

April 2011

29th

2 or 3 Spotted Redshanks were present first thing, between the scrape and fields south of the Chequers, and Bar-tailed Godwits increased to an Observatory record of 830, mostly in Pegwell. There was also a gentle movement of 43 Swallows, but the highlight of the day was the male Montagu's Harrier that gave wonderful views as it approached to within 50 metres on the Hundred Acre Field, occasionally quartering the beach and frequently remaining on the ground for 15 minutes or more before taking flight again, with a ringtail Hen Harrier nearby for comparison (photo on the right is by Steve Ray).



28th

As the cold NE wind blew with renewed enthusiasm, it turned into Day of the Barwit. 164 Bar-tailed Godwits flew along the shore, mostly close to the beach, no doubt contributing to a total of over 440 in Pegwell, while another 64 were loitering on the turf field near the scrape, many of which were in superb brick-red plumage. Also heading N offshore were 30 Grey Plover, 16 Knot and 6 Whimbrel.

27th

The NE wind continued and birding was appropriately soporific, although 10 Barwits moved N and another 4 were standing on the turf field near the scrape.

26th

Cloud and a frisky NE breeze made this a very different day. Seawatching over a leaden sea with occasional puddles of sunlight produced 6 Little Terns, 2 Common Terns, a pale-phase Arctic Skua and a small array of other bits and pieces that included our first visibly moving Bar-tailed Godwits of spring. The most notable birds on land were on New Downs, where 2 **COMMON CRANES** flew in off the sea then N at 06.30, a Nightingale was singing by the farm and a Short-eared Owl and 4 Greenshanks were seen near the river.

25th

Despite a chilly start in a N breeze it was yet another day of uninterrupted sunshine. A party of 5 Mediterranean Gulls - 2 adults and 3 first winter - flew N and at least one more could be heard calling over the marshes to the south. It was also a very good day for raptors, with a Peregrine taking some feathers off a Woodpigeon, a ringtail Hen Harrier over Worth and a movement from 10.50 that included 10 Common Buzzards, 3 Hobbies and a Red Kite, all moving N. The scrape also turned up a Green Sandpiper and a Greenshank and 2 Ravens flew over the Observatory just after mid day..

24th

Clear and sunny again, it was a nice day for a walk, but avian interest was confined largely to local birds, which included 20 Whitethroats on Worth alone, one Green Sandpiper and a ringtail Hen Harrier, plus an adult Mediterranean Gull on the shore.

22nd

With the area looking more like the Northern Territory as each day passes without a cloud in the sky it was appropriate that a Crimson Rosella was noisily flying about the Estate. Otherwise, there was some movement, including 4 Common Buzzards and a Red Kite that drifted N between 10.30 and 11, a party of 3 Green Sandpipers that flew S from the scrape, where a Common Sandpiper was wiggling about, and the customary 2 adult Mediterranean Gulls that flew S along the shore.

21st

Same again, weather-wise, so avian highlights were few, although Whitethroats continue to increase and 4 adult Mediterranean Gulls flew N along the shore, calling as they did so. However, the undoubted highlight of another lovely day was a **GREEN HAIRSTREAK** nectaring on rosemary in the Observatory garden; the first record of this smart spring butterfly within the recording area since 1948! (Photo by Ian Hodgson)

20th

It was a stupendous spring day, with not a cloud in the sky, no wind and temperatures climbing steadily towards the mid-twenties. A Redstart in the Oasis was the only real surprise, though more Whitethroats were apparent,

Sedge and Reed Warblers were also up on yesterday and 2 adult Mediterranean Gulls flew S along the shore.

19th

It was another bright, warm day with a barely perceptible S breeze and although there continued to be little visible movement, there was a significant influx of summer migrants. A Cuckoo and our first Turtle Dove were the first signs of promise and by mid day it was obvious that substantial numbers of Whitethroats (at least 70) had arrived, along with more Sedge Warblers (about 15) and a few more Reed Warblers, mainly in the dykes on New Downs. A Greenshank flew on to the beach from the south, with 3 more on the tidal pool by the River, and a Hobby flew in off the sea before turning its attentions to the Wheatear flock on Prince's.



18th

In continuing bright weather with barely a breath of wind this was a third successive quiet day, although a Little Ringed Plover flew along the beach near the sailing club, 2-3 Green Sandpipers dropped on to the scrape during the course of the morning and our first Lesser Whitethroat of spring was rattling away cheerfully amid the blackthorn blossom along Worth track. There were also at least 5 Yellow Wagtails on Worth.

15th

Warmer and eventually brighter than yesterday, this morning produced an intermittent flow of migrants that included 10 Yellow Wagtails, 9 Wheatears and a Whimbrel and 2 white wagtails on the turf field near the scrape.

14th

2 Green Sandpipers twittered away from the scrape as we approached, probably fed up with the grief they were getting from the local Lapwings, but it was otherwise very subdued. Even the few summer migrants that were evident were reluctant to sing very much; perhaps it was just too chilly.

13th

On an overcast, calm morning 21 Wheatears were arranged along the shore, and 2 Nightingales were singing fitfully on the Estate. There were also 6 Blackcaps and 6 Chiffchaffs, though they were probably just more easily seen with yesterday's wind having died away.

12th

In theory, a NW wind should produce some visible movement, but its main effect was to reduce the temperature by about ten degrees, despite another more or less cloudless day. Under the circumstances a ringtail Hen Harrier was a bit of a bonus.

11th

Despite migration slowing considerably over the weekend as chilly easterlies took hold, Tree Pipit and Hobby were recorded yesterday. This morning was warmer but still pretty quiet, with 18 Blackcaps scattered around the Estate with a few more Sedge Warblers and Whitethroats and a Raven on Worth in the afternoon.

8th

Another day of wall-to-wall sunshine and a light NW breeze was a little quieter in terms of visible migration, but fresh migrants continued to appear. A male Garganey flew over the Observatory car park, a Reed Warbler was singing on the scrape, a male Ring Ouzel slipped elegantly away towards the coast from the farm and a Whimbrel flew N offshore. Grounded migrants included 12 Wheatears, but most other species were fewer in number than yesterday, with 13 Chiffchaffs making up the bulk of the day's warblers.

7th

It was another glorious day; increasingly warm beneath a clear blue sky and a light NW breeze. Northward movement amounted to 206 Linnets, 179 Woodpigeons, 2 superb male Bramblings, 39 Goldfinches, 25 Swallows and 10 Sand Martins, while 3 Yellow Wagtails flew in off the sea. Other migrants included 10 Wheatears (including this lovely male, photographed by Steve Ray), 2 Whitethroats, 17 Blackcaps, 11 Willow

Warblers and 12 Chiffchaffs, while a Sedge Warbler was buzzing away like a maniac along the Delf Stream.

6th

A lovely warm day brought the best day of spring so far, with a steady procession of hirundines along the shore, over the fields or flitting in off the sea, amounting to at least 89 Swallows, 3 House Martins and 3 Sand Martins. Grounded migrants included 18 Chiffchaffs, 5 Willow Warblers, 2 Whitethroats, 3 Blackcaps, 11 Wheatears and a Sedge Warbler on New Downs, while northward movement also included 112 Linnets and 114 Woodpigeons.



5th

A blustery SW breeze and persistent light to moderate wind made for a taxing morning, with most birds keeping their heads down. Still, 2 adult Mediterranean Gulls flew N offshore (and probably the same birds flew inland over the golf course later on), 3 Yellow Wagtails dropped on to Restharrow Scrape and at least 12 Chiffchaffs and a Firecrest were on the Estate.

4th

Decent numbers of migrants remained on a calm, warm morning and although it might be tempting to assume that most were yesterday's birds, they did include our first Willow Warbler of spring. Otherwise, totals included

11 Wheatears, 17 Chiffchaffs, 10 Blackcaps, 5 Swallows and a Firecrest. Visible migration was slightly better, with 109 Linnets coasting N, 2 Common Buzzards, a Sparrowhawk and, oddest of all, 23 Magpies, including a flock of 14 high that moved unsteadily N high over the golf course. Just for good measure, a Ring Ouzel was seen in bushes on Royal Cinque Ports golf course in the afternoon.

3rd

On a warm morning with a light W breeze there was a welcome sense that migration continues to improve. 16 Wheatears, 12 Blackcaps, 20 Chiffchaffs and 2 Coal Tits were scattered about, 2 Ravens flew over and there was the sight of a 'kettle' of 3 Common Buzzards, 2 Peregrines and 4 Sparrowhawks just before mid day.

2nd

The morning began calm, warm and springlike before the breeze got up and although the place wasn't exactly infested with migrants it was better than it has been. 3 Swallows drifted through, a white wagtail flew S, as did 140 Chaffinches, 18 Siskins and 4 Bramblings, and 3 Blackcaps and 5 Chiffchaffs were singing on the Estate. Otherwise, a Wheatear was seen near the sailing club, 3 Common Buzzards flew N over the Observatory at 11.10 and 5 Wheatears appeared near the Chequers in the afternoon.

1st

Pinch and a punch and all that... The new month came blustering in on a fresh W wind that brought a Wheatear, 3 Chiffchaffs and a Blackcap, while a Swallow, 204 Chaffinches and a Brambling flew S overhead and a white wagtail was tiddling about on the scrape, where a female Mandarin was seen early on. Good news is that 3 Cetti's were singing on Worth, suggesting reasonable survival from the winter.