

Jan 2011

31st

It was a welcome change to be out and about without being blown inside out. A gentle procession of divers issued forth from Pegwell Bay first thing, amounting to 159 Red-throated and one Black-throated Diver in an hour and a half. The Estate was pretty quiet, but a visit to New Downs in the afternoon produced a Barn Owl, the adult drake Goldeneye, 14 Song Thrushes, which seem to be scattered about in decent numbers at the moment, and a flock of 11 Mistle Thrushes, which is a notable record by recent standards.

29th

Grey and rather uninspiring, with a dastardly NE breeze, there were 45 Blackbirds on the Estate, which is a good deal more than so far this year, though there would have been more but for some diligent work by one of the local Sparrowhawks, and 3 Great Spotted Woodpeckers were noisily evident. Elsewhere, a Jack Snipe was found on New Downs, where the drake Goldeneye was still present.

28th

After two days of unremitting vileness today was merely unpleasant, with a bitter and cutting E wind. Most birds were understandably keeping their heads down, but a Marsh Harrier and 41 Gadwall were seen on Worth marshes.

25th

The highlight of a walk across Worth was the adult male Hen Harrier that showed really well near the Chequers. It was reassuringly better for small birds, which included 6 Bullfinches, 24 Reed Buntings and a Chiffchaff and a Tree Sparrow at Roaring Gutter. The appearance of a Brambling at the feeders outside the Observatory window caused some excitement; they've been notably scarce this winter.

24th

After a very quiet weekend we decided to walk along the Green Wall then to the shore via the edges of New

Downs. The sun emerged for a while after the gloom following overnight rain had cleared and although the birding remained slow we did find a Woodcock and a superb adult drake Goldeneye on one of the reservoirs.

21st

Although the Estate didn't possess anything stunning this morning, at least 110 Chaffinches were feeding around the sheep, suggesting an increase since the cold weather, 3-4 Great Spotted Woodpeckers were scattered about and 111 Teal were on Restharrow Scrape, which may be a world record, for the scrape, at least. A late afternoon vigil by the Delf Stream failed to produce any Barn Owls, but the Great White Egret flew to roost somewhere near Roaring Gutter, 2 Little Egrets flew in the opposite direction and as the light really began to fade 6 Bewick's Swans flew in from the N and came to ground somewhere near the railway.

20th

A walk to the Point was not entirely without reward - the 2 Shorelarks were still present on the beach and a Black-tailed Godwit was roosting with 61 Redshanks at the edge of the tide. However, small birds were otherwise extremely scarce, with little more than 12 Skylarks on the beach and dunes and 5 Song Thrushes in the buckthorn.

19th

A bright, calm and frosty day was a bit of a shock to the system after so much recent gloom. A walk around the Estate turned up 27 Redwings, a Brambling and a Little Egret flying S but the highlight of the morning was a brief stop at Mary Bax, where a lovely adult male Hen Harrier was cruising about, 2 Merlins tore across the marsh in quick succession and 14 Song Thrushes were ticking about in the gorse and adjacent dyke.

18th

After yet more rain much of the area is saturated, particularly on Worth. However, the recent mild weather has reduced wildfowl numbers considerably and the best we had to show for our efforts were the Great White Egret and a Kingfisher. Otherwise, several thousand Black-headed and Common Gulls were strung out along the shore between Deal and Pegwell and over a thousand more were loafing south of the Chequers. A Barn Owl and a Water Pipit were seen over Worth in the evening.

15th

A Little Gull flew N offshore.

14th

103 Red-throated Divers, 101 auks and 19 Great Crested Grebes flew south out of the Bay in the first hour or so after dawn this morning, which continued to be utterly gloomy with occasional rain. There was also a bonus in the shape of a female Merlin that flew south out at sea, no doubt intent on sneaking up on something tasty, and at least 585 Great Crested Grebes and a Black-throated Diver were floating on the sea at mid day.

13th

Given that seawatching at the Bay is generally close to madness, an hour and a half peering out to sea this morning was quite productive and enjoyable. 56 Red-throated Divers included several quite close inshore, where a Razorbill was performing energetically and an Eider and 86 Great Crested Grebes were floating about. To cap it all, 3 Kittiwakes flew S. Marvellous.

12th

Dull, frequently wet and utterly charmless, it was a good day to do some annual report writing.

11th

In a window of calm after rain and strong winds last night, most attention was given to the north of the area this morning. Highlights included a ringtail Hen Harrier, a Merlin, a Jack Snipe, a Raven heading N overhead and 2 Shorelarks along the beach. Worth turned out to be a disappointment, although the Great White Egret was seen again.

10th

A flock of 18 Bean Geese flew in from the NE early on and the Great White Egret was seen between the Chequers and Fowlmead. Although it was subsequently harder going than yesterday a Bittern was seen again down by the railway, 3 Marsh Harriers were floating about and 2 Peregrines found the presence of the escaped Lanner far too much to tolerate, mobbing it ferociously. As the wind got up around mid day, 3 Common Buzzards were soaring over Worth.

9th

On a lovely, bright and calm day the Great White Egret and a male Hen Harrier flew past the Observatory, 15 Waxwings flew over the Whitehouse and a Red Kite, a Merlin, 2 Marsh Harriers, a Peregrine, 2 Ruff, a White-fronted Goose, a Mandarin, a Chiffchaff and 6 Bullfinches were seen on Worth. 3-4 Tree Sparrows were near the Chequers, but there was no sign of the Barnacles, so perhaps they've taken advantage of the milder conditions and gone back to wherever they originated from.

7th

Following a day of persistent rain yesterday, the only bright note on another gloomy morning with periods of drizzle and light rain came from Sydney! Still, an Avocet was on the tidal pool along the river and a Cetti's Warbler was calling near the boat yard. Tentatively, it seems that they have survived the cold spell pretty well - there appear to be four along Worth track and the Delf Stream and three along the river from the quay to New Downs. Otherwise, 2 Waxwings were perched in trees surrounding the Observatory car park and 8 Tree Sparrows and 42 Barnacle Geese were seen near the Chequers.

5th

The sun poked its nose through the gloom around mid day, before rain arrived just before dusk, but the only highlight of a fairly quiet day was a 2nd winter Mediterranean Gull that flew on to Restharrow Scrape. Its green colour ring suggested that it originated in Germany.

4th

Another gloomy day with occasional light showers started with a Woodcock over the Observatory before the day had started to think about dawning and after some early rain cleared away the Great White Egret was

seen on the North Stream just along Worth track. The remainder of the walk was notable for a Bittern on the Worth side of the railway and at least 1,400 Wigeon, which are present in very impressive numbers at the moment.

1st

The New Year crept in beneath a ceiling of gloom, with occasional drizzle, but barely a breath of wind. As usual with many pairs of eyes on the look-out, it turned out to be a very good day. On Worth, the Great White Egret was seen again and the Barnacle/Whitefront flock near the Chequers was showing well, with a Short-eared Owl and 4 Marsh Harriers over the fields. To the north, a Dartford Warbler, 2 Shorelarks, 2 Lapland Buntings and 5 Snow Buntings were seen along the beach and 2 Slavonian Grebes were lurking among 86 Great Crested Grebes offshore. Waxwings were still to be seen, with 30 N across New Downs and a party of 17 feeding in hawthorns near Blue Pigeons farm along Worth track and 4 Woodcock and a Barn Owl were seen on the Estate..