

**Mar 2009**

**31st**

On a bright and increasingly warm end to the month, most of yesterday's migrants had disappeared, though a Sedge Warbler was seen at Mary Bax, with a Merlin on a nearby fence post. Otherwise, a Black Redstart, 3 Swallows and 3 Chiffchaffs were the highlights.

**30th**

A glorious calm and sunny morning induced an arrival of summer migrants that included 8 Swallows, 2 Sand Martins, a House Martin, at least one Blackcap, 9 Chiffchaffs and 8 Wheatears. 4 Firecrests were zipping about in the Elms, 2 Black Redstarts remained along the shore and raptors included a Common Buzzard and a Sparrowhawk flying N and at least 2 Marsh Harriers and although it's not really a raptor, a Raven over the Observatory.

**29th**

On the Estate a single Grey Wagtail, two Black Redstarts and Chiffchaffs. The Sunday walk went to Backsand Scrape and were rewarded with great views of a Water Rail, another Grey Wagtail, Kingfisher, four Sparrowhawks, Kestrel and a good selection of ducks.

**28th**

Three female Marsh Harriers were seen viz mugging between 08.05-09.15hrs and a Med Gull in first winter plumage.

**27th**



The male Garganey was showing well early this morning on Restharrow Scrape and one lucky member got a fantastic photo before it took to its usual hiding place behind the reeds on the left-hand side. An hour later a single Little Ringed Plover dropped in for a wash and brush up then flew off in the direction of Worth Marshes.

**26th**

Another day of sheltering from the W wind, this time enlivened by occasional blustery showers, produced 2 Swallows, an adult Mediterranean Gull and a Rock Pipit flying S along the beach. The day's grey countenance was briefly illuminated by the appearance of the sun around 1pm, at which point a very pale Common Buzzard flew N and a Peregrine appeared over the marshes.

## 25th

The Dave Clark Five were riding high in the charts in 1964 with a ditty called 'Bits and Pieces' and it proved to be that sort of day. The NW wind was again frisky, making life in the bushes rather difficult, though 2 Firecrests and at least one Chiffchaff were still in the Elms. A Swallow was seen near the Chequers and the drake Garganey was still on Restharrow Scrape, but sheltering from the wind and peering out to sea seemed to be the best option, and this strategy was rewarded with our first 2 House Martins of spring and a Little Ringed Plover, flying N fairly close inshore. So, with a Hooded Crow in Pegwell, it was a much better day than expected.

## 24th

Despite a rather fractious NW wind, 2 Firecrests and 5 Chiffchaffs were sheltering in the Elms, a (the?) Spoonbill was seen in Pegwell and a Marsh Harrier and a Barn Owl were seen over Worth in the afternoon.

## 23rd

The recent spell of spring-like weather was rudely shoved aside as the day became increasingly gloomy, windy and chilly, though a lovely male Garganey was on Restharrow Scrape. Apart from a Chiffchaff there was precious little else to report.

## 22nd

Apart from a Firecrest, there was very little to write home about on the Estate, but a raptor watch from 09.45 to mid day turned up 5 Common Buzzards, 6 Sparrowhawks, a Peregrine, a Kestrel flying N at some height and 2 Marsh Harriers.

## 21st

The continuing clear weather induced an excellent raptor movement, mainly between 10.45 and mid day, in which a **BLACK KITE**, a Red Kite, 5 Common Buzzards, 9 Sparrowhawks and 2 Marsh Harriers drifted N, mainly over Worth and the Observatory.

## 20th

Under cloudless skies it was again a struggle to find anything of note except for 2 Coal Tits and a Common Buzzard that flew NE at 09.50. However, watching the sky around mid day was rewarded with 6 Sparrowhawks, 2 of which flew N, a Marsh Harrier and a Spoonbill that circled above the Elms before flying off towards Pegwell or the Netherlands.

## 19th

A walk across Worth marshes produced single Hen and Marsh Harriers, a Sand Martin flying N and a Barn Owl. In the bright conditions visible migration was non-existent, but on reaching the shore parties of Chaffinches could be heard calling overhead. Although most flocks were impossible to locate in the clear blue sky at least 144 flew rather aimlessly out to sea or into the stiffening NE breeze, as did 21 Siskins and at least one Brambling. There were also 6 Goldcrests around the Elms and a Swallow was seen at the Observatory, with 2 more over Worth in the afternoon.

## 18th

The light SE breeze and clear conditions made for a very quiet day, although a Black Redstart appeared for a while on bales outside the Observatory, 2,500 Starlings included at least 1,100 flying N, single Marsh and Hen Harriers were regularly in view and at least 6 Sparrowhawks were recorded, two of which drifted NE.

## 17th

Bright with an increasingly chilly NE breeze, migrants were few and far between, although a Wheatear was still present and a small arrival of 8 Goldcrests was apparent. Overhead, 258 Chaffinches flew S along the coast, accompanied by 5 Bramblings and 24 Siskins.

### 16th

Although it was quieter than yesterday, at least 6,000 Starlings remained around the Observatory or out on the marshes, 2 Wheatears were still present and a gentle procession of 105 Chaffinches and 4 Siskins headed S. Not long after mid day a Swallow jinked in off the sea near the gullies and 2 Tree Sparrows were also seen near the farm first thing.

### 15th

Although the NW breeze was a bit chilly, it was otherwise bright and sunny and feeling like the first day of spring. Summer migrants included 3 Wheatears, 2 Sand Martins and a Chiffchaff, while a Raven flew N offshore, passing over 300 Great Crested Grebes, scattered over the sea in several substantial groups. Around 40 Great Tits were also on the Estate, suggesting some passage, and on the marshes, at least 5,000 Starlings were swirling about the sheep flocks, on several occasions put up by passing Sparrowhawks, with at least 1,000 flying NE during the morning. 3 Bramblings augmented some light visible migration, which included 45 Chaffinches, 27 Siskins and a few Meadow Pipits and Pied Wagtails, a white wagtail was seen near the Observatory and Hen and Marsh Harriers were seen over Worth.

### 13th

Large numbers of Great Crested Grebes still remain offshore, increasing from 180 on a glass-calm sea off the Estate in the morning to a flotilla of 320 just south of the estuary in the afternoon, having drifted north on the tide. Otherwise, an adult Mediterranean Gull flew over the Observatory and 12 Siskins flew N, but it remains stubbornly quiet.

### 12th

The morning began with the local Collared Dove population being noisily reduced by a female Sparrowhawk, but the rest of the morning was decidedly pedestrian, although a male Peregrine flew along the beach and a handful of Meadow Pipits and Reed Buntings, 4 Siskins and 18 Chaffinches flew over, heading in no particular direction.

### 11th

On a gloriously bright and calm start to the day a Redwing was singing in the Observatory car park; one of 28 that flew off to the N. A stoat on a boat in the sailing club was the highlight of an otherwise quiet morning until around 10.30 when 2 Peregrines and a Common Buzzard drifted NE and a Woodlark flew W; probably from off the sea. A Grey Wagtail flew N over the Observatory and a white wagtail was fizzing about among the sheep nearby.

### 10th

Another blustery day, interspersed with occasional brighter spells, was notable for a *littoralis* Rock Pipit on Restharrow Scrape and a handful of migrant Chaffinches, accompanied by a Brambling and a Siskin. 2 Peregrines put on an impressive high tide display in Pegwell, where there was a Sandwich Tern and one Sparrowhawk flying N.

### 9th

Just about the only birds of note on a bright but blustery and rather cool day were a white wagtail on Prince's practice area near the beach and a Water Pipit on the North Stream.

### 7th

The first 2 Wheatears of spring arrived today - one was on the beach to the south of the Estate and another

was on one of the golf course greens.

### **6th**

As early frost began to clear a Blackcap was singing reluctantly and a white wagtail was rushing about among the sheep outside the Observatory. A Chiffchaff was in the Elms later on, but it was otherwise fairly quiet until around mid day when 4 Sparrowhawks, a Common Buzzard and a Marsh Harrier flew SW in little over half an hour. Raptors continued to feature during the afternoon, with 2 Hen Harriers (including an adult male) and a Common Buzzard over Worth and 2 more Sparrowhawks flying SE.

### **5th**

A very hard frost soon dissolved into a calm, clear morning with warm sunshine and it was no surprise to see our first migrant Chiffchaff in bushes by the shore. Otherwise, the day produced a Common Buzzard and 2 Marsh Harriers and 750 Starlings flying N, mostly in one tight flock around mid day.

### **4th**

A wet and rather unpleasant morning was not without its compensations, with a Ruff and 3 Dunlin on the Mary Bax flood, 3 Short-eared Owls nearby over the golf course and a flock of 38 Lesser Black-backed Gulls near the scrape, of which 34 were *intermedius* types. Later, as the sun began to contemplate the idea of coming out, a Marsh Harrier and a Peregrine were seen from the Observatory and 158 Great Crested Grebes were bobbing about offshore; many resplendent in summer finery.

### **2nd**

A bit cold on the hands first thing, but with wall-to-wall sun and a light NW breeze it was a morning to savour before battening down the hatches once again, if the forecasters are correct. Some light movement included 41 Chaffinches, with at least another 90 on the Estate, 5 Siskins, 3 Reed Buntings and 3 Meadow Pipits, while a Ruff was on the flood near Mary Bax and a white wagtail was scurrying about with a couple of Pied Wagtails on the nearby golf course. A flock of 17 Tree Sparrows was found along Worth track, at least 4 Brambling remained around the Observatory and in the warmth of mid day 2 Small Tortoiseshells were whirring around in a sheltered spot near the Elms.

### **1st**

The new month began with watery sun and a gentle breeze and although at least one Siskin and 9 Chaffinches flew over and 4 Bramblings and 2 Tree Sparrows were still visible outside the Observatory window, it was otherwise pretty quiet.