

May 2011

31st

Following overnight showers the month concluded with a flurry of activity on Restharrow Scrape, where there were 3 Avocets, 3 Garganey and a Little Ringed Plover.

30th

A Barn Owl on Worth and a Little Ringed Plover on the scrape were comfortably the pick of today's bunch, while another Spotted Flycatcher was recorded yesterday.

28th

It continues to be overcast and unsettled and the only events of note were a few parties of Swifts that stumbled N and a Spotted Flycatcher on New Downs.

27th

The threat of showers remained throughout, but only came to anything early in the afternoon, precipitating a N/W movement of 280 Swifts and 30 or so House Martins. Otherwise, it was very quiet, at least away from squabbling scrums of Starlings that are becoming increasingly and noisily more evident.

26th

There was rain in the air for much of the morning, but all but the most worn-out showers were whisked out to sea on a ferocious westerly wind. Birding the Estate was largely fruitless, so the discovery of a **Stone Curlew** on New Downs came very much against the run of play.

25th

On yet another warm, cloudless day we decided to trek north, to the far reaches of the recording area (Here Be Devils on the map). A Barn Owl was seen on New Downs and the Hooded Crow was present again, this

time on the Sampher, but the walk was enjoyable largely for the numbers of relatively common birds we encountered. There were at least 4 singing Chiffchaffs, bringing the total of territories over the whole area to 7; not bad for a species that was proved breeding for the first time only three years ago. The first families of Common Whitethroats were also seen along the riverbank and at least 2 pairs of Lesser Whitethroats were apparent, along with a singing Garden Warbler, 4 Cuckoos and a Chiffchaff/Willow Warbler that sang each of its songs with equal dexterity, if such a word is appropriate for the Chiffchaff bit.

24th

The wind of the last couple of days had died away somewhat, but it remains sunny and extremely dry. Still, a Spotted Flycatcher in the Whitehouse paddock and a Wood Warbler in the Elms indicated that it isn't actually mid summer just yet.

21st

One lucky observer had the good fortune to see an adult male **Golden Oriole** fly NE towards the Estate early on, but on another morning of wall-to wall sunshine there was little else to shout about.

20th

After a few indifferent days it was back to endless, warm sunshine and although birds were much the same as yesterday a Spotted Flycatcher was flycatching in the gullies and 2 Willow Warblers were recorded. Regrettably, the Woodchat was not seen today.

19th

Despite some long-awaited overnight rain, apart from a Willow Warbler and a Garden Warbler it was quiet, although the Woodchat showed well throughout the day close to the blackthorn hedge that runs toward the railway and 2 Hobbies and 2 Marsh Harriers were seen over Worth and Roaring Gutter.

18th

On an overcast and rather cool morning the Woodchat Shrike was still present and showing well and as we

passed the Whitehouse bushes a **Red-rumped Swallow** drifted over, following the Haven stream before heading inland past the Observatory. With the Quail still calling near Restharrow it was a good start to the day, but apart from a few Swifts moving over, it was subsequently quiet.

17th

Apart from a Wood Sandpiper and a Quail in the scrape area first thing and 3 Common Buzzards over Fowlmead and Worth, the remainder of a warm and rather humid day with a light W breeze was fairly pedestrian. However, while looking for dragonflies along the North Stream an adult male **WOODCHAT SHRIKE** popped up on to a hawthorn in front of the microlite hangars. It was still there in mid afternoon,



devouring at least one Hairy Dragonfly in the process. It is the fifth Woodchat to have been recorded at the Bay, but the first since 1979, and although the photograph (by Ian Hodgson) won't win any prizes, it does capture the moment and the mountains of Fowlmead in the background look rather fetching, I'm sure you'll agree.

16th

The weekend was fairly quiet, although 66 Swifts flew N and 2 Garden Warblers and our first Spotted Flycatcher of spring were recorded on the 15th. The less said about today, the better,

although a few Swifts were kicking about over the area.

13th

Despite the foreboding nature of the date, there were a few notable sightings during the course of another sunny day, at least before the wind got up around mid day. The **Montagu's Harrier** put in a lengthy appearance over Worth, a Whinchat was seen at Mary Bax, a Hobby flew across the North Stream and Reed Warbler numbers increased slightly.

12th

It was noticeably chillier than recently, but still sunny. Birding was pretty quiet, though a Garden Warbler was singing in the gullies, a Merlin tore N overhead and a white wagtail flew N along the beach.

11th

The highlight of another calm, sunny morning was an immature male **Montagu's Harrier** that was quartering Royal Cinque Ports golf course, while 5 Lesser Whitethroats were calling on the Estate and Worth and Reed Warblers have arrived in numbers at last, with at least 28 on Worth. A **White Stork** drifted S towards the Chequers in the afternoon.

10th

With overnight showers and a warm, calm start, it was almost a carbon copy of yesterday. Most attention was given to the north of the area, where the Hooded Crow was seen again, flying N across the estuary at mid day. There were also 6 Lesser Whitethroats and 5 Cuckoos and a circuit of the little-watched Sampher turned up enough singing Whitethroats to bring the population over the entire recording area close to a hundred. 28 Whimbrel were busying themselves on the golf course and nearby fields and a Willow Warbler and 3 Chiffchaffs were also singing on the Sampher.

9th

The grass still glistened from overnight showers on a still, warm and cloudless morning and a walk north to the Hundred Acre Field produced an unexpected bonus in the shape of a Hooded Crow, plus the welcome sight of a pair of Stonechats, a species that has taken a real hammering from the last two winters. 14 Whimbrel were clambering about on the golf course and a late-ish white wagtail was on the practice ground

with one of 2 Wheatears.

7th

Rain! Well, a bit of it, but not enough to wet the spuds. Even then, an overcast start gave way to a bright, humid and slightly breezy morning that featured a Common Buzzard over Worth and a Bittern that flew over the scrape before dropping on to the North Stream, or thereabouts.

6th

There were 3 Lesser Whitethroats and a rather nice male Common Redstart on the Estate, while 2 Common Buzzards thermalled over Worth and a Raven flew over the Observatory around mid day. It has to be said, though, that the species of the moment is St.Mark's Fly, which is currently on the wing in biblical proportions. There must be literally tens of thousands of the little critters between the Chequers and the Elms - in places every blade of grass was decorated with a dozen or more of them.

5th

A conspicuous influx of Whitethroats had taken place overnight; there were 42 between the Chequers and the Estate. Otherwise, it was quiet, except for a Swift, a male Stonechat on the golf course and a couple of Lesser Whitethroats.

4th

The pernicious NE wind slackened sufficiently to produce a very pleasant spring day, with almost total sunshine and a gentle breeze from off the sea. Passerines were conspicuous for the first time in over a week and a walk across the Estate and Worth unearthed no fewer than 43 singing Whitethroats, our first migrant Willow Warbler since mid April, 8 singing Blackcaps and 12 Sedge Warblers, though Reed Warblers remain very scarce. 8 Wheatears were also scattered about, 2 Greenshanks and a Wood Sandpiper were on Worth and 6 Common Buzzards were soaring over Fowlmead, probably having roosted there overnight.

1st - 3rd

In addition to a **Purple Heron** on the Hundred Acre Field on the 1st, easterly winds throught the first three days of the month produced a decent selection of waders, including 2 Wood Sandpipers and a Temminck's Stint on Worth on the 1st, 22 Greenshanks on New Downs on the 2nd and 6 Greenshanks and 2 Common Sandpipers on the scrape on the 3rd.