

Sept 2011

30th

For some reason Siskins were a bit easier to see this morning. At least 110 flew N, along with 16 Pied Wagtails, while 2 Great Spotted Woodpeckers flew in the opposite direction and a female Marsh Harrier frightened everything on the scrape. In the bushes, Blackcaps remained fairly numerous, though Chiffchaffs continued to decline in numbers. However, a **Yellow-browed Warbler** was found in the Elms in the afternoon, perhaps confirming a probable calling bird the previous afternoon. Possibly.

29th

To some extent today was a re-run of yesterday, with Siskins heard frequently but with literally none visible in the blue sky and similar numbers of Meadow Pipits and Skylarks were scattered about. However, 37 Pied Wagtails flew N, 18 Redpolls were evident, a late-ish Common Whitethroat was trapped and a Cetti's Warbler was heard in Waldershare Gully. 9 Stonechats were also recorded; a welcome number given the extent to which they apparently suffered last winter.

28th

Well now. Another misty start eventually gave way to another day of uninterrupted sunshine and little wind. Movement was audible but more or less undetectable in the bright blue sky, which was a pity as Siskins were heard frequently and a party of Crossbills flew N somewhere out at sea. More Meadow Pipits (70) and Skylarks (21) were evident, but almost all of yesterday's warblers had cleared out overnight and reinforcements remained few and far between.

27th

Early mist rose slowly to reveal a still, bright and cobwebby morning that was again dominated by large numbers of Blackcaps (at least 130) and Chiffchaffs (100), though overhead movement remained almost non-existent and the only slightly unusual bird on the Estate was a Coal Tit.

26th

Although variety in the bushes continued to diminish and visible passage was confined more or less to one Grey Wagtail, the morning was dominated by a very impressive gathering of 15-20,000 House Martins that were swirling about over the sea and shore at around 0945.

25th

At least 100 each of Blackcap and Chiffchaff were on the Estate, there were 17 Little Egrets on the scrape, 20 Siskins flew over and as early mist lifted to reveal a lovely autumn day a Firecrest was found in the Oasis.

23rd

It was a pretty quiet day, with a trickle of 64 Meadow Pipits arriving from the NE, 11 Pied Wagtails flying in the opposite direction and a collection of 7 Whinchats at Dickson's Corner. However, a mid day raptor watch turned up a Common Buzzard, single Sparrowhawk and Kestrel in off the sea and at least 4, probably 6, Hobbies.

22nd

With the wind having dropped away to a force 2-3 westerly, it turned out to be an interesting day. In addition to 80 Chiffchaffs and 25 Blackcaps in the bushes, a Marsh Harrier drifted up from the south over the sea, lost height as it neared Pegwell, then flopped in low over the sea before heading south along the shore, apparently none the worse for its experience. Visible migration was a bit better, though without much focus, as 61 Siskins and 16 Pied Wagtails flew N, 33 Meadow Pipits flew in from the NE and 8 Reed Buntings were scattered about. 2 Little Egrets also flew S over the sea and in a 45 minute raptor watch just after mid day, 13 Common Buzzards and 3 Sparrowhawks flew N and 2-3 Hobbies, a Peregrine and a Merlin were tearing about over the marshes.

21st

Although most of the oncoming drizzle petered out once north of Fowlmead it was another annoyingly breezy day. There seemed to be fewer Chiffchaffs than recently and highlights, such as they were, included an arrival

of 17 Wheatears along the beach, a 2nd winter Mediterranean Gull and a Little Stint on the scrape.

20th

With the wind still resolutely in the west it turned out to be an unexpectedly interesting morning. As cloud began to withdraw eastwards an hour or so after dawn at least 8 Arctic Skuas, 2 Pomarine Skuas and a Bonxie flew out of the bay, either directly out to sea or downchannel. Given the large movement of skuas that was evident not far along the coast off St.Margaret's a few days ago and which was not apparent here, it seems possible that this group had spent the night in the bay. Whatever the answer, once the sun had come through only one Arctic was seen, harassing terns some way offshore around mid day. On land, it continues to resemble Chiffchaff City (photo on right by Ian Hodgson), with at least 80 fizzing about the bushes before the wind increased to make viewing difficult, though only one Whinchat and 2 Wheatears were recorded and visible migration was limited to an early flurry of 1,900 House Martins, a Great Spotted Woodpecker and a Grey Wagtail.



19th

Beneath the relentless Atlantic airflow, over here on the east coast migration continues to have a distinctly British flavour. At least 140 Chiffchaffs and 35 Blackcaps were on the Estate again, a Grey Wagtail and a few Siskins flew N and a Little Stint flew up from the south and on to Restharrow Scrape. Otherwise, a few Goldcrests were evident and 4 Whinchats and a Stonechat were fussing about around Dickson's Corner.

16th

Although a Marsh Harrier sailed in from the NE early on, 2 Redpolls flew over and 70 Chiffchaffs and 50 Blackcaps remained on the Estate, variety was otherwise rather sparse and the shore in particular was almost deserted in the SE breeze.

15th

The day dawned calm and clear and, again, despite a moonlit night, warblers were flitting about all over the place. At least 150 Chiffchaffs and 30 Blackcaps were the main protagonists, while a Lapland Bunting was heard somewhere over Mary Bax/Dickson's Corner, 24 Meadow Pipits flew in off the sea, a Redpoll was the first of autumn and a Great Spotted Woodpecker and a Little Egret flew N. 2 Spotted Redshanks also dropped in to Restharrow Scrape for a while but moved fairly swiftly on. Later on, a Common Buzzard was seen over New Downs.

14th

The wind had slackened to a moderate WSW breeze and despite a clear overnight sky warblers in particular took advantage of the improvement. At least 140 Chiffchaffs and 110 Blackcaps were on the Estate, 3-4 Firecrests were the first of autumn, 11 more Siskins flew N and 37 Meadow Pipits flew in off the sea. 3 adult Mediterranean Gulls were seen again and 2 Hobbies were energetically chasing about over the marshes.

13th

Yesterday's wind had abated to a frisky SW breeze and the promised showers went somewhere else. 21 Whinchats were clustered around Dickson's Corner, 30 Chiffchaffs were in the bushes and a party of 14 Siskins flew noisily north from the car park trees. 2 Little Stints and 3 Ruff were among the attractions on Restharrow, a Kingfisher was seen at Backsand and a walk across Worth in the afternoon turned up a Common Buzzard, an adult male Marsh Harrier and a Hobby.

12th

Although seawatching at the Bay is normally a certifiable pursuit, this morning was actually pretty good. It was helped by constant drizzle in a strong to gale force SSW wind, which rendered visibility poor but light conditions much better than usual. The highlight was an adult **Sabine's Gull** that flew N along the beach, with 260 Common Terns, 6 Arctics and 87 Sandwich Terns moving in the same direction, while a Shag and 2 first winter Mediterranean Gulls flew S and 5-6 Arctic Skuas flew into the Bay and out again. Passerines were understandably keeping their counsel, although a Wheatear was standing rather forlornly on the beach.

9th

Although most of yesterday's Whinchats had moved on, an overcast and humid morning brought an arrival of 88 Wheatears, mostly strung out along the shore, while numbers of Meadow Pipits (60) and Linnets (320) had increased significantly. 2 Mediterranean Gulls were seen offshore and Restharrow held a Wood Sandpiper, 3 Ruff and a Little Stint.

8th

Although it remained gloomy, the wind had abated somewhat, providing a window of half-decent weather in an otherwise fairly gruesome week. 43 Wheatears and 11 Whinchats were dotted about along the shore, 2-3 Hobbies were tearing about, a Greenshank flew noisily N and the 3 Ruff were still on Restharrow. Otherwise, warbler numbers and other bits and bobs in the bushes seemed similar to yesterday.

7th

Following yesterday's meteorological excesses, small numbers of warblers were visible on the Estate and 3 Ruff were still on Restharrow, but it remained quiet in a strengthening westerly wind.

6th

Well, the forecast was spot on, as a gale force westerly with persistent rain obliterated the day. One Arctic Skua was seen offshore and 3 Ruff were still on Restharrow, but everything else (and everyone else) was keeping its head down for the day.

5th

A calm start to proceedings, punctuated by a sharp shower early on, soon gave way to a strengthening SW wind; the precursor of some grim weather to come, apparently. Still, about 30 Chiffchaffs were zipping about and a couple of Hobbies were taking advantage of gathering numbers of hirundines, many of which were basking on roofs of houses on the Estate.

3rd

A still, warm morning brought the first big arrival of 90 Blackcaps, while 24 Whinchats and 20 Wheatears were spread along the shore. A ringtail Hen Harrier drifted in from the NE, a Raven flew over the Observatory, 3 Ruff were performing nicely on Restharrow Scrape and a Grey Wagtail flew N.

2nd

3 Little Egrets flew over the Observatory at the start of a warm, humid day that produced an arrival of 21 Whinchats and 7 Wheatears, though the rest of the Estate was very subdued and visible migration has yet to think about starting. However, the local corvids were in boisterous mood, chasing a Hobby into the stratosphere before giving up and turning their attentions to one of the local Sparrowhawks.

1st

Just to confound the cynics after such a dull August, the new month began bright and sunny, though with a chilly SE breeze. Highlights included 20 Chiffchaffs and similar numbers of Blackcaps, while 2 Spotted Flycatchers were present, a Grasshopper Warbler was trapped and birds of prey included a Hobby and 2 Peregrines. Although Restharrow Scrape was very quiet, one Curlew Sandpiper remained at Backsand.