

Sept 2007 Avian Sightings - Sandwich Bay Bird Observatory

30th

The morning was calm and, eventually, warm. Visible passage included 52 Reed Buntings, 8 Great Spotted Woodpeckers, 108 Siskins, 102 Goldfinches and 39 Redpolls and at least 70 Chiffchaffs, 25 Blackcaps and 40 Robins were on the Estate, along with a Redstart and a Spotted Flycatcher. Fieldfare, Merlin and several Redwings were also evident and 4 Pink-footed Geese flew over the Observatory just before mid day.

29th

Even between prolonged showers that fed in from the sea on a slackening NE breeze during the morning it was obvious that a lot of birds were either grounded or were dropping in from overhead during breaks in the rain; Song Thrushes, Great Tits, Robins and Goldcrests were particularly prominent. Totals for the morning included 90 Robins, 70 Great Tits, 40 Song Thrushes, 35 Goldcrests, 20 Chiffchaffs and 20 Wheatears along the beach to the north, with a Yellow-browed Warbler, a Redstart and both Pied and Spotted Flycatchers scattered about the Estate. Overhead, 202 Meadow Pipits, 140 Goldfinches, 114 Siskins, 2 Redpolls and a Grey Wagtail flew N, 56 Chaffinches and a Brambling flew in off the sea and 2 Merlins included a male that almost certainly also did so.

28th

The strong N wind continued to blow, accompanied by more or less persistent rain. 7 Arctic Skuas flew N offshore along with 176 Dunlin, 146 Wigeon, 160 Teal and 15 Knot and 2 adult Little Gulls flew in off the sea and straight inland over the sailing club. Restharrow Scrape was predictably productive, holding 26 Dunlin, 52 Wigeon, 40 Teal and 112 Mallards.

27th

A strong N wind with occasional enthusiastic squalls induced a spectacular movement of waders and ducks, heading N towards Pegwell as an increasingly heavy, rolling sea rose to an impressively high Full Moon tide. Totals in seven and a half hours included 1,045 Dunlin, 107 Knot, 22 Sanderling, 7 Avocets and a Ruff, supported by 139 Brent Geese, 165 Shelduck, 233 Wigeon, 131 Teal 13 Pintail, 5 Eider, an Arctic Skua and an adult Little Gull. Additionally, a Song Thrush flew in off the sea, 6 Rock Pipits flew N along the beach, where 6 Wheatears were sheltering in the wind-blown vegetation and a Grey Seal was poking its nose into the goings-on around it.

26th

Although hardly the equal of the north-facing coast in today's strengthening N wind, a prolonged seawatch produced 7 Arctic Skuas and a Bonxie, plus small numbers of Dunlin and Pintail and a flock of 14 Pink-footed Geese that flew by offshore in the afternoon.

25th

At least 50 Chiffchaffs were flicking about in the bushes today, with 18 Blackcaps and a Reed Warbler for company. Overhead, 129 Siskins, 8 Redpolls and 65 Meadow Pipits flew N and 23 Reed Buntings were present, along with a late-ish Turtle Dove and a very pale juvenile Common Buzzard over Worth in the afternoon.

24th

The weather was in a bit of a stink today, though 3,000 House Martins and 800 Swallows moved into the strong SW wind between squally showers. Offshore, at least 100 Gannets and Sandwich Terns were feeding over the sandbanks in the distance, their presence attracting at least 10 Arctic Skuas, and 2 Puffins flew past close inshore; a most unexpected addition. Rather less so was a Hobby that flew over the Observatory in the afternoon.

23rd

Calm and warm again, the morning featured an influx of 23 Reed Buntings, with 25 Chiffchaffs on the Estate, a Marsh Harrier over Worth marshes and at least 2 Sparrowhawks flying N.

22nd

On a beautiful, warm, calm morning at least 40 Chiffchaffs were feeding busily among the trees and bushes, there was a steady trickle of 60 Meadow Pipits, 3 Grey Wagtails, a Sparrowhawk and a few Skylarks, largely arriving from off the sea, and the autumn's first Redpoll flew N, as did 4 Siskins.

21st

The SW breeze that again became stronger towards mid day brought very little, although a Grey Wagtail flew SW, a diminutive male Merlin tore past the Observatory and Reed Buntings were conspicuous, with 14 on the Estate.

20th

Visible migration was negligible in a strengthening SW wind and grounded migrants were few, although a Grey Wagtail flew over and there was a major surprise in the shape of a Hawfinch that pursued a Redwing across the Estate. Otherwise, 100 or so Gannets were feeding offshore, and although most were over distant sandbanks, some came very close to the coast, giving excellent views.

19th

Today was very different, though it was decidedly chilly as the SW breeze freshened. 2,700 House Martins, 10 Grey Wagtails, 300 Meadow Pipits and 2 Lapland Buntings moved N and 2 Bramblings flew in off the sea with a small party of Chaffinches, while 80 Blackcaps and at least 60 Chiffchaffs were on the Estate, with 5 Song Thrushes and 4 Whinchats.

18th

A chill and blustery NW breeze made for a quiet morning, although a Hobby flew N low over the sea and a few Chiffchaffs were fidgeting about in sheltered areas of the Estate.

17th

A calm morning with spots of rain was almost as quiet for birds as was the weather. Almost all the Blackcaps had cleared out overnight, leaving 33 Chiffchaffs on the Estate, and visible migration was negligible. The morning's surprise was a Barnacle Goose, preening itself at the edge of the shingle on the seafront. As to whether it was wild, it seemed positively fuming that I had no cheese and pickle sandwiches for it! An hour seawatching produced an Arctic Skua offshore, a colour-ringed Guillemot and an Eider. Backsand Scrape on the afternoon tide held 6 Curlew Sandpipers and a Little Stint, with a female Merlin on New Downs.

16th

The Estate held 120 Blackcaps and 80 Chiffchaffs on another clear and calm morning, while 7 Stonechats had freshly arrived with 4 Whinchats along the Ancient Highway. A Common Buzzard flew SW, as did a Grey Wagtail, and some substantial parties of House Martins moved N, totalling around 800.

15th

Activity was predictably sedate as our Indian Summer continues, though the presence of 40 Robins on the Estate may have been indicative of some movement. Otherwise, the bird of the morning was a Mistle Thrush; unaccountably scarce recently, this was only the 4th record since the start of August.

14th

On another calm and clear morning an excellent total of 11 Grey Wagtails flew N, accompanied by 96 Meadow Pipits and a Tree Pipit. Raptors included 2 Hobbies, a Common Buzzard and a Marsh Harrier and in the bushes were 40 Chiffchaffs and 30 Robins.

13th

Although conditions seemed identical to yesterday, birds certainly weren't, with just a Grey Wagtail and small numbers of Meadow Pipits moving N and only small parties of warblers on the Estate. However, a female Merlin flew along the shore close enough to give us a Starling's-eye view, a Spotted Flycatcher was perched on some bracken between the houses and a Tree Pipit flew over the Observatory.

12th

What a difference a day makes! A calm, crystal clear morning began with 9 Greenshanks flying vocally in off the sea and over the Estate, which was crammed with 400 Blackcaps, amongst which were at least 7 Lesser Whitethroats and 5 Garden Warblers, plus a Cetti's Warbler. Visible migration picked up spectacularly with a N movement of 520 Meadow Pipits, a Common Buzzard, 2 Sparrowhawks and 2 Hobbies and later on Backsand Scrape there were 21 more Greenshanks, 5 Curlew Sandpipers and a Little Stint.

11th

Birds on the Estate, probably the residue of yesterday's arrival, included 40 Blackcaps and a Common Redstart, and although one Grey Wagtail flew N the area was almost devoid of hirundines. A Hobby appeared over the Observatory at mid day and a Peregrine was seen at the Point, where one Little Stint was present among moderate numbers of waders.

10th

A much better day on which 300 Blackcaps arrived on the Estate, while visible

migration picked up with 9 Grey Wagtails, 18 Meadow Pipits, 1,000 House Martins and 400 Swallows moving N. An Arctic Skua and an Arctic Tern also flew N offshore and a Common Swift and a Hobby were seen from the Observatory.

9th

7 Whinchats were at the usual spot along the Ancient Highway, 2 Grey Wagtails flew over and a Peregrine was seen early on. The ringers noted a steady but light movement of warblers through the area, but otherwise the Thesaurus is beginning to show signs of strain when questioned for another variation on the word 'quiet'.

8th

A bit more marking time today, though without the urgency of yesterday! However, 17 Reed Buntings were on the Estate and at least 4 Sparrowhawks and 3 Hobbies were dashing about.

7th

For passerines today was a case of marking time, although there was a small but obvious influx of Reed Buntings. Waders flying over or present on Restharrow Scrape included 2 Spotted Redshanks and 3 Greenshanks and at least 3 Hobbies were seen on the Estate and New Downs.

6th

Although warbler numbers were clearly down on yesterday, the Estate still held 15 Chiffchaffs, a Garden Warbler and 15 Blackcaps, while 2 Spotted Flycatchers were also present. A pale juvenile Common Buzzard drifted inland from the coast in mid morning and just after mid day came the news that a juvenile Red-backed Shrike had been trapped in a garden just outside the Estate.

5th

To liken today to Malaysia would probably be a bit much, but it was still, warm and increasingly humid. 70 Blackcaps and 20 Chiffchaffs were the most numerous species on the Estate, where other notables included 2 Spotted Flycatchers, at least 2 Hobbies and a Tree Pipit. A Knot was briefly on Restharrow Scrape, a Peregrine flew over and a Marsh Harrier was drifting about over Worth and a visit to Pegwell for the afternoon tide was rewarded with 3 Curlew Sandpipers and a female Merlin, flying across the saltmarsh.

4th

Although today again featured a freshening N/NW breeze it proved to be considerably more productive. A Ruff flew over with a party of Golden Plovers early on, 35 Blackcaps and a Spotted Flycatcher were trapped on the Estate, with a Grasshopper Warbler in the maize, and a flock of 100 Meadow Pipits on New Downs was hopefully a taste of things to come later in the month. Raptors were also more active, with totals of 5 Sparrowhawks, 5 Hobbies and 2 Marsh Harriers.

3rd

The day quickly brightened after a dull start, but the NW wind remained fresh enough to keep activity to a minimum, except for 2 Hobbies and a Swift flying N.

2nd

The focus of attention was Worth marshes, where 7 Hobbies, a Hen Harrier and a Marsh Harrier were cavorting about, while on the Estate there were 21 Willow Warblers, 13 Blackcaps and 6 Chiffchaffs. 800 House Martins and 200 Swallows also flew S.

1st

Although early morning drizzle failed to precipitate a spectacular arrival of migrants, a Tree pipit flew over and the Estate held 14 Whitethroats, 9 Chiffchaffs and 8 Wheatears, while increasing numbers of hirundines attracted regular forays from the local Hobbies, with at least 3 more flying N.