding again.

EURASIAN JACKDAW *Corvus monedula*

Common breeding resident and passage migrant.

At Durlston, Jackdaws mostly breed on the cliff-face. Jackdaws move through Durlston in autumn; 150 were present on 28th September. Peak counts of birds passing overhead in October were 120 on 18th, 140 on 23rd, 200 on 29th and 250 on 30th, and 150 on 4th November.

ROOK *Corvus frugilegus*

Common non-breeding visitor.

Rooks are seen at Durlston primarily in the autumn, and usually in the meadows. Peak counts were of 30 birds on 26th July and 30, 40 and 55 birds on 13th, 17th and 23rd October respectively.

CARRION CROW *Corvus corone*

Common breeding resident.

Carrion Crows nest in the Gully and various wooded areas.

COMMON RAVEN *Corvus corax*

Fairly common visitor.

Ravens are normally seen at Durlston as single birds or pairs, normally flying over. The maximum counts were of five on 28th July, six on both 21st and 26th September, and nine flying west on 14th October.

COMMON STARLING *Sturnus vulgaris*

Uncommon breeding resident, passage migrant and winter visitor.

An increase in Starling numbers generally was noticeable by mid-October with 230 birds passing overhead on 26th October.

HOUSE SPARROW *Passer domesticus*

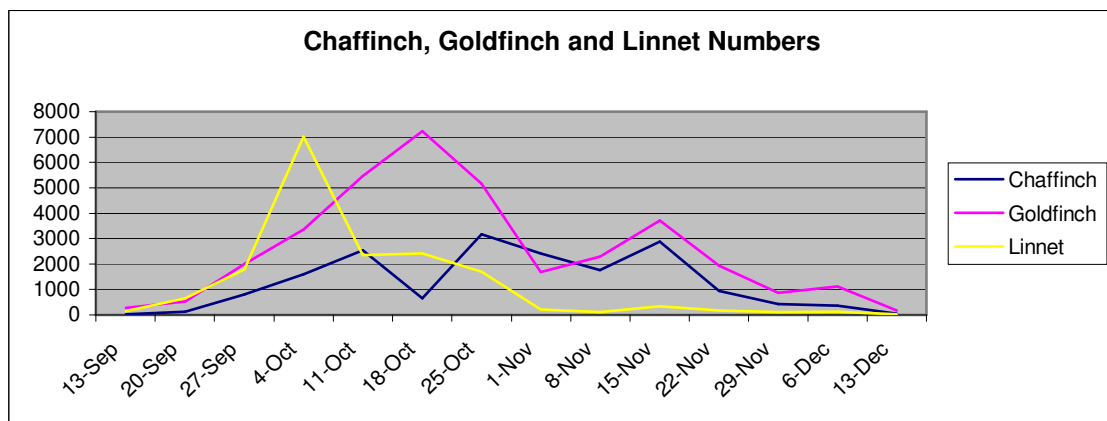
Scarce passage migrant.

House Sparrows are much less numerous at Durlston than 15 years ago when they bred at the Visitor Centre and Bungalow. Visible migration surveys recorded single birds flying over on 25th and 31st October, and 3rd and 11th November.

COMMON CHAFFINCH *Fringilla coelebs*

Common breeding resident, passage migrant and winter visitor.

Breeding occurs on the Park amongst the hedgerows and woods, and in the Gully. Visible migration (the overhead daylight passage of migrating species such as pigeons, larks, hirundines, wagtails, pipits and finches) is an annual occurrence at Durlston and other Dorset headlands. Passage lasts from September until December, but the main period for finches is from October until mid-November. Counts were undertaken on 88 days between 13th September and 19th December. Approximately 17,770 Chaffinches were counted during this period, amounting to an average of 200 per day. Of the seven common finch species (Chaffinch, Brambling, Greenfinch, Goldfinch, Siskin, Linnets and Lesser Redpoll), Chaffinches were the second most abundant, amounting to 23% of the common finches. Particularly strong movements were noted on 11th (828 birds), 25th (963 birds) and 29th (815 birds) October and 15th (1,680 birds) and 17th (1,045 birds) November. Birds were still passing through in December – 203 passed overhead on 4th December.

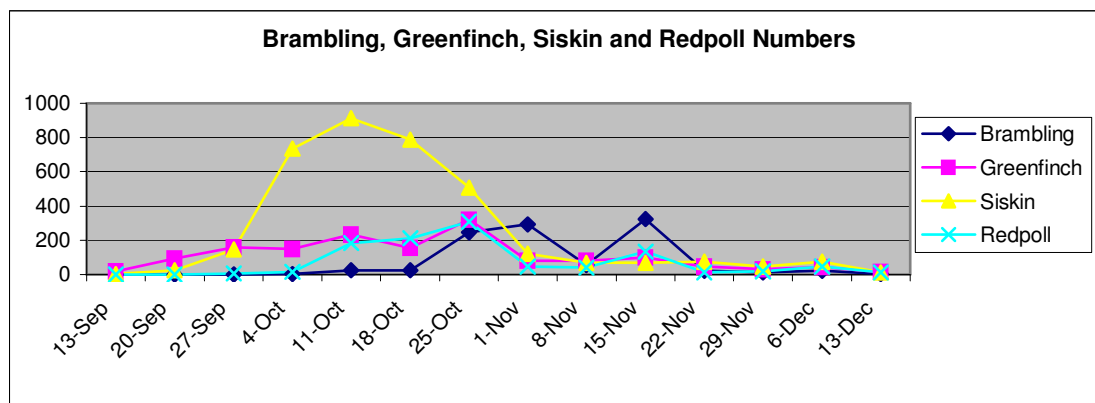


BRAMBLING *Fringilla montifringilla*

Uncommon passage migrant mainly autumn and winter visitor.

There was one record in the first half of the year: on 11th March. As with other finch species, autumn passage is always significantly stronger. The first record of the autumn was on 10th October; records continued until the end of the year. The main passage period was between the end of October and the third week of November (see Graph). Approximately 1,030 Bramblings were counted between 13th September and 19th December, amounting to an average of 12 per day. Of the seven common finch species, Bramblings and Lesser Redpolls

were the least abundant, amounting to just 1% each of the common finches. A particularly strong movement was noted on 17th November when 228 birds passed overhead.



EUROPEAN SERIN *Serinus serinus*

Scarce passage migrant, mainly in spring.

There was an excellent series of records in 2009. The first was of a bird seen singing and calling in the lower Gully at 8.00 am on 18th March; it then flew to the upper Gully and was re-located later on the farmland. A male was seen in scrub by the Dolphin Watch Hut early in the morning of 5th April when it flew west and appeared to drop down into cover. The third spring record was on 31st May of a singing bird near the Visitor Centre [A bird was seen heading east on 10th July with a further record of a bird heading east over the Diagonal Path on 30th September. The sixth and final record was of a bird again heading east over the Diagonal Path on 29th October.

GREENFINCH *Carduelis chloris*

Common breeding resident, passage migrant and winter visitor.

On 8th February, several large groups of Greenfinches, with up to 50 birds in each, were observed passing overhead heading eastwards. The breeding population of Greenfinches is estimated to be over 15 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. Approximately 1,530 Greenfinches were counted between 13th September and 19th December, amounting to an average of 17 per day. Of the seven common finch species, Greenfinches were the fifth most abundant, amounting to 2% of the common finches. Peak counts were on 25th (89 birds) and 26th (108 birds) October; passage numbers then declined (see Graph).

GOLDFINCH *Carduelis carduelis*

Breeding resident, common passage migrant and winter visitor.

Breeding occurred with young noted during July and August. Although small in comparison with the autumn passage, spring migration of Goldfinches is noted as birds move north from their wintering grounds in France and Iberia. Approximately 34,940 Goldfinches were counted between 13th September and 19th December, amounting to an average of almost 400 per day. Of the seven common finch species, Goldfinches were the most abundant, amounting to 46% of the common finches. Peak passage was from the second week of October to the end of the month. Peak counts were on 21st (2,015 birds), 22nd (2,160 birds) and 25th (1,692 birds) October and 17th November (1,785 birds including over 1,000 in 30 minutes).

SISKIN *Carduelis spinus*

Fairly common passage migrant, particularly in autumn.

In the first half of the year, Siskins were recorded from 2nd January to 6th May. There were a few records in August, but the main autumn passage commenced on 17th September.

Approximately 3,580 Siskins were counted between 13th September and 19th December, amounting to an average of just over 40 per day. Of the seven common finch species, Siskins were the fourth most abundant, amounting to 5% of the common finches. Siskin autumn passage exhibits a more marked peak than the other finches (see Graph). Peak counts were on 21st (195 birds), 22nd (202 birds) and 25th (245 birds) October.

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. Approximately 17,130 Linnets were counted between 13th September and 19th December, amounting to an average of 195 per day. Of the seven common finch species, Linnets were the third most abundant, amounting to 22% of the common finches. Linnet passage peaked earlier, at the beginning of October, than the other finches (see Graph). Peak counts were on 7th (3,075 birds) and 9th (3,400 birds) October.

TWITE *Carduelis flavirostris*

Scarce passage migrant.

There was one record: of two birds passing overhead on 15th November. Four probable birds were heard passing overhead two days later.

LESSER REDPOLL *Carduelis carbaret*

Fairly common passage migrant mainly in late autumn.

There was a series of records in the first half of the year: on 7th February; 11th, 16th, 18th, 23rd and 28th March; 3rd and 13th April; 25th May and 10th June. All other records were from autumn passage; the first was on 21st September. Approximately 1,040 Redpolls were counted between 13th September and 19th December, amounting to an average of 12 per day. Of the seven common finch species, Bramblings and Redpolls were the least most abundant, amounting to 1% each of the common finches. Main passage was during the last two weeks of October and the peak count of 171 was on 25th. Birds continued to be recorded throughout November and, at a decreasing frequency, during December.

MEALY REDPOLL *Carduelis flammea*

Rare passage and winter visitor.

There were three records of birds passing overhead: on 11th November, 17th November (two birds) and on 10th December.

COMMON CROSSBILL *Loxia curvirostra*

Uncommon passage migrant and irruptive visitor.

Other than isolated records between May and the end of August (including five birds on 13th), Crossbill records were concentrated between the end of September and the 21st November; a total of 521 birds passed over during this period. These included a count of 215 birds on 21st October (including a flock of 60 birds) and 50 on 25th. The 2009 numbers surpass the large numbers of Crossbills passing over Durlston in 2008.

COMMON ROSEFINCH *Carpodacus erythrinus*

Rare passage migrant.

A juvenile Scarlet Rosefinch was first seen on mown hay in Haysom Field at 12.15 on 4th September. Although the bird was easily overlooked, it had a distinctive jizz even at a distance and in flight. It perched in a willow tree for several minutes, allowing close approach; young Linnets and Greenfinches close by provided useful comparison. Features noted included a large stubby paleish bill, beady black eye, bland expression, double wing bar (particularly the greater coverts), a surprisingly distinct 'necklace', darkish tail and flight feathers, and warm olive uppers. Unfortunately, the bird did not call. It eventually flew buoyantly towards Townsend NR. The bird was seen the next day along the northern boundary.

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 - ten or more young birds were noted on 25th August. Three high-flying birds were recorded on 20th March with 12 in the Gully on 22nd March. Bullfinch autumn migration became apparent in the second week of October and peaked at the end of the month. Peak counts were of 28 birds on 25th and 29th October. A party of five was recorded heading out to sea on 31st October. Four birds were reported on 4th November including one apparently larger bird near the Castle with a distinctive hoarser, almost diatonic, call. Ten birds were present on 5th December and seven on 14th.

LAPLAND BUNTING *Calcarius lapponicus*

Scarce passage migrant.

There were two records: of birds passing overhead on 7th October and on 2nd November.

SNOW BUNTING *Plectrophenax nivalis*

Rare passage migrant

There were two records of single birds passing over: on 25th October and 15th November.

YELLOWHAMMER *Emberiza citronella*

Fairly common breeding resident and passage migrant.

At least eight males held territory; some pairs bred. Yellowhammers move over Durlston during autumn passage, but in low numbers. The peak visible migration count was of five birds on 11th October.

REED BUNTING *Emberiza schoeniclus*

Uncommon passage migrant, mainly in autumn.

There were seven spring records: on 16th, 17th and 18th February; 12th, 20th and 29th March; and 5th April. As with other finch species, autumn passage is always stronger than in spring. Records consisted predominantly of small numbers of birds moving overhead, although birds were also occasionally seen around the Park. Reed Buntings were recorded on most days in October.

CORN BUNTING *Emberiza calandra*

Rare passage migrant.

There were two records: of birds flying over on 12th and 27th October.