

Nov 2011

30th

The spirit of adventure is not yet dead. On a bright, still ludicrously mild and more or less calm day we ventured into the fastnesses of the Green Wall, where hogweed flourishes and dog walkers chatter in oblivion to the world about them. A party of Fieldfares chuckled overhead and a couple of Cetti's mumbled in the reeds along the river, as a Moorhen drifted eastward on a mat of floating vegetation. At some time in the near future it will probably haul up on some distant promontory and claim it as the hitherto undiscovered East Stonar Islands. Those really were the highlights. It's that time of year.

29th

After yesterday's frosty beginning this morning started about 13 degrees warmer! However, a strong S wind made life difficult and most of note came from the safety of the Restharrow hide. The Black-tailed Godwit was still present and didn't seem worried by a female Marsh Harrier that cruised over, but the appearance of an immature Peregrine on one of the islands proved too much and it flew off.

24th

A Raven flew over the Observatory early on, a Lapland Bunting flew along the shore and, on Restharrow Scrape, at least 43 Snipe and a Jack Snipe were put to flight when an adult male Hen Harrier cruised along the bank.

23rd

On a lovely, sunny and calm autumn day the main focus was along the beach, where 36 Snow Buntings were divided into two flocks, a ringtail Hen Harrier flew inland from the Point and a **Richard's Pipit** flew south and back again towards Pegwell over the reserve boundary, calling repeatedly. Slightly bizarrely, among the detritus on the tideline there also appeared to have been a wreck of teddy bears. Back at the Observatory, two Swallows were flitting about and a Chiffchaff was in the Elms, while at least 13 Stonechats were scattered about; a good number considering the negative effect of the last two winters.

22nd

Early fog lifted with the enthusiasm of a disgruntled teenager, but remained never far away on another gloomy morning. The undoubted highlight was a Swallow that flew over the Observatory, while a Peregrine was hunting a Lapwing in the murk, 18 Snow Buntings were seen along the beach to the north and a small-sounding party of White-fronted Geese flew over in the afternoon, invisible in the shroud above.

21st

Another day of unremitting gloom after early fog had lifted produced very little except for a Kingfisher and a Merlin along the river and a Wheatear along the beach, but little change on Worth, where it remains very dry.

20th

2 Black-throated Divers were on the sea yesterday and, in the immortal words of Ron Manager, today was a day of three halves. Early mist lifted not long after first light, but soon descended again, not clearing until nearly 10 am. Under the circumstances, birding wasn't easy and highlights included just 2 Chiffchaffs, flitting about in the Haven, and a Merlin that scattered a party of 6 Stonechats near Dickson's Corner.

18th

In some welcome brightness a Chiffchaff was in the Oasis, a Snow Bunting flew N along the beach and a Merlin was dashing about over Worth. Along the beach to the north 2 Shorelarks were snuffling about opposite Prince's new clubhouse and 8 more Snow Buntings were seen.

17th

Occasional bright spells broke up the gloom, though it remains ludicrously mild and there were plenty of remarks about the range of plants that are still in flower. It was hardly surprising that 2 Swallows flew over the scrape, though rather less expected was a party of 6 Pink-footed Geese that dropped in just after mid day. 20 Snow Buntings were on the shingle south of Prince's old clubhouse and one Black Redstart remained on the shore.

16th

The Walker Brothers may have been overly pessimistic when they suggested the sun ain't gonna shine any more, but on days like this you can see where they were coming from. A trek across Worth was by no means as rewarding as the other day, but 5 Brents were feeding with the Greylags on Willow Farm, thrushes included 55 Blackbirds, 40 Redwings and 19 Fieldfares and a Grey Wagtail flew over. On the beach, 14 Snow Buntings and 2 Black Redstarts were apparent.

15th

A bright start lasted until mid morning before relapsing into gloom once again, made more miserable by a penetrating E wind. 33 Snow Buntings were seen along the shore, including one lone individual that flew N, suggesting that some shuffling about is continuing, while on the scrape 47 Snipe and 2 Jack Snipe were present.

14th

A bright day yesterday was most notable for some remarkably late butterflies, but despite the return of the gloom and sporadic drizzle today turned out to be quite good. A walk across Worth produced a Bittern - never common around here - and a Mandarin on the North Stream, while a total of 7 Cetti's Warblers included one wandering individual in the gullies. A Jack Snipe re-appeared on the scrape, a Long-eared Owl and 4 Bearded Tits were seen elsewhere on the Estate and news of a confiding Grey Phalarope in Pegwell proved too much to ignore; it gave excellent views at the edge of the hoverpad.

12th

Warmer than yesterday, but still very dull, today was notable for a Black Redstart and 22 Snow Buntings near the sailing club and the Bearded Tit, still calling on Worth.

11th

A walk across Worth on a murky day with a light but damp and chilly SE breeze produced a Bearded Tit, calling in one of the ditches, 5 Cetti's Warblers, 80 Blackbirds and 75 Fieldfares.

10th

A walk north along the beach produced 9 Snow Buntings, a ringtail Hen Harrier and a Merlin, as well as 80 Skylarks and 80 Meadow Pipits. However, on a ridiculously warm day the focus was on late summer migrants, which included 20 Swallows, 2 Wheatears and the Curlew Sandpiper on Restharrow Scrape.

9th

In early drizzle and light rain at least 90 Blackbirds remained on the Estate, the Curlew Sandpiper was still on the scrape and 25 Snow Buntings were flurrying about on the beach by Royal Cinque Ports golf course. There were also 2 Woodcock and 6 Crossbills flew S, as did 128 Goldfinches and a smattering of Siskins and Redpolls, while a Twite flew in the opposite direction and a Black Redstart was seen along the shore..

8th

A real November day this; dull with a gentle SE breeze, becoming truly gloomy with drizzle after mid day. We decided on a walk along the beach to the Point, a decision that was rewarded by 14 Snow Buntings, a ringtail



Hen Harrier, an adult female Marsh Harrier and a Merlin. Arriving back on the Estate the gathering gloom had induced an influx of 120 Blackbirds, accompanied by 3 lingering Chiffchaffs and a rather incongruous group of 9 Swallows. Another group of 23 Snow Buntings was discovered in the afternoon near the Chequers, but the bird of the day was unquestionably a beautiful Long-eared Owl that was extracted from the Heligoland trap in mid afternoon (photo on the left by Ian Hodgson).

7th

Despite similar conditions, though the drizzle stayed away, today was a pale shadow of yesterday. Offshore highlights included 10 Red-breasted Mergansers, 13 Eider (including 7 adult drakes), at least one Arctic Skua and 2 Little Gulls, while a Jack Snipe flew along the beach, presumably having been flushed from shoreside vegetation. Otherwise, the Curlew Sandpiper was still on the scrape, a Brambling was calling in the car park and a Marsh Harrier was floating about.

6th

A N breeze with persistent drizzle stimulated a varied movement of wildfowl and waders offshore. Wildfowl included 4

Goldeneye, 697 Brent Geese, 105 Shelduck, 305 Wigeon, 57 Pintail, 177 Teal, an excellent total of 44 Gadwall and 7 Red-breasted Mergansers, while waders were mainly represented by 990 Dunlin, 122 Lapwing, 80 Knot, a Ruff and 12 Snipe. Sundry other bits and pieces included a Black-throated Diver, a Pomarine Skua, 2 Bonxies and 202 Gannets.

4th

Overnight rain cleared around dawn and the SW wind freshened steadily, bringing a real post-autumn feel to

things. Still, 2 Firecrests were on the Estate, the Curlew Sandpiper remained on the scrape, a female Marsh Harrier was jousting with crows on the marshes and 2 Common Swifts flew N across the Estate just after mid day. The recent rain has also stimulated the appearance of significant numbers of fungi, which have been notably scarce in the dry weather, among which was this earth star (photo by Ian Hodgson).



3rd

After a very quiet day yesterday this morning was a bit more eventful, with a Red-necked Grebe on the sea and a steady, if unspectacular movement of Dunlins and Common Scoter offshore, accompanied by 2 Red-breasted Mergansers. A plastic Eider (really!) added some entertaining weirdness to proceedings and the Curlew Sandpiper and 21 Snipe were on the scrape.

1st

An overcast but mild morning with a brisk S breeze licked off with 47 Crossbills high overhead not long after first light. The Curlew Sandpiper was still on the scrape, but much of the remainder of the walk around the Estate was hard going until, on the shore by the sailing club, Steve spotted a swift low over our heads, more or less hanging on the breeze. Its pale secondaries, stocky shape with relatively blunt wings, extensive but softly defined pale throat and eye set in a dark patch on an otherwise pale head strongly suggested **PALLID SWIFT** but it drifted away to the south before allowing photographs and eventually headed SE out to sea with a group of Swallows.