

Old Mill Café

Wildlife Report

Owner: Mark Baker



Old Mill Café and Mew stone in the Background

The Old Mill Café is housed in an old corn mill with a stunning waterside setting overlooking Wembury Bay and beach and magnificent views to the Mewstone and Eddystone Lighthouse.



Views of Wembury Beach

Wembury and the coastline has been designated a Voluntary Marine Conservation Area and a Special Area of Conservation because of its diversity of marine life. The coastal waters support a wide variety of marine life due to the diversity of habitats; rocky shore, slate reefs and massive wave-cut platforms as well as the rocky cliffs which are home to nesting sea birds.



As you walk down the steps to the Café look for ivy leaved toadflax, rock samphire and sea mayweed growing out of the cracks of the walls.



Sea Mayweed



Ivy Leaved Toadflax

Once on the beach, one is delighted by the stunning scenery. The Mew Stone rises from the sea offshore and supports the largest colony of cormorants and shags on England's south coast. A rock pool ramble will show just how diverse and rich in species this coastline is. Facing south and therefore sheltered and protected, the slate rock shelf has plenty of nooks and crannies which form ideal homes for the bounteous marine life.



Mew Stone and Beach

There are over a hundred different types of seaweeds and algae to be found such as lithothamnia, a red and pink encrusting algae. Six species of crab: shore, edible, porcelain, velvet, hermit and furrowed crab can be found along with spiny and cushion starfish, blenny and gobbie fish, purple topshells, dogwelks, periwinkles, and limpets, to name but a few. Join in one of the organised rock pool rambles from the Wembury Marine Centre to really appreciate the wealth and diversity of this beautiful beach and coastline.



Purple Topshell, Limpet and Lithothamnia

This rich marine life supports a wealth of bird species, oystercatchers with their black and white waiter-like plumage are common along with wimbrel and curlew, both have brown plumage and long curved beaks. Listen out for their evocative haunting call. Smaller waders to be seen include dunlin, redshank and common sandpiper. There are also many different types of gull - herring, common, lesser and greater black backed and black headed. You will often see a rock pipit, a smallish brown bird which is very well camouflaged and only gives itself away by moving. A heron can often be seen fishing in the rock pools .





Heron



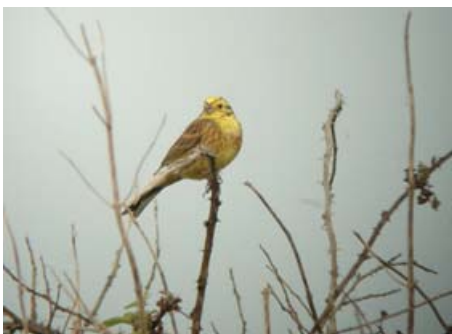
Oystercatcher

Look out to the open sea for guillemots and razorbills, the cigar-shaped birds bobbing on the surface. Gannets, large white birds with a distinctive black wing strip are often seen diving into the sea catching fish. Watch how they fold their wings in tight before entering the water beak first. If you are very lucky you may even see a basking shark or bottle nosed dolphin. Basking sharks visit these waters through the summer months, look out for their fins piercing the waters surface.

The land behind the café is managed by the National Trust and is home to plenty of wildlife. Listen out for the deep almost resonant 'barwk, barwk' of the raven as they fly overhead and in the spring watch for their tumbling acrobatics, which is part of the mating ritual. Listen too for the mewing of the buzzards as they soar high on thermals. A sparrowhawk is a common sight with its characteristic flying - 'flap, flap, glide', and hovering kestrels are often seen over the open grassland, hunting for small mammals. Watch how they appear to hang motionless on the breeze achieved by continuous adjustment of the wing tips and tail. The hedgerow and areas of mixed gorse and blackthorn scrub are the ideal spot for yellow hammer and ciril bunting, listen out for their call.

The yellow hammer says 'little bit of bread and no cheeze', whereas the ciril bunting's call is similar but more jangly and without the cheeze! Another bird seen around this area is the stonechat, the male has a brown/black head distinguishing it from the female and they are often seen on the fence posts and walls, bobbing their tail.

Left: Yellow Hammer



Ciril Bunting

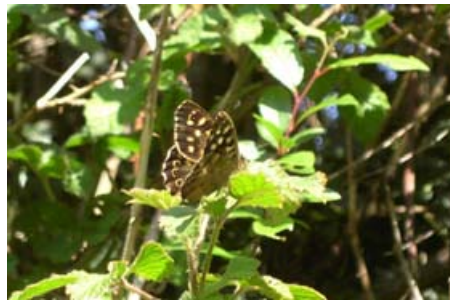


Stonechat (Male)





Ringlet



Speckled Wood

Large and small white, orange-tip and green veined, speckled wood, tortoiseshell ringlet and meadow brown are some of the butterflies to be seen along with the striking marbled white and small copper. The grassland structure is a mix of crested dog's tail, annual meadow grass and sweet vernal along with flowers such as greater and lesser knapweed, spring and autumn squill, kidney vetch, thyme and bird's foot trefoil. The long structure of this flora is ideal for invertebrates such as grasshoppers and crickets which are distinguished from each other by the length of their antennae. Grasshoppers have short, stubby antennae whereas those of the cricket are long and bend back over their body. Look out for the great green bush cricket, which is a local speciality. Through the summer months damselflies such as blue-tailed and common blue are a common sight flying over the grassland.



Blue Tailed Damselflies (Mating)

The grassland is home to many small mammals such as short-tailed field and bank voles, field mice and harvest mice as well as common and pigmy shrew. Shrews are very territorial and often get into fights with one another, listen out for the high pitched squeaks as a battle ensues. You may see a fox out during the day, particularly through the summer months when the vixen has to find plenty of food for her cubs. Evidence of fox can be seen around the area, look for their faeces. Fox faeces is similar to dog but has a wisp at the end and always contains fur.



Fox



Fox Faeces



Species List

Trees and shrubs	Plants	Birds
Ash	Annual meadow grass	Blackbird
Blackthorn	Bluebell	Blackcap
Buddleia	Bramble	Blue tit
Elder	Burdock	Buzzard
Field Maple	Cleavers	Carrion crow
Guelder rose	Cocksfoot	Chaffinch
Hawthorn	Common dog violet	Chiffchaff
Hazel	Cow parsley	Cirl Bunting
Holly	Creeping buttercup	Coal tit
Oak	Creeping Thistle	Dunnock
Holly	Enchanters nightshade	Fieldfare
Oak	Fleabane	Goldfinch
Rowan	Germander speedwell	Great tit
Willow	Giant hogweed	Greater spotted woodpecker
	Greater plantain	Green woodpecker
Ferns	Greater sedge	Greenfinch
	Ground Ivy	Grey wagtail
Hard fern	Hemlock water dropwort	House martin
Harts tongue fern	Herb Bennet	House sparrow
Lady fern	Herb Robert	Jackdaw
Male fern	Honeysuckle	Jay
Scaly male fern	Ivy	Kestrel
	Lord and ladies	Linnet
Mammals		Long tail tit
	Meadow Vetchling	Meadow pipit
Badger	Nettle	Mistle thrush
Bank vole	Primrose	Peregrine
Common shrew	Red campion	Pied wagtail
Daubentons bat	Rock Samphire	Raven
Field mouse	Sea Campion	Redwing
Fox	Sea Thrift	Robin
Hare	Snowdrop	Rook
Lesser horseshoe bat	Timothy	Skylark
Pipistrelle bat	Tufted Vetch	Song thrush
Rabbit	Yorkshire fog	Sparrowhawk
Wood mouse		Stock dove
		Stonechat
		Swallow
		Swift



	Reptile & amphibians	Whitethroat	
		Willow warbler	
	Common lizard	Wren	
	Frog	Yellow hammer	
	Grass snake		
	Slow worm		
	Toad		

NB This is not a comprehensive list



Wildlife Places of Interest Nearby

There are plenty of coastal walks which offer stunning views and idyllic little villages to visit. There are shingle beaches, high windswept cliffs and plenty of wildlife to see if you take your time to enjoy.

Wildlife sites close by to visit:

Wembury - Voluntary Marine Conservation Area

OS Map: SX 518 484

Four miles of coastline, rocky cliffs with nesting seabirds, rocky shore, slate reefs and wave cut platforms makes it a great site to spot marine plants and animals.

There is also a Marine Centre ideal for learning about the marine life, with regular rock pool rambles. For more information tel: 01752 862538

Dartmoor National Park

A day out to Dartmoor will give you a moorland experience, with blanket bogs, upland heath, oak woodlands (Wistmans Wood OS map SX 612 774 and Yarner Wood OS map SX 786 788) and the impressive granite tors. Wildlife to look for includes buzzard, dipper, salmon and skylark. For more information contact the High Moorland Visitor Centre tel: 01822 890414

Andrew's Wood- Devon Wildlife Trust reserve

OS Map: SX 713 520

A wet woodland with acidic grassland. Has one of the largest populations of dormice in Britain, woodland birds include wood warbler; flowers include marsh orchid and heath lobelia. There are plenty of butterflies to see in the grassland and woodland glades such as marbled white and silver washed fritillary.

Wildlife sites further a field to visit:

Slapton Ley National Nature Reserve

OS Map: SX 827 443

The largest freshwater lake in the southwest, it is separated from the sea by the narrow shingle ridge known as Slapton Sands. There is plenty to see, cettis warbler is a resident warbler (listen out for its explosive song), reed and sedge warbler in the summer. Waterfowl include tufted duck, coot, golden eye, great crested grebe and mammals include badger, otter, dormouse and many species of bats. Slapton Bridge, which divides the two leys, is a great vantage point to watch the plethora of wildlife that the reserve supports.

The shingle ridge itself is home to a host of wildflowers including yellow horned poppy and viper's bugloss and looks stunning in May and June. Guided walks run throughout the summer. Tel 01548 580685



Beesands

OS Map: SX 819 410

The small village of Beesands sits behind a mile long stretch of shingle beach. There is a small freshwater lagoon 'Widdecombe Ley' which is an important wildlife site. There is a bird hide which is open to the public from which to watch the wildfowl and other wildlife that visits this ley.

Start Point

OS Map: SX 821 374

A perfect spot for watching the sun go down looking at the lighthouse and the stunning scenery. It is also a good place to watch the summer migrant birds such as willow warbler, chiffchaff and wheatear arriving. March and April is the best time for the migrants, however all year round interest includes peregrine, kestrel, raven and circl bunting. Look out on to the rocks known as Pear Tree Point and you may see a seal or two.

Hallsands

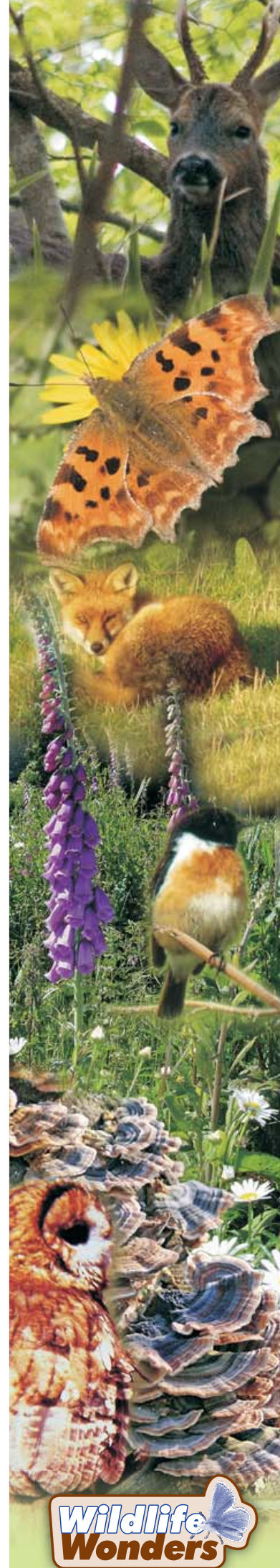
OS Map: SX 817 388

Visit the ruined village of Hallsands, above the village by the row of old fishing cottages is a kittiwake colony, watch these noisy birds fly to and from their nesting site, look out for fulmars in this area too.

Prawle Point

OS map: SX 741 373

Coastal headland south of the village of East Prawle, great views and one of the best bird migration points. Spring and autumn are the best time. Circl bunting breed in the area.



Old Mill Cafe Wildlife Enhancement Advice

Wildlife needs food and shelter: places where creatures can rest and nest. Those gardens which are richest in wildlife have colour in all seasons with plants blooming much of the year and seeds and fruit in the autumn and winter. A carefully planned structure, with plenty of variation in plant height and different habitats is ideal.

Seating/terrace area

More wildlife around the café terrace could be encouraged by putting up a bird table with various types of seed, peanuts and fat balls. The terrace is a fantastic sun spot which if augmented with potted shrub and flowers would most certainly attract more butterflies. Buddleia is a great butterfly shrub and is relatively low-maintenance, requiring annual cutting back. Several shrubs could be planted in the corners or in pots, ideally choose shrubs with different flowering times so that there is interest throughout the summer and autumn.

Salt tolerant climbers trailing up the walls would provide cover for nesting birds and insects. Wild honeysuckle and ivy will offer hibernation sites for butterflies such as brimstone and are good food plants for hawkmoths in the case of honeysuckle. Ivy, which flowers very late in the season, is excellent for hibernating hoverflies and small tortoiseshells, commas, peacock butterflies as well as providing berries for blackbirds and thrushes through the winter.

Nest Boxes

Use an open fronted nest-box behind a climbing plant to attract nesting robins, one could be placed in a climber once it has established.

Nest boxes for birds should be put in place carefully and never on a south facing wall or fence in full sun. House sparrow terrace boxes could also be put up around the building to increase their nesting sites.

Bird boxes should be cleaned out in the autumn when there's no risk of disturbing the occupants. Clean them out with boiling water so that disease and parasites are killed.



Useful addresses

Ash Tree Nursery, Bowden, Nr Dartmouth TQ6 0LR
Tel: 01803 712437
Mobile nos: 07792 525070/07980 922316
Supplier of native wild flowers and plants.

The Really Wild Nursery, 19 Hoopers Way, Torrington Devon EX38 7NS.
Tel: 01805 624739. Website: www.kathryn-moore.co.uk
Supplier of native wild flowers and plants.

Flora Locale website for locally sourced plants near you.
www.floralocale.com

BBC website for useful information on nestboxes for both birds and mammals along with other wildlife tips.
[www.bbc.co.uk/science and nature](http://www.bbc.co.uk/science_and_nature)

Envisage Wildcare: mail-order conservation supplies, everything under the sun!
01793 724848, Freepost NAT18592, Swindon SN2 2BR



Old Mill Cafe

The start of Churchwood Valley Woods which extends up the valley. Listen for greater spotted woodpecker, nuthatch and treecreeper in the woods.

Gorse and blackthorn scrub are home to the dartford warbler, curl bunting and stonechat.

The grassland is important for skylark, meadow pipit and grey partridge. Butterflies include meadow brown, gatekeeper and ringlet.

Rough grassland and bracken cover the slopes of the National Trust Land. Look out for flowers such as greater knapweed, thyme, bird's foot trefoil and kidney vetch. Butterflies include brimstone, marbled white and small copper.

Wembury Marine Centre

Old Mill Cafe

Flowers along the rocky shore include rock samphire, sea mayweed, sea campion and sea thrift.

Peregrine, raven, kestrel and sparrowhawk can all be seen along the rocky coastline. Plants such as rest harrow, wild thyme, bladder campion and fleabane attract butterflies such as common blue and marbled white.

On the tide line look for razor, scallop and cowrie shells as well as mermaid's purses.

Grey Seals are common around the coastline, look out for their dog-like appearance in the water.

On the rocky shore look for velvet swimming crabs, pipe fish, purple topshells, limpets and dogwhelks. Birds include heron, oystercatcher, whimbrel, curlew and greater black backed and herring gull.

