

Teesmouth Bird Club

Newsletter



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Thanks to the contributors to this issue:- Chris Sharp; Alan Wheeldon.

All unsolicited copy will be most welcome, ideally sent by email, or on 3.5" computer disk, using word processing software, but typed and handwritten copy is equally acceptable. Any topic concerned with birds or the local environment is grist to the mill.

MONTHLY SUMMARY by Chris Sharp

July

The Great White Egret remained around Saltholme Marsh all month. With nobody allowed to walk out to this area due to the foot and mouth restrictions the possibility of the bird being flushed was greatly reduced and presumably accounted for its long stay. The Spoonbill was also present around the North Tees Marshes until at least mid-month but was often elusive, presumably hiding on Cowpen Marsh. Last months Hobby was also still on Saltholme (1st). A remarkable series of Cory=s Shearwater records occurred at Hartlepool in the first half of the month with singles on 7th, 8th and 2 flew south on 14th. Sea-watching though was generally quiet though a summer plumaged Black Throated Diver flew past (12th) along with a Roseate Tern. 2 Roseate Terns were at Crimdon (12th). Little Gull numbers peaked at 15 on Dormans Pool (8th). As usual July saw the return passage of Waders. In the first half of the month a few Spotted Redshanks and Greenshanks were around the North Tees Marshes with Dormans Pool being the favoured locality. More birds passed through in the latter half of the month. 162 Black-tailed Godwits were on Dormans Pool (25th) and Curlew Sandpiper numbers peaked at 9 on Greenabella Marsh (29th). The now annual Storm Petrel ringing sessions off Hartlepool Headland produced a peak catch of 11 and a large Petrel bouncing out of the net B the one that got away! 2 Little Egrets on Coatham Marsh (21st/22nd) wandered over to the North side of the river and were joined by a 3rd and possibly even a 4th bird. A male Montagu=s Harrier was on Cowpen Marsh (28th-30th) and an Osprey was at Scaling Dam late month.

August

Passage Waders continued to be in evidence with the usual suspects to be found in the Dormans area early in the month. Small numbers of Greenshank, Spotted Redshank, Wood Sandpiper and Little Ringed Plover were all to be seen. A Pectoral Sandpiper was seen at the pools at Bowesfield, Stockton (3rd). The Osprey at Scaling Dam was seen

irregularly up to 11th. Peregrine and Hen Harrier were also to be seen at Scaling at this time. An immature drake Red Crested Pochard was on Cowpen Bewley Pond from 6th. This is one of the best sites for Kingfisher in the county and Goosanders are often present in winter. A north-westerly on 8th saw a Sooty Shearwater and 6 Bonxies off Cowbar and 4 Sooties off Hartlepool. The Great White Egret continued to show well around Saltholme. Little Egrets were seen in various locations on the North Tees Marshes. At least 3 birds were involved and with 4 Marsh Harriers in the area the area resembled the Danube delta!

2 Roseate Terns were on Seaton Snook (12th) on which date an adult Mediterranean Gull was at South Gare and a Little Stint was on Dormans Pool. An adult Yellow-legged Gull showed well at Haverton Hill from 17th. The months only fall of note occurred on 19th when Hartlepool held 10 Pied Flycatchers and 6 Whinchat. A close in Cory=s Shearwater flew past Hartlepool and South Gare on the same day with 2 Balearic Shearwaters also seen from the former. The numbers of Terns built up on Seaton Snook and high tide evening roosts provided up to 27 Roseate and 21 Black Terns here. A Barred Warbler was briefly seen at West View Cemetery (24th). 75 Whimbrel on Haverton Hole (25th) was a good count. Dormans Pool continued to be attractive to waders with up to 7 Spotted Redshank and also 2 Little Stint. Up to 5 Garganey were also present late in the month. A Honey Buzzard circled here for 10 minutes (26th). This is still a rare bird in Cleveland despite last years amazing September influx. 26 Brent Geese flew past Hartlepool (27th). Yet another Cory=s Shearwater was off Hartlepool (31st) and this bird spent the evening sat on the sea allowing several observers to finally get this species on their county list. 4 Sooties and a few Poms also flew past.

September

September 2001 will long live in the memory of Cleveland Birdwatchers. If the previous 8 months had been somewhat dull, September more than made up for it. Northwesterly winds early in the month produced good sea watching conditions. A Red-necked Grebe passed Hartlepool (1st). The 4th saw 101 Sooty, Balearic and 237 Manx Shearwaters off Hartlepool along with 3 Long-tailed and 5 Pomarine Skuas. 145 Sooty Shearwaters were counted off Cowbar. A further blow on the 8th saw 50 Sooty, 430 Manxies, 46 Bonxies and 1 Long-tailed Skua off Hartlepool. The following day produced 48 Sooties, 172 Brent Geese, 5 Storm Petrels, 56 Bonxies and 21 Little Gulls. Another Storm Petrel was off Hartlepool the following day and the first of the month=s Sabine=s Gulls was off South Gare. Another Sabine=s Gull was seen here (13th). The sea-watching really got going on 17th when the days totals off Hartlepool read 509 Sooties, 159 Manx, 1 Balearic, 2 Leach=s and 1 Storm Petrel, 4 Poms and 1 Long tailed Skua, 37 Brent Geese and 1 Sabine=s Gull. To put the movement of Sooties into some perspective the only previous count over 100 before this year was 206, which flew past Hartlepool on September 11th 1976. The following day saw another 200 Sooties and 11 Long-tailed Skuas. The movement continued on 19th with 115 Sooties, 2 Balearics, Sabine=s Gull, 5 Long-tailed and 4 Pomarine Skuas, Leach=s Petrel, 2 Great Northern and 34 Red-throated Divers and 6 Velvet Scoters. Even South Gare got into the act this evening with 3 Long-tailed Skuas, Storm Petrel and 56 Little Gulls. Good numbers of Skuas continued to pass the coast over the next few days but attention was to be focussed elsewhere.

Whilst all this sea watching was taking place the Marshes received reduced coverage. A Temminck=s Stint was on Coatham Marsh (2nd/3rd) and a Hobby was on Saltholme Pool (2nd). The Great-White Egret remained around the North Tees Marshes all month and at least 1 Little Egret was present on the North Tees Marshes during this period. The >spotty= juvenile Marsh Harrier was around Dormans Pool until 15th. Small numbers of the usual passage waders were also on here though the continuing high water levels meant conditions were not ideal. Only single figures peaks of Curlew Sandpiper were recorded and Little Stints were scarce.

The wind had veered to the north on 19th and attention switched to passerines. Heavy rain overnight 19th/20th saw a good fall of migrants at the coastal stations. Single Yellow-browed Warblers were at Hartlepool, Seaton Cemetery and Zinc Works Road. Red-breasted Flycatchers were reported briefly at South Gare and Old Cemetery and a Barred Warbler was at South Gare. Amongst the common species 2 Great-Spotted Woodpeckers were also on Hartlepool Headland. The following day 3 Yellow-browed Warblers were at Hartlepool and a Red-breasted Flycatcher at Zinc Works Road. The 22nd a Bluethroat was seen briefly at Steetley Quarry.

Small numbers of passage Waders remained on the North Tees Marshes early in the month with 1-4 of Spotted Redshank, Greenshank, Little Stint and Black-tailed Godwit all present. 2 Little Egrets were still in the area and the Great White Egret stayed until 12th. A Bittern was on Dormans Pool (7th) and was

The wind slowly turned to the East over the next couple of days. Again rain overnight 24th/25th saw a huge fall of migrants on the 25th. Large numbers of Goldcrest featured and Hartlepool scored with 4 Red-breasted Flycatchers including a superb male with a full red breast. A Redstart of the eastern race >Samamiscus= was also seen here along with a Great Grey Shrike and a late Wood Warbler. South Gare replied with Barred Warbler and a single Red-breasted Flycatcher. However this was all eclipsed when at 4.30 p.m. news broke of a Red-Flanked Bluetail been seen briefly at Cattersty Gill along with Dusky and Barred Warblers. Not exactly on the regular Cleveland birding circuit, birders set off for the site not exactly knowing where to go. After tramping through fields and being led by mobile phones about 25 lucky observers found themselves watching Cleveland=s first ever Red-Flanked Bluetail. A former gross rarity in Britain this eastern gem has become somewhat commoner in recent years but the Cattersty bird was still only the 26th for Britain. Much to the disappointment of the assembled crowd the next morning there was no sign of the Bluetail. Some compensation was gained however in the fact that the Dusky Warbler was still present along with Barred and Icterine Warblers and Long Eared Owl. A Richard=s Pipit flew over and nearby 3 Richard=s Pipits were at Boulby along with a >Siberian= Stonechat. A Hoopoe showed well in Seaton Carew dunes the same day.

The rare birds continued to show when the following day a Radde=s Warbler was found at South Gare along with a Barred Warbler. The Radde=s was generally elusive but the Barred gave stunning views. Attention suddenly switched from passerines when a Wilson=s Phalarope showed on Coatham Marsh. Although the 12th record for Cleveland it was actually the first since 1985 and gave several of the younger Cleveland birders a chance to add this one to their Cleveland lists. A Black Tern was also present on Coatham Marsh at this time. The following day (28th) a Richard=s Pipit flew over Hartlepool Golf Course and a Yellow-browed Warbler was in Locke Park. Finally an adult White-rumped Sandpiper was found on Saltholme Pool (29th) and an adult Glaucous Gull was on the newly formed tip at Hargreaves Quarry (30th). This was presumably a different bird to the regular returning adult at Hartlepool, which had arrived on cue earlier in the month.

October

still present at the months end though was only to be seen in flight. The White-rumped Sandpiper re-appeared on Saltholme Pool (9th) and remained until 12th though was often absent for long periods. An adult Iceland Gull was on Dormans Pool (11th) on which date single Pale-bellied and Dark-bellied Brent

and 5 Barnacle Geese were on the Tidal Pool. 4 Whooper Swans were on the North Tees Marshes during this period. A juvenile Sabine=s Gull was on Dormans Pool (14th) the 2nd consecutive year a juvenile has appeared away from the coast. On the same date many thrushes appeared at the coastal stations with 3 Ring Ouzels at Hartlepool amongst them. A Great Grey Shrike was also at Hartlepool on this date and a Red Breasted Flycatcher was at Skinningrove. The following day saw a Yellow-browed Warbler at Hartlepool. Easterly winds from 19th saw large numbers of Thrushes and Goldcrests at the coast along with several Black Redstarts, good numbers of Woodcock and Blackcap and Siskin and Brambling also recorded going through. The only unusual bird during this big fall was a Pallas=s Warbler, which showed well at South Gare (21st). A Yellow-browed Warbler was at Brotton (22nd) and a single Waxwing was at Skelton (23rd). Several large skein of Pink-Footed Geese passed through the county at this time and a late Osprey flew south along the coast (25th). Several small flocks of Whooper Swan seen late in the month with up to 15 in the Saltholme area. A Water Pipit was on Dormans Pool (28th) along with a late Garganey and a Buzzard was over Seaton Common.

IDENTIFICATION ARTICLE

The Identification of a Solitary Dark Skua

About 30% of juvenile Long-tailed skuas are dark [Malling Olsen K. [1989]]. Whilst Long-tailed skua is only the size of a Kittiwake, it may not be easy to judge the size of a solitary small dark skua unexpectedly found inland on a golf course or on farmland.

A small dark skua may be confidently aged as a juvenile if it shows evenly distributed pale barring on the mantle and wing coverts as well as a wholly pale base to the bill and all-pale tarsus.

Long-tailed skua should be quite cold grey-brown in overall appearance, lacking the warmer tones of most Arctic. Mantle and scapulars show clearly defined whitish delicate lace-like [joined-up] fringes contrasting with a grey-brown background colour. These whitish fringes are seldom if ever present on dark juvenile Arctic. Even on paler Arctic these fringes are yellowish not whitish and therefore less distinct.

On the closed wing of Long-tailed skua the primaries will appear all brown. Arctic typically shows distinct pale [whitish] arrow marks [as opposed to pale fringes] to the tips of primaries. In flight or when preening or stretching, Long-tailed skua usually shows just two *fully* white primary shafts as opposed to up to eight on Arctic. These two prominent fully white shafts to the outer two primaries P9 and P10 create a pale leading edge to the outer wing. A note of caution: some birds may exhibit exceptionally large Nighthawk-like white flashes in the outer upperwing. On at least three such reported birds, these extensive white areas have been formed by the white *inner* webs of the *base* of each primary [most obviously on the outer four].

Of course, Long-tailed skua has white bases to the inner webs of the outer primaries on the *underwing*, which show as a clear white patch, a feature that is obvious in the field.

Long-tailed skua appears to show a complete but narrow pale leading edge, whereas on Arctic Skua it looks broader and more diffuse. The upperwing of Long-tailed also shows a contrasting dark secondary bar.

Furthermore, the conspicuous pale barring on the rump of Long-tailed skua will stand out as the palest portion of the upperparts. This is never so on Arctic skua. Were an Arctic to show such a pale rump, the hindneck would also be pale, as would the underparts. In a *small* skua pale rump-barring on an otherwise all-dark bird is diagnostic of Long-tailed skua. However, a note of caution; many Pomarine skuas share this pattern.

Also, the axillaries are conspicuously barred whilst in a dark juvenile Arctic they are often though not always dark.

The undertail-coverts of Long-tailed should be too regularly and too pale-banded for a dark Arctic in which the pale barring tends to echo the warm brown tinge of the whole plumage and sometimes is wholly absent.

Typically Long-tailed skua shows a long and rather full tail elongation B longer than the bill, with *rounded* central tail feathers. The narrower pointed elongation of Arctic skua is [in all but extremes] shorter than the bill.

An >inland= skua is often confiding and will allow close approach thus affording exceptional views. On Long-tailed skua the dark tip of the bill is broad, about half of the bill [as opposed to about 30% in Arctic skua]. This black area may extend past the gonydeal angle and frequently tapers along the cutting edges about half way back towards the base.

Such very close range views will further reveal that in Long-tailed Skua, the gonydeal angle is positioned in the middle of the lower mandible [measured from the outermost feathering] whereas in Arctic [and also Pomarine] it is closer to the tip.

In the short-billed Long-tailed skua the distance from the loreal point to the inner part of the nostril is *shorter* than the distance from the outer part of the nostril to the tip of the bill.

In the longer-billed species [e.g., Arctic] the distance from the outer part of the nostril to the tip of the bill is shorter than the distance from the loreal point to the inner part of the nostril.

The rounded head and shorter bill on Long-tailed skua create a head and bill profile comparable to that of a Common Gull. Arctic skua typically shows a more elongated head shape with a flatter crown. However it should be noted that although the bill of Long-tailed skua is shorter than that of Arctic it is rarely more slender. It is usually just as thick as the bill of Arctic and frequently even thicker.

Thus, to some extent, the bill of a Long-tailed is >short and

thick=, the bill of an Arctic is long and slender and the bill of a Pomarine is long and thick.

Finally, the habit of hovering and feeding on earthworms in fields is typical of Long-tailed skua and therefore disproportionately helpful!

My sincere thanks go to Graeme Joynt for taking time out from his multifarious activities as County Recorder to read through the article with his customary diligence.

TRAVEL FEATURE

>Aren=t Cetaceans Brilliant= Portsmouth - Bilbao Minicruise

All whales dolphins and porpoises belong to an Order of marine mammals called Cetacea and are collectively known as cetaceans. European waters were until recently considered by many people to be comparatively impoverished in terms of cetaceans. However studies by volunteers who have conducted whale and dolphin surveys in the English Channel and the Bay of Biscay since 1995 have confirmed that the waters of the north-eastern Atlantic are inhabited by over a quarter of the world=s known species of whales, dolphins and porpoises.

The English Channel between the south coast of England and 481 40'N is an area of shallow water at a depth generally less than 100m. The Brittany Coast lies between 481 40'N and the 200 m depth contour at a latitude of approximately 461 20'N. This is also a shallow water area over the continental shelf with water depth averaging between 100 B 150 m. The Northern Bay of Biscay lies between the 200 m depth contour in the north and 441 30' N in the south. The steep topography of the shelf-edge here results in a sharp increase in water depth from 200 m to 4,000 m, before levelling at around the 4,000m mark. Beyond this lies the abyssal plain of the ocean floor. The Southern Bay covers an area from 441 30'N southward to the north coast of Spain. This is an area with a tremendous variation in depth with two extensive deep-water canyons that fall beneath the transect lines of the two ferries which operate between southwest England and northern Spain. These are the Torrelavaga Canyon on the Brittany Ferries route and the Santander Canyon on the P&O European Ferries route. The Southern Bay also encompasses a small area of continental shelf.

Chris Bielby, Ken Baldrige and I undertook the Portsmouth - Bilbao crossing during 4th B 7th September 2001, having only booked our four-berth cabin the previous day! Departing Darlington at approximately 0900 hours on 4th September we ambled down to the New Forest near Beaulieu Station. Within half a mile of Shatterford car we saw 2 Hobbies, 2 Common buzzards, 5 Stonechats and 3 Dartford warblers. We did not have sufficient time to look for Honey buzzard. In Portsmouth not far from the ferry terminal we saw one little egret. You can leave your car in a fenced and guarded parking compound only 250 metres from the terminal. It is clearly sign posted as you approach the P & O dock. A charge of ,5 for each 24-hour period is levied. Adjacent to the compound is a garage where you can conveniently fill-up for the return journey home. Once you are booked in, a bus transports you to the large and luxurious passenger Cruise ferry >The Pride of Bilbao=. The ship is scheduled to depart 2000 hours and you need to be at the terminal one hour beforehand. You reach Bilbao at 0630 two days later, leaving at 1230 the same day. You arrive back at Portsmouth at 1600 the following day. A passport is required at both the British and Spanish ends.

Results over the past 4 years indicate that this crossing is better than the Plymouth B Santander crossing for rorquals, notably fin whales. The best locations for large cetaceans are stated to be at the southern end of the Bay of Biscay where water is at its deepest. The afternoon and evening on the southern route and the afternoon and evening of the return leg from Bilbao are likely to be best. You cross over the continental shelf edge in the northern Bay on the return journey. However, cetaceans do occur in the north and 10 Minke whales were seen near to the Channel Islands on the northern leg in July close to a major shipping lane.

Watch points are from both the port and starboard sides of Deck 11. If you watch from just behind the bridge you are sheltered from any head wind. The best area is just behind the bridge on the western side on the outward journey and eastern side on the return journey. Otherwise sea glare prevents some colour being determined. It is also less stressful on the eyes. But Ψbe prepared to rocket from one side to the other on several occasions during each crossing! These locations are sheltered in winds of up to 20 mph. Above this telescopes cannot be used and holding binoculars becomes more difficult. A view is obtained of approximately 140 degrees. You are between 80 - 100 feet above sea level. The stabilisers provide a very stable platform even in a sizeable swell. Engine vibrations are nominal. On so-called >Monkey Island= about 15 feet above you stand the cetacean experts and their tour participants. They have an unrestricted view out over the bow from their special vantagepoint. Hugh Harrop who was leading a >The Company of Whales= trip, aided by David Tipling, lent me one of his mobile phones. Every time his group spotted something of interest he contacted me and vice versa. It worked extremely well.

I would recommend taking plenty of food with you. When your supply runs out, you can purchase hot or cold

References:

Birding World 2: 362 B 364

Birding World 3: 28 B 29

Birding World 6: 403 - 404

8Wendle Nivea III

August 2001

rolls, cakes, coffee, soft drinks or bottled water to take back up on deck [praying that you have not missed >the biggie=]. For the more discerning traveller, in addition to several restaurants [the a lá carte menu is impressive], there are several good quality bars [drinks are expensive], jacuzzis, a lower deck swimming pool, two cinemas, beauty therapists [no, we did not indulge as beauty is only skin deep] shops, a casino, floor show AND bingo!

The Cruise ferry travels at around 15 B 17 knots [nautical miles per hour] allowing cetaceans [and seabirds] to be seen for a reasonable length of time. Average time for seawatching is 32 hours over three days. On our first day, 5th September 2001, watching optimistically from 0610 [when it was hardly light] to c2100 hours we saw the following cetaceans and seabirds, mostly from 12.30 p.m. with very little before then, other than a solitary Minke whale.

Cetaceans

Blue Whale	Balaenoptera musculus	1
Fin Whale	Balaenoptera physalus	34
Minke Whale	Balaenoptera acutorostrata	1
Sperm Whale	Physeter macrocephalus	4
Bottlenose Dolphin	Tursiops truncatus	4
Common Dolphin	Delphinus delphis	89
Unidentified Dolphins	Delphinidae sp	20
Pilot Whale	Globicephala melaa/macrorhynchus	7
Harbour Porpoise	Phocoena phocoena	A few
Large Rorqual sp	Balaenopteridae sp	31

Other Marine Life

Basking Shark	Cetorhinus maximus	1
Ocean Sunfish	Mola mola	1
Tuna sp		Several >boils=

Seabirds and other Migrants

Cory=s Shearwater	Calonectris diomedea	132
Great Shearwater	Puffinus gravis	35
Sooty Shearwater	Puffinus griseus	3
Manx Shearwater	Puffinus puffinus	7
Balearic Shearwater	Puffinus mauretanicus	1
Little Shearwater	Puffinus assimilis	1
Northern Gannet	Morus bassanus	Not counted
Grey Phalarope	Phalaropus fulicarius	1
Pomarine Skua	Stercorarius pomarinus	2
Arctic Skua	Stercorarius parasiticus	3
Great Skua	Catharacta skua	1
Sabine=s Gull	Larus sabini	1
Sandwich Tern	Sterna sandvicensis	4
Common Tern	Sterna hirundo	5
>Commic= Tern	Sterna sp	2
Common Guillemot	Uria aalge	1
Eurasian Collared Dove	Streptopelia decaocto	1

On Wednesday 6th September, we docked at 0700 hours at Santurtzi, the port for Bilbao. There are two prominent hills directly behind the town as you look inland to your right. One has a ruined castle on the top, the other a micro-transmitter. We together with other like-minded birders took a taxi from the ferry terminal, which cost the non-negotiable going-rate of 3000 pesetas, up to these hills. The road is very steep and once clear of the town you pass a few houses, then small allotments and paddocks. We had a good 2 hours or so gently paced birding on the hills behind Bilbao before setting off to walk back to the ferry terminal. To walk *there and* back, a distance of perhaps some 4 B 5 miles would take almost 4 hours.

The following bird species were observed. We experienced no diurnal migration in what were cool mostly overcast conditions. It could and should have been 30°C bright and sunny!

Griffon Vulture	<i>Gyps fulvus</i>	30
Common Kestrel	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>	2
Peregrine Falcon	<i>Falco peregrinus</i>	1
Tree Pipit	<i>Anthus trivialis</i>	3
Winter Wren	<i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>	2
European Robin	<i>Erithacus rubecula</i>	3
Black Redstart	<i>Phoenicurus ochruros</i>	2
Common Redstart	<i>Phoenicurus phoenicurus</i>	1
Stonechat	<i>Saxicola torquata</i>	3
Common Blackbird	<i>Turdus merula</i>	5
Cetti=s Warbler	<i>Cettia cetti</i>	3
Sardinian Warbler	<i>Sylvia melanocephala</i>	3
Common Whitethroat	<i>Sylvia communis</i>	1
Garden Warbler	<i>Sylvia borin</i>	1
Willow Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus trochilus</i>	2
Pied Flycatcher	<i>Ficedula hypoleuca</i>	1
Great Tit	<i>Parus major</i>	7
Red-backed Shrike	<i>Lanius collurio</i>	1
Common Raven	<i>Corvus corax</i>	2
House Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>	Several
Eurasian Tree Sparrow	<i>Passer montanus</i>	1
Chaffinch	<i>Fringilla coelebs</i>	5
European Serin	<i>Serinus serinus</i>	10
European Greenfinch	<i>Carduelis chloris</i>	7

Before departing Bilbao on our return Northern leg, an hour or so=s casual birding from Deck 11 of the >Pride of Bilbao= produced the following species mostly in and around the harbour with a few species noted as they flew overhead.

European Shag	<i>Phalacrocorax aristotelis</i>	1
Eurasian Spoonbill	<i>Platalea leucorodia</i>	87
European Honey-buzzard?	<i>Pernis apivorus</i>	1
Griffon Vulture	<i>Gyps fulvus</i>	4
Common Buzzard	<i>Buteo buteo</i>	1
Black-headed Gull	<i>Larus ridibundus</i>	A few
Common Gull	<i>Larus canus</i>	A few
Lesser Black-backed Gull	<i>Larus fuscus</i>	14
Herring Gull	<i>Larus argentatus</i>	Several
Yellow-legged Gull	<i>Larus michahellis</i>	Hundreds
Great Black-backed Gull	<i>Larus marinus</i>	5
Sandwich Tern	<i>Sterna sandvicensis</i>	2
Common Kingfisher	<i>Alcedo atthis</i>	1

Mammals

Brown Rat	<i>Rattus norvegicus</i>	1
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We departed Bilbao on time and continued our birding. Everyone was keen to see enigmatic Cuvier=s Beaked Whale. We birded from 1208 to until approximately 2100 on the southern part of the return leg on the 6th September. We saw the following with seabirds very much at a premium except for one breathtaking species in resplendent full summer plumage.

Cetaceans

Fin Whale	Balaenoptera physalus	35
Large Rorqual sp	Baleanopteridae	20
Cuvier=s Beaked Whale	Ziphius cavirostris	17
Beaked Whale sp	Ziphiidae	4
Bottlenose Dolphin	Tursiops truncatus	11
Common Dolphin	Delphinus delphis	133
Striped Dolphin	Stenella coeruleoalba	65
Unidentified Dolphins	Delphinidae sp	60
Pilot Whale	Globicephala melas/macrorhynchus	34

Birds

Whimbrel	Numenius phaeopus	28
Arctic Skua	Stercorarius parasiticus	1
Sabine=s Gull	Larus sabini	64
Arctic Tern	Sterna paradisaea	1
>Commic= Tern	Sterna sp	2

On the last day as you approach NW France and the Channel Islands you have a further 8.45 hours birding [0615 to 1500]. We saw very little except for;

Cetaceans

Common Dolphins	Delphinus delphis	A few
Unidentified Dolphins	Delphinidae sp	20

Birds

Sooty Shearwater	Puffinus griseus	4
Manx Shearwater	Puffinus puffinus	1
Storm Petrel	Hydrobates pelagicus	33 [out of 83]
Northern Gannet	Morus bassanus	1500+
Ringed Plover	Charadrius hiaticula	1
Pomarine Skua	Stercorarius pomarinus	1
Arctic Skua	Stercorarius parasiticus	2
Great Skua	Catharacta skua	23
Yellow Wagtail	Motacilla flava	1
Chiffchaff	Phylloscopus collybita	1

Also seen was one Aeshna dragonfly, which flew over the ferry an hour before we docked at Portsmouth.

The weather, both crossings, cetacean and bird sightings, on-board facilities and the company of my two colleagues and other birders/whale watchers were all brilliant. Indeed the whole experience must be repeated B and soon. Talk about value-for-money Ψ roll on 2002.

Useful references

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8Alan Wheeldon

ENDPIECE

All's Well at the Rest Home

Just a note to say I'm living
 And not among the dead
 Though my list is getting smaller
 And talk of lumping hurts my head

I've got used to my neuralgia
 To my dentures I'm resigned
 I can cope with colour-blindness
 But all this splitting blows my mind

Sometimes I can't remember
 When I'm standing by the stairs
 Am I going up - have I just come down?
 And just what ARE rectal hairs?

By the bidet I just stand and think
 My simple mind so full of doubt
 Does a trumpeter finch retain its pink?
 Or does it moult it out?

I lost my >scope the other day
 I searched with might and main
 And found it in the microwave
 Are my memory cells on the wane?

Your name has just escaped me
 Though for years we've been good friends
 I hope it comes back to my mind
 Before this poem ends

Still, remember I respect you
 Whoever you say you are
 I wish that you lived nearer
 Instead of somewhere flung so far

PS

I stood before the post box
 My face went crossbill red
 Instead of posting this to you
 I opened it instead

8Lars Pension
 2nd July 2001