

### Part 2 – Cornwall

Friday 19<sup>th</sup> October

At times it had felt as though we'd never get to our HQ, but we were now on the final leg of the journey. The only thing that had kept Wendy going all day was thinking that we were getting nearer to Cornwall instead of just sitting in the house in Norfolk. Although we hadn't planned to, we did actually end up listening to the funny podcast episodes back to back all the way, which helped pass the time surprisingly well. We'd definitely made the right decision to leave Norfolk early too and we'd nearly done the journey and didn't have it all ahead of us tomorrow....Yey! Deep into Cornwall we had our eyes peeled and were hoping to see an Owl in the headlights, but even though we didn't we certainly couldn't grumble at a **Badger** at the side of the road instead. After clearing Penzance, we turned off and started to drive down a narrow track which was so dark we were worried that we wouldn't be able to spot the sign for Daisy Cottage. Luckily, we did but there didn't seem to be anywhere to park outside, so I abandoned the car and went to investigate. I found out that there was a lower entrance, where I duly parked up.

It was 11.02pm when we got out of the car and made our way down the stone path to the front door, which was stupidly at the far end of the building. I found the key in the key safe and tentatively opened the door for our first look around. Instantly, Wendy noticed it was a bit old fashioned and a bit of a damp smell, but she was too tired to complain by that point. I started to bring our bags and cases in, which was made quite difficult by the steps and distance to the door. The kitchen was huge and really nice and Wendy set about putting all our food away to start with. There was a welcome pack on the side which consisted of milk, eggs, butter, fresh strawberries and a loaf of fresh bakery bread. The milk wasn't going to get used nor were the eggs and butter but could be brought home with us to give to Wendy's sister for baking, but the bread and strawberries were a good call. The heating was controlled by a Nest, like what we have at home, so that was a real bonus as I do love a bit of tech. The rest of the unpacking was going to have to wait until tomorrow because we were too braindead by then and just wanted to put our PJ's on and watch some TV to try and relax. Wendy made herself a spritzer and we sat down, but the TV wouldn't work without a code and there was no reference to it in the visitor information folder.....Uh oh! I quickly took a wild guess and keyed in 1234, which was spot on and the TV was up and running...Haha! I couldn't resist checking the internet speed, which at 5meg, was slightly slower than it'd been at North Down House but much better than I expected given the location. There was a dog bed in the living room, which we thought Lyca would just ignore but she surprised us both by getting in it, curling up and going to sleep :O! It'd been a long day and didn't feel possible that we'd woken up that morning in Norfolk and were now in Cornwall. Wendy was still too hyper to sleep but I had plans of getting up and out as quickly as possible tomorrow to see the Catbird, so at 12.15am we went to bed and I set my alarm for 7am.

Saturday 20<sup>th</sup> October

We both went to sleep surprisingly quickly after our eventful day yesterday and we slept like logs too. Wendy wasn't very happy about being woken up at 7am, nor was she particularly chuffed that I was going to the Catbird without her even though there was no way she would get out for any bird at that time of the morning. I explained that I planned to go there for an hour as soon as possible to see it and maybe get some video and then come back and collect her when she was ready. She made herself a coffee and then went back to

the nice warm bed with Lyca and the Mac while I rushed around and finally set off at 7.35am thinking I would get at least an hour before Wendy would be ready.

The Catbird was near Land's End and we were staying in a valley 3 miles away, so it only took me 10 minutes to get there. Seeing as this was the first weekend the bird had been there, the car park was a lot quieter than I expected, so I wondered where everyone was.



Twitch Carpark

When I got to the crowd a bloke told me it had been on the hedge 3 minutes ago.....Aarrghhh! There must have been a lot of car sharing going on (or people were too stingy to park in the field) as there was about 60 birders where I was and about another 20 on the far side of the bushes.



Twitch

I'm not a fan of standing in twitches at the best of times, but I had no choice and decided that I'd be the most inconspicuous on the right-hand side. Typically, a few minutes later

everyone rushed off to the left, so I trotted over trying to not look like a massive geek but could see nothing from there either.....Grrrrr! After about 40 minutes of standing in the cold wet field we saw the group of 20 on the far side shaking hands and slapping each other on the back! What the heck? This caused everyone to stampede back to the right and suddenly people started to say that they were on it! Some blokes were being really helpful by explaining in great detail its position but try as I might I couldn't work out where they were looking, as they were using the names of the bushes. The best I can do is dark green bush, dead twigs, grassy bit etc but eventually one bloke took pity on me when he asked if I could see it and I said, "No!" He asked me where I was looking and when I told him he said I was looking way too far back and told me, "It's down here!" Luckily, I finally got it and was looking at my first **Grey Catbird** just before it popped back down. It was being pretty elusive, but I got my camera out of my rucksack just in case and a few minutes later it popped back up. As it did a bloke stepped out right in front of me.....Typical! I quickly moved to my right to try and get it in the clear and luckily I got a quick few record shots.



Grey Catbird

I then turned around to check and saw I had moved into the line of someone else.....Oops! I asked him if I was blocking his view and he nodded, so I apologised and moved back to where I couldn't see it again.....Urrghhhh! It soon flew off to a different patch of bushes so I left, paid a couple of quid into the car park donation box and got back to the cottage at 8.45am. Pretty much bang on the 1 hour I promised.

Back at the HQ I was really surprised to find Lyca still upstairs in bed and Wendy downstairs in her PJ's.....Doh! I thought she'd have been ready to go but she assured me that she could get dressed quickly enough. It still didn't feel real that we were in Cornwall and it was as though our brains hadn't caught up with the rest of us and were still in Norfolk. By then it was light in the valley, so we could finally see where we were and it didn't disappoint. We knew Cot Valley was a good bird location and Daisy Cottage ticked all the boxes in that respect. We were surrounded by deciduous trees, the garden was amazing and there was even a stream at the bottom of it, which might not have been so good if it'd been summer.





Daisy Cottage

Access to the house wasn't the easiest and it had been a bit of trek down the steps and path especially in the dark with heavy cases and bags. Parking wasn't easy either and it was an awkward manoeuvre to get into the space off the road. It was an expensive property too and we were definitely paying for the location as the interior could've done with a bit of updating although the kitchen was great and the settee and bed were much comfier than the one in Norfolk.



Living room area

Lyca obviously loved all the space downstairs and got very excited when we'd arrived and had already worked out that she could run up and down with her toy to torment us. Mental dog :). After getting to know our surroundings we were ready to go and we left for my second visit to Trevescan of the day!



It was 9.23am when I parked up again and the early morning frost had long gone by then. We set off down the field and coming towards us was a really old birder who could hardly walk who was being propped up and helped by what we can only guess was his Granddaughter. Wendy's eyes instantly started to fill up at the sheer effort somebody would go to in order to see a bird. He was very lucky to have someone who understood and was willing to help him achieve the once in a lifetime opportunity and hopefully he'd just ticked off a Grey Catbird for the first time. Loads of people were leaving with big smiles on their faces, so they'd obviously all seen it. We joined the line of birders and overheard one of them saying that up until recently it'd been showing constantly. There was of course no sign of it now that we were there.....Typical! I showed Wendy where it'd been earlier and told her to keep an eye on the area, as it seemed to be happy there.



Catbird bushes

While we stood around waiting, we remembered that we were meant to be starting a new bird list for Cornwall, so started to take a bit more notice of the bigger picture and not just the bushes in front of us. First up was a **Skylark** singing overhead and next was a **Robin** and a couple of **Linnets**, which landed on top of a bush as well as **Stonechat**, **Wren**, **Great Tit**, **House Sparrow**, **Jackdaw**, **Buzzard** and **Goldcrest**. There was still no sign of the Catbird and the body language of everyone else didn't suggest that it had been seen since we'd arrived. We could hear **Choughs** calling, which away from the Isle of Man always seems weird, so we had to remind ourselves that we were in Cornwall. There were **Herring Gulls** flying around and all of a sudden, a **Common Snipe** lifted and frantically hurtled skywards until it was so high up, we lost it. All the usual common birds were out and about and we added **Chaffinch**, **Blackbird** and a **Kestrel** to our slowly growing list. A **Red Admiral** fluttered by and landed in the hedge behind us and we spotted a **Greenfinch** then a **Great Spotted Woodpecker** flew into the Hawthorn at the side of the Catbird area. Lyca was being strangely calm but you never know the second when she'd decide to launch herself at anyone she didn't like the look of!



Ready to pounce

Suddenly everyone lifted their bins and started to look intently, so I followed suit. The Catbird was out and sitting in the same spot I'd told Wendy to keep an eye on, so I quickly said, "Eh up!" and shoved her in front of me so she was in a better position. I gave her directions and luckily she eventually found the Grey Catbird in amongst the brambles....Phew! This was the second rarest bird we had seen in Britain after the Siberian Ascentor! Or, if you believe some chatter it would be equal first rarest because a lot of people think the first Grey Catbird for Britain, that was in Wales in the 80s, was a string! We'd both now seen it, so we could now relax and make the most of the bird. Considering we'd arrived at 9.23am and we saw it at 10.03am we hadn't had to wait that long really and it could've been a lot worse! A **Wood Pigeon** flew in, but the Catbird dived out of sight, so we stood back to wait to see if it came back again. A **Sparrowhawk** zoomed over and we spotted a **Magpie** but the Catbird was playing hard to get and didn't show again until 10.31am. This time it was further away but was a much better view for Wendy, so she was able to get a really good look at all its details this time. After it'd gone out of view again, we watched a **Painted Lady** flying past until it showed again briefly. After that we'd seen enough and headed back up the field and were back at the car by 10.50am.

Before we left Wendy got me to take a photo of the very rough and ready makeshift sign that the farmer (or someone) had attached to the gate post.





Nice of the farmer

We added **Grey Heron**, **Starling**, **Great Black-backed Gull**, **Rock Pipit** and **Carrion Crow** to our list before arriving back at HQ at 11.08am. As we walked down to the front door, we heard a **Grey Wagtail** flying over, which had probably just come up from the river. I had a quick check of Birdguides to see if there'd been any reports and saw that there'd been one of a Red-eyed Vireo at The Lizard earlier. There had been no further sign of it since, but if it was reported again we would definitely go for another American passerine lifer! There was also a Richard's Pipit at Polgigga which was only about 15 minutes away, so seeing as it'd be another lifer and bogey bird for us both was worth a shot. If we saw that, then we'd have gained 2 lifers on our first day in Cornwall :O! Wendy made our lunch out of the bread we'd been given in our welcome pack and luckily, we'd brought our leftovers with us, so had something to put in them. We started to eat our sarnies, but the bread wasn't what we'd been expecting at all and had cumin seeds in it, so it just didn't work. It'd have been spot on if they'd left them out but it was all we had, so we had to eat it. It was 17c when we headed out again at 12.16pm and we were already having a better time than we'd had during our entire stay in Norfolk. Grey Catbird would take some beating though.

I parked in the layby up the hill and we wandered down the road to the entrance to Bosistow Farm at Polgigga. We slowly walked down the tree-lined road noticing huge numbers of **Red Admirals** feeding on the bushes. We found a **Common Gull** in amongst a field of Herring Gulls, as well as a couple of **Lesser Black-backed Gulls** and some **Stock Doves**. We turned left at the farmhouse at the end of the road and started to head down the footpath, where we could see some birders standing around up ahead near Faraway Cottage.





Polgigga

There was a Common Buzzard sitting on a telegraph post and normally they fly off the second you lift your lens, but this one stayed put and let me get a photo.

We could see loads of Pipits flying around and we started to feel quite optimistic, so we upped the pace slightly until we were close enough to view the field. An older bloke with a young lad had actually gone into the field and were walking around it trying to flush the birds.



Weird flushers

We presumed that they must've been locals who knew the farmer or something to be that bold or they just didn't care. Scanning around all we could see were loads of **Meadow Pipits** and **Skylarks** but maybe we just needed to look and listen harder? We couldn't with any stretch of our imaginations make any of them look remotely like a Richard's Pipit, so we



eventually gave it up as a bad job. Back on the path we spotted a **Large White Butterfly** and just as we started heading towards the coast I got a report of a Richard's Pipit on the heath beyond Faraway Cottage.....Whaaaat? Urrrrghhhhh! Right place, wrong field! I was hell bent on finally seeing one this time, so Wendy had no choice but to follow me.....Hahaha! We had to turn back on ourselves slightly, to where I reckoned we needed to be but, it would still be a loop round the headland looking down over Nanjizal beach with Land's End and Longships lighthouse and rocks in the distance which would be nice, so wasn't a total disaster. As we wandered around looking for the elusive LBJ we spotted a **Peacock Butterfly** and another tatty Painted Lady.



Painted Lady

Wendy then found a small moth resting on the ground and reckoned she recognised it as a **Rusty Dot Pearl**, which is mainly a migrant species. I took a photo of it to check the ID out later and she was right.





Rusty Dot Pearl

There was no sign of any Pipits, so we gave up looking and carried on our walk down the coastal path where at the bottom we had to cross a stream. Luckily there were enough well-placed rocks for us to step on, so it was easy peasy. The path up the other side was really steep but from the top we had a great view of the Longships, just off Land's End.



View to Longships

Looking down at the cove below us we found a **Shag** and a bit further along we turned off and started to head inland to check the Dragonfly pool at Porthgwarra. There'd been Red-veined Darters reported all over Cornwall recently, so I reckoned it'd be as good a place as any to check for them. Another Painted Lady whizzed past and looking ahead of us we



could see that the pool was a bit dried up and couldn't imagine that there'd be anything on it!



Porthgwarra pool

We had a look anyway and found an **Emperor Dragonfly** and a load of **Common Darters** but that was it. Wendy had a scan over the heath and spotted a **Clouded Yellow Butterfly**, which was a brilliant spot for the trip. These are a migratory species which come to the UK from Southern Europe and Northern Africa every year and sometimes in huge numbers. From what we knew already this wasn't one of those years but luckily, we'd been fortunate enough to have seen loads on our 2014 Cornwall/Norfolk trip. Annoyingly, as with most Clouded Yellows this one didn't hang about and cleared off nearly instantly :( Carrying on we started to notice small Warblers flitting around in the bushes, so we stopped to check them out. In such a good location (arguably the best bird migrant area in the UK) there could be something amazing in any bush, so we were keen to check everything, which was hard to remember to do after our disastrous week in Norfolk! Unfortunately, they were just **Willow Warblers** but they were new for the Cornwall list if nothing else. We went through a gate and up a track where it was really sheltered and felt far too hot for my liking.....Grrrrr! We spotted a **Silver-Y Moth** and up at the top of the hill by a house was a nice **Wall Brown Butterfly**. It was so hot by then that I was starting to feel a bit grumpy, which went down like a lead balloon with Wendy. We had a look for the Rose-coloured Starling that was being seen regularly at Ardensawah Farm but there wasn't even a normal Starling anywhere to be seen. The best we could come up with was a **Wheatear** in one of the fields and there was nothing new all the way back to the car.

It was 18c when we got back at 3.11pm and we'd just dipped on 2 birds (Richard's Pipit and Rose-coloured Starling) after our amazing start to the day. It was still too early to pack up for the day so I reckoned that we should go to a place called Carngloose to chance our arm at seeing the Vagrant Emperor and Red-veined Darter Dragonflies that were being reported. Vagrant Emperor would be a lifer and one of the very few chances to see one. We stopped at the Co-op at St Just briefly and parked in a layby at the side of the road at Carngloose at 3.40pm.



Carn Glouce

It may have been given a very strange name (typical of Cornwall) but it was a lovely spot with a great view out over Cape Cornwall.



Cape Cornwall view

There were a few cars already parked up and blokes dotted around at the side of the road, so we got out to join them. Nobody seemed to be looking at anything, so we presumed they were all just chancing their luck too. I asked one bloke if he'd seen anything and he said that the Vagrant Emperor had flown across the road 3 times so far but had disappeared again. At least we knew it was still about, but with so many dense bushes around it could've gone down anywhere. We stood around for ages and watched some **Long-tailed Tits** making their way through a hedge at the back and a **Peregrine** flew over but there was no sign of the Dragonfly. It was very weird being at a Dragonfly twitch and a totally new experience for us! Seeing as nothing was happening up on the road we went down to an area on the headland where everyone else was. This was thickly covered in dead Bracken and Rosebay Willowherb and very sheltered, so looked like a good spot for any Dragonfly to



be basking. From the conversation going on around us we found out that the bloke who'd originally found the Catbird was there and everyone was congratulating him on his discovery. The bloke who'd written the Birdwatching in Cornwall book was also there and it turned out that he was the guy we'd seen earlier at the Richard's Pipit field. That explained why he had free run of the place and access to any field he liked. He still had the same young lads in tow too and everyone there all seemed to know each other, so we felt a bit out of place. We don't know if it was just too late in the day by then, but we didn't see anything, so as we were feeling pretty tired by then we gave up.

Back at the car it was 4.15pm and Wendy wanted to get a photo of the amazing view, so when I drove down the road to turn the car around, she quickly jumped out to get a shot.



Picture doesn't do it justice

We still didn't have any food so, Wendy nipped into the Co-op again and got a pizza and we were back at HQ at 4.44pm. It was still 16.5c when we parked up and there were 2 birders standing looking at the trees at the back of the house. It was funny to think that we'd done the very same thing in the past and hadn't even thought about the people staying in the cottage. Their narky little Jack Russell decided to come over to the car and bark at us as if it owned the place, but they finally called it back and we were free to get out with Lyca. Wendy gave Lyca her tea and put the oven on for our pizza, but I was absolutely starving and could've eaten two whole ones to myself never mind sharing one! After that we both had baths and Lyca was really tired for the rest of the evening. Considering she didn't want to get up that morning this didn't surprise us in the slightest.

It was getting near to 9pm and our Tesco delivery slot, but I started to worry that they wouldn't be able to get to us. There was no mobile signal either so they couldn't contact us if there was a problem, so I started to feel unsettled. I went up the path and put the bin out by the road to help them see the house and then realised that they might not be able to get the van down the tiny road anyway.....Uh Oh! I went back inside and decided to go and sit in the car for the hour where I had a mobile signal in case they phoned. It was a good job I did this because I got a call from the driver asking where we were because he was in the St Just (north) side of the valley and had got stuck....Ooops! I gave him directions and sat waiting until it was 10pm and the end of our slot! I decided to drive up to the junction at the main road to see if they he'd got stuck again but just as I arrived at 10.02pm the van turned in.....Phew! I waved him down and got out to speak to him and he was very grateful

because, as I'd suspected, I don't think he'd have been able to get to the house! I loaded all the food into my boot, drove home and brought it all in for Wendy to unpack. Jobs a good un. After that was done I closed the blinds I'd opened to be able see the Tesco van arriving earlier but I could see people actually in the garden.....What the...? This was a bit unnerving seeing as we had no mobile signal and were in the arse end of nowhere, so I put my shoes on and went out to investigate, if this was a horror film it is literally the opposite of what you are supposed to do. When I got closer, I could see that there were two teenagers smoking in our garden, so I had no choice but to be brave and ask them what they were doing. Apparently, they were hiding from their parents, which made sense, so they must've been staying at the Youth Hostel up the road. Obviously, it wasn't the most relaxing situation to be in but I told them that was OK, but my dog was kicking off because she could hear people and I'd had to come out to see what was going on. I left them to it and went back in to watch some TV and hopefully chill out but within 10 minutes of me sitting down a car pulled up and sat at the top of the drive with its headlights on pointing straight at the house.....Errrrr? It was quite difficult to relax after that and wondered what on earth was going on. We couldn't do much about it and headed off to bed at 11.15pm slightly worried about what would happen next :{.

Sunday 21<sup>st</sup> October

It'd taken us ages to go to sleep last night and our heads were full of awful thought as to what the car was up to. We were pleasantly surprised to wake up at 7.30am to find everything intact and as it should be. What a strange night we'd had though and we really hoped it wasn't going to be a regular occurrence. We usually have a relaxing first day but due to our late arrival and early start for the Catbird yesterday I'd missed out. I'd already decided last night that I was going to go back to the Catbird early doors to try for some better video/shots this morning and then thought we could do our local walk after that. Wendy and Lyca were happy enough and went back to sleep until 9.30am anyway, so everyone was happy.

There was really low mist this time down at the Catbird so I decided to follow some people down a lane which I assumed went to the area on the right where the people were shaking hands the day before. Sure enough, it came out looking over a bush lined ditch and had a better view over the back of the bushes where the Catbird was the day before.





The atmos this time around was worse than the day before and there seemed to be a lot more nutter photographers who were charging about all over the place. As I had brought my tripod with the aim to get video I just plonked myself down and didn't move. Next up were two Asian women who were talking loudly like they were walking around the Tower of London or something. As if that wasn't odd enough they then proceeded to spit on the ground then walk off.....Eh? As the mist lifted the bird started to show. Annoyingly it was in the ditch right in front of us but from my static position I couldn't see it. Cameras were going off all around me which was extremely stressful.



It was in that gap in the bushes

Suddenly it bolted out of the bushes and flew left along the ditch and landed onto of a bramble branch. The photographers went berserk as I swung my camera around but for the life of me couldn't focus on it. Aarrghhhh....I couldn't believe it! A bloke next to me, whilst taking shots even asked me if I had it and rather embarrassingly I had to say, "Yeah, I just can't focus on it!" After flicking to manual, I finally got on it for about 1 second just as it turned and flew down into a gorse bush....NOOOOOOOOOOO! Very luckily I managed to get a grab off the video that was ok, so all was not lost but it could have been a great bit of footage.



Grey Catbird video grab

Everyone moved left to get shots of it in the bush but as I was videoing, I didn't need to go and harass the bird, I could hang back and video from there. That's what I like about videoing. The bird sat in the bush so long that I even had time to get some stills with the GH5 as well. I'm still not sure if it's worth taking stills or just grab from the 4k video!





Grey Catbird photo

The bird then dived further into the bush and everyone seemed happy and started drifting off. When I turned around, I noticed a few birders were looking up the field and it turned out there was a **Short-eared Owl** sitting in a gorse bush! I had a quick go at video and failed miserably, so I gave up. As I walked away, I caught a glimpse of someone and was 99% sure that it was Jon who we went to Cornwall with in 2010. The 1% of doubt stopped me from saying something as if I'd said, "Jon?" and it turned out it wasn't him, it would have been far too embarrassing, so I bottled it. When I was back at the cottage, I messaged Jon on facebook and sure enough, it was him! He had twitched it all the way from Derbyshire!

I was back by 11.05am and there didn't seem like much point in slavishly making sarnies to take out, so we decided to chill out at HQ and go out after lunch.





Raring to go

I got a report of a Brown Shrike (lifer) at Weybourne, which was just typical of our luck now we'd left Norfolk.....Grrrrr! After we'd wasted enough time, we headed out at 12.20pm to do our local walk, which we'd done before but not from our doorstep, so we didn't even need the car :). We wandered through the garden and out of the side gate which took us down a path through the neighbouring houses.



Neighbours houses

One of the houses had a log pile outside with some funny little wooden characters amongst it....only in Cornwall :P!





Okayyyy

When we came out onto the path that takes you down to the coast it felt so familiar that we couldn't believe it had been 4 years since we'd been there.



End of Cot Valley

We spotted a **Vapourer Moth** and there could've been anything in the bracken covered valley. Near the end we could hear a call that we just couldn't place coming from the side of the hill above us but there was so much cover we didn't stand a chance of seeing the bird, so we didn't hang about. Out on the coastal path we stopped to admire the view as well as the rock formations.





Nice view

There was a woman sitting up against some rocks reading in the sunshine and another further down the path on her phone. It was an idyllic spot to take some time out, but although Wendy would've been happy to join in, we didn't have time. We carried on and spotted a **Grey Seal** in the bay below us and a huge **Fox Moth Caterpillar** on the path. Yet again it was too hot for me, so I was feeling uncomfortable and grumpy seeing as I'd dressed for the colder temperatures of earlier in the day and was now totally overdressed. Climbing up out of the valley heading south we saw a Kestrel hunting and although I couldn't seem to get an angle where it was facing me, I had a go anyway.



Trying and failing to photograph a Kestrel

We got to the stream at Nanquidno Beach and crossed over it and scanned around desperately hoping for a Ring Ouzel or something a bit interesting.





Nanquidno

There were 3 other birders there and none of them looked happy, which said it all. We walked up the hill and came out into Nanquidno Valley, where we finally heard a **Yellow-browed Warbler** calling....Phew! Considering it's a famed birding hotspot we've never found much there apart from Firecrests and YBW's. We walked down the road, past all the houses but it was really quiet on the bird front. We found a nice **Small Tortoiseshell Butterfly** and a **Raven** flew over just before we turned off and started to head through the farm fields.



Pulling to get back!

Last time we'd done this part of the walk it'd been so early in the morning it was frosty and wet in the fields. Not so this time, it was the complete opposite! We went over a stile and into a cabbage field which was the home stretch back into Cot Valley.





Still pulling!

At the far end we found a really steep and narrow footpath which was overgrown and muddy, but it brought us out bang on the road near the Youth Hostel. Skillzzz :P.

It was 3pm when we got back to HQ and we'd done 15,000 steps. My foot was feeling a bit sore and Wendy needed to make something to eat for the week ahead, so we decided to leave it at that and not push our luck. She cooked some cauliflower to go in Lyca's dinners and then made a lentil and tomato soup and added the rest of the cauliflower, so it could be turned into a Dhal to mix things up a bit. Wendy went off for a bath and came back really freaked out because her fingers and toes had gone completely white and felt tingly, which could be a symptom Raynaud's Disease. I was then told it was my turn and after that it was tea time, which was very quick and easy as Wendy's soup was still hot and mine was just a quorn burger in a bap with fries to go. Lyca was so tired all evening and seemed to really like the dog bed, which we never imagined she would.



Holiday dog bed



It rained after tea and Wendy made our sarnies in preparation for tomorrow and put some washing on before we sat down to chill out. It was great having a land line phone again, so Wendy could chat to her Mum without the flaky reception of Whatsapp on the poor holiday internet connections. We watched my Catbird videos on the laptop and some TV and headed off to bed at 10.15pm. Wendy skilfully knocked over an entire glass of water, which went all down the back of the bedside cabinet and made a right mess and took ages for us to clear up.....Derrrrrr!

Monday 22<sup>nd</sup> October

Although Lyca tried her hardest to get us up at 7am we managed to settle her back down and slept until 8.10am, which was far more civilised. When Wendy went into the kitchen to get her breakfast, her eyes nearly popped out of her head when she saw a Yellow-browed Warbler sitting out in the open on top of the Camellia right outside the window! She called me to come and look, but it flew off before I could get there. Not a bad garden tick though :). It was a sunny day but quite breezy with the wind having switched from the south to north. After we'd had breakfast and got ourselves organised for the day, we headed out at 9.45am hearing loads of **Redwing** going over the valley. There'd been a Dusky Warbler reported at Porthgwarra yesterday and seeing as it was at the top of our list of places to visit anyway, we thought it was worth a shot. We were a bit gutted to find a young Fox lying dead in the road and then a bit further on was a dead Badger :(. Next second a bloke in a van came hurtling towards us far too fast for the type of roads, so there was no wonder wildlife was being killed, although in this region it's more likely to be shot animals getting dumped on roads.....Grrrrrrr!

When we got to Porthgwarra it was 10.07am and the sun was just making its way out from behind the clouds, but it was still windy. Lyca was going nuts in the back of the car and absolutely raring to go, so we wasted no time in getting her out. We wandered down to the café to get our car park ticket and then went to the WC's with the hidden agenda of checking them for moths, as they have always been good in the past. Unfortunately, there wasn't a single moth to be found, so we went back to the car to display the ticket. We had a really good look through all the bushes in and around the car park before setting off up the road past the Dr's House, where the Dusky Warbler had been reported from.



Looking up the valley towards the Dr's House

There were loads of common birds about but nothing out of the ordinary that was worthy of a second glance. There were only a few birders standing looking so it looked like it hadn't been seen today. A Dusky Warbler is the epitome of little brown job, so we lost the twitch enthusiasm within minutes and decided to carry on. It felt decidedly chilly when we got out onto the heathland at the top of the hill and we heard **Brambling** flying over. To get out of the wind we gladly went down into 60ft cover.



Path to 60foot cover

On the way a Kestrel flew in and landed on a post nearby, so I went all out to get a shot of it while I had such a great opportunity.





Kestrel

It kept flying off and then coming back to the same perch, so I had plenty of chances but eventually a Sparrowhawk mobbed it and it was off. We heard the feeble call of a **Bullfinch** and bumped into some other birders who'd been at the Dr's House when we'd gone past, who said that they had only heard the Dusky calling just before we got there but it never showed.....Aarrghhh! Maybe we should have given it a little bit longer.....Doh. We stopped by the stream at the bottom to check the bushes around us, but they were totally dead, so we started to feel deflated.



Bottom of 60 foot cover



A flock of **Linnets** flew over but then we got onto a small skulking Warbler! Could this be the Dusky and it had moved up the valley? Of course not, it was just a **Chiffchaff**, although our first of the trip....Hahaha. We turned back then and headed out back up towards the great heathland and found a **Common White Wave Moth**. On the way we stopped to have a closer (ish) look at the old Lighthouse/coastguard workers houses. I was sure one of them was a holiday cottage but wasn't sure which. If it was the far end one that would be a cracking one to stay in if we ever came back.



Coastguard workers cottages

A young **Swallow** flew over as we made our way over to the Coastguards building on the headland. We had a scan out to sea and added **Gannet** to our list but with the winds being northerly we knew there wasn't much point. We carried on along the tops until the path started to go downhill and very steeply at that.



Dodgy cliff path



It was hard going on the dry ground and with me being ridiculously unsteady on my feet but not for Lyca who made it look easy with her four paw drive. Wendy kept banging on about the rocks so stopped to take a photo of them.



Funny looking rocks

Obviously, we had to climb up the other side, which was equally as steep and hard going until we were back out onto the tops heading towards Faraway Cottage again. We were again blown away by the scenery of the Cornish coastline and we were reminded as to why we had put all the effort into getting down there for another trip.



Coast

We turned right this time to head back via the Dragonfly pool checking all the bushes as we went. Wendy pointed out that there was loads of Dodder growing on the gorse and seemed to remember it from last time. It's a parasitic plant which we learned about from John aka the Ghost of Kelling Heath years ago.





Dodder

It was fortuitous that we were looking at the ground and not the sky at that point as I spotted a **Short-Eared Owl** rise up from the undergrowth really close to us. It had obviously been roosting there, but we had flushed it unintentionally and we watched it fly up the hill and land on a post. I raised my camera to get a shot, but it lifted again and flew off towards the hedge on the top of hill to our left and disappeared before I could say, "Flipping heck!" Happy with that bit of excitement we carried on to the pool again but this time it was so windy and much colder compared to 2 days ago that there was nothing on it at all. I heard a Great-spotted Woodpecker calling from above 60ft cover but apart from that it was really quiet on the way back. Walking back down the road we got to the Dr's House and stopped for another quick look. There were birds flitting around in the bushes miles away, but not much action in the garden at all. All of a sudden, we heard a call, which I was certain was a **Dusky Warbler** and confirmed it by double checking the Collins bird app on Wendy's phone. This was what the birders we had met in 60ft cover earlier had said, so at least we weren't the only ones not to have seen it, but a call is better than nothing!

When we got back to the car it was 12.35pm and Wendy gave Lyca one of the fancy dog biscuits she'd bought her in Norfolk and we had our lunch. We had only done 9,000 steps so far, but we still had the afternoon to make up for that. Rather than drive somewhere else I reckoned we should do the walk on the other side that goes east to St Leven and found that there was a nice loop walk we could do back to Porthgwarra to save our knees from having to go back down the way we'd be going up.

After our short break we headed out again at 1.07pm and admired the holiday cottage down by the café that was right on the edge of the cove.





Looking back down to Porthgwarra

It must be a great place to stay with the view of the sea but unfortunately it doesn't allow dogs :( . The hill was just as steep as we remembered it, but we made lighter work of it than we expected. Up on the coastal path I was far too hot again while Wendy was too cold, so neither of us were happy. We walked across the top and found a huge Starling flock of at least 300 birds, so with Ardensawah Farm in the background it was possible that we might find the Rose-coloured Starling that had been there for the past month. We watched the ones feeding on the ground ahead of us, which with the grass being slightly long, wasn't easy. Every so often the flock would lift and land in a different spot giving us a brief chance to see them all. All of a sudden they took off and joined the ones in the field over the wall and the whole flock flew around but although we found a slightly paler bird there was no Rose-coloured Starling amongst them.....Boooooo :( . We followed the path until we came out at St Leven Church and went over to the bridge at the stream where we saw Firecrest all those years ago.



St Leven church

Needless to say there was nothing there, so we continued up through some ploughed and stubbly fields which looked perfect for Short-toed lark, Richards pipit etc but had nothing in them. Past those fields we went over a stile where we faced with an overgrown footpath.....Uh oh! I don't know how long it'd been since anyone had walked it and the brambles had taken over, but I reckoned it was still doable.



Where's the path?

Wendy didn't look so certain and asked me if there was another way we could go, so I checked my map. The only way would be to do the entire walk in reverse, so we decided to give it a go. I carried Lyca over the first thickest section then negotiated her through the rest of it by holding the brambles out of the way, but grass was so long she vanished in parts. It wasn't the most dog friendly footpath we'd ever been on, but she didn't seem to mind. Just as we thought we'd nearly done it we found a herd of calves up ahead blocking the entire track, so we had to stop. I went to investigate and it looked as though they'd escaped from a field and there was no sign of the farmer or of them budging, as they had nowhere to go.





Handy!

I scratched my head and wondered what to do next but checking my map again didn't reveal a secret pathway, so we had to just turn around and do it all again.....backwards! Wendy wasn't very pleased with that idea because she didn't fancy the chances of her knee being able to do the steep decline into Porthgwarra, which would ruin the rest of our holiday. It was our only option though and we retraced our steps back to the dreaded hill.



Here goes nothing!

All I could do was tell her to take it slowly and hoped for the best and we started to go downwards. All of sudden I spotted a footpath, that branched off to the right and carried on along the side of the hill. I checked it on my map and it looked as though it would come out at the top of the valley on the opposite side to the Dr's House, so it'd be perfect....Phew! This was a great find and with it being so sheltered there were Common Darters everywhere. One of them confused me for a bit but it was just a teneral, so we carried on. A small group of 5x Swallows that all looked like juveniles flew over and we finally came to the path that took us back down to the bottom behind the houses and café. By then I was

feeling peckish, so we took Lyca to the car and went back to the café to see if I could get some cake. Unbelievably there was absolutely nothing left, not even any ice creams in the freezer, so we walked back empty handed :(.

It was still only 2.59pm when we got back to the car, but we were knackered and in no hurry to go out for another walk. Driving past Ardensawah Farm on the narrow single-track road we could hear an Ambulance heading our way, so I quickly started aiming for the farmyard so I could get out of its way. Before I had the chance, it came hurtling around the corner and nearly hit us, but luckily stopped just in the nick of time. We couldn't help but wonder if someone had come a cropper on the ridiculously steep path we'd managed to avoid going down. It must happen, so wouldn't surprise us in the slightest. There were still people at the Catbird field as we drove past and seeing as I had failed to get cake at Porthgwarra I stopped off at St Just. Wendy jumped out and went into a shop that was advertising vegan pizza and food in the window and came out with a couple of bags but then disappeared into an organic fruit and veg shop/deli. When she got back to the car, she'd got some millionaire's shortbread and a chocolate brownie for me and a tub of 'Ooja Booja' vegan ice cream for herself. I wanted to eat it all straight away but was told in no uncertain terms that it was too near to tea-time and to wait.

By the time we got back to HQ it was 3.43pm but we'd filled the day really well and were too tired to do anything else. The house felt quite chilly again, but Wendy was pleased that her fingers and toes didn't go white this time. After we'd chilled out for a bit Lyca had her tea and Wendy put the oven on for my crispy sweet and sour chicken. She added some curry powder to some of her soup and made it into a dhal and nicked some of my rice and quinoa mix to go with it. After a very nice tea I demolished the chocolate brownie and Wendy went for a long soak in the bath. We'd done 17,000 steps during the 2 walks and were quite tired all evening. I found a HDMI cable in the cupboard, so instead of making do with the rubbish on TV I set it up so that we could watch a bit of what we wanted from the laptop instead. I got the latest episode of Task Master going, which was much more like it. Wendy found a micro moth on the wall, so potted it and put it in the fridge to ID later. It was a bit colder than it had been, so Wendy suggested putting the log burner on. Yet again I tried but failed miserably to get it going, I wish all log burners were easy to light. Lyca was obviously starting to feel the effects of our holiday and took herself upstairs to bed at one point. Lazy dog! We finally admitted defeat and went off to bed at 10.45pm.

Tuesday 23<sup>rd</sup> October

When we woke up it was 7.50am, so Lyca must've been tired to have slept for that long but it was still surprisingly dark outside too. This didn't inspire us to get out early, so I watched the football highlights while Wendy leisurely made the sarnies and had breakfast so consequentially, we didn't leave HQ until 9.55am.

Luckily, we didn't have far to go, a quick drive north and we arrived at Kenidjack at 10.09am. Lyca must've had enough sleep to recover because she was raring to go in the back and the noises coming from her were hilarious :). We started walking down the road and it wasn't long before we spotted a couple with a Black Labrador.....Lyca's Nemesis! Aaaarrgghhhh! They of course stopped to chat with us and we held our breath as Lyca started to get edgy but after explaining her fear they hung around so that she could get used to their dog and amazingly she settled down until she was completely ignoring it :O! Another couple joined us with a Golden Retriever and a Spaniel and she was really good with them too, so she must've got out of bed on the right side for once! After we'd gone our separate ways we stopped at the little bridge at the side of the road when we spotted some birds flitting around in the trees on the other side of the stream. This was also where the sewage



treatment works is but for a nice change there were no nasty smells to put us off. There were Blackbirds everywhere we looked, which we scoured through hoping for a Ring Ouzel but failed miserably. There were some smaller birds too, which were 3x female and 2x male **Blackcaps** and some Willow Warblers, so we seemed to have found out where the migrant party was, just no rarities had been invited!



Blackcap

Wendy watered the grass (can't take her anywhere) before we carried on down the road feeling slightly overwhelmed by how much cover there was and wondering how on earth anything gets found there. There could literally have been anything in that lot, but we didn't have the time to stand around waiting for hours nor are we lucky enough to be in the right place at the right time to find anything, so we didn't stick around.





Too much cover!

Instead of going on our usual walk down the hill and past the mines we turned off to the right and headed up hill towards Botallack. We had done this walk once before but only to the first section. This time I wanted to walk north along the coast right up to Geevor.



Not that way today Lyca!

We walked up to the top where there was a great view over Cape Cornwall and Botallack Mines and loads of **Guillemots** on the sea.





Cape Cornwall

We went up to Kenidjack Cliff Castle which for anyone interested is an Iron age Hill Fort with a Cairn Circle next to it.



Not exactly Castle Rushen!

There was a woman with a Greyhound off the lead coming our way, so we scuttled off before she sat down at the Castle and made herself comfortable. This walk was a new one for us and having only seen Botallack Mines in the distance before we were glad that we'd made the effort to walk out to them. What a great place it was, especially in the sunshine but I'm not sure we'd have been as enthusiastic had it been windy and raining.





Bottalack Mines

We wandered around exploring all the different ruins and mine shafts and there was even some on the cliffs below us.



Crown Engine house

All of a sudden, the Gulls started to kick off and we looked around to see what was going on. All was revealed when a Peregrine came blasting through, chasing something at speed and hurtled down into the cove below and vanished. It never came up again, so presumably it got what it was after and was eating it somewhere out of sight. There was a Golden Retriever coming our way and after the Greyhound Lyca was a bit nervous, so I walked up some steps to get her out of the way. Doing that made me find another Clouded Yellow but this one was on the ground! I shouted to Wendy to come and see it and then handed Lyca



over to her to be able to grab a photo before it flew, seeing as the other one had just been a flyby.



Clouded Yellow

We continued north, until we got to Geevor tin mines and unlike Bottalack which shut in 1895, Geevor carried on until 1990. Bottalack had been mined since possibly the 1500s and Geevor was relatively new having only opened in 1911 and even though it's now a museum the public coastal footpath runs through it so you can see a lot of the buildings.



Geevor mines



We had a little mooch about but decided to not go any further and turned around to head back south.

When passing Bottalack we noticed a big building and car park so went to have a nosey. It was a National Trust Building that had a café in it, I had no idea Bottalack was a tourist attraction at all. There was nothing of interest to buy so Wendy used the WC's and we carried on this time turning inland a bit to skirt some old fields until we were descending back down into Kenidjack valley.



We had done 11,361 steps when we got back to the car and the walk had been 8.3km in total, which wasn't bad going seeing as it was still only 12.48pm. We had our lunch and noticed our first **Pied Wagtail** of the trip sitting on the overhead wires above the car, which was long overdue having seen Grey Wag at HQ on our first morning. Wendy was nearly falling asleep in the passenger seat by then and Lyca was curled up in the back breathing heavily, which wasn't helping the motivation levels. I ended up having to crack the whip and get them moving again because I wanted to do our usual walk down to the coast while we were there.

We set off again at 1.35pm and as is tradition stared longingly at Wryneck Wood Pile, which was just as woody as usual. One of these days! Further down we stopped to chat to a bloke who had just heard a Yellow-browed Warbler in the same trees by the Donkey field as we'd had one in 4 years ago.





Poor Donkeys

There was no sign of it when we got there though, so we carried on down to the coast where the remains of the mines Wheelpit at Boswedden mine were still going strong.



Boswedden Mine

At the end of the path the view towards Cape Cornwall is a cracker. Wendy would go so far as to say that it's one of her all-time favourite spots, so she lay down on her back and had one of her stop the clock moments while I rolled my eyes at the hippie dippie rubbish.....Hahaha!





Hippie!!

This time she went to the extreme of trying to meditate and was very annoyed when I burst her bubble and hurried her up due to needing a number 2 desperately. She wanted to stay there forever while I just wanted to leave as soon as possible before I had an extremely embarrassing accident! Lyca was having fun paddling in the stream, so even I was reluctant to leave but there was no way I could hang on for much longer and there was nowhere nearby where I could go.



Lyca paddling

Lyca didn't want to get out when Wendy finally managed to tear herself away from the ground, so I had to pull her out! We set off back up the path and were stopped by a bloke with a fixed grin on face who was out with his bored looking wife and kid. He asked us if there was anything about, so we told him about the YBW by the Donkey field but his facial expression never changed....not even for a second! After they had gone and were well out of range we wondered if we could manage to grin continuously all the way back to the car and started to put it to the test. After a few minutes our faces started to ache, but it was



making us laugh, so (apart from making us look totally crazy) there must be something in it. On the way back we had a look at the delapidated terraced row of houses. I'm assuming they were mines workers houses from back in the day but now they look totally on their last legs even though people are still living in them!



They look worse in person!

We were back at the car by 2.52pm and had done 17436 steps, so I reckoned that deserved some cake from the Botallack Visitor Centre we'd seen earlier, so I headed straight there.

We left Lyca in the car and wandered over to the huge stone building expecting to find an array of goodies to buy and a sizeable café. Instead, it was all a bit empty and apart from some info boards, toilets, a couple of shelves of gifts and a small café at the far end it was a huge space with nothing in it. I got some millionaires shortbread and an ice cream and when Wendy got her change, she was convinced she'd given them £20 and had been short changed but being, the polite Manx people we are, we never said anything....Doh. Back at the car we didn't have any ideas as to what to do next, so I suggested driving to Pendeen to seawatch from the car. We were both tired, so it seemed like a good plan although we weren't expecting to see much. When we got there and drove round to park in the nice car park, we found that there was now a huge sign saying, "Private Property" and another with, "No overnight parking" so that would've been a huge blow for all the local birders who used the spot regularly. It was a great place especially on a rainy day when you don't want to be outside and can bird from your car. We wondered why they had done it, very odd. I turned around and drove away with that being the nail in the coffin for the day. I stopped in St Just again so that Wendy could get some baps for tea and we were home by 3.55pm.

We relaxed before tea, which again was a nice quick affair of Vegan pulled pork style baps and fries to go for me and some heated up soup for Wendy. After that we both had baths before settling down for the evening. I got some reports in of Vagrant Emperor at Porthgwarra between the car park and Dr's House and a Ring Ouzel at Nanquidno late afternoon. Again, it was a case of right places but wrong times, which is just typical of our luck. Wendy wanted the log burner on, so I tried to get it going again but it just didn't want to stay alight and kept fizzling out after a few minutes, so I gave up.



Work you stupid thing

We laughed about all the characters we had seen knocking about and there were too many to mention. Wendy's favourite was a woman walking her dog that we had seen today who wearing an oversized and shapeless jumper which was full of holes. Her trousers were just as baggy, but everything was caked in paint as if she was an artist or something. Cornwall is a haven for the artistically predisposed and eccentric, so nobody stands out as being unusual, which is nice. I put some YouTube videos on of the mines of Cornwall, which I found really interesting but after a while bored Wendy to tears. I found a Richard Herring interview with James Acaster instead, which was much more like it. Wendy was really tired and wanted to go to bed early as did Lyca, but I was in denial and fighting it.



Tired doggy

I must've been more tired than I thought as I went out like a light when we went to bed at 10.22pm.



Wednesday 24<sup>th</sup> October

I had set my alarm for 7am this morning and it was rude awakening due it being totally dark outside. I took Lyca out and Wendy got the micro out of the fridge to try and ID, but it was so non-descript we were still non the wiser. We got ready pretty quickly, so were ready to go at 8.40am and it was only 8c outside. My plan for the day was to go to Kynance Cove and Church Cove on the Lizard for migrants seeing as there had been a Little Bunting reported from a maize field at Kynance Cove recently, a YBW at Church Cove and a Rose-coloured Starling and Vagrant Emperor at The Lizard. I had planned a walk at Kynance Cove that was totally different and went south across a heathland area called Lizard Downs, across a road and along a footpath by the maize field to a lane going to Lizard village then returning along the coastal footpath. This would be a loop path that would incorporate all the target birds and if we were really lucky, we could find something ourselves. It would take about an hour to drive there, so that's why we got up earlier than normal. Luckily, it didn't feel like an hour had gone by already when we passed the huge R.N.A.S. Culdrose Navy base. The place is as big as a town!

I parked up in the car park for Kynance Cove at 9.37am and went over to get a parking ticket. It was £4 but the machine wouldn't accept one of my coins, so I had to go back to the car to swap it and luckily Wendy had another otherwise we'd have been stuffed! The car park was nice and empty, so we hoped we would be done before the majority of dog walkers arrived. It actually felt pretty cold as we set off along the coastal footpath and after a while, we turned off to the right to go inland and across Lizard Downs for the first time. There didn't seem to be an obvious footpath and before long we found ourselves squelching our way through a boggy section and our boots were soaked.



Where is the path?

Wendy protested behind me and wasn't convinced that I was taking us on the right track, but it looked OK to me, so we carried on regardless until we found the actual path a bit further on.....Doh! Back on track it was a much more pleasant walk although there were literally no birds to be seen and Wendy was wondering why on earth we were there. I had to admit it was disappointingly lifeless, so it was a good job there were target birds to find to add some kind of interest further along. All of a sudden, I spotted a large Dragonfly whizzing about over the heath and I got Wendy onto it quickly. It dropped down behind a

tuft of grass, so we reckoned we would be able to find it and headed over. We thought we had the area pretty much spot on but when we got there, there was absolutely no sign of it and we didn't even kick it up when we started looking further afield. Eh? We looked for ages but just couldn't find it anywhere and reluctantly, due to Lyca sulking because she bored, we had to give up. That could've been a Vagrant Emperor for all we knew.....Grrrrr! We felt a bit disappointed after that and had a horrible feeling that the rest of the walk was going to be a waste of time. We came across some small pools and went over for a look but there was absolutely nothing on or around them and just to rub salt in our wounds I got a report of a Rose-coloured Starling in the Isle of Man!



Looks good for Dragonflies

Everyone back at home would be filling their boots while we were in Cornwall, where they're a common visitor, and couldn't even see one.....Urrghhh! We carried on aiming towards the area where the Little Bunting had been seen but were distracted again when Lyca kicked up another large Dragonfly. It flew off and totally vanished, so we had lost that one too but not wanting to be defeated I decided to try and re-find it. I handed Lyca over to Wendy and retraced our steps back down the path but again there was nothing. A very tatty **Speckled Wood Butterfly** landed nearby and we had a look at the Dragonfly app on Wendy's phone to see if there was any easy way of IDing a Vagrant Emperor seeing as none of the Dragonflies we'd seen so far had been remotely obliging. While we were doing that another Dragonfly flew in and gave us the run around as it whizzed around the trees and bushes before it finally settled in a small depression behind the long grass.





Dragonfly flight area

I slowly crept over so as not to flush it, with my eyes firmly fixed on the spot I thought it was at, willing it to stay put for a little bit longer. When I finally found it, I got it in my bins and was absolutely ecstatic to see that it was a **Vagrant Emperor!** I shouted (quietly) to Wendy to get her to come and look at it as this was a lifer for us both and easily the rarest Dragonfly in the UK we have seen, being a rare migrant from sub-Saharan Africa and the Middle East. I needed to get some photos, but it was in an awkward position and was half covered by grass, so it was no easy task. Finally, I managed to get one, which I could use but I just needed to move some grass out of the way that had been casting a shadow to get the better I had in my mind.



Vagrant Emperor

As I reached over to move it I had obviously pushed my luck and the Dragonfly flew off.....Nooooooo! That'll teach me to be greedy.

Looking around us we were so near to the end of the path and the road, so this had been such a lucky encounter. It was also another new site for them too, as there hadn't been any reports from Lizard downs. How lucky to have found our own Vagrant Emperor? I quickly submitted my report on iRecord in case others wanted to come and see it. When we got to the gate the road was really busy and the path that was meant to run parallel to it on this side was nowhere to be seen. All we could see was waist high grass and brambles and despite me trying everything there was no way we or Lyca could walk through it. The other option would be to walk down the road for about 200 yards to get to the footpath on the other side, but it was a busy A road and there was non-stop traffic bombing past at 60mph, so that was not an option. This meant that we had to turn back and retrace our steps to the car park instead of doing the loop incorporating the Little Bunting field, which was gutting :(.

We cut across the heath to shorten some of the walk and were back at the car park at 11.55am, which was really busy by then. The field in front of the car had been empty when we'd arrived but now it was full of cars and there were people everywhere and felt more like summer than autumn. There were dog walkers, couples, family groups with picnics and kids in wetsuits with boards and young surfer dudes all heading down to Kynance Cove with varying degrees of baggage. It's a bit of a trek down there, so we didn't envy them. We had only done 3.28miles and 8,900 steps so far but considering I'd estimated the entire walk I'd originally planned to be 3.5miles it wasn't too bad seeing as we'd had to cut it short but it makes you wonder how far my planned walk actually would have been...whoops. We ate our lunch while watching the comings and goings around us and concluded that it's definitely a place you need to do early before it gets too busy. We hadn't bargained on it being so busy in late October, not realising it was half term. We will have to make sure in future we don't go away in school holidays!

It was 16.5c when we left at 12.19pm and I drove the short distance to see if we could check the maize field for the Little Bunting on our way out. Typically, there wasn't anywhere to stop so seeing as the bird hadn't been reported all week I carried on driving. My sat nav then took us down a pointless track when it could've stayed on a proper road but we did see a **Jay**, which we may not have done otherwise. My next stop was Craft Pascoe Pool at Goonhilly Downs, which is a satellite earth station set on an ASSI and where Vagrant Emperor and Red-veined Darter had been seen earlier in the week.





Goonhilly Downs

Although we didn't need it, I thought I might be able to get a better shot of one at least. The pool was right at the side of the road so we could view it from the car but there was a bloke with waders on and a camera right in the middle of it.



Craft Pascoe pool plus flusher man

It was 12.40pm by then and warmer than it had been earlier but all we could see were Common Darters that were mating, which was confusing as they looked bigger than usual. There was only one big Dragonfly flying around at the back, so we had no chance of getting a view of it, so we didn't waste any more time.

By the time I parked up at Church Cove car park it was 1.03pm and it certainly didn't feel like 4 years since we had been there. We wandered down the road admiring the imagination and work that had gone into some of the quirky gardens. One had a DIY pergola made of driftwood, which we could only see the top of, but Wendy thought looked amazing.





Looks like a load of old tat to me

Church Cove is a typical picture postcard pretty place and properties there must be very much sought after.



Church Cove

You can't fault the houses and gardens, nor can you fault the view from the bottom of the cove out to sea. Stunning! Lovely though it was, we didn't have all day to stand around looking at the scenery, so we carried on through the gate to the footpath. It was really hot in the shelter of the bushes, which were either side of the path and towering above us.





There must be a rare bird in all this lot!

There's so much cover there that we wondered how anyone ever finds anything, but there didn't appear to be a single bird while we were there. When we had gone as far as we could be bothered, I checked my map and saw a footpath went through some fields in a loop, so we didn't have to walk back the same way. When we got to a locked gate Wendy climbed over it and luckily the gap underneath was big enough to enable Lyca to comfortably fit under it unlike in Scotland when Wendy had to squash her under one! With Lyca safely on the other side with Wendy I climbed over and joined them and it was plain sailing through the fields from then on. That was until we got to a stile, which was tricky to negotiate, then a steep bank down to another stile that Lyca had to be lifted over, as there was no way she was able to do it herself....Urrghhhh! Cornish stiles are something else! We were happy when we came out at the Old Churchyard at the bottom and wandering through it, we couldn't help but notice how old the Gravestones were.



Church Cove Church



Some of the people were tragically young when they died but we were also surprised as to how old some of them were. One man died at the grand old age of 94 in 1914, which was pretty good going back then! There was also a couple of Navy gravestones that just said sailor on them, I am assuming they were people washed up from sunken ships, bit grim! There wasn't any YBW to be heard by the time we'd got back to the car at 2pm. We were only on 12,000 steps but it was getting near to the end of a 2 week holiday, so we were starting to feel tired and I didn't want to push it with my foot especially with a long drive home. As we drove up the hill to leave we noticed that the Postman was pushing a sort of big, fat wheelie bin, which must be because some of the roads are just too narrow to get a van down.....typical Cornwall :P! I stopped off at Lizard Village because we still needed pressies and I fancied an ice cream. The village consisted of a butcher, a fish and chip café, a pasty shop and several gift/ice cream shops but not much else, so we were spoilt for choice. After browsing our way around including a shop selling gifts made from serpentine rock, which was a family business that was dying out due to nobody wanting to carry on the tradition of sourcing it. After I had settled on some pressies I chose a Millionaires Shortbread flavour ice cream and we went back to the car. Wendy had been crowing about some vegan spread that everyone had been raving about that was supposedly the closest thing to butter yet. The only problem was that Sainsbury's was the only place that stocked it in the UK, so Wendy wanted to at least try to get some. There were two Sainsbury's in the area to try, so that was our next plan. Driving down a road we had to laugh when we saw a stereotypical looking young surfer cycling towards us with a surfboard somehow attached to the side of his bike.....Hahahah only in Cornwall :P! We found the first Sainsbury's and Wendy went in but reappeared empty handed, which meant I'd have to go the one in Penzance.....Boooooo! The petrol station was also rammed, so I hoped to find a quieter one elsewhere too. I stopped at Morrison's at Longrock near Penzance to get petrol, which was 125.9 per litre and then spun round to the Sainsbury's. Again, Wendy came out empty handed and disappointed at not having found what she wanted but she had taken a photo of the huge Vegan section and wished that we had such a choice back at home.



Wow!

Back at HQ it was 4.03pm and I was glad I had used the A roads and ignored the sat nav, it was so much easier. Lyca went mental when she got in and was running up and down the living room with her toy.





Nutter

The house was freezing, so I put the heating on to warm it up a bit. After Lyca had her tea at 5pm Wendy started doing ours, which was yet again very quick and easy. I had pasta and a pouch of Bolognese sauce and Wendy heated up some of her soup. Sorted! After Wendy had been up for a bath she came down to watch a bit of TV but was gutted to find me watching another Cornish Mining video, which I had become slightly addicted to but she found a bit morbid and boring. Wendy was still cold, so she set about trying to get the log burner going seeing as I wasn't being very successful. She got it going alright, but it quickly fizzled down and was just as feeble as mine had been....Hahaha :P. It did produce a bit of extra heat though, which was very nice. When Wendy could take no more mines, I turned it off and put the rest of the Richard Herring interview with James Acaster on, which lightened the mood somewhat. By 9.15pm we were both dropping off a cliff rapidly and decided to start going to bed. I emptied the dishwasher and let Lyca out and we were in bed by 9.43pm.....Hardcore or what?

Thursday 25<sup>th</sup> October

After a very early night and sleeping like logs it was still pitch black outside when we woke up at 6.57am. There was a Robin singing when I took Lyca out and finally remembered to let the micro from the fridge go. I was glad it was still alive after all that time and it flew off as though nothing had happened....Phew! The YBW was calling constantly, which was great to hear before going back in. Lyca scoffed her breakfast and then took herself back upstairs to bed and wouldn't budge until it was time to go out.



Lightweight!

I wanted to give Polgigga another go because the Richard's Pipit had been reported again yesterday in the carrot field near Faraway Cottage. It was a different field to the one that we had looked at last time, so we'd been looking in the wrong one.....Doh! I planned a walk from there, past Nanjizal and to Land's End doing a loop through some fields back to Polgigga. It sounded good, so after getting a reluctant Lyca ready we headed out at 9.02am.

It was 10.5c when I parked up at Polgigga at 9.18am and Lyca must've got a sudden burst of enthusiasm after her lazy start judging by the squeals of excitement coming from the back of the car. The sun wasn't out this time, so it was quite dull when we set off back down the long driveway down to Bosistow Farm. The first thing to greet us was a dumped car in a field... I thought we were in beautiful Cornwall not Merseyside!



What the?

There was nothing of note apart from 3x Jays and it was much quieter than it had been on our first day. I found what I reckoned was the carrot field, which was on the other side of



the footpath and behind a farmhouse. We wandered over and I went into the nearest field to see if I could look over a wall and view the carrot field but there were no birds around at all, so it seemed pointless. It was a bit awkward walking back to the footpath because we could see a woman in her dressing gown inside the house, which must be annoying for her. We noticed a huge flock of Starlings and went through them all hoping to find a pale one but had no such luck :(! I took Lyca back over the stile but all of a sudden a yellow Labrador came hemping it towards us, causing Lyca to freak out and nearly rip my arm off in the process....Ouch! A bloke had 3 dogs and they were all off the lead, so we hung back to let them past and Lyca seemed to settle down quickly after her shock. Next, I thought we could walk through another field that might get us a better view of the one behind it. Wendy wasn't happy as it was caked in cow poo and Lyca wanted to roll in it and then we found the herd of cows. I gave Lyca to Wendy and walked through them to a gate where I could see the next field, but it was also dead, so I gave up.



Nowt

Back on the footpath heading to the coast I spotted a couple of big white blobs on the hill in the distance, which turned out to be 2x **Whooper Swans**, bit weird for Cornwall. There was also a huge flock of **Fieldfare** coming in and all the Pipits and Skylarks were in the same field we had been looking in the other day, so we stopped for a scan. They were certainly there in numbers again but were impossible to view, as they were all feeding in the furrows and were well hidden. We noticed a couple of **Yellowhammers**, which was very nice to see. The Pipits and Skylarks gave us the run around for ages but eventually we had to admit defeat and carried on with our walk. We were slightly hesitant when we came to a field of horses that were blocking the exit but there was no other way around it, so we'd just have to chance it.....Uh oh!



They look angry

We kept thinking that if they weren't friendly they wouldn't be in a field with a public footpath running through it and that they must be well used to people and dogs walking through them. We just had to hope that Lyca wouldn't start barking at them and cause trouble. I had to lift Lyca over the stile and pull her in on a really short lead, so I left my camera at the top and went back for it, meaning I had to go past the horses 3 times, what a hero! With that cleared we headed down to overlook Nanjizal Beach, which although Wendy disagrees, I still don't see the big attraction of.



Nanjizal Cove

Further along we had to stop to let about 20 Japanese Tourists past, and they were lovely. Every single one thanked us and most of them either waved at or said, "How cute!" to Lyca, so she was loving all the attention. Next, we had to climb up some really steep steps, which came out on the coastal path looking down over the sea. I spotted a really white Gull that looked huge compared to the Black-headed Gulls that were flying around. With a small burst of enthusiasm, I got it in my bins willing it to be an Ivory Gull, but it was clearly just a



**Mediterranean Gull**, which wasn't bad, but just not an Ivory Gull. It seemed to be feeding as it was flying back and forth so I got a record shot of it.



Med Gull

The path on the section approaching the farm at Land's End was too close to the edge of the cliffs for my liking, so I wasn't keen to stop to admire any scenery. Although when we came across a lovely male Kestrel sitting pretty for a photo I quickly grabbed a shot.



Kestrel

It was also getting horribly busy with people, which we weren't used to having managed to avoid the hoards all week.....Urrghhh! I didn't want to get any closer to the Land's End Metropolis for this reason, so I checked my map to see where we needed to turn off.



Approaching Land's End

The only problem was that there didn't appear to be any paths going off to the right apart from a vague suggestion of one that was overgrown with brambles, so we were stumped.....Errrrr? It was too risky to attempt it in case we found the path ended somewhere and we had to turn back or that we had to go through loads of cow fields. In the end we had to make the decision to go back the way we had come, which meant repeating all the steep coastal paths in reverse and doing the entire walk again. This was getting to be a common occurrence in Cornwall. If that wasn't bad enough I then got a report of 2x Richard's Pipits north of Faraway Cottage.....Grrrrrr!

Back at Nanjizal I decided to go a slightly different way and unfortunately this meant climbing up another hideously steep hill via some huge stone steps to get to the footpath at the top. It was hard going and to make matters worse it was far too hot again, so I was feeling a bit grumpy. Wendy found a **Sand Wasp** on the path and we breathed a sigh of relief when we eventually came out at the top.





Lovely view from the top

The footpath led across the top of a densely covered valley and looking down at it we could fully imagine there being literally anything skulking around in there.



More cover!

Wendy found another Silver-Y and then we got to the part of the path we needed to turn off on, which brought back memories of being there before. It climbed steeply down through the undergrowth and then up the other side, so we were in for more fun and games. At the bottom of the steep path was a stile that Lyca had to be lifted over and was so high even I struggled to get over it.





Look at the height of that!

After another steep uphill path we came out at the top into some farm fields that were nice and flat for a change.....Phew! In one of the fields was the huge Pipit/Skylark flock and just in case we were missing a trick Wendy played the call of a Richard's Pipit to jog our memories. It sounded nothing like any of the calls we could hear, so we carried on up the side of the field to a gate.



Nice stubble field

Suddenly, I heard a call that sounded good, but it was coming from the stubble field we had been looking at the other day, so we headed straight there to check it out. When we got there, we found that yet again there were Pipits and Skylarks everywhere, but they were all feeding in the furrows, so we couldn't see them. They were quite flighty, so we just had to wait until they lifted and dropped down again to hopefully pick something different out. As we stood around, I found a **Merlin** sitting on a hedge, but Wendy was too short to see over the hedge in front of us and had to walk further away to a gate to be able to see it...Hahaha! By then Wendy was still watching the flock from the gate but I had broken away and gone



further down the path to see what I could find. She was watching a bird that's behaviour and looks were unlike the Meadow Pipits around it. It was standing very upright with its head high in the air and she was hoping not to lose it before I came back. I on the other hand had heard that call again and then picked up on a Pipit larger than the Meadow Pipits that dropped in to land. I treble checked the call from the Collin's app and sure enough it was a Richard's Pipit call that I was hearing. I headed back up to Wendy and we compared notes as to what we had seen with Wendy saying her bird was larger than the surrounding Meadow Pipits as well but it had flown off (probably over to me). Normally we would chuck all this info away but this time we decided to be brave and back ourselves and we reckoned we had enough to finally be able to tick off **Richard's Pipit!** After years of them having evaded us and also the last full day in Cornwall we had finally got ourselves another lifer....Woo Hoo! Wendy was more relieved than anything and hoping that from now on we can go away without me banging on about Richard's Pipits as she thinks they are well boring...Hahahaha! The walk back down the driveway seemed much longer than usual but we saw another Silver-Y and were back at the car at 1.51pm.



Long walk back

The walk had been 7.94 miles and 19,356 steps, so we were starving and really enjoyed our lunch. Lucky, we hadn't gone on the full walk as that might have been an absolute monster! It was no surprise to me that not only was my foot sore again but my bunion had also kicked off too.....Boooooooo :( We left at 2.20pm and headed into Sennen to re-find the recycling bin Wendy had spotted on the way past earlier to save us from having to go searching for the ones in St Just. When we spotted it I pulled over and jumped out, but the bin was locked, so we had to revert back to our original plan. Luckily the ones in St Just weren't hard to find and after we'd unloaded our recycling there was nothing else to do but head for home.

Back at HQ it was 3.11pm but we had a lot to do before we left in the morning. We put our dirty washing in the machine and Wendy started to pack what she could. She brought the food bag down from upstairs and as soon as Lyca saw it she knew we were leaving and went into a sulk. I started to look into our journey home and since there were absolutely no rarities to go for to break the journey up with it made things very difficult. I finally decided to give RSPB Ham Wall in Glastonbury a go seeing as we hadn't had time to go there on our way up from Hampshire to Wales last year. It was an impressive reserve being the only

place in the UK to have all the rare Herons and Egrets breeding in summer as well as being great for Dragonflies. Obviously, none of them would be around in October but I wanted to go for a look anyway for future reference. Another great thing about it was that dogs had to be kept on leads, so that was another good reason to visit. By my estimations it was looking as though we could be up north as early as 8pm, so we wondered if we should get a room at a Travelodge again. Last time it had been great and we had been able to totally chill out in comfort before heading to Heysham at stupid o'clock. When I saw that it would be £90 we instantly decided that it wasn't worth it for a few hours of luxury. If the traffic was bad and we didn't get there until later it really would be an expensive mistake, so we ditched it off. After tea we had baths, did more packing and tried to relax but we just didn't want to leave and nor did Lyca by the look of her. We were both starting to feel really tired by then and wouldn't have been able to keep going for much longer but despite that we had done the biggest walk of the week, which was just stupid! Even Lyca was in the dog bed snoring loudly for most of the evening, in between sulking that is. I got another report of the Craft Pascoe Pool Vagrant Emperors and we laughed because unless you had waders on you didn't stand a chance! Although we wanted to eek out as much time in HQ as possible, we couldn't stay awake any longer and went to bed at 10.30pm. When I had done my teeth and went into the bedroom, I found that Lyca had curled up in my place and wouldn't budge, so I had to physically move her!

Friday 26<sup>th</sup> October

Wendy woke up at 6.50am and could hear rain lashing down against the windows, so went back to sleep until we all got up at 7.36am. While we were busy toing and froing to get everything packed up and ready to go Lyca continued to sulk. I took her out in the garden to see if that would perk her up which it did for a few minutes.



Interesting smells

When everything was nearly done, I started to load the car up while Wendy went round taking photos of the cottage.





Kitchen

Handy that it was raining to get me soaked before we'd even left, just what you don't want on a travel day :( . The YBW was calling again, which was something we weren't going to hear again for a long time. All of a sudden Wendy realised that she couldn't find her mobile anywhere and the only thing she could think was that it was still in her dressing gown pocket.....in the suitcase in the boot! It was still raining, so we both got extra soaked as we tried to open the case and root through it but unbelievably it wasn't there.....Uh oh! I tried to phone it so we could hear it ring but we heard nothing and my phone was saying it was unavailable. Clutching at straws Wendy fumbled around in her coat pockets to double check but she still couldn't find it. I picked up her other coat and low and behold it was in one of the pockets, so the panic was over.....Doh! I realised that I hadn't cleaned my windows like I had planned to do either. Driving on motorways at night with dirty windows is an absolute nightmare so I hoped I wouldn't live to regret it.

It was 9.57am when we drove away but it didn't feel like we were going for good at all.



Daisy Cottage

There were only 7 cars at the Catbird, which was a total contrast to our first day, so everyone must've already filled their boots (I found out later it had started to be very elusive). When we got as far as Lower Roskestal Farm we spotted a huge Starling flock and saw it as our last chance of finding a Rose-coloured in Cornwall. The flock all flew behind the farm, so I drove down the road to turn around but before I could a Peregrine came out of nowhere and they all flew miles off.....Urrghhhh! Wendy made me stop at Marazion so she could get a photo of St Michael's Mount, but the conditions weren't favourable and it was too dark.



St Michael's Mount

I had a quick scan of the sea while she was doing that and found 3x **Common Scoter** bobbing about on the waves. The rain had stopped and as we drove away Wendy pointed at a rainbow over Marazion Marshes, which seems to be there every time we go. We set off again at 11.06am and I soon regretted not going back on myself to get onto the main road and found myself crawling along on another country bumpkin road when we really needed to get a move on.....Grrrrr! Luckily it only added 8 minutes onto our journey and we re-joined the main road at Hayle. We had a quick look at the estuary as we drove past and even though the tide was right out there were 2 birders at the side of the road looking. Some **Greylag Geese** flew in and landed in a field and I was pleased to see that somehow I had managed to get back 5 minutes of my travel time....Yey! All was going well and we were making good progress, although getting out of Cornwall seems to take forever. We passed a huge solar power farm where instead of crops or grass, there was field after field with rows of solar panels.





Solar fields

These seem to be very popular in this part of the UK but non-existent in the Isle of Man. Surely, they make more money than a field of grass for sheep to eat? All of a sudden, the traffic just came to a standstill and we were in a tailback as far as the eye could see :(. A few cars turned in the road and went back but we couldn't see any cause for a jam ahead. After a few minutes we were back on the move again but a while later the same thing happened and again and we were stuck for ages. This time though there was 3 smashed up cars at the side of the road so that explained that one.



Yawn

With all the hold ups we didn't have the opportunity to stop anywhere for lunch, so we ate it on the move. Lyca, must've still been sulking as she refused her biscuit when Wendy offered it to her and had normally gobbled it up straight away. By 12.36pm we hit Devon and were depressed to tally up 3x dead young foxes at the side of the road, so far :(.

It started raining again and it looked pretty black up ahead, which would be just about typical for any journey home for us. It was only 7.5c at 12.52pm and then the heavens opened and it started to absolutely throw it down! The traffic ground to a halt again 5 miles before Exeter and a Police car came hurtling down the middle of the road, which annoyingly nobody pulled over to let through. We started to move again but it was only briefly and yet again we were sitting in a huge traffic jam.....Yawn! Wendy tried Lyca with her biscuit again and she finally ate it at 1.35pm. After all the rain the sun had come out and it was now stifling in the car, so we really needed to get moving. An Ambulance whizzed past and we wondered how much this jam would affect us being only 3.5 miles away from our junction. The traffic was nose to tail as far as the eye could see and we'd easily have been burnt off by a snail on valium! Next a traffic officer came up towards us in the middle lane and all the cars started filtering into ours.....Eh? All was revealed, when we passed another crash this time involving a Harley Davidson and a Discovery, but it didn't look too bad, which was good. We'd now lost 45 minutes but the traffic started flowing freely again straight after clearing the incident.....Phew! Our relief was short lived though, when we hit congestion on the M5 and saw warnings of a wide load ahead.....Nooooo!



That will be the wide loads then!

With more hold ups we didn't get into Somerset until 2.15pm where there was even more congestion making us 1 hour behind schedule already. At 3.07pm another traffic officer van went past and we could see blue flashing lights up ahead. This time this crash looked quite bad and the cars involved were pretty smashed up. It was sad to see that they both had suitcases, which had been removed from the vehicles and were at the side of the road, so that was obviously going to ruin their holidays :( We'd now lost 1.5 hours, which we hadn't bargained on, so maybe it was a good job we hadn't booked a Travelodge after all? Unbelievably there was yet another crash further up, but we were very relieved to finally turn off at Glastonbury at 3.20pm. The drive to Ham Wall was on more country roads, so was slow going but I eventually arrived in the car park at 3.45pm.....Yey!

We couldn't wait to stretch our legs and I'm sure Lyca was raring to go by then. We both used the much-appreciated Visitor Centre toilets before we set off down the footpath into the reserve.





Wow

We heard the blast of a **Cetti's Warbler** from the reedbed and crossed over a bridge where we heard a YBW, which was surely the last one of the trip? A **Shoveler** flew over and there were a couple of **Little Grebes** on the river with the **Mallards** and **Gadwall**.



Gadwall

When we got to the first pond we stopped for a scan and it felt decidedly chilly, but we added **Pintail**, **Mute Swan** and **Moorhen**.





View over the pools and reedbed

I was aiming for the Avalon Hide but there was a farmer down the path to it moving his herd of cows, so we had to hang back until they had gone. Wendy was cold, tired and grumpy, so just wanted to carry on and get the walk done as soon as possible, so wasn't very happy to be wasting time waiting around. I had come this far though and had been dying to check it out, so I wasn't giving up that easily. We heard the squeal of a **Water Rail** as we waited and a **Marsh Harrier** floated over the reeds but finally the cows were safely shut into another field and we were free to carry on. Unfortunately, we were quickly stopped in our tracks when came to a gate with a "No Dogs" sign, so my heart sank and we had to turn back. After I told her we would have had a great view of Glastonbury Tor from there too Wendy was gutted. We stopped to view another pool where there were some **Teal** and loads of **Lapwing**.



Nice pool

Carrying on we came to a break in the trees and Wendy spotted Glastonbury Tor in the distance. She had wanted to pay Glastonbury a visit on the way up north, but it was just too



far away for us to drive to at such a late stage in the day, if we hadn't had got stuck in so many jams we would have easily had enough time :(.



Glastonbury Tor

There were some **Wigeon** and a **Little Egret** on the pool and the Marsh Harrier was still hanging around, so I tried to get a decent shot of one. (An effort that has been going on for over 10 years and I've still not got one I'm happy with.)



Marsh Harrier

When we looked back at the pool, I spotted a rather large looking white blob and was surprised to see a **Great White Egret** sitting there. I didn't think they would still be there in October, so I raised my camera to get a record shot.



Great White Egret

We took a loop path back and Wendy noticed that the sky had turned black and there was a double rainbow over the Tor, which had we been closer would've made for a cracking photo.



Double rainbow

Another Great White Egret flew up from the reeds and it didn't take long for the rain to catch up with us but luckily, we were nearly back at the car park by then. It was already feeling really cold, so the rain just made it worse and we couldn't wait to get back to the car. It was 5.10pm when we got there and there were loads of people just heading off into the reserve.... Ehhh. I was intrigued but then we started to see a few Starlings flying in and



realised that it was a Starling Murmuration place... cool. Due to the rain and still having a long way to go we didn't go back for a look. More and more cars started to turn up while Wendy gave Lyca her tea and dentastick and then we ate ours. After that Wendy took Lyca out for a wee and made herself a spritzer for later. When I went to move the car I heard a loud popping sound, which could only mean one thing....Uh Oh! I reversed back and sure enough I had just driven over the poo bag I had put on the ground when we'd arrived as there's no bins there.....Urrghhhh! It had to be peeled off the ground and put into another bag before going in the boot until we found a bin. I did well to not vomit everywhere from the smell. The Starlings started to come in in large numbers at 5.41pm and the more that joined them the more we wished we could stay to watch. It looked as though it was going to be huge and well worth staying for, but thanks to the delays earlier we couldn't risk it time wise and drove away at 5.47pm :(. It was only 8c by then and already feeling much colder than it had down in Cornwall. We could still see huge flocks of Starlings flying in for every angle to join the Ham Wall roost, so the mind boggles as to how many birds would end up there.

There were no more problems on the journey up and we hit Gloucestershire at 7.06pm, Worcestershire at 7.36pm and when we saw the sign for Frankley Services we decided to turn off. By then it was 8.10pm and it looked as though our ETA at Heysham was 10.30pm. This meant it was too late to go up to Arnside for a stop at the pub but too early to be sat at Heysham port. Had we known this we would have stayed for the Starling murmuration.....Grrrrrr! Wendy needed a wee and we were slightly peckish, so went into the services and was ages due to the queue being huge in Burger King. While I waited, I took Lyca out for a wee too but there was no grass for her, so she was reluctant to perform. Wendy finally came out with some chicken strips for me and some fries to share, which filled a hole nicely. It looked as though I didn't have enough petrol to last until I got to Asda but at £1.50 per litre there was no way I was going to fill my tank at the services, so just topped up with £20 to tide me over. Having wasted a bit of time our eta at Heysham was now 11.15pm, which was still too early, but we set off again at 8.50pm and I decided I would go a bit slower.

Thinking we were nice and safe for not being late for the boat that soon went out the window as on the M6 we got stuck just below Preston due to junctions 18-19 being closed.....Noooo! It was 10.45pm by then and I was getting really fed up after a long day driving but just 400 yards before our junction we found there was a diversion.....Grrrrrr! A car had also conked out just before the 200 yard sign so the lanes were down to 1 which slowed everything down even further, so we all had to turn off and go through a place called Sproston. I hate diversions at the best of times as the Sat nav goes mental trying to get you back on the motorway which is not helpful and the rubbish tiny diversion markers on road signs are nearly impossible to see. I've found the best tactic is just follow the car ahead and hope they know what they are doing! After negotiating the diversion and getting back on track we had now lost 1 hour and 11 minutes on our eta! It was luckily we didn't stay for the murmuration after all, as we would have missed the boat!

Saturday 27<sup>th</sup> October

It felt as though we would never get there, but I eventually pulled into the petrol station at Asda at 12.20am, which was much later than we would ever have thought. We had the traffic to blame for that though and it had been a nightmare journey up from Cornwall. Since leaving Daisy Cottage the previous morning it had taken 14 hours 38 minutes to get to Heysham, so we could easily have flown to India, or beyond in that time.....Grrrrrr! I let Lyca out for a wee and surprisingly my foot felt OK and it wasn't too sore, but having remained quite spritely all day I suddenly fell off a cliff and started to feel really tired. I had

driven 1,465 miles over the past 2 weeks, but we hadn't really done much in Norfolk, so the mileage was lower than I expected for such a monster trip. There didn't seem to be many lorries when we parked up at Heysham at 12.35am, so maybe they had got stuck in traffic too? Lyca wanted to get in the front to sit on Wendy's knee but she's a bit big for that these days, although she still hasn't forgotten about it from her younger days and tries it on every time. It was tedious sitting waiting to board and we were shocked to see a car with a horsebox turning up at 1.40am, which was very late and maybe traffic related as well? There were still more freight lorries turning up to load too and all we wanted to do was get our heads down having been up for 18 hours 5 minutes by then. There was a motorbike parked in front of us with no driver, so when it looked as though we were going to start boarding, I was annoyed that we couldn't go anywhere until he came back. My fears were unfounded though when, as if by magic, he appeared just before we were ushered to start boarding....Phew! Another horsebox turned up at 1.52am, which was cutting it very fine seeing as we started to board at 1.54am. We trudged up the never-ending steps to the passenger lounge, but I spotted a woman up ahead with a Staffie, so I wanted to avoid any altercations with Lyca being tired and in a nark. I told Wendy to go and stand in the stairwell to the cabin while I went to get the key. When I got to the desk all of a sudden, I could hear Lyca barking and making a right racket, but there was nothing I could do being in a queue of other passengers. When I went back to Wendy she wasn't happy at all, the woman with the Staffie obviously had a cabin too and had got her key before I had even got to the desk. She had come through the door and up the stairwell where Wendy and Lyca were, so even though her dog was not a problem at all Lyca had freaked out big time. The woman was not pleased and we can't say we blamed her! Embarrassed and tired we were glad to shut the cabin door behind us and we prepared our beds for the night. We set off late at 2.17am and although I only got an hour's sleep at the most, Wendy went out like a light and slept right through until 5.39am, when the announcement came that we would be shortly arriving at Douglas. It was absolutely freezing going out on the deck to get to the car and we finally disembarked at 5.57am. It looked as though it had been a very quiet boat for a change and we wondered if there had been many people who had missed it due to traffic disruptions.

We were back home by 6.02am and the heating had been on for a bit to take the edge off the coldness of a house that had been empty for 2 weeks. Wendy put the heated quilts on and put the food in the fridge while I brought the cases in from the car. Lyca didn't ask to go out and went straight to bed, so we left the rest of the unpacking and went to bed too. I had to set my alarm to wake me up before our Tesco delivery between 10:00-12:00 but hardly slept a wink despite having had a long day before and no sleep on the boat.....Urrggghhhh! Wendy kept waking up freezing but managed to sleep on and off until 10am, so did much better than me.

It had been an interesting 2 weeks, but Norfolk had been a disappointment with so few birds being around. The common winter residents hadn't even arrived in any numbers and the wind direction had been wrong for anything interesting to have been blown in. The Cottage / house had been utterly amazing so it was a shame to have not been staying there with easterlies as surely the garden list would have included some belters! In Cornwall, for a late booking, Daisy cottage was great and a good place to base from. The decision to go to Cornwall a day early was the correct one even though the Catbird was seen well for a few more days after we got there. The highlight of the two weeks was a toss up between the ultra rare Grey Catbird and the self found Vagrant Emperor. There's nothing quite like finding your own rarity. We had done 117,038 steps in Norfolk compared to 125,194 steps in Cornwall. The Norfolk bird list was 105 compared to 85 in Cornwall. My Land Rover Defender count for Cornwall finished on 70, which was 11 more than the 59 we had seen in Norfolk.



## Bird List

|                   |                          |                       |
|-------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------|
| Mute Swan         | Black-headed Gull        | Song Thrush           |
| Whooper Swan      | Mediterranean Gull       | Redwing               |
| Greylag Goose     | Common Gull              | Cetti's Warbler       |
| Wigeon            | Lesser Black-backed Gull | Blackcap              |
| Gadwall           | Herring Gull             | Yellow-browed Warbler |
| Teal              | Great Black-backed Gull  | Dusky Warbler         |
| Mallard           | Guillemot                | Chiffchaff            |
| Pintail           | Rock Dove / Feral Pigeon | Willow Warbler        |
| Shoveler          | Stock Dove               | Goldcrest             |
| Pheasant          | Woodpigeon               | Long-tailed Tit       |
| Little Grebe      | Collared Dove            | Blue Tit              |
| Gannet            | Short-eared Owl          | Great Tit             |
| Cormorant         | Great Spotted Woodpecker | Magpie                |
| Shag              | Skylark                  | Chough                |
| Little Egret      | Swallow                  | Jackdaw               |
| Great White Egret | <b>Richard's Pipit</b>   | Rook                  |
| Grey Heron        | Meadow Pipit             | Carrion Crow          |
| Red Kite          | Rock Pipit               | Raven                 |
| Marsh Harrier     | Grey Wagtail             | Starling              |
| Sparrowhawk       | Pied Wagtail             | House Sparrow         |
| Buzzard           | Wren                     | Chaffinch             |
| Kestrel           | <b>Grey Catbird</b>      | Brambling             |
| Merlin            | Dunnock                  | Greenfinch            |
| Peregrine         | Robin                    | Goldfinch             |
| Water Rail        | Stonechat                | Linnet                |
| Moorhen           | Wheatear                 | Bullfinch             |
| Golden Plover     | Blackbird                | Yellowhammer          |
| Lapwing           | Fieldfare                | Reed Bunting          |
| Snipe             |                          |                       |

## Map

