

# 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:

<b>Common</b>	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.
<b>Fairly common</b>	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.
<b>Uncommon</b>	occurs annually in small numbers at Durlston during the appropriate period; would not be expected to be seen on most visits.
<b>Scarce</b>	a species that can be seen in most years at Durlston, but records are few in number (one to ten).
<b>Rare</b>	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 37<sup>th</sup> 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 26<sup>th</sup> 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 1<sup>st</sup> March; the first record of the second winter period was on 2<sup>nd</sup> October. The maximum count was of 60 birds on 14<sup>th</sup> 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 26<sup>th</sup> January; 13<sup>th</sup> (six birds) and 17<sup>th</sup> February; 11<sup>th</sup> April (two); 4th May (two); 26<sup>th</sup> June (two) and 31<sup>st</sup> December (four).

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

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

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

Three birds passed offshore on 3<sup>rd</sup> 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 4<sup>th</sup> May.

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

A bird passed offshore on 1<sup>st</sup> 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 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> 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 16<sup>th</sup> August. The maximum count was of 30 birds on 24<sup>th</sup> 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 31<sup>st</sup> 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: 1<sup>st</sup> January; 17<sup>th</sup> (two birds), 19<sup>th</sup> (two) and 27<sup>th</sup> February; 9<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup> March; and 29<sup>th</sup> April. Records in the second winter period were on: 8<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> November; and 15<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> 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: 9<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> March; 3<sup>rd</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> April; 3<sup>rd</sup> May; 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> June; and 12<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> July.

**GREY PARTRIDGE *Perdix perdix*****Scarce visitor.**There was one record: a bird on 12<sup>th</sup> May.**QUAIL *Coturnix coturnix*****Rare visitor.**Two birds were flushed on 17<sup>th</sup> 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 13<sup>th</sup> 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 23<sup>rd</sup>. The last record of the first winter period was on 1<sup>st</sup> May; the first record of the second winter period was on 7<sup>th</sup> 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 arctica*****Scarce, passing offshore in spring, autumn and winter.**

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

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

Five birds were recorded on 23<sup>rd</sup> January. The last record of the first winter period was on 21<sup>st</sup> May; the first record of the second winter period was on 24<sup>th</sup> October. An unusual record was of a bird overflying the Observation Point on 28<sup>th</sup> 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 28<sup>th</sup> January and 20<sup>th</sup> 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 31<sup>st</sup> July.**SOOTY SHEARWATER** *Puffinus griseus***Scarce, passing offshore mainly in autumn.**A poor year with only three records: on 5<sup>th</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> September and 7<sup>th</sup> 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 13<sup>th</sup> January and then on the more usual date of 8<sup>th</sup> March. Numbers of passing birds continued to increase, with peak movements in early July. A pronounced movement occurred on 9<sup>th</sup> 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 5<sup>th</sup> 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 13<sup>th</sup> January. Birds were seen off Durlston until 7<sup>th</sup> February when two birds were seen close-in, weaving in and out of a flock of gulls. Birds were then seen from 2<sup>nd</sup> July to 26<sup>th</sup> October. The maximum count was of 19 birds on 16<sup>th</sup> 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 24<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> May (five birds), 3<sup>rd</sup> June and 20<sup>th</sup> October. July records were as follows: 8<sup>th</sup> (six), 9<sup>th</sup> (eleven, including several birds which spent a long time resting on the water, one particularly close-in to the cliffs), 10<sup>th</sup>, 12<sup>th</sup> (a bird lingering off Durlston Head, appearing as a black speck on the water for much of the time) and 14<sup>th</sup> (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 13<sup>th</sup> January, and on 9<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> July when 200 and 150 birds respectively were seen. Hundreds of birds were present in a large flock offshore on 31<sup>st</sup> 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 15<sup>th</sup> January and 9<sup>th</sup> 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 27<sup>th</sup> November and flying east past Durlston Head on 1<sup>st</sup> 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 11<sup>th</sup> February and 28<sup>th</sup> 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 25<sup>th</sup> January, 27<sup>th</sup> February, 1<sup>st</sup> and 31<sup>st</sup> May, 6<sup>th</sup> June, 14<sup>th</sup> July, 9<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> August, 8<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> October, 8<sup>th</sup> November and 20<sup>th</sup> 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 16<sup>th</sup> February; 6<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup> June; 2<sup>nd</sup> July; 6<sup>th</sup> August; 9<sup>th</sup>, 13<sup>th</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> September; 4<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> October; and 30<sup>th</sup> December.

#### **EUROPEAN HONEY-BUZZARD *Pernis apivorus***

##### **Rare passage migrant.**

There were two records. A bird was recorded on 3<sup>rd</sup> 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 26<sup>th</sup> September.

#### **RED KITE *Milvus milvus***

##### **Scarce passage migrant.**

A bird came in over the sea and headed north on 4<sup>th</sup> April.

#### **MARSH HARRIER *Circus aeruginosus***

##### **Scarce passage migrant and winter visitor.**

A bird was seen on 14<sup>th</sup> May.

**HEN HARRIER** *Circus cyaneus*  
**Scarce passage migrant and winter visitor.**  
A ring-tailed bird was seen on 22<sup>nd</sup> September.

**MONTAGU'S HARRIER** *Circus pygargus*  
**Rare passage migrant.**  
A female was seen in the late morning of 31<sup>st</sup> May.

**NORTHERN GOSHAWK** *Accipiter gentilis*  
**Rare visitor.**

An adult male was observed soaring slowly along the Landslip area above Durlston Bay on 4<sup>th</sup> 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 2<sup>nd</sup> March; young birds were heard calling on 3<sup>rd</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> August. These records are suggestive of local breeding. Birds were seen bathing in the Wildlife Pond at the Visitor Centre on a few occasions.

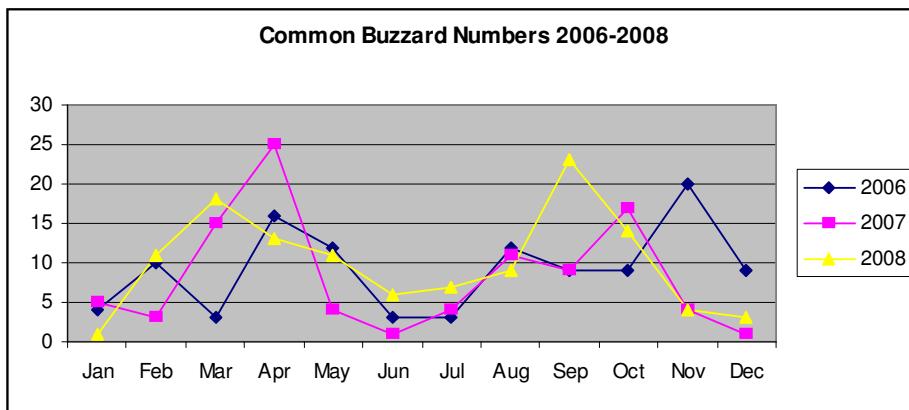
**Monthly counts (bird-days):**

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 19<sup>th</sup> September, six birds on 21<sup>st</sup> September and five on 11<sup>th</sup> October. Birds were seen carrying various prey items – a pigeon on 17<sup>th</sup> April and a rabbit on 16<sup>th</sup> 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 9<sup>th</sup> April and a bird headed south on 13<sup>th</sup> 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 16<sup>th</sup> October with four on 21<sup>st</sup> October. An extraordinary sight on 7<sup>th</sup> November was of a Kestrel attempting to drive a Peregrine Falcon off the carcase of a Short-eared Owl (see Short-eared Owl section for a full account).

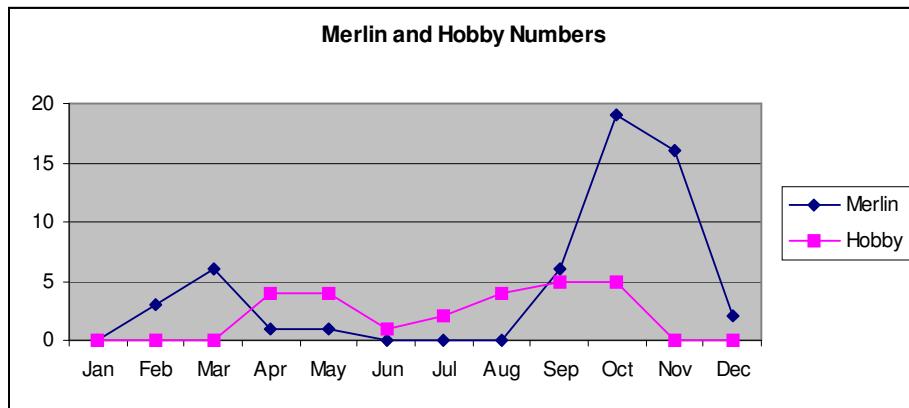
### **MERLIN *Falco columbarius***

#### **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 16<sup>th</sup> February. A late spring passage bird was recorded on 6<sup>th</sup> May. The first autumn passage bird was on 12<sup>th</sup> September and birds were recorded from then until 21<sup>st</sup> December. Higher numbers were recorded in November than in 2006 and 2007; three birds were recorded on 3<sup>rd</sup> 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 16<sup>th</sup> October lying in wait for straggling migrants in the manner of a Peregrine Falcon. A bird was seen over the Landslip on 8<sup>th</sup> November pursuing a flock of Starlings, and a bird was seen diving into a flock of Long-tailed Tits in the Gully on 14<sup>th</sup> 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 17<sup>th</sup> April and birds were seen intermittently until 15<sup>th</sup> October including a bird coming in over the sea on 6<sup>th</sup> 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 7<sup>th</sup> November was of a Kestrel attempting to drive a Peregrine Falcon off the carcase 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 20<sup>th</sup> June and, more unusually, a bird passing over long Meadow on 23<sup>rd</sup> September.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

There were six records of single birds: a bird flushed from the Gully on 1<sup>st</sup> March, a series of records in November (4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup>), and a further bird flushed from the top of the Gully on 5<sup>th</sup> 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 26<sup>th</sup> April, and a flock of 20 birds on 3<sup>rd</sup> May.

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

The first record was of a bird on 30<sup>th</sup> March with peak passage during the typical period of late April/early May; eight birds passed on 29<sup>th</sup> April. Return passage commenced with an early bird on 20<sup>th</sup> June and continued until 2<sup>nd</sup> October; nine birds passed on 29<sup>th</sup> 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 9<sup>th</sup> March (two birds), 2<sup>nd</sup> April, and 4<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> 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 29<sup>th</sup> April, 7<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> May, 3<sup>rd</sup> June, 10<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> July, and 8<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> August.

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

A bird flew over the Visitor Centre on 28<sup>th</sup> July.

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

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

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

A bird flew over on 25<sup>th</sup> August.

**REDSHANK *Tringa totanus*****Scarce passage migrant.**There were two records of birds flying past offshore: on 11<sup>th</sup> July and 8<sup>th</sup> September.**GREY PHALAROPE *Phalaropus fulicarius***A bird was seen off Durlston Head on 5<sup>th</sup> September, with a further bird close in off Durlston Head on 7<sup>th</sup> 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 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> May (the latter including a very obliging bird which almost flew over the observer's head), and single birds on 19<sup>th</sup> May (the bird landed on the water, took off and landed again not far offshore), 6<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> September and 5<sup>th</sup> 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 10<sup>th</sup> October. Highest daily counts were of eleven birds on 5<sup>th</sup> September and eight on 5<sup>th</sup> 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: 11<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> April; 4<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> May; 31<sup>st</sup> July; 9<sup>th</sup>, 16<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup> August; 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> (two birds), 5<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> September; 5<sup>th</sup> (24 birds), 7<sup>th</sup>, 20<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> October; and 29<sup>th</sup> December. The 24 birds passing on 5<sup>th</sup> 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 9<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> with over 1000 birds on 13<sup>th</sup> and 500 on 14<sup>th</sup>.**BLACK-HEADED GULL *Chroicocephalus ridibundus*****Common visitor and offshore passage migrant.**The peak count was of 300 birds in a group offshore on 23<sup>rd</sup> 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: 23<sup>rd</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> January; 11<sup>th</sup> March; 7<sup>th</sup>, 13<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> October; and 8<sup>th</sup> 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 25<sup>th</sup> January and over 50 on 8<sup>th</sup> 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 17<sup>th</sup> February. Several birds of the *intermedius* or *fuscus* races, which have darker mantles and wings than the birds of the *graelessii* race which breed in Great Britain were seen on 25<sup>th</sup> 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 15<sup>th</sup> April.

**YELLOW-LEGGED GULL** *Larus michahellis***Rare visitor.**

An adult was offshore on 21<sup>st</sup> July.

**ICELAND GULL** *Larus glaucopterus***Rare visitor.**

A second winter bird passed heading east on 28<sup>th</sup> 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 26<sup>th</sup> April and 16<sup>th</sup> August.

**BLACK TERN *Chlidonias niger*****Scarce offshore passage migrant.**

There were four records: on 26<sup>th</sup> April, 3<sup>rd</sup> May (two birds), 27<sup>th</sup> August and 6<sup>th</sup> 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 14<sup>th</sup> March with birds seen from then until 19<sup>th</sup> 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 2<sup>nd</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> September respectively.

**COMMON TERN *Sterna hirundo*****Fairly common summer visitor and offshore passage migrant.**

Birds were recorded from 26<sup>th</sup> April (five birds) onwards with the last record of three birds on 28<sup>th</sup> 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 26<sup>th</sup> August and 30 birds on 10<sup>th</sup> September.

**ROSEATE TERN *Sterna dougallii*****Rare offshore passage migrant.**

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

**ARCTIC TERN *Sterna paradisaea*****Scarce offshore passage migrant.**

There were seven records: on 29<sup>th</sup> April, 4<sup>th</sup> May (four birds), 9<sup>th</sup> (two) and 31<sup>st</sup> July, 6<sup>th</sup> August, 2<sup>nd</sup> September (two) and 5<sup>th</sup> 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 10<sup>th</sup> 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 24<sup>th</sup> April. The first chicks hatched on 26<sup>th</sup> May with 25 chicks on the upper ledge by 2<sup>nd</sup> 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 5<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> June, studying an area containing 38 chicks. Chicks started to leave the ledges by 22<sup>nd</sup> June with only five remaining two days later. By 12<sup>th</sup> 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 29<sup>th</sup>. By

the beginning of December, most were in breeding plumage. On 22<sup>nd</sup> 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 10<sup>th</sup> June. Two pairs were later noted high up on the cliff; on 19<sup>th</sup> 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 9<sup>th</sup> January at a rate of 1500 per hour; approximately 90% of these were Razorbills. On 13<sup>th</sup>, 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 14<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> January (when a 'large number' were also just offshore); over 2000 birds headed west on 23<sup>rd</sup> January. Less spectacular movements occurred at the end of the year. Of 400 auks flying east on 29<sup>th</sup> 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 29<sup>th</sup> December. Birds had returned to the cliffs by 12<sup>th</sup> 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: 5<sup>th</sup> January; 6<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> March; 26<sup>th</sup> April; 31<sup>st</sup> May (five birds); and 3<sup>rd</sup> (three birds), 6<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> 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 6<sup>th</sup> 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 17<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> 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 27<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup> October (270 and 250 birds) and 12<sup>th</sup> November (350). Numbers were lower than those in 2007 (8,000 birds passed over on 13<sup>th</sup> 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 29<sup>th</sup> April (two); 8<sup>th</sup>, 12<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> May; 31<sup>st</sup> July; and 2<sup>nd</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> August. The final record was of a bird flying over on 10<sup>th</sup> September, although a bird was reported from just off the Park on 24<sup>th</sup> 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 28<sup>th</sup> April. Further birds were recorded on 6<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> May, 6<sup>th</sup> June (a close view of a bird in the Wildlife Area) and a further bird there on 30<sup>th</sup> 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 26<sup>th</sup> June.

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

There were nine records: on 7<sup>th</sup> April; 12<sup>th</sup> May, 15<sup>th</sup> June (probably a young bird, indicating breeding nearby); 31<sup>st</sup> August; 11<sup>th</sup>, 21<sup>st</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> October; and 7<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> 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 21<sup>st</sup> 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 8<sup>th</sup> April and 9<sup>th</sup> May. The first autumn record was on 29<sup>th</sup> 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 6<sup>th</sup> 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 21<sup>st</sup> May and a bird in the Gully on 22<sup>nd</sup> September.

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

The first record was on the late date of 1<sup>st</sup> May with 40 birds seen on 12<sup>th</sup> 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 29<sup>th</sup> September.

**HOPOE *Upupa epops*****Rare passage migrant.**

A bird was reported in Saxon Field on 25<sup>th</sup> September.

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

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

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

Green Woodpecker is the commonest woodpecker seen at Durlston. Young birds seen on 8<sup>th</sup> and 31<sup>st</sup> 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 6<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> March, 10<sup>th</sup> April and 13<sup>th</sup> 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 8<sup>th</sup> September and 12<sup>th</sup> November. On 2<sup>nd</sup> October, a bird was seen to make five attempts to fly out to sea, turning back each time. On 9<sup>th</sup> 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 1<sup>st</sup> March with a further bird the next day. The first autumn record was on 28<sup>th</sup> September. The main passage was in October with birds recorded on 3<sup>rd</sup> (two birds), 10<sup>th</sup>, 13<sup>th</sup> (two), 17<sup>th</sup> (two), 18<sup>th</sup>, 24<sup>th</sup>, 25<sup>th</sup>, 27<sup>th</sup> (three) and 28<sup>th</sup> (five). There were three November records: on 5<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup>.

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

Spring passage started on 7<sup>th</sup> February. Birds were singing from 9<sup>th</sup> February until 27<sup>th</sup> July with a maximum of eight birds heard on 13<sup>th</sup> June. The first brood of young birds was recorded on 9<sup>th</sup> 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 13<sup>th</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup>, 25<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup> October respectively; 34 birds passed over on 5<sup>th</sup> November.

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

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

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

#### **BARN SWALLOW *Hirundo rustica***

##### **Common summer visitor and passage migrant.**

The first record was on 25<sup>th</sup> 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 15<sup>th</sup> November. Peak movements were in the last two weeks of September with pronounced movements on 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> (over 1000 birds), 21<sup>st</sup> (when the estimate for the whole day was over 10000 birds passing east), 25<sup>th</sup> (1200), 26<sup>th</sup> (4500), 28<sup>th</sup> (1500), 29<sup>th</sup> (2000) and 30<sup>th</sup> (3000). Over 1600 birds moved through on 14<sup>th</sup> October. A Peregrine was seen hunting a flock of Swallows and House Martins on 3<sup>rd</sup> October.

#### **HOUSE MARTIN *Delichon urbicum***

##### **Common summer visitor and passage migrant.**

The first record was on 16<sup>th</sup> 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: 13<sup>th</sup> (over 2000 birds), 21<sup>st</sup> (1200), 23<sup>rd</sup> (2900), 26<sup>th</sup> (2100) and 29<sup>th</sup> (1600) September. Birds were still moving through in significant numbers in October: 900 on 13<sup>th</sup>, over 950 the next day and over 250 on 21<sup>st</sup>. The last record was on 7<sup>th</sup> November.

#### **RICHARD'S PIPIT *Anthus richardi***

##### **Rare passage migrant.**

A bird flew over the Gully on 13<sup>th</sup> October.

#### **OLIVE-BACKED PIPIT *Anthus hodgsoni***

##### **Rare passage migrant.**

An Olive-backed Pipit was sound recorded just after 0800 on 13<sup>th</sup> 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 sonograms 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 23<sup>rd</sup> April and 17<sup>th</sup> May. Return passage commenced on 24<sup>th</sup> July and continued until mid October; the last record was on 13<sup>th</sup> October. The numbers of birds recorded were small other than on 8<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> 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 27<sup>th</sup> February), and peaking in March and early April. Significant spring passage movements occurred on 13<sup>th</sup> and 31<sup>st</sup> March (130 and over 100 birds respectively), and 3<sup>rd</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> 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 6<sup>th</sup> March and a Merlin ten days later. Return passage became evident from mid-September with 120 birds passing on 12<sup>th</sup> September. Passage peaked at the end of September; significant movements took place on 24<sup>th</sup>, 25<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> September when 270, 860 and 390 birds respectively passed overhead. Numbers declined from mid-October onwards when 160 birds passed on 14<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup>. The last evident movement was on 5<sup>th</sup> 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 28<sup>th</sup> September and 15<sup>th</sup> November, generally in small numbers. Exceptions were on 2<sup>nd</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> October when 29, 25 and 30 birds respectively passed overhead.

### **WATER PIPIT *Anthus spinoletta***

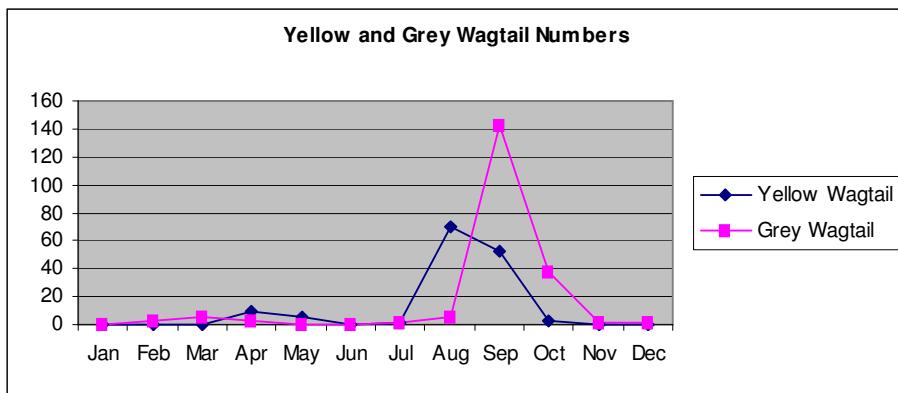
#### **Rare Passage migrant.**

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

### **YELLOW WAGTAIL *Motacilla flava***

#### **Fairly common passage migrant.**

The first record of the year was on 4<sup>th</sup> April; no further birds were recorded until 21<sup>st</sup> 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 30<sup>th</sup> August. The last record was of two birds on 6<sup>th</sup> 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 12<sup>th</sup>, 40 on 13<sup>th</sup> and 16 on 21<sup>st</sup>. 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 29<sup>th</sup> September and 13<sup>th</sup> 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 12<sup>th</sup> 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 13<sup>th</sup> September suggested an influx.

**RUFOUS NIGHTINGALE (Nightingale) *Luscinia megarhynchos***

**Scarce passage migrant.**

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

**BLACK REDSTART *Phoenicurus ochruros***

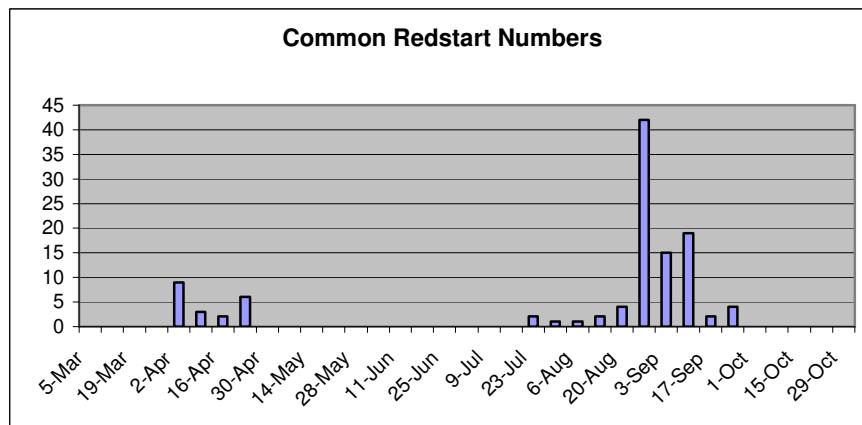
**Uncommon passage migrant and winter visitor.**

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 2<sup>nd</sup> March by a female, raising hopes of possible breeding. It, or other birds, were seen up to 8<sup>th</sup> April with an immature male or a female present on 2<sup>nd</sup> April. There were no further records until a bird passed through on 16<sup>th</sup> May. The first bird of the autumn passage was recorded on 14<sup>th</sup> 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.**

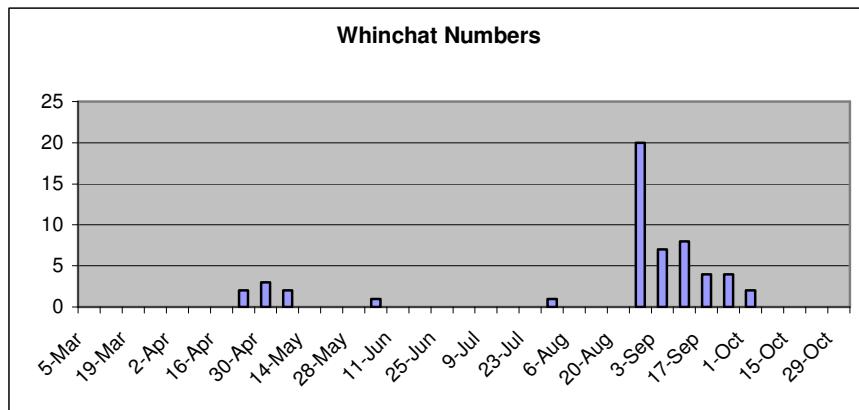
The first spring passage record was on the 3<sup>rd</sup> April; passage was relatively short with no records after the end of April. The autumn passage of Redstarts at Durlston is normally noticeably heavier than in spring; this was particularly evident in 2008 (see Graph, which shows numbers on a weekly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



### **WHINCHAT *Saxicola rubetra***

#### **Uncommon passage migrant.**

The first spring passage record was on 23<sup>rd</sup> April; birds passed through until 10<sup>th</sup> May with a late record on 6<sup>th</sup> June. Autumn passage commenced on the early date of 1<sup>st</sup> August, there were no further records until 28<sup>th</sup> August. Nine birds were recorded on 29<sup>th</sup> 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***

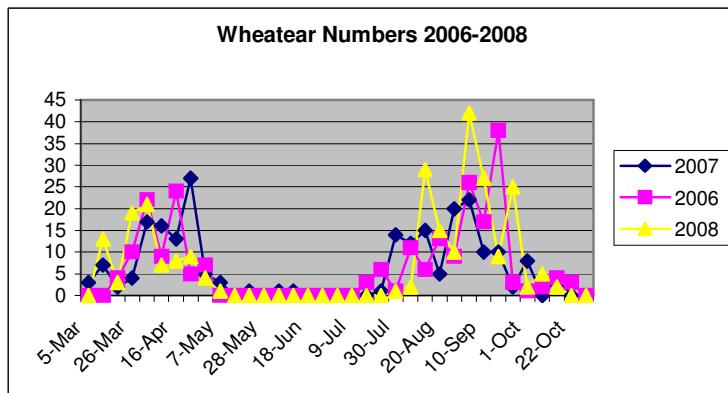
#### **Common breeding resident and passage migrant.**

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 14<sup>th</sup> March. Fledglings were already out of the nest and harassing their parents for food on 2<sup>nd</sup> 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 24<sup>th</sup> September, 14 on 14<sup>th</sup> October and over 15 on 17<sup>th</sup> October. An unusual sight on 12<sup>th</sup> 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 13<sup>th</sup> 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 7<sup>th</sup>. The last record was on 18<sup>th</sup> 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 16<sup>th</sup> September. Birds (all singles) were recorded on four more days in September, six in October and four in November. The last record was on 9<sup>th</sup> November.

**BLACKBIRD** *Turdus merula*

**Common breeding resident, passage migrant and winter visitor.**

There are estimated to 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 1<sup>st</sup> March. Birds were seen in the second winter period from 21<sup>st</sup> 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 5<sup>th</sup> January. Autumn movements were light with no significant movements recorded – the highest visible migration counts were of 14 birds on 13<sup>th</sup> November, 30 on 14<sup>th</sup> and 20 on 15<sup>th</sup>. 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 7<sup>th</sup> April. The first record in the second winter period was of two birds on 27<sup>th</sup> 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 25<sup>th</sup> October, 60 on 5<sup>th</sup> 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 9<sup>th</sup> October and nine on 13<sup>th</sup> November.

**GRASSHOPPER WARBLER** *Locustella naevia*

**Uncommon passage migrant.**

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

**Monthly counts (bird-days):**

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

### **SEDGE WARBLER *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus***

#### **Uncommon passage migrant.**

The first record of the spring was on 23<sup>rd</sup> April. Passage continued during April and May, albeit in low numbers, until 29<sup>th</sup> May. Return passage commenced on 19<sup>th</sup> July with peak passage in August with three birds on 29<sup>th</sup>. The last record was on 13<sup>th</sup> 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 27<sup>th</sup> May.

### **REED WARBLER *Acrocephalus scirpaceus***

#### **Uncommon passage migrant.**

The first record of the spring was on 23<sup>rd</sup> April. As is normal with this species, spring passage was protracted and lasted until 21st June. Return passage, limited though it is, commenced on 30<sup>th</sup> July; records continued very intermittently until 22<sup>nd</sup> 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).

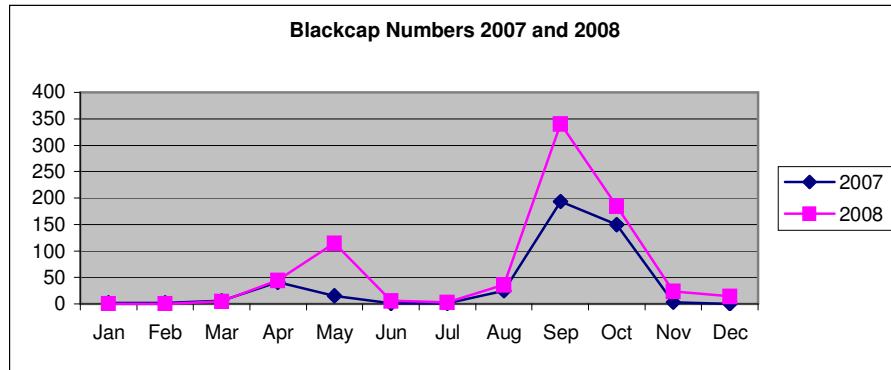
### **BLACKCAP *Sylvia atricapilla***

#### **Fairly common breeding summer visitor and common passage migrant.**

No over-wintering birds were recorded in January or February; the first record on 14<sup>th</sup> 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 12<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup> 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 25<sup>th</sup> 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 17<sup>th</sup> 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

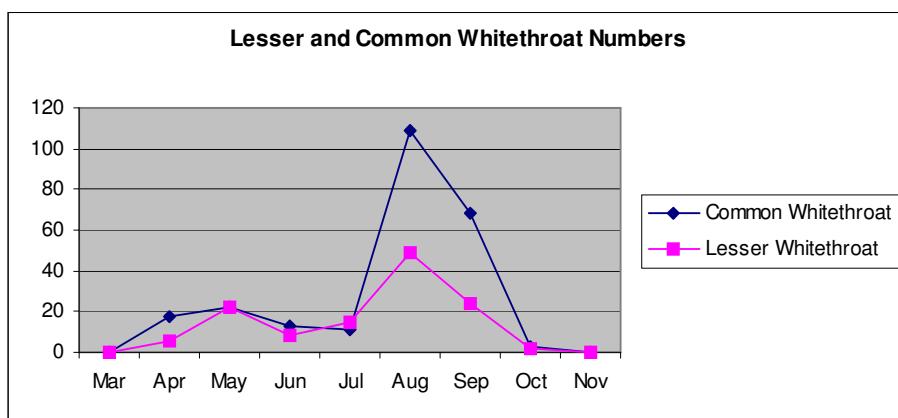
### LESSER WHITETHROAT *Sylvia curruca*

#### Fairly common breeding summer visitor and passage migrant.

The first spring record was on 22<sup>nd</sup> April. Eight birds were present on 8<sup>th</sup> 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 31<sup>st</sup> July. The main passage was in August; eight birds were present on 4<sup>th</sup> August and eleven on 30<sup>th</sup>. The last record of the autumn passage was on 11<sup>th</sup> 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 3<sup>rd</sup> 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 11<sup>th</sup> 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 8<sup>th</sup> 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 17<sup>th</sup> 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 9<sup>th</sup> August and a bird on 12<sup>th</sup> September.

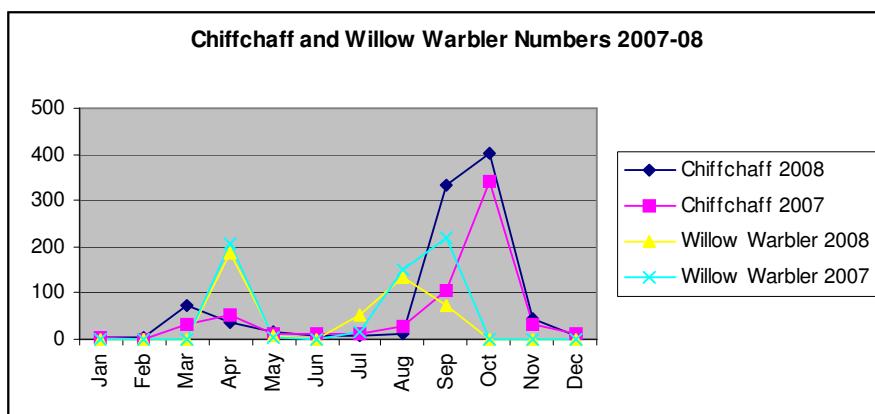
### COMMON CHIFFCHAFF *Phylloscopus collybita*

**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 28<sup>th</sup> February. Chiffchaff autumn passage is later than the closely-related Willow Warbler and peaked in October with 60 birds on 6<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> October; there was also a significant movement earlier with over 90 birds on 12<sup>th</sup> 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 2<sup>nd</sup> 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 25<sup>th</sup> September. The peak count was of 40 birds on 4<sup>th</sup> August. There was a late record on 18<sup>th</sup> 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

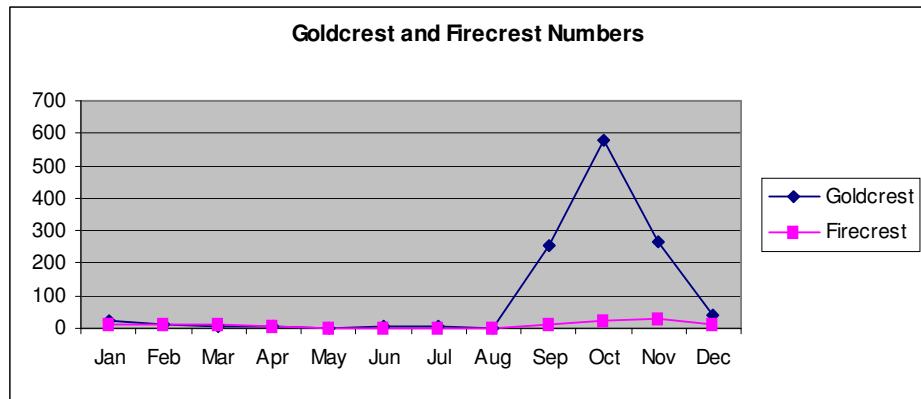
### GOLDCREST *Regulus regulus*

**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 11<sup>th</sup> 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 21<sup>st</sup> April with an unusual record on 21<sup>st</sup> June. The first autumn record was on 8<sup>th</sup> 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 14<sup>th</sup> 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 3<sup>rd</sup> May with birds seen intermittently up to 29<sup>th</sup> June. Return passage commenced on 12<sup>th</sup> August and continued to 25<sup>th</sup> 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 29<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> August, and ten on 12<sup>th</sup> September.

### PIED FLYCATCHER *Ficedula hypoleuca*

#### Uncommon passage migrant.

There were two records in spring: on 22<sup>nd</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> April. Return passage commenced on 31<sup>st</sup> 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 30<sup>th</sup> August, and three on 12<sup>th</sup> September. The last record was of two birds on 25<sup>th</sup> September.

### LONG-TAILED TIT *Aegithalos caudatus*

#### Common breeding resident.

At least three pairs held territory. A flock seen on 20<sup>th</sup> May contained many newly-fledged and still slightly fluffy young birds. Over 50 birds were seen on 14<sup>th</sup> 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 11<sup>th</sup> June. Unusually, three Blue Tits were mixed in among the migrating flocks of passerines on 27<sup>th</sup> 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 2<sup>nd</sup> (three), 3<sup>rd</sup> (two), 4<sup>th</sup>, 14<sup>th</sup>, 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> October.

**EUROPEAN NUTHATCH *Sitta europaea***

**Scarce visitor.**

There was one record: a bird on 11<sup>th</sup> 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 5<sup>th</sup> 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 29<sup>th</sup> 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 16<sup>th</sup> 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 15<sup>th</sup> 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 6<sup>th</sup> January with 40 on 23<sup>rd</sup> August and 10<sup>th</sup> November. Jackdaws move through Durlston in autumn; over 700 birds passed overhead on 25<sup>th</sup> October, with over 100 on 27<sup>th</sup> October and 5<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> 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 8<sup>th</sup> November. Highest visible migration counts were of over 150 birds on 25<sup>th</sup> October and over 70 on 8<sup>th</sup> November.

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

Carrion Crows nest in the Gully and various wooded areas. Thirty birds were seen on 29<sup>th</sup> 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 14<sup>th</sup> 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 30<sup>th</sup> 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 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> 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 29<sup>th</sup> September (two birds); 9<sup>th</sup> (two), 11<sup>th</sup> (three) and 27<sup>th</sup> (four) October; and 4<sup>th</sup> 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 8<sup>th</sup> (627 birds), 25<sup>th</sup> (650) and 28<sup>th</sup> (530) October; and 4<sup>th</sup>, (535), 5<sup>th</sup> (815) and 12<sup>th</sup> 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 9<sup>th</sup> (two birds) and 16<sup>th</sup> January; 5<sup>th</sup>, 29<sup>th</sup> and 31<sup>st</sup> March; and 5<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> April. As with other finch species, autumn passage is always more pronounced. Autumn passage commenced on 2<sup>nd</sup> October and lasted until 8<sup>th</sup> December. Significant visible migration movements were noted on 25<sup>th</sup> October (42 birds), and 5<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> November (32 and 42 respectively).

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

There was one spring record: a bird heard on 6<sup>th</sup> 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 21<sup>st</sup> September, and a bird passing over on 13<sup>th</sup> 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 9<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> 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: 29<sup>th</sup> September (718 birds); 4<sup>th</sup> (840), 10<sup>th</sup> (874) and 25<sup>th</sup> (1420) October; 3<sup>rd</sup> (1525), 4<sup>th</sup> (960) and 9<sup>th</sup> (720) November.

#### **SISKIN *Carduelis spinus***

##### **Fairly common passage migrant, particularly in autumn.**

In the first half of the year, Siskins were recorded from 21<sup>st</sup> January to 3<sup>rd</sup> May. Autumn passage birds were seen from 8<sup>th</sup> 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 25<sup>th</sup> (240 birds) and on the following days in October: 6<sup>th</sup> (360), 10<sup>th</sup> (334), 11<sup>th</sup> (316), 13<sup>th</sup> (428), 14<sup>th</sup> (349), 16<sup>th</sup> (227), 21<sup>st</sup> (246), 22<sup>nd</sup> (214) and 25<sup>th</sup> (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 29<sup>th</sup> September. Significant visible migration movements were noted on the following days in October: 4<sup>th</sup> (545), 9<sup>th</sup> (282), 10<sup>th</sup> (540), 11<sup>th</sup> (590), 13<sup>th</sup> (515), 19<sup>th</sup> (379), 23<sup>rd</sup> (610) and 25<sup>th</sup> (605). A count of 340 birds on 5<sup>th</sup> 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 21<sup>st</sup> January, 27<sup>th</sup> February and 3<sup>rd</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> March (two birds). Significant visible migration movements were noted on the following days in October: 8<sup>th</sup> (48 birds), 17<sup>th</sup> (81), 21<sup>st</sup> (52), 22<sup>nd</sup> (47) and 25<sup>th</sup> (68).

#### **MEALY REDPOLL *Carduelis flammea***

##### **Rare passage and winter visitor.**

A bird was reported on wires on 11<sup>th</sup> October. Two birds sound-recorded passing over on 29<sup>th</sup> 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 5<sup>th</sup> June and 14<sup>th</sup> November. Birds were recorded on 45 days (compared with seven in 2006 and two in 2007). Peak counts were: 23 on 25<sup>th</sup> July, 29 on 6<sup>th</sup> August, 20 on 3<sup>rd</sup> September and 20 on 11<sup>th</sup> 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 18<sup>th</sup> October and 15 on 27<sup>th</sup> 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 18<sup>th</sup> October, 22 on 25<sup>th</sup> October and 18 on 5<sup>th</sup> 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 25<sup>th</sup> September, 14<sup>th</sup> October, and 5<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> November.

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

A bird passed over the Castle on 23<sup>rd</sup> 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 5<sup>th</sup> November.

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

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

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

There were five spring records: on 17<sup>th</sup> February; 13<sup>th</sup>, 26<sup>th</sup> and 31<sup>st</sup> March; and 3<sup>rd</sup> April. A bird was in the Gully on 7<sup>th</sup> 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.