



newwildlifetours

journey into the natural world

Sand crocus Devon

5th April 2017

Much better weather was forecasted for this trip to south Devon to look for the Sand crocus and other sand dune spring wildlife.

It was a lovely warm sunny spring morning as we travelled down. We arrived in good time and the sun was already high and quite warm.

Carrion crow, Wood pigeon and Lesser black back gull were seen and a Jay flew across the track as we made our way to the nature reserve.

Herring gulls were immediately seen and there were a couple of magpies in the low bushes. Linnets also called and moved from bush to bush and a couple of Canada geese flew over.

We headed over to try and find the dainty small Sand crocus (*Romulea columnae* var. *Occidentalis*) and we were not disappointed. Although we had to look closely as they are small we soon got our eye in and found it soon found it tricky to walk around with so many of them in flower. Photographs were taken in the perfect sunlight.

There was also an early Southern marsh orchid (*Dactylorhiza praetermissa*) just about to open its flower buds and Wall speedwell (*Veronica arvensis*). Early forget-me-not (*Myosotis ramosissima*) was also flowering delicately.

Stinking iris (*Iris foetidissima*) leaves were present in the wooded area as well as Intermediate polypody (*Polypodium interjectum*).

A Blackbird sang from one of the trees and in the grassland several Skylarks were displaying and on the ground there were many small plants beginning their growth. In the sun a Peacock butterfly was on the wing.







On the pond there was a noisy Little grebe and a Mallard.

Butcher's broom (*Ruscus aculeatus*) was in one of the sand dune scrubby areas

Cormorant, Oystercatcher, Shelduck and Little Egret were present on the large expanse of mudflats.

Portland spurge (*Euphorbia portlandica*) was also showing with fresh looking plants. There were also patches of Cuckooflower (*Cardamine pratensis*).



As we moved to the dunes there were two Ringed plover on the shore and we had great views.



A Small white butterfly was flying around with lovely powder yellow lower wings showing it was a fresh specimen.

There was a small sand bank in the estuary and a number of birds were resting there including Cormorant, Oystercatcher, Little egret, Dunlin, Great black back gull and Ringed plover.

Plants include Common ramping-fumitory (*Fumaria muralis* ssp. *Boraei*), Groundsel (*Senecio vulgaris*), Scentless mayweed (*Tripleurospermum inodorum*), Common mouse-ear (*Cerastium fontanum*), Sea beet (*Beta vulgaris maritima*), Sea bindweed (*Calystegia soldanella*), Sea spurge (*Euphorbia paralias*), English stonecrop (*Sedum anglicum*), Biting stonecrop (*Sedum acre*), Sea campion (*Silene uniflora*), Sea sandwort (*Honkenya peploides*) and the gorgeous coconut scent of the Gorse (*Ulex europaeus*).



A lizard sp ran over the warm sand as we made our way along the dune path. Most probably Common lizard but the view was too brief. These beautiful reptiles are favourites and whenever you catch a glimpse it is wonderful.

We saw lichen species everywhere but one that grew quite large was most likely to be *Peltigera canina*. These were seen on some of the banks on the sides of the dunes.



Linnetts were ever present as well as a Dunnock singing from a bramble bush.



On the walk back we saw Dandelion (*Taraxacum* spp), Alexanders (*Smyrniolus olusatrum*) and Tamarisk (*Tamarix gallica*) which was just in flower bud. There was also Daisy (*Bellis perennis*), Herb Robert (*Geranium robertianum*) and Red dead-nettle (*Lamium purpureum*). Some of these commoner plants in flower are really beautiful especially in the sunshine and are to be appreciated.

However the day will be remembered for the fabulous show of the Sand crocus.



A buzzard flew over and a Starling was on the grass next to the path. Whilst a male Blackcap sang in the bushes.

As we left for our next site an lovely Orange tip butterfly flew by.

The heath land site we stopped at on the way back enabled us to a couple of other nice species such as Common dog-violet (*Viola riviniana*), Male and female Stonechats perched on nearly each bush and a Swallow. There were the typical Heather (*Calluna vulgaris*) and Bell heather (*Erica cinerea*). A raven and rabbits added to the species list.

The star species of this site was the excellent view we had of a Dartford warbler sat on the top of a gorse bush. We had a few moments to study its plumage before it disappeared into the scrub. It was really lovely to see and gave us a great finish to a great day in South Devon.

Michael

(copyright NWT Limited)