

Jan 2009**31st**

4 Woodcock were in the Whitehouse this morning, ahead of the Siberian weather that has been forecast for the next couple of days.

30th

A walk northwards along the beach in a character-building wind was rewarded by 21 Snow Buntings, near the old clubhouse, while back at the ranch at least 5 Bramblings and a Tree Sparrow were still present with the Chaffinches.

29th

Despite some welcome sunshine, coupled with little wind, the last few days have been very quiet, apart from a Red Admiral butterfly and a Barn Owl that was performing splendidly over Worth marshes yesterday afternoon. Today was gloomy and chilly, though the finch flock outside the Observatory window contained at least 80 Chaffinches and 7 Bramblings.

23rd

By comparison with yesterday, today was relatively benign, with occasional showers blowing in on a fresh W wind. Counts of 153 Red-throated Divers and 98 Great Crested Grebes were probably not representative of numbers actually present, but any fretting about such things was dissipated by the presence of a superb Great Northern Diver close inshore off the Estate.

22nd

In complete contrast to yesterday, a howling wind was blowing rain in sheets over the sea and visibility was very poor. Under the circumstances it was not surprising that of the birds that did decide to fly only 14 Fulmars and 12 Kittiwakes were of note, though a Black-throated Diver was sitting on the sea; obviously the activity of choice for whatever was out in the murk.

21st

A walk across Worth marshes on a calm and mostly bright morning was eventually very productive, though passerines were generally low in numbers. A Barn Owl took flight from the hedge bordering the railway line, 3 Sparrowhawks were dotted about, 3 different Marsh Harriers were present, a Water Pipit and 280 Teal were on the North Stream at Roaring Gutter and 3 Common Buzzards were soaring in the distance near Betteshanger. A flock of 16 Yellowhammers was also noteworthy, as was the presence of 169 Great Crested Grebes offshore, a flock of 22 Skylarks came in off the sea and, in the evening, 70 Meadow Pipits dropped in to roost near the railway.

20th

Today was calm but resolutely gloomy with frequent showers. The sea was dotted with parties of grebes and divers, probably including well over 200 of the latter, and 19 Snow Buntings flew along the beach.

19th

Windy weather returned, so most attention was directed offshore, where a Bonxie cruised by looking for trouble, 272 Red-throated Divers, 49 Kittiwakes and 78 auks (mostly Guillemots, by the look of it) flew S and a Black-throated Diver was sitting on the sea. Elsewhere, a pair of Peregrines, a Merlin and 2 Bramblings were visible from the Observatory.

18th

There was a strong movement of divers this morning, amounting to 517 Red-throated and 3-4 Black-throats. Numbers so far this winter have been very low, so presumably this was connected with last night's

gales, which may have displaced the birds eastwards.

16th

A gloomy, bone-dampening day had little to recommend it, although 4 Bramblings were with 60-70 Chaffinches at the Observatory and a flock of 14 Fieldfares turned up briefly nearby.

14th

On a bright, still morning with a hard frost we decided on a walk across Worth marshes and a good choice it proved to be, particularly as a blanket of mist descended just as we finished. There were 3 Marsh Harriers, a Hen Harrier, a Merlin and at least 4 Short-eared Owls, while a Water Pipit was furtively nipping among the water voles on the North Stream and 26 Snipe flushed from the river and adjacent fields. Also of note was a redhead Smew on Backsand Scrape.

13th

A walk to the Point was notable for 72 Skylarks and 32 Corn Buntings, but there was no sign of the Snow Bunting flock. Back at HQ a ringtail Hen Harrier and a female Marsh Harrier were floating about over the fields and 2 Bramblings were still present with 30 Goldfinches and 40 or so Chaffinches.

12th

The recent very cold weather has not relented enough to thaw the scrape, so most interest was concentrated around the Observatory, where at least 50 Chaffinches, 3 Bramblings and 16 Goldfinches were still present. Offshore, a Black-throated Diver flew by, quite close to shore.

9th

A hoar frost this morning transformed the reserves into a stunning winter wonderland and lasted for most of the morning. The temperature at 7.30am was -6.5oC and the birds were definitely hiding! As the weak sun rose Chaffinches and Goldfinches began feeding off the Big Bird Table and amongst them were 7 Brambling. A Short-eared Owl was spotted hunting at the back of Restharrow Scrape other than that the odd Lapwing and Curlew flew over. Offshore only 2 Red-throated Divers and 2 Great Crested Grebes were recorded.

8th

Little coverage on the Estate today but a Barn Owl flew over the observatory at 11.30pm - somebody's been burning the midnight oil!

7th

Snow Buntings in a flock of 21 are on the beach near Prince's old clubhouse and offshore 21 Red-throated Divers, singles of Great Northern and Black Throated Diver and 24 Great Crested Grebes.

6th

Not a lot of coverage today, but a Chiffchaff was in one of the gardens, a Grey Wagtail flew over the Observatory and at least 3 Bramblings were still present.

5th

Well, the Slavonian Grebe was back on the scrape this morning, sadly meeting its end at the mitts of two Carrion Crows in the afternoon. The finch flock around the Observatory seems to be increasing - there were around 60 Chaffinches, 37 Goldfinches and 8 Bramblings there today.

4th

The Slavonian Grebe, clearly fed up with being left to keep the scrape ice-free on its own, flew off over the beach and towards Deal in mid morning, shortly after a flock of 18 Bean Geese had flown N over the marshes. A Woodcock was flushed again, a Hen Harrier and a Short-eared Owl were seen around Restharrow and at least 6 Bramblings and a Tree Sparrow remained in the hedge outside the Observatory.

2nd

Today's star was a Slavonian Grebe (photographed by Mick Vurley) that turned up on Restharrow Scrape



in the afternoon, breaking the glass-clear surface in a series of elegant aquabatics as a Short-eared Owl drifted around its edges. 9.8. Elsewhere, Hen and Marsh Harriers were seen over Worth, the finch/sparrow flock at the Observatory still held at least 4 Bramblings and the Snow Buntings continued to frighten the dog walkers on the beach.

1st

Dull and cold with a light northerly breeze, the new year began much as the old had left off and although activity was rather slow, there was a decent selection of birds to be seen. At

least 3 Barn Owls were seen during the course of the day, with one Short-eared Owl near Mary Bax, where 14 Whitefronts were present at dusk, a Jack Snipe and 4 Goldeneye were seen on New Downs, 30 Snow Buntings were on the beach near the shell of Prince's old clubhouse and 2 Common Buzzards were soaring together over Worth. At least 8 Bramblings and 2 Tree Sparrows were recorded, mainly close to the Observatory, 14 Siskins flew N and a Woodcock took flight from one of the fields on the Estate.