

Cornwall/Norfolk Trip October 2014 **PART 1**

Call us gluttons for punishment but after our non-eventful trip to Norfolk in August we were clutching at straws for something exciting, especially bird wise, so we booked another holiday. Oooooops! We both still had 2 weeks to take from work, so even though I'd never taken a holiday any longer than a week I decided to push the boat out and do a mega 2 weeker. It was something I'd always wanted to do with the added bonus of saving money on the ridiculously priced ferry. October is a great time to go away too but where we were going to go for so long? Initially I wanted to hit Norfolk hard during the 3rd and 4th week, as this would cover both the decent weeks (going off the previous 5 years) but Wendy couldn't get those weeks off, so it was back to the drawing board :(. After 4 attempts at Norfolk in October, over 4 years, we'd skillfully managed to dodge the week that had easterly winds and therefore decent birds by a week every time. Having dreamt of being there during those amazing weeks for years, as they seem to be the most reliable for any mega finds in the UK, this was a real blow. At least we could be there for the 3rd week but the 2nd doesn't seem to be a very productive one, so could be a waste of time. We then started toying with idea of going back to Cornwall especially as that time seemed to be great for Wrynecks but if we did we could practically guarantee that everything super rare would turn up in Norfolk and if we went to Norfolk we could guarantee everything turning up in Cornwall.....Urrghhhhh! With everything becoming more and more complicated we decided to play it safe and do a week in each but just hoped that we hadn't done it the wrong way round. It was a total gamble, the journeys would be immense and knowing our luck we will definitely be in the wrong place in the wrong week!

For the 1st week I found the great looking, relatively cheap and 'Gold Award' dog-friendly Wesley's Barn in Bosavern, near St Just in Cornwall and Wendy was particularly impressed. This was probably due to the fact that it had a hairdryer and a Nespresso Coffee machine the same as the one she has at home, so she could make her own Cappuccinos! Although it didn't have a fancy coffee machine we booked our 4 times tried and tested Church Owl Cottage in Blakeney, Norfolk for the 2nd week.....Sorted :). It was pretty shocking that a 2 week holiday in October was only around £50 more than our 1 week break in Norfolk during August :O! Obviously I'd booked a Travelodge for our 1st night because there was no way I was going to even attempt driving straight down to Cornwall after getting off the boat at midnight. Again I'd booked the one near Slimbridge and although we'd thought it was grubby last time, it'd had a refurb, so we hoped it'd improved. This move would break up our 1st stretch of travel time nicely and we could even grab a few hours sleep :).

Typically, as I watched the BirdGuides reports, it looked as though all the Wrynecks had already gone through Cornwall by the middle of September! Yet again, there was even one at the trusty woodpile we'd stood next to twice before at Kenidjack.....2 weeks before we'd even got there! There'd been a constant stream of Yellow-browed Warblers and Red-breasted Flycatchers filtering through as well as the odd Red-backed Shrike, Purple Heron and Greenish Warbler! Things were looking bad for us already, so the ever-optimistic (!) Wendy even considered writing the article before we even left, predictably starting with the gale force wind that cancelled our sailing and ending up with having seen nothing! Surely our week in Cornwall couldn't be as fruitless as our 2012 trip.....or could it? There'd been no Ring Ouzels anywhere to speak of, so hopefully we'd be around to catch up with some of them at least.....or were they just our famous last words? :/.

Obviously to expect wall to wall sunshine in October would be asking far too much as well but we'd had a very mild September, so we just had to a) hope for the best and b) pack wisely! We could remember the early mornings, during October in Cornwall and Norfolk, being very cold and frosty but that the temperature could rise considerably once (or more

appropriately IF) the sun came out.....Urrghhhhh! Our holiday crept up on us and Wendy went into panic mode when she realized that she still had her leaky old boots with the holes in them, so she had to hope that the new ones she'd ordered would fit, not to mention arrive, before we left :O!

Watching the weather forecast it was all looking good until the Friday we were due to leave and all our plans were scuppered. The wind was set to pick up to gale force on the day of our sailing, which was no surprise to us, and there was a 90% chance of rain for every day of our entire week in Cornwall.....Arrghhhhhh! Unbelievably just like on our August trip we'd picked another week, which would coincidentally see the tail end of a Hurricane! All the forecasted winds were westerlies, so my dreams of getting some easterlies and finding some cool migrants were shattered and the best we could hope for was some good seawatching from the car at Pendeen in Cornwall :(Wendy was very pleased to get her new boots before we left though and they fitted.....Phew!

Friday 3rd October

Luckily I had an extra day to take off work so I had the whole day to prepare and it also meant a day of chilling out which I hoped would help me to last longer when driving overnight. Wendy had been very jammy again because the hygienist was away on a course, so she was only needed for the morning surgery. The day kicked off predictably with a VERY windy start but luckily it started to drop off by lunchtime, much to Wendy's relief! After I'd had a thorough soaking from packing all our stuff into the car in the rain we set off and arrived at the Sea Terminal at 6.56pm. We joined the small queue and even though we were the 2nd to last car to arrive we were only in the 2nd lane. We'd timed it well again, as we were boarding at 7.19pm and were in the cabin at 7.27pm. We settled down for what we thought would be an ok crossing, as although it was chucking it down the wind had remained at about force 6 since lunchtime. When the captain came on and told us all that the crossing would be rough due to a strong southwesterly wind Wendy's face dropped. What the.....? It wasn't even that windy outside! As we left Douglas the boat rolled it's way out into the bay and it continued for about $\frac{3}{4}$ of the sailing. Wendy had taken Stugeron but I needed to stay awake for the drive so hadn't. Consequently Wendy slept with Lyca while I felt a bit green around the gills and had to stay in the supine position until it eventually calmed down as we approached Heysham....Bleurghhhhhh! At about 11pm we took Lyca outside to see if she wanted a wee and yet again she waited until we were up on the top deck to create a huge puddle on the rubber matting :O! We were more than a bit pleased to be docking at 11.20pm and finally disembarked nice and early at 11.36pm.....Phew! Wendy wanted to go to the Terminal, so my Sat Nav's eta at the Travelodge for 2.35am was thrown out of sync a bit. Having lost 5mins already I finally drove away from Heysham and started the long drive down south.

Saturday 4th October

I'd only been going for 1hr but it soon became apparent that I was so tired I was going to have to stop for a break. Luckily Knutsford Services was on hand, so I headed straight there and parked up at 12.50am. After a quick 15min break, where Lyca was let out and also performed, we set off again. Unfortunately having the day off before travelling hadn't had the desired effect on me and I had to pull into Hilton Park Services at 1.57am! I was so tired by then that I ended up taking a quick nap there. We were both totally gutted to see that there was a Travelodge there too and wished that we were staying there instead! While I dozed off Wendy ran into the Services hoping to get some fries but only Costa was open, so she came out empty handed.....how times change! At 2.33am I bit the bullet and carried on for the last stretch of the journey and after a very non-eventful drive we finally reached the Travelodge at 3.33am, quite a bit later than the 2.30am time I was expecting! We were very impressed by the refurb and all went out like lights and slept like the dead until the 9am alarm went off.

Wendy woke up reluctantly feeling like she could've slept all day, so was in a pretty bad mood. I reminded her of the fact that we had to get going if we were to reach our cottage in Cornwall at a reasonable time and we still had a long way to go before that happened.

It was raining outside, so I took some stuff out to the car and filled my petrol tank up while Wendy was getting ready to leave. We were starving by the time we left the room and after giving Lyca her breakfast in the car our thoughts turned to our own. There was a Starbuck's next door but I thought it was closed, as it looked like it was in darkness, so Subway was our only option. We wandered in and looked at the uninspiring menu wishing that there was a Little Chef, which is really saying something, so we could get something vaguely resembling breakfast food. I picked a Sausage Sub and spied a chocolate donut at the counter but Wendy was stumped and ended up getting a Cappuccino and a Cheese Toastie all for the bargain price of £3.79.....sorted :). We returned to car to eat our food but when Wendy opened her bag up she was totally disgusted with what was inside...Uh oh! She reluctantly took a bite of her toastie and her face said it all. It was soooooo dry that she couldn't eat it and said it was like eating compacted dust with the faintest hint of tasteless chewy rubber on top!



Yuck!

My Sausage Sub wasn't exactly gourmet either and even Wendy's Cappuccino was horrible, so she resorted to chucking it all away. No wonder it was so cheap! Luckily we'd noticed people going in and out of Starbuck's, so she ran over to get a proper Cappuccino instead and ate a cereal bar out of the bag in the back. After a pretty bad start to the day we set off in the pouring rain at 10.20am seeing our 1st bird of the trip, a **Magpie**.

Next up and just to lighten the mood (not) Wendy spotted a dead Sheep lying on its back, legs in the air, in a field.....Nice! :(We couldn't believe there were so few birds around and after driving for a while we'd only added **Herring Gull** and **Wood Pigeon** to our list. Next up was a Common **Buzzard** sitting on a telegraph pole looking totally soaked through. We went straight through Bristol without hitting any traffic jams, which was very nice indeed especially as I was positive that with it being a Saturday the area would be jammed solid. Unfortunately the driving conditions were awful, although the photo doesn't show just how bad it really was!



Urrghhh!

The bad weather was obviously why there were no birds about apart from the usual hardcore **Jackdaws**, **Starlings** and **Black-headed Gulls**. The atmosphere became rather somber as we drove through Somerset knowing that we were in the controversial 'Badger culling zones' and we just hoped that this year's entirely pointless and cruel exercise would fail again. It wouldn't be without its casualties or fatalities of course but knowing that the Sabs were out there every night doing everything they could was our only consolation. We carried on and spotted some **Carrion Crows** and a **Lesser Black-backed Gull** feeding in a field and a **Cormorant** sitting on top of a pylon. Passing the signs for Cheddar Gorge and Wookey Hole we found our 1st dead Badger at the side of the motorway :(. We couldn't help but wonder if it was an accident or that it had been put there by someone, trying to cover up their dirty deed, which is a well-known and popular trick. A **Grey Heron** was the next bird we saw and finally at 11.30, when we'd reached Exeter the sun began to poke through the clouds. The sign for West Devon was a welcome sight and a good enough place to take a quick break. I pulled up at Castle Drogo Services at 12pm, where we noticed a small flock of **Goldfinches** and Wendy ran in to use the WC's. While she was inside I let Lyca out for a wee and we were back on the road again for the final leg of our journey by 12.08pm. Some **Long-tailed Tits** flitted over the road ahead of us and Wendy let out a delighted, "Oooo arrrrrrr!" as we passed the Welcome to Cornwall sign at 12.29pm. We were now well on our way to reaching our 1st port of call of the day.....Phew! We saw what was to be our 1st **Jay** of many and then another dead Badger at the side of the road and this one definitely looked more dodgy than the last.....Grrrrrrrr! :(.

As we hadn't made any plans to stop at any reserves on the way down I decided to stop at Marazion since we'd be going through Penzance anyway and we were way too early to get into the cottage. We arrived at 1.37pm and it was sunny but very blustery. There'd been a Spotted Crake in the same spot we'd tried to find one on our last Cornwall trip 2yrs ago and a Garganey on another pool there, so we thought it'd be worth a shot. We had plenty of time to kill before 4pm so I looked around for things to do. Wendy ran over to the WC's first but quickly returned to grab 20p for the pleasure of using them! We took a wander down onto the beach to scan for Waders feeding at the tide line but the beach was crawling with people and totally void of any birds.

Out over the sea were loads of **Gannets** but nothing else but I took Lyca for a bit of a sniff around anyway. She'd been so good in the car that she deserved to stretch her legs for a while. Wendy, on the other hand was tired and had found herself a sun trap, which was

sheltered from the strong wind, so was lying chilling out and soaking up the rays.....lightweight! The vista of St Michael's Mount out in the bay was stunning in the low Autumnal light and it was the perfect place to be on our 1st day in Cornwall.



St Michaels Mount

Having managed to finally move Wendy out of her spot our thoughts turned to food again, so we headed up to the café. It was still really busy even though the summer season was well and truly over but we managed to find a table outside.



Café Dog

Wendy went in to find us some lunch and a few minutes later the very friendly owner came out with our food. Wendy had chosen a cheese and tomato Panini with a cappuccino and had ordered me some toast, so after our disastrous breakfast it was great to eat some quality food. Lyca was being a bit of a pain by then and had gone a bit hyper, so it was no wonder that a nearby Bearded Collie had decided to take a dislike to her. There was a bit of snarling and general antisocial behavior but they soon calmed down after establishing their feelings. I was still feeling peckish after my toast so Wendy went back to the café to get me an ice cream, with a flake, which did the job perfectly. With our

stomachs refueled we happily wandered back to the car to drive the short distance down the road to the RSPB Reserve in the hope that dogs were allowed in.

It was 2.44pm when we arrived at the charity car park by Marazion NR. There was an old bloke at the entrance taking the money so Wendy asked him if dogs were allowed and we were told, "Oh yes." Excellent, although we weren't hopeful of finding what we wanted but having just arrived we were still feeling optimistic. There was a **Pied Wagtail** in the entrance field and we headed straight over to the Spot Crake pool.



Spotted Crake pool

There were Dragonflies whizzing around but we couldn't get a good enough view to ID them as either Migrant or Common Hawkers. There were **Great Tits** and **Blue Tits** in the surrounding Willows, **Speckled Wood** and **Red Admiral Butterflies** around the Brambles and we heard a **Wren**. With no sign of the Spot Crake and no positive vibes being given off by any of the other Birders we moved back to the entrance to read the info board, so we could locate the other pools and try to find the Garganey. While we stood there we found **Meadow Pipits** and **Stonechats** and were very surprised to see a lovely **Clouded Yellow Butterfly**, which we presumed wouldn't still be around in October after seeing our first ever in Norfolk back in August. We arrived at the next pool, which was pretty uninspiring, but Lyca was standing bolt upright on her back legs focused on the long grass and looking very excited indeed.



What's that?

When we looked down we saw why, as we caught the briefest glimpse of a **Fox** disappearing into the undergrowth, never to be seen again. There were a few **Small Copper Butterflies** out feeding on the late flowers in the sunshine and around the pool were **Rabbits**, **Little Egrets** and **Moorhens**. After that we went out through a gate onto the pavement and walked down the road to view another pool further down, which we guessed was the pool we were looking for. On the way we heard the erratic blast of a **Cetti's Warbler** from the reeds and the singing of **Crickets** coming from the stonewall right next to us. At the next pool along were 8x Little Egrets, **Teal**, **Mallard** and a **Kestrel** hovering above the trees.



Egret Island

At the end of the pavement we had to cross over the road to view the last pool and there were a couple of Birders with scopes already there. We had a quick scan picking up 2x **Little Grebes**, **Mute Swan**, **Coot** and **Reed Bunting** but there was no sign of any Garganey. We heard one of the Birders saying that it'd just gone into the reeds, so seeing how deep the reeds were right at the back of the pool, we decided not to waste any time waiting around so we gave up pretty sharpish. As soon as we'd turned around a report of

the bird came in on my phone, so we'd just missed it by minutes! Urrghhhhh! Next I got a report of a Monarch Butterfly at Housel Bay on the Lizard.....What the.....? Wow! Now that's a Mega rare Butterfly we'd both like to see! Obviously something like that isn't twitchable, even if we'd been nearby and by then it was getting late and we just wanted to get to HQ to unpack and settle in. We crossed over the road and walked back seeing a **Blackbird** on the way and were back at the car at 4.15pm for our final stretch to HQ.

It'd been a long day but finally and 418miles later, since arriving at Heysham that morning, we arrived at our HQ for the week, Wesley's Barn, at 4.36pm.....Woo Hoo! :). I parked up outside and we got Lyca and a couple of bags out from the boot and let ourselves in.



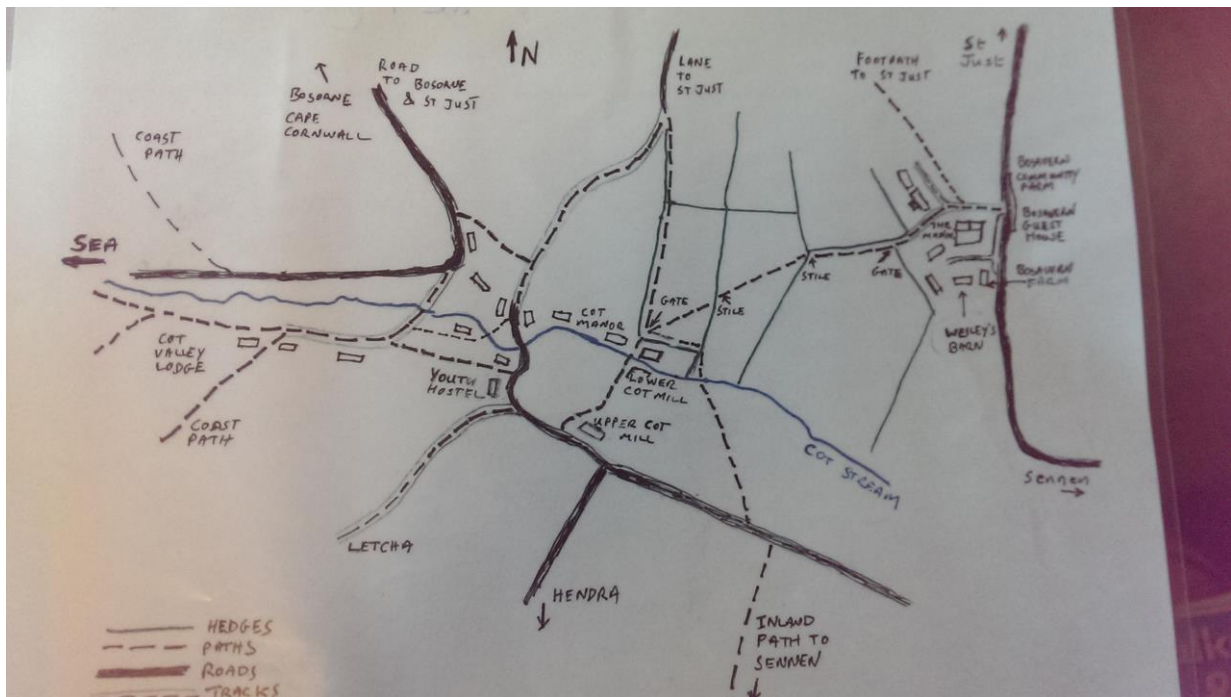
Wesley's Barn

To say we were happy would be an understatement, as the place was lovely and spotlessly clean and tidy.



Living room/Kitchen

When we went back outside to get the rest of our stuff we were greeted by the owner, who lived next door and he took us inside to give us a run down of the cottage. Next he took us outside and showed us a map where the footpaths were for walks on our doorstep.



Hand drawn map with Barn on the right

One of the walks took you down the field behind HQ, through Cot Valley (a place we planned to visit) and looped round via Nanquidno Valley back to HQ.....very nice :). We'd definitely be doing that walk then, seeing as it incorporated 2x excellent valleys into its route. The other walk was a shorter loop into St Just and back. The whole time we were away the boot of my car was left wide open with all our gear still in it but the owner assured us that it'd be more than safe in the area. When we got back to HQ he asked us if we'd mind if the builders popped in to finish tiling the roof of what looked like a new conservatory on the back of the cottage. Of course we said it'd be fine and he very kindly said that he'd ask them to call in later in the day so as not to disturb us. The new conservatory didn't have any glass in it yet either and it felt very strange going outside to look at the back garden straight through the doors!



Hello!

Wendy could hear Buzzards close by, so she went out to investigate. When she looked over to the other side of the valley she found a total of 5 hopping around in a ploughed field, so called me outside. Another Buzzard flew straight over us and joined the others followed by a **Grey Wagtail**, which made me reinstate my quest to get a belter of a Buzzard shot, which I'd attempted on both of our previous trips but had failed miserably at. Frustratingly, Buzzards at close range are easy to come by in Cornwall but the sun is usually behind them or they're in a field close enough to pat on the head but on a narrow winding road with nowhere to stop safely.....Urrghhhhhh!

Our Tesco order had been booked for 8-9pm to make sure we'd be there to accept it, so our choice of tea was somewhat limited. After she'd unpacked Wendy was hungry and having brought a tin of Lentil Soup for emergency use only she ended up having to open it. It wasn't what she fancied at all but did the job although she said it tasted like ****! I decided to wait for Tesco for mine and while I watched some TV Wendy went off for a shower. The only problem with the cottage was that it didn't have a bath, which Wendy was gutted about, but it was small sacrifice considering how perfect everything else was.



Shower room

Wendy had thought she'd been clever by adding shampoo/conditioner into the Tesco order to save on packing space, so had to wash her hair in 2in1 shower gel.....Haha! She could hardly get her brush through it afterwards and was surprised she had any left by the time she'd got all the knots out :P. When she let Lyca out just after 8pm she was very pleased to hear **Tawny Owls** calling. It's a good job she enjoys listening to them, as Tesco arrived at 8.10pm, and she had to stay outside with Lyca while our shopping was brought in through the front door. The Tesco man was very friendly and we had a good chat about the Isle of Man, as he was a TT fan. After we'd unpacked the shopping I knocked up some beans and sausages on toast in record time and we finally sat down to chill out.

On the webpage it mentioned there was a barn next door with a table tennis table and darts board inside, so I'd brought my table tennis bat and balls with me.



Cool!

I hadn't played since I was 11 and Wendy was probably not much older than that, so neither of us were any good at it but thought it'd be fun to have a knock about in the evenings. We were far too tired on this occasion but strangely we could hear people outside having a game even though the upper barn was unbooked. We concluded that it must've been the owner but at around 10pm we heard voices, the clinking of bottles and then people upstairs....Eh? I checked the website and sure enough the upper barn was still vacant. Maybe it was the owner's son or something? By then Wendy had started to feel really rough and having felt a bit bunged up for a few days it looked like her brewing cold was going to rear its ugly head at last. Noooooooooo! At 10.29pm we were totally knackered and went off to bed.....Rock'n'Roll! :P.

Sunday 5th October

I leapt out of bed with a mission at 7.15am to do either Porthgwarra or the Cot Valley/Nanquidno walk but Wendy was doubtful that she'd be able to join me. She'd been awake 3 times in the night unable to breathe through her nose and with a sore throat, headache and aching limbs.....Uh oh! After lying in bed listening to me getting ready and feeling totally depressed there was only one thing for it.....get up and go! There was no way she was going to let me and Lyca go and find something to totally grip her off with, so she staggered into the kitchen, looking like death warmed up, to make a Cappuccino. She let Lyca out while she waited for the kettle to boil and saw a **Robin** in the garden. The Buzzard party in the ploughed field was still going strong and then Lyca flushed what Wendy thought was a moth. She called me to grab a glass, so she could catch it to ID but when she put it over it and it opened its wings all was revealed. It was a **Wall Butterfly** and not a moth at all! After breakfast Wendy got some pics of the garden while the weather was nice and we heard a **Great-spotted Woodpecker** calling nearby.



Garden

Having made my mind up to keep the morning local we were ready to go out at 9.20am and all set off up the road to the footpath we'd been shown the night before. We saw a **Dunno**ck in the hedge as we walked down the steep field behind HQ and we noticed that we were heading towards a tree-lined stream at the bottom.



Heading down towards Cot Valley

As we approached the stream we heard a familiar call, which we couldn't place for a few seconds. Wendy saw something bright yellow dropping down into the stream and at 1st thought it was a leaf, until we saw that it was a Grey Wagtail.....Doh! There was another perching on the overhead cables too and they were constantly calling to each other as well as some **Chaffinches** in the bushes. We could see loads of birds moving about amongst the thick cover of the trees but couldn't for the life of us pin any of them down for a second. The ones we did manage to see were all just Goldcrests, so we didn't stick around. We carried on through a gate and down a narrow footpath behind a house, which brought us out onto a narrow road running through a densely wooded area.



Where do you start?

Standing talking to each other were presumably the local 'rarities' and one of the women had silvery grey plaits long enough to rival Wendy's! The bloke she was with had a huge ginger beard and they both looked as though they'd just stepped out of a nearby hippy commune. They were all friendly and we exchanged pleasantries as we passed each other and carried on our walk. We walked down through Cot Valley without hearing or seeing anything of note. We'd been hoping to hear the call of a Yellow-browed Warbler or Firecrest but everywhere was pretty quiet.....Typical!



Yes please!

We came out onto the coastal footpath and admired the view seeing as there were no birds to look at other than the **Choughs**, **Rooks** and **Ravens**. It was strange hearing Choughs while we were away from the IOM but we were in Cornwall, which is place where Choughs are starting to expand. Climbing out of Cot Valley, I found this sign overly amusing.



That's definitely the way people fall down mine shafts!

Out on the coast there was a **Common Seal** watching us go by and loads and loads of Gannets. As we walked along the path we checked every bush and stretch of path ahead of us for a Wryneck or Warbler but to no avail. It was already beginning to look like we were in for another week of non eventful trudging just like our previous 2 trips to Cornwall.....Aarrghhhh! Every time we spotted a bird diving into a bush it turned out to be just another Wren or Dunnock so we started to wonder why we were bothering and it was only our 1st day! All of a sudden Wendy stopped dead in her tracks when she saw a small bird flash from one gorse bush to another a few feet in front of her. We both waited and waited for it to reappear but it didn't happen. Going by the description of her brief view it sounded like it could possibly have been a Red-flanked Bluetail :O! OMG! If only it'd popped out to give us a proper view, it would've been the find of a lifetime and a lifer for us both! This of course didn't happen and the little **** had probably managed to skulk itself ½ a mile away without us even noticing :(While this was all going on Lyca was having a wail of a time off the lead!



Freedom!

Wendy's nose was fast becoming a running tap and she had no tissues with her. She'd have to go to a shop as soon as we left HQ later to see what she could pick up, as it was Sunday and all the Chemists would be closed. Talk about bad timing! We were really starting to drag our heels by then but we carried on picking up another 2x Clouded Yellows, a **Sparrowhawk** zooming past and some **Oystercatchers** down on the rocks beneath us.

Shortly after the opening to Nanquidno Valley appeared, so we turned off and started the walk upwards.



Bottom of Nanquidno valley

A grumpy looking Buzzard sat on a cliff top watching over us like it knew we weren't local.



Gerroff moy laaaaand!

There was nothing of note until we found a **Willow Warbler** and a huge **Hornet** in the trees at the top of the road we'd stayed on with Chris, Keren and John in 2010. Wendy

found a weird looking Wasp on the path, so she took a quick pic to ID it later and found out that it was a Black Slip Wasp.



Black Slip Wasp

Next up was a **Peregrine** out on a mission and another dead Badger at the side of a very small track leading to a farm. I couldn't help but wonder about this Badger too, as the track was tiny, so no vehicles could've been moving quickly by any means and there seemed to be a bit too much blood around it for my liking. Wendy scuttled off as quickly as possible so as to avoid the gory details but we both left feeling very suspicious. We then walked through the farm fields, which were absolutely caked in tiny yellow form Wild Pansies, so Wendy stopped to get a quick pic with her point and click.



Wild Pansy

The farmers around there obviously don't use any nasty pesticides for the fields to be so full of life, which is brilliant :). Before long and much to Wendy's relief we were soon back in the field below HQ where we found 2 more Clouded Yellows. It was a steep climb back up and she was starting to flag big time. Her energy levels were pretty low to start with

so she'd done well to complete the 4.5mile (plus the rest) walk, especially without any tissues!

Back at HQ it was 12.30pm and after she'd blown her nose several times it was time for lunch. While we were eating I had a report of another Monarch but this time from Porthgwarra! To think that I'd nearly chosen to go there 1st thing that morning as well! :(.

That was to be our next plan of the day though but we didn't think for a second that it'd still be around. By then Wendy's nose was getting very sore from using harsh toilet paper to blow it with, so the next thing on our agenda was to go into St Just so she could get some proper tissues and whatever else she could find to ease her symptoms.

We left at 1.30pm and Wendy ran into the Co-op reappearing with a box of tissues, Paracetamol and some Strepsils. They didn't have anything else, so she'd have to wait until the Chemists were open the next day. After that I drove south to Porthgwarra and parked up in the car park at 2.07pm. It was still sunny but with a very brisk westerly wind, which wasn't exactly ideal but it was worth a go. There were some **Linnets** hanging around the car park and as there'd been loads of reports of Balearic Shearwaters, which would be a lifer for Wendy, I was keen to have a look off Gwennap Head, the most South westerly point in England.



Porthgwarra

First though we walked up the hill and headed over to 60ft cover but Wendy had really started to flag by then. Having thought it'd be easy to find the track into the infamous area we messed up amazingly and found ourselves looking at what looked like a small animal track into the scrub! Not wanting to attempt it, knowing that there was no migrants about and that it was probably too late in the day anyway we decided to forget going in so went to try a bit of seawatching instead.

We turned around and headed back down to the path junction but had to stop when a herd of Cows slowly ambled their way down the track we wanted to be on. We let them go past before venturing any further as Lyca was particularly interested in them.



They're only cows Lyca!

We found a big hairy **Fox Moth Caterpillar** on the way up and finally sat down sheltering behind a rock from the wind. It was absolutely freezing up there and the sea looked dead. Looking south out to sea it looked vast and if you carried on in a straight line the 1st country you'd hit would be Spain 450 miles away! We managed to pick up **Great Black-backed Gull** and **Shag** on the sea but there was no sign of the 100's of Balearic Shearwaters that were being reported as streaming past daily.



Gwennap Head

Eventually Wendy found and could just about make out the tiny black and white shapes of 4x **Manx Shearwaters** right out in the distance. Not the Balearics we were hoping for! Nothing much seemed to be happening and it was pretty cold, so we got up and turned back passing more cows with Lyca going mental! After that Wendy wanted a Cappuccino, so our next stop was the Café and we saw a **Pheasant** on the way. While we chilled out I worked out that we'd just walked 1.6miles, so in all we'd done at least 6miles that day. Back at the car it was 3.45pm and Wendy was feeling awful, so we called it a day and headed back to HQ for an early finish.

As we drove out of Porthgwarra and past Botswalla Farm Wendy saw a bird sitting on a shed roof and very nearly didn't even mention it until she remembered where she was. There was a **Hooded Crow** sitting there sheltering from the wind, which aren't normally seen South of the Isle of Man. This bird had even been reported on BirdGuides, as it was a scarcity down there. Driving through Kelynack we saw a **Collared Dove** and we arrived back at HQ at 4.10pm. Wendy headed straight for the kitchen and set about peeling and chopping various disgusting vegetables and rinsing lentils and beans to make herself a huge pan of soup to keep her going for the rest of the week.



Kitchen

It all looked too much like hard work to me and I was glad I'd bought myself a ready meal, which after 5mins in the microwave was ready to eat.....Om nom nom :). Lyca flopped out on her new holiday rug for the week and seemed adequately pooped.



Tired dog

At 6.30pm I received some reports from RBA, which were as good as useless since it was already getting dark outside. There'd been a Yellow-browed Warbler and Richard's Pipit at Cot Valley and also the Hoody at Porthgwarra. Yet again we'd been in the right place

earlier that morning (Cot Valley) but at the wrong time! We started to wonder if all the reports were going to come in after dark again, which is very frustrating when you're out there all day trying and failing to find stuff and then come home to find the reports flooding in when it's too late. As forecast, the wind started to pick up big time and it was blowing a gale outside. The cottage was lovely and warm though and after watching TV and chilling out we all hit the sack at 10.46pm, which I reckoned was way too late if we wanted to get out early the next day.

Monday 6th October

Having not set the alarm we were all back in the land of the living by 8am and it was still very windy but nowhere near as bad as it'd been over night. Wendy had woken up a couple of times again drowning in snot and had been listening to it howling in the background. She still felt dreadful, so we didn't rush to get out too early and after she'd made the sarnies and we'd got our stuff together we headed out at 9.31am. Having seen a reported Rose-coloured Starling at St Ives we reckoned that we'd try there 1st, as it'd be a lifer for Wendy. The bird was hanging around Island car park with the Starling flock, so it looked do-able even from the car. The only problem was that I've developed a real dislike of driving in the ridiculously narrow streets of St Ives and before we'd gone away I'd vowed to not go anywhere near it on this holiday. We'd already guessed that lifers would be hard to come by in Cornwall, so it was worth a go and hopefully with it being October and morning it would be less busy.

St Ives was pleasantly quiet compared to our previous visits, so I had fewer problems getting to Island car park this time round. There were still several people walking or standing in the middle of the road and most of them were totally oblivious to any oncoming vehicles. To be fair though it's unusual for a main shopping street to allow traffic these days, so it's no wonder they looked confused. To keep me on my toes my Sat Nav was slightly behind and I had to make about 10 turns in the narrow streets but luckily enough I guessed correctly each time and we were soon at the Island car park. I parked up in the last remaining space and went to get my ticket. Yet again there were loads of Gannets streaming past over the sea and another Clouded Yellow flitting around on the grassy hill. We seemed to be finding nothing but Clouded Yellows on this trip! In no time at all the Starling flock flew in and landed in a bush with some **House Sparrows** and started feeding on the hill but there was no sign of the RCS. They kept on coming and going in dribs and drabs so we kept on checking the ever changing flock with absolutely no success.....Grrrrrrrr! Surely our bird couldn't be far away? The flock kept splitting off from each other and distributing themselves all over the place. Some would go down onto the beach while the others flew off in the direction of the town, so we quickly realized that it could be anywhere :(Having given up on the RCS we decided to walk up the hill to the Coastguards hut on the Island to see what we could pick up instead. Battling the wind we stood there and admired the view and I must admit that in the sunshine St Ives was definitely growing on me.



St Ives

At the Coastguard hut we had a quick Seawatch but only managed to add **Rock Pipit** to our list even with Lyca helping out.



Seawatching dog

With no sign of anything out in the bay I thought it might be a good plan to go back to the car park and have a look at the garden that a lot of Starlings seemed to be targeting. Before that though we had a quick walk around the headland just in case there were any more over on that side. Not only were there no Starlings but there were no birds at all, although the views were very nice. There were even a few surfers out in the bay, which added a real summer feeling to the scene.



Nice :)

Round at the garden there wasn't any Starlings either, so Wendy trotted off to the beach café for a Cappuccino as consolation for our 1st dip of the trip.....Arrghhhhhh! While we sat in the car wondering where to go next to rescue our bad start Wendy spotted a very white bird out in the bay. We both got our bins on them to find 4x **Sandwich Terns** flying past, now all we needed was a Common Scoter or Little Gull.....Haha dream on! We left St Ives shortly after that hoping we'd have better luck at our next place.

It was already 11.54am when I parked up in the layby at Kenidjack and we all bailed out of the car. Wendy wasn't feeling up to lugging her camera around with her, so having already given up on my big lens I took hers instead. While we got our stuff together Wendy spotted something on the ground at the top of the field next to us. It was a lovely **Green Woodpecker**, which was unfortunately too far away to get a shot of.....Boooooooooo! There was yet another Clouded Yellow feeding on a bush next to car, so I went in to attempt a shot and totally messed it up just before it flew off! The biggest drawback of Kenidjack is that there's a sewerage works at the top end of the road so there's a special aroma about the place! The smell fortunately disappears once you've left the road and start heading down into the valley, so we headed off promptly :P.



Kenidjack

In one of the gardens was a **Small Tortoiseshell** and another Sparrowhawk blasted through. We found another Clouded Yellow, so this time I went in for the kill but didn't really get the shot I was hoping for.



Clouded Yellow

Having made a special trip to Choseley Drying Barns in August when we were in Norfolk we were surprised to be seeing so many in October in Cornwall! The brilliant looking migrant bushes at either side of the track produced nothing but a couple of **Chiffchaffs** and the Wryneck log pile lay lifeless.



Wryneck log pile

Further down the road we passed a small field, which was home to 2x Donkeys who Lyca was very keen to go and meet.



What the?

We thought we'd spare them the stress and marched her straight past them, much to her disappointment. Was there any point going further? We had nowhere better to go, so we carried on down the valley and past the old Arsenic Mine, which is a pretty awesome view in itself.



Arsenic Mine

Right down at the bottom are some trees including Sycamores, next to another Donkey field, which is another good place to look for Warblers. We could hear the calls of Chiffchaffs and held our hopes up for finding a Yellow-browed or Firecrest somewhere. After trawling through the leaves high up in the branches we'd found nothing new, so when a stoney-faced bloke, who was with his wife, told us that there'd been one reported that morning our hearts sank. We hung around for ages seeing one Chiffchaff after another until our enthusiasm started to wear thin. All of a sudden the bloke started pointing to a tree in the Donkey field, so we walked over to him and reluctantly asked him what he'd seen. He said he'd had the YBW but it'd gone, so we were pretty miffed that he hadn't alerted us to his find before it disappeared. That was our 2nd dip of the day, so we weren't doing very well and decided to go for a wander over the bridge to the mine. Needless to say we found absolutely nothing so headed down to the coast, which I reckoned we'd never actually been down to, even though we'd been to Kenijack several times before. I'm glad we did, as there were some more smart old Mine buildings down there and a cracking view of Cape Cornwall in the distance.



Nice view

Down at the bottom was the wheelhouse for what used to be the 2nd largest water wheel in the British Isles but it looked like it would've been tiny compared to the Laxey Wheel!



Old Wheelhouse

With us finding nothing bird wise we headed back to the YBW trees for a last ditch attempt.

Luckily stoney-faced man had gone and he'd been replaced by a much more friendly bloke from Leicester. We got chatting to him and he told us that he'd just seen the bird and that it was showing well :O! That was it, we weren't leaving until we'd seen it and we desperately needed something to show for all our efforts. The bloke was good company and we compared notes and chatted away until eventually some Warblers came back to the bushes in front of us. We went through them and to our great relief we finally spotted our bird. A lovely **Yellow-browed Warbler** was frantically feeding off the branches in the willows next to us and after waiting for ages it called too. Even though I had Wendy's camera I had to attempt a record shot and was blown away by yet another candidate for National Geographic photo of the year :P.



Yellow-browed Warbler – just about!

All of a sudden the sky turned grey and the Donkey's headed for the cover of the trees, so it looked like it was going to rain at any moment. As we were thinking of going another Birder, obviously a painter and decorator, turned up followed by another and both had come for the YBW! It wasn't a very good sign if the Cornwall Birders were making a special trip to twitch a YBW and made all our fears that nothing was happening in Cornwall a harsh reality....Uh Oh!

With that happy thought we said, "Bye" and hurried off back up the valley hoping to get back to the car before the heavens opened. There was a light shower on the way back but nothing to write home about but it did mean that after it'd stopped and the sun came out again we were walking through midgie soup! They were everywhere, probably due to the stream, which runs all the way down to the sea and it wasn't pleasant. Ahead of us we could see 2 elderly ladies heading our way with a very excited tiny Yorkshire Terrier puppy, pulling like mad on it's lead and wagging it's tail frantically. It was soooooo cute and only 4months old, so after we'd made a huge fuss of it we let it have a play with Lyca. The woman then proceeded to divulge into too much information about it having only done a wee after hoping it'd do a poo.....Nice!

Back at the car it was 2.24pm and we were starving, so we grabbed our lunch, while Lyca curled up on the back seat and went to sleep. There was another Clouded Yellow right next to the car, so I quickly got out with the camera but just as I raised it to get a shot it flew off.....Arrghhhhhh! That was the 6th one we'd seen just on that walk alone though! After lunch I drove into St Just so Wendy could go to the Chemist to get a Vick's Inhaler Stick to try and relieve her increasingly blocked nose. She was also looking for No-Sore, which apparently is like a lip balm but for your nose, which stops it from getting red and sore but they'd never heard of it, along with probably 99% of the population including me. As we were so close we quickly popped back to HQ at 3pm and sat in the driveway to pick up a Wi-Fi signal just in case there'd been anything interesting reported. There'd only been some more YBW's and a scattering of Firecrests that morning, so we had no idea where to go next. I finally settled on trying the straight tree-lined road leading to a farm at Polgigga, which is again notoriously good for migrants and had a Firecrest reported that morning, so we left at 3.15pm.

Before we'd even got there, and after the Sat Nav had sent on us a mad route, I saw a place that looked familiar, so I stopped. I'd done a bit of research before our trip and found a

new site with a pond, which looked like it could be quite good. I had no idea of its exact location, so stumbling across it was a real bonus. I only managed to recognize it after viewing the area on google street view before going away. Something that wasn't a bonus, was me discovering that I'd dropped some chocolate on my trousers, which had melted and made it look as though I'd had a nasty accident.....Doh! Undeterred we got out at 3.15pm and trotted off down the path.



Where are we?

We were a bit concerned that it was a private area but as there was no signs saying, 'Keep out!' we took a chance and went in but I started to wonder if we were in the right place at all. Half way up the track a man in a telecom van drove past us, so I thought the best plan was to act confident like we were meant to be there so it wouldn't look dodgy. That seemed to do the trick and the man gave us a wave as we moved Lyca out of his way :). There didn't seem to be a pond anywhere, so we turned back only to find that we'd just walked straight past it! We wandered over and had a look but there was nothing about, apart from the usual Chiffers and Tits, although the view was quite restricted.



Pond

We didn't stick around and headed back to the car to continue with our original plan.

It was 3.44pm when we arrived at Polgigga and funnily enough someone else had had the idea. The nice bloke from Leicester was just heading up the road back to his car having already been. We laughed and said, "Hello!" again and assured him that we weren't following him. He said he'd seen no sign of any Firecrests, so it looked as though we were lining ourselves up for our 2nd dip of the day.



Polgigga

All the way down the road was the constant calling of Goldcrests but none of them sounded like a Firecrest nor did the masses of them we had in our bins look like one :(It felt pointless so we called it a day. The rest of week wasn't forecasting for the conditions to get any better either. Great! Back at the car it was 4.50pm and we felt depressed that the bird situation was so poor but lucky that we'd managed to dodge the showers and had been out in the sunshine for most of the day. Looking at the forecast it was saying rain for tomorrow, so we had no idea what to do.

When we arrived back at HQ it was 5.04pm and there were blokes out the back finishing off tiling the conservatory roof. This annoyingly made Lyca bark a lot, so I had to shut the blinds to keep her mind off the intruders outside. After they'd left we had tea and Wendy went off for a shower with the luxury of finally having some proper hair products. It started to rain again and was very windy still, so we had to forego a game of table tennis again. At least the worst of the rain was happening in the evenings and continuing through the night. These were the sort of conditions we'd dreamed of every time we'd been to Cornwall, especially with westerlies. It should've been putting migrating birds down but it just didn't seem to be working and there was no sign of any movement full stop. Wendy let Lyca out later on and spotted a **Bat** flying around the tree in the garden. She was still gutted at not having been able to get No-Sore, as her nose was bright red and really sore by then. She was totally fed up with feeling ill and hoped that she'd be over the worst of it soon. I did a quick speed test on the Internet expecting it to be really slow but was totally shocked to find that it was running at 12meg a second, which is quite impressive for somewhere where the majority of houses aren't even connected to a proper sewerage system :O! As we wanted to get out earlier in the morning we packed up and went to bed at 10.25pm and listened to the rain and wind as we nodded off.

Tuesday 7th October

The alarm was set for 7am but before it could go off and rudely wake us up we were all just about awake by 6.54am.....Phew! Wendy was very pleased to find that her cold seemed to easing off a bit too, which was a good start. After breakfast we made a quick exit and were out by 8.27am, by which time it was brightening up outside. While we were packing our stuff into the car we heard a **Skylark** singing overhead.

Our 1st port of call was Porthgwarra as I wanted to try the best migrant area as early as possible to see if that would make a difference. Instantly we could hear much more birdcalls with it being earlier in the day. This could be a good sign but we didn't want to be too optimistic. We headed straight back up the road and saw a bird moving about in the hedge ahead of us, so we stopped. We waited for it to show and having anticipated it to be something interesting it turned out to be just a female **Blackcap**. It was likely to be a migrant but not what we'd hoped for!

We went straight to 60ft cover after that but this time we went down the track that led to the southern end of it.



60ft cover

The area was lifeless but we heard an unexpected bird, which was a Great-spotted Woodpecker and wondered what on earth it was doing in there! It then started to rain, so we took shelter behind some bushes where Wendy also decided to have a wild wee. While she did so she looked down at the ground only to find that she'd narrowly missed standing in some HUMAN POO! Blerrghhhhh! There was no way it had come from a dog and made complete sense considering where it was. Yuk! That's two for two in our holidays and human poo's. I hope that's not a record we keep going!!

Instead of turning back I had a 4 mile loop walk planned, so we carried on over towards the Wryneck/Ring Ouzel wall.



Ace wall

It came as no surprise to us that there was nothing on the wall or even in the bushes on the way up a Bramble lined footpath. Wendy would stop every now and again to pick some Blackberries for Lyca, as she loves them and will even pick her own if she can reach! It looked again like we might be lucky with the weather, which was amazing considering the bad forecast. In reality we could see squalls in the distance but they looked like they would miss us and we kept our fingers crossed.



Squalls out to sea

When we approached Ardensawah Farm we were greeted by 5 Dogs but luckily they were nice and Lyca didn't cause any trouble....Phew! Suddenly and literally out of nowhere the sky started turning very black and we knew there was no way we'd get back to the car before the downpour.



Incoming!

We hurried along anyway but when we started to feel drops of rain I thought it'd be a good idea to shelter at the side of the road behind the wall of a farm until the worst had past over. While we stood there we noticed that there were loads of Pipits and Finches in the fields and overhead cables and just wished we could just hear the call of a Richard's Pipit or something. I was slightly excited as it was our 1st bit of Vis Mig on the holiday and could be an indicator of movement but Wendy wasn't impressed.....Hahahaha. It started to absolutely chuck it down and didn't look like it was going to stop for a while, so not being able to see the public footpath signs I double checked on the map on my phone. Eventually the rain eased off, with our shelter having worked very well and we were able to continue our walk none the worse for wear. According to my map there was a footpath just a bit further down the road but try as we might we couldn't find it! We walked further still and found another path going through the fields, which looked as though it'd do the job.



Squelch!

When Wendy saw what lay ahead her face dropped, the field was full of cows! Lyca has an issue with cows and likes to bark at them but Wendy also has an issue and is scared of

them.....Hahahaha! I'll let her off though because her friends Dad had his front teeth kicked out and tongue split in ½ by one years ago....Ouch! As we started walking through the field Lyca was OK apart from trying to eat and roll in all the poo.....Ewwwwwww! Just to add insult to injury all the recent rain had made the field wet and muddy as well so the 3 of us were filthy within minutes. According to the map when we reached the next farm there should've been a path to the right but all we found was a load of machinery and giant mounds of mud :-/. There were definitely no footpath signs and a total absence of any signage as far as we could see! I had a decision to make, so chose to play it safe and turned away from the mess to aim for the driveway of the farm instead, which was also supposed to be a footpath. Walking through the farm buildings it took us ages to find the new footpath we needed! What was going on with the lack of footpath signs around there? Arghhhhh! With any luck though the detour through the fields would eventually get us back on track to the path heading to St Levan.

The next hurdle came when there was another field of cows, which didn't please Wendy in the slightest. I opened the gate to find a cow lying down right next to it, so I shooed it away, so we could go past. When it stood up there was a patch of blood left on the ground where it'd been lying and the cow didn't look too good :(We kept Lyca well away from it and skirted the outside of the field to give them all a wide birth. According to my map there should've been a public footpath at the end of the field but there was a farmer in a Caterpillar digger building a new wall right over where it should be! Uh Oh! Our only option was to turn back and try to find another way, so I charged back through the cows with Lyca and back to the gate. Wendy, who was behind me watched as the bleeding cow followed me back to the gate, leaving no room for her to get past. She didn't fancy walking up behind it at all and was starting to freak out. When I peered into the field to see where she was there was no sign of her until I looked up and saw her standing on top of the hedge looking worried! Hahahaha if only I'd taken a photo! She'd tried to climb over the hedge to get into the next field to avoid the cows but there was barbed wire about 1ft away all the way round it. She'd have had to jump it like a superhero if she was going to clear it successfully without impaling herself or breaking her neck and superhero she certainly isn't, so she found herself well and truly stuck :O. Luckily I was at hand and tied Lyca to a post, while I went back in to shoo the cows away for a 2nd time to let Wendy through....Hahahahahah what a wuss! Although there were still no footpath signs we went back and turned right, down another track. It was strewn with dead gorse bushes and brambles but I remained hopeful that it would eventually take us to Porthcurno. This wasn't where I originally wanted to walk and was much further than I'd planned but due to the rubbish signage, this was the next best plan and would eventually get us back on track. At least my Army Cadet map reading skills were coming in useful!

Eventually we came out in familiar territory and joined the road to Porthcurno, where we'd stayed in 2012.....Phew! As we walked down the road we could hear loud music and someone singing (more like shouting randomly) along with it. The road is lined with large houses and is a pretty quiet area, so we wondered what was going on. Wendy looked up to see a labourer high up on some scaffolding, with his top off, strutting around like he was god's gift! He definitely wasn't, nor was his singing worthy of an audience, but he was obviously just enjoying the last of the sunshine while he worked. God knows what the neighbours were thinking, we could still hear him ½ a mile away! Walking through Porthcurno we went past the Cable Museum again and I swore that one day I'd visit it, just to go in the cliff tunnels, which were used in WW2!



Cable Museum

The footpath turned off to the right, taking us behind the house and through some ploughed fields to St Levan. We'd been on that particular section of the walk before when we'd stayed at Porthcurno in 2012 and just as last time there were Meadow Pipits and Skylarks everywhere! We couldn't see them on the ground because they were so well camouflaged or in the troughs but we were nearly standing on them!



Spot the birdie!

There was a couple which caught our eye but when we had them in our bins they were just Meadow Pipits....Booooooo :(We found yet another Clouded Yellow and finally made our descent into St Levan, where there'd been a Firecrest reported earlier in the day.



St Levan

We walked down through the Churchyard to the trees by the river to have a look for the reported bird. Yet again there were more Goldcrests than you could shake a stick at but despite hanging around for ages there was no Firecrest, which was another dip for the trip!



Firecrest trees

After giving up we carried on along the coast and past some more fields where we spotted a **Wheatear** sitting on top of a bush. The path, lead us down to a very steep and slippery part of the cliff and back to Porthgwarra, where we'd started.



Approaching Porthgwarra

Nearly at the bottom we met a large party of people who were on their way up and some of them were already completely out of breath and struggling. We let them past and exchanged a few words and it turned out that they were Germans on a coach tour.

It was already 12.20pm by the time we got to the bottom, so after our 4.2mile walk Wendy wanted a Cappuccino, so we went back to the car to get some money. We heard a YBW calling from the trees in the car park and after Wendy had grabbed her purse we headed back over to the café and sat outside in the sun. Wendy's Cappuccino was tiny and gone within seconds and she shook her head at the fact that she'd just paid £3.60 for it plus a Fanta for me! By then we'd worked up a bit of an appetite, so we went back to the car and sat outside on the grass to eat our lunch. Lyca was being a real pain and trying to scrounge from Wendy but needless to say she didn't get a scrap :P.



Dream on Lyca

Before we did anything else Wendy made a quick visit to the WC's and came back with a pic on her phone. It was of a **Common Marbled Carpet Moth**, which had been trapped inside and she'd released. That was the only Moth either of us had managed to find up till then and having hoped to find some different species, with it being later in the year, we were disappointed that it was something so common.

I suggested another shot at Gwennap Head and after Wendy had protested strongly at the fact that she thought it would be a total waste of time and effort we set off. This time it was even colder and windier than it'd been the last time we'd tried. We hunkered down behind a rock and watched as Gannet after Gannet streamed by....Urrghhhh! Ok, she'd been right all along but I wasn't going to let that stop me at least trying to get her a lifer. There were absolutely no Shearwaters, or anything else for that matter. Wendy who was still feeling really rough grew more and more annoyed and eventually kicked off with a full-scale child's tantrum! I admitted defeat but treated the tantrum with the respect it deserved by leaving her up on the head, while me and Lyca walked off back down. Sure enough a few minutes later a sorry looking Wendy appeared, probably all tired out from the kicking and screaming! Hahaha. As we approached the Dr's House we heard a feeble call from somewhere in the trees. We looked and looked but couldn't see anything, all the birds were taking cover and not out in the open. Just then a bird flew and we could just about make a white rump and coupled with the call we knew that it was a **Bullfinch**. It dived straight into another tree and vanished never to be seen again, so we gave up. Back at the car it was 2.13pm and we had a tough decision to make, as to where to go next, so we scratched our heads. The sky was beginning to turn very dark again, so we didn't want to go too far from the shelter of the car in case it rained. In the end I came up with

the idea of trying our luck (or lack of it) at Cot Valley for Firecrest, seeing as we hadn't managed to catch up with any so far. When we'd been there before with Chris, Keren and John in 2010 we'd all found our own Firecrests, which were out in the open feeding amongst the branches, so surely we couldn't fail?

When we arrived at 2.41pm we saw the Matiz belonging to the bloke from Leicester, so as we started to walk down the hill we got slightly paranoid that he'd think we really were following him!



Cot Valley

We stopped to check out the Tit flock moving quickly through the trees but there wasn't anything in with them apart from Goldcrests and a Chiffchaff. We couldn't hear anything unusual and none of the other Birders had seen a Firecrest either, so it soon became apparent that we were wasting our time.....Grrrrrrrr! While we continued to scan we had a chat to the bloke from Leicester again as well as a couple of others. All of a sudden I got a report of a Wryneck at Botallack, so we quickly spread the word and made our way back up to the car. There were 9x Birders standing around by then and a bloke Wendy was talking to had really squiffy eyes and referred to Kenidjack as Knackerjack, which we found quite funny. All of a sudden Wendy said loudly to me, "Look around you, it's not hard to see why nobody's seeing anything!" I instantly cringed and looked around at the guy with the eyes, totally paranoid that he'd think she was referring to him! Wendy jumped straight to her defense and pointed out that not only was the sun shining right into all our faces, but it was also like attempting to find a needle in a haystack trying to find a tiny bird in the huge trees! Oooops! She wasn't convinced that she'd said anything out of line, maybe it was just me being paranoid but we made our exit and told everyone we were going to go and try Botallack for the Wryneck. Having just dipped again, we set off at 3.20pm to attempt our 1st proper twitch of the trip with absolutely NO idea where we were going. Neither of us had a mobile phone signal to check the details nor had we ever heard of Botallack.....Uh oh! As soon as I had a signal I pulled over in a layby to see where the bird had been seen. I found out that it was on the coastal footpath in some scrub and from my map it looked as though it'd be quicker to get to it from the Kenidjack side, so we headed straight there.

It was 3.37pm when I parked up at Kenidjack and we hotfooted it down the road and took a right turn up a different path to the coast. I was instantly happy, as it was somewhere we'd never been and I love exploring new places on holiday. We eventually came out next to a spoil heap surrounded by waist high bracken and brambles and met a Birder who

came over and spoke to us. He told us that the bird had been there for four days and that he'd seen it the day before. Why hadn't anyone put the news out? Grrrrrrrrrr! Apparently it was hanging around between the spoil heap and a mound further to the left, so we all spaced ourselves out, with our eyes peeled and bins poised at the ready.



Looking for Wryneck

We waited and waited and looked until we were seeing double but there wasn't any sign of any Wryneck and it was getting late. The bloke had walked right out to the left for quite a way and had done a good job of scouring the bushes but he hadn't found it either. In the end we gave it up as a bad job having just dipped on possibly our only chance of seeing a Wryneck during the week :{.

I did like the look of the coast mines though and they were much more impressive than the ruins at Bradda Head.



Cool Mines

We walked back via the YBW trees and the Donkeys but it was all very quiet by then and eventually slumped back into the car feeling deflated at 5pm.

A brown, curly-haired dog is lying on a colorful, patterned rug. The dog is wearing a black harness and a leash. The rug has a complex geometric pattern in red, blue, yellow, and green. The dog is positioned in front of a wooden chair with a patterned seat. The background shows a white wall and a wooden door frame.

Good girl

A tired dog seemed to be all we were gaining at the end of the day after all our efforts, but that was one good thing at least. Wendy went up to the bar for our drinks and got a menu, which had a staggering 8 veggie options.....Wow! My face felt like it was burnt but Wendy wasn't convinced and said there wasn't enough strength in the sun in October to burn you, although it looked pretty red to me! Eventually Wendy chose the Vegan Superfood Salad and I opted for Chicken Goujons with Chips and Onion Rings without salad :). Our food arrived quickly and went down a treat although Wendy was disappointed with hers after having a similar thing, which was much nicer, at the Dun Cow in Norfolk. She was stuffed but I still had room left for pudding, so Wendy went back to order me the Chocolate Torte and Ice-cream.....Om nom nom :). Despite needing a hammer and chisel to get through the base, I was really enjoying my pudding when the space in my stomach began to rapidly run out but I was determined not to be defeated. Wendy said I reminded her of Mr Creosote from Monty Python's 'Meaning of Life' having started to get worried when the mouthful I'd just put in didn't seem to want to stay there. She was just thinking of making a run for it, before I exploded all over the Pub, when she offered me, in a French accent, "A waffer thin mint?" and burst out laughing! Not being a fan of Monty Python I didn't get the joke and carried on regardless until every last morsel had gone, well I was on holiday after all :P. Luckily nobody had to get out the mops and buckets and I staggered back out to the car rather full but luckily still in one piece.

Back at HQ it was 6.40pm, so Wendy went off for a shower before sitting down to chill out for the remainder of the evening. As usual the wind picked up and it rained heavily, so we still hadn't had the chance to have a game of table tennis and time was running out. When Wendy let Lyca out after the rain had eased off she heard the Tawny Owls calling again and after watching some TV we were so tired we ended up going to bed at 10.30.....ZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZ.

Wednesday 8th October

We woke up after more than enough sleep at 7.45am and although it was still a bit windy it wasn't raining.....yet! The holiday was obviously already taking its toll on Lyca who was too tired to be bothered to get up for her breakfast :O! She did in the end but she certainly took her time, which is unheard of normally.

Seeing as Wendy hadn't been happy with most of my plans to date I handed the decision making over to her for the day. After what seemed like 10 hours of deliberating (women!!!!) her 1st plan was to go back to Nanquidno, as the wind had dropped and it'd rained over night, which is usually good for putting down migrants. After waiting for a sudden torrential downpour to ease off we eventually left at 9.57am.

It was 10.05am when we arrived at the layby and it was absolutely freezing! It'd been so mild every day that we hadn't dressed for the occasion at all.....Oooops! We headed off down the road towards the Firecrest trees finding nothing but another Tit flock. This time there wasn't even a single Goldcrest in with them, so we instantly had a bad feeling about the day ahead. This felt extra depressing as it meant that even after the overnight rain there was still nothing was being put down. There were a few Chiffchaffs and a **Willow Warbler** in the hedges but it was very quiet, even with Lyca being a handy lookout!



Nothing here

Finally we found one Goldcrest but it was on its own and quickly cleared right off. We carried on down the path to view the sea valley rocks hoping for a Ring Ouzel or something but it too was dead apart from a Buzzard sitting motionless on top of a rock.....Urrghhhhhh! Just as we were about to leave 5x Jays surprisingly flew over, obviously on the move and I couldn't help but feel sorry for them, as they weren't going to find any acorns around there! Apparently the autumn acorn crop had been a bad one, so any birds coming in to feed up on them would have a job on their hands. We were back at the car feeling uninspired at 10.57am but luckily we'd made it before the heavens opened. I was feeling quietly smug that after Wendy had slagged my plans off every day so far, her idea had been even worse. Hehehehehe.

Seeing as it was too wet out to go out walking we went back into St Just to pick up some bits and bobs. Wendy wanted a coffee and I fancied a choc chip cookie so it was a win-win situation. I pulled up outside the Co-op just in time for a bright flash of lightning swiftly followed by a very loud clap of thunder.....Eeeeeek! Wendy legged it over to the Co-op but got so wet in those few steps that she was totally soaked. Next she went to the Café for a

proper coffee and jumped back to the car making a huge puddle of rainwater on the leather seat.



Soaked!

At least we'd timed it well and hadn't been caught in it while we were out walking at Nanquidno! Since we'd been away Wendy had been wanting to get Lyca a new toy to chew, so having found what looked like a Pet Shop previously it was just a case of re-finding it. This was easier said than done but eventually I stumbled across it but there was nowhere to park or turn the car around on the narrow streets. After doing some dodgy maneuvers I pulled up and Wendy ran over and opened the door. Peering inside she was surprised to see that it looked more like a Vets instead of a Pet Shop but a very friendly woman asked her if she could help. It was a Pet Clinic, which did grooming, claw clipping, etc. but luckily she did have some great chew toys as well. Ace! It was so awful outside that Wendy's next plan was to go to Pendeen to seawatch from the car (surprise surprise!), so we could stay dry but also hopefully see something new.

We arrived at 11.52am and the car park was very quiet, which wasn't a good sign.



Grim view from Pendeen

We looked out and predictably saw loads more Gannets and Shags but nothing else. There was no point in us sticking around, so we headed back to HQ.

It was 12.28pm when we arrived back and the 1st thing Wendy did was to get changed out of her soaking wet trousers. We then had our lunch and by the time we'd finished it had brightened up outside and we were ready to go out again. I got some reports but none of them were particularly inspiring. There were Balearic Shearwaters off Porthcurno and Penlee Point, a YBW at Kennack Sands, Firecrests at Cot Valley and Kenidjack and also the Garganey at Marazion again. There was also a Short-toed Lark (would be lifer) hanging around at Sancreed, which we kept driving past, but there was no public access to get in to see it.....Booooooooo! Wendy then decided on trying Hayle Estuary and if we were going that way we'd be able to visit Marazion again as well as the Supermarkets to get some bits.

On the way I stopped off at Tesco Petrol Station in Penzance to fill the car up then drove Wendy round to the store so she could get a big towel for her hair in preparation for Norfolk. She always struggles to get all her hair into a small hand towel after she's washed it, so wanted a large one to make life easier. I was finding it cold at night without slippers and she was feeling the chill in her thin fleece so she wanted to have a look to see if she could solve the problem. Tesco didn't have anything other than the towel, so next I took her to the nearby massive Sainsbury's and she came back wielding some cheap holiday slippers for me but hadn't managed to get herself a warmer top.

After that I drove down the road to Long Rock Pool again and parked up at the side of the road to have another crack at the Garganey that was being reported daily. We instantly found our bird in with some Coots, which was constantly feeding with its head under the water but I managed a quick shot before we carried on towards Hayle.



Garganey

Wendy had planned to visit some family friends if we were going to be near where they lived and Hayle was the closest we were going to get. Although she would've loved to see them she didn't think it would be fair to go round and spread her germs, so she had to bin the idea.

It was 2.26pm when we arrived at Hayle and I parked up underneath the picturesque graffiti strewn concrete bridge again. The sun was out and we could see a few Birders over the road viewing the Estuary already. Wendy stopped to feed Lyca some Blackberries and we had a quick look out from Eric Grace Memorial Hide, which is meant to be great for Kingfisher. It was dead apart from some **Canada Geese** and **Curlews** so we made a swift exit and walked off down the footpath to cross the road. All of a sudden Wendy let out a shriek and cursed loudly. She'd only gone and stood in dog poo and christened her brand new vibram soled boots! The soles are a complete nightmare to get anything out of, so to say she wasn't very pleased wouldn't do it justice.



Ewwwww!

After scraping her boots through the long grass for ages her soles were good to go again but it'd been an avoidable waste of time if people would stop being so selfish and PICK IT UP!!!! Grrrrrrrrr! After crossing the busy main road we stood at the wall and had a scan

through the hundreds of Gulls down on the mud. I reckoned I'd found a Med Gull and possibly a Yellow-legged Gull but I needed them to move if I was going to be able ID them. There were some **Wigeon** and **Bar-tailed Godwits** too but there was no sign of any small Waders, as the tide was out and they'd all be elsewhere. I got a quick record shot of the Gull I'd been watching and looking at the screen I could tell it was a **Mediterranean Gull**, so I'm not sure why I was struggling with it really.



Med Gull

Before I could get an ID for the potential Yellow legged Gull the sky suddenly turned dark without any prior warning and within seconds it started absolutely thrashing down. It was so heavy there was no way we were prepared to hang around, so we legged it back to car. I ran most of the way with Lyca, leaving Wendy straggling behind us. When she caught up with us, sheltering back at Eric Grace Hide, we were all totally drenched.



Urrgghhhh!

We went back to the car and luckily, after her mornings soaking, Wendy had brought her spare trousers with her to get changed into if she needed them and she definitely needed them. At least that way she wouldn't end up standing outside taking pictures with no trousers on, like on our Norfolk trip in August! With daily (annoying!) reports coming in of the Rose-coloured Starling at St Ives we decided to give it another shot, as we were right next to St Ives, in the hope that going later in the day would give us a better chance. Before we came away I vowed I was not driving in St Ives again and there I was going in for the 2nd time!!

Driving along the prom in St Ives I mentioned that we should see Turnstone, as they're quite cheeky and surprisingly tame there. Wendy laughed and said, "**Turnstone!**" She'd spotted some running around under the benches, scrounging for food scraps where there were people eating, exactly like we'd see them at home.....Not! It looked very idyllic again and amazingly the sky was clear blue even though it was less than an hour since getting drenched!



St Ives

I drove into Island car park at 3.21pm only to find that it was full. No surprises there then, it's a nightmare! There was another car ahead of us waiting for a space as well so we were 2nd in line. We could've been sitting there for hours but we finally got a space after about 20mins. It had started to rain again in that time, so at least we stayed dry. After parking up we scanned the sea and spotted a **Grey Seal** out in the bay. Wendy noticed a bird flying past, which looked very white and she presumed Sarnie again but when we got our bins on it we found another very nice Med Gull. Wendy was still after a warmer fleece and we were also on the look out for some pressies, so we decided to go and have a look around some shops while the weather was so unpredictable. We took Lyca with us, as St Ives is very dog-friendly and you can take your furry friends into most of the shops. Walking along the very busy prom was tricky, as there were people everywhere as well as the cars trying to negotiate their way through the narrow street. I had to look twice when a couple walked past pushing a pram and I noticed that instead of a baby there was a dog in it! It was wearing some kind of outfit too but unfortunately Wendy wasn't looking and by the time I'd told her they'd gone past us. She did hear some people behind us commenting and sounding just as confused as me though. We were pleased to see that Lyca wasn't remotely freaked out and looked as though she was enjoying all the hustle and bustle.



Ooooooooo

Luckily there was a Mountain Warehouse in the main street, so we all went in for a look. I managed to find a really warm looking fleece for Wendy and amazingly she liked it! Result! It was also in the sale (skillzz) so Wendy wandered over to the unmanned counter to pay for it. Eventually a bloke upstairs noticed her standing there and shouted for the assistant. The assistant appeared from out the back and instantly Wendy turned round to me and gave me a funny look and laughed. She looked as though she'd just smoked the fattest spliff you could imagine and coupled with her very relaxed attitude her eyes were red and $\frac{1}{2}$ closed but she was really nice and admired Lyca while she served her. I went upstairs to look for some pack away waterproof over trousers, which I've been after for a very long time. Remarkably I found exactly what I wanted and they were also in the sale.....Wahey! Lyca was very well behaved until a small dog decided to bark and snarl at her, so she obviously joined in....Urrghhhh!

When we came out there was thunder and lightning overhead and it was really close. Cornwall seemed to be as bad as Scotland for ever changing weather. With it came more torrential rain, so I ducked for cover in an alleyway with a couple of others and put my new waterproofs on. Wendy went into a Fudge Shop for me and while she was being served there was a huge flash instantly followed instantly by a deafening clap of thunder, which must've been right over us.....Eeeek! Within a few seconds there were tons of us sheltering in the alleyway!



Shelter

We stood in the alleyway and waited for the rain to die down for about 15mins and when it did we hurried back to the car before it started again. We were back at 5pm and the thunder and lightning was still rumbling on. It seemed that 5pm was a good time for reports of the RCS, so when the Starlings started to gather we were hopeful that it would put in an appearance, as it looked like it was where they roosted for the night. All of a sudden there was a flash of lightning and the whole flock lifted and flew off at speed.....Noooooooooooo! They didn't come back but we watched the huge black storm cloud making its way slowly down the coast and away from us.....Phew! It was pretty cool watching the lightning strikes over on the other side of the bay though.



Nasty!

Thinking the weather had passed I was contemplating going back round the island for a look, just in case the Starlings had flew around the back. Just as I was about to go the heavens opened big time so I decided to stay put!



:0!

After the rain a massive double rainbow appeared out over the sea, which looked very impressive but obviously our pics don't do it justice.



Double Rainbow

Another Med Gull flew past and since the rain had finally stopped I got out to check the Island. Wendy stayed in the car and carried on looking out to sea while I continued my search. Round the back of the Island there were absolutely no birds, so it'd been a bit of a waste of time but it was interesting to see how far up the tide goes to the houses on the beach!



High tide line

There was no sign of the RCS even though I'd had a report of the bird from the car park at 3pm. We'd arrived 20mins after it'd been seen and yet again we'd done a great job of avoiding it....Doh. When I got back to the car Wendy had seen a **Great Northern Diver** out in the bay, which had been getting a bit of grief from a Black-back as it sheltered from the storm. Eventually it must've got sick of the hassle and flew further into the bay and out of sight. It wasn't the Little Gull or Common Scoter we'd hoped for but was still a new bird for trip, which we'd be lucky to pick up anywhere else. The car park ticket was due to expire so, after yet another dip, we decided to head for home at 5.51pm. As luck would have it, that was the time on my ticket, so we'd got our money's worth if nothing else.

Before going home I nipped into St Just to get myself a take away from the Chinese, as I didn't really have anything in for tea. It was the same Chinese I'd been to on both previous trips to Cornwall so I was wanting to visit it again. On the way Wendy couldn't resist laughing at the local Estate Agents name, which was Lillycrap Chilcott.....Unlucky!

We were back at HQ at 6.35pm and I sat down to eat my takeout while Wendy heated up some of her soup.....Sorted :). After tea Wendy went off for a shower and I got some reports from BirdGuides. There'd been a Great Shearwater off Porthgwarra and a Wryneck in Kenidjack Valley.....Aarrgghhhhhh! Again we were going to the right places it was just that we seemed to be going the day before everytime! While we were sitting watching TV we noticed that we could hear people upstairs :O! We'd been so lucky all week, to have the whole Barn to ourselves, but now we could only hope that they weren't like a herd of Elephants above us. It was really windy and the temperature had dropped considerably, so Wendy said we should get the log burner going. After I'd worked it out and set it alight in no time at all we had a raging fire warming the room up. It wasn't the best we've ever used but the additional heat did the trick and made the place feel really cosy too. After reading BirdGuides reports and discovering that there'd been loads of Balearic, Sooty and Great Shearwaters streaming through at Porthgwarra we felt like giving up. We just kept going to the right places but on the wrong days and getting Wendy even one lifer in Cornwall was looking very unlikely. Having not walked very much, due to the bad weather, Lyca was very unsettled that evening. She was up and down like a yo-yo jumping on us and just being annoying but then she does have a lot of energy to use up and today just hadn't cut the mustard :(At 10.30pm we were tired, so after the fire had died down we packed up and went to bed.

Thursday 9th October

At 8am we were up but definitely not raring to go! Not only was it still really windy but it was raining just to top it off :(I'd planned to go to the Lizard Peninsula, which was an hour away but we were up too late and the weather was awful, so I put it off until the next day. I just hoped the weather improved, as it was going to be our last day and chance of going there at all. Instead I thought we could try the Land's End walk, which was what I'd planned to do much earlier in the week. I'd had to keep putting it back, as the wind was always too strong for such an exposed area, it was still too strong now but we had no choice apart from not doing it at all. After we'd got ourselves ready we headed out at 9.45am. Wendy took the bin bag and recycling out before we left and nearly got blown away by the wind.

It was 9.58am when we arrived at Land's End car park and I parted company with a whopping £5 for the privilege. It was still raining heavily, so we'd prepared for it this time and put our waterproofs on before we left.

I got a report of another Monarch Butterfly this time at Marazion beach but there was no mention of whether it was a fly over or what, so we assumed it was and didn't drop everything to bomb down to Penzance. It looked like the rain was never going to stop but after Wendy had been to the WC's and had a nosey round the shops it started to ease off. At 10.25am we had a window of clear skies so set off on our walk hoping that it'd stay dry.



Land's End 'City'

The 1st part of our walk takes you along a path towards Sennen, which is lined with fence posts and looks amazing for Wrynecks and Ring Ouzels.



Ace track

Obviously we had no such luck and the area was dead. Lyca was being spoilt rotten with Blackberries but they were already getting past it, so Wendy was letting her make the most of them. Further along we came across a pretty cool looking signpost disguised as a sculpture, which told us how many miles it was to John O'Groats as well as other places in the world. Wendy did the touristy thing and went and stood next to it with Lyca for one of very few photos she's posed for. OK she did pull her coat right up to cover the majority of her face but that's Wendy for you :P.



Catwalk next? :P

At Sennen we turned back on ourselves and headed south. At the end of the track we came to the next part, which went through even more, muddy cow fields.



Uh Oh!

Wendy, due to the cows, was throwing another Karl Pilkington strop and wasn't enjoying herself at all. Luckily the cows were quite far away but they soon became interested in us and started to crowd around, slowly edging their way closer to us. Wendy's face was a picture, and she couldn't get past them quick enough. The fields all the way south were barren of bird life, which was such a shame as I'd planned this walk to take in loads of different habitat. Eventually we came out onto a track leading to the coastal path and at Nanjizal and we could hear thunder rumbling away in the distance. I found it quite interesting how the path went straight through the middle of a crop field but Wendy wasn't interested! Hahaha.



Mad!

Before we could make our descent into the valley we had to hide behind a hedge to shelter from yet another torrential downpour! By then Wendy was desperately in need of a tissue for her free running nose, the wind wasn't helping matters either, but she didn't have any with her. She'd spent the majority of the walk so far sniffing to stop the flow but her nostrils were now stinging and she was feeling pretty miserable. The bushes surrounding us looked like they'd have any number of great birds in them if the conditions were right but typically, while we were stuck, there wasn't so much as squeak.

The rain gradually eased, so we could carry on down the footpath to the bottom knowing fine well that we'd have to climb all the way back up on the other side. Why doesn't Cornwall have any flat footpaths? :/.



Going down into Nanjizal valley

Luckily when we got to the bottom the walk became a lot more pleasant and Wendy was much happier. Lyca was having a great time on the coastal path and never walked in a straight line once and was zig-zagging all over the place sniffing like a lunatic!



Found something!

The sun was shining, so we stopped to admire the view out to sea and I noticed a shipwreck below us. The waves were crashing around it, which covered it up for a moment but retreated for just long enough to expose it again. We tried to get some pics with our point and clicks but it was so far below us they don't show it but it was a lovely view anyway.



Shipwreck

Back at home I found out that the ship was the SS City of Cardiff, a Cargo steamer that ran around in gales in 1912 when sailing from Le Havre in France to Cardiff. All very interesting stuff!

After that we climbed up onto the heath that surrounds Land's End. As we climbed up the inevitable steep path a **Merlin** zoomed past chasing a Pipit and vanished into the cove below. We can only presume that it hit the jackpot, as we didn't see it come out again. When the path started to become more worn down we knew we were getting close to the end of the walk.



Taking in the view

Next to the Land's End Metropolis is Land's End Farm and luckily Lyca was on a lead or there could have been a blood bath as she looked as though she wanted to eat the Pig and the Chickens!



Tasty

It was 1.12pm when we got back to car and the car park was 100 times busier than when we'd set off. Obviously the 1st thing Wendy did was dive straight on her tissues to blow her nose before we ate our lunch. I worked out that the walk had been 4 ½ miles and we weren't surprised, we were knackered! We were running out of ideas as to where to go but Wendy wanted to revisit Zennor. It wasn't exactly nearby but it would be nice to see it again just because it's such a nice place. No birds are ever reported from there and it seemed a bit pointless but she had other things on her mind. We left at 1.45pm and the sun was still out.

It was 2.20pm when I parked up in Zennor car park and we were both feeling totally zonked! How were we going to carry on at this rate to do another week of the same in Norfolk? Wendy sleepily commented that we hadn't seen any Greenfinches yet and we reclined the car seats with Lyca curled up on Wendy's knee. I actually ended up falling asleep for a few minutes.....I must be getting old :P! When we felt a bit more awake we all headed up the road to the Tinner's Arms for a bit of a break.



Tinner's Arms

Wendy heard another YBW calling from the trees by the Church, which was a good bird for Zennor and then some **Greenfinches** flew over calling.....finally! There were a couple of other dogs in the pub already but luckily Lyca wasn't bothered by them and sat down at our table. Wendy went up to the bar and treated herself to a ½ lager and lime and an Appletiser for me. The pub was quiet and after our quick chill out we left at 3.20pm to go for a walk.

I had a quick look at the OS map on my phone and found a nice 1mile walk around Zennor Head. It seemed to be quite a popular walk but then there's not much else to do in Zennor so it made sense really. There weren't any birds, which came as no surprise but there were however some small orange Moths flying around, which never landed for us to get a proper view never mind a photo. All we could see was that they were orange, had big feathery antennae and Wendy noticed a white patch on their wings, so surely we'd be struggling to ID them with such little information? Whatever they were we knew that they were same type that we'd seen at Smeale a couple of weeks ago and also a lifer. Even though we hadn't found any Moths during the week we'd brought the book with us just in case but it was back at HQ, so it'd have to wait till later, although it was bugging Wendy big time. The walk had some nice coastal views but Wendy wasn't impressed when we couldn't find the turn off and it ended up being a longer walk than she'd expected!



View from Zennor Head

When we got back to the car I'd already planned my next move, to get a local Moomaid Ice cream from the Café :). Wendy went off and had a look around the shop and returned with a tub of Chocolate Ice cream for me. They didn't have anything else apart from Lemon Curd flavour, probably because it was October, and although it wasn't my favourite it did the job and I kind of liked the funny picture of the Moomaid on the front.



Yum yum

It was 4.30pm by then and with nothing else to do we headed back to HQ via the Chilli Jam stall at Trevescan Cottage. On several occasions we'd passed a house that had a wooden box outside selling homemade Chilli Jam but because it was right on a corner I hadn't been able to stop and then we'd forget where it was. Wendy had been keen to get some for a pressie for her Mum and had even had a look on the way to Land's End but had found it all locked up. There were CCTV cameras monitoring it and a notice apologising and explaining that due to an increase of thefts it couldn't be left open anymore and would be locked until 5ish. There's always somebody to spoil a good thing :(! Five-ISH seemed like a pretty loose arrangement but it was worth a 2nd shot on the way home. By a stroke of luck we found it again and Wendy went over for a look. She said there were more varieties of Chutney and Pickles that she ever imagined were possible but she got what she wanted and put her money in the honesty box....Sorted! Because of the cameras she felt really paranoid while she was looking and even when she paid but at least she did pay, so she shouldn't have felt so dodgy.

When we arrived back at HQ it was 5.40pm and Wendy went straight for the Moth book. When I went back into the kitchen she waved it under my nose and showed me a picture she'd found on the Mac and I was in total agreement. The Moths we'd seen were **Vapouror Moth**, which was finally a lifer for us both.....Yey! After that we had tea, had showers, I put some washing on next door and finally sat down to relax. Lyca was absolutely knackered, which was very nice after her hyperness the night before and just goes to show what a difference a decent walk does! Wendy let her out at about 7.25pm and there was a Bat flying around again and the Tawny Owls were calling. I planned for an early start the next day to get to the Lizard at a decent time, so at 10.30pm we headed off to bed.

Friday 10th October

We were all rudely woken by the 7am alarm but we had to set off as soon as possible if we stood any chance of seeing anything decent. It was cold outside and we could tell that it'd rained heavily over night, which was good. By 8.51am we were ready to go and hoped that our last day in Cornwall would produce something to rescue the non-eventful week. My 1st plan of the day was to visit Church Cove on the Lizard, which was about an hour away, so we had a bit of drive ahead of us. Our only worry was that something would be found in our local area and we'd be too far away to get back in time. As always it's a

gamble but seeing as it was our last day we threw caution to the wind and went for it anyway.

On the way we went past RNAS Cudrose, near Helston, which is a massive Royal Navy Air Station. It's one of Europe's biggest Helicopter stations and has 75 aircraft as well as being the biggest single-site employer in Cornwall with 3,000 personnel and pumps £100m into the local economy every year (Wendy googled it!).



RNAS Cudrose

It looked just like a big town apart from the fact that there was a barbed wire fence running all the way around its perimeter. Looking up there were helicopters flying around everywhere and it was quite an impressive sight.

When we arrived at Church Cove car park at 9.42am we saw that the bloke from Leicester had had the same idea as us.....again! It was a lovely sunny morning and we wandered down the track and joined him and another Birder.



Church Cove

We laughed at having bumped into each other again and after exchanging notes it turned out that he'd had as much luck as we had since we last met. This didn't bode well for my decision to visit Church Cove at all. While we stood there we found another Clouded Yellow feeding on the flowers in the garden of the house we were standing outside and Wendy got this shot.



Clouded Yellow

Amazingly there were also **Small** and **Large Whites**, Wall, Small Copper and **Small Tortoiseshell** in the tiny postage stamp sized border, so we all tried for some shots while we chatted.



Butterfly border

After making our excuses we left the others to it and carried on down the road, turning off onto a footpath up the headland. When we reached the top a couple of young **Swallows** blasted over our heads, which were the only ones we'd seen all week.

We had a look in the field finding more Clouded Yellows, Red Admirals and Speckled Woods but no birds of note. The Butterflies were certainly thriving and the area looked great but there was still no sign of any bird movement despite the consistent over night rain. We even found this lovely looking small valley caked in bushes but it was absolutely dead.



Dead!

This was such a shame as Church Cove is well known as a rarity hotspot. We gave up pretty quickly and headed back to the car to go to my next place, Kynance Cove, a place we visited last time in Cornwall and really liked. All of a sudden the bloke from Leicester came hurtling round the corner and he was on a mission! He'd actually come down the road especially to find us to share his news! He'd had a report of a Subalpine Warbler and Red-breasted Flycatcher back at Porthgwarra, so we thanked him and legged it back to the car. Subalpine Warbler would be a great bird to see on ANY trip but on this trip with no bird lifers so far it was a no brainer, even though we were an hour away. Kynance Cove was duly ditched off, which was a shame but we had to give this bird a go. Our biggest worry when we'd set off that morning had been that we'd be going too far away from the best area and how right we'd been!

We left at 10.54am and could see the guy from Leicester up ahead of us, so I just followed him. There were houses with honesty boxes outside selling Honey, Jam and Chutney everywhere and we just hoped that people were honest unlike at Trevescan Cottage. This system would definitely fail in the IOM and the best example being the Gelling's Egg hut at Baldrine. Sadly, the hut is often subject to theft as well as vandalism but it would seem that Cornwall is more civilized and trustworthy than at home. It's a lovely idea as long as it works. While we were commenting on how nice it was of the bloke to come and find us to tell us the news Wendy got a couple of reports on her phone. They were the birds we knew about at Porthgwarra and also a Rose-coloured Starling at KFC at Penzance! Thinking I knew the way I didn't bother with my Sat Nav but soon regretted that decision as I took a wrong turning! I quickly got the Sat Nav up and running again and we were back on track without losing too much time. Whoops! Wendy was keen to go to look for the RCS on our way and having lost the guy from Leicester in the vicinity we presumed that he'd made a detour to KFC first. We now had more details and the RBF was at the

north end of 60ft cover and the Subalpine was at the car park and also a male, so I was much more interested in getting us straight to Porthgwarra without wasting any more time than was necessary. Wendy spotted KFC and pointed it out to me but I was heading to Porthgwarra and was already in the wrong lane. Wendy was a bit annoyed, as RCS would've been a lifer for her and especially as we'd tried so hard to find the one at St Ives and failed. I compromised and said we could go back tomorrow and carried on to our 1st major twitch of the trip, which was typically on our last day. We couldn't help but get a sinking feeling though that this was the start of better things to come. Knowing our luck it would all kick off now and we'd be leaving it all behind in the morning.....Aarrghhhhhh!

Adrenaline was pumping through our veins as we parked up at Porthgwarra at 11.55am and there were loads of Birders standing around in the field next to the car park.



Subalpine Warbler twitch

We raced over to join them but the vibes weren't promising and nobody had seen it recently. It'd just be our luck that we'd just driven all the way back from the Lizard only to find that the birds weren't seen again. There was no sign of the guy from Leicester but he eventually turned up much later. All of sudden someone called it and we saw the black silhouette of a bird diving into a bush to the right. Everyone rushed to chase after it and we stayed put but nobody saw it again and we hadn't had a good enough view to claim our lifer! Noooooo! :(There was a guy walking round with his hands cupped behind his ears (we named him 'Radar Man') and he didn't half look silly :P. He walked around like that for ages and eventually claimed he could hear it sub singing in a bush in front of us all. This totally went against the theory that the bird we'd all seen flying right was it at all, so we were slightly dubious to say the least. We stood there for an hour and Lyca acquired some admirers as she was being very cute!



Just chillin

A nice woman who was celebrating her 50th Birthday was her main admirer. Her husband was the Birder, so she was there for him, although she seemed happy enough just being outside in the sunshine with her softy of a German Shepherd. By then people were starting to slowly trickle away looking depressed and after chatting to the Birthday woman for ages and seeing nothing for our efforts we too eventually gave up and decided to go back to the car for lunch.

It was 1.05pm when we got back and the temperature had risen so much since the cold start to the morning that we had to take our coats off. The guy from Leicester also came back for his lunch, so Wendy went over for a chat. She asked him if he'd gone to KFC because we'd lost him in the area and he said that he had. He hadn't seen the RCS though but it was also being seen at Morrison's over the road, so he was going to try again on his way back to Marazion where he was staying. A **Migrant Hawker Dragonfly** was flying around in front of the car while we had lunch and after we'd finished we wandered over to the Café again as consolation. We actually bought a car park ticket this time and Wendy got herself a Cappuccino while I tried to cheer myself up with a donut :(. We sat contemplating as to how we'd just had our most unproductive Cornwall trip to date and how a Subalpine Warbler and RBFly would've salvaged the entire week. There were some very posh people sitting next to us discussing suitably poncey things such as the ins and outs of 'Arrrrrrfternoon Tea' and having heard enough we left. It was so nice out that Wendy suggested going over to the bench that overlooks the sea to sit and commiserate for a while.

We sat down and raised our bins in a pathetic last-ditch effort to seawatch, even though there wasn't a breath of wind and we were much lower down than on our other attempts.



Bah!

There weren't even many Gannets out there but all of a sudden we spotted some Shearwaters and Wendy noticed that they didn't have the obvious white under parts of a Manxie. To our surprise we'd actually stumbled over 3x **Balearic Shearwaters**, which was Wendy's only bird lifer of the trip. To say she wasn't exactly exuding with excitement by our find would be an understatement and it didn't even raise a smile between us. I then spotted a **Porpoise** but it didn't come up again so Wendy didn't see it and our adrenaline fuelled arrival had totally fizzled out into a depressing slump of nothingness. Lyca all of a sudden started barking and as we got up to go we heard a familiar voice saying, "I know that bark, hello Lyca!" We turned the corner to see the Birthday woman sitting there with her dog and she gave us some good tips on dog obedience, as she'd obviously already got the measure of Lyca :P. As we walked away we realized that Wendy had come away with just 1x lifer and we'd both possibly seen ½ a Subalpine Warbler. Grrrrrrr stupid hobby, what a waste of time, money and effort!

Feeling ready to jump off the nearest cliff we reckoned we should give up to go and look somewhere else. Right at the last second I decided we might as well go and look at 60ft cover anyway, although our chances of finding a RBFly in there were practically zero! Wendy was a bit difficult to persuade but as we had nothing better to do she begrudgingly gave in and came as well. On our way up we rounded a corner and suddenly found a large group of Birders all with their bins raised and cameras poised. What the?

I assumed it must have been the Red-breasted Flycatcher, so we joined in looking in the general direction to try and get a glimpse.



Mystery twitch

Wendy quickly asked a bloke what they were looking at and she nearly fell over backwards when he said it was the Subalpine Warbler :O! In a second we raised our bins into the line of everyone else and couldn't believe our eyes when we caught sight of our bird. We were looking at a brilliant male **Subalpine Warbler**, which was a lifer for us both and Wendy's 2nd of the day. It was certainly mobile and was hard to keep up with but we all followed it up the track and up onto the heathland getting some great views in the process.....YESSSS!!! How lucky was that? Typically I obviously hadn't brought my camera and if there was ever a time when I regretted the decision it was then :(With the bird being so obliging there was only one thing for it and I ran like a bat out hell back to the car to get it while Wendy stayed with Lyca, so as not to lose the bird.

While I was gone the bird continued to show well and Wendy watched in total disbelief at our change in fortune. Just when things were going so well all of a sudden the bird shot out of the bush it was in and flew off at 100mph back towards the car park.....Noooooooooooo! Wendy frantically looked around for me hoping that I was back and had managed to get a record shot at least. Unbeknown to her and by total fluke the bird had flown straight over me on my way back and landed in a bush just north of the Dr's house. I'd re-found it and was able to point everyone around in the right direction. I managed to lift my camera but the bird disappeared into the bush it landed in and never reappeared, so unfortunately I was about half a second too slow.....Noooooo!

With the bird gone Wendy headed back down the road with Lyca to see where I'd got to and found us all looking into the bushes. There'd been a lot of speculation as to whether the bird was of Eastern or Western race with the majority of Birders quickly going with Eastern but only time would tell. It wasn't long before somebody had found another bird skulking in the bush and with the briefest of views we all wondered if it was Reed Warbler. It looked very plain and if someone had held a gun to my head I would've gone with Reed Warbler but I wasn't going to stick it down on our holiday list. The Subalpine Warbler was obviously not playing ball anymore and had gone in to some seriously deep cover, so we carried on to 60ft cover just in case of some miracle happening to us.....not that there's any such thing! By then it was so warm that Wendy had taken off her coat and fleece and had the sleeves of her long-sleeved T-shirt rolled up. It was hard to believe that it was October!



Sweltering

Despite looking and looking we couldn't pull out an RBFly and there wasn't any birds calling or moving about either, so we headed back down, slightly hopeful that the Subalpine Warbler was getting seen again. It had more than saved the day and the entire trip come to think of it :). Going past the Drs. house we found some people staring at the bushes but there'd been no further sign of it since I'd seen it earlier on.



Still looking

Feeling very happy at last we were back at the car at 3.27pm having dipped on the RBFly but gaining a really good lifer for us both in the process. The weather had also been the nicest it'd been all week and we felt pretty reluctant to have to leave in the morning :(If we'd won the lottery wild horses couldn't have dragged us away :P. We finally got another report and with it the confirmation that it was indeed an Eastern Subalpine Warbler. My only regret was that I hadn't taken my camera with me in the 1st place and had missed out on getting even a record shot of the bird.

Instead of going straight home we went out to Penzance to look for the RCS at KFC for Wendy. As we approached at 4.04pm we could see a long line of Starlings sitting on the overhead cables and Wendy could instantly make out a pale bird amongst them.



Starling flock

I parked up and we both finally had the easiest ever **Rose-coloured Starling** in our bins! This had been a bogey bird for Wendy ever since our trip to Cornwall in 2010 but not any more.....Phew! This was Wendy's 3rd lifer of the day, which lifted both our moods no end. I got out of the car to attempt a record shot just for posterity and it was lucky I acted quickly, as the flock flew off before I got anything like the shot I wanted.



Rose-coloured Starling

They'd headed in the direction of Morrison's, so I drove round to see if we could catch up with them but there was no sign. It didn't matter though and we decided to go out for tea again in celebration of a brilliant last day.

As we passed the 'First and Last' we thought we'd try there, as we knew it was dog-friendly and had also heard that the food was good. I parked up at 4.45pm and we went inside hoping that they started serving at 5pm.



First and Last

Wendy asked the Barmaid and our hearts sank when she told us it wasn't until 6pm. With the best will in the world we didn't have the time or patience to hang around till then, as we had packing to do, so we walked straight out. Wendy had to go to the Co-op in St Just again, so we made a quick decision to go back to the Kings Arms, as we knew they'd be serving from 5pm.

It was 5.10pm when we sat down and scanned through the menu again. Wendy opted for Grilled Halloumi Salad plus a side of Chips while I went for the Pleasant Clucker Ciabatta and Chips but without salad. She had to go back and order me a side of Onion Rings because she'd totally forgotten them. When it arrived she was gutted to see that her Halloumi wasn't grilled at all and had been deep fried instead, so with the Chips it was all a bit greasy for her. I hardly touched my Onion Rings because mine already came with some on the side, but it was very nice indeed. I was so full after mine that I had no room for any pudding this time....SHOCKA!

Back at HQ it was 6.15pm and Wendy headed straight for the shower before starting the packing, doing more washing and making the sarnies for a quick get away in the morning. After that it was the 1st night that it hadn't been too cold, wet and windy, so we went out to the barn for a quick game of table tennis.



Table tennis – finally!

Surprisingly Wendy impressed me with a crazy wrist shot that would blast the ball but despite the power she lacked control. With my weaker but more controlled shots I won 5-1....Skillz :P. We just wished we'd able to do it a few more times before we'd left, as it was great fun. Not only that but I'd brought my bat and balls all that way for nothing! When we'd finished Wendy saw 2x Bats in the garden and heard the Tawny Owls calling from the trees running along the back of the garden. They were so close but it was way too dark to be able to see them. After watching some TV and getting the majority of the packing done (there was no way I was going to let Wendy leave it until the morning like on our last Norfolk trip) we were tired. It was our last night in Wesley's Barn but knowing we had a long day ahead of us we went off to bed at 10.56pm.

Saturday 11th October

I'd set the alarm for 7am again and we were all dead to the world until it went off and woke us up. It was sunny and calm outside and after breakfast Wendy packed up the rest of our stuff and tidied up the Cottage before we left. I was just about to load up the car to leave when it started to thrash it down, so we had to run back indoors until it passed over. At 9.34am we very reluctantly said, "Goodbye" to another great HQ and set off for our 457mile journey up to Norfolk :(.



Bye bye HQ

My Sat Nav reckoned it was going to take us 7 ½ hrs to get there and the prospect was daunting to say the least.....Urrghhhhhh! Not only that but it would mean that Lyca wasn't going to get a walk and would have to lie in the back of the car for the duration. We dreaded to think how hyper she'd be later on when all we'd want to do is chill out. There was a Steppe Grey Shrike hanging around at Burnham Norton in Norfolk and if we got up there in good time, we thought we could stop off for a look. This would be another lifer for Wendy and would also give us something to aim for on such an otherwise tedious day.

Shortly after we'd left I got a report of a Little Bunting at Church Cove and yet again we'd been there the day before and it'd be dead! This further fuelled our predictions that everything was going to kick off after we'd gone :(Looking into it though the bird had been seen but had flown off never to be seen again, so we didn't feel quite so bad. We hadn't been on the move for very long at all when my Sat Nav decided to have a breakdown and the timing couldn't have been any worse if it'd tried. In the end I had to pull over to reset it and get it back on track and we set off again into the pouring rain. It seems that every time I have a long drive it's raining and this was no exception. Visibility was dreadful and with so many lorries on the road it just made the far from ideal conditions worse plus the fact that my IBS started to kick off again even though I hadn't had any problems for the whole week.....Aarrghhhhhh! We passed another dead Badger at the side of the motorway and I'd put money on it having been shot and dumped.
*****!

It felt like it'd taken forever to just get out of Cornwall and at 10.57am we sighed in relief when we saw the 'Welcome to Devon' sign :).

Continued in Part 2!

Where we visited in Cornwall

