



Dorset Birdwatching Breaks

In addition to booking a guide through our **Tailor-made Birding and Wildlife Tours**, we can also offer a **Dorset Birdwatching Break** package.

The Dorset Birding and Wildlife Experience have joined forces with **LakeViews Bed & Breakfast**, run by Jenni Gormill [<http://www.lakeviews-bedandbreakfast.co.uk>] to offer a combination of quality accommodation and a guide to provide an unforgettable experience of Dorset's birdlife.

LakeViews is located on the outskirts of the Old Saxon town of Wareham, a short 15-minute walk from the town centre. The town is well served by road and rail links (situated on the main London Waterloo to Weymouth line). The property has undergone extensive renovations to the highest standard and offers B&B to individuals, couples and to small groups (max. six). The accommodation consists of **two double bedrooms** and **one twin bedroom**, all with en-suite facilities.

LakeViews overlooks Swineham Gravel Pits, one of the few freshwater bodies in the Poole Harbour area, and is close to Swineham Point where the two Wareham Rivers – the Frome and Piddle – flow into the harbour. In winter the pits attract a good variety of waterfowl with occasionally something more unusual - Bittern, Ring-necked Duck and Smew have all been seen here. Bearded Tit breed on Swineham Point, Cetti's Warbler is resident and Marsh Harrier may be seen at any time of the year.

We can offer a flexible approach to tailor your own **Dorset Birdwatching Break** with an itinerary to suit your particular interests at any time of the year. The price quoted for your package will depend on your party size, the number of nights B&B and the number of days guiding you require.

An example of an autumn/winter weekend break based on two (or three) nights:

- Two (three) nights B&B accommodation on Friday, Saturday (& Sunday)
- A full English breakfast on Saturday, Sunday (& Monday)
- A packed lunch on Saturday & Sunday
- The services of a guide on Saturday & Sunday
- Afternoon tea before departure on Sunday (or depart after breakfast on Monday)
- A bird checklist
- If travelling by train, we can pick up/drop off at Wareham Station

Evening meals are not provided but there is a good choice of pubs and restaurants locally.

Itinerary

(for illustration only: subject to tides, weather and, of course, what birds are about/where they are!)

Dorset at any time of the year offers a fantastic birding experience, especially so in the autumn and winter months (Oct-Mar). During our **birdwatching break** weekend we'll have a very good chance of picking up around 100 species over the two days as we spend time visiting various sites around the Weymouth/Portland area and in Purbeck.

Arrive at your leisure on Friday afternoon/evening and settle in to LakeViews. If arriving before dark you'll have the chance to start off your bird list by having a look over **Swineham Gravel Pits**, which surround LakeViews. A scan at dusk over the nearby fields may reward you with a hunting Barn Owl.

Breakfast will be taken at 8.00am on Saturday so that we can be on our way by 8.30am. We'll have a quick look on the pits to see what waterfowl are about before heading off to Weymouth.

The RSPB reserves at **Lodmoor** and **Radipole Lake** will be our first stop. These must rate amongst some of, if not THE, best urban sites in the UK - they have always had a habit of turning up a good selection of ducks, waders and gulls. Cetti's Warbler and Bearded Tit are resident and Water Rails often show themselves on the muddy margins of the reed beds. Wintering Bittern are a particular speciality of both sites.

Next we'll move on to Portland, stopping first at a few locations overlooking **Portland Harbour** where we'll look for wintering divers, grebes and sea ducks. At **Ferrybridge**, any dark-bellied Brent Geese we find will need to be scanned carefully for the rarer Black Brant or pale-bellied individuals. Mediterranean Gulls are often the most numerous species amongst the loafing gulls here, regularly reaching into three figures, and we should also find a few waders including Ringed Plover, Dunlin and Turnstone.

After our packed lunch by the Chesil Beach Visitor Centre at Ferrybridge we'll head down to **The Bill on Portland**. A sea watch will give us a chance of more divers and grebes as well as Gannet, Common Scoter and possibly a few auks. A small number of Purple Sandpiper are regular winter visitors to The Bill and other birds around may include Peregrine, Little and Short-eared Owls, Raven and mixed flocks of finches - but Portland often turns up the unexpected!

On Sunday we'll concentrate on birding around Purbeck. We'll start with a pre-breakfast walk at 8.00am out to **Swineham Point** to see what birds are on the doorstep. Expected ducks and geese on the pits may be joined by something a little more unusual - Marsh and Hen Harriers regularly quarter the area and we may find Bearded Tit on the Point.

After breakfast (9.00-9.30am) we'll head across to **Wareham Forest**. A walk around the heathland and the wooded edges of Morden Bog should find Dartford Warbler, Stonechat and a selection of other small birds – including possibly Woodlark or a wintering Great Grey Shrike. We'll then make a quick stop at **Bere Regis Cress Beds** to look for Green Sandpiper (sometimes Water Pipit are here too), before moving on to Poole Harbour and the **Middlebere Channel**. This area is good for a selection of waders, including Avocet and Black-tailed Godwit, and is often favoured by Spoonbill. The adjacent **Hartland Moor** is another good spot for Hen Harrier and, possibly, Merlin.

Depending on time, we may head up to **Durlston Country Park** for a short walk around the cliff top. Black Redstart is a regular winter visitor here and we should pick up a few gulls and seabirds offshore before stopping for our packed lunch. Our final destination of the day will be the **Studland Peninsula**. We'll make a few stops along the Sandbanks road to look for more divers, grebes, ducks and waders and will try to pick up some of the species we may have missed so far.

We'll return to LakeViews by around 4.00/4.30pm for afternoon tea before your departure (or your final night's stay).