

Sept 2009

30th

The month ended with another bright morning without a breath of wind, during which 295 Goldfinches, 55 Reed Buntings, 39 *alba* wagtails and 87 Meadow Pipits flew N. The bushes were quieter than yesterday, with no more than 30 Chiffchaffs and a few Blackcaps in evidence.

29th

On another bright morning with a barely perceptible breeze overhead movement consisted of 2 Sparrowhawks, 2 Great Spotted Woodpeckers, 4 Grey and 41 *alba* wagtails, 3 Tree Sparrows, 246 Goldfinches, 51 Linnets, a Lapland Bunting and 25 Reed Buntings. 4 Snow Buntings were on the path across the golf course, at least 24 Blue Tits were moving along the coast in assorted directions and 100 Chiffchaffs were again evident on the Estate.

28th

Overhead movement picked up this morning, with totals of 107 Goldfinches, 131 Linnets and 72 *alba* wagtails flying N, 3 Mistle Thrushes and a Great Spotted Woodpecker S and 44 Reed Buntings materialising from high in the sky, looking as if they were arriving from off the sea. A **Yellow-browed Warbler** was present in the Observatory car park (well, all right, in the bushes surrounding it), the Estate held 100 Blackcaps and 120 Chiffchaffs and 4 Snow Buntings were on the beach.

27th

Staring across Worth marshes into a shimmering pink-hued haze over yellowed grass with Ring-necked Parakeets flying about in a bright blue sky the morning felt like Bharatpur. Overhead movement consisted of 42 Reed Buntings, 45 *alba* wagtails, 4 Grey Wagtails and 4 Great Spotted Woodpeckers, while a Lapland Bunting was seen at Dickson's Corner, a male Merlin was tearing about, a party of 6 Song Thrushes was on the Estate and 4 Snow Buntings were on the beach again.

26th

On another cloudless day with barley a breath of wind 46 *alba* wagtails, 19 Reed Buntings and 2 Great Spotted Woodpeckers flew N, another **Yellow-browed Warbler** was trapped in the Haven and 60 or so Chiffchaffs were fidgeting about on the Estate.

25th

Although overhead movement was very light, amounting to little more than 9 Reed Buntings, 4 Great Spotted Woodpeckers (in a total of 6 for the day) and a handful of other species, the Estate held at least 100 Chiffchaffs and 50 Blackcaps and the Red-backed Shrike was showing pretty well in the Oasis field. It is also possibly worth noting, since bird reports usually find so little sensible to say about the species, that a Pheasant, running away from something probably imaginary, fell headlong down a rabbit burrow!

24th

Bright and still, it was a day that gathered pace rather than hitting the ground running. Rather incongruously on such a day, there were 4 Snow Buntings on the golf course or along the shore, 2 Red-backed Shrikes were in the Oasis/Whitehouse paddocks, a Firecrest and a Yellow-browed Warbler were in the Haven and 7 Common Buzzards and 8 Sparrowhawks moved N in an hour and a half from mid day.

23rd

Despite gathering cloud it was much quieter than expected, with little overhead movement apart from a couple of Great Spotted Woodpeckers and a few Reed Buntings, 60 or so Chiffchaffs on the Estate and at least 2 Marsh Harriers over Worth at lunchtime.

22nd

Against a clear blue sky 3,700 House Martins, 900 Swallows, 330 Meadow Pipits, 27 Pied Wagtails, 9 Grey Wagtails, 13 Reed Buntings, 3 Great Spotted Woodpeckers and a minimum of 4 Sparrowhawks flew N. Down at ground level, the Estate held 2 Redstarts, a Spotted Flycatcher and 7 Whinchats and although fewer warblers were around 4 Great Tits flew strongly S along the shore.

21st

The Meadow Pipit-fest continued with another 1,300 moving N this morning, along with a heady mix of 2,800 Swallows, 2,200 House Martins, 7 Grey Wagtails, 11 Reed Buntings, 22 Skylarks, 2 Tree Pipits and 14 Pied Wagtails. At the Observatory, there were at least 100 Blackcaps and 120 Chiffchaffs, a **Yellow-browed Warbler** was trapped, 2 Sparrowhawks flew N and 3 Common Buzzards flew N at lunchtime. Late in the afternoon a member of a local shooting syndicate turned up at the Observatory in a state of some excitement to say that he had seen 3 **Glossy Ibis** gliding down on to a secluded pool on New Downs. They had moved on when the pool was checked but from his description there seems no doubt that they were indeed Glossy Ibises.

20th

A Kingfisher flying over the golf course first thing was a strange precursor to an outstanding northward movement of 3,700 Meadow Pipits - an Observatory record - accompanied by 21 Reed Buntings, 9 Grey Wagtails, 1,300 Swallows and 650 House Martins, while the Red-backed Shrike was seen again in the Oasis field. 18 Whinchats were recorded, mostly on New Downs, and Backsand Scrape held 69 Redshanks, a Spotted Redshank, 14 Greenshanks and a Little Stint.

19th

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle would have appreciated the misty start to the morning, with Tawny and Barn Owls calling beyond the Estate and a Cetti's Warbler sang briefly from the Observatory pond as the mist began to lift, revealing a calm, warm morning that was a real relief after so much recent wind. The Red-backed Shrike, at least 6 Common Redstarts, 6 Whinchats, 2 Spotted and 2 Pied Flycatchers were in the Oasis along with a good arrival of warblers, including 100 Blackcaps, 9 Lesser Whitethroats and 18 Chiffchaffs. 5 Great Spotted Woodpeckers were evident and northward movement consisted mainly of 760 Meadow Pipits, along with 5 Grey Wagtails, a Tree Pipit, 20 Skylarks and 2 Siskins, which have clearly decided to move much later than last year. 400 hirundines, mainly Swallows, were swirling around the golf course bushes early on, though they quickly dispersed after one of their number was removed by a Hobby.

18th

The main event of the morning was the sudden upsurge in numbers of Meadow Pipits, a total of at least 120 dropping on to Restharrow Scrape before departing in noisy groups, while another 240 flew N overhead and 80 or so were scattered about in grassy areas bordering the Estate. Otherwise, the hedgerows and fence lines were not to be ignored, holding 17 Whinchats, 12 Common Redstarts and 11 Wheatears. A Ruff was on Restharrow Scrape, a Firecrest was in the Little Gully, 2 continental Song Thrushes were trapped and there were 2 Red-backed Shrikes; one was re-discovered near the Elms and a second individual was found in the Oasis, between the Observatory and the golf course.

17th

As the wind began to moderate at last, the highlight of the morning was a flyover **Tawny Pipit**, which flew strongly N at 07.35. Otherwise, 3 Common Redstarts, 4 Whinchats and 3 Pied Flycatchers remained and a Merlin and a Marsh Harrier were seen over the Estate, where 40-50 Robins were present.

16th

430 Swallows moved N and a Merlin flew in off the sea in the first couple of hours and although the NE wind strengthened throughout the morning, making observation difficult once again, sheltered corners and lines of bushes on the Estate proved productive. At least 5 Common Redstarts were flitting about, as were 6 Pied Flycatchers and a Spotted Flycatcher. A Hobby tore past the Observatory, there were 2 Whinchats

on the fence lines, a Crossbill was seen drinking at a pond on the estate and, best of all, a rather elusive **Red-backed Shrike** was found near the Elms.

15th

Despite a strong NE wind with rapidly moving and heavy squalls the sea had little to recommend it. However, the wind slackened in the afternoon and inspection of the Estate revealed 10 Common Redstarts and 2 Pied Flycatchers, mostly scattered along the hedgerows between the Observatory and the Elms.

14th

Three hours watching the sea produced only moderate numbers of birds, but a decent variety. The main cast included 74 Wigeon, 59 Teal and 57 Dunlin, supported by 19 Knot and 3 Pintail, while 20 Meadow Pipits flew N along the beach. Watching the bushes was again difficult in the frisky N breeze, but at least one Pied Flycatcher and a Common Redstart were hugging the shelter of the Haven and a Short eared Owl flew N at some height over Worth.

13th

There was some visible migration this morning, for more or less the first time in the autumn, including 3 Grey Wagtails, 18 Meadow Pipits and 400 or so Swallows. The Spotted Redshank was again on Backsand Scrape and raptors included a Marsh Harrier and 2 Hobbies.

12th

3 Pied Flycatchers and a Common Redstart were on the Estate and 2 Ravens flew S over the Observatory.

11th

An hour and a half of mindless tedium that others more fortunate than us refer to as 'seawatching' was enlivened by a Merlin flying N offshore and 42 Gannets moving S, though they were probably nearer the Belgian coast than our own. However, the NE wind slackened a bit during the morning to allow inspection of the bushes, which held 4 Common Redstarts, 2 Pied Flycatchers, a Spotted Flycatcher and 25 Chiffchaffs and there were also 3 Whinchats on the Estate.

10th

A frisky NE breeze made finding anything in the bushes difficult, but constant calls from Chiffchaffs suggested that plenty are still around and a Pied Flycatcher was trapped. Otherwise, a Ruff flew over the Estate with a couple of Whimbrel and a Sparrowhawk flew N.

9th

With overcast conditions and a northerly breeze today had a very different feel. 60 Chiffchaffs, 4 Whinchats and 2 Spotted Flycatchers were scattered about the Estate and offshore an Arctic Skua was harassing terns in the distance, a Shag flew south and 3 Grey Herons flew in from far out to sea. Pegwell in the afternoon held 2 Avocets, nearly 800 Oystercatchers, 73 Sandwich Terns, 140 Redshanks and a Ruff that flew along the shore and on to the wader roost, which was some way upriver on a very high tide.

8th

The Fan-tailed Warbler was apparently more showy this morning and the Estate again held good numbers of migrants, including 150 Blackcaps, 100 Chiffchaffs, 9 Whinchats and 5 Spotted Flycatchers, while a Tawny Owl was trapped at first light; a very rare event on the Estate. Elsewhere, Backsand Scrape held an Avocet, 13 Greenshanks, a Spotted Redshank and 46 Common Redshanks, a drake Garganey was lurking in another pool on New Downs and from Pegwell came the news that an Alpine Swift had flown by, completing a very satisfactory sequence of events.

7th

..... Well, obviously not. Phil Milton saw the Fan-tailed Warbler at 09.15 and it grudgingly appeared until at least mid afternoon, alternating bouts of skulking about in the low stuff with exhibitionist performances on the tops of bushes, but with extensive gaps in between. Also at Pegwell, a juvenile Gannet flew upriver and on the Estate were 200 Blackcaps, 100 Chiffchaffs, a Common Redstart and 4 Whinchats. Significantly, only two Blackcaps were re-trapped from yesterday, suggesting a fresh influx of birds.

6th

There were large numbers of migrants on the Estate on an overcast and initially calm morning, including around 300 Blackcaps, 70 Chiffchaffs, 8 Garden Warblers, 11 Lesser Whitethroats and 5 Spotted Flycatchers. Pegwell was also stuffed with a similar variety of species, including at least 10 Spotted Flycatchers, with the notable addition of a **FAN-TAILED WARBLER**, which was seen zitting over the shore-side path at 10.45. It appeared to dive into a thicket of brambles and scrub but could not be relocated, despite the attentions of birders anxious to see this first documented record for the Bay, and presumably had moved quickly on.....

4th

A howling wind made yesterday almost impossible, but in overcast conditions this morning there were similar numbers to a couple of days ago; 25 Chiffchaffs, 16 Blackcaps, 2 Lesser Whitethroats, 6 Common Whitethroats and a Spotted Flycatcher. The highlight of the day was arguably a herd of 18 Ring-necked Parakeets that was mercilessly mobbing a Marsh Harrier over the golf club.

2nd

The Dotterel and 5 Whinchats remained from yesterday and an overcast start to the morning brought a decent arrival of migrants on the Estate, including 30 Chiffchaffs, 16 Blackcaps, 12 Willow Warblers and 3 Lesser Whitethroats. 2 Great Spotted Woodpeckers flew in from the north and 30 or so Sand Martins moved through with about 80 House Martins and 100 Swallows.

1st

The Dotterel remained for a third day, clearly enjoying its celebrity status as The Most Photographed Bird in the History of the Bay, but only a dribble of migrants was evident on the Estate, the best of which were 6 Whinchats at the south end and 20 or so Sand Martins off the sea.