

April 2007 Avian Sightings - Sandwich Bay Bird Observatory

30th

A Hoopoe on Worth marshes was the bird of the day, though continuing wader activity brought 27 spectacularly attractive Bar-tailed Godwits, a lovely summer-plumaged Grey Plover and Greenshank and Green Sandpiper to Restharrow Scrape.

29th

There was a fair amount of activity offshore, including a Pomarine Skua and a Bonxie heading N towards Pegwell, where there were 260 Bar-tailed Godwits (another 140 arrived from inland in the evening) and 7 Little Terns. 37 Whimbrel included a flock of nearly thirty on the golf course and 7 Swifts flew N but passerines were very quiet in the chilly breeze and early rain. The day was rounded off nicely by a Spoonbill on Restharrow Scrape.

28th

Apart from a few waders - 8 Bar-tailed Godwits and 9 Whimbrel - there was little else new on the Estate in the continuing NE wind.

27th

It was back into winter plumage this morning in a chill NE wind and migrants were slowed accordingly. 2 Swifts flew N, a Common Sandpiper was on Restharrow Scrape and a couple of Whimbrel flew overhead.

26th

Although the wind has returned to the NE it now has a less caustic feel than earlier in the month and 3 more Swifts flew N, as well as 3 Turtle Doves and a party of 15 Whimbrel. A Common Buzzard drifted W across Worth marshes, an Arctic Skua was following a horde of gulls around a fishing boat offshore and a small influx of Red Admiral butterflies was apparent.

25th

A few migrants trickled through on yet another calm, warm morning, though the moment of the day was a three-minute shower of rain at 7 am, which precipitated our first 3 Swifts of the spring! Otherwise, 2 Cuckoos were seen or heard, 5

Whimbrel flew N and a Black-tailed Godwit flew high S.

24th

Although much of what was about today was left over from yesterday, 2 Turtle Doves had freshly arrived, a Garden Warbler was our first of the spring and of 3 Ring Ouzels at least one was a new individual. 12 Wheatears were on the field near the yacht club, a late Redwing was trapped and a 2 Mandarins were on Restharrow Scrape; feral or not, the drake was an absolute cracker!

23rd

This was our best day of spring so far. The cloud was high and broken and with not a breath of wind to disturb a warm early morning the bushes were crammed with 60 Whitethroats, 24 Blackcaps, 12 Willow Warblers and seven Lesser Whitethroats. Other birds in the area included three Ring Ouzels, a superb male Common Redstart, a male Black Redstart (not far behind in the league of aesthetics!), three Cuckoos and our first two Turtle Doves. A Marsh Harrier flew N, three Greenshanks were on New Downs Pool and the ditches were alive with the sound of singing Reed and Sedge Warblers.

22nd

Again, not much was moving over, but migrants on the ground included a female Ring Ouzel in the Elms, 8 Whitethroats and 10 Wheatears and 2 Marsh Harriers were seen over Worth marshes.

21st

Things were pretty quiet on a still, warm day, though our first Cuckoo of spring was seen and a Common Buzzard was recorded on the monthly boat trip down the Stour.

20th

There was little moving in a brisk easterly breeze, but the ringers were treated to a splendid male Ring Ouzel and birds on the Estate included a Wheatear and a freshly-arrived Little Ringed Plover.

19th

Blackcaps were conspicuous today, with at least 14 in the area, and other warblers

included our first Reed of the spring, 2 Sedge, 2 Common Whitethroats and 3 Lesser Whitethroats. Otherwise, 3 Wheatears were on the field near the yacht club, 7 Yellow Wagtails flew over, 3 Little Egrets alighted briefly on Restharrow Scrape before flying off N and there was a northward trickle of 35 Swallows.

18th

9 Fieldfares and 3 Redwings departed into the light but rather chilly N breeze first thing, a Firecrest was trapped and a smattering of passerines included 3 Blackcaps, 3 Chiffchaffs and a Willow Warbler, while the Ring Ouzel and 6 Wheatears were still showing well on the field by the yacht club. There was a steady northward procession of 430 Linnets, 48 Goldfinches, 232 Woodpigeons, 75 Swallows, a few House and Sand Martins and 2 Sparrowhawks and a Greenshank dropped noisily onto Restharrow Scrape from high in the bright blue sky.

17th

Although visible migration was sporadic at best, 2 Sparrowhawks and a Marsh Harrier flew N and birds in the area included 4 Fieldfares, 2 Ring Ouzels, 6 Wheatears, 7 Yellow Wagtails, including one blue-headed, a White Wagtail and our first Common Whitethroat of spring. By mid afternoon the cattle field along the Ancient Highway held 14 Yellow and 2 blue-headed Wagtails, plus single Pied and White Wagtails chasing about together around the animals.

16th

8 Lesser Whitethroats arrived overnight, joining a supporting cast of the Ring Ouzel on the field near the yacht club, 2 Wheatears, 7 Chiffchaffs, 5 Yellow Wagtails, 4 Willow Warblers and 7 Blackcaps, while 450 Linnets flew N. The afternoon almost deserved the summer epithet *Phew, what a scorcher!* and it was hardly surprising that the first 4 Small Coppers of the season were recorded.

15th

One of the Ring Ouzels, 4 Wheatears and the Black Redstart were still present this morning, proving popular viewing in bright sunshine, as 440 Linnets, 270 Woodpigeons, a Grey Wagtail and 34 Swallows flew N, accompanied by 7 Fieldfares that flew out of the gullies. The 2 adult Med.Gulls were offshore again, 11 Yellow Wagtails were scattered about the area, and warblers included 7 Chiffchaffs, 3 Blackcaps and a Willow Warbler.

14th

Northward-moving migrants included 47 Swallows, 7 House Martins, 50 Goldfinches and 640 Linnets, while 2 superb male Ring Ouzels were bouncing about on fields near the beach, which also held 9 Wheatears, 3 Yellow Wagtails and a Black Redstart. A Sedge Warbler was singing near 2 Cetti's along Worth track and 2 adult Mediterranean Gulls flew north offshore in late afternoon.

13th

Dense fog relented only slowly and by 9.30 visibility was still little more than 300 metres. Nevertheless, a Tree Pipit called in the murk and waders flirting with the idea of dropping into Restharrow Scrape included 14 Whimbrel, in a total of 22 for the day, and 2 Bar-tailed Godwits. 35 Swallows drifted through during the day, 7 Yellow Wagtails were fiddling about around the cattle in the afternoon and birds offshore included 6 Sandwich Terns, 2 Common Terns and 114 Lesser Black-backed Gulls, while 117 Linnets flew N along the shore.

12th

In a chilly NE breeze, this morning had more in common with winter than spring and birds reflected it. A male Merlin flew in off the sea and a Short-eared Owl was seen along the riverbank, but for the most part migrants took the day off. A Barn Owl was seen along the Ancient Highway in the evening, suggesting that 2 pairs may be present in the area.

11th

Northward-moving migrants included 36 Swallows, 2 House Martins, 5 Sand Martins, 3 Yellow Wagtails and 215 Linnets, while 4 Chiffchaffs and 2 Willow Warblers were flitting about amid sun-bathed catkins. 2 Avocets were seen at the Point and a male Black Redstart was on New Downs, but bird of the day was a Red Kite, soaring about near the Observatory at 11.20 before moving off towards Pegwell.

10th

Grounded migrants on a warm, overcast morning included 10 Chiffchaffs, 7 Willow Warblers and 4 Blackcaps, together with a rather surprising 16 Song Thrushes, several of which flew N over the area. 2 superb summer-plumaged Black-tailed Godwits were on Restharrow Scrape, a Common Buzzard was soaring about inland and a Peregrine flew out to sea very early on.

9th

Migration accelerated after a couple of quiet days with the arrival of our first 3 Willow Warblers, while 3 Green Sandpipers, 4 Blackcaps, 9 Chiffchaffs, 3 Yellow Wagtails, 4 Cetti's Warblers and 2 Wheatears were in the area and 11 Sand Martins and 4 Swallows flew N.

8th

Very quiet today - obviously any migrants felt it unwise to drop into the fog that failed to clear until after 9 am, although the Hobby was seen again and our first Yellow Wagtail and Sedge Warbler of spring were seen along Worth track in the afternoon.

7th

2 Swallows, a Sand Martin, a Whimbrel and a Red-breasted Merganser flew N after early fog burned away, but the Estate was very quiet, apart from 2 singing Chiffchaffs, though a Hobby flew over the Observatory in the afternoon..

6th

11 Redwings and 15 Fieldfares moved off N in an early frost, followed by 7 Swallows, 2 House Martins and a Marsh Harrier as the day warmed up, along with a procession of 284 Linnets, 244 Woodpigeons and 38 Meadow Pipits. Grounded migrants included a singing Blackcap and 7 Chiffchaffs with a Long-eared Owl and a Firecrest in the Elms and the female Merlin put in an appearance again over Restharrow Scrape. A Common Buzzard appeared late in the afternoon, dropping in to a higher-than-usual class of overnight accommodation in trees by Royal St. George's Golf Club.

5th

5 Swallows flew through this morning and 2 Chiffchaffs were singing in the area. Otherwise, apart from a trickle of Linnets and Woodpigeons, a White Wagtail was poking about with some cattle and Corn Buntings, a Whimbrel was our first of the spring, there were 2 Barn Owls and, quite frankly, it was nice to be warm again.

4th

A Swallow did its best to alleviate the effects of another chilly morning, but there

was little else of note until a Common Buzzard flew NW in the afternoon.

3rd

Despite a return to cold conditions a very early Grasshopper Warbler (the earliest Observatory record by 3 days) was singing from tangles in the Haven Stream and Ring Ouzel, Swallow and Blackcap were seen in Pegwell. However, a Woodcock was probably more appropriate to the weather and although there was little visible movement early on, 470 Chaffinches flew S as soon as the skies began to clear from the north.

2nd

1,225 Chaffinches flew over this morning, heading S along the coast or SE out to sea. A total of 6 Sparrowhawks included 2 heading N and 2 flying out to sea, the Merlin was seen over the Scrape, which held the Little Egret and a Green Sandpiper, 3 Wheatears and 5 Stonechats were seen near Prince's old clubhouse and 2 Swallows flew N in the afternoon.

1st

The wind still blows enthusiastically from the NE and migrants remain stubbornly elusive, though 54 Lesser Black-backs flew N and Restharrow Scrape held 2 Little Ringed Plovers and the Little Egret, while a Firecrest was in the Elms and the female Merlin was seen again nearby.