

WILDLIFE DIARY AND NEWS FOR DEC 19 - 25 (WEEK 51 OF 2011)

BIRDS

Divers: Large numbers moved south into the English Channel this week. On Dec 18 reports of **Red Throated** from six continental sites potentially totalled 2302 birds with a definite count of 1344 at one of them in the Netherlands. On the same day another report was of 1800 off the Suffolk coast. Six were seen off Selsey that day and 100 were seen passing Dungeness on Dec 19 (when Durlston logged 25). 37 were off Portland on Dec 20 and on Dec 21 one was seen off the mouth of Chichester Harbour.

Few **Black-throated** were seen but two went past Portland on Dec 18 and one was in the north of Southampton Water on Dec 19. 20 were seen together off Portsatho near Falmouth on Dec 20.

Great Northern were the least numerous with a peak count of 13 at St Ives in Cornwall on Dec 18 but two were seen in the south of Langstone Harbour on Dec 20, 21 and 22 while the long staying bird was still in Southampton Water on Dec 22. A count of 272 'diver species' passing Pegwell Bay in Kent on Dec 21 shows that there are more on their way south.

Great Crested Grebe: After last week's report of a raft of 1484 birds off the Netherlands on Dec 14 the first reports of big numbers on this side of the Channel came this week with 550 off Dungeness on Dec 20 and 400 there next day.

Red Necked Grebe: One remains near the mouth of Chichester Harbour with sightings reported on Dec 10, 17, 21 and 22. Another is in the Studland Bay area of Dorset, last reported on Dec 22

Slavonian Grebe: Ten were present at Portsatho near Falmouth on Dec 20 and 2 were off Selsey Bill on Dec 18 with one seen nearby in Chichester Harbour on Dec 22 with a single off Lymington on three days this week

Black-necked Grebe: The group of 11 seen in Langstone Harbour from the Oysterbeds on Dec 17 were probably still there this week - I saw at least 4 from Budds Mound on Dec 20. The biggest reported count during the week was of 10 in Portland Harbour on Dec 21 with 8 in the Torbay area of Devon on Dec 21 but only 3 in the Studland Bay area on Dec 18

Shag: One or two are probably spending the winter in or near the entrance to Langstone Harbour but the last report I have seen was of one there on Dec 19

Cattle Egret: Last week it seemed that there were only two of these in Britain - one on Thorney Island and the other in Norfolk - but both may have moved this week. The Thorney bird has moved about 4km west to join the cattle on Warblington Farm between Havant and Emsworth (first spotted by Kevin Stouse leading a HOS walk party on Dec 18 and likely to stay for some time - last seen on Dec 23) while the Norfolk bird has not been reported but one did appear in Dorset (at East Holme near Wareham) on Dec 20

Glossy Ibis: Two have been in the Kent Stour valley since Dec 18 but it seems there are no others in southern England this week (not sure if any are lurking at Dungeness)

Spoonbill: A flock of 15 was still to be seen in Poole Harbour on Dec 18 but these seem to be the only ones in southern England

Bewick's Swan: The number at Slimbridge was up to 178 on Dec 23 with 6 at Harbridge near Ringwood and 7 by the River Adur in Sussex on Dec 22. A flock of 24 was on the Amberley Wild Brooks area south of Pulborough on Dec 19 and 21 but has not been reported since

Whitefront Goose: 161 were at Slimbridge on Dec 23

Red-breasted Goose: The Exe estuary bird was still there on Dec 22

Brant: Just two reports this week - one was at Weymouth (Littlesea area) on Dec 18 and the other was among Brent in the East Head carpark in Chichester Harbour on Dec 22. None have been reported in Langstone Harbour so far this winter.

Red Crested Pochard: Five were seen on the Blashford Lakes back on Nov 6 but apart from those this week has brought the first reports for the winter from the Wimborne area of Dorset (one on Dec 21) and Rye Harbour (two on Cstle Water on Dec 22)

Scaup: Two paid a fleeting visit to Budds Farm in Havant on Dec 19 and three were at Abbotsbury in Dorset on Dec 20 with one seen at Lodmoor (Weymouth) on Dec 22

Surf Scoter: The regular bird was at Dawlish Warren (Exe estuary) on Dec 22 while the other wintering bird was at Penzance that day

Smew: Dec 18 brought a surprise report of one (redhead) at the Blashford Lakes near Ringwood but there have been no other reports from there or anywhere other than the Dungeness/Rye Bay area which is as far west as they are normally seen nowadays

Goosander: Reports from eight sites this week but none so far from the Solent harbours other than a report of three in Langstone Harbour on Oct 23 (probably a mistaken id for **Mergansers**) and a more credible report of one on the Thorney Island Great Deeps on Nov 1 which was not refound. Maybe some sightings have not been reported as a result of a decision by the ornithological equivalents of 'Brussels Bureaucrats' who have recently published a revised list of 'internationally agreed English names for birds' that has been embodied in the Mapmate recording system and has resulted in the rejection of records for both **Goosander** and **Marsh Harrier** - these are now known to that system as **Common Merganser** and **Western Marsh Harrier**. So far the British Ornithologists Union, maybe on advice from David

Cameron, are sticking to **Goosander** and **Marsh Harrier** (not sure where Nick Clegg stands on this issue).

Rough Legged Buzzard: On Dec 19 Lee Evans told us that 15 of these young birds are still in the UK after a very successful breeding season in Europe/Asia. The Folkestone bird was still present on Dec 22 and the Burpham bird near Arundel was seen on Dec 21

Great Bustard: Two reports this week of a bird with a radio transmitter around its neck at sites close to Weymouth - a bird with a similar transmitter was reported at Langton Matravers near Swanage on Nov 21 and 22. No current reports of the bird tagged 06 which was near Thurlstone in south Devon from Nov 26 to Dec 2

Knot: There may have been a wave of new arrivals in southern England this week with a report of 1500 on the north Kent shore at Seasalter on Dec 21 co-occurring with an increase of numbers at Emsworth (16 seen at Nore Barn on Dec 20)

Jack Snipe: A tale of an incompetent **Sparrow Hawk** and a lucky **Jack Snipe** came from the Arundel wetlands trust reserve on Dec 18. The **Jack Snipe** was on the ground when a **Sparrowhawk** plunged onto it and gripped its body in a non-lethal grasp whereupon a **Crow** dived at the hawk and caused it to fly off, releasing the apparently undamaged **Snipe** which also flew off in a different direction.

Black-tailed Godwit: These have been present in increasing numbers at Pulborough Brooks since Oct 30 when just 5 were present. The ten reports which I have picked up since then had reached a count of 63 on Dec 7 but shot up to around 140 on Dec 23. So far I have not seen any other reports from the inland sites such as Titchfield Haven and the lower Avon valley to which the birds generally move after Christmas.

Whimbrel: The wintering bird in the west of Chichester Harbour was seen again on Dec 22 in the old boating lake at North Common on Hayling Island (adjacent to Northney Marina). The Fishbourne Channel bird has not been reported since Nov 27

Ring-billed Gull: One seen at Radipole (Weymouth) on Dec 18 and 21. The Gosport bird has not been reported since Dec 17

Iceland Gull: One was seen near Lands End in Cornwall on Dec 16 and there was another sighting at Teignmouth (near Exmouth) in Devon on Dec 21 - is it fanciful to think these were the same bird heading east towards the Hampshire coast?

Guillemot: By Dec 23 more than 300 were on or near the breeding ledges at Durlston and most of the birds were acquiring breeding plumage - just one was in the Chichester Harbour entrance area on Dec 22 (two Razorbills were also there)

Little Auk: Latest sighting was of one at Durston on Dec 19 (there was also a **Puffin** there on Dec 23)

Desert Wheatear: Last report of a **Northern Wheatear** was last week in Devon on Dec 16 but a **Desert Wheatear** was still in Northumberland on Dec 19

Yellow Browed Warbler: I was surprised to see in Lee Evans round-up of rare birds in the British Isles on Dec 19 that he was only aware one in the whole area

Hume's Leaf Warbler: The bird which has been in the Littlesea area of Weymouth since Nov 26 was trapped by a ringer on Dec 21 giving Martin Cade a chance to take a close up photo which appears on the Portland website above the Dec 21 entry.

Great Grey Shrike: A second bird reached Hampshire around Dec 18 to be seen on Half Moon Common (some 3 km north of Cadnam) and what was probably a third bird appeared in the Bishops Dyke area (between Beaulieu and Beaulieu Road station) on Dec 21

Hawfinch: 28 were seen leaving the Blackwater Arboretum in the New Forest on Dec 18 and on Dec 19 one was seen in an unexpected place (on Butser Hill near Petersfield). On Dec 22 two were back at a regular winter site at Mercer's Way in Romsey

Snow Bunting: A group of three which have been at East Head in Chichester from Nov 11 to Dec 22 (at least) made a very brief trip into Hampshire on Dec 21 when they landed on the causeway leading to Black Point and almost immediately flew back to East Head

Corn Bunting: A flock of more than 75 were still in the Burpham area of the Arun valley on Dec 21 where a large flock has been present since Oct 6

Lesser Kestrel: Late news of a male at Zennor in Cornwall on Nov 1 has only just been published - Lee Evans says it is only the second record for Cornwall after one in May 1968

INSECTS

Dragonflies:

No reports from anywhere this week

Butterflies:

Notable sightings this week:

The most unexpected sighting was of a **Painted Lady** seen at the QE Country Park near Petersfield on Dec 22. Other than that there were six reports of **Red Admiral** on Dec 22 from Gosport to Broadstairs in Kent with one sighting of **Speckled Wood** in Gosport on Dec 15 and one sighting of a **White butterfly** seen at 50 yards distance (maybe a **Large White**, maybe a **female Brimstone**) on the slopes of Portsdown Dec 22

Moths:

Selected sightings this week:

Note - I assume that readers are as ignorant of moths as I am and so I attempt to provide background info about each species through links to sources of expert knowledge. **For each species two links are given.** The first is to the **UKMoths** entry

for that species giving one or more photos (if more than one thumbnail is shown clicking it will cause it to replace the large image) plus background info at the national level. The second is to the **HantsMoths** entry giving similar information at the Hampshire county level - clicking the Phenology, etc boxes gives charts relating to records in the Hampshire database and the meaning of the colours in the Flighttime Guide can be found at http://www.hantsmoths.org.uk/flying_tonight.php Finally note that a **Sussex Moths** site is under development at <http://www.sussexmothgroup.org.uk/>

0819 Scrobipalpa costella found at Portland on Dec 22 - see <http://ukmoths.org.uk/show.php?id=2763>

For the HantsMoths info go to <http://www.hantsmoths.org.uk/species/0819.php>

998 Light Brown Apple Moth Epiphyas postvittana found at Portland on Dec 22 - see <http://ukmoths.org.uk/show.php?id=4388>

For the HantsMoths info go to <http://www.hantsmoths.org.uk/species/0998.php>

1157 Crocidosema plebejana found at Portland on Dec 22 - see <http://ukmoths.org.uk/show.php?id=1600>

For the HantsMoths info go to <http://www.hantsmoths.org.uk/species/1157.php>

1631 December Moth Poecilocampa populi found at Lindfield near Haywards Heath on Dec 21 - see <http://ukmoths.org.uk/show.php?id=1100>

For the HantsMoths info go to <http://www.hantsmoths.org.uk/species/1631.php>

1638 Fox Moth Macrothylacia rubi - a **caterpillar** of this species found at Lindfield near Haywards Heath on Dec 21 - see <http://ukmoths.org.uk/show.php?id=1999>

For the HantsMoths info go to <http://www.hantsmoths.org.uk/species/1638.php>

1775 Mottled Grey Colostygia multistrigaria found at Portland on Dec 23 - see <http://ukmoths.org.uk/show.php?id=6191>

For the HantsMoths info go to <http://www.hantsmoths.org.uk/species/1775.php>

1799 Winter Moth Operophtera brumata found at Fareham on Dec 22 - see <http://ukmoths.org.uk/show.php?id=1813>

For the HantsMoths info go to <http://www.hantsmoths.org.uk/species/1799.php>

1862 Double-striped Pug Gymnoscelis rufifasciata found at Lindfield near Haywards Heath on Dec 21- see <http://ukmoths.org.uk/show.php?id=123>

For the HantsMoths info go to <http://www.hantsmoths.org.uk/species/1862.php>

1923 Feathered Thorn Colotois pennaria found at Durlston on Dec 22- see <http://ukmoths.org.uk/show.php?id=1757>

For the HantsMoths info go to <http://www.hantsmoths.org.uk/species/1923.php>

1932 Spring Usher Agriopis leucophaearia found at Durlston on Dec 22- see <http://ukmoths.org.uk/show.php?id=5099>

For the HantsMoths info go to <http://www.hantsmoths.org.uk/species/1932.php>

2092 Shuttle-shaped Dart Agrotis puta found at Portland on Dec 23- see <http://ukmoths.org.uk/show.php?id=5348>

For the HantsMoths info go to <http://www.hantsmoths.org.uk/species/2092.php>

2187 Common Quaker *Orthosia cerasi* found somewhere in Sussex on Dec 21- see <http://ukmoths.org.uk/show.php?id=3947>

For the HantsMoths info go to <http://www.hantsmoths.org.uk/species/2187.php>

226A? Black-spotted Chestnut *Conistra rubiginosa* found at Sandwich Bay on Dec 22- see <http://www.birdguides.com/webzine/article.asp?print=1&a=2991> and scroll down to relevant section

This species was new to Britain when one was found at Dartford in Kent on November 8 this year so the current find at Sandwich was only the third for Britain - so far UK Moths and Hants Moths do not have entries for the species and Bradley and Fowler code 226A is merely one I made up to create an entry in my own database

2441 Silver Y *Autographa gamma* found at Portland on Dec 22- see <http://ukmoths.org.uk/show.php?id=5855>

For the HantsMoths info go to <http://www.hantsmoths.org.uk/species/2441.php>

Other Insects:

Selected sightings this week:

The most unexpected sighting this week came from Durlston which reported a **Caddis Fly** seen on Dec 22 - no hint of the species so maybe there is one that likes to join the **Fungus Flies** which I regularly swallow at this time of year as I cycle through the small clouds which flutter in any beams of sunshine reaching us through the leafless trees. Google pointed me to <http://www.whatsthatbug.com/2009/12/30/caddisfly-found-in-the-snow-snow-sedg-e-perhaps/> which shows that some **Caddis Flies** do appear in winter (at least in the US). A more comprehensive account of **Caddisfly life cycles** can be found at <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Caddisfly> which points out that the larvae can survive for long periods in very cold water - what it does not explain is the mechanism by which these larvae all emerge together though I suppose that, given that those larvae have very accurate biological clocks, the fact that, since the adults only survive for a single day, mating and egg-laying is only likely to occur between males and females which happen to emerge on the same day and thus the biological clocks which govern the life span of the larvae are all started, and all end, together. This still leaves unsolved the mystery of how those super-accurate biological clocks work, especially in the case of those **Cicadas** with 13 to 17 year (species dependent) duration and which are accurate to within one day over that length of time. (See <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Magicicada>)

PLANTS

So far this month I have recorded 129 plant species in flower and I feel sure that the real total of 'out of season' flowerings is much greater. I have included the list of plants found in the Rye Bay area and published by Barry Yates at <http://rxwildlife.org.uk/category/all-latest-news/plants/> - these include the following which I am not aware of in the Havant area ... **Wall Germander, Scarlet Pimpernel, Black Mustard, Ragged Robin, Selfheal, Dyers Greenweed, Spurge Laurel, Corky-fruited Water Dropwort, Purple Viper's Bugloss and Betony**. Interesting finds in the Havant area have been

Welsh Poppy: a garden escape by the Billy Trail in the Langstone area seen on Dec 21

Common Fumitory: Still flowering by the new carparking bays on Budds Mound on Dec 20

Sweet Violet: A few still to be seen in St Faith's churchyard on Christmas Eve

Musk Mallow: Still flowering on Portsdown outside the Driving Test centre on Dec 22

Round-leaved Cranesbill: Also on Portsdown on Dec 22

Yellow-flowered Strawberry: One or two flowers still out in Juniper Square, Havant

Small Nettle: Still flowering on Budds Mound in Havant on Dec 20

Burnet Saxifrage: Seen on Portsdown with **Wild Parsnip and Alexanders** on Portsdown on Dec 22

Yellow Wort: A single plant, with another of **Small Scabious**, on Portsdown on Dec 22

Hybrid Water Speedwell: New flowers just opening in the water channel taking surplus water from the Bedhampton Springs into the Hermitage stream on Dec 21

Ploughman's Spikenard: Seen on Portsdown with **Ox-eye Daisies** on Dec 22

Tansy: Seen with **Musk and Spear Thistle** on Portsdown on Dec 22

Butcher's Broom: Although coming into general flowering at this time of year I have, in recent years, had no difficulty in finding the first flowers in September or even earlier (this year, by diligent searching of the prickly stems, I found the first flowers on Aug 5). Knowing that this plant has separate male and female plants I have been puzzled not to find distinctive flowers on the female (berry bearing) plants. This week I again searched both books and the internet for a description of what female flowers might look like but found no information on this subject. Extending my search to the plants themselves I have concluded that **male flowers are those which look like purple and white 'Passion Flowers' with their petals held flat against the cladodes (pseudo-leaves)** from which they grow whereas the **female flowers are all white (showing no purple) and hold their petals in a cup shape** which I have in the past ignored as a stage in the opening of flat, male type, flowers.

OTHER WILDLIFE

Common Seal: On Dec 17 twelve were seen hauled out on the mud of the Emsworth Channel in Chichester Harbour where it passes the southern part of Thorney Island. One was seen in Langstone Harbour entrance near the Hayling Ferry on Dec 21

Bats Two flying at Durlston on the evening of Dec 21 at Durlston were probably **Pipistrelles** that may not have yet gone into full hibernation

Fungi: Many clusters of medium sized fungi found on Budds Mound at the south end of Southmoor Lane in Havant on Dec 20 were probably what is named **Lyophyllum loricatum** in Roger Phillips 1981 book (this name seems to have gone out of use since then and I am not sure of the current equivalent). See my Diary pages for Dec 20 and 22 for more about this find. On Dec 21 I found a cluster of what I think were **Brick Caps** on a Willow overhanging the Langbrook stream at the west end of Mill Lane at Langstone and with them was a big specimen of **Wrinkled Peach (Rhodotus palmatus)** of which smaller examples can still be seen further east in the lane where I first noticed them on Nov 28. **Jelly Ear** (which I still think of as **Jew's Ear**) is a common fungus usually found on Elder trees but it has only just begun to appear this winter - the first two reports were both on Dec 18 and come from Portsdown and Durlston.

WILDLIFE DIARY AND NEWS FOR DEC 19 - 25 (WEEK 51 OF 2011)

Thu 22 Dec

Portsdown wild flowers and a butterfly

With warm sunshine actually drying my washing in the garden I headed for the Fort Southwick area where the visibility was magnificent and my shortened route down the south face of the hill and then up to the area above the Paulsgrove chalkpit gave me a list of 25 wild plants in flower and, totally unexpected on the day of the winter solstice, **a brief sight of a white butterfly** flying some fifty metres from me and never seen closely enough to be sure of its identity though by its size it must have been either a **Large White** or a **female Brimstone**.

The flowers included **Spear and Musk Thistle, Ploughman's Spikenard, Yellow-wort, Small Scabious and Burnet Saxifrage** at the foot of the slope plus **Butcher's Broom** (with its tough 'leaves' apparently providing winter hibernation for a couple of **Ladybirds**), **Wild Parsnip, Ox-eye Daisies, Tansy, Musk Mallow and Round-leaved Cranesbill** at the top. Not included as flowering were several plants of **Carline Thistle** with their (now defunct) flowers still glowing yellow in the bright sun which also lit the slopes with many patches of red and gold from **Cotoneaster berries and Gorse flowers**.

A visit to Bedhampton yesterday added **Hybrid Water Speedwell** flowering in the outflow channel taking water from the springs into the Hermitage stream and at least **ten Gadwall with Tufted Duck, Mallard and Little Grebe** on Bedhampton mill pool. A significant rise in air temperature encouraged more birds to sing and I heard the **first Song Thrush for a week along with Dunnock, Wren, Blue and Great Tit as well as Collared Dove and Woodpigeon**. An unexpected sight at the main road end of the Billy Trail in Langstone was a **Welsh Poppy flower** and at the west end of Mill Lane both **Wrinkled Peach and Brick Caps fungi** were flourishing on a Willow Tree overhanging the Langbrook stream on the downstream side of the footbridge. I could not get to them to check the identity of the **Brickcaps** and from a distance the bright yellow and shiny, greasy look suggested **Velvet Shank** but I could see no hint of the blackish stems that species would have.

Back at home I had a clear white spore print from the fungi found on Budds Mound on Tuesday and concluded that the fungi concerned had been what Roger Philips lists as **Lyophyllum loricatum** (though that name seems to have dropped out of use

since the book was written). Most of the fungi I had seen had dark coloured caps (like those of *Lyophyllum decastes*) though a couple of clusters had had the yellowish caps shown in Philips' photo and the gills of the specimen brought home had turned from white to yellowish straw colour after giving me the spore print (a feature which Philips mentions as significant)

Tue 20 Dec

Havant and Budds Farm

A walk to the shops this morning found 22 wild plants in flower including the **Yellow Flowered Strawberries** in Juniper Square and **Ivy** still attracting a **white tailed Bumble Bee**. The **Sweet Violets** at St Faith's only had a couple of flowers that I could see but **Nigella damascena (Love in a mist)** was still flowering outside the multi-storey carpark and a **Duncock sang** briefly as I added **Ivy-leaved Toadflax** to my list (also heard today in addition to the **Robins** were both **Wood Pigeon** and **Collared Dove**).

Next came a trip to Cosham giving me a sight of the **Alexanders** still flowering by the caravan park beside the London Road going down the slope of Portsdown (watching Countryfile on TV last night I learnt that its roots and leaves are both edible and very 'spicy' like **Horse Radish**). On the way home I stopped off at Budds Farm where a **Little Grebe** was still 'singing' among many **Teal, Gadwall, Mallard, Shoveler, Pochard** and **Tufted Duck**. I felt pretty confident that I had seen the **Fudge Duck**, especially by the sight of the white patch under its tail, which is more prominent than usual for **Tufted Duck**, but I had a very brief glimpse before the bird disappeared behind the westernmost island and when I moved to the west end for a better view I could not see the bird.

That disappointment was soon offset when I turned to look at the harbour with my scope - it gave me my first view of both **Black-necked Grebe** and **Goldeneye** for this winter and a possible sighting of a **Common Scoter** only identified by its black colour and jump diving.

While on Budds Mound I noticed **many toadstools** whose identity I could not identify so I brought a couple of samples home and will hopefully be able to name when they have given me a spore print. Easier to identify were **Common Fumitory** and **Small Nettle**, both still flowering. On another plant a single **Striped Snail** was in full view.

WILDLIFE DIARY AND NEWS FOR DEC 12 - 18 (WEEK 50 OF 2011)

BIRDS

Red-throated Diver: We are again missing out on divers on our side of the Channel - 2 off Selsey and 2 off Portland plus 1 off Titchfield Haven summed up the sightings reported on the English shore this week while the French had 108 off Normandie on Dec 12 and 441 off Le Clipon near Dunkirk on Dec 17 (the total of reports from 7 French sites that day was 871 birds)

Black-throated Diver: We had more of these but only 5 at Selsey on Dec 13 with 12 at two Belgian sites on Dec 17

Great Northern Diver: This was our most numerous diver according to the reports I have picked up. On Dec 16 Dorset had a total of 12 (six of them in Weymouth Bay) while a single bird was in Langstone Harbour entrance channel on Dec 16 and 17 plus one at Sandy Point on Dec 17 and another single in Southampton Water throughout the week

Great Crested Grebe: 42 had been off the Brownwich Cliffs (west of Titchfield Haven) on Dec 10 but no English flocks were reported this week whereas a Netherlands site had 1484 on Dec 14 (increasing to a potential 2403 birds when adding the number reported at a second site)

Red-necked Grebe: Three reports of singles on our side of the Channel this week - one off Eastbourne on Dec 11, one off the mouth of Poole Harbour on Dec 14 and one at Sandy Point (Hayling Island) on Dec 17

Slavonian Grebe: 8 were off Pagham Harbour on Dec 10 when 1 was in the north of Langstone Harbour seen from Budds Mound and another was off Lymington. On Dec 13 four were at Stokes Bay (Gosport) with three singles at Dorset sites on Dec 14 plus 2 off Beer (East Devon just west of Lyme Regis in Dorset) on Dec 16 and an estimated 4 off Sandy Point (Hayling) on Dec 17

Black-necked Grebe: 12 were off the Hayling Oysterbeds on Dec 10 with 11 still there on Dec 17 but these were outnumbered by 49 in Studland Bay (near the mouth of Poole Harbour) on Dec 10 and by 38 in Carrick Roads at Falmouth that same day.

Manx Shearwater: A single out of season bird was off Portland on Dec 16 (no substantial numbers have been in the English Channel since the beginning of October and they are not expected back until March or April)

Cormorant: These are now acquiring breeding plumage and birds with 'judge's wigs' and white 'thigh roundels' have been seen at Emsworth this week. The grey head markings have once again raised the question as to whether grey headed birds are of the continental sub-species to which the answer is that they may be but the only sure way of separating the sub species is by observing the size and shape of the yellow 'gular patch' at the base of the bill (and even that test fails in a good percentage of the birds). See <http://www.paxton-pits.org.uk/id.htm> for the best account of how to separate the subspecies using a diagram at the bottom of that page. Reading this I learnt that the amount of grey on the head can increase with age but this applies to both subspecies and the grey still remains breeding plumage, not to be seen throughout the year as our age-related grey hair is. One point of difference that I have seen elsewhere is that continental birds favour inland tree nests whereas British birds prefer the sea cliffs but that, I think, is a matter of necessity as there are few available cliffs along the European north shore east of France and nowadays many British birds also fly inland to nest on trees or pylons.

Shag: One was back in the Langstone Harbour entrance on Dec 16 with two there on Dec 17 and these may be expected to remain in that area for the winter.

Cattle Egret: Until Dec 18 the only news of this species for this week came in Lee Evans round-up of UK bird news on Dec 11 when he said there were only two

Cattle Egrets in the country - one in Norfolk and 1 on Thorney Island (where I again failed to see it on Dec 12). Then, just as I had settled down to write this summary, Kevin Stouse rang me to say that he was watching **two Cattle Egrets** with the Warblington Farm cattle in the field which has a path across it connecting Warblington cemetery to the shore. I dashed down to have a look and, looking over the field gate at the south end of Church Lane where it turns into the church carpark, I saw two birds with the cattle. One was clearly a **Cattle Egret** with a short stubby yellow bill but the other, while smaller than an **adult Little Egret** which was also there, had a long thin greyish bill making it a **juvenile Little Egret** in my book. So I have at last broken my duck and got **Cattle Egret** on my year list thanks to Kevin.

Great White Egret: Lee Evans, in his Dec 11 round up, told us that there were 15 of these birds in the UK as a whole and on Dec 15 Dungeness reported that their two birds had possibly become three with other south coast birds at the Blashford lakes in Hampshire and another at the Oare Marshes in north Kent

Glossy Ibis: The Christchurch Harbour bird has not been reported since Dec 6 and this week the only news (from the RBA website on Dec 16) was of two birds in the UK - one in Essex and one at Leighton Moss in Lancashire where it had arrived on Dec 13

Spoonbill: Just one report this week of 15 birds at Brownsea Island in Poole Harbour on Dec 11

Bewick's Swan: New arrivals at Slimbridge increased the number there to 145 on Dec 17 while the group of 5 in the Blashford Lakes area near Ringwood were still there until Dec 16 (the absence of reports since then may mean they moved on to Slimbridge to help swell their Dec 17 total)

Black Brant: The first to be reported in Chichester or Langstone Harbours this winter was at West Wittering for the WeBS count on Dec 10 but has not been reported again this week.

Red Breasted Brent Goose: The young bird which arrived with Brent at Christchurch Harbour on Oct 18 was there until Oct 28 but then moved to the Exe estuary arriving there on Nov 7 after being seen at Weymouth and Abbotsbury on Oct 30 and 31. It has been in the Exe estuary until Dec 14 at least.

Ruddy Shelduck: The single bird which has been seen in Pagham, Langstone and Chichester Harbours since Oct 14 was last reported at Ella Nore (near West Wittering in Chichester Harbour) on Dec 10

Goosander: The number using the Blashford Lakes as their winter base and roost (many of them fly off each day to feed in smaller ponds in the New Forest and elsewhere) was up to 76 on Dec 1 and reached at least 98 on Dec 14

Goshawk: At least one nest in the New Forest has been visible to the public via a remote camera in recent years and successful breeding there now seems to have increased the population of **Goshawks** in the surrounding area so it is not surprising

that one **Goshawk** has been seen this week looking for its supper at the huge **Redwing** roost at Long Beech Inclosure (between Fritham and Cadnam) while what is probably a different bird was photographed recently at a private site in the lower Avon valley (see <http://www.chog.org.uk/Features/Goshawk%20in%20the%20Avon%20Valley.htm>)

Common Crane: In his Dec 11 round up of UK bird news Lee Evans told us that he know of 31 Cranes in Norfolk, 8 in Cambridgeshire and 7 in Suffolk with others elsewhere and this week the 'others elsewhere' included a group of three moving around in Hampshire. On Dec 16 they were seen in the Test valley south of Mottisfont and on Dec 17 they were seen again in the Beaulieu area of the New Forest.

Avocet: By Dec 17 there were more than 450 in the Exe estuary and there have been sightings of smaller numbers at other sites - Langstone Harbour had 24 near Kendall's Wharf on Dec 17 and Christchurch Harbour had 6 on Dec 14 and 16

Whimbrel: Wintering birds have been reported since the end of October at Lymington, Eling (north end of Southampton Water) and at the Fishbourne Channel near Chichester but by far the most reliable place to see one seems to North Common at Northney on Hayling Island where one has been reported six times since the start of October in the old boating lake immediately east of the Northney Marina - it was last seen on Dec 17

Spotted Redshank: Since Nov 24 three of the sightings at Nore Barn on the Emsworth shore have been of 2 birds, the most recent being on Dec 13. 9 or 10 can still be expected on the Lymington shore and one was still at the Fishbourne Channel near Chichester on Dec 14

Little Gull: There are still plenty of these to be seen on the French side of the Channel - at Pointe de Hoc in Normandie there were 540 on Dec 11 and 4771 on Dec 12

Iceland Gull: What seems to be the first in southern England this winter was at Sennen in Cornwall on Dec 16. The first to reach the Netherland was there on Dec 4.

Black Guillemot: One was seen in St Austell bay (Cornwall) on Dec 12 (one had been off Portland as early as Oct 30) but I was most interested in a photo of one taken in Scapa Flow by Steve Copsey while he was on HMS York defending us from a Russian naval task force supposedly en route to the Mediterranean but having to shelter in the lee of northern Scotland to avoid the superior force of the weather. Not being familiar with the species I was surprised to see how much white there is in its winter plumage. A visit to the Three Amigos website at <http://www.surfbirds.com/blog/amigo> will show you the photo but will also (as you scroll down the the Dec 16 entry) take you past Mark Cutts entry showing the finer points of **Redwing juvenile plumage** and show you an **elderly Goldcrest** (at least 3 and a half years old so nearing the record age for a Goldcrest)

Little Auk: Among the birds still passing over England on their way south one was seen at Titchfield Haven on Dec 11 when others were seen off Pagham Harbour and at Eastbourne

Great Spotted Woodpecker: The first report of **drumming** came from the Hamble river valley in the Sarisbury area on Dec 12 (a **Lesser Spotted** had already been seen drumming in north Hampshire on Dec 1)

Swallow: A juvenile was still to be seen in the Thanet area of Kent on Dec 15 (I wonder if anyone is taking bets on a Christmas Day Swallow?)

Pied Wagtail: Two more roost sites were reported this week, both on Dec 15. One was of at least 100 birds at the Conquest Hospital in Hastings, the other of around 200 birds at Eastleigh airport (birds seen in the carpark at 6am warming up for a dawn take off)

Waxwing: Lee Evans Dec 11 round up of UK news mentions a flock of 70 somewhere in Suffolk but the only other report this week is of one bird at a Netherlands site on Dec 17

Wheatear: A very late bird was still to be seen in the Seaton area of Devon (just across the county boundary from Lyme Regis in Dorset) on Dec 16, and a **Desert Wheatear** was still in Northumberland on Dec 15.

Redwing: The large night roost at Long Beech Inclosure in the New Forest which was first reported on Nov 28 reached its highest count of 9655 birds on Dec 16. Among the raptors which attend the roost is a regular **Peregrine** but **Kestrel** and **Goshawk** have also been there

Chiffchaff: Brief song was heard from a bird in the Chandlers Ford area near Eastleigh on Dec 17

Brambling: No large flocks in south Hampshire so far but at least 3 were seen in the West Dean Woods near Chichester on Dec 10

INSECTS

Dragonflies:

Unsurprisingly none seen this week

Butterflies:

Red Admiral was the only species reported this week with just one seen near Eastbourne on Dec 12. A late report for Dec 9 from the Lymington area was of three of the butterflies enjoying fallen apples in the company of **Fieldfares**

Moths:

The only report I have picked up for the week is of a **Death's Head Hawkmoth** found dead in a garden near Eastbourne at dawn on Dec 12 in a place where it was not seen the previous evening so assumed to have flown in overnight

Other Insects:

Selected sightings this week:

Large Willow Aphid (*Tuberolachnus salignus*): Another fascinating observation by Graeme Lyons to be found in the Dec 15 entry headed 'Check out this freaky aphid!' on his blog at <http://analternativenaturalhistoryofsussex.blogspot.com/> Graeme found the insects concerned within 100 yards of the Sussex Wildlife Trust HQ at Henfield and it seems that they are not uncommon on the trunks of **Willow Trees** in winter months but their lifestyle is very unusual to say the least. For a formal account see the Natural History Museum website at <http://www.nhm.ac.uk/nature-online/life/insects-spiders/common-bugs/aphid-watch/index.html> and among the facts that you will learn from this are that this 5mm long mini-beast is the fastest runner in its class; that it is at its most active in snow and frost in January (when all other aphid species have disappeared, leaving only their eggs to over-winter); that no males of this species have ever been seen; that they are found on the tree bark or on the ground moving from tree to tree but never on the leaves where you would expect to find aphids feeding on the juices to be found most easily in the soft parts of the tree; and finally that, while these creatures are relatively easy to find in the winter, none have ever been seen between March and July and no-one knows where they go in this period. Photos can be seen on both websites referred to above.

Yellow Dung Flies: Seen by Brian Fellows on **Hogweed flowers** at Brook Meadow in Emsworth on Dec 15

Walnut Orb Weaver spider (*Nuctenea umbratica*): Richard Roebuck found three of these female spiders on Oak trees in the Henfield area on Dec 15 and his photo of one can be seen at <http://www.sussex-butterflies.org.uk/sightings.html> after you have scrolled down past the initial barrage of adverts. Most of the large female orb web spiders that we see in autumn sunshine have now vanished, leaving their tiny spiderlings to wait for spring but Dick Jones says of this species that females (up to 14 mm long) can be found all year round concealed under the bark of trees and that the species is common everywhere. Further pictures and info can be found at [http://www.eurospiders.com/Nuctenea umbratica.htm](http://www.eurospiders.com/Nuctenea_umbratica.htm) It is also worth a look at [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nuctenea umbratica](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nuctenea_umbratica) which says that this spider's bite can cause a nasty itch.

PLANTS

Lesser Celandine: I had already seen these in flower on Hayling as early as Nov 11 and subsequently seen one in Havant on Dec 7 but this week I saw them at two further sites on Dec 16 and 17. On Dec 16 the first flower was open on the bank of the Lymbourne stream just south of the A27 Havant bypass (and those at Bound Lane in Havant were still flowering). On Dec 17 I found another plant flowering in a Langstone garden

Pale Flax: Still flowering at Durlston on Dec 16

Ivy: Still flowering and attracting flies in the Hollybank Woods at Emsworth on Dec 17

Japanese Spindle (*Euonymus japonicus*): The hard cases which have been protecting the developing fruit of this plant began to split from Dec 10, revealing the colourful orange coloured arils (fruits)

Among other flowers seen this week were **Sweet William**, **Fatsia Japonica**, **Yucca** and **Narcissus** in gardens and **Winter Heliotrope**, **Cow Parsley**, **Hogweed**, **Feverfew**, **Yellow Corydalis**, **Wavy Bittercress**, **Greater Knapweed**, **Prickly Lettuce**, **Cats Ear**, **Nipplewort**, **Japanese Honey Suckle**, **Common Ramping Fumitory**, **Smooth Hawksbeard** and **Thyme-leaved Speedwell** in the wild

OTHER WILDLIFE

Weasel: These animals show little regard for humans and will take advantage of opportunities we unknowingly create for them without a word of thanks. On Dec 12 the first birder to enter one of the hides at Pulborough Brooks had the close company of a **Weasel** which brought a dead mouse into the hide, stashed it behind a loose board, and went off to do more shopping for his forthcoming Christmas dinner - all without apparently noticing the human observer.

Common Starfish (*Asterias rubens*) and Common Cockles: The Rye Bay website marine section (<http://rxwildlife.org.uk/category/all-latest-news/other/>) has entries by Barry Yates showing two results of recent storms which have washed up hundreds of marine creatures to the benefit of gulls and shorebirds

Fungi: Nothing unusual this week - Brian Fellows found a **Shaggy Parasol** in the 'Westbourne Open Space' at Emsworth and found the **Wood Blewitts** still flourishing at Brook Meadow while I still have **Meadow Waxcaps** on my Havant garden lawn and found a cluster of 'pretty' **Honey Fungus** on a log beside Wade Court Road (see my Diary page entry for Dec 17 for photos)

WILDLIFE DIARY AND NEWS FOR DEC 12 - 18 (WEEK 50 OF 2011)

Sat 17 Dec

Round-up of past week

The weather and Christmas preparations have combined to give me little to write about here but there have been a few things worth mentioning so here is a short round-up of observations.

On Monday (Dec 12) I cycled east to Prinsted and came home along the shore with my first stop being at the Thornham Marshes in the vain hope of seeing the **Cattle Egret** which was still there on the previous day (Dec 11) according to Lee Evans. What I did see at Thornham was a collection of sticks placed on top of one of the old 'landing light' poles in imitation of an **Osprey nest** to encourage the birds that spend several weeks here each year on their spring and autumn journeys to consider staying here for the breeding season - this is a Chichester Harbour Conservancy project. To the west of the landing lights a **large raptor** was seen perched on fence posts overlooking a reed filled ditch, occasionally moving to a different post to peer intently into the reeds in the hope of detecting prey (but not finding any while I was there). I wondered if this might be a **Marsh Harrier** but I could not see any lighter markings on the head or neck so I had to assume the bird was a **Buzzard**.

Coming back along Thornham Lane I was impressed by a large plant of **Cow Parsley** covered with many fresh flower umbels and as I left Emsworth Marina to head up Slipper Road I noticed a cluster of tall **Prickly Lettuce** plants with yellow

flower petals showing on one despite the fact that it was after midday when the flowers of this species close (like those of **Goatsbeard**).

On Friday (Dec 16) I cycled to south Hayling with a round of Christmas Cards and before reaching Langstone I found the first **Lesser Celandine** flower open beside the Lymbourne Stream with the winter resident **Grey Wagtail** nearby - a little further south at least one flower head was open on **Japanese Honeysuckle**. On the Hayling Coastal Path I did not bother to look for the **Pale Flax** flowers which I had seen as late as Nov 23 but back at home I saw that they were still flowering at Durlston on this very day. More unexpected flowers were seen at south Hayling - **Sweet William** was in flower in a Grand Parade garden and several **Lesser Celandines** were still out in the ditch beside Bound Lane where I had seen them on Nov 11.

Today I did another round of Christmas card deliveries starting with Nik Knight in the Wade Court area, finding yet another **Lesser Celandine** flowering in his garden. Coming back up Wade Court Road I collected the rather attractive **Honey Fungus** specimens whose photos appear below, then on to Emsworth where **cultivated Narcissi** were flowering in Brian Fellows' garden. After my final stop in the Hollybank Lane area I continued up hill into the woods where I passed a couple of **Clouded Agaric** fungi, then what looked like a mustard yellow 'tennis ball' which had 'blown its top' - this must have been a **Common Earth Ball** which had 'puffed out' all its spores in response to heavy rain. Also in the woods **Wavy Bitter-cress** was still flowering. My final note was of one last flower seen on the **Common Ramping Fumitory** growing up the New Lane allotments fence.

The caps and undersides of two specimens of Honey Fungus found in Wade Court Road today (larger cap is 12 cm across)

One fascinating observation seen on the internet yesterday was Graeme Lyons find of an aphid species which exhibits some very unexpected aspects to its way of life. It is called the **Large Willow Aphid (*Tuberolachnus salignus*)** and is apparently fairly common though I have never heard of it before - it was found on Thursday by Graeme Lyons in cracks in the bark of a **Willow Tree** within 100 yards of the Woods Mill HQ of the Sussex Wildlife Trust where Graeme works and his photos can be seen at <http://analternativenaturalhistoryofsussex.blogspot.com/> (Dec 15 entry headed "Check out this freaky aphid!"). Graeme points us to the Natural History Museum website page on this species (<http://www.nhm.ac.uk/nature-online/life/insects-spiders/common-bugs/aphid-watch/index.html>) and among the facts that you will learn from this are that this 5mm long mini-beast is the fastest runner in its class; that it is at its most active in snow and frost in January (when all other aphid species have disappeared, leaving only their eggs to over-winter); that no males of this species have ever been seen; they are found on the tree bark or on the ground moving from tree to tree but never on the leaves where you would expect to find aphids feeding on the juices to be found most easily in the soft parts of the tree; and finally that, while these creatures are relatively easy to find in the winter, none have ever been seen between March and July and no-one knows where they go in this period.

WILDLIFE DIARY AND NEWS FOR NOV 28 - DEC 4 (WEEK 48 OF 2011)

BIRDS

Red-throated Diver: The best place to see these is currently The Hague (near Rotterdam) in the Netherlands on the sea off the part of the town known as Scheveningen where a flock of 448 on Nov 27 grew to 1083 on Nov 28 and then to 1131 on Dec 12. These are just the counts at the Scheveningen site but on Nov 28 the 1083 there was only part of an overall total of 2680 birds at four sites. The best we could do locally this week was just one off Christchurch Harbour on Nov 29 and one off Pagham Harbour on Dec 2. No **Black-throated** reported this week but one **Great Northern** was in Southampton Water with other singles off the mouth of Chichester Harbour, Christchurch Harbour, Pagham Harbour, Beesands in Devon (between Dartmouth and Start Point) and with two in the west Solent off Lymington

Great Crested Grebe: The biggest flock of these as also on the sea off The Hague with 951 reported off De Vulkaan on Nov 30

Slavonian Grebe: A traditional winter site for these is off the mouth of Pagham Harbour and 11 had been there on Nov 26 but only 3 were there on Dec 2. This week's hotspot for them on our south coast was the West Solent with 4 off Lymington on Dec 2. Runner up was the Broadmarsh area of Langstone Harbour with 2 seen on Nov 30

Black-necked Grebe: The total in Studland Bay plus the adjacent part of Poole Harbour was up to 49 on Nov 29 but the only report from the Solent Harbours this week was of 3 in the Fareham Creek area of Portsmouth Harbour

Shag: Since one was seen inside the mouth of Langstone Harbour on Nov 7 there have been no further reports from that area and this week's news is of 25 on the sea off Christchurch Harbour (probably local birds that breed on the Isle of Wight)

Cattle Egret: Lee Evans latest bulletin on Nov 30 said there were two of these in Britain, one of them being the bird at Thornham Marshes on Thorney Island

Great White Egret: Birds remain at the Blashford Lakes and at Dungeness but there has also been a small flurry of reports from new sites this week. One flying over the West Moors area of Dorset on Nov 30 could have been the Blashford bird taking a day trip (it was back at Blashford on Dec 3) but it may have been part of an influx as on Nov 30 the RBA daily bulletin reported a total of 15 birds in Britain. Dec 2 brought a report of one in a sheep field at Barnham (north of Bognor Regis) and Dec 3 brought news of one over the M27 just west of Southampton and another (maybe the same) at Titchfield Haven

Bewick's Swan: No big movements but on Dec 3 a party of 5 (including one juvenile) turned up at the Blashford Lakes near Ringwood, hopefully to remain in the Ibsley area through the winter as a token remnant of the regular flock that used to spend the winter there (182 were there in the 1989/90 winter)

Brent Goose: The presence of some 600 birds feeding on the Warblington Farm fields between Langstone and Emsworth on Dec 2 marked a new stage in the winter routine of these local birds

Shelduck: Another sign of the progress of winter in the Langstone area was the sight of 18 Shelduck visible from the Ship Inn at Langstone on Dec 3 (in past winters the count from here has usually risen to around 100 in January)

Pintail: There are plenty of these now in southern England (e.g. 110 at Pulborough Brooks on Dec 2) but the sight of the first four back on the Emsworth shore on Nov 30 was another local milestone

Fudge Duck (Pochard x Ferruginous hybrid): Martin Gillingham was the first to report the return of this regular winter visitor to Budds Farm pools on Nov 18 and Martin saw the bird again when he visited the pools on Nov 30

Surf Scoter: The bird which flew west through the west Solent and Poole Harbour on Nov 21 seems to have ended up at Polzeath (near Wadebridge and Padstow on the north coast of Cornwall) where one was seen on Dec 3

Smew: The number at Dungeness RSPB on Dec 2 had risen to 3

Red-breasted Merganser: A flock of 16 were fishing off Langstone village on Dec 3 while a total of 78 could be seen in Langstone Harbour from the Milton shore on Nov 27

Goosander: The roost flock at the Blashford Lakes near Ringwood was up to 76 on Dec 1

White-tailed Sea Eagle: A sighting of one at Eemshaven on the Netherlands coast where it meets the German border near Emden could be an indication of one heading our way. Last winter's local bird which was in the New Milton area of Hampshire through January and then in the Basingstoke area from Feb 23 to Mar 13 eventually got cold feet about crossing the North Sea when it reached the Norfolk coast at the beginning of April and settled down in Lincolnshire until the beginning of August. There was one final report of it over Tangmere near Chichester on Aug 18 but there has been no news of it since then though there have been eight reports of the species on the near continent

Rough-legged Buzzard: The bird in the Arun valley near Burpham was still around on Dec 2 though it was only one of 12 that Lee Evans told us were in Britain on Nov 30

Osprey: I thought the report of one still in Bedfordshire on Nov 16 would be the last for the year but on Dec 2 one was seen flying north west over the Tesco store at Kingsbridge on the southernmost tip of Devon. With such a mild winter could that have been the first spring arrival in Britain? (not serious)

Avocet: The only report I have picked up this week is of 18 at Farlington Marshes on Dec 2, increasing to 19 on Dec 3

Golden Plover: A flock of 200 was on Gander Down (Cheesefoot Head area east of Winchester) on Nov 27 and 100 were at the Bunny Meadows along the River Hamble just upstream of Warsash on Nov 29 but I personally was pleased to see just 22 on the mud east of Langstone village on Dec 3

Little Stint: A bird wintering in the Fishbourne Channel near Chichester was seen again on Nov 27 where the R Lavant flows into the harbour. It was seen there previously on Nov 8. A wintering **Whimbrel** was also there in Nov 27

Purple Sandpiper: The number at Southsea Castle was up to 10 on Dec 1 but other reports this week include 20 at Christchurch Harbour on Nov 29 and 29 at Penzance in Cornwall on Dec 2

Black-tailed Godwit: Recent rain may have encouraged some to move inland to feed on worms in wet grassland and this is reflected in counts at Pulborough Brooks of 21 on Nov 30 and 28 on Dec 2. There had been 20 there on Nov 15 but prior to that the highest count there this autumn was 6

Spotted Redshank: The single bird which frequents the Nore Barn stream at Emsworth was joined by a second bird twice this week

Grey Phalarope: 7 were present in Britain on Nov 25 and the total in Britain and the near continent may have been 18 on Nov 27. Two were reported on Dec 2

Black-headed Gull: Several of these now have almost complete 'black heads' as they grow their spring plumage

Sandwich Tern: More than usual seem to be wintering in the Solent Harbours this year and on Dec 3 a flock of 17 were seen together inside the mouth of Chichester Harbour

Little Auk: A count of 164 at Flamborough Head in Yorkshire on Nov 28 dropped to just 6 there on Nov 29

Puffin: See <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-hampshire-16010963> for the story of a **Puffin** found on Nov 30 cowering at the foot of some steps at the Royal Hampshire County Hospital in Winchester having failed to locate the A & E entrance. It was taken to the Hart Wildlife Rescue Centre near Alton but sadly died on Dec 3

Stock Dove: There have been fewer than usual reports of **Stock Dove flocks** in southern England this autumn. On Oct 31 a flock of 40 were at Cissbury Ring near Worthing, Christchurch Harbour reported 16 heading west overhead on Nov 6 and Durlston had 89 over on Nov 17. This week Tony Gutteridge saw a flock of 80 on the Warblington Farm fields between the farm and Pook Lane

Little Owl: Tony Gutteridge also told me that the Warblington Farmer (Henry Young) had recently seen a **Little Owl** on the roof of his barn at dusk on more than one recent evening

Short-eared Owls: The bonanza of these continues and on Nov 27 two more were seen coming in off the sea at Rye Harbour. On Dec 2 Brian Fellows watched one hunting by day over the Eames Farm fields west of the road to Thorney village and north of the Great Deeps on Thorney Island. Also on Dec 2 one was hunting Farlington Marshes and was still there on Dec 3 having been joined by a second bird. Also on Dec 3 the group at Waltham Brooks at Pulborough had increased to 5. Several sites have now reported 5 Owls hunting together but the target to beat remains the 6 at Barnham Levels (north of Bognor) on Nov 22

Common Swift: One was over the Scillies on Nov 22 and another was seen at Truro in Cornwall on Nov 25

Lesser Spotted Woodpecker: On Dec 1 one was drumming (and seen well) at Bramshill Plantation near Fleet in north Hampshire

Swallow: 5 were at Folkestone on Nov 25 and there were singles in Devon on Nov 27, in Cornwall on Dec 1 and at Portland on Dec 2

House Martin: The last report I know of was of one over the North Foreland in Kent on Nov 26

Waxwing: Three reports this week, all from the north of England. On Nov 28 a flock of 31 were in the Bradford area of Yorkshire, on Nov 30 just 1 was at Bolton in Lancs, and on Dec 2 two were seen near Halifax in Yorkshire

Duncock: The only **Duncock song** I know of this week came from two birds at Nore Barn wood in Emsworth on Dec 2. **Robin and Song Thrush** are singing daily, **Wood Pigeon, Collared Dove, and Wren** can be heard occasionally while other species that you may hear are **Skylark, Goldfinch, Goldcrest, Coal, Blue and Great Tits** and **Yellowhammer** (one heard at Stansted East Park on Dec 3). One songster forgotten from the above list is of course **Cetti's Warbler** and at least one **Dartford Warbler** was singing in the New Forest on Nov 27

Wheatear: A **Northern Wheatear** was still to be seen in Devon on Dec 2 and there was a **Desert Wheatear** still in Shropshire on Nov 26

Redwing: Flocks of **Fieldfare** are now commonplace though there has been no cold weather to drive them into gardens so far but an estimate of **8770 Redwing** in the Janesmoor Plain area of the New Forest (between Fritham and the A31) on Dec 2 was noteworthy.

Garden Warbler: A report of one in a Penzance garden on Nov 30 suggests that others may also have stayed on as a result of mild weather

Blackcap: Four reports of these newly seen in gardens show that the winter birds from central Europe have definitely arrived. More than one report mentions them feeding on apples but the Lewes garden which attracted most (3 males plus 3 females) had a grapevine with grapes on offer as their food

Great Grey Shrike: One has been in the Burley/Ringwood area of the New Forest for some time but on Dec 3 another turned up on Half Moon Common between

Cadnam and West Wellow to the north. On Nov 25 the RBA News had reports of 10 birds in the UK

Reed Bunting: Of local interest only a group of four were seen in the southeast shore field of Warblington farm on Dec 2

Gyrfalcon: Less local, but indicative of coming cold weather, was the first **Gyrfalcon** of the winter reported by Lee Evans on Nov 30 to have arrived on Orkney

Escapees: A number of Sussex birders suddenly took an interest this week in the **Laysan Duck** seen at Pagham Harbour back on Nov 20 - the general tenor of their comments was that the species is not uncommon in captivity in Sussex, it breeds easily and can be bought from several dealers

INSECTS

Dragonflies:

Species reported this week:

Southern Hawker (last seen on Nov 27 in the New Forest and Norfolk), **Migrant Hawker** (in the New Forest on Nov 27 and at Edburton on the Sussex Downs on Dec 1), **Common Darter** (seen in Norfolk and Gloucestershire on Nov 27 and at Pegwell Bay in Kent on Nov 30)

Butterflies:

Species reported this week:

Brimstone (last on the Isle of Wight on Nov 27), **Red Admiral** (still flying in Sussex on Dec 3)

Moths:

Selected sightings this week:

Note - I assume that readers are as ignorant of moths as I am and so I attempt to provide background info about each species through links to sources of expert knowledge. **For each species two links are given.** The first is to the **UKMoths** entry for that species giving one or more photos (if more than one thumbnail is shown clicking it will cause it to replace the large image) plus background info at the national level. The second is to the **HantsMoths** entry giving similar information at the Hampshire county level - clicking the Phenology, etc buttons gives charts relating to records in the Hampshire database and the meaning of the colours in the Flighttime Guide can be found at http://www.hantsmoths.org.uk/flying_tonight.php Finally note that a **Sussex Moths** site is under development at <http://www.sussexmothgroup.org.uk/>

1932 Spring Usher *Agriopsis leucophaearia* found at Wadhurst near Crowborough on Nov 19 (does not normally fly until Feb) - see <http://ukmoths.org.uk/show.php?id=5099>

For the HantsMoths info go to <http://www.hantsmoths.org.uk/species/1932.php>

1933 Scarce Umber *Agriopsis aurantiaria* possible id of many male moths flying around West Sussex trees (on which wingless females were present) on Nov 19 - see <http://ukmoths.org.uk/show.php?id=1799>

For the HantsMoths info go to <http://www.hantsmoths.org.uk/species/1933.php>

1984 Hummingbird Hawk-moth *Macroglossum stellatarum* feeding on plants at West Chiltington near Pulborough on Dec 2 - see

<http://ukmoths.org.uk/show.php?id=2198>

For the HantsMoths info go to <http://www.hantsmoths.org.uk/species/1984.php>

2187 Common Quaker *Orthosia cerasi* found at Wadhurst near Crowborough on Nov 27 (does not normally fly until Mar) - see

<http://ukmoths.org.uk/show.php?id=3947>

For the HantsMoths info go to <http://www.hantsmoths.org.uk/species/2187.php>

Other Insects:

Selected sightings this week:

Shieldbugs: The Nov 27 entry on the Rye Harbour website reports both an adult **Bronze Shieldbug (*Troilus luridus*)** and a nymph **Green Shieldbug (*Palomena prasina*)** found in an East Sussex wood on Nov 27 - see

<http://rxwildlife.org.uk/category/all-latest-news/insects/> for photo

Stag Beetle larva: When chopping wood for the fire at his home on Portsdown on Dec 2 John Goodspeed found at least one of these larvae but does not say whether it survived the chop!

PLANTS

Traveller's Joy (aka Old Man's Beard): This is still abundant in seed but I was surprised to see it in fresh flower on Portsdown Hill on Dec 1 (see my Diary entry for that day for more detail and photos of this and other finds on Portsdown that day including **Musk Mallow, Tansy, Musk and Spear Thistles, Field Forget-me-not, Ploughman's Spikemard, Ox-eye Daisies, Burnet Saxifrage, Small Scabious, Yellow-wort, Wild Parsnip and Round-leaved Cranesbill**)

Field Pennycress: I thought this had been eliminated from the Juniper Square site in Havant where I found a mass of flowering and seeding plants on Feb 28 this year but two or three plants were once again flowering there on Dec 2

Violets: Sweet Violets were flowering in Havant and Emsworth this week while

Dog Violets were among a list of species still flowering at Rye Harbour and thereabouts on Dec 4 (see <http://rxwildlife.org.uk/category/all-latest-news/plants/> entry for Dec 4)

Small-flowered Cranesbill: Still flowering in Juniper Square at Havant on Dec 2

Cherry Plum blossom: Reported to be out in a Seagull Lane garden at Emsworth on Nov 30

Dog Rose: Still bearing a few flowers at coastal sites around Havant and Emsworth up to Dec 3 at least

Cow Parsley: Four fresh plants were flowering close to Warblington Farm on Dec 2

Wild Primrose: Brian Fellows found a cluster of these flowering at Walter's Copse at Newtown on the Isle of Wight on Nov 27 and they were also seen in the Rye Harbour area on Dec 4

Wall Germander: This is included in the list of plants flowering in the Rye Harbour area on Dec 4, as is **Dyer's Greenweed**

Common Broomrape: A very unexpected find flowering in an Emsworth garden on Nov 28

Common Teazel: Several freshly flowering plants were found in the Broadmarsh area at Havant on Nov 24 and more were seen near Rye Harbour on Dec 4

Cultivated Daffodils: Some plants growing as a crop in fields in the Posbrook area near Titchfield were already starting to flower on Nov 30

OTHER WILDLIFE

Hare: The Havant Wildlife Group saw one on Dec 3 in the fields north of Woodlands Lane (which runs from the east end of Stansted East Park to Walderton)

Smooth Newt: Brian Banks is the first to report **a Newt returning to his garden pond** at Northiam (on the A28 just south of the R Rother as the road comes north from Hastings). He says this is later than usual but understandably so as it has been so dry that his pond has almost dried out - the arrival of the **Newt** co-incided with the first heavy rain.

Three-spined Stickleback: The Quarry Lake at Rye Harbour currently has lots of these in saline water and on Nov 27 Barry Yates listed the bird species (from Little Grebe to Egrets and Redshank) feasting on them but all taking care to swallow them head first to prevent the spines sticking in their throats. To see Barry's **video of a Little Grebe enjoying the feast** go to <http://rxwildlife.org.uk/category/all-latest-news/birds/> (entry for Nov 27)

Fungi: Last week I was puzzling over the identity of **an Amanita species** which Brian Fellows had found at the Chichester lakes and on Nov 28 I thought I had found two more examples of the same species on the mound above the Budds Farm pools in Havant but when I sought help from Dr Stuart Skeates of the Hampshire Fungus Recording Group he told me that the species found at Chichester was **Amanita vaginata (Grisette)** but that what I had found was **Volvariella gloiocephala (Stubble Rosegill)** making me realise that my enthusiasm to prove that the two were the same had led me to commit the common crime of emphasising the similarities between the two finds while ignoring the differences! On Dec 1 while on Portsdown I took photos of two fungi that were abundant there - the **Yellow Fieldcap Bolbitius vitellinus** and the very common **Sulphur Tuft Hypholoma fasciculare** - and these can be seen on my Diary page for Dec 1. I also found and photographed a **Field Blewitt Lepista saeva**. Another local find by the Havant Wildlife Group on Dec 3 in fields east of Stansted Park was of the **Stinking Dapperling Lepiota cristata**. On Nov 30 my Diary page has a photo of a **Meadow Waxcap Hygrocybe pratensis** which had just appeared on my lawn.

Very much more interesting this week have been the fungal finds, made with the help of Howard Matcham, by Graeme Lyons in a wood called Ladies Winkins

whose location I have failed to discover but it is near Stane Street where that Roman Road sets out from Chichester on its way to London. The find which was of most interest to me was of a version of the very common Honey Fungus called **Dark Honey Fungus *Armillaria ostoyae*** which is a specialist in killing conifers and you can see Graeme's photo of it at

<http://1.bp.blogspot.com/-4K121FCu1IM/TtSWDBEPEBI/AAAAAAAAACBo/YlwcA3eN2wl/s1600/Fungi+day+128.JPG> - you may not find this species in your books but it is apparently the species which I have long heard of as a fungus occurring in the USA and **thought to be the biggest living organism in the world** covering 2,200 acres of Oregon (see a piece in The Independent newspaper at <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/science/oregons-monster-mushroom-is-world-s-biggest-living-thing-710278.html>). Graeme might rate another of his finds higher as it was of **a species only known (so far) to occur at one place in the whole of Europe - the Ladies Winkins wood**. This is called ***Jumillera cinerea*** and an uninspiring photo of it can be seen at http://2.bp.blogspot.com/-ImmbpN_7lqg/TtJwuZz8aWI/AAAAAAAAACAA/7DvJFEDRRFE/s1600/Fungi+day+020.JPG

Graeme describes and has photos of several other fascinating fungi in his blog at <http://analternativenaturalhistoryofsussex.blogspot.com/> where you can see and read about the **Christmas Cake Mushroom** (Graeme's suggested name for ***Agaricus macrocarpus***), ***Tricholoma scioides*** (no English name but called the **Dark Knight** by Graeme), **Velvet Toughshank** (not, I think, to be confused with the **Velvet Shank** which appears in times of hard frost), **Blushing Wood Mushroom *Agaricus silvaticus***, **Terracotta Hedgehog *Hydnum rufescens***, **Dead Moll's Fingers *Xylaria longipes*** (not to be confused with **Dead Man's Fingers *Xylaria polymorpha***), ***Ramaria flaccida*** (no English name that I can find), **Dusky Puffball *Lycoperdon nigrescens***, and some normal **Wood Mushrooms *Agaricus silvicola***. If you are still keen for more scroll on down through pictures of mosses and international moss expert Howard Matcham and you will see Graeme's photos of a pretty fungus which I also found this week on logs outside the small meadow close to the west end of Mill Lane at Langstone - the **Wrinkled Peach *Rhodotus palmatus***.

After writing the above summary I found that Brian Fellows had updated his Emsworth Wildlife website with news and a photo of a very colourful fungal find made today (Dec 4) at Brook Meadow - see <http://www.emsworthwildlife.hampshire.org.uk/0-0-222-wood-blewitt-sglp-bm-04.12.11.jpg> I have only seen the photo but I will suggest to him that bright Amethyst colour of the caps looks much more like that of an Amethyst Deceiver than of any Blewitt (these can be brightly coloured below but not on the cap). See <http://www.first-nature.com/fungi/laccaria-amethystina.php> for a typical picture of the Deceiver and for a good example of a Wood Blewitt see <http://www.first-nature.com/fungi/lepista-nuda.php> or for Field Blewitt see <http://www.first-nature.com/fungi/lepista-saeva.php> Having spoken to Brian he says he has other photos which look much more like what I think of as a Wood Blewitt and that he will add one to his website so see <http://www.emsworthwildlife.hampshire.org.uk/0-0-0-wildlife-diary.htm> before making up your mind!

I have now now seen the second picture and fully agree that it is a Wood Blewitt though I still think the first picture has cap colours that look just like the Amethyst

[Deceiver photo in the above link - just shows how difficult fungus identification from photographs can be.](#)

WILDLIFE DIARY AND NEWS FOR NOV 28 - DEC 4 (WEEK 48 OF 2011)

Fri 2 Dec

Langstone to Nore Barn

This morning the forecast of a clear blue sky was correct as I set out to walk along the shore to Nore Barn at Emsworth via Langstone. To get a few more plants on my December list I started out through Juniper Square where I found the expected **Yellow Flowered Strawberry** and **Small Flowered Cranesbill** but had an unexpected bonus in the shape of two or three fresh young plants of **Field Pennycrest** and one garden escape plant of **Cyperus eragrostis** which Stace calls **Pale Galingale** but the Fitters call **American Galingale**.

The Lymbourne stream alongside the Wade Court Chinese Water Garden had its regular **Grey Wagtail** and the banks of the stream had flowers on the **Dewberry** version of bramble while, just before turning off the Billy Line to cross Russell's Field to Langstone, I confirmed that the **Japanese Honeysuckle** was still flowering.

Reaching the point on the shoreline where the official path turns inland to go past Warblington church I stopped to scan the expanse of mud exposed at the bottom of the tide and now covered with a full winter show of birds including some 20 **Knot** and hundreds of **Bar-tailed Godwit** lining the distant water's edge (a group of them proved their identity by taking to the wing and flying past me). Even further out on the small area of remaining water were 8 diving ducks which must have been **Mergansers**. Before moving on I looked inland and watched a **Fox** exploring the western hedge of Warblington cemetery.

After rounding Conigar Point I had a look in the farm field from which most of the wild flowers have vanished but their interest was replaced by a flock of around **600 Brent** feeding on the two fields between Conigar Point and the Church Path. While I was there something disturbed them and the great mass of geese rose into the air - at least 200 came down into the shore field in front of me.

At the 'corner' of the farm where you turn north to Nore Barn wood four **Reed Buntings** took flight and headed towards Thorney Island but changed their mind to return to the field hedge, giving me good views of them and at least one fresh **Dog Rose flower**.

At the 'Maisemore Gardens' stream there was no **Spotted Redshank** but I did enjoy the sight of **two male Pintail** on the mud, and as I turned to start the walk home along the north side of the wood I noticed a large number of **House Sparrows** active in the mass of Ivy which now totally covers the remains of the Nore Barn building. A little further along the path the first of two **Dunlocks** burst into song though they still sing only occasionally, unlike the **Song Thrushes** which can now be heard daily. Nearing the west end of the wood I was impressed by a circular tower of greenery arising vertically from the stubble of the field north of the wood - this turned out to be an over-enthusiastic plant of what I (and Stace!) call **Prickly Sow-thistle** but I see that the Fitters call **Rough Sow-thistle**!

Here, where a broad opening into the wood normally has a broad carpet of **Sweet Violets** (none today) I turned into the wood to see if there might be any flowers on the patch of what I think of as the intermediate coloured violets that (in spring) have flowers half way between the Violet at the north of the wood and the few remaining Pink ones at the south. I did not find Violets but did tick **Butchers Broom** flowers and then, emerging from the wood by the first available path near its south west corner, I added to my knowledge of the plants in this wood by finding **Japanese Honeysuckle** flowering entwined among the brambles growing along the woodland edge. I may have seen the flowers here before and ignored them as just **Honeysuckle** but at this time of year the **Japanese** species is more likely to be flowering and its identity can be confirmed by the fact that the flowers of our native species grow in a single terminal whorl at the end of strand whereas those of the **Japanese** species grow in pairs from the axils of opposite leaves before the end of the strand,

Walking back across the large field which has the Church Path along its southern edge I found one luxuriant growth of **Dwarf Spurge** and many plants of both **Sharp** and **Round-leaved Fluellen**, many with unopen flower buds but one showing yellow from its partially open flowers.

Beyond the Church, as I rounded the corner of the 'Black Barn' to head north on Church Lane, I came on the first of four tall freshly flowering plants of **Cow Parsley**, the last items to go on my note pad.

Thu 1 Dec

Lots to see on Portsdown

Morning sunshine with no wind when rain had been forecast sent me on a visit to the area of Portsdown below Fort Southwick. By the time I got there the sun had been hidden by high cloud but the visibility over Portsmouth Harbour and across to the Isle of Wight was excellent.

My first destination was Portchester Common where there was a good show of small yellowish fungi growing from dung - this is **Bolbitius vittelinus** or the **Yellow Fieldcap** and deserved a couple of photos.

Single Yellow Fieldcap growing from old dung on Portchester Common and a trio of them nearby

Heading downhill to the area close to the Paulsgrove estate I was surprised to find one plant of **Ploughman's Spikenard** in flower but not looking very photogenic so I did not get my camera out again until I came on this **Musk Thistle** in full flower.

Musk Thistle plant and an out of focus close up of a flower

On the climb up to the area above the Paulsgrove chalkpit I passed a small group of **Holly Trees** covered in berries and sheltering a big patch of **Butcher's Broom** with their attractive 'passion flowers' but I did not get the camera out again until I came on several patches of young and colourful **Sulphur Tuft** fungi.

One of several patches of young Sulphur Tuft fungi

The final section of my walk was alongside the road below Fort Southwick where two small roundabouts slow the traffic coming and going to the Driving Test site and here, to my surprise, I found a cluster of unexpected wild flowers. By the eastern of the two roundabouts **Old Man's Beard (or Travellers Joy)** had fresh flowers, as did **Tansy** and **Ox-eye Daisies** and in the roadside grass was a cluster of **Field Blewitt** fungi.

Old Man's Beard in flower near a fresh plant of Tansy

Cap and gills of Field Blewitt in roadside grass

By the western roundabout I found **Musk Mallow** and **Round Leaved Cranesbill** while just beyond it several flowering plants of **Field Forget-me-not** were poking through wire mesh fencing and not photogenic

Out of focus Musk Mallow flowers

Round Leaved Cranesbill plant with a close up of its flowers

Wed 30 Nov

[\(Link to previous day's entry\)](#)

More on Fungi and a long ride with little to report

With blue sky promised for the whole morning I set out to enjoy a long cycle ride via north Emsworth, Stansted House and the Ems valley, returning via Aldsworth Pond, Westbourne and Brook Meadow at Emsworth. When the sun did shine the views of green fields in the Ems valley from Walderton south to Racton were magnificent but for much of the time clouds and few raindrops were the order of the day and my notepad remained empty. Probably the most interesting species seen was a single example of **Hard Fern** (which likes acid soils and so is not common in the coastal area around Havant) in Southleigh Forest and the most striking was **a very dead and decomposed young Deer** lying in the road from Aldsworth to Westbourne. I did see several fungi, but nothing new, and the best in the way of bird life was **Coal Tit and Stock Dove song** and the only notable flowering plants were **Wavy Bittercress and Wood Avens!**

Back in Havant when shopping after lunch I did better by walking down a narrow alley between brick walls and seeing what I think was an escaped **French Cranesbill (*Geranium endressii*)** flowering atop one of the walls (where it definitely was not planted!)

Best of all was a new **Waxcap Fungus** which had appeared overnight on my garden lawn - a **Meadow Waxcap** of which a photo appears below though the photo makes the cap appear pale where to the naked eye it was a pretty shade of pink measuring 5 cm across and standing 3 cm high

Meadow Waxcap on my lawn

Settling down indoors I found I had an email from Dr Stuart Skeates of the Hampshire Fungus Recording Group giving the **true identity of the 'potential Death Caps'** that I have written about in my last two entries and, by implication, pointing

out that I had committed the common error of those amateurs who jump to conclusions by saying 'this specimen looks like that one, therefore they are the same'. I full agree with Dr. Skeates conclusion that the species found at the Chichester Lakes by Brian Fellows was *Amanita vaginata* (Grisette) whereas the one found by myself on Budds Mound was a young example of the *Stubble Rosegill* (now called *Volvariella gloiocephala* but appearing in old books as *V. speciosa*)

Mon 28 Nov

[\(Link to previous day's entry\)](#)

More Potential Death Caps and other fungi

This morning I walked down the Langbrook stream and across the South Moors before returning along the shore to Langstone to come home via Wade Lane, noting 69 plant species in flower plus a few good birds and several fungi, amongst them being two fresh specimens of the species seen at Chichester last week which I still think may be closely related to *Death Caps*.

More of the fungi below but first the plants among which were *Small-flowered Cranesbill*, *Yellow Iris* and fresh *Meadow Sweet* plus a new patch of *Small Nettle* among the *Common Fumitory* around the new carpark on Budds Mound, *Common Vetch* and *Dog Roses* along the South Moors shore and *Sweet Violets* along Mill Lane at Langstone where the *leaves of the Hairy Garlic* which I 'discovered' last year caught my eye and proved their identity when I got out my hand lens and saw the hairs protruding from the edges of the leaves. Later, passing Wade Court, I confirmed Brian Fellows recent observation that the fruits (arils) of the *Japanese Spindle* were beginning to burst out of their 'shells' and show their bright orange colour.

Little of note among the birds but I was surprised when, at the Budds Farm pools, I had great difficulty in spotting just one *Coot* - where have they all gone? High over the Moors a single *Snipe* was seen in flight and a single *Rock Pipit* was heard and seen on the shore. Best bird came when I was nearly home and passing the Lymbourne Stream watercress beds (well hidden in a private garden just north of the A27) - from the sky came the clear call of a *Green Sandpiper* flying over reminding me that one of these birds is likely to spend some of his time in those watercress beds during the winter.

Coming to the fungi I started off with a nice fresh cluster of *Honey Fungus* on a stump by the Langbrook stream before reaching the old rubbish tip mound above the Budds Farm pools where I noted *Weeping Widows* and *Shaggy Inkcaps* but the main find here was of two fresh specimens of what I feel sure is the same '*Amanita type*' toadstool that Brian Fellows found at Chichester a week ago. I brought home one example to be measured, dissected and photographed - hopefully, with these details, I may get an opinion on the identity of the species and its status as a 'death bringer' from the Hampshire Fungus Recording Group.

The Chichester specimens had already shown that the species had a pure white spore print and could sometimes show evidence that it had worn a 'universal veil' when it emerged from the ground (one specimen from there had the remains of the veil adhering to its cap but the remnants around the base of the stem were less obvious). The two specimens found this morning did not have remnants of their veil on their caps but those caps were very 'greasy' and the veil would not easily adhere

to it though there were possible indications that some had stuck to the rim of the cap - what they did have in both cases was a definite volva around the base of the stem, but of a 'floppy' nature which could easily have become adherent to the stem in time (as seemed to be the case with the older Chichester specimens).

The photos below illustrate the various features of the specimen I brought home today. The cap was 65mm across and very greasy. The gills were initially pure white and free (they did not reach the stem) and the stem was 90mm tall and had a bulbous base 20mm across tapering to 10 mm at its apex and there was no hint of a ring on the stem but an obvious volva at the base. I did not notice any smell and certainly did not taste it!

Cap of Amanita type fungus from Budds Mound (see Nov 25 for examples from Chichester)

Cap section of Amanita type fungus from Budds Mound showing 'free' gills

Stem of Amanita type fungus from Budds Mound (broken when I dropped it!)

Stem base of Amanita type fungus from Budds Mound showing 'volva'

Gills of Amanita type fungus from Budds Mound

WILDLIFE DIARY AND NEWS FOR NOV 21 - 27 (WEEK 47 OF 2011)

BIRDS

Red-throated Diver: A massive new arrival on Nov 26 brought 1068 of these to two sites in the Netherlands after 102 had been seen at one site on the Normandie coast of France on Nov 25.

Little Grebe: A count of more than 40 on the lagoon at Pagham village on Nov 26 suggests that we should soon be seeing full winter flocks at regular sites along the coast such as the outflow of the Hermitage stream into Langstone Harbour at Broadmarsh and, on the other side of Farlington Marshes, the area where Broom Channel flows in the Ports Creek channel

Great Crested Grebe: 65 were seen off the Hayling Oysterbeds on Nov 20

Slavonian Grebe: Another regular winter flock has started to form off the mouth of Pagham Harbour with 3 birds seen there on Nov 22 and around 11 on Nov 26

Black-necked Grebe: There were 31 in the Studland area (including 6 inside Poole Harbour) on Nov 22 and Nov 23 brought the first report from Portland Harbour where 5 were seen

Bittern: Titchfield Haven had its first of the winter on Nov 25 and Hatch Pond in Poole Harbour has had 3 since Nov 19

Cattle Egret: There has been no mention of the Thornham Marshes bird on Thorney Island since Nov 15 but on Nov 24 a 'new' bird turned up at Christchurch Harbour but did not stay there

Glossy Ibis: Single birds remain at Dungeness and at Christchurch Harbour up to this weekend

Spoonbill: There were still 11 at Brownsea Island in Poole Harbour on Nov 25

Whitefront Goose: Pulborough Brooks has had 12 this week while Pett Level near Rye Bay had 13 on Nov 20 and Abbotsbury had 5 on Nov 25

Greylag Goose: Two 'white' geese seen with 160 Canadas on Farlington Marshes this week appear to be mutant Greylags

Shelduck: There were more than 80 at Farlington Marshes when I was there on Nov 24 and when I was at Langstone Pond on Nov 25 I could see six on the mud off Pook Lane (the first I have seen there of what should become a regular winter flock which has in past winters had up to 100 birds)

Ferruginous x Pochard hybrid (aka Fudge Duck): The first report for this winter of what may be the bird that has been seen each winter on the Budds Farm Pools at Havant since the autumn of 1999 was there on Nov 18 but there have been no more reports so far

Scaup: A male bird has been at Rye Harbour on Nov 13 and 25 and another was on Leythorne Lake close to the Bognor Road roundabout on the Chichester bypass on Nov 25 (but was not seen there on Nov 26)

Long-tailed Duck: One remains at the Dungeness RSPB reserve and a newcomer was in Poole Harbour on Nov 25

Common Scoter: Two females were off the Hayling Oysterbeds on Nov 18 and 20

Surf Scoter: One which was seemingly still en route to its winter destination was seen in the Lymington area and at Christchurch Harbour on Nov 21

Velvet Scoter: Three were in Poole Harbour from Nov 19 to 25 and four were at Exmouth in Devon on Nov 23

Bufflehead: The long staying bird at Helston in Cornwall was still there on Nov 26 (arrived Oct 27)

Goldeneye: There has been a general arrival this week with a count of 14 on the Blashford Lakes at Ringwood on Nov 21 after 9 were in Langstone Harbour and 2 were seen at Newtown Harbour (Isle of Wight) on Nov 18. On Nov 26 six were in Pagham Harbour and one at the Chichester gravel pits

Smew: One redhead was still at the Dungeness RSPB site on Nov 26 (arrived Oct 25)

Red-breasted Merganser: 75 were in Langstone Harbour on Nov 20 when 40 were in Chichester Harbour. Portsmouth Harbour had 35 on Nov 23

Water Rail: A large number of these fly long distances to spend the winter along the south coast and the newcomers inevitably interact with those resident here leading to an increase in their vocal disputes. On Nov 21 I heard the 'Pik pik' calls of one coming from an overgrown section of the Langbrook stream here in Havant and on Nov 25 I heard two loudly interacting in the same way from the bank of Ivy Lake at Chichester, then that evening at Langstone Pond I heard the loud 'screams' of one, again unseen

Great Bustard: News from the team which have been introducing Russian Bustard chicks to England, releasing them on Salisbury Plain, appeared on the Devon Birding site this week and I read that there are **currently 17 Bustards in the wild in England**. This year's released birds have been out for eight weeks now, and most are starting to roam more widely around their original release sites. Some however have been rather more adventurous than others! Black Six, named after the numbered black wing tag she carries, was last seen by project staff on the day of her release. She spent a couple of weeks on a neighbouring farm, but then went off the radar. At dawn on 5th November, a **Great Bustard** was seen flying south from Portland Bill in Dorset, and then the following lunchtime we received a report of Black Six in a field at South Huish, near Kingsbridge in Devon. She flew north an hour later. This week [21 November 2011] we received a report of another bustard, this time without wingtags, but with a radio transmitter, on land owned by The National Trust near Langton Matravers in south Purbeck (Dorset). They certainly are getting around"

Conservationists are looking forward to seeing where the bustards will fly to next, but are appealing to the public for help.

Trace Williams Great Bustard LIFE Manager for RSPB said: "Of the 17 birds in the wild we are able to track nine directly as they have radio and satellite transmitters. The remaining birds however have no transmitters so we need people who see them, and notice the very visible numbered wing tags, to let us know by calling 01980 671466."

Investigating further on my own I found that the project started in 2004 and in 2009 an introduced pair nested in the wild and raised the first two chicks to hatch here while contributing to the European monetary crisis by securing a grant of £1.8 million from the European Union. For those who want to keep in touch with the project their website is as <http://greatbustard.org/>

Avocet: Poole Harbour had more than 600 wintering birds on Nov 22 while the number in the Exe estuary had halved from 240 on Nov 17 to 120 on Nov 20 - maybe they had moved further west as 60 were at Saltash on the Devon/Cornwall boundary that day. Farlington Marshes had 9 birds during the week but the number at Nutbourne Bay was up to 25 with 9 or 10 in Pagham Harbour

Purple Sandpiper: The number at Southsea Castle was 4 on Nov 18 when 9 were at Christchurch Harbour (increasing to 11 on Nov 26) but this week's winner has been Brighton Marina with up to 18

Wilson's Snipe: One of these trans-Atlantic vagrants from Canada has been in the Scillies since Oct 5 and this week it has been photographed (though in an un-natural pose!) - if you want to see it go to the entry for Nov 24 at <http://www.scilly-birding.co.uk/>

Black-tailed Godwit: The Nore Barn site at the west end of the Emsworth shore has been doing well this week with a site record count of at least 186 (maybe 200) birds there to have their legs scanned for rings and their bills watched for 'water squirting'

Spotted Redshank: Also at Nore Barn the **Spotted Redshank** population doubled from 1 to 2 on Nov 24

Sandwich Tern: I had thought that by now the only **Terns** left in the English Channel would be the relatively small number intending to stay the winter with at most a dozen together at any one site but on Nov 26 Ouistreham on the Normandie coast had 117 of them. Normal end of passage seems to have occurred on Oct 9 when 80 were seen at Dungeness after counts of 770 on the French coast on Oct 7 and 713 there on Oct 2. Since then the biggest count I have picked up was of just 12 in Langstone Harbour on Nov 3

Short-eared Owl: The bonanza of these continues and this week both the Rodmell area of the Sussex Ouse and the Barnham Brooks between Arundel and Bognor have both had 5 flying concurrently with 6 at Barnham on Nov 22. Surprisingly only one has been reported at Farlington Marshes (on Nov 21) - I noticed that two were hunting Watership Down near Basingstoke that day but there was no mention of them hunting Rabbits!

Swift: These are still to be seen in England with one over Truro in Cornwall on Nov 25

Skylark: On Nov 24 one was singing continuously over Farlington Marshes

Shorelark: One was at Christchurch Harbour on Nov 22, staying till Nov 23

Swallow: Surprisingly I have not heard of one being seen since Nov 23 (and no **House Martins** since Nov 16)

Waxwing: The only report I have picked up this week is of 36 in Fife (Scotland) on Nov 23

Wheatear: The last report I have seen was of one in Poole Harbour on Nov 22. Two **Desert Wheatears** were still with us (one near Lands End on Nov 21 and the other in Torbay on Nov 22)

Ring Ouzel: Last two reports for this year (?) came Cornwall on Nov 20 (2 females at St Ives) and Nov 22 (a young male at Zennor)

Fieldfare: On Nov 19 584 flew over the Aldershot area and a flock of 200 were at Titchfield Haven with another 200 in the west of the New Forest on Nov 26

Song Thrush: One continues to sing daily around my garden and they can be heard at many other southern sites

Redwing: The biggest flock I have seen reported this week was only 60+ at Rye Harbour on Nov 19 (with 58 at Furze Hill near Ringwood on Nov 22)

Blackcap: Three or four reports of birds newly arrived in south coast gardens show that the continental birds which will winter with us have now arrived and started to settle

Hume's Warbler: This tiny Warbler from Asia should be wintering in India but one arrived in the Wyke Regis area of Weymouth on Nov 23 (still there on Nov 26) and has been attracting a lot of attention from birders (including many from Hampshire). It looks similar to the **Yellow-browed Warbler** but is a little smaller, has only one wingbar and makes a two syllable call unlike the high pitched 'dog whistle' call of the Yellow-browed (which has double wingbars)

Chiff-chaff: On Nov 21 birds were singing in Southampton and in Torquay, the first to be heard since one at Emsworth on Oct 1. Also on Nov 21 seven birds were already settled in Eastleigh sewage farm for the winter.

Willow Warbler: A late bird was in the Scillies on Nov 19 - the first report I have seen since Oct 13

Pied Flycatcher: A late bird was seen in the Scillies on Nov 15 (followed on Nov 20 by the latest ever **Red-breasted Flycatcher**)

Snow Bunting: At least two birds were still at East Head (mouth of Chichester Harbour) on Nov 20 and on Nov 23 Sandwich Bay took the 'biggest flock' prize with 36 birds

Little Bunting: One was trapped and ringed at a private site in West Sussex called 'The Mumbles' on Nov 19 and was still there on Nov 26. Those who missed the first report of it on the SOS website may have been puzzled as to where the site is but the first news did include the location as near Steyning

Vagrants: On Nov 21 Lee Evans told us of a **Blackpoll Warbler** at Tunbridge Wells in Kent which was discovered as it happened to fly over an 'off duty' birder mending his garden gate - luckily the birder had his bins with him and left his gate untended as he tracked down the strange calls he was hearing and also luckily the bird stayed around for a second birder to be summoned to corroborate the sighting - a first for Kent and only the 44th for Britain

Escapes: When Caroline French from Emsworth visited the Sidlesham Ferry Pool (Pagham Harbour) on Nov 20 she noticed an unusual duck there which no one else has reported. She eventually identified it as a **Laysan Duck**, a species whose world population in the wild is no more than 500, all to be found on a single island (Laysan) of the Hawaii group. As with the Nene Goose, also from Hawaii, the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust has been breeding it in captivity since 1959 and the bird at Sidlesham is probably an escape from their Arundel reserve. Photo can be seen on <http://www.emsworthwildlife.hampshire.org.uk/0-0-0-wildlife-diary.htm> site entry for Nov 22

INSECTS

Dragonflies:

Species reported this week:

Southern Hawker (three reports this week with the last on Nov 25 in the New Forest), **Migrant Hawker** (one report from Suffolk on Nov 18), **Vagrant Emperor** (

one report of a moribund insect on the pavement of a street in Coventry), **Common Darter** (last sighting was of three in the New Forest on Nov 25

Butterflies:

Species reported this week:

Brimstone (one report from the Isle of Wight on Nov 20), **Large White** (one report from Portsdown on Nov 23), **Red Admiral** (reports from 8 sites during the week, last on Nov 25), **Peacock** (one at Portland on Nov 22), **Comma** (one at Pulborough Brooks on Nov 20 and another that day near Alton in East Hants), **Speckled Wood** (three reports, last from Portland on Nov 22)

Moths:

Selected sightings this week:

Note that further info for all species can be found on Mike Wall's HantsMoths website using the second link given for each species.

Note also that a **key to the meaning of the colours used in the HantsMoths Flighttime Guides** can be found at http://www.hantsmoths.org.uk/flying_tonight.php

1631 December Moth *Poecilocampa populi* found at Edburton (north of the Sussex Downs) on Nov 19 - see <http://ukmoths.org.uk/show.php?id=1100>

For the HantsMoths info go to <http://www.hantsmoths.org.uk/species/1631.php>

1720 The Gem *Orhthonama obstipata* also at Edburton on Nov 19 - see <http://ukmoths.org.uk/show.php?id=2530>

For the HantsMoths info go to <http://www.hantsmoths.org.uk/species/1720.php>

1760 Red-green Carpet *Chloroclysta siterata* also at Edburton on Nov 19 - see <http://ukmoths.org.uk/show.php?id=4948>

For the HantsMoths info go to <http://www.hantsmoths.org.uk/species/1760.php>

1771a Cypress Carpet *Thera cupressata* seen at Bexhill on Nov 2 - see <http://ukmoths.org.uk/show.php?id=1541>

For the HantsMoths info go to <http://www.hantsmoths.org.uk/species/1771a.php>

1799 Winter Moth *Operophtera brumata* found at Edburton (north of the Sussex Downs) on Nov 19 - see <http://ukmoths.org.uk/show.php?id=1813>

For the HantsMoths info go to <http://www.hantsmoths.org.uk/species/1799.php>

1923 December Moth *Poecilocampa populi* found at Folkestone on Nov 19 - see <http://ukmoths.org.uk/show.php?id=1757>

For the HantsMoths info go to <http://www.hantsmoths.org.uk/species/1923.php>

1935 Mottled Umber *Erannis defoliaria* found at Edburton (north of the Sussex Downs) on Nov 19 - see <http://ukmoths.org.uk/show.php?id=212>

For the HantsMoths info go to <http://www.hantsmoths.org.uk/species/1935.php>

2026 The Vapourer *Orgyia antiqua* (male) found in Thanet (Kent) on Nov 23 - see <http://ukmoths.org.uk/show.php?id=544>

For the HantsMoths info go to <http://www.hantsmoths.org.uk/species/2026.php>

2087 Turnip Moth *Agrotis segetum* found at Folkestone Kent on Nov 22 - see <http://ukmoths.org.uk/show.php?id=298>

For the HantsMoths info go to <http://www.hantsmoths.org.uk/species/2087.php>
2227 The Sprawler *Brachionycha sphinx* found at Edburton (north of the Sussex Downs) on Nov 19 - see <http://ukmoths.org.uk/show.php?id=1801>

For the HantsMoths info go to <http://www.hantsmoths.org.uk/species/2227.php>
2256 The Satellite *Eupsilia transversa* found at Portland on Nov 22 - see <http://ukmoths.org.uk/show.php?id=1797>

For the HantsMoths info go to <http://www.hantsmoths.org.uk/species/2256.php>
2261 Red-headed Chestnut *Conistra erythrocephala* found at Portland on Nov 23 - see <http://ukmoths.org.uk/show.php?id=3327>

For the HantsMoths info go to <http://www.hantsmoths.org.uk/species/2261.php>
2306 Angle Shades *Phlogophora meticulosa* found at Portland on Nov 22 - see <http://ukmoths.org.uk/show.php?id=1731>

For the HantsMoths info go to <http://www.hantsmoths.org.uk/species/2306.php>
2321 Dark Arches *Apamea monoglypha* a late specimen in Thanet on Nov 20 - see <http://ukmoths.org.uk/show.php?id=52>

For the HantsMoths info go to <http://www.hantsmoths.org.uk/species/2321.php>
2441 Silver Y *Autographa gamma* a late migrant at Folkestone on Nov 22 - see <http://ukmoths.org.uk/show.php?id=1134>

For the HantsMoths info go to <http://www.hantsmoths.org.uk/species/2441.php>

PLANTS

Narrow-leaved Pepperwort: A very unexpected new flowering by the Langstone roundabout in Havant on Nov 21

Pale Flax: Still flowering by the Hayling Coastal Path on Nov 23

Common Flax: Still flowering by the Broadmarsh-Farlington Marshes cycleway on Nov 24

Sweet Violet: A general re-flowering in Havant St Faith's church yard on Nov 21

Round-leaved Cranesbill: A mass flowering at the Chichester gravel pits lakes on Nov 25

White Melilot: Still flowering at Broadmarsh on Nov 24

Dog Rose: Still flowering on the Langstone South Moors shore on Nov 23

Meadow Sweet: One freshly flowering plant at Langstone South Moors on Nov 23

Japanese Spindle: Fruit cases starting to split at Brook Meadow in Emsworth to show the orange colour of the Aril fruits on Nov 22

Upright Hedge Parsley (*Torilis japonica*): A single fresh plant starting to flower at the Chichester gravel pit lakes on Nov 25

Stone Parsley: At least three freshly flowering plants at Farlington Marshes on Nov 24

Fools Water Cress: Flowering in the Langbrook Stream (below the A27 at Havant) on Nov 21

Black Horehound: Still flowering in Havant on Nov 21

Wood Sage: Still flowering in Hollybank Woods at Emsworth on Nov 24

Field Forget-me-not: An unexpected fresh flowering in the Hollybank Woods on Nov 24 (both **Water Forget-me-not** and **Tufted Forget-me-not** also flowering by the Langbrook stream in Havant on Nov 21)

Teazel: Several fresh flowering plants in the Broadmarsh area on Nov 24

Fleabane: One roadside plant still flowering in the Broadmarsh area on Nov 24

Goat's Beard: A single unexpected plant flowering in the Broadmarsh area on Nov 2

Summer Snowflake (*Leucojum aestivum*): Newly flowering beside Mill Lane at Langstone (across the lane from the West Mill) - never seen flowering before mid-February in previous years

OTHER WILDLIFE

Roe Deer antlers: If you saw Autumnwatch this week you will have seen young Jake and his collection of bones and today I found that his website (<http://jakes-bones.blogspot.com/2010/05/how-roe-deer-antlers-grow.html>) had the answer to a question posed by an entry for Nov 19 on the Durlston website telling us that a **Roe Buck** there was .. "**sporting a fine set of antlers** and now fully moulted from his smart chestnut summer coat into a thicker, but more sombre, winter attire.". This suggested to me that the buck had already grown new antlers and the question in my mind was about the time of year at which Roe drop their antlers and grow a new set. Jake's answer is .. "**Roe deer antlers grow at a different time to red deer antlers. Roe antlers start growing around December, stop growing in April or May, and fall off around November.** When I was watching the roe deer in December, the antlers were like small furry lumps. Different roe deers antlers grow at different speeds, but you can still see them getting bigger through the spring." So I have to assume that **the Roe at Durlston was wearing a new coat with an old hat** - i.e. last season's antlers which will soon fall off.

Water Vole: We know there is a population of **Water Voles** on the River Ems where it runs through Brook Meadow at Emsworth with others in the stream running past Fishbourne Church into the Fishbourne Channel of Chichester Harbour, and the Hampshire Biodiversity Action Plan <http://www.hampshirebiodiversity.org.uk/pdf/PublishedPlans/WaterVolejjDTPdark.pdf> tells us that, while there has been a serious decline in their numbers throughout Britain, Hampshire still has good populations in the catchment areas of all the main rivers of the county. In July of this year the BBC ran a story as part of a 'Million

Ponds' project to create new ponds throughout Britain, focussing on the creation of ten ponds in the Alton area of East Hampshire which it was hoped (among other things) would create new habitat for Water Voles in that part of the county, and I guess that these voles can be found in the Meon Valley as they certainly can in the Itchen Valley but I am not aware of any other sites where they can be seen in the Havant area so **I was very excited when, just after sunset on Nov 25, I saw an animal which looked very like a Water Vole swimming across Langstone pond within three metres of where I was standing** - see my Diary entry for that day for the full story which leaves unanswered the question as to whether this was **a Vole or a Rat**.

Ray's Bream: The Nov 24 entry in the bird news from Reculver on the north Kent Coast (<http://www.kentos.org.uk/Reculver/headerpage11.htm>) includes a photo of a freshly dead fish washed up on the shore - not, you may think, an attractive subject but I think you may change your mind when you see its extremely elegant shape and imagine it alive.

Fungi: On Nov 24 Brian Fellows found **Fly Agaric** in the Hollybank Woods at Emsworth and I have seen far too many species (mostly having names unknown to me!) to list here but two specimens did attract my attention this week. When walking around Farlington Marshes on Nov 24 I came on a couple of mustard yellow, funnel-shaped fungi with decurrent gills growing in open grassland near the stream - if they had been in woodland (especially with conifers) I would have said they were either the table delicacy, **Chantarelle**, or the dangerous look-alike, **False Chantarelle**, but here in the grass I could not think what they might be. Another species absorbing a lot of my time was found on Nov 21 at the Chichester gravel pit lakes by Brian Fellows and which **I thought might be a deadly Death Cap** - I went to see it for myself on Nov 25 and you can see my photos and read what I thought of it in my Diary entry for Nov 25. I now think it is **unlikely to be a Death Cap** but that it probably is **one of the 600 known species of Amanita** that can be found worldwide, and in the process of studying it I learnt that fungi which emerge from the ground encased in a 'universal veil' (which usually leaves fragments of that veil sticking to the cap - e.g. the white flecks on the red cap of the **Fly Agaric**) do not all have the 'open bag' remnant of the veil (called a **Volva**) left around the base of the stem - in some, as in this case, the bag collapses and sticks to the stem and is thus less easy to spot.

WILDLIFE DIARY AND NEWS FOR NOV 21 - 27 (WEEK 47 OF 2011)

Correction re entry for Nov 25 - at the end of that entry I said that I saw Venus (or maybe Jupiter) in the eastern sky - it was of course **Jupiter** that I saw. As Venus is closer to the Sun than Earth Venus can only be seen in the western sky at sunset (work it out for yourself as I have now done!)

Fri 25 Nov

A busy day at Chichester Lakes and Langstone Pond

When Brian Fellows was at the Chichester Gravel Pit lakes on Nov 21 he took a photo of **a fungus which he could not name** and put it in his website diary (<http://www.emsworthwildlife.hampshire.org.uk/0-0-0-wildlife-diary.htm>) entry for Nov 21. The whitish 'stuff' on the top of the cap suggested to me that the fungus had been enclosed in a 'universal veil' when it emerged from the ground, leaving

remnants of it on the cap when the fungus grew and split the veil (that is how the **Fly Agaric** gets the distinctive white flecking on its otherwise red/orange cap). This morning I went to Chichester and found a couple of **old specimens of the fungus Brian had seen and I include my own photos of these below** showing clearly the remains of the veil on the cap and possible remains of the bottom of the universal veil enclosing the base of the stem. This basal part is called a **Volva** and normally has the appearance of an **'open topped bag'** with a gap between it and the fungus stem coming up from the centre of the bag but this is not always the case as I found out from the excellent Collins New Generation Guide to Fungi by Stefan Buczacki, almost half of which is devoted to background info about fungi. Stefan says (page 34) there are **two types of volva** - the open bag type which are named **'free'** and an **'adherent'** type which adheres to the stem and appear (as with the remnants of the veil on the cap) as 'lumps' sticking to the stem base and my photos show this form is present on the stems of my samples. Further, by bringing the samples home I found that the **spore print is white**, making it likely that the fungus is an Amanita species.

Pictures of a **Death Cap** at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Amanita_phalloides show some similarities to my samples (the size of which is within the lower limit of measurements for Death Cap) but indicate a 'free' volva so my current thinking is that the fungi which Brian found are probably an Amanita species or variant (and above all should not be eaten even though it is **not a Death Cap!**). There are some **600 Amanita species worldwide** and **Amanita frostiana (an American species) does have an adherent volva** (see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Amanita_frostiana). One factor against Amanita is the **total absence of a stem ring** on the samples from Chichester.

While at Chichester I had a look at all dozen or more lakes seeing many Gulls (Black-headed, Herring and Common), Mute Swans, Coots, Cormorants, Great Crested Grebes, Mallard, Tufted Duck, Pochard and Gadwall with a few Wigeon and Canada Geese plus Moorhens on the water but the surprise among the waterfowl came at the end when, after passing the road into the caravan site, I had a look at Leythorne Lake which can be seen from a very narrow path running along the northern fence of the caravan site - among a good many other waterfowl was a single **male Scaup** exactly where I had seen it on Jan 3 this year - maybe it is a plastic resident here but it looks genuine enough and I have posted an entry on the Sussex Ornithological Soc website in the hope that some knowledgeable birder will let us know its status.

On my way back from the Scaup I kept my eye open for flowering plants and beside one of the miscellaneous buildings between Runcton and New Lakes a strip of soil (hardly a flower bed) was full of **Round-leaved Cranesbill** in flower. This plant is listed as rare in the Hants Flora but I think it is one that is nowadays fairly widespread - I have included a photo of a branch which I brought back with me and it shows two of the diagnostics, first that the petals have smooth round tips with no indent at the tip and second that the plant is very hairy all over. Looking just at the flower pedicels the abundant glandular hairs, all of an even length, could mislead you into thinking this was an unusually large **Small-flowered Cranesbill** but that has flowers half the size of the **Round-leaved** and they are mauvish in colour (not pink) and the petals are 'retuse' at their tips (i.e. have a 'shallow blunt notch'). In checking

this id with Stace I noticed that he divides the **Cranesbill tribe** into two sections (**Geranium**, which includes **Round-leaved** and **Robertium** which includes **Small-flowered** - one of the distinguishing features between them is that the petals of Geranium species are joined to the flowerhead by a 'claw' - a continuation of the main 'blade' of the petal which is narrower than the blade which is visible without taking the flower to pieces) The petals of Round-leaved do not have a claw.

Back in the Ivy Lake area I heard calls of Bullfinch and a strident altercation between two Water Rails making their 'Pick, pick' calls and then found a single plant of **Hedge Parsley (Torilis japonica)** which normally flowers in July and I have included a photo to show that it is the weather and not me that is out to deceive you!

Back at home the weather continued fair and the tides were right for **a count of Egrets coming to roost at Langstone Pond** so I cycled down there a little before sunset. With most of the leaves off the roost trees I could be pretty sure no Egrets had arrived before me and I had to wait until seven minutes after sunset before the first arrived. I ceased counting 45 minutes after sunset with **just under 50 birds in the trees** but while waiting for them to arrive I had two other surprises which contributed to the slight inaccuracy of the count. The first was the undoubted presence of a **Water Rail**, announced by its loud blood curdling call (said to resemble the noise of a Pig having its throat slit), the second was the sight of **what I think was a Water Vole** swimming across an open area of water no more than three metres in front of me. Although it was dark by this time the patch of water was fairly well lit by the afterglow of the sunset and I could clearly see the shape of the swimming animal and am sure it had the **'square ended' shape and size of a Vole** and **did not have the tail which a Rat** would have shown trailing behind it but as I stepped forward to get a better view the animal immediately disappeared below the water without even leaving a ripple to show where it had been. I know Rats can swim well both above and below water and have seen videos of them doing so (in one the tail was clearly visible on the surface before the Rat dived). I also know that Rats frequent Langstone Pond to enjoy the bread thrown to the ducks, and I have never heard of definite sightings of Water Voles there so my sighting must not be taken as proof that they are resident there or in the Lymbourne stream which feeds the pond and which has suitable banks for their burrows but it may be worth keeping an eye open for further signs of their presence.

A final bonus as I turned away from the pond to set off home was to see the very bright sight of what I thought to be **Venus** (though it might have been Jupiter) in the centre of an otherwise totally black eastern sky looking towards Thorney Island.

Thu 24 Nov

Around Farlington Marshes

This morning I drove to the Broadmarsh small carpark and walked round Farlington Marshes at high tide. Nothing very exciting among the 45 bird species seen but I did find some surprises among the flowering plants and also saw a good variety of fungi (almost all unidentified).

Among the birds were many **Wigeon, Teal and Shelduck** with around 20 each of **Pintail and Shoveler** as well as the **Brent and Canada Geese** (among the latter was **a leucistic bird** which was the size of the Canadas but had yellowish legs and a pinkish bill so probably had some **Greylag parentage**). At the Lake were **seven**

Avocets plus many Blacktailed Godwits with Redshanks, three Greenshank, Lapwing and Dunlin - while there a Kingfisher flew by and later, among the tidal rubbish at the foot of the southern seawall was one Rock Pipit. Over on the RSPB Islands were many Oystercatchers and Grey Plover with Cormorants and some Mergansers in the water of Russell's Lake. The Deeps had a good show of Pintail and while there a small flock of what I think were Linnets flew over and a single Meadow Pipit landed on the fence above which a single Kestrel had been hovering. On the way back just three Great Crested Grebes were in Chalkdock Lake.

Most of the plants seen in flower were beside the cycle way and included a single Goatsbeard and a couple of Common Flax flowers and several freshly flowering Teazles as well as the more expected Chinese Mugwort, Yellowwort and Blue Fleabane plus the first Winter Heliotrope flowerhead among the leaves there. The majority of the unexpected flowers were seen where the cycleway runs alongside the main road (generating the extra heat and gases which come from the cars and benefit the plants) and included Fleabane, White Melilot, White Campion, Ox-eye Daisy, and a mass of Black Medick and Storksbill. One find within the reserve was a cluster of fresh plants of Stone Parsley, one covered with flowers and others too fresh leaved to have thought about flowering yet.

In the grass of the Marshes were many large Mushrooms (probably Horse) and at one point I found a couple of what looked just like False Chanterelles (but both they and the genuine delicacy Chanterelle normally grow with conifers, not in open grassland). Another odd sight when walking by the stream was to see a Fox pop out of one side of a bramble clump as a Rabbit emerged from the other side.

Yesterday I cycled to the Oysterbeds and found two flowers of Pale Flax still out, then found the Summer Snowflake in flower outside the West Mill in Langstone Mill Lane (I see John Goodspeed had seen this in flower on Monday of this week). I have noted the first flowering of this plant each year since 2006 and the range of dates over these six years has been from Feb 16 to Mar 20 until this year's climate has brought it into flower three months early in November.

Another exceptional flowering this week was seen on Monday (Nov 21) when I found a fresh plant of Narrow-leaved Pepperwort in flower beside the Langstone Roundabout where I first noticed it in flower on May 2, then saw it re-flowering on Aug 22 and now find it out again. Also on Nov 21 a mass re-flowering of Sweet Violets could be seen in St Faith's church yard in Havant

WILDLIFE DIARY AND NEWS FOR NOV 14 - 20 (WEEK 46 OF 2011)

BIRDS

Divers: All three regular species are now fairly common in southern waters but a count of 68 Black-throated off Cap Gris-nez on Nov 12 (with a total of 81 of them reported on Trektellen from five sites that day) is worth a mention as is Lee Evans news on Nov 19 of .. "A cracking summer adult WHITE-BILLED DIVER just

beginning to moult remains for at least its third day off of Peninerine Beach on South Uist (Outer Hebrides)"

Red-necked Grebe: Of local interest one was in Southampton Water on Nov 14 and 15

Slavonian Grebe: On Nov 14 these were off Thanet (2) and in Christchurch Harbour (1) and another was off Broadsands (close to Brixham in south Devon) on Nov 18. One was off Farlington Marshes in Langstone Harbour on Nov 19 and 20

Black-necked Grebe: Two were in Langtone Harbour on Nov 13 and one was in Southampton Water on Nov 14

Bittern: Reported from 11 south coast sites this week with two at Hatch Pond (Poole Hbr) and Marazion (Penzance) and a single at Brading Marsh (Isle of Wight)

Cattle Egret: The long staying bird was still at the Thornham Marshes on Thorney Island on Nov 15 (with another at Blakeney in Norfolk)

Glossy Ibis: The Christchurch Harbour bird was still there on Nov 17 and others seen this week were at Plymouth (roosting with Egrets on Drakes Island) and at Stodmarsh in Kent

Bewick's Swan: The number at Slimbridge was up to 76 on Nov 19

Red-breasted Goose: The dubious juvenile remains in the Exe estuary (Devon) and was last seen consorting with Brent but a new adult bird appeared in Essex on Nov 16 - both still present on Nov 18

Pintail: 28 were on the Thorney Deeps for the WeBS count on Nov 12 (when 364 were at Pointe de hoc on the Normandie coast) and on Nov 14 there were 30 in Langstone Harbour with 78+ in the Devon Exe estuary on Nov 17

Eider: The number in the west Solent off Lymington was up to 55 on Nov 17

Bufflehead: The long staying female/juvenile which arrived on Oct 26 was still at Helston in Cornwall on Nov 19

Goldeneye: Just one was in Chichester Harbour for the Nov 12 WeBS count and on Nov 14 there were 9 at the Blashford Lakes and one in Southampton Water

Red-breasted Merganser: These have now arrived in strength with 46 in Langstone Harbour (at the Kench) on Nov 12 when 72 were on the Suffolk Coast.. Five were off north Hayling on Nov 13 and 55 were seen from East Head in Chichester Harbour on Nov 17 (when 51 had reached the Exe estuary)

Osprey: I thought we had seen the last of this species until next spring but on Nov 16 one was still happily resident and fishing at the RSBP HQ at Sandy in Bedfordshire

Common Crane: When I saw that a flock of 24 had been seen circling over Wickham (just north of Fareham) and then heading north up the Meon valley at 3pm on Nov 17 with no other reports of similar sightings anywhere within 50 miles I did wonder if the report was accurate but when I came to check this weeks birding news from Cornwall I was very surprised to see that this group of 24 had been in the Wadebridge area on the north coast of Cornwall since Nov 12 and had remained there for three days before flying east over over Devon (seen at Exbourne near Okehampton on Nov 17). These are of course in addition to our resident flock of 30 that have been based in Norfolk since at least 2006. Other reports of Cranes in England this week are of a single near Abbotsbury in Dorset since Nov 6, a party of 8 in Cambridgeshire on Nov 8, and a group of 6 which arrived at a farm on The Lizard in Cornwall on Nov 16 and was still there on Nov 18

Avocet: The winter flock at the Exe estuary numbered 240+ on Nov 17 (280+ had been reported on Nov 7) and some of the birds flying west to join them have stopped off in our area and are likely to stay unless the weather turns much colder. As usual one flock has settled in the Broom Channel west of Farlington Marshes in Langstone Harbour and these numbered 27 on Nov 13 and 22 on Nov 14. Another regular stopping off place is Nutbourne Bay in Chichester Harbour where the first was seen on Nov 12 and by Nov 17 there were at least 17 there. A party of 13 were in Pagham Harbour on Nov 1 but none seem to have settled there yet.

Ringed Plover: 100 of these were caught and ringed with both metal and colour rings at Black Point (mouth of Chichester Harbour) recently and one of them has been seen more than once in nearby Emsworth Harbour where it was reported to be shaking its leg as if uncomfortable with one of the rings - this behaviour has apparently been reported elsewhere with similarly ringed birds but I never remember hearing similar reports about a Grey Plover (known as 'all the reds' as it had colour rings on both legs) that was present for several consecutive winters in Eastney Lake at the mouth of Langstone Harbour. I don't know the facts of this case but I believe the recent ringing is in reponse to a decline in Ringed Plover numbers and a wish to get more information about the factors leading to that decline.

Purple Sandpiper: A single was seen at Southsea Castle on Sep 7 and 8 but no more have been reported there until three were seen on Nov 16, presumably part of a wave of new arrivals that brought 11 to Brighton marina on Nov 14 (the Southsea bird may have moved on west as Christchurch Harbour had 6 on Nov 17)

Black-tailed Godwit: The Chichester Harbour WeBS count on Nov 12 found 472 at the Thorney Deeps and the number feeding at Nore Barn near Emsworth was up to 140 on Nov 15. If you are interested in the recent discussion on the subject of why these birds have occasionally been seen using their bills like water pistols to squirt jets of water have a look at

<http://www.emsworthwildlife.hampshire.org.uk/x-black-tailed-godwit.htm> for some expert opinion that does not advance the discussion very much

Bar-tailed Godwit: The Nov 12 WeBS count found 450 on the Pilsey Sands in Chichester Harbour and there has one sighting of 10 near the Northney marina on Nov 13.

Spotted Redhank: Fears that the 'easy to watch' bird that has spent a good many winters at Nore Barn on the Emsworth shore had found somewhere else to spend its time have been allayed this week as it has been there at the expected time (two or three hours before and after high tide) on Nov 13, 15, 16 and 17 at least

Green Sandpiper: Another 'easy to see' bird comes to the Hermitage Stream in Leigh Park each winter and was back there again on Nov 16, seen downstream of the first footbridge upstream of Barncroft Way (map ref for where I saw the bird then is SU 71126 07288)

Grey Phalarope: These are still passing through and on Nov 16 one dropped in at the Blashford Lakes near Ringwood. On Nov 13 and 14 one was at Pegwell Bay in Kent and another has been in the Scillies

Terns: As expected at least two Sandwich Terns are wintering near the mouth of Chichester Harbour and another two have been seen at the Kench in Langstone Harbour but Nov 13 brought a surprise with a **Black Tern** at Lodmoor (Weymouth)

Little Auk: On Nov 12 we were told that one had been at Brighton Marina for at least a week - maybe it is still there

Woodpigeon: These continue to mystify with huge numbers moving over random places with no apparent start or end point to their journeys. This week's hot spot was Durlston where 54,500 flew over on Nov 17 (**89 Stock Doves** went with them)

Ring-necked Parakeet: A party of 15 broke their vow never to leave the London area and flew over Crawley near Gatwick airport on Nov 16

Short-eared Owls: The number arriving in our southern counties continues to rise. By Nov 19 both the Lewes Brooks and the Barnham Brooks near Arundel each had 5 birds hunting and another report of five came from the Thorney Island Deepes area on Nov 13. Waltham Brooks near Pulborough had 4 on Nov 15 as did Beeding Brooks on the Adur just north of Shoreham. Not to be outdone Durlston claimed 6 there on Nov 17 but I think they were just passing. Another familiar site for winter owl watching is **Bransbury Common** near Andover and it entered the fray on Nov 19 with counts of **3 Short-eared, 1 Barn Owl and 1 Great Grey Shrike**

Swifts: A probable Common Swift was seen over Sinah Warren stables on Hayling Island early on Nov 18 (others had been over Cornwall on Nov 12 and the Channel Isles on Nov 14). On Nov 19 a Pallid Swift was seen over Titchfield Haven

Swallow: The latest I am aware of were 2 over Sandwich Bay on Nov 17 but others had been seen elsewhere on each of the three preceding days

House Martin: One over St Leonards (Hastings) on Nov 16 was not too surprising but a flock of 50 over the Royal Military canal at Hythe (Folkestone) that day was

Waxwing: On Nov 16 Lee Evans told us of 28 in Fife (Scotland), 60 in Northumberland and 23 in the Midlands at Stafford. In addition a party of 6 has been in the Ramsgate area of Kent since Nov 16

Black Redstart: There are plenty of these in southern England at the moment but an **Eastern Black Redstart** is currently attracting special attention as it is of a race normally found in central Asia, wintering in western India, but has turned up on the beach at Margate in Kent. If you want to see it I suggest

<http://www.surfbirds.com/blog/Belvide84/23523> rather than some of the Twitcher pages found higher up the hit list. As Lee Evans was writing the news of its arrival, and the fact that it was only the second to reach Britain, he heard news of another arriving in a Vicar's garden on Holy Isle in Northumberland

Common Redstart: Two reports of females seen at Farlington Marshes on Nov 13 and at Bexhill near Hastings on Nov 15 come some six weeks after the last reports of the species in England and suggest to me that the birds seen were in fact Black Redstarts

Wheatears: A **Common (Northern) Wheatear** was still to be seen at Portland on Nov 19 but a rarer and smarter **Desert Wheatear** was at Dungeness on Nov 15 with another on the south Devon Coast at Mansands (Brixham area) on Nov 18 and 19. Lee Evans tells us of others at Skomer (Wales) and Titchfield (Norfolk) on Nov 16

Ring Ouzel: One was at Durlston on Nov 13 and another was at St Ives in Cornwall on Nov 14

Blackbird: On Nov 13 Brian Fellows heard **subsong** from one at Brook Meadow in Emsworth, possibly provoked by the intrusion of continental birds into his home territory? (50 new arrivals were at Dungeness on Nov 12)

Fieldfare: On Nov 14 a total of 665 were seen flying over Timsbury in the Test Valley and there were reports of more than 100 seen at various Hampshire sites on Nov 12, 13 and 15 - plenty around in the south. Not so many **Redwing** reports this week but a roost of some 1000 was found in the New Forest on Nov 12 with 160 birds at Linwood near Ringwood on Nov 13

Dartford Warbler: One was heard singing in flight near Burley in the New Forest on Nov 13

Pallas Warbler: Singles seen on the Isle of Wight on Nov 13 and at Christchurch Harbour on Nov 14

Yellow-browed Warbler: One provided excitement at Pulborough Brooks on Nov 16 and 17

Goldcrest: A flock of 20 at Durlston on Nov 13 was outdone by one of 40 at Christchurch Harbour on Nov 14 - another was singing at Pulborough Brooks on Nov 16

Firecrest: Abbotsbury in Dorset had a flock of 14 on Nov 13 and at least five other sites had multiple birds this week including the QE Country Park at Petersfield and the West Dean Woods near Chichester

Willow Tit: A report of one at Faccombe in the north of Hampshire shows they are still hanging on in the county

Penduline Tit: One at the Oare Marshes in north Kent on Nov 16

Tree Creeper: One provided local excitement by turning up at Nore Barn wood on the Emsworth shoreline on Nov 13 (maybe a first for the site?)

Great Grey Shrike: In addition to the established birds in the Burley area of the New Forest and in Ashdown Forest one was seen on Nov 15 near Arne in Dorset

Bullfinch: Last week I reported the ringing at Reculver in north Kent of three Bullfinches of three different subspecies, one of them very much larger than the others. This big bird of the northern subspecies (*Pyrrhula pyrrhula pyrrhula*) weighed 31.8 gms last week (the other two were around 21 gms) and this week the northern bird was recaptured and found to now weigh 35 gms - it also gave a 'toy trumpet' call said to be the signature tune of its tribe.

Snow Bunting: The flock at Sandwich Bay numbered 33 birds on Nov 15 (with 31 at Reculver on Nov 16). Locally you can expect to see these birds at East Head in Chichester Harbour and there were 4 there on Nov 15

Vagrants: Among this week's twitcher menu the star item is a small thrush called a **Veery** seen on the Isle of Muck in the Scottish Highland region on Nov 16. Its home is along the Canada/US borders and among its specialities it makes a mud-cup nest but sites it on the ground. Its interest to Lee Evans was that it became tick number 450 on the roll of species seen in Britain and Ireland this year.

INSECTS

Dragonflies:

Notable sightings this week:

The most unexpected report was of a late **Vagrant Emperor** at Pett Level by Rye Bay on Nov 13

Species reported this week:

Southern Hawker seen at Crawley in Sussex on Nov 15, **Migrant Hawker** last seen at Rye Harbour on Nov 18, **Vagrant Emperor** female seen at Pett Level in East Sussex on Nov 13, **Black Darter** seen at Thursley in Surrey on Nov 13, **Common Darter** - three records on Nov 17 from Gloucestershire, Cumbria and Hampshire where one was at Hook/Warsash

Butterflies:

Notable sightings this week:

A fresh male **Holly Blue** seen on Ivy in Fareham on Nov 13 must have emerged nearly a month after the last previous report of one seen in the Gosport area on Oct 19. Also of interest was a female **Red Admiral** egg-laying at Goring in Sussex on Nov 15

Species reported this week:

Clouded Yellow at Southbourne Undercliff in Bournemouth (where there is an established resident colony) on Nov 12, **Brimstone** seen at Petersfield, Basingstoke and near Eastbourne on Nov 13, **Holly Blue** at Fareham on Nov 13, **Red Admiral** at many locations up to Nov 17 in Havant, **Painted Lady** at Portland on Nov 17 after others at Bournemouth and Bracklesham on Nov 12 and 13, **Small Tortoiseshell** on south Hayling on Nov 15 and Rye Harbour on Nov 18, **Peacock** somewhere in Sussex on Nov 15, **Comma** near Worthing on Nov 16, **Speckled Wood** latest on Hayling on Nov 15, **Meadow Brown** reported to have been seen on Portsdown on Nov 9 - as this was 17 days after the latest previous report I wonder if this could have been a worn Speckled Wood?

Moths:

Selected sightings this week:

Note that further info for all species can be found on Mike Wall's HantsMoths website using the second link given for each species.

Note also that a **key to the meaning of the colours used in the HantsMoths Flighttime Guides** can be found at http://www.hantsmoths.org.uk/flying_tonight.php

1631 December Moth *Poecilocampa populi* found in a Welsh kitchen on Nov 16 - see <http://ukmoths.org.uk/show.php?id=1100>

For the HantsMoths info go to <http://www.hantsmoths.org.uk/species/1631.php>

2441 Silver Y *Autographa gamma* migrant still arriving at Gosport on Nov 15- see <http://ukmoths.org.uk/show.php?id=1134>

For the HantsMoths info go to <http://www.hantsmoths.org.uk/species/2441.php>

Other Insects:

Selected sightings this week:

The only species to get a mention here this week is a **Marmelade Hoverfly *Episyrphus balteatus*** which got its picture into the Portsmouth NEWS on Nov 19 after it was photographed in a Portsmouth North End garden recently and submitted to the paper described as a wasp to fill the daily amateur photo slot. This Hoverfly can be seen, like some Bumblebees, flying on warm days right through the winter.

PLANTS

Lesser Celandine: A dozen plants were flowering in a south Hayling Bound Lane roadside ditch on Nov 11, the earliest ever that I know of.

Common Ramping Fumitory: Still flowering at the New Lane allotments in Havant on Nov 15 though the **Weasel's Snout** that also grows there has all gone to seed.

Pale Flax: One flower still to be seen by the Hayling Coastal Path on Nov 15 and other plants still flowering at Durlston on Nov 18

Sweet Violet: One flower seen in a totally natural environment under brambles on North Common, Hayling, on Nov 15

Black Medick and Spotted Medick: Both flowering on Portsdown on Nov 16

Hawthorn: Just three flowers seen on a tree in the Stockheath area of Leigh Park which usually bears flowers at this time of year - sadly the tree had just been subject to a vicious pruning

Cow Parsley: Newly flowering plants found this week at both Brook Meadow in Emsworth and at south Hayling

Alexanders: On Nov 16 I went to Portsdown to see the exceptionally early flowering plants which Brian Fellows had found flowering on Nov 11 and found six plants in full flower

Strawberry Tree: The specimen at Northney Church on Hayling had many flowers on Nov 15

Primulas: Some which had been planted for butterfly nectar on Heyshott Down in West Sussex (to support Duke of Burgundy butterflies) were flowering on Nov 16 suggesting that wild Primroses might be out in some places

Moth Mullein (*Verbascum blattaria*): Still flowering on Nov 15 by the entrance to the Hayling Golf Course where I had found it in flower on Nov 1

Twiggy Mullein (*Verbascum virgatum*): I am awaiting expert confirmation of a find I made on Nov 15 on North Common on Hayling which I think is this species. See my Diary entry for Nov 18 for more about this find and the photos which I then took

Pale Toadflax: Still flowering on Sinah Common, south Hayling, on Nov 15

White Comfrey: The first autumn flowering I have seen this year was on south Hayling on Nov 15. **Common Comfrey** was also flowering at Brook Meadow in Emsworth on Nov 13 but it has been seen at various sites in Sept and Oct

Narrow-leaved Ragwort: The plant at Farm Lane, Nutbourne still had flowers on Nov 17

Black Walnut: On Nov 19 Brian Fellows was given a Black Walnut fruit and, like me, was not aware of the difference between this tree (*Juglans nigra*) and the Common Walnut (*Juglans regia*) which thrives in the local soil around Havant (I have a specimen in my garden). Brian noted some facts about the Black Walnut in his diary entry for Nov 19 (see

<http://www.emsworthwildlife.hampshire.org.uk/0-0-0-wildlife-diary.htm>) but I wanted to know more and first checked the Collins Field Guide to Trees by Alan Mitchell which tells me that the leaves of the Black Walnut are quite distinct from those of the Common, having nine or more pairs of thinner toothed leaflets in each spray compared to the three or four pairs of broader, entire leaves of the Common. It also tells me that the bark of the Common is grey but that of the Black is black and the Black can grow to 30 metres where the Common does not grow beyond 23 metres. For a visual display of these characteristics got to <http://wildmanstevebrill.com/Plants.Folder/BlackWalnut.html>

OTHER WILDLIFE

Mink: Reculver (north Kent) bird news for this week mentions a first ever sighting of a Mink in their coastal marshes. I hope this was just a stray youngster searching for a territory and does not indicate any spread of these unwanted predators whose numbers were, I thought, declining as a result of raft trapping techniques.

Pipistrelle Bat: One was seen to have a narrow escape from a Sparrowhawk that was hunting at dusk (presumably after birds going to roost, not specifically after bats). **Pipistrelles** were also the probable species involved in an unusual request for help which I was asked to pass on to a bat expert this week - the request came from the owner of riding stables where several horse owners had found small bats falling out of the horse blankets which they had left hanging over stable doors when they returned from a ride and went to put the blankets back on the horses - I hope the cause of this strange choice by the bats of a place to settle can be remedied to prevent further distress to the bats (and maybe the horse owners).

Common Lizard: Three were still basking in the sun at Goring (near Worthing) on Nov 15

Fungi: As might be expected the number of species encountered was up on previous weeks but before naming them I heard (on Radio 4 Saving Species programme) that some mycologists are using a new technique to identify species. This consists of taking a Hammer and a roll of Toilet Paper out on their forays - having found your unknown fungus you place some tissue on a hard surface, put the fungus on top and bash it to pulp with your hammer, then 'pot' the paper to prevent contamination until back in your lab you analyze its DNA. Sounds like the end of the road for the amateur but no doubt we will continue to muddle on and give the fungi whatever names we think right.

One step which I have taken in this direction is to add a new species to my database under the code XFNG with the English name of Fungus Catchall. The first species to go under this code comes from Graeme Lyons (the Sussex Wildlife Trust ecologist who does such a wonderful job of letting us amateurs into the world of the professional). In his Blog entry for Nov 15 (<http://analternativenaturalhistoryofsussex.blogspot.com/>) he tells us .. "perhaps one of the strangest life forms I have ever seen was this **Glue Fungus Hymenochaete corrugata**, the dark fruiting bodies literally glue dead branches to living branches (particularly of Hazel)." To go directly to his picture of it see <http://3.bp.blogspot.com/-nwltpPrf-UU/TsKfiwU9MDI/AAAAAAAAAB-o/ZE-GUH1atLA/s1600/Minute+Pantswort+008.JPG> but a regular browse through his whole blog always brings up something of interest. The fungi he has come across this week in West Sussex include one species as yet un-named which has some similarity to a **Yellow Stainer Mushroom** but which has a much stronger yellow colour in its cap when damaged and a different 'jizz' to the proportions of its cap to stem etc. With it at Ebernoe he found a pristine example of an Agaricus species which is listed by Roger Phillips but which I have never seen called the **Lilac Mushroom A. porphyizon**. Graeme's next photo is of a species which I have seen called **The Goblet Pseudoclitocybe cyathiformis**. This is one of several found in Hoe Wood which I suspect is adjacent to the Woods Mill HQ of the Sussex Wildlife Trust at Henfield but my attempts to track it down led me to a Woodland Trust wood at

Colchester in Essex. The species here were **Clouded Funnel (aka Clouded Agaric) *Clitocybe nebularis***, **Common Funnel *Clitocybe infundibuliformis***, **Aniseed Funnel *Clitocybe odora***, **Butter Cap *Collybia butyracea*** and **Wood Blewit *Lepista nuda***.

My own finds this week, in addition to the fine display of **Waxcaps** which persist on my lawn, were **Clouded Funnel (aka Clouded Agaric) *Clitocybe nebularis*** on Sinah Common (Hayling Island), **Fleecy Milkcap *Lactarius vellereus*** at Northney (Hayling), **Stubble Rosegill *Volvariella gloiocephala*** (a fieldful of this near West Town station on Hayling), **Shaggy Ink Cap *Coprinus comatus*** near Langstone Bridge, **Fairy Inkcap *Coprinus disseminatus*** on North Common (Hayling), and **Candlesnuff Fungus *Xylaria hypoxylon*** in woodland on Portsdown.

Other fungi reported this week were more **Shaggy Parasols** seen by Brian Fellows at Warblington Farm here in Havant, **Field Blewit *Lepista saeva*** at Durlston, and **Sulphur Tuft** seen in an Emsworth garden

A late addition to our list of current fungi comes from the Portland Bird Observatory where the **Mousepee Pinkgill *Entoloma incanum*** was seen on Nov 18. This was a first for Portland and only the fourth record for Dorset. The picture can be seen at http://www.portlandbirdobs.org.uk/wp_entoloma_incanum_2_181111_500.jpg

WILDLIFE DIARY AND NEWS FOR NOV 14 - 20 (WEEK 46 OF 2011)

My latest weekly summary of reports is now available by clicking [Weekly Summary](#) here

[Fri 18 Nov](#)

Poor pictures of Twiggy Mullein and a Hayling Botanic Mystery

When I cycled round Hayling Island last Tuesday (Nov 15) and found what I thought was **Twiggy Mullein (*Verbascum virgatum*)** I did not have my camera with me and today, despite lack of sunshine in the afternoon, I cycled back to North Common to take a couple of pictures to back up my claim to the identity of the plant. Luckily it was still there but an erratic breeze put my attempts at close-up photos out of focus (and, inexcusably, the pictures taken in my own home of a single flower that I brought back are also out of focus).

The leading shoot of the plant had been broken off some time ago so I can only guess that its full height would have been around one metre. When I found it there were four lower flowering shoots and I convinced myself that several of the lower flowers grew in pairs although I can find no clear photographic evidence of this. All the other requirements of Stace's key for this to be **Twiggy Mullein** should be discernible in the photos despite the poor focus - the flower pedicels are much shorter than those of the **Moth Mullein** (also found by me on Tuesday on south Hayling and at two Sussex sites earlier this summer) and the calyx is liberally covered with stalked glandular hairs. I see that one of the three upper anthers has fallen off its filament but the way in which the remaining two are located on their filaments is as would be expected.

I have a personal interest in the identity of this plant as it is growing very close to where I found a similar Mullein in September 2007 and I was told that that one was not Twiggy Mullein but (after being referred up to the national Verbascum expert, Vic Johnstone,) that it seemed to be a species new to western Europe and named in a Turkish Flora as *Verbascum macrocarpum*. It seems that seeds taken from that plant did not germinate as I have heard no more of attempts to grow them in order to establish the plant's true identity so I am hoping that this one really is Twiggy Mullein to claim the lesser honour of having a known and not uncommon species on my 'Life List'. (Though listed as very rare in the Hampshire flora - with a note that its last known site on south Hayling was destroyed by building work in 1984 - the plant is not a national rarity).

Another point of interest is that the South Hayling location of the Twiggy Mullein which existed up to 1984 is given in the Hants Flora as Seager House in the 1Km map square SZ 7098 and as this square only has buildings in its extreme north east corner (and I find through an online search of photos held by the Hampshire Museums Service that Seager House was a School on a plot at around SZ 710 990) this area must be some sort of botanic hotspot as, to my own knowledge, the famous Childing Pink (later re-identified as Proliferous Pink) plants were found here as a direct result of my finding *Amsinckia micrantha* (Common Fiddleneck) here - the Pink's were discovered by Eric Clement and Debbie Allan who had come to check out the *Amsinckia* at my request - and since then the large colony of Cock's Eggs (*Salpichroa organifolia*) has been found close by. All these plants may well be within the original boundaries of the Seager House School.

And now for my poor photos - one gives a general view of the plant growing a close to the public path across North Common at Northney (map ref SU 72923 03991 on the south side of the path where, coming in from the road entrance, the path makes a broad turn from north east to south east).

Thu 17 Nov

Avocets at Nutbourne

This morning I cycled to Nutbourne and found 17 Avocets (one count seemed to give me 19 but I could not repeat it) among a great variety of other species including a Peregrine which flew over but made no attempt to hunt.

While there I found a few flowers still left on the Narrow-leaved Ragwort but could not find any on the Water Chickweed at Prinsted Bay (plenty left on the Shaggy Soldier at the 'market garden plot')

Next target was the Cattle Egret on the Thornham Marshes but managed to miss it again at the fourth attempt. The cattle were once more in the field beside the main road leading to the army base. The little deeps were also devoid of any bird interest and so was the Nore Barn stream!

The sunshine did give me another **Red Admiral** in my garden where the Song Thrush was again singing volubly and while out I also heard **Wren, Collared Dove** and **Cetti's Warbler**

Wed 16 Nov

A dull day on Portsdown

Today I drove to the top of Portsdown and parked between the Churchillian pub and Fort Widley before walking an anti-clockwise circuit of that central section of the south face of the hill. The objective was to see for myself the **Alexanders plants** which Brian Fellows had discovered flowering incredibly early (they normally flower in late March or early April) on Nov 11.

Leaving the **Alexanders** till near the end of my walk I set out round the back of Fort Wildey where a pair of **Yellowhammers** provided the interest. Crossing the Hilltop Road to the south face of the hill I soon found **Greater Knapweed** and **Black Medick** in flower plus some **Tansy** (its poor showing made up for by bright red **Common Poppies**) but I failed to find any **Common Gromwell** (in the past I have found young plants flowering in the autumn rather than waiting for next spring). One surprise on the southern slope was to find several plants of **Yellow-wort** still out as well as the inevitable **Small Scabious**.

Eventually reaching the London Road below the Clifdale Caravan Park I began to trudge uphill on the pavement passing, as expected, many **young leaves of Alexanders** and then finding **six full grown plants of it in flower** just where I had expected them, right outside the Caravan Park on the uphill side of its entrance.

The impression of spring induced by these flowers made me double check the **Rookery** within the park in case the birds had also been deceived by the weather and were already nesting! I could see no sign of that but when I reached the 'Candy Pits' area, where you can leave the pavement and head in through the old chalk pits to climb the steps that bring you out near the view point carpark, I disturbed a large bird which must have been a **Buzzard** but gave me the distinct impression by its half-seen size and plumage that it was an **Eagle**.

On one of the tree stumps in the pits there was a good show of **Candle-snuff fungus** and in this area I found two new flowering plants - more **Winter Heliotrope** flowering on the steps up to the hilltop, and where I stopped to admire the Alexanders I found **Spotted Medick** at my feet.

After lunch I made a brief cycle ride in Havant in the hope of adding another unseasonal flower to my plant list - in several past winters I have found **Hawthorn flowering in the winter** in a line of scrubby trees following the huge pipes that divert winter flood water from the 'winter bourne' stream coming down from the Idsworth/Rowlands Castle area though the West Leigh area, reducing the chance of flooding in central Havant by sending it into the Hermitage Stream at Stockheath (in Leigh Park). These pipes can be found close to the first bridge over the Hermitage Stream upstream of Barncroft Way (the flowers appear less than 100 metres from the stream, adjacent to the place where the streamside path goes under the pipes) and when I arrived there today I saw the **Hawthorns had been very**

roughly trimmed and it seemed unlikely that any flowers remained but a close search found just three!

The nearby bridge over the stream gave me a substantial bonus as, looking downstream with my binoculars, I saw a **Green Sandpiper** standing motionless in the shallow water (one or more of these birds are here each winter but not always so easily seen!). As an extra reward a **Grey Wagtail** flew down into the stream while I was watching the **Sandpiper**.

[Tue 15 Nov](#)

A glorious day on Hayling Island

After a really dull and gloomy day yesterday today was almost windless with continuous sun from a blue sky and I enjoyed every moment of the four and a half hours it took me to cycle slowly around Hayling Island, meeting pleasant surprises everywhere that I went.

The reason for choosing Hayling as a destination was the hope of seeing the extremely early **Lesser Celandines** which I had been told were flowering in the ditch beside Bound Lane and with them in mind my first stop was at the Lymbourne stream just south of the Havant bypass - although there were no flower buds to be seen the leaves of two or three plants were well grown and I will keep an eye on them from now on.

Continuing down the Billy Trail my next surprise was a burst of **Dunnock song** from one of the trackside gardens, confirming that their song period has started here, as - according to Cliff Dean's entry for yesterday in his 'Birding Walks in RXLand' blog - it has now started in the Rye Bay area where the RX registration letters on the fishing boats give the Rye Harbour nature reserve website and Cliff's Blog their 'RX' tag. I did not hear more **Dunnocks** today but must have heard half a dozen **Song Thrushes**, a couple of **Wrens**, and a miscellaneous collection of **Blue and Great Tits** plus the inevitable **Starlings** though strangely no **Wood Pigeons** or **Collared Doves**.

Reaching the shoreline I took advantage of the new wooden seat overlooking the mouth of the Brockhampton stream to check out the birds which included a couple of Turnstones and three Great Crested Grebes among the Brent and Wigeon. While here I started what became a substantial list of fungi with a single '**Lawyer's Wig**' (**Shaggy Inkcap**) and among the plants here I found leaves of **English Scurvygrass** looking as if they were about to start flowering (normally that happens at the end of March but I am not sure if the leaves do sometimes show in winter).

The first surprise on Hayling was to find **Pale Flax** still in flower beside the track where it passes the Riding Stables just south of Stoke Bay and on reaching the big West Lane fields I was not so surprised to find a vast flock of Brent feeding on the young cereals but the last shore field on the west side of the track had a different surprise - a vast crop of **Rosy Stubblegill fungi** (which I still call **Volvariella speciosa**)

Nothing more until I reached Ferry Road at its junction with St Catherine's Road where a nice fresh plant of flowering **Cow Parsley** was followed (not far further west, immediately after passing the Golf Club entrance road) by the sight of the **Moth Mullein** still bearing its yellow flowers

No great excitement at the Sinah Gravel Pit though I did see the first butterfly of the day (probably a **Red Admiral**) flying above the tree tops and on the ground below found my first troop of **Clouded Agaric** fungi.

After the Gunner Point area came the highspot of the day as I was nearing the approach road to the Inn on the Beach - a small dark long-tailed bird flew across the track a few feet in front of my bike and settled on the tip of a gorse bush to take a good look at me from a distance of no more than two metres - giving me in turn a clear, sunlit view of an adult **Dartford Warbler**. This was just before the Gorse which had **Dodder** on it back in July and which still today has some **Pale Toadflax** flowering below it. Not far further east the **Cocks Eggs** were still in flower and before reaching the Beachlands Offices I watched a **Small Tortoiseshell** butterfly (the first I have seen since June) visiting Red Valerian flowers. Continuing east along the Seafront Road I added **Annual Wall Rocket** to my flower list

Turning up Bound Lane I found the glorious **Lesser Celandine flowers**, about a dozen of them, in the shallow ditch on the west side of the lane between houses 12 and 14, and as a bonus I noticed the first **White Comfrey** flowers I have seen this autumn in a garden on the opposite side of the lane a little further north (these may have been planted but I confidently expect to see garden escapes flowering very soon.

Nothing more more noted until I reached St Peter's Road approaching Northney from the south - here I stopped for a look at a large **Brent Flock** out in the vast north Hayling Fields and as I did so I realised that, under fallen leaves in the roadside at my feet, were several large **Fleecy Milkcap fungi**. Next came Northney Church where the **Strawberry Tree** had many fresh white flowers. At the other side of the village I went into North Common where the first thing I noticed were many clusters of tiny **Fairies Bonnets fungi** (**Coprinus disseminatus** - now just called **Fairy Inkcap**) but the second thing that caught my eye was much more exciting - **another yellow flowered Mullein but almost certainly a different species from the Moth Mullein seen near the Hayling Golf course entrance**. I am hesitant to suggest a name for it as I found a yellow flowered Mullein with violet stamen hairs growing in this same area a few years ago and these were referred to the UK Mullein expert who initially said that it did not match any species which he knew of, but he later said he had found a matching description in a Turkish Flora and concluded these plants were new to Europe! Today's plant seems to have a good chance of being **Verbascum virgatum** (**Twiggy Mullein**) and I have found a couple of photos of that on the internet which seem to match the flowers and leaves of the plant I saw. See http://www.rbgsyd.nsw.gov.au/_data/assets/image/0011/81695/Verbascum_virgatum_flower_620.JPG for the flowers (in particular I noted that some of the lower flowers were in pairs and Stace uses this as a critical distinction between Twiggy and Moth Mullein (the latter always having single flowers). For the leaves see http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Verbascum_virgatum_leaves.jpg - visually this is a good match for the leaves I saw which measured 7 cm long - the flowers I measured as 25mm across, maybe slightly small for Twiggy?

While still at North Common I had two more good finds - a single **Sweet Violet flower** and a single **Speckled Wood butterfly**. Nothing more noted on the way home for a late lunch.

WILDLIFE DIARY AND NEWS FOR NOV 6 - 13 (WEEK 45 OF 2011)

BIRDS

Divers: On Nov 7 Christchurch Harbour had 14 **Red-throated** present during the day, St Austell Bay in Cornwall had two **Black-throated** plus four **Great Northern** on the same day and County Wexford in Ireland had a lone **White-billed Diver**, also on Nov 7

Grebes: The only English record of a **Red-necked** was of one at Dungeness on Nov 7 (when there were another eight across the channel off France). **Slavonian** were seen in Pegwell Bay (Kent) and near Plymouth on Nov 9. Three **Black-necked** were in Langstone Harbour near the Oysterbeds on Nov 12 but the Dorset flock in Swanage Bay shot up from 7 birds on Nov 4 to 31 on Nov 12 and one also arrived that day at Dungeness (one other had been near Torquay on Nov 7)

Bittern: Six reports this week - one from each south coast county except Hampshire!. The Devon bird was found in Paignton Zoo.

Squacco Heron: Not a south coast bird but if you are not familiar with this species one has recently been giving a good TV performance to 500 twitchers at the Attenborough nature reserve on the River Trent at Nottingham - see <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-nottinghamshire-15535987>

Cattle Egret: The last reported sighting of the Thornham Marshes bird on Thorney Island was on Nov 7 when it was last seen flying away north east (but may well have returned)

Little Egret: A roost count of the Langstone Pond birds on the evening of Nov 9 recorded 132 birds

Great White Egret: My impression that the number in this country is increasing is supported by Lee Evans who on Nov 8 said there were then more than 11 birds present in England (and his list did not include the Hampshire Blashford Lakes bird)

Glossy Ibis: The Christchurch Harbour bird was still there on Nov 11 and another was in the Pett area near Rye Bay on Nov 8 while a third southern bird has been at Drakes Island in Plymouth Sound. Lee Evans also mentions one in Yorkshre and another in Essex - another was in the Kent Stour Valley on Nov 6

Spoonbill: There were still 14 in Poole Harbour on Nov 10

Bewick's Swan: The Slimbridge site has not yet got more than 21 birds but on Nov 11 one Netherlands site had 316 with another 11 at a nearby site

Whooper Swan: Not many of these so far - on Nov 8 a family of four landed near Pett Level and a loner landed at Christchurch Harbour on Nov 6 (making a lot of noise about the fact that was lost!). Another 8 were seen in Yorkshre on Nov 7 but the biggest count so far has been on 21 in Belgium on Nov 11

Red-breasted Goose: The bird that was chased away from Christchurch Harbour by genuine Brent on Oct 28 has lost even more of its claim to be a genuine wild bird by now consorting with Canada Geese at Exminster Marshes in Devon

Greylag Goose: These are as common as Canada Geese in most of England but we do not often see them in south east Hampshire so there may be some interest in reporting that a flock of 18 landed at the RSPB reserve islands in Langstone Harbour on Nov 12

Shelduck: We may soon be seeing an increase in the number returning to the Solent area for the winter - this thought comes from reports of birds moving west at three sites on Nov 6 (54 at the South Foreland in Kent, 105 at Sandwich Bay and 103 in the Calais area of the French Coast.

Wigeon: Another wave of these is now reaching us - on Nov 6 154 went past Folkestone and also that day 3088 were reported across the channel on the French coast in Normandie. By Nov 10 the number at the Lower Test Marshes was up to 350 and by Nov 12 the number at the mouth of the Langbrook stream (just west of Langstone Bridge) was up to the normal winter complement of around 45

Long-tailed Duck: The bird that was on the Budds Farm pools from Oct 29 to Nov 5 has not been reported since but others have been seen at Dungeness on Nov 6 and 9 while two were seen together in Shoreham Harbour on Nov 7 before flying on west

Common Scoter: The female which I saw in the Hayling Oysterbeds on Nov 1 may still be around as a similar bird was seen there on Nov 12

Velvet Scoter: The number in the English Channel increased to 18 off Cap Gris-Nez on Nov 5 and 6 and one was in Christchurch Harbour on Nov 7

Pintail: The number in the Lymington area was up to 60 on Nov 7 but nothing on our side of the channel to match the 680 in the Calais area of northern France on Nov 6

Goldeneye: No big arrival but by Nov 10 there were 6 at the Blashford Lakes with preceding sightings at Sandwich Bay, Dungeness and Pett Level during the week. Nov 12 brought singles to Southampton Water (and to Bewl Water near Crowborough)

Smew: First mention of this species for the winter came on Nov 12 with single redheads at Dungeness and Bewl Water

Eider: The flock off the Lymington area was up to 44 on Nov 12

Red-breasted Merganser: There had been a count of 15 in Langstone Harbour as early as Nov 3 but by Nov 6 the number off Dungeness was up to 88 and by Nov 8 there were 6 in Pagham Harbour with 15 off Christchurch Harbour on Nov 10. Counts on Nov 12 were 46 at The Kench in Langstone Harbour and 81 at

Dungeness with a smaller party of 12 in the channel off Warblington between Langstone and Emsworth

Goosander: The number at the Blashford Lakes was up to 44 on Nov 12 from 33 on Oct 23

Rough Legged Buzzard: One was still in the Burpham (Arundel) area and another at Folkestone this week as a result of an excess population of voles on the continent this summer

Osprey: What was probably the last to be seen in England this year was over Climping (near Bognor) on Nov 7

Crane: One Belgian site had 1857 birds on Nov 6 and a few have spilled over to England giving reports of 8 in Cambridge on Nov 8, 1 or 2 in Dorset and one on Nov 10 by the R Test where it crosses the M27 near Southampton

Great Bustard: The first bird to set out on its winter holiday from Salisbury Plain (carrying the 06 tag) was in South Devon (Thurlstone Bay) on Nov 6

Avocet: The number which had arrived at the Exe estuary by Nov 7 was over 280 with others en route (9 at Christchurch Harbour on Nov 10, 7 at Farlington Marshes on Nov 7 and one at Nutbourne Bay in Chichester Harbour on Nov 12

Golden Plover: The flock at Rye Harbour was nearing 3000 by Nov 12 when a much smaller flock was again on the mud of the Emsworth Channel in Chichester Harbour off the Great Deeps

Woodcock: Reports of 31 birds arriving from the continent this week include one seen near the Hayling Coastal Path near West Town Station and another on the Kent coast near Dover being caught by a Peregrine but escaping when the Peregrine was attacked by seagulls. On Nov 8 Portland had 4 few arrivals and Durlston had 3.

Spotted Redshank: The bird which has been almost a fixture in the Nore Barn stream at the west end of the Emsworth shoreline for several winters has been seen several times this winter but much less regularly than usual and this week it only turned up once - probably it has found better feeding elsewhere

Curlew: Recent rainfall has moistened the ground making the Warblington Farm fields into a possible feeding area for Curlew for the first time this winter and they were first seen back there on Nov 7

Guillemot: A mixed flock of some 3,500 Auks was off the Brittany coast of Fance on Nov 5 and 6 and I am wondering if it is the arrival of these birds from further north that influences our local breeders to return to their nest ledges at this time of year. At any rate Durlston reported that their Guillemots were back on the ledges on Nov 10 and I think they will continue to 'defend them' against intruders throughout out the winter. I have no positive evidence that the winter visitors make

any attempt to muscle in on these breeding ledges but I have been made aware that several species of seabird do base themselves at their proposed breeding sites long before they intend to use them as nests, and then abandon the nest area over the last few weeks before they actually start to nest, and I suppose it would make sense to defend their nests while the 'strangers' are still around but to leave the nests at the same time that the visitors leave for their own breeding area, taking the opportunity to move to good feeding areas and stoke up for the breeding season, then return to the nests at the last minute

Woodpigeon: The inexplicable autumn flights of vast numbers of Woodpigeon have continued through this week. On Nov 6 the village of Little Haldon in the Teignmouth area of Devon was the location of a report of more than 126,400 pigeon flying north overhead. As I understand it these are supposedly Scandinavian birds making their way south west to winter in Spain or beyond but the reported observations do not seem to support this. In the first place why were these birds going north, not south (OK they could have discovered at dawn that they were out over open sea and headed for Dartmoor to rest during the day, but if so one would expect to find some evidence of their continuing journey next night (or day) but I have never been made aware of any such continuity (the facts suggest that the birds are travelling in several parallel universes - appearing in ours at random intervals, and giving the impression that several parties of birds are travelling in parallel but each party is making unco-ordinated jumps between the universes.

Turtle Dove: On Nov 6 one was found at Polgigga (between Lands End and Penzance) which is thought to be an **Oriental/Rufous Turtle Dove (Streptopelia orientalis)** - the species which was in an Oxfordshire garden from Feb 16 to May 9 earlier this year

Owls: On Nov 8 a **Long-eared** was caught in a Heligoland trap at Sandwich Bay but the majority of owls currently being reported are newly arrived **Short-eared** (one of which was seen harrying a Barn Owl on the Isle of Wight on Nov 4 I hope this does not become a habit!). 21 reports of Short-eared this week include up to 5 at Portland, another 5 at Rodmell near Lewes. and one or two on Hayling on Nov 9 and 12 (one hunting over the Golf Course and another seen at Sandy Point)

Swifts: Back on Nov 4 a **Pallid Swift** was reported over Lee Farm on the Sussex Downs but it is now thought that it may have been a rarer **Needle-tailed Swift**. Two **Common Swifts** (maybe the same) were seen at Christchurch Harbour on Nov 10 and Portland on Nov 11 and Christchurch Harbour had a **Pallid Swift** on Nov 4 while the week ended with a sad tale of yet another **Pallid** which was found on the ground, weak and emaciated at Langton Herring on Nov 12. Martin Cade drove over to collect this bird and on the way back to Portland it was warmed up and dried out by the car heater so when back at Portland in warm sunshine it was strong enough to fly and feed itself but sadly it was almost immediately taken by a local Sparrowhawk.

Kingfisher: Local sightings this week included one on the R Ems in Brook Meadow at Emsworth and more than one sighting along the 'canal' between the Great and Little Deeps on Thorney Island

Hoopoe: The bird at Climping near Bognor was seen from Nov 6 to 10 at least

Swallow: Still being seen daily with 5 at Durlston on Nov 12

House Martin: The last report I have seen was of one at Sandy Point on Hayling on Nov 9

Rock Pipit: Wintering birds have been around for a month or more but there may have been a wave of new arrivals this week. Two were on the Langstone South Moors shore on Nov 12 with three more at the Kench that day.

Waxwing: The first I know of in southern England flew through Ramsgate station on the morning of Nov 7 as a local birder was waiting for his train to work and on Nov 8 Lee Evans reported recent arrivals in Norfolk.

Wren and Dunnock have both been heard to sing this week as have **Song Thrush Wood Pigeon, Collared Dove, Starling** and over course **Robin**

Ring Ouzel: Two were still in Dorset and one at Dungeness on Nov 11

Blackbird: Plenty of continental arrivals this week - Nov 6 brought 1275 to Dungeness, and 300 to Folkestone. On Nov 7 there were 250 at Dungeness and 120 at Sandwich Bay on Nov 8 followed by 43 at Christchurch Harbour on Nov 10

Fieldfare: 1800 were in Cornwall on Nov 6 and 600 were in the Kent Stour valley on Nov 7 with 145 in the New Forest on Nov 12

Redwing: Around 1000 were roosting in the New Forest on Nov 12

Mistle Thrush: Three were at Warblington Church near Havant on Nov 12

Late Warblers: A **Barred Warbler** was on the Sussex Downs at Cissbury Ring on Nov 12, a **Common Whitethroat** was in Dorset that day and a **Garden Warbler** was at Durlston where **5 Blackcaps** were seen (Nov 12)

Hume's Leaf Warbler: One in Shetland on Nov 8 became species no 448 to be seen in Britain + Ireland this year (a new record for Lee Evans annual year list) - another appeared in Norfolk next day.

Goldcrest: Plenty of these around but I think a flock of 40 at Christchurch Harbour on Nov 12 was a shared record with Dungeness which had 40 on Oct 30

Bullfinch: Plenty around this winter (current English record is 118 at Durlston on Nov 1) but I learnt this week of a 'new to me' Northern subspecies (*Pyrrhula pyrrhula pyrrhula*) with a winglength of 98 mm against the 80 mm of our normal birds and weighing 31.8 gms vs 21.5) This giant was caught and ringed on the north Kent coast on Nov 9

Lapland Bunting: One was at Sandy Point on Hayling on Nov 5 (8 others at different sites this week)

Snow Bunting: These have been pouring into England this week - the record count was 39 at Sandwich Bay on Nov 8 with smaller number at at least 14 other sites including 5 at East Head in Chichester Harbour on Nov 11

INSECTS

[\(Skip to Plants\)](#)

Dragonflies:

Species reported this week:

Southern Hawker (last seen on Nov 6 in Cornwall), Migrant Hawker (Last on Nov 12 at Lower Test Marshes), Common Darter (last at Sinah Gravel Pit on Hayling on Nov 12)

Butterflies:

Species reported this week:

Large White (last at Portland on Nov 12), Small White (last at Gosport on Nov 4), Red Admiral (last at Warblington near Havant on Nov 12), Painted Lady (last was a newly arrived migrant on Southsea Beach on Nov 6)

Moths:

Selected sightings this week:

Note that further info for all species can be found on Mike Wall's HantsMoths website using the second link given for each species

1716 The Vestal (*Rhodometra sacraria*) trapped at Portland on Nov 1 - see <http://ukmoths.org.uk/show.php?id=6173>

For the HantsMoths info go to <http://www.hantsmoths.org.uk/species/1716.php>

1498 Amblyptilia punctidactyla - an uncommon plume moth found in Hove on Nov 5 - see <http://ukmoths.org.uk/show.php?id=2677>

For the HantsMoths info go to <http://www.hantsmoths.org.uk/species/1498.php>

1720 The Gem *Orthonama obstipata* - found at Dungeness on Nov 5 - see <http://ukmoths.org.uk/show.php?id=2530>

For the HantsMoths info go to <http://www.hantsmoths.org.uk/species/1720.php>

1764 Common Marbled Carpet *Chloroclysta truncata* - at Folkestone on Nov 9 - see <http://ukmoths.org.uk/show.php?id=26>

For the HantsMoths info go to <http://www.hantsmoths.org.uk/species/1764.php>

1771a Cypress Carpet *Thera cupressata* - at Edburton on the Sussex Downs on Nov 5 - see <http://ukmoths.org.uk/show.php?id=1541>

For the HantsMoths info go to <http://www.hantsmoths.org.uk/species/1771a.php>

1795 November Moth *Epirrita dilutata* at Edburton on Nov 5 - see <http://ukmoths.org.uk/show.php?id=5984>

For the HantsMoths info go to <http://www.hantsmoths.org.uk/species/1795.php>

1984 Hummingbird Hawkmoth - still flying at Durlston on Nov 7

2087 Turnip Moth *Agrotis segetum* - at Edburton on Nov 5 - see <http://ukmoths.org.uk/show.php?id=298>

For the HantsMoths info go to <http://www.hantsmoths.org.uk/species/2087.php>

2203 White-speck *Mythimna unipuncta* - at Portland on Nov 5 - <http://ukmoths.org.uk/show.php?id=700>

For the HantsMoths info go to <http://www.hantsmoths.org.uk/species/2203.php>

2208 The Cosmopolitan *Mythimna loreyi* - at Dungeness on Nov 5 - <http://ukmoths.org.uk/show.php?id=885>

For the HantsMoths info go to <http://www.hantsmoths.org.uk/species/2208.php>

2227 The Sprawler *Asteroscopus sphinx* - at Edburton on Nov 5 - see <http://ukmoths.org.uk/show.php?id=1801>

For the HantsMoths info go to <http://www.hantsmoths.org.uk/species/2227.php>

2245 Green-brindled Crescent *Allophyes oxyacanthae* - at Folkestone on Nov 10 - see <http://ukmoths.org.uk/show.php?id=1764>

For the HantsMoths info go to <http://www.hantsmoths.org.uk/species/2245.php>

2375 Large Wainscot *Rhizedra lutosa* - at Folkestone on Nov 8 - see <http://ukmoths.org.uk/show.php?id=1770>

For the HantsMoths info go to <http://www.hantsmoths.org.uk/species/2375.php>

2400 Scarce Bordered Straw *Helicoverpa armigera* - at Portland on Nov 5 - see <http://ukmoths.org.uk/show.php?id=2527>

For the HantsMoths info go to <http://www.hantsmoths.org.uk/species/2400.php>

Other Insects:

Selected sightings this week:

Drone Fly *Eristalis tenax*: One photographed by Brian Fellows at Brook Meadow on Nov 9

PLANTS

[\(Skip to Other Wildlife\)](#)

Lesser Celandine: Flowering by the roadside of Bound Lane, south Hayling, on Nov 11 - I have never come across the first flowers before mid-December in previous years

Soapwort: Still flowering in Havant on Nov 7

Dog Rose: Many flowers on plants at two sites near Langstone, both on the harbour shoreline - seen on Nov 11 and 12

Burnet Saxifrage: Still flowering in Havant cemetery on Nov 7 but area likely to be mown soon

Alexanders: I have never seen this flowering before March in previous years but Brian Fellows found it flowering beside the London Road coming down the south facing slope of Portsdown on Nov 11

Sharp-leaved Fluellen: Still one flower to be found in the Warblington Farm arable field behind Conigar Point on Nov 11

Field Woundwort: Also flowering in the same field on Nov 12

Small Scabious: Still flowering on Portsdown on Nov 11

Narrow-leaved Ragwort: Not a local find a Kent birder came on a new site for the species at the South Foreland on Nov 6

Winter Heliotrope: Now coming into general flowering in the Havant area

OTHER WILDLIFE

[\(Skip to Endweek\)](#)

White Squirrels: These are regularly seen in the Portsdown and Portsmouth area and this week as many as three were thought to have been seen together in a small urban wood called 'The Dell' at Purbrook on the north facing part of Portsdown

Fungi:

Best Fungus news and pictures once more come from Graeme Lyons (see <http://analternativenaturalhistoryofsussex.blogspot.com/>) for **Phleogena faginea** and **Scarlet Waxcaps**. Graeme also gives a source for what sounds like a useful key for identifying waxcaps at

<http://homepage.ntlworld.com/ralph.hollins/Summary.htm> <http://sxbr.org.uk/news/waxcaps>

Species seen and identified locally this week were:

Snowy Waxcap (*Hygrocybe virginea*)

Parrot Waxcap (*Hygrocybe psittacina*)

Drab Bonnet (*Mycena aetites*)

Orange Moss-cap (*Rickenella* or *Mycena fibula*)

Field Mushroom (*Agaricus campestris*)

Bell-shaped Mottlegill (*Panaeolus campanulatus*)

Brown mottlegill (*Panaeolina foenisecii*)

Meadow Puffball (*Vascellum pratense*)

Apricot Club (*Clavulinopsis luteoalba*)

Stinking Dapperling (*Lepiota cristata*)

Glistening Inkcap (*Coprinus micaceus*)

Shaggy Parasol (*Macrolepiota rhacoides*)

WILDLIFE DIARY AND NEWS FOR NOV 7 - 13 (WEEK 45 OF 2011)

[\(Skip to previous week\)](#)

[Sun 13 Nov](#)

[\(Link to previous day's entry\)](#)

Summary of past week's news

My latest weekly summary of reports is now available by clicking [Weekly Summary](#) here

[Sat 12 Nov](#)

[\(Link to previous day's entry\)](#)

Celandines flowering on Hayling

Shortly after posting yesterday's diary entry I had a phone call from Hayling Island telling me of **Lesser Celandines** in full flower alongside Bound Lane in south Hayling (the earliest I have ever seen them in the past has been mid-December) More surprise news came from last night's Autumnwatch programme which said that **Waxwings** had already been seen in the Midlands and when I checked the internet this morning I read of a commuter, waiting for his morning train, seeing a couple of **Waxwing** flying through Ramsgate station on the morning of Nov 7. There was also a mention of them in Lee Evans latest bulletin of 'twitcher news' dated Nov 8 in which he mentioned that .. "North Norfolk and elsewhere have seen small numbers of **BOHEMIAN WAXWINGS** arrive in recent days on the easterly winds." He also claimed that the recent arrival of the first **Hume's Leaf Warbler** (related to **Yellow Browed**) of the year had pushed the number of species recorded in Britain and Ireland during the current year up to an all time record of 448.

Going back to the Autumnwatch programme and the arrival of **Bewicks' Swans** at Slimbridge (where the highest count of them so far has been 21) I saw that there was a big influx to the Netherlands on Nov 11, increasing the number there from at most 84 to 327.

My own observations this morning, during a cycle ride to Budds Farm and back, were of my first **Rock Pipits** (two on the South Moors shore), another cluster of just **over 40 Dog Rose flowers** at the mouth of the Langbrook stream, and **four new fungi** for my personal list - including a great show of **Lepiota cristata** outside the vehicle entrance to the Havant Council Depot in Southmoor Lane and a lone **Glistening Inkcap** growing below John Goodspeed's Nature Notes poster at the west end of Mill Lane at Langstone, plus two more I could not name with certainty. When at Budds Farm there was the usual display of duck species plus an unusually large group of **10 Cormorant** and another of **three Green Sandpipers** while the flock of **Wigeon** off the mouth of the Langbrook stream was up to 42.

Back at home the **Song Thrush** had resumed singing in today's sunshine and I also heard another brief burst of **Duncock** song as well as both **Wood Pigeon** and **Collared Dove**.

Finally, for those who, like me, gather odd facts, I read this morning in a Kent bird ringer's blog that on Nov 9, when ringing at Reculver on the north Kent coast, he had trapped three Bullfinches of three different subspecies. Two of them (**Pyrrhula pyrrhula pileata** and **P. p. europaea** with wing measurements of 80 and 81 mm) were difficult to separate but the third was a giant by comparison with wing length of

98 mm - this was the '**Northern Bullfinch**' **P. p. pyrrhula** which weighed 31.8 gms against the 21.3 and 22.4 gms of our British/Continental subspecies.

Fri 11 Nov

[\(Link to previous day's entry\)](#)

Wild Roses on a dull day

I went out to get some fresh air on my bike this afternoon with no expectation of seeing anything of wildlife interest but as I was returning from Emsworth along the shore I decided to pop in to the Conigar Point field at Warblington Farm and there, along the inside of the shore hedgerow, was a lovely display of more than 30 fresh **Dog Rose flowers**. A closer look at the field edge below the hedge not only found **Field Woundwort** still in flower but also one fresh flower on **Sharp-leaved Fleuellen**.

Heading on home I was halfway up the Billy Trail, passing the Wade Court footbridge with the daylight fast fading, when I was stopped by the sound of **Duncock song** - the first I have heard since July 26 though I see Brian Fellows heard an isolated burst at Nutbourne on Oct 21. Last year they started singing regularly on Dec 9 so I am not expected to hear another for a month. Earlier this week a single **Song Thrush** was singing all morning within earshot of my home on Monday (Nov 7), Wednesday and Thursday but I did not hear it today - probably this was a continental bird who got no response to this calls for a mate here and has moved on to try elsewhere. Also heard last Monday was a burst of **Wren song** (and I see Brian Fellows heard one on Wednesday) but last spring they did not start daily song until Jan 14 (I have a report of one frozen to its overnight perch in Scotland on Jan 13!)

WILDLIFE DIARY AND NEWS FOR OCT 31 - NOV 6 (WEEK 44 OF 2011)

Bird news highlights:

Items which have appeared on the internet since my last full scan and update of my own records include the news that the **Long-tailed Duck** which has been on Budds Farm pools here in Havant since Oct 29 flew out into Langstone Harbour on the afternoon of Nov 5 when a **Wryneck** was seen on the Fishery Creek shore of Hayling Island (west of Black Point) and a **Black Brant** was further up the east shore of the Island in the Mill Rytthe area. Also on Nov 5 came the first report of a **Shag** inside Portsmouth Harbour and a **Great Northern Diver** in the west Solent off Park Shore.

A local first for the Emsworth area was a sighting of a **Firecrest** in the Nore Barn woodland. On Nov 6 the **Hoopoe** was still being seen at Climping, just east of Bognor, and five **Short-eared Owls** were still hunting the banks of the Sussex Ouse at Rodmell near Lewes. Thousands of **Woodpigeons** were on the move over Hampshire and Dorset - e.g. 3255 over Barton on sea west of Lyminster on Nov 5.

Black-necked Grebe: By Nov 4 there were **7 Black-necked Grebes** in Studland Bay

Cattle Egret: I have not seen any reports of the Thorney Island bird since Oct 30 but it was roosting at the Little Deeps with 78 Little Egrets on the evening of Oct 29

Great White Egret: I continue to be amazed by the large number of these which are reported at continental sites with virtually no reports of **Little Egrets** coming from the continental side of the Channel while on this side of the channel the situation is reversed. I find it difficult to believe that this will remain true indefinitely and maybe this week marks the start of a changing pattern with news from Lee Evans that on Oct 31 five **Great Whites** were roosting together at Frampton in Gloucestershire while two flew east over Thorney Island on Oct 29 and one was reported at Venford reservoir in Devon on both Oct 26 and 27 as well as the 'resident' bird at the Blashford Lakes. Other reports from English sites since Oct 1 have come from the Worthing area, Reculver and Oare Marshes in north Kent, Dungeness, Wadebridge in Cornwall, the Axe and the Exe estuaries in Devon, and Lands End (to maintain the balance we must add that recent continental reports include reports on Oct 23 potentially totalling 226 birds at 38 continental sites and with a definite count of 24 at a single site, another set of reports on Oct 24 showing a potential total of 176 birds at 29 sites including one with 13 birds, and a third set on Oct 28 totalling 112 birds at 17 sites including one with 35). As I feel sure that many **Little Egrets** do come and go across the Channel I have wondered if **Little Egrets** were so common on the continent that they were never reported but a search of Trektellen has discovered no more than 20 reports from half a dozen sites, but with no counts of more than 8 birds (most of just one bird)

Glossy Ibis: This week's reports show one remaining at Christchurch Harbour, a juvenile seen once near Plymouth, one in the Kent Stour valley, one flying east over Beachy Head and one arriving in Yorkshire on Oct 31

Bewicks Swan: Still only 3 at Slimbridge but a total of up to 15 had arrived at the Belgian sites by Nov 3

Whooper Swan: Twelve were seen at Flamborough Head in Yorkshire on Oct 31 and more than 20 had been seen at other English sites earlier in the month but Slimbridge has only seen two of them and they seem to have moved on.

Brent Geese: The **Dark-bellied** birds are now with us in large numbers and are already happily feeding on winter wheat in several places but the only **Pale-bellied** that I know of have been four in the Weymouth area which seem to have flown east to appear in the Gosport area after Oct 29 (no more than 2 seen together). In addition to a couple of **Brant** in the Weymouth area (not seen after Oct 26) we have news of just one seen at Mill Rytte (east Hayling) on Nov 5. The single **Red-breasted juvenile** which turned up at Christchurch Harbour (apparently coming with migrant Brent) on Oct 21 was chased off by the Brent and flew to Ferrybridge (Weymouth) on Oct 30 before being seen over Abbotsbury on Oct 31

Goldeneye: Just one new bird has appeared on the Blashford Lakes on Nov 3 and one more was at Dungeness on Nov 4

Red-breasted Merganser: The first small flocks are at last starting to appear with 19 at Dungeness on Nov 3, 15 in Langstone Harbour (Milton shore) on Nov 3 and 10 in Portsmouth Harbour on Nov 4

Goosander: One redhead was a surprise sight in the Thorney Great Deepes on Oct 29 and maybe the same bird was seen there on Nov 1

Rough-legged Buzzard: On Oct 29 there were six of these over one Netherlands site (maybe a total of 13 over 5 sites that day) and several have come further west into England (latest were one over Sheppey in Kent on Nov 1 and one over Folkestone on Nov 4)

Osprey: Last reports from England were of one over Weymouth and another over Otter Head close to Budleigh Salterton in South Devon, both on Oct 30

Quail: An unexpected report of one in Devon, also at Otter Head on Oct 30

Crane: Large scale movements on the continent with over 1000 birds at one Netherlands site on Oct 4 (potential total of 2559 at 15 sites) and 2755 at one Belgian site on Oct 5 when potentially there were 6783 birds at 20 sites. The only recent report in England was of just 2 over the Pevensy Levels on Oct 31

Avocet: At least 87 had reached the Exe estuary by Oct 30 and on Nov 1 there were 13 at Church Norton (Pagham Harbour) and 5 at Langstone Harbour

Stone Curlew: At least one migrant was passing south through Sussex on Oct 30 giving two reports - one of a bird by the R Stour near Lewes and another in the Coombes Corner area where the R Adur turns south to head through the Downs

Golden Plover: A flock of around 300 was in the upper section of the Emsworth Channel (off the Great Deepes) on Oct 30 and a similar size flock was in Pagham Harbour off Church Norton on that same day

Woodcock: At least four birds reported in southern England this week - one in south Devon (Thurlstone Marsh) on Oct 27, one at Climping (east of Bognor) on Oct 29, one near St Adhelms Head in Dorset on Nov 4 and one at Durlston on Nov 5

Black-tailed Godwit: The Exe estuary flock was up to around 600 on Oct 30, when there were 180 in the Emsworth area, and the Lymington shore had 254 on Nov 1. On Nov 4 there were more than 150 in the Broadmarsh area of Langstone Harbour

Curlew: Nov 3 saw a leucistic bird returning to the Oare Marshes on north Kent for the fifth successive year showing that its lack of camouflage has not rendered it a target for predation.

Ring-billed Gull: The 'Cockle Pond' bird (named Waldo for his association with Walpole Park at Gosport) was back this year on Oct 23 and was seen again on Oct 30 and Nov 5

Sandwich Tern: 12 were off the Milton Shore of Langstone Harbour on Nov 3 and three were off Mill Rytte in Chichester Harbour on Oct 29 - I suspect these are all intending to stay for the winter

Common Tern: One was at Lymington on Nov 1, 3 were at Berry Head (Brixham) in south Devon on Nov 2, and one was still passing Dungeness on Nov 3

Black Tern: A late bird was at Christchurch Harbour on Oct 30 but it may have lost its sense of direction as one was seen at the Longham Lakes on the northern fringe of Bournemouth on Nov 1

Auks: 512 were off Dungeness on Nov 3 and 200 were off Brixham in Devon on Nov 2. A **Black Guillemot (Tystie)** was off Portland on Oct 30 and a **Little Auk** off Dungeness on Oct 31 with another off Brixham in Devon on Nov 2

Stock Dove: No big flocks in southern England yet - recent reports have been of 62 on the Suffolk coast on Oct 30 and 40 on the Downs above Worthing on Oct 31

Wood Pigeon: Recent reports of movement over southern England have included 18,800 over Ascot (Berkshire) on Nov 2 (plus others giving a potential total of 26,804 over 5 English sites that day) and 3255 over Barton on sea west of Lymington on Nov 5. A late **Turtle Dove** was at Portland that day

Short-eared Owl: Seemingly there have been a lot more than usual in southern England for the time of year (and I noticed one report on Nov 4 of a **Barn Owl** being chased from its hunting territory at Brading Marshes on the Isle of Wight by one of the **Short-eared** invaders). Normally these Owls appear in ones and twos but this week we have had 6 hunting together at Rodmell near Lewes, another six together at Portland, and at least 5 over the Pevensey Levels near Eastbourne. On Nov 1 the Netherlands had a potential total of 10 Owls over 4 sites (one having 7 birds).

Swifts: Southerly winds seem to have blown **several Swifts of three species** over England this week. Reports of **Common Swifts** came from south Devon, the Testwood Lakes near Southampton, and Sandwich Bay in Kent (2 birds seen distantly). **Pallid Swifts** were reported from Dorset, Wales, Northumberland and Kent, and an **Alpine Swift** was claimed on the Sussex Downs on Nov 4

Hoopoe: On Nov 4 a resident living near the Climping shore (east of Bognor) saw a **Hoopoe** back where it has been last winter but local birders did not locate it until Nov 5 when it was elusive around Kent's Farm but it was still there on Nov 6

Wryneck: Three late sightings - on Oct 30 one was in Christchurch Harbour, on Nov 1 one was at the very end of Berry Head near Brixham in Devon and on Nov 5 one was on the south Hayling shore (north side!) at a slipway at the north end of Nutbourne Road (SZ 742 987)

Shore Lark: There have been nine reports of these at continental sites since Oct 9 (including a flock of 40 at a Netherlands site on Oct 24) but there have been only two sightings in southern England so far - one of a single bird at the QE 2 Reservoir in London on Oct 26 and one of 4 flying over Pegwell Bay in Kent on Nov 4

Swallow: Still being seen at Durlston on Nov 5 with **House Martin** in Kent on Nov 4

Pied Wagtail: The first local indication of a night roost in Havant was on Oct 31 when I saw several landing at dusk on the roof of the West Street multi-storey carpark but then seemingly moving to a main roost on the roof of McIlroy's store in West St - others flew on south over this area

Whinchat: Still being seen on Oct 31 at Rye Harbour and Sandwich Bay, then on the Scillies on Nov 2 and near St Alban's Head in Dorset on Nov 3

Ring Ouzel: Two were still at Beachy Head on Nov 4

Song Thrush: A very brief **snatch of song** was heard from the Warblington Farm fields on Nov 2 - last year song was heard on Nov 13 and 26

Mistle Thrush: First autumn song heard by Brian Fellows in Stansted Forest on Nov 1

Pallas' Warbler: Around a dozen reports this week from Dungeness to the Scillies - the nearest to Havant was at Church Norton (Pagham Hbr) on Nov 4

Firecrest: Plenty of these around - one birder in Devon came on 15 in a walk around his village - and locally one was photographed on Nov 5 in the Nore Barn wood at the west end of the Emsworth shore

Marsh Tit: These seem to be vanishing from the south coast at the **Willow Tits** have done so it was good to hear of two seen on Kingley Vale (north of Chichester) on Oct 29

Great Tit: Brief song heard in Havant on Nov 1 and 3

Great Grey Shrike: One seems settled in the New Forest between Burley and Ringwood while others are being seen in Ashdown Forest and at Smeathorpe Airfield (between Honiton and Taunton in Devon)

Magpie: If you go to

<http://www.emsworthwildlife.hampshire.org.uk/0-0-0-wildlife-diary.htm> and scroll down to the Nov 2 entry you will see a photo of a Magpie holding a piece of pasta in its bill with its breast plumage in an unusual state. Brian Fellows asked for suggestions as to the reason for this plumage state but my rather facetious suggestion that it had acquired the look by diving into something very mucky to pull out the pasta was not taken very seriously so if you have a better suggestion do send it to Brian who currently thinks that this is 'juvenile plumage'. Having seen many young Magpies, including a family group of three which visited my garden daily last spring, I have always found their plumage to be an even brighter black and white than that of their parents and the only differences between the adult and young is that the latter are smaller and have distinctly shorter tails. My own serious suggestion about this bird is that it had been bathing in a deep pool of water just moments before the photo was taken, leaving its breast feathers disarranged and discoloured by the water (and also because we are seeing the underside of them and the down that is normally hidden beneath them) - I seem to remember a similar problem of identification arose a year or so ago with a photo of (I think) a Greenfinch which had also been bathing at Brook Meadow and had its plumage similarly discoloured and deranged while the plumage was still wet. (Brian's email address is given at the top of his Wildlife Diary page)

Bullfinch: These have been much more numerous than usual this autumn but Nov 1 brought an extreme example of this when Durlston reported a count of 118 passing through

Snow Bunting: This week has brought reports of this species from nine south coast sites including one on Saxon Down (the high ground immediately east of Lewes) on Oct 30 and another at St Catherine's Point, Isle of Wight, on Nov 2

Corn Bunting: On Oct 31 one was singing at Cissbury Ring on the Downs above Worthing and on Nov 1 a flock of 80 was at Burpham by the R Arun near Arundel

Vagrants: Among this week's unexpected visitors was an **Eastern Crowned Warbler** (only the second for Britain) caught in ringer's nets in Hertfordshire on Oct 30. Other twitching interest this week lies in the number of **Shrike species** seen - in addition to at least **six Great Grey** and **one Red-backed** the following have been reported (I'm somewhat confused by the names and cannot be sure that each is a separate species!) .. **Steppe Grey** (=Saxaul?), **Brown**, and **Daurian** (a subspecies of Isabelline or vice versa?)

Insect News highlights:

A **Queen Hornet** trying to hibernate in a house bedroom was unusual as was a **Dark Bush Cricket** still stridulating at this time of year - lots more in the main section below

Plant News highlights:

Finds of **Moth Mullein** on South Hayling and **Blackthorn** in flower near Titchfield were the highspots of the week but a total of **113 plant species in flower in November is good going**

Other News highlights:

Fungi: These are at last responding to the rain. On Nov 4 I found a large group of **Shaggy Parasols** 'in bud' on the bank of the approach road to the Broadmarsh Slipway and also found a mature **Field Mushroom** there while my own mossy lawn had **Parrot and Snowy Waxcaps**, **Apricot Club (Clavulinopsis luteoalba)**, **Pink Domecap (Calocybe carnea)**, and **Collared Parachute (Marasmius rotula)**. In the Warblington area I came on **The Miller (Clitopilus prunulus)**. From Kent came a report and photo of **Sessile Earthstar (Geastrum fimbriatum)** and from Ebernoe near Midhurst reports of **Beech Jellydisc (Neobulgaria pura)** and **Lemon Disco (Bisporella citrina)**

White Grey Squirrels were seen this week both in the Purbrook area on the northern side of Portsdown and in Kingston cemetery in the heart of Portsmouth

A family group of a female Roe Deer with two well grown kids grazing peacefully at the southern foot of the A27 embankment where it crosses the River Ems was photographed this week and can be seen in Brian Fellows website (Oct 30th entry on

<http://www.emsworthwildlife.hampshire.org.uk/0-0-0-wildlife-diary.htm>)

An unusual find on the Camber Sands (Rye Bay on the Kent/Sussex border) on Oct 23 was the **corpse of a juvenile Blue Shark (Prionace glauca)** - a photo of it is at <http://rxwildlife.org.uk/category/all-latest-news/other/> and general info about this normally deep water species is at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Blue_shark

INSECTS

[\(Skip to Plants\)](#)

Dragonflies:

Notable sightings this week:

Vagrant Emperor: None seen in the British Isles but there is news on the internet (see <http://www.flickr.com/photos/39280703@N08/6289450178/in/photostream/>) of a new surge building up in Portugal, possibly about to fly north

Species reported this week:

Southern Hawker, Migrant Hawker, Common Darter,

Butterflies:

Notable sightings this week:

Red Admiral has been the only species seen in any number this week

Species reported this week:

Clouded Yellow, Brimstone, Small White, Small Copper, Common Blue, Red Admiral, Painted Lady, Peacock and Speckled Wood

Moths:

Selected sightings this week:

1052 Dark-streaked Button (*Acleris umbrana*) trapped at Rye Town on Nov 4 - id of this not yet confirmed but if it is it will be around the sixth record for Sussex. For photo and details see <http://ukmoths.org.uk/show.php?id=5427>

Note that further info for all species can be found on Mike Wall's HantsMoths website by noting the UK Moths species number (e.g.1052 for the above species) and replacing the ** in the following web address with it - thus http://www.hantsmoths.org.uk/species/****.php would become <http://www.hantsmoths.org.uk/species/1052.php>**

1716 The Vestal (*Rhodometra sacraria*) trapped at Portland on Nov 1 - see <http://ukmoths.org.uk/show.php?id=6173>

1745 The Mallow (*Larentia clavaria*) trapped at Gosport Stokes Bay on Oct 30. See <http://ukmoths.org.uk/show.php?id=1776>

1771a Cypress Carpet (*Thera cupressata*) also trapped by Tony Tindale at Stokes Bay on Oct 30 with photos at <http://ukmoths.org.uk/show.php?id=1541> and on Tony's website at <http://www.surfbirds.com/blog/amigo/23401/Oak+Rustic+at+Stokes+Bay+.html>

1797 Autumnal Moth (*Epirrita autumnata*) trapped at Folkestone on Oct 30 - see <http://ukmoths.org.uk/show.php?id=3090>

1923 Feathered Thorn (*Colotois pennaria*) trapped at Durlston on Nov 4 - see <http://ukmoths.org.uk/show.php?id=5676> and select both male and female photos (males have the feathery antennae)

Hummingbird Hawkmoth: Still being seen at Portland and Ventnor (Isle of Wight) - presumably as migrants

2087 Turnip Moth (*Agrotis segetum*) trapped at Folkestone on Nov 4 see <http://ukmoths.org.uk/show.php?id=298>

2203 White-speck (*Mythimna unipuncta*) trapped at Portland on Oct 30 see <http://ukmoths.org.uk/show.php?id=700>

2232 Black Rustic (*Aporophyla nigra*) trapped at Durlston on Nov 4 see <http://ukmoths.org.uk/show.php?id=6029>

2241 Red Sword-grass (*Xylena vetusta*) trapped at Portland on Nov 4 see <http://ukmoths.org.uk/show.php?id=2738>

2246a Oak Rustic (*Dryobota labecula*) Trapped at Stokes Bay by Tony Tindale on Oct 30 see <http://ukmoths.org.uk/show.php?id=5610> and <http://www.surfbirds.com/blog/amigo/23401/Oak+Rustic+at+Stokes+Bay+.html>

2261 Red-headed Chestnut (*Conistra erythrocephala*) trapped at Portland on Nov 1 see <http://ukmoths.org.uk/show.php?id=3327>

2263 Red-line Quaker (*Agrochola lota*) trapped at Durlston on Nov 1 see <http://ukmoths.org.uk/show.php?id=1128>

2272 Barred Sallow (*Xanthia aurago*) trapped at Folkestone on Oct 30 see <http://ukmoths.org.uk/show.php?id=1735>

Other Insects:

Selected sightings this week:

Mesembrina meridiana House Fly: Seen at Durlston on Nov 1. The orange patches on its wings make this fairly common large fly easy to recognize - for more info see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mesembrina_meridiana - better photos can be seen at <http://www.naturespot.co.uk/species/mesembrina-meridiana>

Hornet: John Goodspeed found one in the bedroom of his house on Portsdown Hill on Nov 1 suggesting to me that it was a Queen looking for somewhere to hibernate

Ivy Bee (*Colletes hederæ*): Seen braving strong winds at Durlston on Nov 1 - probably one of the last to be seen this year. For info see http://www.bwars.com/colletes_hederæ_map.htm

Dor Beetle (*Geotrupes stercorarius*): Still to be seen at Durlston on Nov 4. For info see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Geotrupes_stercorarius

Harlequin Ladybirds: These have been seeking hibernation sites recently on warm days (as have other Ladybird species) - to help distinguish them see http://www.harlequin-survey.org/recognition_and_distinction.htm

Dark Bush Cricket (*Pholidoptera griseoptera*): I was surprised to read on the Sussex Butterfly Conservation website that this species could still be heard on Nov 1 calling at night in the Lewes area - I think it would take younger ears than mine to pick up the high frequency sounds!

Uncommon Spiders: Thanks once more to Graeme Lyons I have been made aware of a money spider species (***Erigone dentipalpis***) which has the unusual feature of having thorn like spikes on its palps which must make sex rather uncomfortable for the females. See

<http://analternativenaturalhistoryofsussex.blogspot.com/2011/11/money-pit.html#links>

PLANTS

The weather has enabled me to see 113 species of wildflower in bloom so far this month - some of them get a mention here.

Common Ramping Fumitory is still out at the New Lane allotments in Havant along with **Weasel's Snout**

Pale Flax: In flower both by the Hayling Coastal Path and at Durlston

Turkish Tutsan was flowering by the Brockhampton Stream on Nov 4 (and **Perforate St John's Wort** elsewhere)

Viola tricolor: One plant was a lucky addition to my list when I found it in a Havant pavement edge (not planted there!)

Soapwort: still flowering near the Park Road North bridge over the railway near Havant Station. **White and Red Campion** also both out in the town.

Small-flowered and **Hedgerow Cranesbill** (normal and white flowered forms) all seen

Tufted Vetch, Common Vetch and White Melilot all seen in the Broadmarsh area

Blackthorn: I have seen this flowering in the Havant area at this date in past years but this year the only report of it is from the Brownwich area west of Titchfield Haven (seen by Richard Carpenter)

Dwarf Spurge still flourishing in the Warblington Farm arable fields this week with **Fools Parsley** and the **Rayed form of Groundsel**

Cow Parsley flowering in at least three places

Yellow-wort (one plant) flowering this week but no Common Centaury seen

Cock's Eggs: abundant flowers still on Sinah Common (Hayling)

Moth Mullein was a surprise beside the Ferry Road on south Hayling (immediately west of the Golf Course approach road)

Pale Toadflax also in full flower on Sinah Common

Grey Field Speedwell found in Havant and **Blue Fleabane** at Broadmarsh

Winter Heliotrope: 16 flowerheads came into bloom in central Emsworth this week (A259 roadside just west of the town centre roundabout)

WILDLIFE DIARY AND NEWS FOR OCT 31 - NOV 6 (WEEK 44 OF 2011)

[Fri 4 Nov](#)

Fungi are appearing at last

This morning I went to see the **Long-tailed Duck** which is still showing well at the Budds Farm pools and then cycled on to Broadmarsh, adding several new flowering plants for the month to bring my current month list up to 113. Good additions were **Turkish Tutsan** by the bridge over the Brockhampton Stream and **White Melilot**, **Dark Mullein**, **Common Vetch**, **Teazel** and **Yellow-wort** along the cycle way.

The rain is at last bringing up some fungi and at Broadmarsh I found a cluster of **Parasol Mushroom 'buds'** and brought one home as I suspected it would turn into a **Shaggy Parasol** - the shortness of the stem suggested this and at home I confirmed it by cutting the specimen in half to reveal a diagnostical reddish flush to the white flesh and to enjoy the strong and very pleasant aroma it gives off (apparently the big Parasols have only a faint smell). Also while out I found a single **Field Mushroom** past its best (too many holes in the flesh to think of eating it!) and back at home a walk round my lawn found **Parrot and Snowy Waxcaps**, **Calocybe carnea**, and the tiny orange **Mycena fibula** and the 'gold spindle like' **Clavulinopsis luteo-alba**.

I have not made any other major expeditions since Tuesday's trip to Hayling but a walk in the Warblington area on Wednesday added the fungus **Clitopilus prunulus (The Miller)** on the 'Emsworth Wayside' at the east end of the A27 underpass and on that same walk I found more of the **Rayed Form Groundsel** in the farm fields in which I think I heard the very briefest attempt by a **Song Thrush** to start singing (last year I heard the first song there on Nov 13) while on Thursday I heard a brief burst of **Great Tit** song.

Tue 1 Nov

A good start to November

This morning I cycled down the Hayling Billy line to Gunner Point and back and this afternoon I took a brief walk to the New Lane allotments and Eastern Road cemetery to get my flowering plant list for November off to a very good start with 67 species seen (and a good dozen more seen yesterday around Havant which I am sure would still have been flowering today if I had followed yesterday's route again)

Today also gave me a sighting of a bird at the Oysterbeds which I could not be sure of but strongly believe to have been a female **Common Scoter** by its general size, shape and overall dark brown colour but more particularly by its vigorous jump diving. The bird was fishing inside the outer bund wall of the big south west pool of the Oysterbeds and it could not come less than 300 metres from me as the pool was only just starting to flood with the incoming tide at around 1pm (so the water nearer me was too shallow for it) and it was not only distant but spending nearly all its time under the water

Also seen while out were up to half a dozen **Red Admirals** and what I am pretty sure was a **Common Darter** though all I saw of it was the brief sparkle of its wings as it flew over the gorse bushes of Sinah Common.

My selection of today's best plants started with a couple of **Pale Flax** in flower beside the Hayling Coastal path just south of the Oysterbeds area and fresh plants of **Cow Parsley** and **Moth Mullein** (yellow flowered) by Ferry Road on either side of the Hayling Golf Club entrance road (the **Mullein** was only a few yards west of the entrance, set back against the brambles south of the pavement). Not so uncommon, but something I have not noticed before, was a good show of **Lesser**

Hawkbit (id confirmed by the sparse hairs at the base of the flower stems) on the bus turn-round roundabout close to the Ferry Inn, and on Sinah Common in the Inn on the Beach section **Pale Toadflax** and **Cock's Eggs** were still flourishing. Back in Langstone I ticked the single **Winter Heliotrope** flower. In Havant this afternoon I ticked the expected **Weasels Snout** and **Common Ramping Fumitory** at the New Lane Allotments and **Burnet Saxifrage** in the Cemetery plus **Grey Field Speedwell** in my home road (had I gone to the far side of Havant Park I would have seen the **Soapwort** that was still flowering yesterday, as were **Spotted Medick**, **Mouse Ear Hawkweed**, **Wall Lettuce** and some **Perforate St John's Wort**. One other observation at dusk yesterday was of a good number of **Pied Wagtails** going to roost, apparently on the roof of Mcllroys store in the West Street precinct (I saw them landing on the West St multi-storey carpark before moving to Mcllroys though I could not be sure that was their final destination)

WILDLIFE DIARY AND NEWS FOR OCT 24 - 30 (WEEK 43 OF 2011)

Bird news highlights:

Late News: A **Stone Curlew** was by the R Adur just north of the Sussex Downs on Oct 30 and a **Snow Bunting** was just east of Lewes on Oct 30. Local news was of the Thornham Marshes **Cattle Egret** again roosting with **78 Little Egrets** on Oct 29 when a redhead **Goosander** was on the Great Deeps. In Dorset the **Red-breasted Goose** from Christchurch Harbour arrived at Ferrybridge (Weymouth) on Oct 30

Black-necked Grebe: In the past few winters Studland Bay in Dorset seems to have become the favoured wintering site for this species while the number in Langstone Harbour has much diminished and I see that Studland has recorded its first back this week (six of them) while the only Hampshire record since last winter has been the single summering bird at the Blashford Lakes. Dorset has also had a single **Slavonian Grebe** on Oct 22 (only stayed for one morning and may have flown to Jersey where one appeared on Oct 27)

Bittern: These are now breeding in south east England and so can be found there year round but some are now starting to move into the south west for the winter - one was at Lodmoor (Weymouth) on Oct 18, another near Penzance in Cornwall on Oct 21 and a third at Hatch Pond in Poole Harbour on Oct 23

Cattle Egret: I have recently failed on two occasions to see the Thornham Marshes bird which arrived on Thorney Island on Aug 14. The last sighting I know of was on Oct 21 and I see that one arrived on the Axe estuary in Devon on Oct 22 ... latest news is that it is still there roosting with the Little Egrets but maybe feeding with a different set of cattle.

Pale-bellied Brent: The first two of the winter on the south coast were at Weymouth on Oct 13, increasing to four there on Oct 24. Those four have not been reported since Oct 26 but on Oct 29 the first two to reach Hampshire were seen at Gilkicker (Gosport).

Red-Breasted Goose: The single juvenile which arrived at Christchurch Harbour on Oct 18 in company with newly arrived Brent has recently been subject to

aggressive behaviour from the Brent and has not been seen since Oct 28. (Latest news is of its arrival at Ferrybridge/Weymouth on Oct 30)

Ruddy Shelduck: The bird which seems to have been moving around Pagham, Langstone and Chichester Harbours since Oct 14 was in Nutbourne Bay on Oct 21 and 21, then seen near Cobnor Point on Oct 22, and most recently has been with Brent at Bosham (up to Oct 29 at least).

Major influx of winter duck: This week has brought more than 1600 **Wigeon** at Pulborough Brooks on Oct 27, 400 **Teal** at Lymington on Oct 29, more than 146 **Pintail** at Exmouth on Oct 25, 60 **Pochard** at Slimbridge on Oct 26 and 24 **Mergansers** at the Kench in Langstone Harbour on Oct 24

Newly arrived duck this week have included an unexpected local sighting of a single **Long Tailed Duck** at the Budds Farm pools here in Havant in on the evening of Oct 29 (still there on the morning of Oct 30). Another unexpected sighting was a **Bufflehead** at The Lizard in Cornwall on Oct 26, then moving to Helston on Oct 29 (for a photo go to <http://www.cornwall-birding.co.uk/> and scroll down to the Oct 28 entry). Another good sighting this week was an early sighting of the first **Smew** at Dungeness on Oct 25.

Rough-legged Buzzards have been arriving on the east coast this week and Lee Evans has reported them at ten different UK sites this week as the result of 'a recent explosion of Field Voles in Scandinavia'

Hobbies were still present in southern England this week with one seen at Dungeness on Oct 26 and another at Fleet in northern Hampshire on Oct 28

Coot numbers have shot up on the south coast this week with counts of 266 at Christchurch Harbour on Oct 23 and 1358 at the Blashford Lakes on Oct 24

Avocet have at last been showing signs of moving to winter quarters this week - 45 had arrived at the Exe estuary by Oct 23 and on Oct 28 there were 8 in Pagham Harbour and 5 in Langstone Harbour

Auks have been arriving in the English Channel in force this week with peaks of 830 Guillemots and 195 Razorbills at Dungeness after a count of 4000 mixed Auks on the French coast at Cap Gris-nez on Oct 20

Woodpigeons and **Stock Doves** have still been on the move this week with over 100,000 recorded over 10 continental sites on Oct 22 but only 2000 seen in southern England (Fleet area) on Oct 24

Long and Short-eared Owls: A **Long-eared Owl** was over Christchurch Harbour on Oct 28 (maybe from the Isle of Wight population?) and several local **Short-eareds** have been seen in the Fareham/Stubbington area, Hamble Common, Southampton Docks and at the Hayling Oysterbeds (Oct 29) with a count of seven over Christchurch Harbour on the same day as the **Long-eared**.

Swifts: Singles were over Ferring(Worthing) on Oct 28 and Timsbury (Romsey) on Oct 29 after singles were over Belgium on 27th and the Netherlands on the 28th. We have also had an **Alpine Swift** in Essex on Oct 25/26th and a **Pallid Swift** over Norfolk on Oct 26

Shore Lark: One was an unexpected sight at the QE 2 Reservoir in London on Oct 26 a couple of days after 40 were at a Netherlands site on Oct 24

Sand Martin: Three were over Dungeness on Oct 22 and the same three were probably in Belgium next day (previous last for England were over Durlston on Oct 10). Both **Swallows** and **House Martins** were still in England on Oct 29.

Richard's Pipit: One at Sandy Point on Hayling on Oct 28. Less common birds in England this week were **Tawny** and **Olive-backed Pipits** in the Scillies, a **Pechora Pipit** in Shetland, and a **Red-throated** in the Scillies

Rock Pipit: Of local interest the first three Rock Pipits were on the Langstone South Moors shore on Oct 22

Dipper: An unusual report from Devon on Oct 22 was of a **Dipper** singing loudly enough to be heard above the morning rush hour traffic in the centre of Newton Abbot.

A **Dunnock** was singing at Brook Meadow in Emsworth on Oct 21 - the first I have heard of since July 26 and first before the normal resumption of song in early December though I see there was a similar single burst of song heard in Emsworth on Oct 5 last year, maybe a defensive response against the arrival of continental birds for the winter? (I see that a 'flock' of 16 Dunnocks was in a Southampton garden on Oct 27 and that Oct 28 brought a peak count of 92 in total at three German sites to prove that they are on the move)

Robins are also arriving in force - 60 were at Dungeness on Oct 28 after counts of 38 and 30 there in the previous few days

Ring Ouzel: The massive passage of this autumn seems to be tailing off but there was still one at Beachy Head on Oct 27 and a potential total of 47 at 8 continental sites on Oct 29

Blackbird: Twice this week I have seen small groups passing through my garden after 95 arrived at Dungeness on Oct 25. Also of interest Chris Packham this Friday tried to talk himself out of his faux pas of the previous week when he appeared to say that all male Blackbirds had yellow bills from birth - his excuse was that he was thinking of some continental race in which the adult males do have black bills - that would explain Lawrence Holloway's annual claim in past years at this time of year that the 'the **black billed continental Blackbirds** have arrived in Bognor'. Checking on the internet I see that male British birds are supposed to retain pale or orange bills in their first winter but Scandinavian male birds have genuine black bills in their first winter

Pallas' Warbler: On Oct 27 the RBA reported a total of 10 birds in the UK, presumably including the one that was at Sandy Point on Hayling in Oct 24/25

Yellow-browed Warbler: Singles were seen at six southern England sites this week but that included a sickly bird at Birling Gap on Beachy Head whose eye were closing.

Goldcrest: Plenty of these now around - on Oct 24 one was singing from a pine tree about 100 yards from my house in Havant

Firecrest: These seem to be more numerous than the **Goldcrest** with a flock of 17 at Abbotsbury in Dorset on Oct 22 and 12 at Dungeness on Oct 26 among others

Blue and Great Tits: The number of these in our gardens is likely to increase after counts of 3500 Blue and 663 Great at a German site on Oct 22

Shrikes: A **Brown Shrike** was in Argyll on Oct 25, **Isabelline Shrikes** were in Cornwall and Norfolk, at least one **Red-backed** was in Cornwall and at least three **Great Greys** were in southern England this week with up to 14 more on the near continent on Oct 23

Crows: Large number feed on our tidal shorelines nowadays with several hundred roosting in the Netley area south of Southampton all round the year (max count of 350 there on Mar 20 this year). Also in late March there were 280+ at Teignmouth in Devon and Christchurch Harbour had 157 on Oct 12. A smaller flock, often reaching 100 or more, feeds along the Warblington shore between Langstone and Emsworth in winter months, dividing their time between the shore line at low tide and the farm fields at high tide. This week Brian Fellows raises the question as to where they spend their nights and I have to admit that I have no idea but I have seen no evidence of them in the Langstone area when counting Egrets at sunset. I suspect they fly inland to woods but they may well travel long distances (birds from the winter roost somewhere near Fareham Creek regularly travel as far as the New Forest to feed)

Brambling: Small numbers have been in southern England since Oct 1 when two appeared at Arne in Dorset but a count of 86 at Christchurch Harbour on Oct 28 may mean that large flocks will soon reach us

Common (Mealy) Redpolls: **Lesser Redpoll** is the common species in southern England both for breeding and wintering but this autumn there has been a big influx of **Mealies**. For one example of the numbers see Sam Bailey's blog at <http://www.horshamringers.blogspot.com/> in which his Oct 22 entry describes how out of **134 Redpolls caught that morning 112 of them were Mealies**

Bullfinch: These too have been seen in exceptional numbers in southern England this autumn - on Oct 28 the Durlston site recorded 39 of them with a total of up to 42 at 8 sites that day

Snow Bunting: These have been seen in ones and twos at eight southern England sites this week, one being on the Lymington marshes

Reed Bunting: A count of 172 passing through Christchurch Harbour on Oct 28 may mean that we will all see more of them soon

Vagrants: Last week I included a link to what I thought was an image of the **Scarlet Tanager** which turned up in Cornwall on Oct 20 and then moved to the Scillies on Oct 22 but I see that the bird in Cornwall and then in the Scillies is a young first winter male which does not have the scarlet plumage but is dressed in pale yellow and grey. To see a photo of the actual bird go to <http://www.scilly-birding.co.uk/> and scroll down to the photo in the Oct 22 entry. This week's best Vagrant is a **Pied Wheatear** in Gloucestershire which you can find at

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pied_Wheatear and
<http://blx1.bto.org/birdfacts/results/bob11470.htm> .

Late News: A **Stone Curlew** was by the R Adur just north of the Sussex Downs on Oct 30 and a **Snow Bunting** was just east of Lewes on Oct 30. Local news was of the Thornham Marshes **Cattle Egret** again roosting with 78 **Little Egrets** on Oct 29 when a redhead **Goosander** was on the Great Deeps. In Dorset the **Red-breasted Goose** from Christchurch Harbour arrived at Ferrybridge (Weymouth) on Oct 30

Insect News highlights:

This week's highlight was an **Azure Dragonfly** found and photographed in Scotland on Oct 25. Dan Powell starts his account of the species by saying .. "Regarded by many as the Holy Grail of Dragonflies. Discovering your own Azure is a joy equivalent to that of a birder on finding a Golden Oriole." This find seems to have been accepted by the British Dragonfly Society but it must raise questions in some minds for, as far as I can see, the species is only on the wing in June and July.

Photos and a brief description can be seen at

<http://www.british-dragonflies.org.uk/species/azure-hawker> but this does not mention the flight time which is given as June and July in both my Dragonfly field guides.

Migrant Hawkers, Common Darters and Willow Emeralds (26 of them at one Suffolk site) were the only other dragonflies reported this week

Butterfly species seen during the week were **Brimstone, Large - Small - and Green-veined White, Small Copper, Brown Argus, Common Blue** and many **Red Admirals** (47 enjoying Ivy at one Isle of Wight site on Oct 22), plus **Painted Lady, Small Tortoiseshell** (just one seen in the Netherlands), **Peacock, Comma and Speckled Wood** and one fresh **Meadow Brown** were all seen during the week

For **moth news** see the main section below

Plant News highlights:

Nothing to add to the plant reports below

Other News highlights:

Pointed Snail (*Cochlicella acuta*) colony on Thorney Island. When at the west end of the Thorney Great Deeps on Oct 24 I had a careful look along the foot of the inside of the seawall, checking the first metre of the slope up from the level track over the stretch from the fence above the water inlet pipes to the military fence. I had made a similar check here in mid-July and again at the end of August but only found at most 20 live snails on hot days when I expected the snail population to be at its most visible (clinging to plant stems well above the ground level at which the temperature would be highest and most likely to 'fry' the snails in their shells if they stayed on the ground). This week's check was much more encouraging, finding many shells well distributed along the first half of the section from the inlet pipes to the military fence. This check had been assisted by mowing of the lower slopes,

and admittedly all the shells I found were empty (so possibly they have lain there for several years and do not reflect this year's population) but I suspect the shells did mark the end of this year's generation and that a good number of eggs or very tiny snails are also present to grow into next year's generation. I have also been encouraged this year by finding a new population where the River Lavant flows into Fishbourne Channel and to hear of them at Durlston

Lack of fungi. I did see my first two clumps of **Honey Fungus** in Havant this week and the pair of **Dryads Saddles** in Wade Court Road are still in a healthy state but walking for more than an hour around Havant Thicket on Oct 28 I was astonished only to find a single **Deceiver** there at this time of year - maybe this week's rain will bring up a good show next week.

Moths:

Selected sightings this week:

Old World Webworm (*Hellula undalis*) was trapped at Folkestone on Oct 24; for photo and details see <http://ukmoths.org.uk/show.php?id=3890>

Rush Veneer (*Nomophila noctuella*): Still arriving as a migrant at Folkestone on Oct 28; for photo and details see <http://ukmoths.org.uk/show.php?id=1793>

Fox Moth caterpillars (the common Woolly Bear species) were numerous in Durlston grassland on Oct 29

Red-green Carpet was trapped at Folkestone on Oct 24; see <http://ukmoths.org.uk/show.php?id=4948>

November Moth - first of the year trapped at Folkestone on Oct 24; see <http://ukmoths.org.uk/show.php?id=5984>

Winter Moth - first trapped at Folkestone on Oct 28; see <http://ukmoths.org.uk/show.php?id=1813>

Convolvulus Hawkmoth still arriving at Durlston on Oct 27; see <http://ukmoths.org.uk/show.php?id=1750>

Hummingbird Hawkmoth - still among the incoming migrants at Portland on Oct 29 but one was trying to hibernate in the shelter of a door arch in the Thanet area of Kent on Oct 24 (still there next day)

Ruby Tiger caterpillar - one caterpillar found heading for a hibernation site at Emsworth on Oct 24 and identified through a very comprehensive website at <http://www.ukleps.org/morphology.html> (well worth exploring) to find this caterpillar go to the web page then FIND (CTRL + F) Ruby Tiger to go to the text (picture is below text)

The Delicate - another migrant still arriving at Portland on Oct 29; see <http://ukmoths.org.uk/show.php?id=1808>

Cosmopolitan - another immigrant at Portland on Oct 29; see <http://ukmoths.org.uk/show.php?id=885>

Flame Brocade - at least the 8th of a string of rare migrants seen this autumn since Sep 30 was at Portland on Oct 26; see <http://ukmoths.org.uk/show.php?id=856>

Dewick's Plusia - another uncommon migrant which has been seen this year at Hayling, Rye Town and most recently on Oct 29 at Portland; see <http://ukmoths.org.uk/show.php?id=3608>

Other Insects:

Selected sightings this week:

Orb web spider **Gibbaranea gibbosa** - hardly this weeks sighting as this species was found in May when Graeme Lyons was showing Ray Mears facets of the Sussex Down for an ITV programme only broadcast this week (and still available on ITV Player). However it is a relatively common spider on trees and bushes in spring and early summer and has a very distinctive shape ('upward pointing breasts'). See

<http://www.eakingbirds.com/eakingbirds3/arachnidsinfocusgibbaraneagibbosa.htm>

PLANTS

Pale Flax: Among this week's oddities was a single flower of this at Durlston on Oct 29

White-flowered Hedgerow Cranesbill: The plants at the Havant Bus Station were still flowering this week

Spindle Fruits: Brian Fellows found a colourful crop of fresh fruit ('arils') on a Spindle bush in the Nore Barn woodland this week - see <http://www.emsworthwildlife.hampshire.org.uk/0-0-0-wildlife-diary.htm> and scroll down to the entry for Oct 28. Later in that entry is a photo of the **Japanese Spindle bush** at Brook Meadow in Emsworth - as yet that has no colourful fruits but if you continue to scroll down to the entry for Oct 27 you will see a photo some of those fruits after dissection to reveal the developing colour inside the fruit cases

Wild Clary: On Oct 24 a few flowers could still be seen on the plants in the Christopher Way 'wayside' in Emsworth

Devils Bit Scabious was still providing bright colour on a few plants in Havant Thicket on Oct 28

Winter Heliotrope: The single flower which appeared at Wade Court roadside on Oct 21 after a single frost is still in good health but I do not expect to see more until frosts return

At least 65 plant species were in flower this week

WILDLIFE DIARY AND NEWS FOR OCT 24 - 30 (WEEK 43 OF 2011)

[Thu 27 Oct](#)

Green Sandpiper back at Langstone South Moors

This afternoon I walked to the South Moors in the hope of seeing **Rock Pipits** back on the shore (Mike Collins saw three there on Oct 22) but had no luck (did not expect to find them with the tide well out allowing them to feed low down the shore, not on the shingle immediately below the seawall, nor late in the afternoon when they would probably have gone to roost elsewhere) but I did hear the calls of an unseen **Green Sandpiper** which may well now be resident on the stream running across the moors, especially after recent rain.

Also seen on this outing was my first **Honey Fungus** of the autumn and my first sight of a **Grey Wagtail** in the Lymbourne stream running past Wade Court. Earlier in the day, back in my garden, I saw a compact flock of at least **50 Goldfinch** flying right over my house and settling in nearby trees at the start of a rain shower.

Back on Monday (Oct 24) I made a further attempt to see the **Cattle Egret** on the Thornham Marshes and again failed - this time the cattle were out on the marshes but not the Egret. I did however have my first sight of **Pintail** for the winter - 12 of them flying east over the Thorney Little Deeps but not settling. On the sea wall west of the Great Deeps I was pleased to see that the colony of **Pointed Snails** still exists though my only evidence for this was the large number of their discarded shells lying along the bottom part of the seawall slope where I had looked closely for them in the summer but found very few.

WILDLIFE DIARY AND NEWS FOR OCT 17 - 23 (WEEK 42 OF 2011)

Overview

Bird news highlights:

Whooper Swans: The first two arrived at Slimbridge on Oct 20 after a flock of 13 were seen on the Yorkshire coast as early as Oct 9. **Bewicks** have been arriving on the continent since Oct 13 (up to 24 seen in Belgium) but none have yet been reported from Britain

Brent Goose: The last milestone in the process of settling in to their winter quarters here was witnessed by Brian Fellows on Oct 21 when he found a flock of 75 feeding on land on a cereal crop in a field adjacent to Nutbourne Bay in Chichester Harbour. There is now a growing body of evidence that Brent have had at least some breeding success (though it may be as low as 6% and that rate would need the adult birds to live for at least 16 years for the number of young to replenish the number which die). Another encouraging sign is that several families have managed to raise 5 young this year. The **Black Brant** reported so far are just two in the Weymouth area and a photo of one can be seen at http://www.portlandbirdobs.org.uk/bp_black_brant_38_181011_500.jpg showing the thick neck band, dark breast and white flank

Red-breasted Goose: An unringed juvenile arrived at Christchurch Harbour on Oct 18 with a wave of Brent suggesting that it might well be a wild bird rather than a local escape (but where are its parents if it is a juvenile?). The photo at

<http://www.chog.org.uk/Sightings%20Photos/2011/October%202011/Red-breasted%20Goose%207.jpg> shows that the Brent are not happy with its presence - perhaps it has habits that caused its parents to reject it? The evidence for it being a juvenile is shown at <http://www.chog.org.uk/Sightings%20Photos/2011/October%202011/Red-breasted%20Goose%205.jpg> in the multiple wing bars - an adult should have just two narrow and clear bars

Ruddy Shelduck: One was with Brent at Nutbourne Bay on Oct 20 and 21 and it too may be a wild bird, maybe coming from as far away as Turkey where there is a very large wild population. I suspect that this may be the same bird which arrived at Pagham Harbour on Oct 14 and was then seen at Farlington Marshes on Oct 15 and 16 before moving to Nutbourne. It could well be the same bird which turned up last year at Pilsey on Oct 1 before moving around Chichester, Langstone and Pagham Harbours though the winter until it left on Apr 2

Pochard: These are just starting to arrive in southern England. The first overflew Christchurch Harbour on Oct 15 and on Oct 18 a flock of 143 were seen in the Kent Stour valley followed by a pair on Budds Farm pools here in Havant on Oct 19 and then 10 at Titchfield Haven on Oct 22

Red Breasted Merganser: After several reports of single birds that have probably spent the summer here the first flock was of 12 birds off West Wittering in Chichester Harbour on Oct 15

Rough-legged Buzzard: On Oct 16 a wave of these leaving Scandinavia brought sightings from 52 sites in the Netherlands involving a possible total of 94 birds and some outliers of this movement came through southern England with sightings over the M23 near Gatwick on Oct 20 and in Cornwall on Oct 17

Short-toed Eagle: On Oct 16 a wandering individual was seen the south coast of both Devon and Dorset

Woodcock: Just three sightings in southern England this week show that the winter influx of continental birds has started

Spotted Redshank: The long awaited Nore Barn bird returned to Emsworth on Oct 21

Woodpigeon: Lee Evans reported the arrival in England of the first immigrants from the continent on Oct 18 and 2000 were reported in Lancashire on Oct 19 while Portland reported its first (only 100) that day. On Oct 20 big flocks were seen at seven sites in northern England including 5300 in south Yorkshire

Ring-necked (or Rose-ringed) Parakeet: Christchurch Harbour website on Oct 20 showed a photo of a blue form of this species which I was not previously aware of - see

<http://www.chog.org.uk/Sightings%20Photos/2011/October%202011/Parrot.jpg>

(this website gives the species a name I have not come across before, 'Rose-nosed', and in searching for other instances of that name - which I did not find - I discovered that males of this species have a clear red ring around their

necks while females either have no ring or one of a much paler shade, making the Christchurch bird a female)

Short-eared Owl: A large number of migrants have been crossing the channel this week with a peak of 18 at Portland on Oct 16 followed by 9 on Oct 18 and 6 on Oct 20 but these are only three of the 24 reports I have seen. Confusingly the Portland report of Oct 16 mentions that 3 of the birds seen were heading south out over the sea. Locally one was hunting the Milton reclamation area in Southsea for five days from Oct 14 to 18

Woodlark: On Oct 21 one Netherlands site had 162 birds from a potential total of 1001 at 20 continental sites that day. They have also been seen during the week at eight sites in southern England with birds singing at Lavington Common (Pulborough), Latchmore Bottom (New Forest) and Pagham Harbour

Swallow: Still plenty with us at the end of this week - reports for Oct 21 are of 317 over Durlston, 30 over Hook/Warsash and others seen on Thorney Island - 4 were still over Andover, 3 over Hook/Warsash and one over the Arun valley in Sussex on Oct 22 with 6 in the New Forest and 15 more over the Lymington shore. Latest reports of **House Martins** are of 6 in the New Forest on Oct 22 after 4 over Andover and 1 over Butser Hill (Petersfield) on Oct 17 but some of these are usually still with us when all the Swallows have left. No **Sand Martins** have been reported in England since Oct 10.

Waxwing: On Oct 20 a site in southern Sweden reported a flock of 830 birds as they began to move south and on Oct 21 at least one was seen in the Netherlands

Duncock: The first report of song since July 26 comes from Brian Fellows in the Nutbourne Bay area on Oct 21 - I wonder if the song was provoked by the arrival of continental immigrants causing a resident bird to defend its territory?

Robin: There has also been an increase in Robin song in the past week and I see that Sandwich Bay reported an influx of around 60 continental birds on Oct 13 with the Oare Marshes in north Kent reporting the presence of 'masses' on Oct 16 - maybe the song we are now hearing means that the continental birds have infiltrated through Sussex to Hampshire?

Red-flanked Bluetail: No news of one returning to Sandy Point on Hayling (last year one arrived there on Oct 18 and stayed until Oct 23) but up to 9 birds were in Britain over the weekend Oct 15/16 according to Lee Evans (I think all in Kent and Norfolk)

Black Redstart: Although some birds were in southern England through the summer there has been an increase due to the arrival of continental birds since the start of October giving a total of 34 in the Scillies on Oct 16 when singletons were at Stubbington (south of Fareham) and at two Isle of Wight locations after sightings on Oct 15 at Seaford, Pulborough, Portland and Cissbury Ring (Worthing)

Isabelline Wheatear: The first ever seen in Sussex made a one day stand at Crowlink near Eastbourne on Oct 15. This species breeds in Russia and normally heads south to India for the winter. It is slightly larger than our Northern Wheatear but is not easily identified by amateur birders (see Collins Guide)

Ring Ouzel: The deluge of sightings continues but shows signs of drying up - I have picked up 22 reports since Oct 15 with a peak count of 12 on Dartmoor on Oct 17 and more than 8 in Dorset on Oct 19. They have been seen daily up to Oct 22 at Latchmore Bottom on the west fringe of the New Forest and two were still on the Sussex Downs near Firlie Beacon on that day.

Blackbird: No large numbers of continental immigrants (peak count of 45 arriving at Sandwich Bay on Oct 15) but I was surprised when Chris Packham was unable to answer a viewers query during this week's Autumnwatch programme - the question was about why a number of Blackbirds had been seen recently with dark (not yellow) bills. That reminded me of my puzzlement a few years ago when Lawrence Holloway seemed to insist that dark bills were indicative of continental origin - as I understand it all **Blackbirds** have dark bills during their first winter with the males only acquiring the bright yellow in the spring after they hatched

Fieldfare: Now widespread in southern England with a max count of 800 at Seasalter in north Kent on Oct 20 with plenty more to come (a potential total of 63,381 at 7 Netherlands sites on Oct 21). On arrival in England the birds tend to fly north away from the densely populated south coast so it is not surprising that the nearest report to the Havant area this week was of 135 over Butser Hill (Petersfield) on Oct 17

Song Thrush: Only small numbers of migrants reported so far (though there had been counts of 1000 at Pegwell Bay in Kent and 6648 at a Netherlands site back on Oct 8 and 9) but this week's surprise came from the Mediterranean where Mark Cutts found one on board HMS Liverpool on Oct 22 (see <http://www.surfbirds.com/blog/amigo/23336/Song+Thrush+migration+in+the+Med.html>)

Redwing: Again no large flocks yet in south Hampshire - max was 100 at Latchmore Bottom in the New Forest on Oct 16 and 17 with just seven at Portsmouth Dockyard on Oct 16

Pallas' Warbler: Singles at Dungeness on Oct 15 and at Portland on Oct 22

Bearded Tit: For most of the year these birds never see anything outside the reed bed in which they feed, sleep and raise their families but during September and October some bravely set out to seek new homes either in response to post breeding population pressure or the chill of approaching winter - most movements are, I think, within England but there is a small arrival of winter visitors from the continent (perhaps 2 at Dungeness on Oct 15 were 'foreigners'). When the urge to move to a new site begins to influence the birds they can be seen 'high flying' above their home reedbed - flying up high into the air but dropping back into the reeds from which they came - but when the urge becomes stronger than the need for the safety of the home that they know they set off on what may be long distance flights - on Oct 21 at least 9 flew east away from the Thorney Little Deeps.

Willow Tit: A reminder that these still exist in Hampshire came on Oct 19 when the distinctive call of one was heard from the Facombe area in north Hampshire (one of perhaps two sites in the county that these birds still stay and breed)

Penduline Tit: One appeared in Kent on Oct 15, presumably at the Dungeness RSPB site where it was reported again on Oct 20. A partially read ring on its leg suggested that it had been here last winter.

Isabelline Shrike: One was seen in Suffolk on Oct 14 and then presumably moved to the Cliffe Pools on the Kent coast of the Thames estuary for Oct 15 - 17. I am confused by recent changes in Shrike taxonomy but I think this was a Daurian race bird which has come east from China

Great Grey Shrike: The first reports of this species in southern England come from the North Foreland Golf Course in Kent on Oct 16 and 17, then from Woolmer pond in east Hampshire on Oct 22. At least 4 and maybe 30 were at 20 Netherlands sites on Oct 16

Magpie: I know that some 'bird lovers' think Magpies should be eliminated (and that Larsen traps have been regularly used in the Havant/Emsworth area to catch and despatch them) but I am puzzled as to how one died on the Emsworth Marina seawall on Oct 21. Brian Fellows found it freshly dead and seemingly in good health on Oct 21 and a photo of it on his website (see <http://www.emsworthwildlife.hampshire.org.uk/0-0-263-magpie-dead-marina-21.10.11.jpg>) shows some marks on the side of the head which might be the result of pecking by other birds or less likely air gun pellets while the neck feathers show a possible indication of it having had its head in a noose or possibly having had its neck wrung but there is no strong evidence of the cause of death nor why the corpse was found beside a little used path near lots of humans.

Brambling: Christchurch Harbour reported 21 there on Oct 17 and smaller numbers have been reported from at least four other south coast sites this week but so far no counts to match the 1108 birds at a Netherlands site on Oct 17 with 778 at a different site there on Oct 21

Crossbill: 23 reports from sites in southern England this week have a peak count of 188 arriving at Sandwich Bay in Kent on Oct 19 and around 100 at Christchurch Harbour on Oct 16. Among the latest reports is one of four birds at Northney on Hayling Island on Oct 20. We also have the first report of a single **Parrot Crossbill** among **22 Common** at Sandwich Bay on Oct 16

Bullfinch: More evidence of a large increase in this population comes in a report of **30 Bullfinch** seen at Durlston on Oct 16

Snow Bunting: This week one settled on the southern end of the shingle of The Fleet at Weymouth (seen Oct 17 and 20) and two others were in the Bewbush area of Crawley on Oct 21

Yellowhammer: One was singing at Cissbury Ring (Worthing) on Oct 20

Vagrants: A Siberian Rubythroat was alive and well on Shetland on Oct 19 (see http://orientalbirdimages.org/search.php?Bird_ID=2538&Bird_Image_ID=29207&Bird_Family_ID=&p=14). That may have been a genuine wild bird but I doubt that was true of a Scarlet Tanager seen on the Scillies on Oct 20 (see this resident of the Americas at

<http://www.alanmurphyphotography.com/Gallerypages/tanager,bunting,grosbeak/scarlettanager5.htm>)

Escapes: On Oct 19 when Steve Wright went to Mengham Infants School on Hayling Island to pick up his daughter he found a Lanner type falcon still wearing its jesses perched in a nearby tree but not thought to be intending to pick up any of the children. There has also been a sighting a Harris Hawk, also wearing jesses, at the Chichester Gravel pits on Oct 9. **Should you find raptors in the Chichester/Portsmouth area** which appear to be escaped falconers birds **ring the Sussex Falconry Center on 01243 512472** and report the sighting as this may help to re-unite the bird with its owner.

Insect News highlights:

Both Dragonflies and Butterflies were out in extraordinary numbers for the second half of October and in particular a very late **Ringlet butterfly** was found. A good selection of moths, including many late migrants, were recorded and I have been introduced to some new Beetle and Spider species as a result of this week's reported finds

Plant News highlights:

Several unexpected flowering plants for this time of year include **Common Flax, Soapwort, Water Chickweed, Narrow-leaved Ragwort, Dyers Greenweed, Moth Mullein** and **Chamomile** were found during the week. **Shaggy Soldier** was a new addition to the Emsworth village list and the first frost brought out the first **Winter Heliotrope** flowers of the winter season. I was particularly pleased to find the **Rayed form of Groundsel** flowers (and **Dwarf Spurge**) in the Warblington Farm fields and Brian Fellows added **Corn Mint** to the list for that area and three new **Cockspur Thorn** trees to his 'Wayside' list

Other News highlights:

On Oct 21 Graeme Lyons joined a Fungus Foray in the Ashdown Forest and mentions nine species which he found there including the **Nail fungus** that occurs only on the dung of ponies and horses which have fed on un-improved acidic grassland and heathy vegetation. The fruiting bodies are most frequently seen on well-weathered dung, and may not occur on dung that has been heavily disrupted by foraging birds or animals, possibly due to subsequent desiccation - see <http://www.arkive.org/nail-fungus/poronia-punctata/image-A2484.html#text=Range> which states that, in Britain, this species is restricted to the New Forest and one site in Dorset so Graeme's report of it in the Ashdown Forest extends the range which I was previously aware of. Other species found were **Russula vesca** (normally known as Bare-toothed Russula but also known to some as 'The Flirt'), Poison Pie (**Hebeloma crustuliniforme**), the hallucinatory Magic Mushroom aka Liberty Cap (**Psilocybe semilanceata**) which occurs on the Gipsies Plain south of Havant Thicket and the Pine Fire Fungus (**Rhizina undulata**) which I have found in the woodland of Havant Thicket - the best photo of a fresh specimen that I have come across is at

<http://www.wildaboutbritain.co.uk/pictures/showphoto.php/photo/94919/size/big> .

For Graeme's blog entry see

<http://analternativenaturalhistoryofsussex.blogspot.com/2011/10/ive-got-nail-fungus.htm> (the title refers to the medical condition in humans known as Nail Fungus)

BIRDS

Most of this week's significant birds have been listed in the Bird Highlights above but there are a few items worth mentioning here ...

White-billed Diver: The first of the winter was off Tiree in Scotland on Oct 18

Cattle Egret: The long staying bird on the Thornham Marshes (Thorney Island) was still present on Oct 21

Glossy Ibis: The two birds at Christchurch Harbour do not seem to have been seen since Oct 15 but new (transitory) singles have been seen in East Sussex and at Titchfield Haven

Canada Goose: On Oct 21 the flock at Pulborough Brooks exceeded 1000 birds (the RSPB must have their goodwill to all birds strained by this)

Wigeon: The count at Pulborough Brooks was 450 on Oct 16 and around 400 in Nutbourne Bay (Chichester Harbour) on Oct 21

Ferruginous Duck: The first arrival for this winter was in Norfolk on Oct 15 - maybe the '**Fudge Duck**' will be back at Budds Farm soon?

Common Buzzard: As well as the **Rough-legged** birds that have been moving south there was a big count of potentially **3312 Common Buzzards** at 31 sites in the Netherlands on Oct 16 (one site had 267 of them)

Osprey: One was still over Haywards Heath area on Oct 15 and another was at Titchfield Haven on Oct 19

Hobby: One was at Portland on Oct 15 but an even later bird was seen in Yorkshire on Oct 16

Quail: A late bird was at St Adhelm's Head in Dorset on Oct 16

Water Rail: Up to 8 birds have been at the Milton Common lakes in Southsea this week (Oct 18) and their mass movement to winter quarters was seen on Oct 17 when just two Netherlands sites reported a total of 42 birds

Spotted Crake: One in the Scillies on Oct 15 with a **Corncrake** also there that day

Golden Plover: Around 200 were seen on the Chichester Harbour mud of the Emsworth Channel near the Great Deeps on Oct 15 but none have been reported on the mud between Langstone and Northney Marina yet

White-rumped Sandpiper: One appeared at Rutland Water on Oct 15 and was still there on Oct 18

Woodcock: Six reports of these moving to winter quarters this week include one in the Thanet area, one at Dungeness, and one near the South Downs Way in Sussex

Spotted Redshank: The famous 'Nore Barn' bird was back at Emsworth for the first time this winter on Oct 21

Grey Phalarope: Four reports this week include one at Reculver on the north Kent coast on Oct 20

Little Gull: Cap Gris-nez in France reported 1274 on Oct 19 and 57 were off the north Kent coast on Oct 20

Sandwich Tern: Six were still in Langstone Harbour off Milton Common in Oct 17 and a single **Common Tern** was off Mill Rythe on the east coast of Hayling Island on Oct 18 (when another was in Southampton Water)

Little Auk: One was seen at Dungeness on Oct 14 after two were seen at Flamborough Head in Yorkshire on Oct 13

Turtle Dove: One was still in the Scillies on Oct 17

Little Owl: Of local interest one was heard calling from trees between the school and the holiday camp at Mill Rythe on Hayling on Oct 18

Kingfisher: Again of local interest there have been sightings this week at Emsworth Town Millpond, at the nearby Little Deeps, at the Leigh Park Gardens lake and at the Budds Farm Pools

Wryneck: Five were still in the Scillies on Oct 16

Tree Pipit: A late bird was at Christchurch Harbour on Oct 15 and a late **Yellow Wagtail** was there on Oct 21

Bluethroat: One on the Scillies on Oct 17

Whinchat: One was at Sinah Warren (south Hayling) on Oct 16 but the latest so far was at Portland on Oct 19

Wheatear: Two were still on the Hampshire coast (Warblington and Hook) on Oct 21

Grasshopper Warbler: A late bird at Portland on Oct 14

Blyth's Reed Warbler: One in the Scillies on Oct 16 along with a **Subalpine Warbler**

Dartford Warbler: One had reached Hastings Country Park on its autumn dispersal flight by Oct 18

Lesser Whitethroat: One at Durlston on Oct 14 with a **Common Whitethroat** at Christchurch Harbour on Oct 21

Blackcap: Birds in the New Forest and at Portsmouth on Oct 18 were probably our summer birds on their way south but three at Dungeness on Oct 20 might be coming the other way

Pallas' Warbler: One at Dungeness on Oct 15

Yellow Browed Warbler: 11 reports this week show that these are now widespread in southern England

Radde's Warbler: Singles in Norfolk and the Scillies this week

Goldcrest: Among this weeks reports are 20 at Durlston on Oct 16, 9 at Butser Hill (Petersfield) on Oct 17 and 7 at Gilkicker (Gosport) on Oct 15

Firecrest: 16 were at Abbotsbury in Dorset on Oct 15 with smaller numbers at six other sites in southern England this week

Red-breasted Flycatcher: Singles in Cornwall and the Scillies on Oct 16 (maybe the same bird)

Pied Flycatcher: One at St Adhelms Head in Dorset on Oct 14

Red-backed Shrike: One flew over a cafe on the outskirts of Brighton on Oct 15 and another was in the Scillies on Oct 16

Starling: A flock of 2000 roosting at the Romsey Fishlake Meadows on Oct 20 with more arriving from the continent (497 over Mile Hill at Fleet in north Hampshire on Oct 21

Rose Coloured Starling: In addition to birds in Cornwall and the Scillies Christchurch Harbour had its first on Oct 19

INSECTS

Dragonflies:

Notable sightings this week:

The sight of any dragonflies still flying after mid October is remarkable but the least expected reports were of a **Vagrant Emperor** and **Red-veined Darter**, both in the Scillies. **Common Darters** were the most frequently seen species and were the latest to be reported on Oct 20. Photos of the first two rarities can be seen by going to <http://www.surfbirds.com/cgi-bin/gallery/display.cgi?gallery=gallery19> (note that this is a 'push down' gallery and you may find that one or both of the species mentioned is no longer on the first page but you can find them by clicking 'Next 12' at the foot of each page)

Species reported this week:

Southern Hawker, Common Hawker, Brown Hawker, Migrant Hawker, Vagrant Emperor, Gold Ringed Dragonfly, Red-veined Darter, Common Darter, Common Blue Damselfly

Butterflies:

Notable sightings this week:

Ringlet: Matthew Oates was at Magdalen Hill Down on Oct 11 and found a fresh male which he thinks was the first example of a second brood emergence in the county. This was two months after the previous last sighting on Aug 10 at Chalton Down north of Rowlands Castle

Butterflies still on the wing in Sussex on Oct 22 were **Common Blue, Brown Argus, Meadow Brown, Red Admiral, Speckled Wood** and **Small Copper** (this last seen by Barry Collins on Thorney Island). Here in Havant a **Large White** was flying in my garden on Oct 23

Holly Blues were flying at Testwood Lakes near Southampton on Oct 13 and at Stokes Bay, Gosport on Oct 19

Species reported this week:

Clouded Yellow, Brimstone, Large White, Small White, Green Veined White, Small Copper, Brown Argus, Common Blue, Adonis Blue, Holly Blue, Red Admiral, Painted Lady, Small Tortoiseshell, Peacock, Comma, Speckled Wood, Wall Brown, Meadow Brown, Ringlet

Moths:

Selected sightings this week:

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Note re Moth entries - a key to the meaning of the colours used in the HantsMoths Flighttime Guides can be found at http://www.hantsmoths.org.uk/flying_tonight.php

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1398 ***Rush Veneer *Nomophila noctuella****

Recorded at Pagham Harbour on Oct 15

UK Moths photo at <http://ukmoths.org.uk/show.php?id=1793>

UK Moths comments: Wingspan 26-32 mm. When at rest, this moth has a very elongated and narrow shape, which makes it easily recognisable. A well-known migrant, it can often be found in large numbers at coastal watch-points, and tends to occur in the adult stage between May and September.

Hants Moths photo and comment at

<http://www.hantsmoths.org.uk/species/1398.php>

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1456 ***Epischnia banksiella***

Recorded at Portland on Oct 17

UK Moths photo at <http://ukmoths.org.uk/show.php?id=561>

UK Moths comments: Wingspan 27-30 mm. The distribution of *E. banksiella*, is tied to that of its larval foodplant, golden samphire (*Inula crithmoides*), growing on sea cliffs in S. and S.W. England and Wales, as far north as Llyn, where it is well established. Apparently, it does not favour plants on saltings, such as those in S.E. England. The forewing is greyish with darker striations, and the moth adopts an elongated shape when at rest.

The adults fly from dusk onwards in July, and can be attracted to light. Larvae feed in August - September, and again in April - May after overwintering.

The habitation is silk, flecked with frass, which may form a flimsy tube running down the plant. When disturbed, the larva may throw itself from the habitation. Pupation is in a cocoon among detritus in June and early July.

Hants Moths photo and comment at
<http://www.hantsmoths.org.uk/species/1456.php>

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1524 **Emmelina monodactyla**

Recorded at Pagham Harbour on Oct 15

UK Moths photo at <http://ukmoths.org.uk/show.php?id=592>

UK Moths comments: Wingspan 18-27 mm. One of the commonest of the 'Plume' moths all over Britain, and one of the few to be found in the early part of the year, as the adults occur in all months. Like most of the Pterophoridae, the wings are cleft or divided, but this can be difficult to see, as the moth often rests with the wings rolled up tightly. The wing colour is usually pale brownish, but can be darker. Each pair of spurs on the hind legs has one spur longer than the other. The abdomen has a pale buff dorsal longitudinal band with brown streaks along the midline. It occurs in any suitable habitat where the larval foodplants, bindweeds (*Convolvulus* and *Calystegia* spp.), occur. Larvae have also been reported occasionally on Morning glory (*Ipomoea*), *Chenopodium* spp. and *Atriplex* spp. They feed in two overlapping generations on leaves and flowers from late May to September.

The larvae are greenish yellow with a broad green dorsal band, which has a fine discontinuous yellow line along its centre. The dorsal pinacula can be black, or coloured the same as the adjacent integument. Some specimens have ruby red dorsal markings. The pupa varies from green to reddish, sometimes with black markings.

Hants Moths photo and comment at
<http://www.hantsmoths.org.uk/species/1524.php>

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1720 **The Gem *Orthonama obstipata***

Recorded at Portland on Oct 17

UK Moths photo at <http://ukmoths.org.uk/show.php?id=2530>

UK Moths comments: Wingspan 18-21 mm. Another continental species, which is a regular migrant to the British Isles, mainly in the south. The species is sexually dimorphic, the male being light brown with a darker central band, and the female slightly larger and darker, with a white spot on each forewing.

It usually appears in late summer and autumn. The larvae feed on various low-growing plants.

Hants Moths photo and comment at
<http://www.hantsmoths.org.uk/species/1720.php>

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1984 **Hummingbird Hawk-moth *Macroglossum stellatarum***

Five reports this week including one of a newly arrived immigrant at Portland on Oct 17 and others at inland sites but none later than Oct 17

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2076 **Kent Black Arches *Meganola albula***

Recorded at Portland on Oct 17

UK Moths photo at <http://ukmoths.org.uk/show.php?id=1031>

UK Moths comments: Wingspan 18-24 mm. A species which is restricted to the southern and eastern counties of England, and parts of Wales, generally occupying

open woodland and coastal habitats. The species flies at night from June to August, and can be attracted to light. The small, hairy larvae feed on dewberry (*Rubus caesius*), and overwinter in this state.

Hants Moths photo and comment at

<http://www.hantsmoths.org.uk/species/2076.php>

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2198 **Smoky Wainscot** *Mythimna impura*

Recorded at Portland on Oct 21

UK Moths photo at <http://ukmoths.org.uk/show.php?id=5673>

UK Moths comments: Wingspan 31-38 mm. Named after the dusky or smoky suffusion on the hindwing, this is a fairly common species over most of the British Isles. It flies from June to August, sometimes later in the south as a partial second brood. Occupying downland, sand dunes and rough grassy areas, the larval foodplants are mainly grasses.

Hants Moths photo and comment at

<http://www.hantsmoths.org.uk/species/2198.php>

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2208 **The Cosmopolitan** *Mythimna loreyi*

Recorded at Portland on Oct 17

UK Moths photo at <http://ukmoths.org.uk/show.php?id=885>

UK Moths comments: Wingspan 34-44 mm. Although it can resemble one or two related species such as The Clay (*M. ferrago*) and White-speck (*M. unipuncta*), this moth can be told apart by the pure white hindwings. It is an immigrant to the south-west of the British Isles, with varying numbers each year, ranging from just a few to several hundred in exceptional years. The main arrival period is from August to October, though they have been recorded as early as May. Abroad, the species occurs in southern Europe and North Africa, and is thought to feed on grasses.

Hants Moths photo and comment at

<http://www.hantsmoths.org.uk/species/2208.php>

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2232 **Black Rustic** *Aporophyla nigra*

Recorded at Durlston on Oct 15

UK Moths photo at <http://ukmoths.org.uk/show.php?id=6029>

UK Moths comments: Wingspan 40-46 mm. A rather long-winged species, with little variation from the blackish-brown ground colour and whitish stigmata. The males have white hindwings, the females more dusky. In Britain the species is common in the south, with a scattered distribution northwards, mainly with a western bias, into Scotland, where it is widely scattered throughout. Mainly coastal in Ireland. The adults fly in September and October, occupying heathland and downland, and the larvae feed on low plants such as heather (*Calluna*) and dock (*Rumex*), as well as various grasses.

Hants Moths photo and comment at

<http://www.hantsmoths.org.uk/species/2232.php>

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2245 **Green-brindled Crescent** *Allophyes oxyacanthae*

Recorded at Pagham Harbour on Oct 15

UK Moths photo at <http://ukmoths.org.uk/show.php?id=1764>

UK Moths comments: Wingspan 35-45 mm. Although superficially a dull brown species, the typical form of this moth has patches of metallic green scales giving it an attractive sheen in the correct light. A melanic form, ab. *capucina* is quite common in suburban areas, and shows much less green. An autumn species, flying from September to November, it is fairly common throughout much of Britain, occupying woodland, hedgerows and suburban habitats.

The caterpillars hatch in spring and feed on a variety of trees and bushes, including hawthorn (*Crataegus*) and blackthorn (*Prunus spinosa*).

Hants Moths photo and comment at

<http://www.hantsmoths.org.uk/species/2245.php>

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2251 **Flame Brocade** *Trigonophora flammea*

Recorded again at Portland on Oct 18 for the sixth time since Oct 2 (first arrived at Friston near Eastbourne on Sep 30)

UK Moths photo at <http://ukmoths.org.uk/show.php?id=856>

UK Moths comments: Wingspan 44-52 mm. Formerly resident in Sussex, becoming extinct there in the late 19th Century, the species is now resident only in the Channel Islands and elsewhere it is only an immigrant. Adults have appeared, usually at coastal light-traps along England's southern shores, mainly from Hampshire westwards. The normal flight period is October and November, most immigrants turning up in the former month. The caterpillar feeds on low plants such as buttercup (*Ranunculus*) in the early stages, later preferring such species as ash (*Fraxinus*) and privet (*Ligustrum*).

Hants Moths photo and comment at

<http://www.hantsmoths.org.uk/species/2251.php>

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2262 **The Brick** *Agrochola circellaris*

Recorded at Pagham Harbour on Oct 15

UK Moths photo at <http://ukmoths.org.uk/show.php?id=220>

UK Moths comments: Wingspan 33-38 mm. One of several similar, orange-coloured species which emerge during the autumn period, it is distributed widely over much of Britain and is fairly common. It frequents mainly woodland and parkland, and is on the wing from August to October. The larvae feed on the flowers and leaves of wych elm (*Ulmus glabra*) or poplar (*Populus*) when young, later feeding on the leaves.

Hants Moths photo and comment at

<http://www.hantsmoths.org.uk/species/2262.php>

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2264 **Yellow-line Quaker** *Agrochola macilenta*

Recorded at Pagham Harbour on Oct 15

UK Moths photo at <http://ukmoths.org.uk/show.php?id=1106>

UK Moths comments: Wingspan 32-36 mm. Distributed throughout Britain, and commonest in the south, frequenting woodland, bushy localities, and moorland in the far north. It flies from September to November, and feeds at various flowers and at sugar. It also comes to light. In the north of its range, the caterpillars feed on

heather (*Calluna*), but further south it generally lives on deciduous trees such as oak (*Quercus*) and beech (*Fagus*).

Hants Moths photo and comment at

<http://www.hantsmoths.org.uk/species/2264.php>

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2267 **Beaded Chestnut *Agrochola lychnidis***

Recorded at Durlston on Oct 15

UK Moths photo at <http://ukmoths.org.uk/show.php?id=1736>

UK Moths comments: Wingspan 30-35 mm. An autumnal species, flying in September and October, and a regular visitor to the mercury vapour light. The species is quite variable and there are a number of named forms. It occurs most commonly in the southern half of England and Wales, becoming scarcer further north. It is rare in Scotland and Ireland. The larvae feed on low plants when small, later consuming the leaves of various trees and shrubs

Hants Moths photo and comment at

<http://www.hantsmoths.org.uk/species/2267.php>

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2274 **The Sallow *Xanthia icteritia***

Recorded at Pagham Harbour on Oct 15

UK Moths photo at <http://ukmoths.org.uk/show.php?id=1795>

UK Moths comments: Wingspan 27-35 mm. A common species in most of Britain, occupying damp woodland, heathland and marshy places. It is quite variable, with the relatively frequent ab. *flavescens* having the darker markings almost absent. Like many of its congeners, it flies in the autumn, in September and October and is a frequent visitor to both sugar and light. Again, like similar species, the larvae feed at first on sallow (*Salix*) catkins, and then later on herbaceous plants.

Hants Moths photo and comment at

<http://www.hantsmoths.org.uk/species/2274.php>

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2321 **Dark Arches *Apamea monoglypha***

Recorded at Portland on Oct 21

UK Moths photo at <http://ukmoths.org.uk/show.php?id=52>

UK Moths comments: Wingspan 45-55 mm. A common species throughout the British Isles, there are frequent melanic specimens, especially in the north.

Occurring in a variety of habitats, especially more grassy areas, it is on the wing from July to August, with a later second brood in the south. It is readily attracted to light and one of the commoner species in the moth trap in late summer. The larvae feed on the bases and stems of various grasses.

Hants Moths photo and comment at

<http://www.hantsmoths.org.uk/species/2321.php>

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2353 **Flounced Rustic *Luperina testacea***

Recorded at Durlston on Oct 15

UK Moths photo at <http://ukmoths.org.uk/show.php?id=167>

UK Moths comments: Wingspan 30-35 mm. A common species in England and Wales, but more local in Scotland and Ireland, occupying dry, grassy habitats.

There is one generation, flying in August and September, when the species comes to light. The larvae feed underground in the bases of grass stems and amongst the roots.

Hants Moths photo and comment at

<http://www.hantsmoths.org.uk/species/2353.php>

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2400 Scarce **Bordered Straw Helicoverpa armigera**

UK Moths photo at <http://ukmoths.org.uk/show.php?id=2527>

UK Moths comments: Wingspan 30-40 mm. An immigrant species to Britain, mainly around the southern coasts, and occurring most often in the autumn months. It is also found as a larva from time to time on tomato plants, geraniums and other plants brought in from the Mediterranean region, where it can be a pest.

Hants Moths photo and comment at

<http://www.hantsmoths.org.uk/species/2400.php>

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2408 **Small Marbled Eublemma parva**

Recorded at Portland on Oct 17

UK Moths photo at <http://ukmoths.org.uk/show.php?id=4284>

UK Moths comments: Wingspan 14-18 mm. Another migrant species which occasionally arrives along with the Purple Marbled (*E. ostrina*) Like the former species, larvae are sometimes found in immigration years, these feeding on common fleabane (*Pulicaria dysenterica*) and ploughman's-spikenard (*Inula conyzae*). Most migrants have arrived in June and July, and mainly in the south of England.

Hants Moths photo and comment at <http://www.hantsmoths.org.uk/species/2408.php>

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2436 **Dewick's Plusia Macdunnoughia confusa**

Recorded at Rye town on Oct 17 with the comment that the species was first found by A J Dewick in Essex in October 1951. Rare vagrant until the last decade. Now well established with four colonies in Sussex alone

UK Moths photo at <http://ukmoths.org.uk/show.php?id=3608>

UK Moths comments: Wingspan 32-38 mm. This moth is a vagrant to Britain, having occurred only a few dozen times, mostly attracted to light on the south and east coasts. August is the optimum month for this species, but records have occurred between July and October. On the continent it is double-brooded, and the larvae feed on a range of plants, most commonly nettle (*Urtica dioica*).

Hants Moths photo and comment at

<http://www.hantsmoths.org.uk/species/2436.php>

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2477 **The Snout Hypena proboscidalis**

Recorded at Pagham Harbour on Oct 15

UK Moths photo at <http://ukmoths.org.uk/show.php?id=1136>

UK Moths comments: Wingspan 25-38 mm. A common species throughout Britain, this moth can often be found in numbers around dusk, flying over patches of the foodplant, nettle (*Urtica dioica*). It is on the wing from June to August, and again later in the autumn, and is a common occurrence at the light-trap. It occurs on waste ground, gardens, woodland and other places where nettle occurs.

Hants Moths photo and comment at

<http://www.hantsmoths.org.uk/species/2477.php>

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For more local moth photos go to Tony Tindale's latest blog entry at

<http://www.surfbirds.com/blog/amigo/23347/Beaded+Chestnut%2C+Large+Wainscot%2C+Satellite+and+a+sixth+MV+Lamp.html>

Other Insects:

Selected sightings this week:

Beetles: For a couple of beetles found by Graeme Lyons in Sussex see <http://analternativenaturalhistoryofsussex.blogspot.com/2011/10/25mm.html> for

Psammoecus bipunctatus and

<http://analternativenaturalhistoryofsussex.blogspot.com/2011/10/east-hastings.html> for a rare weevil called **Cathormiocerus myrmecophilus** and for

another found at Durlston on Oct 17 see

<http://www.arkive.org/ground-beetle/pterostichus-aterrimus/>

Spiders: A jumping Spider called **Pseudeuophrys lanigera** was found at Peasmarsh near Hastings on Oct 14 - see

<http://www.eakringbirds.com/eakringbirds3/arachnidsinfocuspseudeuophryslanigera.htm> and for **Zilla diodia** found at Woods Mill by Graeme Lyons at Woods Mill

(Sussex Wildlife Trust HQ) during his lunch break on Oct 17 see

<http://www.nicksspiders.com/nicksspiders/zilladiodia.htm> and if you want to see other species of orb web weavers go to

<http://ednieuw.home.xs4all.nl/Spiders/Araneidae/Araneidae.htm> Another species

found by Graeme Lyons at Hastings Country Park on Oct 19 was **Zygiella atrica** - see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zygiella_atrica

PLANTS

Common Flax: Three plants of this were a surprise find alongside the cycleway between Broadmarsh and Faflington Marshes on Oct 19 - two were in bud and one had its large dark blue flower open

Soapwort: Another unexpected find in Havant on Oct 18 was of new flowers on the plants just north of the Park Road North railbridge on its east side

Water Chickweed: Another big surprise was to find this still flowering at Prinsted Bay seawall on Oct 17 (see my diary page for the day for more detail)

Dyers Greenweed: Also unexpected on Oct 17 was fresh growth and flowering of this plant in the north east corner of Thornham Marshes.

Cockspur Thorn: Three new specimens were added to the Emsworth Waysides plant list by Brian Fellows on Oct 17 - I have not seen them but I believe that if I wanted to find them I should go to the junction of Southleigh and Horndean Roads, then walk north on the east side of Horndean road expecting to find the trees after the end of the houses where they are replaced by fields called Spencers Field

Dog Rose: Still flowering - I found a single flower beside the east end of Thornham Lane on Oct 17 and another single flower in the southfacing field edge of the Warblington Farm field that is on your right as you walk south from Nore Barn wood.

Dwarf Spurge: I found my first for the year on Oct 21 among the stubble in the biggest field of Warblington Farm on the north side of the path from Nore Barn to Warblington Church

Cow Parsley: On Oct 21 I passed three new flowering plants between Warblington Farnyard and the Old Rectory on Pook Lane

Moth Mullein: Three plants were growing (one with a yellow flower, the others with buds still to open) by the old farmyard just west of the gate into the field containing the abandoned market garden plot at Prinsted - seen on Oct 17

Round and Sharp-leaved Fluellen: Both were flowering (just!) on Oct 21 in Warblington Farm fields that have been harvested

Corn Mint: Brian Fellows found some of this flowering in fields north of the Nore Barn wood on Oct 17. I have found **Water Mint** (which has its flowers in a terminal whorl at the top of its stem) in several damp (and some not so damp) areas around Havant but have not been in the area where Brian made his find of plants with multiple whorls of flowers up their stems.

Rayed Form of Groundsel: Found on Oct 21 in the big Warblington Farm field between Nore Barn and Warblington Church where I have found it in past years - see my Diary page for that day for more detail and a photo

Shaggy Soldier: Lots of this flowering in the abandoned Prinsted Market Garden plot on Oct 17 and a few more plants found by roadside kerb stones at the junction of Queen Street with the A259 in Emsworth - seemingly a new addition to the Emsworth village flower list

Narrow-leaved Ragwort: This unusual alien was still flowering at its Farm Lane site in Nutbourne on Oct 17

Winter Heliotrope: First flower of the winter season was out at Wade Court in Langstone on Oct 21 - true to form the first day after the first frost of winter had triggered it into growth.

Chamomile: On Oct 18 John Goodspeed found this flowering by the Tennis Courts at Purbrook Heath playing fields

The above are the more significant plants seen flowering this week but several others get a mention if you read through my diary pages

WILDLIFE DIARY AND NEWS FOR OCT 17 - 23 (WEEK 42 OF 2011)

Fri 21 Oct

Winter Heliotrope at Wade Court

This morning I walked to Langstone, then along the shore to Nore Barn and home via Warblington Church. En route I added **Winter Heliotrope**, **Dwarf Spurge**, **Rayed form Goundsel** and three more plants of flowering **Cow Parsley** to my list plus a **Wheatear** on the Warblington Farm shoreline with what I think were my first **Knot** of the winter close to a flock of **Bar-tailed Godwit** near the distant water's edge.

Walking down Wade Court Road the fungus which I saw in a very young state on Oct 13 was now in the prime of life as a matching pair of **Dryad's Saddles** (I must get a photo of it!) but when I reached the very end of the road section of Wade Lane (between Wade Farmhouse and the Wade Court buildings) I had a pleasant surprise in finding the first 'lavatory brush' flowerhead of **Winter Heliotrope** with its flowers opening - perhaps I should not have been surprised as Havant had had its first winter frost yesterday morning and this plant is regularly spurred into flowering by frost.

Reaching the shore I found the tide at its lowest and what birds there were needed a telescope to identify but I am pretty sure that the medium sized waders along the water's edge were **Bar-tailed Godwits** and the slightly smaller but 'tubby' birds feeding on the mud a little way from the water were **Knot**. Reaching the point where the path to Warblington Church heads inland from the seawall I had no difficulty in identifying a lone **Wheatear** on the fence posts.

Just beyond Conigar Point I went into the field from which the Sweetcorn crop has been harvested and which has immediately been re-sown with what I assume to be a sacrificial cereal crop planted to feed the Brent later in the winter and paid for by some government grant - nothing new here but I did again find both **Field Woundwort** and **Sharp-leaved Fluellen** flowering (just!) in the field edge. Back on the shore I found a **single Dog Rose flower** a few yards before turning north towards Nore Barn wood.

Turning for home on the 'Church Path' through the fields I was very pleased with three plant finds in the biggest field (Field M on my map at <http://ralph-hollins.net/warblington.htm>). Moving onto the stubble north of the field edge path I quite soon found several plants of **Dwarf Spurge** and one of **Round-leaved Fluellen** and after passing the gateway into the field south of the public path I found something I have often looked for but not found over the years since I was introduced to it (in this field) by the much-missed Gwynne Johnson - this is the **rayed form of Goundsel** which I have photographed after carrying a specimen home with me. Stace names this rayed form as **var hibernicus** and says that it is the result of hybridisation with Oxford Ragwort plus subsequent 'back crossing' (not sure what that means but I assume it to mean a second round of hybridisation). The Hants Flora says this variant is more commonly found near the sea and that it has been found in 19 Tetrads of South Hampshire but only 2 in North Hampshire (a Tetrad is a map square measuring 2 x 2 km).

Two views of the Rayed-form Groundsel specimen

Reaching Church Lane I found a flowering plant of **Cow Parsley** at the roadside foot of the west wall of the Warblington Farm Barn and before reaching the Old Rectory near Pook Lane I found two more and finally, reaching the north side of the footbridge over the A27, I looked down on the shrubs planted inside the roadside fence and am pretty sure that several plants of **Japanese Honeysuckle** (which I only recently identified alongside the Hayling Billy trail) were growing up and flowering among Laurel like shrubs

[Wed 19 Oct](#)

Pochard back at Budds Farm

This afternoon I cycled to Budds Farm then along the Broadmarsh shore to the eastern entrance to Farlington Marshes before returning along the cycleway. A surprise at Budds Farm was to see a pair of **Pochard** on the pools, the first to be reported as winter visitors to Hampshire (a very few pairs do breed in Hampshire but they are normally only seen in the Test valley) though not the first in the south - a male circled Christchurch Harbour on Oct 15 and 10 had been at the Blashford Lakes on Aug 13 when 22 were seen in the Kent Stour Valley. An indication of more on their way came from a count of 143 in the Kent Stour valley on Oct 18.

Coming down from Budds Mound to the Budds Farm shore I found **206 Brent** close inshore and tried to count the number of juveniles among them (difficult to see the white wing bars of the young birds when looking into the bright sun with the birds bobbing on the choppy water but I am sure there were **at least 36 juveniles** among them - an unrepresentatively high proportion of the overall population but an indication that breeding has not been disastrously low!)

Crossing the Hermitage Stream into the Broadmarsh area I found nothing of significance until I reached the cycleway running below the A27 embankment where, among more expected flowers such as **Chinese Mugwort**, **Blue Fleabane**, **Common Centaury** and **Yellow-wort**, I was pleased to find several plants of **Common Flax** just starting to flower plus a **Teazle** and some **Tufted Vetch**. Stopping just before the Farlington Marshes east entrance (where a misplaced cycleway sign tells you you are near Hunston and only a couple of miles from Chichester) I enjoyed a good handful of large, ripe and juicy **Blackberries** before turning back along the cycleway and adding **Dark Mullein**, **Cockspur Grass** and **Creeping Yellow-cress** to my flower list.

As I turned into my home road I had a bonus in the shape of a large female **Sparrowhawk** flying lazily over my house, paying no attention to her attendant **Crow**

[Tue 18 Oct](#)

Soapwort in Havant

A walk round Havant this morning showed many plants wilting from last night's low temperature but some were still looking healthy - even a flower on one of the **Weasel's Snout** plants at the New Lane allotments where the **Common Ramping Fumitory** showed no sign of feeling the cold.

In the Eastern Road cemetery a single **Red Admiral** shot by me heading due south at high speed obviously thinking it would be better off nearer the Mediterranean.

The only two surprises came near Havant Park - approaching the area from the north along Park Road North I was coming up the slope to the bridge over the railway when I saw a good fresh display of **Soapwort** flowers down the grassy slope on the east side of the road and reaching the bus station south of the park I found a good show of the **white-flowered Hedgerow Cranesbill** that has survived for several years in a tiny patch of weedy soil among the otherwise concreted ground.

[Mon 17 Oct](#)

Emsworth, Prinsted and Nutbourne

Sunshine from a clear blue sky saw me cycling east this morning in the hope of seeing the **Cattle Egret** on the Thornham Marshes - I did not see that bird (last report was on Oct 15) but did get an unexpected close view of a female **Merlin** at Prinsted Bay and found several 'good' plants still in flower (**Dyer's Greenweed**, **Water Chickweed**, **Narrow-leaved Ragwort** and **Shaggy Soldier** plus one plant of **Cow Parsley**, a single flower on **Moth Mullein** and also one on a **Dog Rose** bush)

When I reached Thornham Lane I found that the cattle with which the **Egret** had been associating were nowhere to be seen though I eventually found them in the field alongside the Main Road to Thorney village just south of the Thornham Lane turning. After scanning the empty fields south of the lane I cycled on to the eastern seawall and climbed the stile onto the path heading down the east of the island but went no further than down into the marsh field where I found an unexpected clump of **Dyer's Greenweed** in fresh flower after crossing an area on which **Glasswort** was starting to turn red. Heading back along the lane I spotted a **single Dog Rose flower** on a leafless bush before turning along the private road past

Thornham House to Prinsted (the **Alpacas** were not in the fields leaving open the question as to whether those that I saw recently in the field beside the River Ems immediately south of Westbourne are the same beasts under new ownership).

At Prinsted Bay I stopped at the top of the slipway and, while scanning the bay for birds, two birds which I at first thought were a couple of **Collared Doves** flew low over my head (from behind me) at high speed. When I managed to focus on them they were half way across the bay and only a foot or so off the ground but I then realised that one was a **brown female Merlin** and the other a black **Crow** harrying it. When they reached the other side of the bay and were forced up over the seawall the **Crow** veered off and the **Merlin** headed for trees over the footpath leading to the orchards where it perched for a brief rest before some walkers came along the path.

When I reached the east side of the bay I went down onto the broad track beside the water-filled ditch but stopped after going some 80 metres at SU 78056-04748, verifying that I was in the right place by the southern end of a section of modern railing replacing the wire in the fence above the ditch. I then turned my attention to the slope up the sea wall on the Bay side and there, where I had seen it on July 25 this year and on July 13 in 2007 was a big plant of **Water Chickweed** and even more surprising it still had quite a few flowers.

Moving on to Nutbourne Bay with the tide low but rising I guessed at the large number of **Brent (100+)**, **Black-tailed Godwit (at least 90)** and **Wigeon (over 300)** with a single **Lapwing**, a few **Oystercatchers**, **Grey Plover** and **Curlew** that I passed between Prinsted and this Bay (no **Avocet** yet!)

I then went inland to Farm Lane and saw that the grass verge on the north side of the lane had been close mown but this had not affected the plant of **Narrow-leaved Ragwort** which is now easier to spot as it is the only patch of colour in the edge of the scrub as you near the point where the first stream runs under the lane. For interest I went a bit further to where the second stream goes under the lane to have a look at the **Strawberry Tree** which had no flowers but a good show of large red fruit.

I now went back up School Lane to the A259 and rode west to take the first turning to Prinsted and on reaching 'the Square' I turned west again into the field containing the once cultivated market garden plot which has been abandoned this year. It was worth making this detour as the plot was full of flowering Shaggy Soldier plants, and even more so when I came back out of the field and looked at the area in front of the 'farm yard' - here a single white flower caught my attention and I saw three very narrow plant stems less than 1 metre tall with one flower on one stem telling me they were the **Moth Mullein plants** seen here before (**Moth Mullein** normally has yellow flowers but I don't think it is unusual for the flowers to be white).

Going home by the route out I was back in Thornham Lane and had just passed the 'homestead' with statues of prancing horses, but not yet reached the gateway where the house name is ornamented with men shooting their shotguns, when I spotted a poor specimen of **Cow Parsley** in flower in the southern hedge of the lane.

At the main road I turned south for a final look at the cattle (still no Egret but in the field south of the Little Deeps I was happy to see a **Kestrel carrying a large vole** away for his lunch and not so happy to see at least 50 Canada Geese). Along the NRA track I passed a single **Common Darter** to add to a **Large White** and a couple of **Red Admirals**.

Re-joining the A259 from Slipper Road I was passing the junction with Queen Street when I unconsciously noticed some more **Shaggy Soldier** plants flowering from a roadside crack in the kerb stones and when I got home I told Brian Fellows who was pleased to add a new comer to his Emsworth Plant list.

WILDLIFE DIARY AND NEWS FOR OCT 10 - 16 (WEEK 41 OF 2011)

Note that while I have in the past often stayed up after midnight on a Sunday to make this summary as complete as possible for Monday morning reading I have decided that from now on I will stop work at 11pm on the Sunday and will post an incomplete summary if necessary but I still intend to complete the work on Monday, posting a complete version not later than Monday evening for Tuesday. This week the part not completed is the section on Moths and Other Insects which both require a lot of research and careful writing to make them useful to readers

Overview

Bird news highlights:

Brent Geese return with young: First to arrive were probably Pale Bellied birds (9 in the Scillies on Sep 12 and 1 in North Devon on Sep 14) but our Dark Bellied birds were first seen on Sep 15 when small numbers were seen at Dungeness, north Kent and France. No flocks exceeded 100 birds until Sep 25 when 1142 were reported off Germany and on Sep 26 Chichester Harbour had a flock of 230 and on Sep 28 there were 110 in Portsmouth Harbour and 172 in Langstone Harbour. By

Oct 1 the Langstone Harbour flock was up to 500 and 235 had reached Exmouth in south Devon. The first juveniles were reported among a flock of 33 in Christchurch Harbour on Oct 6 and by co-incidence another flock of 33 at Bosham in Chichester Harbour on Oct 11 also had 8 young with family size up to 3 juvs. These Bosham birds also marked the stage at which the newly arrived birds overcame their fear of human activity and came to feed along the busy northern shore of the harbour. The first statistically significant measure of breeding success came on Oct 12 when two separate flocks, each of 2000 birds, were counted at Seasalter on the north Kent coast, each of them having 6% of juveniles. A higher but less significant percentage (roughly 14%) was reported from Christchurch Harbour on Oct 14 when 14 juvs were seen among a flock of 103 geese and on that day an even more optimistic estimate came from the Lymington shore where 11 juvs were seen in a flock of just 24 birds (but in that count was a single family with 5 juvs). Next stage in the winter cycle will come when the geese start to feed on land - hopefully we will have had some rain to encourage growth of grass and cereal crops by the time they exhaust the eel grass in the harbour.

First Brant is back: On Oct 13 the first Brant of the winter, with 2 Pale-bellied Brent, arrived at Littlesea in Weymouth

Migration routes: As a human I automatically envisage a map of the areas over which birds must fly to get from their breeding areas to winter quarters and this map-based route-planning habit causes me to assume that the passage birds seen along our south coast at this time of year have come from further north in the British Isles and are just waiting for suitable weather to cross the channel in order to continue a straight line route to their destination. What I see when looking at the internet reports that are now available to us forces me to realise that bird movements are not governed by the sort of knowledge based planning that humans use but are driven by a combination of an inner urge to keep moving in a general direction modified by two factors which (not having the background knowledge that we have) are the only things to influence their behaviour - these are (a) the landscape and (b) the weather.

One thing that has made me reflect on this is that the majority of reports from Sandwich Bay at this time of year are of passage birds flying north and if you look at an atlas you will see that birds flying in a southwesterly direction along the north coast of Europe may well (particularly when flying at night or in cloudy conditions) not make the sharp turn south to follow the French coast after passing Calais and Cap Gris-nez but will fly on to hit the Kent coast. Birds on a more southerly route will reach Dungeness and then follow the English south coast west while those that were flying north of the continental coastline will hit our coast in the Sandwich/Pegwell Bay area where the birds would have to make a left turn of more than 90 degrees to follow our coast down to Dover - the easier change of direction is to the right, taking them north and then west along the north Kent coast, then up the Thames valley and an overland route back to our south coast. This is just one example of the sort of decision that will influence the routes followed by birds on passage.

Autumn vagrants: This may prove to be the best week of the year for vagrant birds in Britain. Some which have caught my eye have been the Isabelline Wheatear in

the Beachy Head area, a live Rufous-tailed Robin in Norfolk, a moribund (now dead) Yellow-billed Cuckoo at Liverpool, a Lanceolated Warbler on Fair Isle and a Rose-breasted Grosbeak in Orkney, plus an Eleonora's Falcon in Scotland (Lothian) and a 'very convincing report', according to Lee Evans, of a Sooty Falcon at Birling Gap on Beachy Head

Insect News highlights: (To be completed)

Plant News highlights:

Autumn sunshine has given us 160 species still in flower this week. Among those noted in the Plant News below some that I think are of special interest are four not normally flowering at this time of year - **Marsh Marigold, Yellow Iris, Cherry Plum** and **Cornsalad**. One that only flowers in October is Chinese Mugwort. Two plants that I personally am pleased with are **Ray's Knotgrass** and **Japanese Honeysuckle**, both of which I have seen before but have only discovered their names this week

Other News highlights:

This week we have two interesting contributions from Graeme Lyons - one about Dormice in the West Dean Woods near Chichester and the other about Bird's Nest Fungi in Ebernoe church yard near Midhurst

BIRDS

Divers: 14 reports of **Red-throated** this week including one from Germany where 68 birds were seen at 3 sites. Nine reports of **Black-throated** include one in Christchurch Harbour and several round the Kent coast, with six reports of **Great Northern** including one in the Solent off Stokes Bay at Gosport.

Grebes: Little Grebes have started to appear on coastal waters - two were in the Warblington Farm stream outflow south of the church with newly arrived Wigeon on Oct 15. A Black-necked was seen going south at Pegwell Bay in Kent on Oct 9 and a Slavonian was on the French Normandie coast on Oct 10 while there were three reports of Red-necked from the Yorkshire coast during the week

Shag: No reports from the mouth of Langstone Harbour yet this winter but a flock of 20 landed on the sea off Selsey on Oct 12

Cattle Egret: The Thornham Marshes bird was still present on Thorney Island on Oct 15

Little Egret: The number roosting at Langstone Pond has started to diminish as winter inevitably approaches and I only counted 100 there on Oct 13

Great White Egret: Reports from southern England this week include two newcomers at the Axe estuary in Devon and single resident birds at Dungeness and in Cornwall plus late news of one at the Oare Marshes in north Kent where it was said to be eating a Mole. The number of birds on the near continent seems to be increasing with totals this week of 33 birds on Oct 9, 49 on Oct 13 and 69 on Oct

15 - these all came from a maximum of 16 sites, but on Oct 14 Trektellen had reports totalling 390 birds from 51 sites!

Glossy Ibis: The three birds that seemed settled at Christchurch Harbour have been down to two since Oct 12 but two were still there on Oct 15 (one did make a brief appearance at the Exe estuary on Oct 14) and one remains faithful to the Stithians reservoir in Cornwall. By Oct 15 there were also 3 in Suffolk and one in Cleveland

Swans: On Oct 13 a total of 24 **Bewick's** arrived at three sites in Belgium and on Oct 14 there were 19 at two Netherlands sites - none at Slimbridge yet though the first seven Whitefront geese arrived there on Oct 14. Thirteen Whoopers were reported at a Yorkshire site on Oct 9 (with six more at two other sites), six more reach Flamborough Head on Oct 10 and eight were at a lake in the Manchester area on Oct 13

Geese: Just over 1000 **Bean Geese** reached 4 sites in the Netherlands on Oct 14 but only a couple of **Pinkfoots** were reported in England (in off the sea at Pegwell Bay in Kent, then flying on west) this week after nearly 14,000 arrived in Aberdeen on Oct 6. Plenty of **Whitefronts** reached the Netherlands starting with 17,500 on Oct 13 with 9,000 more on Oct 14 and 5,700 on Oct 15 and the Netherlands also welcomed 3,000 **Greylag** on Oct 13 and 4,000 more on Oct 14 (with a single **Snow Goose** reported on Oct 13). Barnacles also reached the low countries in force (9,200 on Oct 9, 3,300 on Oct 12 and 14,700 on Oct 14) and two of these wild birds flew into Pegwell Bay on Oct 12 but a single **Barnacle** flying west through the Solent on Oct 9 seems less likely to have been wild.

I have commented on the **Brent** and their young, plus the arrival of the first **Brant** (at Weymouth on Oct 13), in the Highlights above. Three reports of **Egyptian Geese** (max of 121 birds) in the Netherlands were probably not winter arrivals and the same probably applies to a single report of just two **Bar-headed** in Belgium on Oct 13

Duck: This week **Wigeon** began to turn up at last and on Oct 8 Pagham Harbour had 40 birds while Clamerkin Lake (Newtown, IoW) had 47. On Oct 10 I saw my first 5 on the Budds Farm pools at Havant and on Oct 15 there were 9 in the outfall of the Warblington Castle stream between Langstone and Emsworth. On Oct 13 Christchurch Harbour had more than 200. Also on Oct 13 Dungeness saw 60 flying west and at dusk that evening as I was counting Egrets at Langstone Pond a V shaped skein of around 30 duck (probably Wigeon) flew west high over north Hayling heading for Langstone Harbour.

On Oct 9 51 **Gadwall** were new at Hook/Warsash and on Oct 8 a count of 25 **Pintail** in Pagham Harbour was the first notable arrival of the species in the local area (though there had been 30+ in Devon on Oct 1). On Oct 14 one **Garganey** was still in Christchurch Harbour and on that same day one site in the Netherlands had a count of 321 **Scaup** increasing to a massive 1175 birds at the same site next day. **Eider** also saw a big increase on Oct 13 with 3589 at one German site. A single **Goldeneye** was at Pegwell Bay in Kent on Oct 9 and precursors of the **Mergansers** began to appear on the south coast with one at Sandwich Bay in Kent on Oct 9, two at Seaford on Oct 10 (two passing Climping that day were

presumably the same birds), and four were off the Normandie coast on Oct 14. Oct 9 also saw the count of **Goosander** at the Blashford Lakes shoot up to 23 (though only 2 were reported there on Oct 14)

Raptors: The last **Honey Buzzard** went over Portland on Oct 10 after one had flown over Eastleigh near Southampton on Oct 9. The two long staying **Black Kites** were still in Cornwall on Oct 15 and a different bird was reported over Ferndown near Bournemouth on Oct 11 while this week brought a suggestion that our **Red Kite** population has reached a point where some are heading into Europe - I have no information about the numbers of these birds to be found in Europe but I was surprised totals in the Low Countries of 60 birds on Oct 14 and 56 on Oct 15 (plus 17 at three sites in Czechoslovakia on Oct 9). Coming the other way were 11 **White-tailed Eagles** at a Swedish site on Oct 12 with 8 at four sites in the Netherlands on Oct 14. A single **Hen Harrier** in the New Forest on Oct 12 was the first reported there since June but more may be on the way as there has been a significant increase of them in the Low Countries since Oct 9 when 48 were at 26 sites followed by 182 at 49 sites on Oct 14. Another increase among continental raptors came with a report of 18 **Goshawks** at 5 Netherlands sites on Oct 14 (11 of them at one site) while Oct 14 also brought lots of **Sparrowhawks** to the Netherlands (1387 at 29 sites with one site having 186 of them) and also on Oct 14 one site in Germany had 930 **Buzzards** with a possible total (ignoring double counting) of 7380 at 47 sites. Naturally there were **Rough-legged Buzzards** also on the move giving reports of 149 at one Swedish site on Oct 12 and of 44 at 24 Netherlands sites on Oct 14. I was about to say that the last Osprey had been seen in Hampshire on Oct 1 but a quick search shows that one was in the Lymington area at 5pm on Oct 15 - others had been seen in Sussex (Weir Wood) on Oct 10 and in Cornwall on Oct 12. A Red-footed Falcon was at Christchurch Harbour on Oct 9 and three others were reported on the continent this week. Also in the UK this week were an **Eleonora's Falcon** in Scotland and an unconfirmed **Sooty Falcon** near Beachy Head (this species does not normally get closer to us than Egypt and should currently be heading south from the Middle East to Madagascar - I'm not sure if one has ever been recorded in Britain). Plenty of **Merlin** sightings this week including a local one at Hoe Cross in the Meon valley while Belgium had a possible total of 92 birds at 40 sites on Oct 14. **Hobbies** were seen at Andover on Oct 10 and in the New Forest on Oct 13. A postscript to this summary is the sighting of a **Short-toed Eagle** at Orcombe Point (near Exmouth in south Devon) at midday on Oct 16

Common Crane: The only reports from England this week are of 2 at Dungeness on Oct 8 and maybe the same two over Rye Harbour on Oct 13 but just across the Channel Oct 13 brought a count of 1697 at one German site and another count of 1009 birds at Berlin on Oct 14

Waders: By Oct 14 the number of **Avocet** in the Exe estuary was up to 39 (last January there were 580 there and I see that in February Poole Harbour had 1200 so there are plenty more yet to reach the west country). The **Golden Plover** flock in Chichester Harbour numbered 200 at West Wittering back on Oct 4 but this week a flock of 250 were well up the Emsworth Channel (off the Great Deeps area) and we may soon be seeing them from Langstone when the

tides are right for them to settle on the mud for their daytime snooze after nocturnal feeding in fields.

I had my personal first encounter with around 50 **Sanderling** in the Black Point high tide roost on Oct 13 and Rye Harbour reported a **Purple Sandpiper** there on Oct 9 (the species being uncommon there so still noteworthy whereas most waders have now settled into their winter sites and so are no longer exciting enough to report). Another uncommon visitor to Rye Harbour this week was a **Buff-breasted Sandpiper** and in the Scillies a **Wilson's Snipe** was even more uncommon. Soon to attract attention in southern England will be continental **Woodcock** - so far I have only heard of one arriving at Bockhill near the South Foreland in Kent on Oct 8 but they were seen at one or two Netherlands sites on Oct 14 and 15. On Oct 12 the Scillies had the first **Upland Sandpiper** for the year but Emsworth birders are still waiting for the return of 'their' **Spotted Redshank** which should turn up in the coming week (last year it arrived on Oct 19). Back in the Scillies the **Lesser Yellowlegs** and the **Least Sandpiper** were still present.

Skuas:

On Oct 9 Dungeness recorded **41 Pomarine, 40 Arctic and 193 Bonxies** and on that day a **single Long-tailed** was off the Suffolk coast

Gulls: On Oct 12 a Swedish site had 1033 Little Gulls that may be coming our way but there has been little excitement along our south coast this week. One highlight was a great photo of a first winter **Caspian Gull** taken at the Axe estuary in Devon on Oct 14 (to see it go to <http://www.devonbirds.org/Birdnews> and click the link to 'Devon Bird News' then scroll down the page which this invokes - you should be able to go direct to <http://devonbirdnews.blogspot.com/> but I have had difficulty with doing this). The resident **Glaucous Gull** is still at Dungeness but a couple of early winter visitors have been reported - one at Cowes (Isle of Wight) on Oct 10 and another in the Netherlands on Oct 7, 9 and 10.

Terns: In addition to the Sandwich Terns that will stay with us for the winter the only birds reported were an Arctic off Snady Point (Hayling Island) on Oct 9 and 3 of them at Dungeness on Oct 13, a single Little Tern at Pegwell Bay in Kent on Oct 9 and a Black Tern at Cowes (IoW) also on Oct 9

Little Auk: Two were seen at Flamborough Head in Yorkshire on Oct 13

Wood Pigeons: This week brought the first signs of the great Woodpigeon invasion we experience each autumn with its unanswered questions about where the birds come from and where they go to. Oct 9 was the clear start of the flocking season over in Germany with a report of 227,000 birds at four sites, one of them having 113,000. By Oct 13 the centre of this activity had moved to the Netherlands with 340,000 birds at 13 sites while next day there were 714,000 birds at 28 sites. Over in England the only pigeons to attract attention were **Stock Doves** with reports from Weir Wood in north Sussex of 'more than usual' there on Oct 12 following a report of 26 + on Oct 11. On Oct 13 a single Belgian site had 173 birds.

Turtle Dove: The last I know of in England was one at Portland on Oct 13

Cuckoo: A juvenile was still in the Scillies on Oct 8 and one was in Belgium on Oct 10

Owls: Both **Long** and **Short-eared** have been seen on the move. Only one Long-eared has been reported from the Netherlands but there have been 12 reports of Short-eared including one at Church Norton in Pagham Harbour on Oct 10. Peak count was on Oct 14 when 36 birds were reported from 18 sites in the Netherlands

Kingfisher: These are now settling down in winter quarters with one bird based in the Emsworth ponds and harbour area and another in the Hermitage Stream/Budds Farm area west of Havant

Wryneck: Reports this week from the Scillies (up to 7 there on Oct 12) and Cornwall. Last report was from Climping at the mouth of the R. Arun on Oct 14

Woodlark: Recent warm sunshine has caused several reports of these in full song (one report from Cuckfield near Haywards Heath on Oct 12 suggested that each field there had its own singing bird) - others were singing in the New Forest and at Pagham Harbour while on Oct 14 news from Belgium was of 230 birds at 22 sites

Skylark: Almost everyone interested in birds must have heard one or more Skylarks heading west low overhead this week and on Oct 14 a total of 31,378 birds were seen at 19 sites in the Netherlands

Hirundines: The last report of Sand Martins in England was of 24 at Durlston on Oct 10 but 830 Swallows and 90 House Martins were still passing over there on Oct 14

Rock Pipit: I have not yet hear of any back on the Langstone Harbour shores but they are now being seen in small numbers all along the south coast and on Oct 13 Dungeness reported 5 there as their first autumn birds

Water Pipit: One on the Lymington shore on Oct 14 seems to have been the first of the autumn on the English south coast

Buff-bellied Pipit aka American Pipit (*Anthus rubescens*): What seems to have been accepted as an individual of this species was seen at Newhaven on Oct 9 and refound there on Oct 12 but not I think seen since though there have been others present this week in Shetland and the Scillies

Dipper: One was reported at the Holmsley gravel pit reserve in the south west of the New Forest on Oct 10 but as far as I know it was only seen by the finder - maybe it will turn up again at Romsey?

Dunnoek: On Oct 14 I was surprised to find a couple of these noisily exploring the shoreline vegetation at Broadmarsh in Langstone Harbour and I later discovered that a Netherlands site had reported 47 there that day. Clearly a number of continental birds do come to us for the winter and I suspect that my two were new

arrivals, as may have been one which surprised Brian Fellows last week by its presence and noisy calls at Brook Meadow in Emsworth on Oct 7 last week (the day after Brian's bird was seen there was a flock of 150 at a Netherlands site). Oct 13 also brought a report of a total of 427 **Robins** at 5 sites (one site having 118 birds)

Bluethroat: One in the Scillies on Oct 12

Red-flanked Bluetail: Last year one turned up at Sandy Point (Hayling Island) on Oct 18 and stayed for at least 5 days - maybe it will return this year as on Oct 13 there were 5 separate individuals of this species in the UK, one of them giving great pleasure to a ringer at Reculver in north Kent when he found it in his nets and was able to handle it

Ring Ouzel: This week has brought 28 reports of these birds including two seen on Portsdown just above the Paulsgrove chalk pit and others all along the south coast. In the Netherlands on Oct 13 a total of 54 birds were reported at 21 sites and I suspect that the majority of those seen in England were of continental origin which had arrived in England as a result of weather conditions that had diverted them from a more normal passage route through France. Also arriving from the continent were some of the Blackbirds and Thrushes that will stay here for the winter (Maybe some of the Ouzels will do so - I clearly remember seeing one that wintered in the New Forest in the 1980s). Dungeness saw the arrival of 175 Blackbirds on Oct 13 and had reported 130 Song Thrushes on Oct 9

Fieldfare: After the first arrivals in England on Oct 8 and 9 there was a surge of new birds on Oct 13 when 1470 flew in over Pegwell Bay in Kent and were seen at many sites including 120 birds at Lachmore Bottom in the New Forest - Portland reported their first arrival that day.

Song Thrush: The number arriving at Pegwell Bay on Oct 8 was estimated at 1000 but reports from the Netherlands that day indicated some 16,000 at 16 sites there and I suspect the majority of those pushed on across the Channel.

Redwing: These began to pour into southern England via Kent on Oct 8 when there were some 28,000 at 15 sites in Belgium and birders in Kent estimated that some 24,000 arrived in the Pegwell Bay area. Another surge came on Oct 13 with a build up of around 20,000 in the Netherlands and reports of them arriving at sites all round Kent and 280 being seen at Farnborough (perhaps these had come round north Kent and up the Thames estuary before turning south to look for the south coast as the Thames began to narrow)

Blackcap: One (probably one of our summer birds) was still to be seen on Thorney Island on Oct 12 when 239 of his 'colleagues' were seen at a site in Portugal.

Pallas' Warbler: One was at Reculver in north Kent on Oct 13

Yellow-browed Warbler: Thirteen reports this week from Kent to Cornwall and the Scillies but none in Sussex or Hampshire

Goldcrest and Firecrest: Increased numbers noted at several south coast sites as continental birds arrive. One good local report was of 2 Firecrests in the Leigh Park area of Havant on Oct 12 with one of them singing. On Oct 13 20 Goldcrests were present in the Sarisbury area by the River Hamble west of Fareham

Flycatchers: Single **Spotted Flycatchers** were at Church Norton (Pagham Harbour) on Oct 10 and on the north shore of Weymouth Bay on Oct 13. In the Scillies a **Red-breasted Flycatcher** was present on Oct 11. Late **Pied Flycatchers** were in Cornwall on Oct 12 and north Kent on Oct 14

Tits: We may not think of **Blue** or **Great Tits** as long distance migrants but on Oct 12 some 510 Blue and 150 Great Tits were seen leaving Sweden before the winter sets in. Maybe they will soon join our local Tit flocks.

Isabelline Shrike: Last week a bird that should have been in Asia was in Shetland and this week it (or another) had flown south to appear in Suffolk on Oct 14

Red-backed Shrike: Just one this week in the Scillies on Oct 12

Great Grey Shrike: Seven continental reports this week gives hope that some will soon arrive in southern England. By Oct 14 there were 21 birds at 17 sites in the Netherlands

Chaffinch: On Oct 9 the total at 61 Netherlands sites was 879,012 birds but the biggest number reported in England so far was just 1200 arriving at Dungeness on Oct 13 (many others will of course have flown over our coastal sites without being counted!)

Brambling: Also on Oct 9 there were 7,000 of these at three continental sites but that day only one was seen at Dungeness and on one Oct 10 Pegwell Bay had just 14. On Oct 12 one had got as far west as Paulton's Park near Romsey and on Oct 14 singles were seen at Christchurch Harbour and Durlston

Greenfinch: Many of these have suffered from disease in the last year or so and numbers are much lower than they used to be but on Oct 14 Christchurch Harbour counted 530 of them

Goldfinch: These are flourishing and on Oct 14 Christchurch Harbour had 3,400 while Durlston had 1315 on Oct 12

Siskin: These are also numerous with 1200 at Christchurch Harbour on Oct 14

Linnet: Top count this week was 1725 at Dungeness on Oct 10

Crossbill: As this winter's influx builds up four sites had counts of more than 100 birds with 164 at Pegwell Bay in Kent setting a new record for that site. Smaller numbers were seen almost everywhere.

Bullfinch: These are also doing well this winter and this week five English sites reported flocks of from 10 to 13 birds

INSECTS

[\(Skip to Plants\)](#)

Dragonflies:

Notable sightings this week:

Common Hawker: Only one seen this week at Carnoustie in Scotland and that one was moribund

Common Darter: More than 100 were still present at a Norfolk site on Oct 14

Species reported this week:

Southern Hawker, Common Hawker, Brown Hawker, Migrant Hawker, Black Darter, Common Darter, Emerald Damselfly, Small Red Damselfly

Butterflies:

Notable sightings this week:

Red Admiral: Up to 70 heading south at Dungeness on Oct 9 and migrants still heading south down the Arun valley on Oct 14

The list of species seen is still holding up but the number of sightings of species that will overwinter as adults is limited by the fact that when they emerge from the pupa their first task is to find somewhere to spend the winter so most of them are only on the wing for less than a day.

Species reported this week:

Clouded Yellow, Brimstone, Large White, Small White, Small Copper, Common Blue, Adonis Blue, Red Admiral, Painted Lady, Peacock, Comma, Speckled Wood, Wall Brown, Meadow Brown.

Moths:

Selected sightings this week:

(TO BE COMPLETED)

Other Insects:

Selected sightings this week:

(TO BE COMPLETED)

PLANTS

[\(Skip to Other Wildlife\)](#)

Marsh Marigold: A single flower was open at the Langstone South Moors orchid field on Oct 10. Last year was the first in which I have witnessed autumn flowering of this species but maybe it will become normal in future?

Creeping Yellow-cress: This was in flower at Broadmarsh in Havant on Sep 2 but the roadside area where it grew was subsequently mown so I was pleased to see the flower re-appearing in Oct 14

Sea Rocket: Still flowering at Black Point on Hayling Island on Oct 13

Common Milkwort: I was pleased to find single plants still flowering on both Portsdown and Hayling Island this week

Pale Flax: Still flowering at Durlston on Oct 14

Common Dog Violet: On Oct 9 a work party at the butterfly reserve (Park Corner) near Eastbourne found and photographed a plant in full flower

Sea Spurrey: Both Greater and Lesser species were found in full flower this week

Small Flowered Cranesbill: This too was in healthy flowering at Havant on Oct 10

Least Yellow Sorrell: When I checked the Langstone site (where plants cover a 100 yard stretch of pathside) I could only see a single flower open in Oct 15

Hairy Vetchling: Two of the Broadmarsh 'mountain' plants were still flowering on Oct 14

Sickle Medick: Despite close mowing of its roadside site on Portsdown this summer flowers could still be seen on Oct 12 but worryingly no seeds were found - maybe this is the last year that this plant will feature in Hampshire.

Cherry Plum: When in the Hook area near Warsash on Oct 13 Tony Wootton took a photo of a Cherry Plum shoot covered with open flowers plus the distinctive green twigs of its fresh fresh growth

Dog Rose: Many flowers still to be seen on bushes otherwise covered with red hips on Oct 10 and 15 at Langstone South Moors and the Warblington farm shore

Ray's Knotgrass: When on the Hayling Island Sandy Point shingle shore on Oct 13 I found fresh flowers on what I had previously thought to be the rare Sea Knotgrass but close checking showed me that this was in fact Ray's Knotgrass and that the very rare plant grows on sand, not shingle. See my diary for more.

Sharp-leaved Fluellen: I found this in flower on Oct 15 in the Warblington Farm field immediately behind Conigar Point and at the same time saw that the field has been prepared for a new crop to be sown following the recently harvested Sweetcorn - this means that the variety of wild plants that I expect to see in the field after harvest (including many plants of **Dwarf Spurge**) will not appear this year and may be lost from the field's seed bank

Green Field Speedwell: A good find (with flowers and seed capsules) in grass alongside Bracklesham Road leading to the Hayling Island Sailing Club when I was there on Oct 13

Basil Thyme: The biggest plant I have ever seen, covered with flowers, was on Portsdown (Portchester Common) on Oct 12

Japanese Honeysuckle: What is presumably a long established garden escape grows on the northwest side of the Hayling Billy line just north of where it passes the line of the footpath from the Royal Oak at Langstone to the centre of Havant but I had not identified the species until this week

Cornsalad: I have never seen this growing, let alone flowering, at this time of year before but I found it flowering in Havant on Oct 11

Chinese Mugwort: The plants by the cycleway at Broadmarsh only flower in October. They were still in bud on Oct 1 but had all started to flower by Oct 14

Yellow Iris: Several plants had fresh flowers on the Langstone South Moors on Oct 10

The plants listed above are only part of the 160 species seen in flower this week

OTHER WILDLIFE

[\(Skip to Endweek\)](#)

Dormice: One Oct 14 Graeme Lyons joined volunteers checking some 50 Dormouse boxes located in the West Dean Woods north of Chichester and you can read his blog entry at

<http://analternativenaturalhistoryofsussex.blogspot.com/2011/10/furry-ginger-thing-with-spine.html> which also has photos showing the 'yellow neck' of a

Yellow-necked Mouse and comparing it to a **Wood Mouse**

Pipistrelle Bat: Several of these were active in the Langstone Pond area when I was counting Egrets on Oct 13 and I was greatly impressed by the flying skill of one hunting the Wade Lane area as I cycled back up it in the dark - I was aware of the bat's presence but totally unprepared for its very close pass across my face when I

distinctly felt the movement of the air disturbed by its wings as it momentarily blotted out my field of view

Fungi: Also on Oct 13 as I cycled down Wade Court Road on my way to Langstone Pond I passed a young specimen of **Dryad's Saddle** growing from a roadside log on the east side of the road just north of South Close (on the other side). For something more exciting go to

<http://analternativenaturalhistoryofsussex.blogspot.com/2011/10/avian-themed-fungal-ticks.html> where Graeme Lyons has a photo of a group of **Fluted bird's nest (Cyathus striatus)** fungi on a log in Ebernoe Churchyard near Midhurst. The photo shows some of the 'eggs' in the base of one of the 'nests' and these eggs are a fascinating example of nature evolving the most efficient design for this life form. The purpose of all fungal fruiting bodies is to spread spores for the survival of the species and the majority of fungi do this in one of two ways - they either drop their spores from gills (as in the edible mushroom) or they shoot them from devices similar to hypodermic syringes (as in the apparently lifeless 'King Alfred's Cakes' which, if taken at the right time and place on a sheet of black paper under a glass dome, will 'magically' generate a circle of white spores on the black paper around the fungus). The Bird's Nest Fungi have a different solution to this need to spread their spores - first they grow a bowl shaped structure and place their spores in small bundles in the 'eggs' sitting at the bottom of the bowl then they wait for rain. The bowl shape guides a raindrop down the side of the bowl and under the eggs at the bottom - this forces the egg up into the air but the design takes account of the fact that the spores have to be mature before they are released so the egg is connected to the base of the bowl by the equivalent of an elastic band. Until the spores are mature this will pull the egg back into the nest despite the rain - when they are mature the 'elastic band' will break and allow the egg to fly upward but it has a further function - the section of band still attached to the egg is designed to catch on anything such as a leaf of a plant overhanging the nest, leaving the egg to burst at a good height for wind dispersal of the spores, all achieved without the need to grow a large, tall mushroom structure. The only other fungus I have noted this week was seen after mowing the lawn when I discovered that I had exposed the remnants of *Clavulinopsis luteoalba* (Apricot Club) which grows like tiny yellow fingers among the grass

WILDLIFE DIARY AND NEWS FOR OCT 10 - 16 (WEEK 41 OF 2011)

[\(Skip to previous week\)](#)

[Sun 16 Oct](#)

[\(Link to previous day's entry\)](#)

Summary of past week's news

My latest weekly summary of reports is now available by clicking [Weekly Summary](#) here

[Fri 14 Oct](#)

[\(Link to previous day's entry\)](#)

Broadmarsh and Budds Farm in more sunshine

Another sunny afternoon saw me on my bike and heading west to see if the **Chinese Mugwort** was now in flower by the Broadmarsh cycleway (which it was) but before getting to it I had another look at the Broadmarsh 'mountain top' where two plants of **Hairy Vetchling** still had fresh flowers.

Coming down to the slipway I saw nine **Brent Geese** on the Budds Farm shore with the tide still high (my first geese feeding on the north shore of the harbour) and heading west along the sea wall I was accompanied by a **Wheatear** which thought it could keep ahead of me. Reaching the cycleway I immediately found that the **Chinese Mugwort** plants which had all been in bud back on Oct 1 were already coming to the end of their brief flowering while across the cycleway the **Blue Fleabane** still had many flowers as well as distinctive seed heads.

In the Chalk Dock area the **Great Crested Grebe** flock was down to 15 birds and on the edge of the mud that was just starting to appear was a small flock of a dozen **Black-tailed Godwits**. Coming back to the **Mugwort** area I heard and saw a couple of **Dunnocks** in the water's edge rough vegetation making me wonder if they were newly arrived Continental birds - back on Oct 1 a Netherlands site had reported **38 Dunnocks** as 'remarkable' and on Oct 2 a Belgian site had 52 of them, then on Oct 7 Brian Fellows noted one calling at Brook Meadow where he had not noticed the species recently and on Oct 8 another Netherlands site reported a count of 150 so I am pretty sure many of these birds are now moving west from the continent before the cold weather arrives.

Turning my attention back to the flowers as I continued east along the cycleway I noted two **Dark Mullein** plants with full spikes of fresh flowers (with less conspicuous roadside **Cockspur Grass**) and by crossing the road at the busy junction where Harts Farm Way meets the A27 traffic I found **Creeping Yellowcress** starting to flower again after its recent mowing.

Turning off Harts Farm Way down the Brockhampton Stream I passed freshly flowering **Meadow Sweet** and at the bridge below the old Corn Wharf I met a **Kingfisher** coming upstream.

Next stop was at Budds Farm and while there I had another good look at what was probably the same **Kingfisher** flying over the pools on which there were at least a dozen **Shoveler** with similar numbers of **Teal** and **Mallard** plus slightly fewer **Gadwall** and **Tufted Duck**. While there I had a **Chiffchaff** in the tree above my head after seeing one in the shore-side bushes.

I came back up Southmoor Lane which gave me one last surprise - a very fresh plant of **Stone Parsley** in full flower.

Thu 13 Oct

[\(Link to previous day's entry\)](#)

Sandy Point in the sun

After delivering a birthday gift to my son who lives in the Mengham area of Hayling I went on to walk round the Chichester Harbour entrance in sweltering hot sunshine.

My first find was made in the roadside grass of Bracklesham Road where a tiny deep blue flower caught my eye - I found a strand of the plant which had both flower and seed capsules and back at home the long straight hairs on the seed capsule clinched the id as **Green Field Speedwell**. Also in this road an ivy clad sycamore

was inhabited by what was probably a **Chiffchaff** but the insistent high pitched calls did make me wonder if it was a **Yellow-browed Warbler!!**

Reaching the causeway leading to Black Point some of the very few flowers to be seen were the 'fag ends' of **Evening Primrose** with flowers looking much smaller than usual for the 'Large Flowered' plant - probably a result of end of season exhaustion. I did collect one flower for later inspection and when I got home I found that Fitter and Fitter use the relative lengths of style and stamens to separate the species but while my specimen had many stamens I could not find a style (another sign of exhaustion causing the plant to give up sex in its old age?)

At the head of the causeway I walked west along the sandy beach with the water at its highest, almost covering the mass of **Greater Sea Spurrey** flowers but not reaching the **Sea Rocket** plants apparently happy to survive on a diet of dry sand. Also on the dry bank leading up to the Sailing Club compound **Spanish Broom** was still flowering and among them was a **small Gorse bush** with flowers and spines looking small enough to be **Dwarf Gorse** which I have not found here before (plenty to be found in the old hospital grounds south of the Lifeboat Station) so I measured the flower as being 15mm long and I see that 15mm is the minimum for **Common Gorse** (the maximum for **Dwarf** being 12mm)

Having reached the limit of public access I settled on a rock to scan the distant high tide wader roost in which I was pleased to see my first 'white clockwork mice' (**Sanderling**) of the winter as well as **Oystercatchers, Grey Plover** (I'm pretty sure I heard but did not see **Ringed Plover**), **Dunlin, Bar-tailed Godwit**, a few **Turnstone** and what may have been **Knot**. One **Sandwich Tern** was fishing near them and in the far distance near the Tournerbury shore was a long line of several hundred **Brent**. Making my way back down the causeway two **juvenile Sandwich Terns** allowed me close views.

In the beach carpark just north of the Lifeboat Station a couple of very healthy looking prostrate **Knotgrass plants** were in full flower where, on my last visit, I thought I had found the rare **Sea Knotgrass** (the id based on the woody stems of the plants) but a specimen of today's find convinced me that this was **Ray's Knotgrass** based on three factors - first that the silvery stipules were nowhere near the length of the internodes, secondly that they were brown at the base, and thirdly (after reading the entry in the Hants Flora) that these plants were growing in shingle, not in sand on the lower shore. This last factor makes me doubt if I have ever seen the genuine rarity, but at least it gives me a new tick as I have never been confident of having found **Ray's Knotgrass** before!

My last noteworthy finds were in the old Hospital Grounds where **Common Centaury, Dwarf Gorse, Bell and Ling Heather** and an unexpected plant of **Milkwort** went on the list

With tide and weather favourable I spent the hour before sunset on the Langstone seawall **counting Egrets coming to roost**. For the first time this season there were no Egrets at all anywhere around the pond when I arrived and it was some 50 minutes after my arrival that the first arrived. By sunset the count was only 25 and I thought the birds has abandoned this roost but before it was too dark to see the count had nudged up to 100. Among the birds several bats (probably **Pipistrelles**) were hunting round the roost trees and as I cycled back up Wade Lane in the dark I had an experience I have never had before - **a bat shot across my path so close that I could swear that its wings brushed against my forehead** - at any rate my whole face felt the air displaced by its wings.

One final note is of a fungus seen on my way down Wade Court Road at the start of my outing. I stopped for a close look but could not be certain what I was looking at though it was most probably a cluster of several **Dryad's Saddles** coming from a common base on an old log - look for them on the east side of the road opposite and a little north of South Close

[Wed 12 Oct](#)

[\(Link to previous day's entry\)](#)

Portsdown in the rain

After drizzle in the morning the sun broke through in the afternoon and I set off for Portsdown but I was glad when I reached the unofficial field entrance parking area west of Fort Southwick that I was wearing a rain-proof jacket as the drizzle restarted though not strongly enough to deter me from a walk on Portchester Common.

Best find was a scrape of bare earth in which the biggest plant of **Basil Thyme** that I have ever come across was covered with lovely flowers. Most other flowers were over but I still managed to find **Harebells, Marjoram, Small Scabious** and **Yellow-wort** in reasonable numbers with odd single specimens of **Musk** and **Dwarf Thistle, Wild Basil** and **Wild Parsnip**.

Surprisingly difficult to find were any **Eyebright** flowers but I did have one bonus in a single healthy specimen of **Common Milkwort** nestling in a patch of long grass. Not seen on the hill, but found this morning in St Faith's churchyard in Havant, was **Mouse-ear Hawkweed** and also around Havant I found **Wall Lettuce** and **Sticky Mouse-ear** in flower.

[Tue 11 Oct](#)

[\(Link to previous day's entry\)](#)

I don't believe it!

Yesterday I found **Marsh Marigold** in flower and this evening, taking a brief breath of fresh air at dusk, I found many catkins starting to stretch and open on **Grey Alder** (not expected until February) and tiny blue flowers starting to show on **Cornsalad** (not expected until April). The **Alder trees** are in the Prince George Street carpark - alongside which (mainly hidden by a brick wall) runs a short section of the Lavant Stream which has come underground from the Eastern Road and which immediately disappears again, not to emerge again until it is in Havant Park - this would normally have a slight flow of water at this time of year but which today is bone dry, maybe a factor in the early flowering of the trees and other plants? The single, but large and healthy, **Cornsalad** plant was growing in Beechworth Road at the foot of a wooden fence on the south side close to the junction with Fairfield Road.

Also seen in this 45 minute stroll were 15 new flowering plants for this week's list including **Spotted Medick, Oxeye Daisy, Burnet Saxifrage, Field Scabious, Common Ramping Fumitory** and **Weasel's Snout** (these last two side by side in the New Lane allotments).

With nothing else to report today I thought I would add in here an experimental version of how to make the Moth Sightings section of my Weekly Summary more interesting. You may have noticed there were no entries in that section last Sunday, partly because I was not happy in just listing reports of species that had interested me but probably would not interest other 'non-moth-ers'. What I am now thinking of doing is to give, for each species that seems newsworthy to me, one or more

pictures with some background info about the species and a link to the source of my news (allowing people to bypass my ignorance and see the original story.

Here are a few species in the current news treated in this way:-

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2420 **Egyptian Bollworm** *Earias insulana* at Portland on Oct 9

Wingspan c. 25 mm. A rare immigrant species probably imported from abroad, where it occurs in Africa, Asia and Europe. There have only been a handful of records in the British Isles.

UK Moths photo at <http://ukmoths.org.uk/show.php?id=4403>

Portland photo taken by Martin Cade is at

http://www.portlandbirdobs.org.uk/mp_egyptian_bollworm_2_091011_500.jpg This was probably a genuine migrant arrival - probably only the sixth for Britain

=====

2054 **Crimson Speckled** *Utetheisa pulchella* at Portland on Oct 9

Wingspan 29-42 mm. A spectacular species, but unfortunately only a sporadic migrant to this country with around 100 records in the last century.

The species occurs naturally in the Mediterranean and North Africa, and most immigrants are presumed to have originated there. Moths may turn up at any time during the summer or autumn, but most records are from the southern counties or offshore islands.

These spectacular moths had been arriving along the south coast for several days before one turned up at Portland. First I know of was at Beachy Head on Oct 4 and one was at Dungeness on Oct 5

UK Moths photo at <http://ukmoths.org.uk/show.php?id=6045>

Portland photo taken by Sam Ellis is at

http://www.portlandbirdobs.org.uk/mp_crimson_speckled_2_091011_500.jpg

Dungeness photo of their specimen on Oct 5 at

<http://www.dungenessbirdobs.org.uk/images/Crimson%20Speckled%20Dungeness%20041011.jpg>

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2353 **Flounced Rustic** *Luperina testacea* at Durlston on Oct 10

Wingspan 30-35 mm.

A common species in England and Wales, but more local in Scotland and Ireland, occupying dry, grassy habitats.

There is one generation, flying in August and September, when the species comes to light.

The larvae feed underground in the bases of grass stems and amongst the roots.

UK Moths photo at <http://ukmoths.org.uk/show.php?id=5978>

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2260 **Dotted Chestnut** (*Conistra rubiginea*) at Rye Harbour on 9th Oct

Wingspan 30-35 mm. A very local species, occurring mainly in the south and south-east of England, but occasional scattered occurrences elsewhere.

It inhabits woodland and heathland, flying in October and November, after which it hibernates and appears again in early spring. The foodplants are not well-known in the wild, but it is thought to feed on a number of deciduous trees.

UK Moths photo at <http://ukmoths.org.uk/show.php?id=3804>

Rye Harbour photo at <http://rxwildlife.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2011/10/dotted-chestnut.jpg>

Alan Martin at Rye comments: "The last few days of September and early October have been good with four **Clifden Nonpareils** (see below), a **Scarce Bordered Straw** and a **Vestal** in my garden trap near Staplecross, but last night this **Dotted Chestnut** was the highlight. This Nationally Scarce B species seems to be expanding its range and is described by Colin Pratt in his book as 'a Sussex speciality, but even here it has always existed at a low density, and has been very local, elusive, and episodic in appearance'"

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2451 **Clifden Nonpareil** (*Catocala fraxini*)

Wingspan 75-95 mm. This is the Victorian collector's classic all-time favourite, the 'Blue Underwing'. In the British Isles it is now only an immigrant, though was formerly resident in certain parts of Kent and Norfolk during the middle part of the 20th century. Nowadays, only a handful per year are recorded, mainly in the south and south-east of England, September being the most likely month.

UK Moths photo at <http://ukmoths.org.uk/show.php?id=849>

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2247 **Merveille du Jour** (*Dichonia aprilinea*) at Henfield on Oct 8

Wingspan 35-40 mm. One of our most beautiful moths, especially when freshly emerged, this species frequents woodland and parks, and is widespread, though thinly scattered over most of Britain. It flies in September and October and comes to light in small numbers.

UK Moths photo at <http://ukmoths.org.uk/show.php?id=6099>

Richard Roebuck's photo from Sussex BC at

<http://www.sussex-butterflies.org.uk/species/moths/M/MervDuJourHenfield091011RR.jpg>

=====
2028 Pale Tussock (*Calliteara pudibunda*) caterpillar

This is in the news on account of one being found in the Arundel area by Tony Wootton on Oct 9. This individual was almost certainly looking for somewhere to pupate (before emerging as a moth next May). In Tony's photo (see <http://www.emsworthwildlife.hampshire.org.uk/0-0-274-pale-tussock-caterp-TW-09.10.11.jpg>) the distinctive spike of red hairs on its rear end is hidden by leaf litter but can be seen in the UK Moths photo at <http://ukmoths.org.uk/show.php?id=1095>. Another UK Moths photo shows the way the caterpillar responds to threats by curling up to show its black bands - see <http://ukmoths.org.uk/show.php?id=1096>. The caterpillar used to be called the 'Hop Dog' as its favourite food plant is Hop though it will eat other plants

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Mon 10 Oct

[\(Link to previous day's entry\)](#)

Marsh Marigold flowering at Langstone

This morning I walked down the Langbrook stream to the South Moors and Budds Farm, making three unexpected discoveries. The first came when checking out the 'orchid field' at the South Moors and was a double bonus - I saw that the field had been mown and so went in to see of the mowing (in general a very good thing at this time of year) had taken all the flowers of the **Devils Bit Scabious** which is already in very short supply and which, by not flowering until late in the summer (this year I saw the flowers on Aug 22), leaves itself open to destruction by autumn mowing. Some seed should have been set before this mowing but I need not have feared as I soon found two bright blue undamaged flower heads growing very low to the ground.

They were expected, so not a surprise - the double bonus came from finding both **Yellow Flag (Iris)** and **Marsh Marigold** in fresh flower. Until last year I had never seen **Marsh Marigold** flowers except in the springtime but in 2010 flowers were out here from Oct 19 to Dec 13 (they will need a lot of rain to achieve that this year - today I saw just one flower on one plant and found no leaves of any other plants in the normally waterlogged area which today was bone dry.

Moving on to Budds Farm Pools I had another pleasant surprise but not entirely unexpected - not only were there at least **25 Teal** on the water with the **Shovelers, Gadwall, Tufted Duck** and **Mallard** but there were also at least **five Wigeon** (my first of the autumn). South of the pools a number of car parking spaces have been created and at the end of the line there has been a large circular earth mound providing a turning circle for cars. Until today I had thought the earth mound might be tastefully planted with flowering plants but since my last visit two wooden benches have been placed on top of the mound with steps leading up to them. As this is the highest point in the area the benches provide an excellent viewpoint from which, with a telescope, you can view the whole of the north of the harbour.

Coming down from the mound prior to following the seawall path back to Mill Lane I met another birder who told me that on Oct 3 he had been at the Broadmarsh Slipway and had seen, on the Budds Farm shoreline, an unmistakable **Glossy Ibis**. As the last two of the seven birds which arrived on the Isle of Wight on Sep 30 flew off on Oct 2 it seems quite likely that they did visit Langstone Harbour and one was still there on Oct 3 though I have seen no other reports of this.

Heading on home I still had one more pleasant surprise, especially in today's bright sunshine. Reaching the mouth of the Langbrook Stream, and following the path around as it turned from east to north, I counted **13 Dog Rose flowers** on the pathside bushes!

WILDLIFE DIARY AND NEWS FOR OCT 3 - 9 (WEEK 40 OF 2011)

Overview

Bird news highlights:

This week has brought an invasion of **Glossy Ibis** and the start of the major arrival of **Wild Geese** in the UK while Oct 7 saw massive numbers of seabirds in the English Channel (mainly on the French side!) The week has also given the Twitchers a prize in the form of the first **Sandhill Crane** to be seen in England while ordinary birders have had their first chance to witness the **arrival of winter thrushes** (especially **Redwing**) from the continent.

Insect News highlights:

Tegenaria House Spider: I am grateful to Brian Fellows for making me aware that my knowledge of the big and common **House Spider** which I have always known as **Tegenaria gigantea** is now called **T. duellica**, especially as my faithful source of information about Spiders (Dick Jones' 'Countrylife Guide to Spiders') begins its account of the genus by saying .. "The domestic species are relatively easy to identify although **there has been considerable confusion in their names, especially T. gigantea which has been known as T. atrica and T. saeva**" .. so now, to avoid this confusion, it has been given a new name!! Not quite, and if you want to know more go to

http://wiki.britishspiders.org.uk/index.php5?title=Tegenaria_gigantea_saeva

and see the section on Distribution and Habitat which shows a map of England with **T. gigantea** occupying England and **T. saeva** Wales and the West Country - this was the result of the two slightly different spider species having allied themselves to two different human groups in pre-historic times and then being carried into this country with the household possessions of the humans. The rest of this webpage is also well worth reading, especially the section on House Spiders in Medicine

For more fascinating and essential information about spiders see

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Spider> and don't miss the bit about mating. I suspect that most general naturalists will be aware that female spiders of all species are larger than the males and would prefer to eat the male rather than have sex, so the males have to take great care how they approach the female. The Wikipedia article tells me male spiders can determine by 'smelling' her web that the female which built the web is of his species and that she is sexually receptive, but he still needs to approach cautiously, plucking her web to tell her that he is a male here to mate and not a prey item. In some species he will already have captured prey and wrapped it up very tightly in the hope that the prey will divert her attention from himself as a prey item, and that the unwrapping of the prey will give him time to perform his business and make a getaway before she has finished her meal.

Assuming he gets close enough to her he still has to go through a multistage process to inseminate her with his sperm. The first stage is to spin a small web onto which he will ejaculate his sperm. He then moves position so that his head end is

near the sperm-laden web and he picks up the sperm with his 'palps' - the things which look like 'boxing gloves on long thin arms' which are positioned on either side of his mouth (outside and separate from the fangs with which he injects poison into his prey). The tips of the palps are a form of syringe which he loads with sperm and then ejects it into the female's genital opening (the epigyne) located below her abdomen.

Wikipedia tells us .. "Males of the genus *Tidarren* amputate one of their palps before maturation and enter adult life with one palp only. The palps are 20% of male's body mass in this species, and detaching one of the two improves mobility. In the Yemeni species *Tidarren argo*, the remaining palp is then torn off by the female. The separated palp remains attached to the female's epigynum for about four hours and apparently continues to function independently. In the meantime the female feeds on the palpless male".

To complete this story it so happens that Graeme Lyons has also been investigating spider mating in his blog this week and I am indebted to him for a picture of a female spider's sexual organ (the epigyne which we have referred to above). His picture of the Crab Spider which he was trying to identify can be seen at <http://4.bp.blogspot.com/-CK78NePIBWE/TpBVggISISI/AAAAAAAAABpM/fGrGc4IogFg/s1600/Xysticus+007.JPG> and his photo of the spider's epigyne (the bit that looks like a wet Pig's Nose in the centre of the picture) can be seen at <http://2.bp.blogspot.com/-RIMuYUYNlx0/TpBV3Pk8wml/AAAAAAAAABpQ/td-HxwKk0f4/s1600/Xysticus+020.JPG>

Plant News highlights:

Nothing dramatic this week but I was made aware of **a new species of Michaelmas Daisy** and was pleased to find the first **'winter Cow Parsley'** in flower and to find new sites for **Common Calamint** and **Weasel's Snout**

Other News highlights:

Wood Mouse 'castles': See

<http://rxwildlife.org.uk/2011/10/05/des-res/#more-15171> for Barry Yates' account of the origin of a pile of around 1,000 small pebbles which appear to have been placed in front of the entrance to a **Wood Mouse breeding tunnel** to conceal and defend it (though Barry's last picture shows that it is no defence against **Badgers** after the Honey in a Bumblebee Nest after the mice have handed over their tenure of the hole to the Bees).

See <http://www.wildlifebritain.com/fieldmouse.php> to avoid argument over Barry's use of the name '**Long-tailed Field Mouse**' and my preference for '**Wood Mouse**'

Barry knows (from the video included in his web entry) that the tunnel is being used by the Mice and he says that there are many such piles of pebbles in the same area (where shingle is present below a very thin layer of soil) and he suggests that the piles are the deliberate work of the mice, which I find hard to believe. I can see that the mice will excavate quite a few pebbles when digging their tunnels but surely not enough to make the pile shown in his photo, though I suppose that they might be accumulated over several years by several pairs of mice having to re-excavate the

nest tunnel (which must be prone to subsidence in this soil) but we are still left with the problem of the 'cairn building' skill needed - to achieve a pile of this size and shape each pebble would need to be carried to the top of the existing pile and as far as I can see there is no evidence for this in the video showing the mice carrying nest material into the tunnel

Hibernation and digestion: See the Other Wildlife main section re Adders and Slow-Worms for thoughts regarding the problems of going into hibernation with a full stomach

BIRDS

Divers: **Red-throated** were reported from two sites in Kent and from Poole Harbour, the Dorset coast and around the Scillies this week while up to five **Black-throated** were off the Netherlands on five days this week. One **Great Northern** was in Chichester Harbour on Oct 6 and others were seen in Kent, Dorset and Cornwall with up to four off the Yorkshire coast on Oct 8

Grebes: The first **Little Grebe** of the winter appeared in Emsworth's Slipper Mill Pond on Oct 6 - I find it hard to imagine these bird's taking the long distance flights which some must make each autumn and spring - and what may be the first long distance passage **Black-necked Grebe** of the autumn appeared to Arlington Reservoir in the Sussex Cuckmere Valley on Oct 2. Some of this species spend the summer here in the south and appear in 'winter quarters' very early (e.g. the current Blashford Lakes bird which has been there since July 24) while others (maybe failed breeders elsewhere) appear early but pass on (e.g. one at Dungeness on July 22, one at Weir Wood reservoir near Crowborough on Aug 1, and others at Paghm Harbour on Sep 3 and at Abbotsbury in Dorset on Sep 4). Another indication of Grebe passage to winter quarters comes this week with reports of **Red-necked** at Dungeness on Oct 6, and at Christchurch Harbour on Oct 8 when up to five were seen in the Netherlands. Oct 3 brought a report of a **Slavonian Grebe** just setting out on its southward journey, seen in East Lothian in Scotland.

Shearwaters: Just two **Great Shearwaters** were seen at Pendeen in Cornwall on Oct 6 and on Oct 7 there were up to 1650 **Sooty** and 473 **Manx** and 657 **Balearic** off the northern coast of France. Also on Oct 7 up to 182 **Leach's Storm Petrels** were seen off the Netherlands

Night Heron: One was seen in Dorset by the R Stour south of Bladford on both Oct 4 and 5

Cattle Egret: The Thornham Marshes on Thorney Island bird was still present on Oct 7 when it went to roost with **139 Little Egrets** in the copse near the Little Deeps

Great White Egret: On Oct 1 one flew south over the Angmering area near Worthing and the Blashford Lakes bird was last seen on Oct 2 when one flew over Reculver on the north Kent coast. Also on Oct 2 there were up to 91 present at 29 sites in the Netherlands

Glossy Ibis: What seems to have become a regular influx of Spanish birds into England started this year on Sep 4 when five birds flew over Yorkshire but the invasion proper started on Sep 30 when 7 birds landed on the Isle of Wight with

singles appearing that day at Christchurch Harbour and in Glamorgan. Most of the Isle of Wight birds left next day but one was still seen on Oct 7. On Oct 3 Lee Evans reported a flock of 11 in Ireland and on Oct 5 RBA reported at total of 24 birds in the UK. On Oct 4 one bird appeared at the Stithians Reservoir in Cornwall and was still there on Oct 8. Christchurch Harbour has had a regular flock of three birds since Oct 1 to Oct 8 at least - they feed on small crabs found in the grass of intertidal areas.

Spoonbill: A flock of 28 has been at Brownsea Island in Poole Harbour since Sep 30 while a few other less settled birds have been seen at Pulborough Brooks (3 on Oct 2). in Cornwall (1 on Oct 4) and in Devon (1 on Oct 8)

Whooper Swan: Three were seen on their way south off Yorkshire passing Spurn Head on Oct 4 and one seems to have arrived at the Axe estuary in Devon (near Seaton on the border with Dorset) on Oct 7

Wild Geese: At least 21 **Bean Geese** had arrived in the Netherlands on Oct 3 and five more were in Belgium next day. **Pink Foot Geese** have been arriving in the UK since Sep 13 with a report of 25,000 in Aberdeenshire on Sep 2 and on Oct 8 a group of 6 were seen in Kent at Pegwell Bay. **White Fronts** have been seen in the Netherlands since mid-September with a count of 15,443 on Oct 2 but so far I have not seen any reports from UK sites. The first 25 **Barnacle Geese** were seen on the Yorkshire coast on Oct 8 but I suspect that three seen at Titchfield Haven that day were from the many feral flocks ever present in southern England. **Brent Geese** of both races are now with us for the winter, including 9 Pale Bellied birds that were at Marazion near Penzance in Cornwall on Oct 6. Also of interest on Oct 5 there were still 174 **Egyptian Geese** in the Eversley area on the Hants/Berks border

Wigeon: These are at last starting to arrive in force with a total of 1798 birds seen at 5 sites on Oct 2, 930 of them on the Yorkshire coast. On Oct 8 at 400 arrived in England (205 at Pegwell Bay in Kent with a smart male Scaup among them

Garganey: A late female was at Lower Tamar Lake on the Devon/Cornwall boundary on Oct 7

Scaup: Four were seen at Flamborough Head (Yorkshire) on Oct 5 and three singles were seen on Oct 8 - the male at Pegwell Bay and females at the Blashford Lakes and in Yorkshire

Eider: The flock off Lyminster decreased from 43 to 32 birds on Oct 5 but the single bird which had been seen in Chichester Harbour back on Sep 10 became a flock of 9 there on Oct 6

Red Breasted Merganser: No newcomers yet in the Solent harbours but hopefully they will appear soon as the first four of the autumn reached the Exe estuary in Devon on Oct 1 and a flock of 67 was at a Netherlands site on Oct 8

Goosander: Although there has been up to 8 birds at the Blashford Lakes since early September they were presumably local breeders and a doubling of the number there up to 16 on Oct 8 may well indicate the arrival of birds from the north

Raptors: What may have been the last **Honey Buzzards** were seen this week (one in the Scillies on Oct 6 and one in the Netherlands on Oct 7). Three **Black Kites** remain in Cornwall but the Burpham **Pallid Harrier** has not been reported since Oct 3 though others remain in the UK (three in the Shetlands on Oct 4 and one at Tempsford in Bedfordshire on Oct 2 and 3 - the latter was of personal interest being in the Parish of which my father in law was Rector and within half a mile of the church where I was married). **Hen Harriers** were seen at Dungeness and in Devon this week and **Sparrowhawks** were still moving on the continent with 47 seen at one Netherlands site on Oct 8. One **Osprey** was still fishing in Chichester Harbour on Oct 6 (south of Thorney Island) but most have now left us (only four birds reported from English sites this week). At least six **Merlins** were seen in southern England (Portland, Christchurch, Lymington, Selsey, Romsey and Sandy Point on Hayling Island) but on Oct 8 reports from the near continent show a total of 66 birds with 26 all at one site. At least three **Hobbys** were in southern England (including one at Farlington Marshes on Oct 3).

Partridges: A West Sussex gamekeeper told birders looking for the Harrier at Burpham this week that 2000 Partridges (**Red-legged** and **Grey**) had been recently released in that area so no doubt we will soon be seeing more escapees from the shoots, weighting the odds heavily against any Greys seen being genuine wild birds.

Quail: On Oct 4 single Quail were still to be seen in Cornwall and the Scillies and on Oct 7 one was flushed at the Pevensey Levels near Eastbourne

Water Rail: What were probably newly arrived winter visitors were reported at Farlington Marshes on Oct 2 and at Portland Bill on Oct 4

Sandhill Crane: The trans-Atlantic vagrant which arrived in Scotland on Sep 16, wind driven by Hurricane Katia, and which has successfully kept one step ahead of the twitchers on its erratic journey south was cornered by many telescopes and TV cameras at Boyton Marshes on the Suffolk Coast on Oct 5. Some good photos of the bird can be seen at

<http://mikewatsonsdairy.blogspot.com/2011/10/sandhill-crane.html>

Rare Waders: 2 **Dotterel** were still to be seen in Cornwall on Oct 5 and 200 **Golden Plover** were at West Wittering in Chichester Harbour on Oct 4 (when 400 were on the north Kent coast) - by Oct 6 more than 300 were back in Devon with others at more than half a dozen southern sites. The Scillies also had a single **American Golden Plover**. Also on Oct 6 a **Semi-Palmated Sandpiper** and a **Pectoral** were in Cornwall and the **Solitary Sandpiper** was still in the Scillies with a **Least Sandpiper** and three (maybe four) **Buff-breasted**. Also in the Scillies was a **Wilson's Snipe** that should have been in Canada, and in Cornwall two **Long-billed Dowitchers** were present with a **Lesser Yellowlegs**. Two **Spotted Sandpipers** could be seen - one at Chew Valley Lake and the other at the Plym estuary - and **Grey Phalaropes** could still be seen at both ends of southern England (as total of 10 in the Scillies and one in north Kent)

Other Waders: 100 **Knot** were at West Wittering in Chichester Harbour on Oct 4 and single **Little Stints** were at Pulborough Brooks, Blashford Lake and Lymington. Three Curlew Sandpipers were at Farlington Marshes on Oct 3 but

none have been reported since then. **Dunlin** were getting into winter mode with 4000 at Pilsey Sands (Thorney Island) on Oct 6 and a single **Jack Snipe** was at Christchurch Harbour on Oct 3. More than 600 **Black-tailed Godwits** were in the Exe estuary on Oct 8 and other reports were of 40 in Pagham Harbour on Oct 2, 74 in Emsworth Harbour area on Oct 4, 160 in Yarmouth Harbour (IoW) on Oct 5 while on Oct 6 the number in Emsworth Harbour was up to 82. Three Bar-tailed Godwit and one Whimbrel were off North Common on Hayling Island on Oct 2. The number of Spotted Redshank on the Lymington shore was up to six by Oct 7 with at least one at Farlington Marshes and two in Pagham Harbour during the week, but the regular bird at Nore Barn on the Emsworth shore has not yet shown up - last year it arrived on Oct 19 and in 2009 it was there on Oct 21 but in 2008 it did not arrive until Nov 8. The Greeshank count at Farlington Marshes was up to 33 on Oct 3 (nowhere near the 85 at the Thorney Deeps on Sep 2)

Skuas: Plenty of these this week, mainly on continental shores - peak counts were of 318 Pomarine on the French coast on Oct 8, 1421 Arctic off France on Oct 7 (when Dungeness had just 15), 73 Long-tailed off France on Oct 7 and 2907 Bonxies there that day

Gulls: One **Little Gull** remained at Hook near Warsash until Oct 5 at least but over on the Swedish coast Oct 5 gave a count of 775 (all at one site). Max count of **Sabine's** was of 67 on the French coast on Oct 7 with 5 at Pendeen in Cornwall on Oct 6. A single **Bonaparte's Gull** at Weir Wood reservoir in north Sussex from Oct 3 to 7 was unexpected, as perhaps was a count of **138 Common Gulls** at Alresford Pond near Winchester on Oct 8. Maybe a little more expected was a total of **3000 Lesser Blackbacks** coming to roost at the Eversley pits on the Hants/Berks border on Oct 1 (on Oct 7 a total of 2995 was reported from two Netherlands sites). The 'perpetua' Glaucous Gull at Dungeness was still there on Oct 8 so a 'new' bird in the Netherlands on Oct 7 may be a genuine winter arrival

Terns: On Oct 7 there were still 770 Sandwich Terns to be seen off the French Normandie coast with 605 Common. Two Arctic Terns were at Dungeness that day and a single Little Tern was off the Netherlands. One Black Tern was last seen at Warsash on Oct 1 but on Oct 7 one was off the north Kent coast and three were in the Scillies.

Auks: A mixed bag of 2219 Razorbills and Guillemots was off Cap Gris-nez near Calais on Oct 7 and up to four Little Auks were off the Low Countries on Oct 7 and 8

Passerines:

Ring-necked Parakeet: Oct 7 brought an unexpected report of 135 of these normally static birds streaming south over Pegwell Bay in Kent

Cuckoo: Also unexpected on Oct 6 was a very late juvenile Cuckoo in the Scillies

Swift: What may well have been our last **Common Swift** was heading south over Pegwell Bay in Kent on Oct 6. Also this week we have had a **Pallid Swift** in Yorkshire and an **Alpine Swift** in Shetland, both on Oct 2

Wryneck: At least 21 different birds reported this week including 10 in the Scillies and 2 at Christchurch Harbour

Woodlark: One was singing over ploughed fields near Haywards Heath on Oct 3 while continental reports on Oct 2 gave a total of 198 birds on the move

Skylark: These were moving west across southern England during the week (I even heard one over my Havant garden) but the biggest count was of just 136 over north Kent suggesting that the birds on the move were of continental origin

Sand Martin: Very few now left so the max count was just 30 over Durlston on Oct 5. Durlston also had the peak count of 2050 **Swallows** on Oct 6 and 1100 **House Martins** on Oct 5

Tree Pipit: Farlington Marshes had 7 on Oct 1 which turned out to be the peak count for the week

Meadow Pipit: Christchurch Harbour had 2,700 over on Oct 5 but could not match a total of 22,368 at 12 continental sites on Oct 8

Yellow Wagtail: By the end of the week all sites were down to single figure counts but Gilkicker at Gosport managed a total of 15 on Oct 1

Grey Wagtail: I am now hearing winter resident birds in Havant almost daily and saw one at the Homewell spring pool on Oct 4

Wren: These have been heard singing intermittently in both Havant and Emsworth this week

Dunnoek: On Oct 7 Brian Fellows heard one calling in Brook Meadow at Emsworth - as these have been on the move at continental sites since Sep 15 (and a Netherlands site reported a count of 150 on Oct 8) I am not sure if the Brook Meadow bird was a resident objecting to newly arrived continental invaders or in fact a newly arrived continental bird checking for opposition to its intention to settle down there for the winter.

Robin: 'Many migrants' were reported arriving at Sandwich Bay as early as Aug 24 and another small influx brought 40 there on Oct 1 so I suspect that many of the birds now quietly singing there winter songs in our gardens have crossed the channel to be there.

Nightingale: A late departing bird was at Portland on Oct 2 (another had been trapped and ringed in Cornwall on Sep 30)

Black Redstart: Another sign of the arrival of continental birds has been the sudden increase in reports of Black Redstarts since the beginning of Sept (11 were seen at Folkestone on Sep 30 and since then they have appeared all along the south coast (and inland - one was in a Crowborough town garden on Oct 8)

Common Redstart: What may have been the last for this year was at Seaford Head in Sussex on Oct 2

Whinchat: At least 8 birds seen this week

Stonechat: A flock of 25 arrived at Portland on Oct 2 - maybe intending to head on over the sea.

Wheatear: Portland had 75 as late as Oct 4 and Lymington had 7 on Oct 8

Ring Ouzel: 16 reports this week including one eating blackberries at Budds Farm in Havant on Oct 3 and another playing hide-and-seek with birders in Church Norton churchyard from Oct 4 to 8. Oct 8 brought a wave of departing birds giving a total of 92 birds at 22 Belgian sites plus at Pegwell Bay in Kent

Fieldfare: A total of 2003 were at 5 Netherlands sites on Oct 8 but only a few seem to have reached England (a few seen in Kent on Oct 8 and just 1 seen at Andover on Oct 9 when only 247 were reported on the continent)

Redwing: At least 24,200 passed over Kent on Oct 8 and on Oct 9 at least 500 (probably 700) went over the Fleet/Farnborough area in Hampshire. Plenty still to come as it looks as if there were still 100,000 on the near continent on Oct 9

Other thrushes: On Oct 9 it looks as if 150+ **Mistle Thrushes** and 12,000 **Song Thrushes** were queueing up on the continent to supplement those that have already crossed the water to England. Many fewer **Blackbirds** and are in the queue so far.

Warblers: Very few still waiting to leave us - the odd **Whitethroat** and **Lesser Whitethroat**, one **Garden Warbler** seen in Devon and one **Blackcap** at Church Norton but there was some excitement with the first **Pallas' Warbler** of the autumn at Durlston on Oct 6 while single **Yellow-browed Warblers** were seen at four sites in Kent and the Scillies - locally a Chiffchaff was singing at Emsworth

Flycatchers: **Spotted** were seen up to Oct 5 at Pagham with one in the Fareham area on Oct 2 and **Pied** were still at Portland on Oct 7 and in Cornwall on Oct 8

Bearded Tit: These remain active with more than 100 in the Kent Stour Valley on Oct 1 and others reported from Farlington Marshes and Titchfield Haven later in the week.

Marsh Tit: A report of two in Slindon Wood near Arundel on Oct 6 reminds me how rare these now are along the south coast - this is the first report of the species I have seen since March 20 (As for **Willow Tits** they have only been reported from just one wood in East Hampshire this year)

Isabelline (Daurian) Shrike: This visitor from China was in the Shetlands on Oct 4 and 5

Red-backed Shrike: Singles seen at four sites this week (Kent, Dorset, Cornwall and the Scillies)

Great Grey Shrike: Several now present on the near continent but none in England since the isolated report of one in the New Forest on Sep 18

Jay: A report of 10 newly arrived birds at Pegwell Bay in Kent suggests that we will soon be seeing them streaming west through southern England.

Rose-coloured Starling: One was in the Lymington area on Oct 3 but has since been lost in a big flock of Common Starlings

House Sparrow: A count of 75 leaving a thick hedge in Gosport on Oct 6 confirms the previous week's reports from Havant and Emsworth that the birds are back from their autumn holiday in the countryside

Tree Sparrow: A few (around 15), presumed to be of continental origin, have been seen at Durlston and in Thanet (Kent) this week

Chaffinch: Now on the move in a big way. Over here there were 1255 over Durlston on Oct 7 while on the continent one site reported 35,866 on Oct 8 when the total at 27 sites was 201,893

Brambling: Already seen at six sites in southern England with a max of 12 at Pegwell Bay in Kent on Oct 8 (when a single site in the Netherlands reported a flock of 800)

Siskin: Now very widespread and plentiful in southern England with counts of several hundred over at least seven sites

Linnet: Also numerous with a max count of 1530 at Christchurch Harbour on Oct 8

Twite: Three reports this week - on Oct 2 five were in the Yorkshire area, on Oct 7 eight were in Fife (Scotland) and on Oct 8 a Netherlands site reported 52

Lesser Redpoll: Several reports with a max of 96 at Durlston on Oct 7 and the first **Mealy Redpoll** seen in the Netherlands on Oct 8

Crossbill: 19 reports with a max of 122 at Sandwich Bay (newly arrived?) on Oct 8

Hawfinch: These are now on the move with 106 total at 7 German sites on Oct 3 and a party of 4 moving along the Test valley near Romsey on Oct 6

Lapland Bunting: Several in the west country with one at Christchurch Harbour on Oct 5

Snow Bunting: These have been present in Cornwall since Sep 29 but this week one also appeared in Kent

Corn Bunting: A flock of 40 was in the Burpham area near Arundel on Oct 6

Vagrant: This weeks vagrant was a **Siberian Blue Robin** found dead on Shetland on Oct 3

Escapee: An **Eagle Owl** at Sancreed in Cornwall on Oct 2 (These birds have colonised Yorkshire so I suppose it is possible this one is an attempt to extend their range!)

INSECTS

Dragonflies:

Notable sightings this week:

Vagrant Emperor: The tenth report of this migrant in Britain this year comes from Cornwall on Oct 3 (First for the year was at Portland on Apr 23)

Willow Emerald: A new site for this species was discovered in Suffolk on Oct 2 by a birder there to see the Sandhill Crane

Species reported this week:

Southern Hawker, Common Hawker, Migrant Hawker, Emperor, Vagrant Emperor, Gold Ringed Dragonfly, Black Darter, Common Darter, Emerald Damselfly, Willow Emerald, Small Red-eyed Damselfly, Blue-tailed Damselfly and Common Blue Damselfly - not a bad list for October

Butterflies:

Notable sightings this week:

Clouded Yellow: As well as 11 migrants (one of them a helice) at various sites there were 11 of these butterflies at their established resident site on the Southbourne Undercliff in Bournemouth on Oct 2 and one of them was egg-laying

Duke of Burgundy: A very unexpected sighting of a fresh specimen on Old Winchester Hill in the Meon Valley on Oct 2 I see that a second brood is not unheard of ...

Species reported this week:

Clouded Yellow, Brimstone, Large White, Small White, Small Copper, Common Blue, Adonis Blue, Holly Blue, Duke of Burgundy, Red Admiral, Painted Lady, Small Tortoiseshell, Peacock, Comma, Speckled Wood, Wall Brown, Meadow Brown, Small Heath

Moths:

Selected sightings this week:

Other Insects:

Selected sightings this week:

Glow-worm: A very late sighting of a Glow-worm still glowing came from Durlston on Oct 5 - sadly this is bad news as it means that a male has not found her and her life will have been in vain

False ladybird (*Endomychus coccineus*): One reported at Peasmarsh near Hastings on Oct 6 - see <http://www.uksafari.com/falseladybirds.htm> for a picture and details of this unusual species which does not eat aphids but lives on a diet of fungi

***Chrysolina hyperici*:** This small black leaf beetle was found at Durlston on Oct 8 - apparently it has been introduced to Australia to eat up and excess of St John's Wort plants

Southern Oak Bush Cricket (*Meconema meridionale*): This is an alien species which arrived in France in the 1990s and was first seen in England in 2001 - it has

now extended north to Nottinghamshire. Find out more at <http://www.nhm.ac.uk/nature-online/species-of-the-day/evolution/meconema-meridionale/index.html> - this tells us that the new arrival survives by eating other insects but does not tell us if it is likely to harm our native species

Tegenaria duellica: I learnt this 'new to me' name for the common **House Spider** from Brian Fellows - see Insect Highlights above for the wealth of information about spiders and their mating habits which this led me to discover

PLANTS

Small-flowered Cranesbill: I was pleased to find two plants of this in fresh flower in Juniper Square here in Havant on Oct 4

Cow Parsley: Another good find on Oct 4 was a single plant of Cow Parsley in full flower at Brook Meadow in Emsworth

Weasel's Snout or Lesser Snapdragon (*Misopates orontium*): A good find on Oct 3 was a single plant of this in flower at a new site - I have found it for years at the New Lane allotments in Havant but never anywhere else. This week's find was only in the Havant Cemetery next door to the allotments but still gave me a pleasant surprise

Common Calamint: After my unexpected find of this plant flowering on the edge of the Stantsted estate on Sep 19 I was still excited to find another specimen on the north face of Portsdown on Oct 3

Narrow-leaved Michaelmas Daisy: A find of this in Emsworth by Brian Fellows on Oct 5 made me aware of a species that I think I have seen in the past but never actually recognised as a separate species.

OTHER WILDLIFE

Common Dolphin: More than 100 were seen off the Scillies on Sep 29 and 8 Bottle-nosed were off Christchurch Harbour on Oct 5

Fin Whale (aka Common Rorqual): Three were in the Bay of Biscay off the north coast of Spain on Oct 4. This is the second largest whale species after the Blue Whale and can grow to 27 metres long. It is also the fastest swimmer and although they do not often turn up in European waters they do roam widely in the temperate oceans of the world. See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fin_whale for more.

Brown Rat: Patient watching of the River Ems flowing through Brook Meadow at Emsworth has revealed the presence of many Rats and expert opinion from Graham Roberts is that they are a threat to water voles (can kill young voles, can take over the Vole's tunnels and can carry diseases that kill Voles) so efforts will be made to reduce the Rat population (though both trapping and poisoning could be as harmful to voles as to rats - one suggestion is to use traps baited with grain, which will not attract Voles, and placed away from the waterside frequented by the voles)

Wood Mouse: See Highlights above for a strange story from Rye Harbour

Adder and **Slow-Worm**: Both were still active at Folkestone on Sep 30, enjoying late sunshine before going underground for their winter sleep. The Autumnwatch programme this week made me aware of a practical consideration in respect of hibernation which I had not been aware of - I was aware in connection with Bats that, however much their metabolism is slowed down during hibernation, they still have to wake up for a mid-winter fly-around to defecate if they are not to poison themselves with a build up of toxins in their bodies but I had not thought through the same problem as it relates to snakes which take in whole animals and digest them slowly over a lengthy period - it would be dangerous to the individual snake and to those hibernating close to it if it went into hibernation immediately after ingesting a mouse-sized meal - the snake itself would suffer poisoning from the indigestible parts of the mouse and those hibernating with it could suffer the effects of an explosion if gasses built up to a critical point within the 'full stomached' snake. These are very unscientific thoughts but they seem to call for closer investigation!!

WILDLIFE DIARY AND NEWS FOR OCT 3 - 9 (WEEK 40 OF 2011)

[Tue 4 Oct](#)

Havant and Emsworth

My continuing efforts to get as many flowering plants as possible onto my October list before the weather deteriorates gave me more healthy entertainment today. On my way to do some shopping this morning I took the long route via Juniper Square where I eventually found a couple of flowers on the **Yellow-flowered Strawberries** and then found not one but two flowering plants of **Small-flowered Cranesbill**. Coming north up Park Rad South there was no difficulty in adding **Black-Horehound** and **Water Cress**, and at the Homewell Spring I had the bonus of a smart **Grey Wagtail** while ticking the **Ranunculuis baudotii**. A few yards further on a couple of **Wall Lettuce** plants were flowering on the brick wall outside the north front of Homewell House.

In the afternoon I was on my bike and off to see what Emsworth might have to offer, which started with **Wild Radish** and **Opium Poppy**. In Brook Meadow I was pleased to find **Wild Angelica** still in flower with **Common Comfrey**, and even more pleased to find a very healthy and well grown single plant of **Cow Parsley** with many flower umbels.

Also on the trip, in a meadow on the east bank of the River Ems just south of Westbourne, I was surprised to see a small group of **Alpacas** that I have never seen there before. Less surprising was the sight of a **Jay** and the song of a **Wren**, both in the general area of Warblington, and just as I was nearing home I heard the flight calls of three **Chaffinches** dropping into trees by the Billy Line (maybe just ending a flight from mid-Europe?)

[Mon 3 Oct](#)

Havant and Portsdown

A short walk around Havant this morning gave me one surprise when I found I found a single flowering plant of **Weasels Snout (aka Lesser**

Snapdragon) in the Havant Cemetery - although next door to the New Lane allotments where this plant is regularly found it is new for the cemetery. After lunch I drove to Portsdown and parked on the west side of Fort Widley from where I followed an anti-clockwise circular route down to Portsdown Hill Road, then along the lower limit of the public space to the London Road just below the Caravan site, returning by the popular hill top view point carpark and the path behind Fort Widley. At the end of this pleasant circuit my flowering plant count for the day was 98 and included late finds of **Autumn Gentian**, **Kidney Vetch** and **Harebell**. The best find came near the end when I went downhill from the Churchillian on the east side of the 'Children's Wood' and stumbled on a single plant of **Common Calamint**. Despite the hot sunshine very few butterflies were seen - just one **Meadow Brown**, a couple of **Speckled Wood** and a single fresh **Red Admiral** attracted to flowering Ivy. No unexpected birds were seen on the hill but I did see a very smart **Scandinavian Lesser Blackback Gull** flying over the Havant New Lane allotments in the morning. **Robins** were singing everywhere all day and small flocks of **Long-tailed Tits** were encountered several times at both sites.

WILDLIFE DIARY AND NEWS FOR SEP 26 - OCT 2 (WEEK 39 OF 2011)

BIRDS

Divers: Two **Red-throated** off Portland on Sep 30, one **Black-throated** off Dungeness on Sep 24 and one Great Northern off Land's End on Sep 28

Great Crested Grebe: 26 off the west Hayling shore on Sep 28 and 46 in the Chalk Dock area of Langstone Harbour on Oct 1

Cattle Egret: The long staying bird at the Thornham Marshes on Thorney Island (which arrived on Aug 14) was still there on Sep 29

Little Egret: The roost count at Langstone Pond on Sep 28 was of 166 birds (198 there on Sep 14 was probably the year peak). 144 roosted at north Thorney Island on Sep 23

Great White Egret: The regular bird at the Blashford Lakes was seen on Sep 26 and 29. Elsewhere in England two arrived at Radipole (Weymouth) on Sep 28, another two at the Axe estuary in south east Devon, and on Sep 30 one turned up at Marazion near Penzance in Cornwall. These arrivals reflect bigger movements on the continent where 28 were seen at just one of 30 sites reporting the species. On Sep 28 17 sites reported an overall total of 69 birds (max 14 at one site)

Grey Heron: Also increasing numbers on the continent with three sites reporting a total of 112 birds on Oct 1 (max at one site was 79)

Glossy Ibis: A mini-invasion on Sep 30 brought seven to Brading on the Isle of Wight, one to Christchurch Harbour and one to Glamorgan in Wales

Spoonbill: The number at Brownsea Island in Poole Harbour was up to 28 on Sep 30 and on Sep 28 three continental sites had a total of 65 birds (one of them in the Netherlands had 40)

Pinkfoot Geese: On Sep 23 Strathbeg in Aberdeen had an arrival of more than 25,000 birds and on Sep 25 at least 101 flew south past Flamborough Head into England

White Front Goose: None reported from English sites yet but on Sep 27 four Netherlands sites had 1 total of 439 birds

Dark-bellied Brent: By Sep 25 there was a total of 1142 birds at two sites in Germany and on Sep 28 Christchurch Harbour had 11, Langstone Harbour had 172 and Chichester Harbour had 400. By Oct 1 the Exe estuary had 235 and at least 3 had reached the Scillies while Langstone Harbour had more than 500 seen from west Hayling

Shelduck: Since the start of September these have gradually been starting to return from their summer moult and to join the few adults left here through the summer. Normally they do not settle on our local shores until mid-October at the earliest though a few may make one day stands on their way west but this year a flock seems to have settled on the Nore Barn shore west of Emsworth with 20 seen there on Sep 27 and 34 on Sep 28

Wigeon: These are late in arriving locally this autumn with the highest count this week being of 78 in Christchurch Harbour on Sep 25. Maybe they have overshot us and flown on west as the Exe estuary had over 300 on Oct 1

Red-breasted Merganser: Four arrived in the Exe estuary on Oct 1 but very few have been seen elsewhere

Pallid Harrier: The bird which has been in the Arun valley area since Sep 17 was still present on Oct 2. It is only one of at least 6 juvenile which have arrived in Britain this autumn, including one in Somerset

Osprey: Two were in Langstone Harbour on Sep 27 and two others in Chichester Harbour on Sep 30

Spotted Crake: The first of the autumn arrived in the Scillies on Sep 26

Common Crane: Two flew over Rye Harbour on Sep 27 and maybe they landed in the Pevensy Levels near Eastbourne where two have been seen from Sep 27 to Sep 30 at least

Sandhill Crane: Just one of these has been in Britain since Sep 16 (first seen in Scotland) and this week it has been flying south reaching Northumberland and Yorkshire on Sep 29. By Oct 1 it had reached Lincolnshire

Semi-palmated Sandpiper: This has been Hampshire's rarity of the week remaining on the Lymington shore from Sep 24 to Oct 1. Another has been in the Seaton area of east Devon

Grey Phalarope: The number in England has diminished with only Eastbourne, Tresco in the Scillies and Ivy Lake at Chichester having single birds this week. Sadly the bird on Ivy Lake at Chichester vanished in a splash of water while it was being watched on Sep 25 and is assumed to have been taken by a Pike

Sabine's Gull: These two have left our shores - the last that I know of was at Sturt Pond near Lymington on Sep 29

Auks: Both Guillemots and Razorbills have been seen on the south coast this week but all reports are of singles, including a Guillemot among the boats at Itchenor in Chichester Harbour on Sep 25 and a Razorbill in Portsmouth Harbour on Sep 29

Turtle Dove: Singles were at Folkestone and Durlston on Sep 29

Cuckoo: No reports from Britain but one was in Belgium on Sep 29

Tawny Owls: Several reports this week from several sites in Sussex of Owls calling noisily before dawn - they seem to be claiming territories earlier than usual - maybe it has been a good breeding season and many young are in the market

Swift: The last to be reported in England was at Portland on Sep 25 after one was seen on Portsdown on Sep 24

Wryneck: 13 reports this week with the latest being in Christchurch Harbour on Sep 30

Swallow: Still plenty in England with 22,000 over Christchurch Harbour on Sep 28

House Martin: 11,500 arrived in the Thanet area of Kent from the continent and flew on west into England on Sep 26 reminding us that the large number of birds that fly along our south coast at this time of year have not necessarily bred in Britain. No reports of **Sand Martins** anywhere this week!

Yellow Wagtail: 60 were in the Hook/Warsash area on Sep 24 but numbers dropped off during the week with the only report on Sep 30 being of 2 over Christchurch Harbour

Grey Wagtail: Some of the passage birds that have been on the move since August seem to be settling down for the winter in Havant - on Sep 28 I heard one over Waitrose in Havant and the next day one flew over my garden

Dunnoek: At least 144 were on the move in Germany on Sep 25 and I suspect we will soon be seeing and hearing them back in our gardens as they recover from their moult and/or fly here from the continent for the winter

Black Redstart: These too are starting to be noticed as they move to winter quarters. This week one was in the Scillies on Sep 27 and another at Church Norton (Pagham Harbour) on Sep 30 while four were reported at a Netherlands site on Oct 1

Ring Ouzel: This week one was at Beachy Head on Sep 27, another at Dungeness on Sep 28 and one at Pagham Harbour on Sep 30

Blackbird: One Netherlands site had a group of 15 on Sep 25 and a different site had 31 on Sep 26 (maybe all heading for our gardens?)

Fieldfare: One Netherlands site had 3 on Sep 29 and the total at two sites on Oct 1 was 4 birds

Song Thrush: On Sep 27 two Netherlands sites had a total of 200 birds and by Oct 1 the number on the move was up to 476 (all at one site)

Redwing: Five continental reports of birds on the move but the max count was no more than 6 birds

Mistle Thrush: At least 56 were on the move in the Belgium on Sep 25 and in Devon there was an unexpected flock of 45 near Kingsbridge on Sep 28

Blyth's Reed Warbler: One trapped at Portland on Sep 27

Yellow Browed Warbler: After 16 arrived in Shetland on Sep 20 there has been one in Cornwall on Sep 27, one at Folkestone on Sep 28 and now one at Sandwich Bay on Sep 30

Goldcrest: Christchurch Harbour had 55 on Sep 29 as migrant arrivals build up

Bearded Tits: More than 15 were 'high flying' over their Thornham Marshes reedbeds as they summoned up the nerve to fly off into the unknown on Sep 30 while at Lymington that same day four were high flying and four more were seen flying away east

Golden Oriole: Ivan Lang (Pagham Harbour warden) is confident that he heard one fly overhead as he was checking his moth trap on Sep 27

Red-backed Shrike: One was at Lodmoor (Weymouth) from Sep 24 to 30 and another was seen near Land's End in Cornwall on Sep 29

Great Grey Shrike: Although one was reported in the New Forest on Sep 18 there have been no more reports of it. This week one bird was seen in Germany and 2 in Belgium

Woodchat Shrike: One was in the Scillies this week

Rose Coloured Starling: One was at Dungeness on Sep 23, one in the Scillies on Sep 28, one in Cornwall on Sep 29 and another is said to have spent the week before Oct 1 on Lundy

House Sparrow: Both in Emsworth and in Havant this week brought the noisy chatter of House Sparrows back to gardens with dense shrubbery as they return from their autumn holiday in the local fields where grain crops have been harvested

Chaffinch: Their autumn passage has now got under way with a report from Germany of a total of 53150 birds at four sites

Brambling: The first autumn bird in southern England was at Christchurch Harbour on Sep 26 but so far no more than 15 birds have been reported from continental sites

Greenfinch: A count of 580 at Christchurch Harbour on Sep 29 is the first to exceed 100 birds anywhere in southern England this autumn

Siskin: These are now being heard all across southern England but the peak count so far is of 930 birds at Christchurch Harbour on Sep 29

Twite: The first in England this autumn were 5 in Cumbria on Oct 1

Snow Bunting: The first in southern England was at Sennen in Cornwall on Sep 29 and 30 while another was seen in north Yorkshire on Oct 1

Reed Bunting: The first count to exceed 12 birds this autumn was of 109 at Christchurch Harbour on Sep 28

Wild Turkey: One that knew that Christmas was coming and had made its escape was seen near Paham Harbour on Sep 24.

INSECTS

Dragonflies:

Notable sightings this week:

Red-veined Darter: One seen on Sep 28 by Paul Winter at the Badminton Pits near Calshot (New Forest area) was the first to be reported since Aug 15

Willow Emerald Damselfly: Earlier reports this year never exceeded 14 insects but a visit to Alton Water at Tattingstone in Suffolk on Sep 25 recorded more than 100 insects

Species reported this week:

Southern Hawker, Common Hawker, Brown Hawker, Migrant Hawker, Gols Ringed Dragonfly, Black Darter, Red-veined Darter, Common Darter, Banded Demoiselle, Emerald Damselfly, Willow Emerald Damselfly, Small red-eyed Damselfly, Small Red Damselfly, Blue-tailed Damselfly, Common Blue Damselfly

Butterflies:

Notable sightings this week:

Red Admiral: These were flying south at most places this week and at Portland Bill they were watched heading out over the sea.

Grayling: Just one seen this week at Browdown near Gosport on Sep 26

Gatekeeper: One reported at Durlston on Sep 29 was the first anywhere since Sep 10 (also at Durlston)

Species reported this week:

Clouded Yellow, Brimstone, Large White, Small White, Green Veined White, Small Copper, Brown Argus, Common Blue, Adonis Blue, Red Admiral, Painted Lady, Small Tortoiseshell, Peacock, Comma, Speckled Wood, Wall Brown, Grayling, Gatekeeper, Meadow Brown, Small Heath

Moths:

Selected sightings this week:

Death's Head Hawkmoth: The first and only report for this year is of one landing among people sunbathing on Southsea Beach on Sep 24. The full text of the entry on the Hampshire Butterfly Conservation website read .. "Sophie Venables reports from Southsea beach (SZ667985) where the following observations were made: 'Death's head' hawkmoth (1). "I am reporting this as it seemed such an unusual find - I've never seen one before and noticed its dramatic size and appearance. It appeared on the dark strap of a camera bag and was drawn to dark colours, including my young son's shorts, climbing up his leg to get to them which unnerved him rather! My friend has a photograph which he will try to send to you independently."

The first of a mini-invasion of **Flame Brocade** moths reached Friston near Eastbourne on Sep 30 and on Oct 1 more than ten were caught at the same site while another arrived at Portland

Another first for the year was a **Dusky-lemon Sallow** at Folkestone on Sep 29

Another prized first on Sep 29 was a **Clifden Nonpareil** somewhere in Sussex

Other Insects:

Selected sightings this week:

Volucella zonaria: One of these large Hoverflies seen at Durlston on Oct 1

Colletes hederæ (Ivy Bee): This recent colonist of southern England was noted at Durlston for the first time this autumn on Sep 27

Stenus solutus (Rove Beetle species): This is one of more than 1000 Rove Beetle species but this one has a unique way of getting out of trouble if it ever happens to fall into water - the surface tension supports its weight but does not give the beetle a chance to 'walk' to the water's edge. To get there it squirts a special detergent liquid from its back end and this creates a difference in the surface tension behind and in front of the beetle. By repeating the detergent squirting it can propel itself across the water in the direction it is pointing. Thanks to Graeme Lyons for this information.

Western Conifer Seed Bug: Five more reports of newly arrived immigrants at coastal sites from Dungeness to Durlston this week

England's biggest spider: Another fascinating nugget of information from Graeme Lyons describes how he found the Sussex Site (Pevensy Levels) for this spider (**Dolomedes plantarius**) which is even bigger than the **Dolomedes firmbrata Raft Spider** that can be found in the New Forest. See Graeme's blog entry at

<http://analternativenaturalhistoryofsussex.blogspot.com/2011/09/facehugger.html> and for information about the spider go to <http://www.dolomedes.org.uk/>

Wasp Spider (*Argiope bruennichi*): I am delighted to see that Brian Fellows in Emsworth has just come across a female **Wasp Spider** still guarding the egg sac in which she has laid her eggs. Brian remarks that this was the first time he has seen one of these spiders without its distinctive web but she has put all her energy into spinning the intricate 'Chinese Lantern' container for her eggs and now that it is complete she has no further job in life and will not feed again - soon she will become a 'dead parrot'

PLANTS

Plenty of plants still in flower but nothing new this week - the only new flower I was hoping for was **Chinese Mugwort** at Broadmarsh where it never flowers before October. When I checked in on Oct 1 there were plenty of healthy plants covered with unopen flower buds but none yet flowering. My count of flowering species this week was 151

OTHER WILDLIFE

Common Seal: 14 were on the mud off Thorney Island on Sep 23 and 13 were seen there on Sep 30

White Squirrel: A pure white Grey Squirrel was seen in the Purbrook area on the north slope of Portsdown Hill on Sep 26 - not a great surprise to local naturalists as similar white (I think albino) animals have been seen in the greater Portsmouth area from time to time over more than 20 years. They seem able to live a normal life and do not die earlier than normal Greys.

Fungi: A list of species found this week includes: -

Fly Agaric - one in Havant Thicket on Sep 27

Pink Domecap (*Calocybe carnea*) - continuing to flourish in my Havant garden

The Deceiver - several in Havant Thicket on Sep 27

Blackening Waxcap - several in my Havant garden lawn

Pink Waxcap (*Hygrocybe calyptriformis*) - one I have not yet come across found in Ebernoe Churchyard near Midhurst by Graeme Lyona

Parrot Waxcap - another regular still present on my garden lawn

Fleecy Milkcap - Two large mature specimens in Havant Thicket on Sep 27

Primrose Brittlegill (*Russula sardonia*) - a colourful specimen with dark red cap, rose pink flushed stem and custard yellow gills found in Havant Thicket

Stubble Rosegill: One found in grass beside the Brockhampton Stream (west side of Budds Farm at Havant) - usually seen in arable fields after the harvest

Alder Scalycap (*Pholiota alnicola*): Found by John Goodspeed in the Hookheath Nature reserve (northern foot of Portsdown) on Sep 30

Weeping Widow: Also found by the Brockhampton stream

Chanterelle: This culinary prize found by Graeme Lyons in the Ebernoe area on Sep 29

Penny Bun/Cep: Two in Havant Thicket on Sep 27

Dryad's Saddle: A fresh specime growing from wood below the surface of the Hayling Coastal path on Sep 28

Collared Earthstar (*Geastrum triplex*): An unexpected find by Graeme Lyons in the North Laines area of Brighton - growing under a Kiwi Tree in the garden of a restaurant

Common Bird's-nest (*Crucibulum laeve*): Found in a compost bin among growing Potatoes in the Thanet area of Kent on Sep 28

Dog Stinkhorn (*Caninus mutinus*): One found in the Ebernoe area of West Sussex on Sep 29

WILDLIFE DIARY AND NEWS FOR SEP 26 - OCT 2 (WEEK 39 OF 2011)

Sat 1 Oct

A good start to the month

My notepad had **90 flowering plant species**, and details of **three fungus species** which I felt I should be able to identify, plus the birds seen at Budds Fam, when I arrived home late this afternoon.

The birds were not difficult to identify and included **Mallard, Tufted Duck, Gadwall, Shoveler** and **Teal** plus a singing **Cetti's Warbler** but no passerine migrants other than the **Chiffchaffs** that could be heard in many places. Best entry among the birds was a count of **46 Great Crested Grebes** in the Chalk Dock area near the eastern entrance to Farlington Marshes.

The flowers should have included **Chinese Mugwort** beside the cycleway where it passes the west end of the Broadmarsh grassland (it never flowers before October and I thought it would be out early this year but I could not find a single open flower among the masses of unopen buds). To make up for that I did find both a single **Sweet Violet** and a very unexpected **Wall Speedwell** in flower when back in Havant (both seen in St Faith's Churchyard), and despite the expected seasonal mowing of the Broadmarsh grassland there was still a show of **Hairy Vetchling** flowers in the uncut northern fringes of the top of the 'Broadmarsh mountain'.

Before coming to the Fungi I ought to mention that a tasty mouthful of **ripe Blackberries** caused me to jot down '**Satan's urine**' to remind me of an old country saying which stuck in my memory many years ago and which returns to my consciousness at this time each year - it warns you never to eat Blackberries after the last day of September as, during the night which separates September from October, Old Nick visits the hedgerows and urinates on any Blackberries which

remain. All I can say is that if he remembered to perform this annual duty last night the result was sweet and tasty.

Coming to the **Fungi** I already had some unresolved id problems from this morning when I was entering into the database from which I generate my Weekly Summary entries this week's backlog of entries gleaned from the internet. Brian Fellows had left me with one problem as to how to enter the fungus he had seen and tentatively named '**Grey Polypore**' - I cannot find this name in any of my fungus books, nor in the list of 'English Names for Fungi' prepared by the British Mycological Society in the hope of make the identification of fungi more attractive to amateurs. Resorting to the less reliable source of Google it seems that some people use the name '**Grey Polypore**' for the fungus which is called '**Bjerkandera adjusta**' (causing me to think of it as the 'Swedish Chef' who featured in the Muppet Show) which can appear as both a bracket and a resupinate and which is a common species throughout the year. Unless I hear to the contrary I will assume that is the species he found. Two other species found by John Goodspeed were easier to deal with as both appear in list of English names - '**Common Jellyspot**' turns out to be **Dacrymyces stillatus** and '**Alder Scale Cap**' becomes **Pholiota alnicola** after altering the English Name to '**Alder Scalycap**'. I suspect the majority of readers do not have the list of new English names and thus need the name under which they can find the species in their fungus books.

My own three finds this afternoon were all large and fresh and should have presented no problems and this was true of one species - a troop of brown 'furry' toadstools which I immediately recognised as '**Weeping Widows**' (**Lacrymaria velutina**). Close by (alongside the Brockhampton stream which runs along the west fenceline of Budds Farm) was a single tall 'all white' fungus with an umbonate cap and a pinkish tinge to the white of the gills and a very slight browish tinge to the white of the cap which was 65mm across (the stem being 80 x 15). The nearest match I could find for this was called **Volvariella gloiocephala** in Michael Jordan's book (Encyclopaedia of Fungi) but having found that name I found it was merely a synonym for the name by which I know this species (**Volvariella speciosa**) or **Stubble Rosegill**. I did not immediately recognize it as (a) it was a young stage before the cap had become a darker brown and the gills a deeper pink and (b) I normally find this fungus trooping in ploughed fields after the harvest (while today's specimen was in pathside grass). I won't waste your time describing the third find as I have not yet decided what it is but I hope what I have said illustrates some of the difficulties we all have in naming many species of Fungi....

[Wed 28 Sep](#)

Sunny Hayling

A high spring tide at midday with a light wind and hot sunshine were ideal for a cycle trip down the Hayling Coastal Path in the hope of seeing my first large flock of **Brent Geese** but when I was approaching the area where I expected to see them I met a platoon of birdwatchers marching towards me with binoculars round their necks - I recognized one of them and asked how many **Brent** they had seen - the answer was 'just 16 which flew over'. This was disheartening but a hundred yards or so on from this encounter there was a clear view over the harbour so I stopped and, unlike the birding platoon I deviated from military discipline and actually raised

my binoculars in order to scan the area of the harbour where I expected the **Brent** to be keeping a low profile - there they were in a long line of **at least 172 birds**.

That was not the only benefit from stopping where I did as below the wooden rail against which I propped my bike was a lovely fresh **Dryad's Saddle fungus**, presumably attached to a tree stump hidden under the soil. On my way back there was another bonus in this area - a cluster of **Common Dog Violet** flowers in a place where masses of them flower in spring.

Reaching Gunner Point and turning east along the southern edge of the Golf Course I had another birding bonus when a small group of **Meadow Pipits** attracted my attention to the Golf Club fenceline and on a bush just inside the fence I saw not only an unexpected **Yellow Wagtail** but also my first male **Stonechat** of the autumn.

Still on Sinah Common I enjoyed quite a few re-flowering plants including **Thrift**, **Sea Campion** and **Yellow Horned Poppy** while the mass of blue/white **Pale Toadflax** was still flowering at full strength and the white '**Cocks Eggs**' were flourishing along the garden hedge south of Staunton Avenue despite the mass of them which grows out over the grassland having been mown down since my last visit.

Another unseasonable plant re-flowering near the Oysterbeds was **Pale Flax** and at the Oysterbeds I noticed that 'No Landing' sign was still on display by the thin strip of land on which shingle had been laid in the hope of encouraging **Little Terns** to land but that the high fence down each side of the strip which has for the last few years served to get the 'No Landing' message across to those Terns which do not read English has been removed - maybe next year the Terns will land there.

Back in Havant I noted two welcome signs of autumn. The first was that the **House Sparrows** which have been away on their summer holidays in the cornfield hedgrows were back and making a loud chattering from a favourite thick garden shrubbery. The second was that as I neared the Waitrose store the distinctive call of a **Grey Wagtail** came from above me - something I often hear here in the months that these winter migrants are with us (writing this on Thursday morning I can report that I have also heard the same call from the air above my garden for the first time this winter)

To end a busy day I spent the hour before sunset counting **Egrets coming to roost at Langstone pond**. When making these counts I have to be careful not to double count birds which have arrived in the trees some time before and are later seen flying down from the high branches to the lower perches where they prefer to spend the night, and similarly I have to avoid counting those that fly in among the trees but for various reasons fly out again (either in the hope of getting a late snack before going to sleep, or because they can't see a suitable perch and so move on to try another roost site such as that on north Thorney Island). Normally the birds arrive in ones or twos and it is relatively easy to follow them from above tree-top height until they settle on an initial perch but this evening on two occasions flocks of 20 or more arrived together, making it difficult to follow them all down to their landing (they make steep dives into the area and can then fly around in different directions looking for a vacant perch - with twenty birds it is impossible to follow

them all). To make things worse this evening on both occasions these mass arrivals co-incided with the presence of a flock of gulls behaving as they do when being thrown pieces of bread and when it was clear that the majority of the Egrets arriving in this melee gave up the attempt to land and flew on I was only able be sure that out of the 40 or more Egrets arriving only about half a dozen roosted so my **final count of 166 birds** settling for the night may well have been an under-estimate.

One thing I could be sure of was that there was a **Cetti's Warbler** present at the pond.

[Tue 27 Sep](#)

Havant Thicket

An afternoon walk round Havant Thicket gave me a selection of **Fungi** among which were some fresh **Penny Buns (*Botulus edulis*)** and some older **Fleecy Milkcaps** plus several that I could not name. One of these seemed to be a *Russula* with a dark red/purple cap but I was puzzled when I found it did not have the pure white stem and gills that I was expecting - the whole stem was flushed a very pretty deep rose pink as illustrated in Stephan Buzacki's Collins Guide (and in some photos seen on the internet) for ***Russula sardonica***. Another species of which I found several examples was small, pure white above and below with very decurrent gills and which I am fairly sure was **Snowy Waxcap**. A Bolete with very large pores may have been ***Boletus piperatus*** but my specimen was too old for me to want to taste it - an alternative id was ***Boletinus cavipes*** - the pores looked very similar to Roger Phillips photo but he says that is a rare species found with Larch in Scotland! Speaking to a man hoping to photograph **Dragonflies** (of which the only species on the wing were a few **Southern Hawkers**) he told me he had seen one example of **Fly Agaric** in the Thicket today and as I was driving home I passed a good example of a **Parasol Mushroom** standing tall but still in it 'bud form'.

Nothing much in the way of birds except for a single three second view of the '**huge Swift**' silhouette of a **Hobby** as it glided above the tree tops, allowing me a brief glimpse through a gap in those trees. Also noted was a cluster of fresh **Mole Hills**.

[Mon 26 Sep](#)

Around Havant and Langstone

Stepping out of my front door this morning one of the first birds I saw was a **Buzzard** slowly circling in a thermal high over central Havant, the heat rising from the town proving the lift to give the bird a good view of the surrounding countryside on which it could descend if a meal was on offer.

In Juniper Square I was pleased to see a new healthy plant of **Field Pennywort** starting to flower, and later the path through 'new' Langstone gave me unexpected **Tutsan** flowers close to where the tiny yellow stars of **Least Yellow Sorrel** cover the ground over a 100 metre stretch. On the Langstone Pond shore three lonely looking **Lapwings** were resting - other than a single bird seen in early August these

seem to be the first back here though Brian Fellows had one at Nore Barn last week on Sep 21.

WILDLIFE DIARY AND NEWS FOR SEP 19 - 25 (WEEK 38 OF 2011)

BIRDS

Divers: A count of **46 Red-throated** at a north-east British site on Sep 18 shows that these birds are now on their way south in force though the only reports of divers on the south coast this week were of **two Red-throated** off Christchurch Harbour on Sep 18 and **one 'diver species'** off Portland on Sep 22

Balearic Shearwater: A good count of 283 passing Porthgwarra (near Lands End) on Sep 18 with 156 seen there on Sep 19

Storm Petrel: Also at Porthgwarra **263 Storm Petrels** were seen on Sep 20

Bittern: The first to be seen at Rye Harbour this autumn was there on Sep 20

Squacco Heron: The first anywhere on the south coast this autumn was in the Little Sea area of Studland in Dorset on Sep 21

Cattle Egret: Latest mention of the Thorney Island bird was on Sep 23 when it went to roost near the Little Deeps with **144 Little Egrets**

Grey Heron: These are still on the move in the Low Countries with counts of 82 at a Netherlands site on Sep 18 and 55 at a Belgian site on Sep 24

Spoonbill: One was seen to flew north west from Pilsey in Chichester Harbour across Hayling Island on Sep 22 when there were at least 14 in Poole Harbour. On Sep 23 a Belgian site reported a count of 116 so there may be more coming our way.

Egyptian Goose: The 2009 Hampshire Bird Report listed a county record count of 143 at Eversley (Hants/Berks border) in Oct 2009 - a very significant increase on a county record of five birds seen together prior to publication of 'Birds of Hampshire' in 1993. This week saw a new county record set with a count of 170 roosting at the Eversley gravel pits on the evening of Sep 24 - I have no idea where these birds come from but Birds of Britain magazine has an undated article (see <http://www.birdsofbritain.co.uk/bird-guide/egyptian-goose.asp>) saying that the British population now stands at 900 birds, 90% of which are to be found in Norfolk so I guess the birds now at Eversley have either come from Norfolk or direct from the Continent (Netherlands and Germany both have large feral populations). The BTO website adds to my knowledge by saying .."Their failure to spread outside East Anglia may be due to their nesting in the winter months (so productivity is often low) and to lack of introductions (it is not a quarry species)" .. and a follow up search on the breeding season tells me that "The breeding season is anywhere from July to March, depending on the area". I also read that the species is very sedentary and shows no tendency to migrate. Maybe the arrival of such a large number at Eversley is an indication that the numbers in Norfolk have grown beyond the population size that Norfolk can support?

Shelduck: Last week I reported the arrival of a flock of 27 on the shore between Emsworth and Langstone (on Sep 16) and I suggested that these would move on westward and that such numbers would not be seen there again until at least mid-October but in fact the birds have remained and their number had increased to 32 during this week.

Goldeneye: None seem to have arrived on our south coast so far but one flock of 31 birds seems to have arrived at a Netherlands site on Sep 18

Pallid Harrier: The bird first reported at The Burgh on the Sussex Downs (south of Amberley) as a young **Montagus's Harrier** on Sep 15 and subsequently identified as a **Pallid Harrier** on Sep 17 has remained in the area between Burpham village (near Arundel) and The Burgh until Sep 24 at least. On Sep 20 Lee Evans wrote .. "Following a westward expansion into European Russia and Finland by breeding male **PALLID HARRIERS**, further apparent juveniles continue to arrive in Britain, with the most recent being singles at Colne Point/St Osyth Marshes (Essex) and at The Burgh (West Sussex) following the three or more currently ranging over Shetland. Today saw another probable juvenile fly low north over Barns Ness (Lothian)."

Quail: Despite the accepted wisdom that **Quail** do not pause at the south coast on their autumn migration a pair of visiting birders (from Bracknell) walking round Thorney Island on Sep 23 claim to have heard one calling as they were in the Marker Point area

Lady Amherst's Pheasant: One reported from the Abbotsbury area of Dorset on Sep 18 - this is the only report of the species that I have come across this year

Corncrake: One was accidentally flushed from fields on Portland Island on Sep 21 after overnight rain which is likely to have deterred it from flying out over the channel

Common Crane: On Sep 17 two flew west over Rye Harbour and on Sep 19 one arrived at Reculver on the north Kent coast where it was seen to be colour ringed and thus discovered to be a female called Mildred which had come as an egg from a nest in Germany, been hatched in an incubator at Slimbridge and then released in the Somerset Levels as part of the project to introduce more Cranes to Britain in addition to those which have set up their own natural colony in Norfolk - two birds arrived there in 1979, the first young was hatched in 1981 and by 2007 35 adults were present, having raised 5 young in 2005. For those interested in the subject of introducing species into Britain there is a website (<http://www.hows.org.uk/inter/birds/exotics/gbr.htm>) summarising the known projects (covering Mammals and Insects as well as Birds). It says of **Common Cranes** .. "The common crane was hunted to extinction in Britain in the past but the birds recolonised the Norfolk Broads in 1979 and there is a slowly growing population currently numbering 35-40. These have spread naturally, supplemented with continental birds, and have got a toe hold in several other sites in the east of the UK. This natural re-colonisation is deemed too small and vulnerable so a reintroduction was started in the Somerset levels in 2010. There are also some **introduced common cranes** in Norfolk but these are not officially sanctioned." Going back to the home page of this website which covers introductions and

exotics in Europe my eye was caught by a BBC News article dated 1 Aug 2009 concerning an **Asian 'super ant' called *Lasius neglectus*** which had been found at Hidcote Manor in Gloucestershire. This species is somehow attracted to electricity and to build its nests among powercables causing a real risk of starting fires if they import conductive materials into these nests - read all about it at <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/england/gloucestershire/8179872.stm>

Sandhill Crane: One bird of this much rarer species was in Scotland on Sept 16 and 22

Golden Plover: This week has brought reports of 350 on the north Kent coast and 300 at Rye Harbour but also of the first flock of 17 back in Chichester Harbour this autumn, seen in the Emsworth Channel near Marker Point on Thorney Island on Sep 23

Solitary Sandpiper: The bird found walking along a road in the Scillies (St Mary's) on Sep 15 with a cat following it along the road has survived to Sep 19 at least

Long-toed Stint (*Calidris subminuta*): A bird that was eventually identified as being of this species (rather than a **Temmick's Stint**) has been at Weir Wood reservoir in north Sussex from Sep 16 to 21 and is the first of its species to be seen in Sussex and only the third for the UK

Semi-palmated Sandpiper: One was seen briefly on the Lymington shore at dusk on Sep 24 - also seen there this week have been **Pectoral** and **Baird's Sandpipers**

Buff-breasted Sandpiper: As well as birds seen in Cornwall, on the Scillies and at Dungeness this week two of them were on the Dorset coast at the White Nothe headland between Weymouth and Lulworth Cove

Ruff: Up to 10 were present at Pulborough Brooks on Sep 23 with others at some six other sites

Jack Snipe: One was photographed on the garden patio of a house in Emsworth on Sep 19 and the picture can be seen on Brian Fellows' website at <http://www.emsworthwildlife.hampshire.org.uk/0-0-289-jack-snipe-garden-SOS-20.09.11.jpg>

Long-billed Dowitcher: The one seen in Cornwall on Sep 17 was still there on Sep 20 but on Sep 18 what was probably a different bird appeared on the Oare Marshes in north Kent

Lesser Yellowlegs: The bird seen in the Scillies and in Cornwall last week was still at the Drift reservoir site in Cornwall on Sep 20

Grey Phalarope: No shortage of these this week with birds reported from ten south coast sites including 36 birds at St Ives in Cornwall, 6 at The Lizard and 3 at Portland plus singles at Prinsted in Chichester Harbour up to Sep 19 and at Ivy Lake in Chichester on Sep 22 and 23

Skuas: Small numbers of birds continue to be reported all round the British Isles but on Sep 18 exceptional numbers were recorded at St Ives in Cornwall (**11 Long-tailed** and **168 Great Skuas**). St Ives also had **43 Sabine's Gulls** that day.

Lesser Black-backed Gull: After the night roost count of 1200 at the Yateley gravel pits on the Hants/Berks border on Sep 12 John Clark made a further count there on Sep 24 and recorded a total of 2475 birds

Guillemot: One was seen in Hayling Bay on Sep 21

Turtle Dove: One was still in north Kent on Sep 20

Cuckoo: A late juvenile was seen at Arne in Dorset on Sep 18

Short-eared Owl: Two more arrivals this week - at Seaford on Sep 18 and Climping on Sep 19

Swift: Just one seen over southern England this week (Lymington shore on Sep 23)

Wryneck: Singles seen this week at Lymington (two sites), Cissbury Ring, Cornwall and the Scillies - last date was Sep 23

Sand Martin: Last big count was of 1200 over the Blashford Lakes on Sep 20

Swallow: 1800 over Christchurch Harbour on Sep 23 was the largest of counts at six sites this week

House Martin: Top count was of 3610 in the Fleet area of Hampshire on Sep 20 but there were still 2000 over the Lymington shore on Sep 24

Tree Pipit: Five over Christchurch on Sep 19

Meadow Pipit: 1060 over Portland on Sep 19 with smaller numbers everywhere

Water Pipit: First mention of these on the move comes from Belgium on Sep 24 (just one bird)

Yellow Wagtail: Still twelve reports this week with a max count of 85 at Warsash on Sep 19. Also in the news were singles of both **Grey Headed** and **Blue Headed** birds in Cornwall on Sep 20

Grey Wagtail: Ten at Durlston on Sep 21

Alba Wagtails: Max count of 97 at Portland on Sep 19. Definite **Whites** were seen at Brownich (Titchfield), Lymington and Farlington Marshes

Dunnoek: 160 were on the move at a German site on Sep 23

Whinchat: Six were seen at Cissbury Ring on Sep 23 but smaller numbers were seen at ten other sites including 3 on the Langstone South Moors on Sep 22

Stonechat: Eight were seen at Climping (mouth of R Arun) on Sep 19, two were on the Langstone South Moors on Sep 22 and three were seen on Thorney Island on Sep 23

Grasshopper Warbler	3	9	3	10	6	105	5	3	2
Sedge Warbler	180	76	45	100+	70	4	-	6	1
Reed Warbler	5		7	30+	54	6	-	7	2
Lesser Whitethroat	6	12	8	13	17	11	3	2+	5
Common Whitethroat	220	130	150	350	175	100	33	40	30
Garden Warbler	10	12	9+	15	4	3	2	4	1
Blackcap	23	16	25	50	45	400	19	400	550
Wood Warbler	-	1	-	1	-	1	3	-	-
Chiffchaff	275	-	-	3	12	70+	35+	395	300
Willow Warbler	1	250	175	290	500	100	200	11	11
Spotted Flycatcher	-	10	1	14	15	12	5	12	2
Pied Flycatcher	2	2	1	1	5	2	2	1	1

Bearded Tits: A report of 10 'high flying' at the Oare Marshes in Kent confirms that they are starting to move to new sites. Other reports are of 25 seen at Seasalter on the north Kent coast on Sep 18, when there were 25 at the Oare Marshes and 30+ at Farlington Marshes

Red-backed Shrike: Singles seen this week in the Scillies and in north Kent

Great Grey Shrike: The first for this winter was seen in the New Forest at Rushbush Pond on Sep 18

Tree Sparrow: On Sep 23 a flock of 142 was at a German site while over here 2 were seen in the New Forest near Fawley and a single was at Sturt Pond near Lymington

Siskin: A flock of 200 was seen at North Baddesley near Romsey on Sep 19 and lesser numbers were on the move at 10 other south coast sites during the week including 78 over Gilkicker Point at Gosport and 21 over Milton Common in Southsea

Lapland Bunting: These have been seen in the west country since Sep 4 but on Sep 15 one was seen at Sandwich Bay and since then there have been sightings at Farmoor in Oxon and the Cuckmere valley in Sussex

Snow Bunting: First report for this winter is of one in the Netherlands on Sep 23

Baltimore Oriole: This new vagrant arrived in the Scillies on Sep 20

INSECTS

Dragonflies:

Notable sightings this week:

A much reduced species list this week

Species reported this week:

Brown Hawker, Common Hawker, Migrant Hawker, Golden Ringed, Black Darter, Common Darter, Small Red Damselfly, Emerald Damselfly

Butterflies:

Notable sightings this week:

Clouded Yellow: Sightings at six sites this week shows that the migration period is not yet over

Red Admiral: A count of 60 at Gosport on Sep 16

Painted Lady: Five sightings this week indicates a similar status as the Clouded Yellow

Wall Brown: On Sep 23 eleven third brood insects, two of them mating, were found at the eastern end of the Sussex Downs

Grayling: On Sep 15 the Farnborough area had 17 still on the wing with another two at Browdown in Gosport and a late single was seen in the New Forest on Sep 19

Small Heath: 74 were flying in the Farnborough area on Sep 15

Species reported this week:

Silver Spotted Skipper, Clouded Yellow, Brimstone, Large White, Small White, Green Veined White, Brown Hairstreak, Small Copper, Brown Argus, Common Blue, Red Admiral, Painted Lady, Small Tortoiseshell, Peacock, Comma, Speckled Wood, Wall Brown, Grayling, Meadow Brown, Small Heath

Moths:

Selected sightings this week:

Oxyptilus laetus: This is an **immigrant Plume Moth** which turned up at Dungeness on Sep 9 and is so rare that the UK Moths website does not yet have a photograph of the species but you can see it if you go to <http://www.dungenessbirdobs.org.uk/lateframe.html> and click the 'Fauna' button at the head of the page.

Convolvulus Hawkmoth: Four reports this week including one from Tony Wilson at Edburton on the Sussex Downs who says (Sussex Butterfly Conservation website entry for Sep 22) .. "I have nurtured my nicotiana plants from seeds in the hope of getting a **Convolvulus Hawkmoth** and tonight it happened. The plants are under an outside light by my patio doors so I got brilliant views of it feeding several times throughout the evening. Although I've seen them at rest on the Scilly Isles, I've never seen one in flight and I have to say it was spectacular _ as big as a bat with a hugely long tongue and a curiously slow flight - the best moth I've ever seen!"

Other Insects:

Selected sightings this week:

Dor Beetle (*Geotrupes stercorarius*): One found on the path leading from Victoria Road to the Emsworth Recreation ground on Sep 19 - see Brian Fellows photo at

<http://www.emsworthwildlife.hampshire.org.uk/0-0-293-dor-beetle-wash-rd-ws-19.09.11.jpg> - although not very obvious in the photo Brian says that the beetle lived up to its alternative name of "The Lousy Watchman" by being covered in tiny mites

Pantilius tunicatus: I came across this Mirid Bug through Graeme Lyons stimulating website after he had seen one on the outside wall of the wooden classroom at the Woods Mill HQ of the Sussex Wildlife Trust - to see his photo of it visit his website (<http://analternativenaturalhistoryofsussex.blogspot.com/>) and scroll down to the entry for Sep 23 headed 'Pantilius'. This species also introduced me to another website which could be very useful in the identification of any British Bug - see

http://www.britishbugs.org.uk/heteroptera/Miridae/pantilius_tunicatus.html and then have a look at the home page <http://www.britishbugs.org.uk/> and click 'Systematic Lists'

The Invisible Spider (*Drapetisca socialis*): Another 'new to me' species which is apparently quite common on smooth barked trees but is only 4mm in body length. I learnt of it through Graeme Lyons website (see his entry for Sep 19)

PLANTS

[\(Skip to Other Wildlife\)](#)

Brooklime: I have not seen this in flower since July 23 but Brian Fellows found it re-flowering in the Chichester Canal on Sep 22

Rootless duckweed (*Wolffia arrhiza*): This species is not found in Hampshire but Graeme Lyons knew of its presence in ditches at the Lewes Railway Lands (old rail goods yards on the east side of Lewes now converted into a large social and ecological site - see <http://www.railwaylandproject.org/>) and he visited the site on Sep 21 before writing an entry in his blog under the title 'The UK's smallest vascular plant'

See the Highlights section at the head of this Week's Summary for news of a new site for **Corn Parsley** on Hayling Island

OTHER WILDLIFE

[\(Skip to Endweek\)](#)

Roe Deer: Durlston reports that a pair seen on Sep 19 were already starting to acquire winter pelage (i.e.coat) and that the male was starting to drop his antlers.

Dormouse: Although rarely seen by the casual naturalist I think these creatures are more widespread than most people believe and a sighting of one running around just outside the entrance to a TESCO store in Lewes on Sep 21 supports that view

Hare: One or two sightings this week but the one that caught my attention was a local sighting on the fields of Eames Farm, seen from the western seawall of Thorney Island north of the Great Deeps. I can remember **Hares** being a regular sight in those fields and am delighted to hear that they have not vanished.

Nathusius Bat: See the highlights above for details of how this and another bat species have come to my attention

Leatherback Turtle: The second report to come to my attention this autumn is of one seen from Pendeen in Cornwall on Sep 18 (the previous report was from the Scillies on Aug 14)

Lesser Bulin (Ena obscura): This scientific name may suggest a shy member of the Coronation Street cast but this is in fact a not uncommon small snail species seen on a tree trunk near Ditchling Beacon on the Sussex Downs by Graeme Lyons on Sep 19. A photo of this species can be found at <http://naturenet.net/blogs/media/blogs/eating/Ena-obscura.jpg> and it is also worth looking at http://www.open2.net/survey/snails/html_download/snail_download.htm for an introduction to snails and the terminology used in their identification - if you scroll down to the section headed "Dextral long thin shells (various families)" you will see another photo with text below this heading including .. "One of the commoner species in this group, the **Lesser Bulin (Ena obscura)** appears to cover itself with mud or other debris so can be tricky to spot."

Fungi: We are really into the autumn fungus season now with Durlston reporting the first **Death Cap** and the first **Parasol Mushroom** plus a second example of the **Red Cage** (the first was reported on July 24 and the second - now actively attracting flies on Sep 18). Also appearing at Durlston this week were **Grey Coral** and **Yellow Brain** while locally a walk from Havant to Stansted Park and back through the Hollybank Woods gave me **Field Mushrooms, Fairy Ring Champignons, Agaricus bisporus** and what may have been **Agrocybe praecox** in grassland with **Slippery Jack** under conifers and the **Amethyst Deceiver** among **Inocybe geophylla** in woodland plus **Pleurotus dryinus** on the cut stump of an Ash tree. Later in the week Brian Fellows found **Boletus erythropus** in the grass verge of an Emsworth road and subsequent visits to that site by myself and Brian have added **Brown Rollrim** and **Russula aeruginea**. As you will have seen in the highlights above the first Earthstar of the autumn has been found - **Geastrum triplex** growing under a Kiwi Fruit tree in a Brighton garden. Late news of finds of **Dog Stinkhorn, Chanterelle, Black Helvella,** and **Hygrocybe calyptriformis** come from Graeme Lyons who found them in the Ebenoe churchyard area near Midhurst on Sep 25 (he uses the new English Names of **Pink Waxcap** and **Elfin Saddle** for the last two of these). In my own garden **Blackening Waxcaps** have started to appear.

WILDLIFE DIARY AND NEWS FOR SEP 19 - 25 (WEEK 38 OF 2011)

Wed 21 Sep

More fungi and a few flowers

This afternoon I cycled to the western end of Emsworth to a look at a large fungus which had been found by Brian Fellow in grass beside a short road called Seafields. When I got there I saw no sign of the 25 cm wide Bolete which Brian had found and which you can see at

<http://www.emsworthwildlife.hampshire.org.uk/0-0-291-red-cracked-bolete-cap-21.09.11.jpg> (I was probably looking in the wrong place) but I did find a patch of grass under Birch trees with a couple of common species of fungi (**Brown Rollrim** and **Russula aeruginea** - several specimens of each) and one brown capped Bolete which was less than half the size of Brian's find and which turned out to be **Boletus erythropus**, again not a rarity.

Earlier in the day, back at home, I had added another fungus species to my repertoire (one which has been appearing on my lawn in troops over several years but which I have never succeeded in naming until today) when I chanced to pick a

fresh specimen to have a close look at it and noticed that, when held up against the morning light, the flesh around the rim of its cap was a pink colour contrasting with the pale brown of the rest of the cap and this led me to identify it as **Calocybe carnea** (carnea referring to this flesh pink colour which I could not detect when looking at the fungi from above)

Heading home along the shore I found that the Sweetcorn crop in the Warblington Farm field had just been harvested so I had a look around the field in which (in past years) there has been a good show of **Dwarf Spurge** but I did not see any though I did find the one of many plants of **Sharp-leaved Fluellen** had an open flower

[Mon 19 Sep](#)

A long walk with lots of fungi and a surprise flower

This afternoon I set myself the challenge of walking 8 miles from my home following the railway north to Rowlands Castle, returning through Stansted Park, Southleigh Forest, Hollybank woods and the Denvilles area of Havant.

Back at home my note pad listed 122 flowering plant species including **Common Calamint**, which I have not found anywhere for at least ten years. The only birds of any interest were a single **Buzzard** and many **Swallows** on their way south with both **Green** and **Great Spotted Woodpeckers** being vocal at several places while **Robins** were singing almost everywhere.

I came across at least **ten species of fungi** including some fresh ones growing on the cut stump of an Ash tree which I think are **Pleurotus dryinus** by their pure white decurrent gills and white caps having light brown flecking. Another that I feel more confident about was a huge specimen of **Slippery Jack (Suillus luteus)** - typical of the difficulties I find in naming fungi the books all give the maximum cap width for this species as 10cm but this one measured 25cm across though it was growing in the right habitat with pine trees and resembled **Slippery Jack** in all other respects. An easily named find was the **Amethyst Deceiver** - just one specimen among a cluster of smaller white fungi with 'coolie hats' having a prominent 'umbo' (central bump') which I am pretty sure are **Inocybe geophylla**. Much easier to be sure of were several 'fairy rings' of **Marasmius oreades (The Fairy Ring Champignon)**. Near one of the rings in grassland was a 'mushroom' still in the 'bud' stage but much bigger than a young **Field Mushroom** and with a very swollen stem - almost certainly **Agaricus bisporus**. As a footnote to this list I have to admit that the mushrooms which I found on the south Hayling sandy shore grassland on Sep 15 and named as **Agaricus litoralis** have subsequently yielded a cream spore print, quite wrong for any **Agaricus** but equally unattributable to any other species that I can find!

One non-wildlife feature of this walk was a reminder of the old **Top Gear** program in which the trio of petrel heads (aka idiots) did **silly things with huge agricultural tractors**. On the fields of Holme Farm (immediately west of the Stansted Sawmill) a troop of huge modern tractors were assembled. All but one had finished work for the day but one was still at work and clearly wanting to finish as soon as possible. It was a large specialised liquid slurry spreader having a very big tank for the slurry and long beams (like those used for spraying fertiliser and/or weed killer) on either side. The machine had just three wheels - the front having a tyre probably seven feet high and five feet across, the other two being slightly smaller. This was an impressive vehicle when static but the best part of the show was the way it was being driven - **muck-spreading at more than 40 mph and performing the equivalent of hand-brake turns** at the end of each run across the large flat field!

WILDLIFE DIARY AND NEWS FOR SEP 12 - 18 (WEEK 37 OF 2011)

[\(Skip to previous week\)](#)

Overview

[\(Skip to Bird News\)](#)

Bird news highlights:

This week saw the return of our winter **Brent Geese** (seemingly both **Dark** and - in north Devon and the Scillies - **Pale-breasted** species) and gave me what I suspect is this year's peak count of **198 Little Egrets** night roosting at Langstone Pond

It also marked the start of the 'Scilly Season' when birders make their annual attempt to sink the islands with the combined weight of the twitchers seeking to tick the equally large number of storm driven (or 'navigationally incompetent' birds which chose to land there rather than perish in the Atlantic. Unusual bird species seen there (or in other parts of Britain) this week include **Fea's Petrel, Little Bittern, Greater Flamingo, Sandhill and Common Crane, Semi-palmated, Solitary, Spotted, Baird's, Buff-breasted and White-rumped Sandpipers, Long-billed Dowitcher, Greater and Lesser Yellowlegs, Ross's Gull, Tawny Pipit, Black-and-White Warbler, Red-eyed Vireo, Northern Waterthrush and an escaped Yellow-breasted Tit**. I was amused by the entry for Sep 14 in <http://www.scilly-birding.co.uk/> which read ... "**St. Mary's – A Solitary Sandpiper** was found in the middle of the road by Newford Duck Pond. Fortunately 3 visiting birders found it, it was been stalked by a cat! They shoed off the cat and chivvied the bird onto the mud on the pond were it seemed to feed happily all afternoon."

Local excitement this week has come from the sight of the Thornham Marshes **Cattle Egret** catching and eating one of the **Yellow Wagtails** that share its interest in the insects attracted to the cattle (the Wagtails showed their strong objection to the Egret's choice of food by mobbing the Egret and driving it off but it was soon back and apparently forgiven). The north east of Thorney Island also hosted a **Wryneck** and a **Sabine's Gull** while Prinsted Bay had one of around 20 **Grey Phalaropes** seen at 10 south coast sites this week (another was in the Sword Sands area of Langstone Harbour watched from the Great Salterns Quay by the Eastern Road in Portsmouth).

Another event in the local birding calendar was the return of **Shelduck** to the muddy shore between Emsworth and Langstone - an adult had been seen in Emsworth Harbour on Aug 26 and 16 were at the Thorney Great Deeps on Sep 2 but a flock of 27 in the Emsworth-Langstone area on Sep 16 seems to indicate an early return of these birds which will be a regular sight here in late November and December (the equivalent date in 2009 was Oct 17 when 27 were seen here). These early birds are unlikely to stay here but are part of a westward movement along the south coast as **Shelduck** regain their flight feathers after their annual moult off the Dutch/German coast and move to their winter quarters, en route picking up the adults which have stayed here to chaperone young hatched here and also now able to fly.

Additions this week to the migrant species arriving here for the winter have been **Siskin** - the first birds for this autumn were noted at Winchelsea near Rye on Sep 13, at Climping on the West Sussex coast on Sep 14 and at Portland on Sep 15 - and **Pinkfoot Goose** - 189 arrived in Lancashire on Sep 14 and 6 reached the north Kent coast on Sep 15

Insect News highlights:

Lesser Stag Beetle: George Spraggs blog has been recently updated to reveal that he has come across one in the West Town area of Hayling

Plant News highlights:

On Sep 13 I found a new site for **Slender Hare's Ear** in the Warblington Farm fields and on Sep 15 while visiting south Hayling I discovered new sites for **Sand Spurrey, Chicory** and **Corn Parsley**

Of more general interest **Common Gorse** had come into general flowering by Sep 15

Other News highlights:

This week my annual garden show of **Waxcap fungi** started and among the fungi on the lawn I was puzzled by the sight of **two halves of a Grey Squirrel's tail** which had apparently been the rope used in a nocturnal tug-of-war between two unknown (but extremely vociferous) animals. We also have a couple of links to **unusual photos** - one of a **Great Crested and a Common Newt nestling side by side in a human hand** and the other of a **Common Lizard which had lost its tail**

BIRDS

Divers: Six reports this week of single **Red-throated** along our south coast and one of 32 from Denmark on Sep 15 plus single **Black-throated** off the Durham/Yorkshire coast on Sep 16 and the first **Great Northern** off Durham on Sep 14

Grebes: On Sep 15 I counted 22 **Great Crested** as I cycled down the Hayling Coastal Path and I suspect these were in addition to the flock of around 30 that have been in the Broadmarsh area. The single **Black-necked** that has been at the Blashford Lakes since Aug 1 was still there on Sep 17 and a single **Red-necked** off the Belgian coast on Sep 14 has also been around since early August

Bittern: At dusk on Sep 16 three were seen flying east from the Ardingly reservoir near Haywards Heath and on Sep 13 the first to be reported in Dorset this autumn was at Lodmoor (Weymouth). On Sep 12 a **Little Bittern** turned up at Titchwell on the Norfolk coast

Cattle Egret: The Thornham Marshes bird was still present on Sep 17 when it caught and ate a **Yellow Wagtail**

Little Egret: On Sep 14 I made what may well be the peak roost count of 198 birds at Langstone Pond

Great White Egret: The regular Blashford Lakes bird was there on Sep 10 but may have flown 15 miles south east to be seen on the Avon Flood at Keyhaven on Sep 12 - no other reports from either site this week but over on the continent there were 12 of these birds at one Netherlands site on Sep 12

Grey Heron: Migration is in full force on the continent with counts from the Netherlands being 152 on Sep 14, 414 on Sep 15, 53 on Sep 16 and 24 on Sep 17. On Sep 14 the **Grey Herons** were accompanied by **140 Purple Herons**.

White Stork: The peak count of migrants through the Netherlands this week was 137 on Sep 15

Spoonbill: Also on Sep 15 a Belgian site reported **431 Spoonbills** - a very sharp peak with no other report for the week being of more than 54. The only other 100+ report for this year was also from Belgium with 107 seen on Apr 10. Here Brownsea Island also had a good count of 15 birds on Sep 15

Flamingo: A **Greater Flamingo** flew in and landed at the Blashford Lakes near Ringwood on Sep 16. No doubt it had escaped from a collection not too far from Ringwood but if Bob Chapman was correct in saying that it was a 'Greater' than it is unlikely to have come from Flamingo Park at Seaview on the Isle of Wight as their website says they have around 100 Flamingos of the Chilean, Lesser and Caribbean species only

Pink Foot Goose: 189 arrived in Lancashire on Sep 14 and 6 reached the north Kent coast on Sep 15

Brent Goose: First to be reported were 9 which arrived in the Scillies on Sep 12, followed by one on the North Devon coast near Bideford on Sep 14 - I'm pretty sure these will have been **Pale-bellied birds** from Greenland and that the Bideford bird has been summering (seen at the same site on Aug 2). The first **Dark-bellied birds** arriving from the east appeared on Sep 15 (when an unspecified number flew past Dungeness, two went west along the north Kent coast at Reculver, and three were off Cap Gris-Nez in France). Also on Sep 15 I saw six Brent in the Mengham Rythe area just inside the Chichester Harbour entrance though these were almost certainly from the group of 11 that have spent the summer in that harbour. Sep 16 saw two more arrivals reaching Kent - a single bird passing Folkestone and a group of three in the Pegwell Bay and Reculver areas - and others much further west (the first flock of 23 in Langstone Harbour and what may have been the same group of 4 flying west past Climping at the mouth of the R. Arun and later past Christchurch Harbour). On Sep 17 a flock of 53 were heading along the French coast, 17 were seen from Splash Point at Seaford, and singles were reported at Ferrybridge (Weymouth) and the mouth of the R. Exe in Devon. I did wonder if these Dorset and Devon sightings were of **Pale-bellied birds** but a photo of the Ferrybridge bird shows it was **Dark-bellied** and previous reports of the Exmouth bird during the summer show that it was not a new arrival and was **Dark-bellied**. Today (Sep 18) the Langstone Harbour flock had acquired 5 more birds - possibly summering birds which I suspect to have been in the harbour though not reported - to give a report of 28 birds

Shelduck: The great majority of adult birds leave southern England before the end of June for sites where they can pass their flightless summer moult period in safety from predators such as Foxes - I think our southern birds fly east to the huge sandy beaches off the north German and Netherlands shores but others go to the north Devon coast and perhaps some use the Norfolk coast. Most of the birds that breed here also join the moulting flocks at the last minute after their eggs have hatched, leaving very few adults to chaperon mixed flocks of ducklings from several families. Another feature of the **Shelduck** lifestyle is that (at least along the south coast) very few nest close to the sea but have nests five miles or more inland where there is a far greater choice of relatively safe nest sites under tree roots or in rabbit burrows. I have no information on what happens to the chicks that hatch at these inland sites - do they immediately start the long and dangerous walk to the sea (having to cross busy road and electrified railways en route) or do they find places to survive inland until they can fly to the sea?

What I can observe from the reports that I see is that during the June to August period the coastal sightings are of few adults outnumbered by ducklings, then from the start of September both adults and young start to gain the ability to fly with small groups appearing unexpectedly on the harbour shores but rarely staying in one place for more than a day or so. The number of returning adults gradually builds up through September and October. From the start of November the birds start to settle down and you can expect that a flock which you saw one day will still be present next day and next week, and through December and January the flocks are at peak strength and there is little movement from place to place.

We have already seen the first stages of this autumn cycle with the presence of a family (one adult and two young) in Emsworth Harbour on Aug 26 followed by a count of 16 birds at Thorney Great Deeps on Sep 2. This week has taken us a step further with the arrival of 27 birds on the mud off Emsworth on Sep 16 and this may indicate that the winter build up will occur earlier than usual this year as in 2009 an equivalent 'first flock' did not appear on the Emsworth to Langstone shore until Oct 17. Whatever happens I strongly suspect we will not see the 27 birds of this week still here next week as I'm pretty sure they will have moved on westward by now.

Garganey: Singles were still to be seen at Alresford Pond, Pagham Harbour and the Lyminster shore this week with the latest report being of 6 flying west over the sea on Sep 16 close in to the Climping shore heading past Bognor to Selsey Bill. These are probably not the last to be seen this year as the average 'last date' for Hampshire is Sep 27 and in 1953 one was still here on Nov 29

Goosander: A strong hint that we will soon be seeing birds arriving from the north is a report of 15 off the Netherlands coast on Sep 14

Raptors: Sussex birders on the Downs south of Pulborough on Sep 17 saw both **Hen Harrier** and **Marsh Harrier** (both regulars there for some time now) with the bonus of a juvenile **Montagu's Harrier** and possibly also a **Pallid Harrier** though I could not be certain from the reports if the possible **Pallid Harrier** was in addition to or an alternative id for the **Montagu's**. Also on Sep 17 a **Marsh Harrier** was at Titchfield Haven and 22 of them passed through one Netherlands site (with further sightings at 12 other sites). In the Itchen Valley a **Goshawk** was seen soaring over

a Bishopstoke garden (near Eastleigh) on Sep 16. On Sep 9 there was an indication of Scandinavian **Sparrowhawks** moving south for the winter with 73 over a German site and on Sep 14 Dungeness reported 48 passing over with another 9 over on Sep 15 (I assume they were travelling south and suspect they too were Scandinavian birds which had come across the North Sea and just clipped East Kent). It seems that at least 12 **Ospreys** passed through south east England this week including one of Roy Dennis' Highland birds over Arundel on Sep 11. Both **Merlins** and **Hobbies** were still being seen on most days this week.

Quail: Reports of our summer birds seemed to have ceased with one at Portland on Sep 3 but Sep 15 brought a surprise report of one at the Lost Gardens of Heligan (Mevagissey on the south coast of Cornwall)

Corncrake: Another surprise sighting was of a **Corncrake** in the Scillies on Sep 13

Common Crane: Two flew in at Dungeness on Sep 14 and made an overnight stop in the Kent Stour Valley before disappearing. A different bird was first spotted at Eastney (Portsmouth) on Sep 16 to be seen at Titchfield Haven, Hook (Warsash), Normandy and Keyhaven (both ends of the Lymington marshes), then over Burton and Christchurch Harbour before heading north up the Avon Valley and into oblivion. Also on Sep 16 a **Sandhill Crane** flew south over Dunbar (Lothian) in Scotland before disappearing.

Waders: A single **Dotterel** was heard and briefly seen over Reculver on the north Kent coast on Sep 16 and another was in the Scillies that day. On Sep 12 a **Semi-palmated Sandpiper** was at Chew Valley Lake in Somerset and on Sep 16 it or another was at the Drift reservoir near Penzance in Cornwall. An even rarer **Solitary Sandpiper** arrived on St Mary's in the Scillies on Sep 15 to be seen walking along a road followed by a cat - luckily three birders came to its rescue, chasing off the cat and shooing the **Sandpiper** onto the muddy edges of a nearby duckpond but it has not been seen since - I wonder if the cat came back? A **White-rumped Sandpiper** was near Truro in Cornwall on Sep 17 and a **Baird's Sandpiper** has been on the Lymington shore from Sep 14 to 18 at least. This week **Pectoral Sandpipers** have been at Pegwell Bay in Kent, Poole Harbour in Dorset, Exmouth in Devon, Wadebridge in Cornwall and five were in the Scillies on Sep 13. **Curlew Sandpipers** have been at several sites including north Hayling (3 on Sep 11), Pagham Harbour (3 on Sep 15), Lymington marshes (9 on Sep 16), Rye Harbour (8 on Sep 13), a total of **38 Buff-breasted Sandpipers** were said to be in Britain on Sep 15 including up to 8 in the Scillies and 4 in Weymouth Harbour. Pulborough Brooks had the highest count of **Ruff** with 9 on Sep 16. **Snipe** numbers are now rocketing with 250 at a Netherlands site on Sep 17 but on that day the spotlight was on a single **Long-billed Dowitcher** at Stithians reservoir south of Redruth in Cornwall and on a single **Lesser Yellowlegs** at Drift Reservoir near Penzance. Earlier, on Sep 12 and 13 Cornwall added a new species to its county list with a confirmed **Greater Yellowlegs** near Wadebridge. This week has brought a multitude of **Grey Phalaropes** to our shores with a peak count of 10 in Chesil Cove (Portland) on Sep 13 and others seen at ten other sites between Portland and Brighton Marina. Close to Havant one was discovered on Sep 16 in Prinsted Bay by Tony Wootton from Emsworth and was still there on Sep 17 for two other

observers. Another was seen in Langstone Harbour on Sep 15 near the Great Salterns Quay (on the Portsmouth side close to the Eastern Road)

Skuas: **Pomarine, Arctic, Long-tailed** and **Great** were all present but the only large counts were of **57 Bonxies** off the north Kent coast on Sep 16 after a surge had brought **407** to the French coast on Sep 15

Gulls: **Sabine's** were seen at eight sites during the week including one on Sep 17 which flew over Barry Collins head as he was passing the west end of the Little Deeps on Thorney Island. Two new adult **Ring-billed Gulls** were seen on the Cornish coast on Sep 12 (with no reports of the Christchurch bird during this week). On the evening of Sep 12 John Clark found **1200 Lesser Blackbacks** coming to roost at the Fox Lane gravel pits on the Hants/Berks border near Yateley and on Sep 13 there were **14 Yellow-legged Gulls** at that site with 11 seen at the Lower Test Marshes and more than 64 at Swineham in Poole Harbour on the next two days. Other than one seen in May in the same area a **Ross's Gull** at a Netherlands site on Sep 15 seems to have been the first for the year.

Terns: The biggest count of **Sandwich Terns** this week was of 310 at Christchurch Harbour on Sep 11 and the last substantial count was of 94 there on Sep 12 so perhaps migration is tailing off. I thought we had seen the last **Roseate** on Aug 31 but a single straggler was reported at Dungeness on Sep 11. **Common Terns** have also ceased to figure in reports since Sep 12 when 260 were reported at Sandwich Bay but **Arctic Tern** passage is still ongoing with daily reports from Sep 11 to 15 (max 17 at Christchurch on Sep 12). **Little Terns** were also putting on a late spurt with 16 at Dungeness on Sep 15 and **Black Terns** were still at three English and one Netherlands site on Sep 17 - the Netherlands also had a single **White-winged Black Tern** on Sep 14

Auks: Single **Guillemots** were at three south coast sites this week and Christchurch Harbour had two **Razorbills** on Sep 11 plus one on Sep 12. There was also a single **Puffin** off Portland on Sep 17

Turtle Dove: These ceased to breed on the west Hayling shore several years ago and this year is the first that they have not been regularly seen on north Thorney Island but total loss has been avoided by one which turned up there on Sep 11

Cuckoo: Maybe the last in England was a juvenile at Pagham Harbour on Sep 10 but two others were seen on the continent - one in Germany on Sep 12 and one in the Netherlands on Sep 17

Short-eared Owl: One arrived at Christchurch Harbour on Sep 14 to be driven off by Crows but I think it stayed around to be seen again on Sep 16 after a new arrival was seen on the Pevensy Levels on Sep 15

Nightjar: The only report from England was of one feeding up at Durlston at dawn on Sep 15

Swift: Other than two seen at Liphook near Petersfield on Sep 10 the three reports for this week are all on singles

Hoopoe: One has been seen sporadically from Sep 11 to 14 in Glynde village just upstream from Lewes on the Sussex Ouse

Wryneck: Singles seen at eight sites this week including the north west part of Thorney Island where it was one of four birds present on Sep 16 (the others were at Warsash, Netley and Lymington along the Hampshire coast)

Woodlark: A local sighting at Rowlands Castle was made around Sep 8 and another was heard singing near Fleet in north Hampshire on Sep 11

Sand Martin: Still plenty around with 3000 reported at the Blashford Lakes on Sep 12 and 4000 departing over Dungeness on Sep 16 (when 1000 were flying east over Durlston)

Swallow: Large numbers this week with the peak count being of 21,600 over Christchurch Harbour on Sep 16

House Martin: Christchurch Harbour also reported the top count of 4000 on Sep 16

Tawny Pipit: On Sep 15 RBA reported one in East Sussex - no other info but this is the first to be mentioned in England this autumn

Tree Pipit: On Sep 15 Christchurch Harbour again came out with the top count of 6 for southern England but a Netherlands site reported 68 on Sep 16

Meadow Pipit: On Sep 14 a count of 15,750 moving south past Spurn Point in Yorkshire was impressive but not as great as the 20,200 going south on Sep 13. On Sep 15 a count of 7,100 came from Lancashire. Maybe many of these birds paused in their travels before reaching the south coast as on Sep 15 a flock of 1100 birds were feeding on a rootcrop field at Dean Hill not far north of Whiteparish on the River Test but there were no such dramatic figures from coastal sites

Yellow Wagtail: Plenty still all along the south coast with a peak of 174 at Barton on Sea (west of Lymington) on Sep 15

Grey Wagtail: I have been hoping to see one back on the Lymbourne Stream here in Havant but so far the only migrant to arrive as a winter visitor in the Havant area has been one which turned up on the Westbrook stream in Emsworth on Sep 15. I assume the birds which have been arriving in southern England since mid-July have included some from the continent and some from northern Britain but I have no means of telling whether counts such as the 14 recorded at Portland on Sep 16 were arriving or departing

Nightingale: None reported in Britain this week but one was still in France on Sep 17

Whinchat: On Sep 16 Hook/Warsash had 21 (and on Sep 15 I boke my duck for the year with two on the Hayling Coastal Path)

Stonechat: More started to arrive on the south coast this week with the first of the autumn at Gilkicker (Gosport) and on Portsdown Hill (none seemingly bred there this year) both seen on Sep 15

Wheatear: On Sep 17 there were 70 at Portland and 70+ at a Devon site

Ring Ouzel: Just starting to leave us this week with sightings at Beachy Head, the Isle of Wight, and in Devon (max 3 birds in the Prawle area)

Fieldfare: Single birds seen at Netherlands sites on Sep 16 and 17 plus a first sighting of 4 **Redwings** also in the Netherlands on Sep 16 remind us that Christmas is coming!

Black-and-White Warbler: A transatlantic vagrant in the Scillies - if you are as unfamiliar with this species as I was have a look at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Black-and-white_Warbler for background to a single bird found in the Scillies on Sep 17

Aquatic Warbler: Two in the Scillies on Sep 12

Chiffchaff: At long last these are now far outnumbering the Willow Warblers seen at coastal sites

Goldcrest: The first 3 autumn passage birds were seen at Portland on Sep 15 and Sandwich Bay had its first 4 autumn **Firecrests** on Sep 14

Bearded Tit: A count of 24 at Farlington Marshes on Sep 15 suggests that we may be seeing more of these birds at all their main sites in the near future

** COASTAL COUNTS OF DEPARTING MIGRANTS **								
Bird Name	31/07	07/08	14/08	21/08	28/08	04/09	11/09	18/09
Turtle Dove	1	4	6	10	7	5	4	11
Cuckoo	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	
Nightjar	-	-	-	-	1	1	1	1
Swift	80	1500	20	29	22	24	5	1
Wryneck	-	-	1	3	1	2	3	1
Sand Martin	500	300	1000+	450	3000	1000	2000	4000
Swallow	100	15000+	500+	150	1800	12000	2100	21600
House Martin	50	80	250+	40	-	400+	550	4000
Tree Pipit	4	14	8	10	70	15	5	6
Meadow Pipit		60	35		24	15	60	20200
Yellow Wagtail	20	150	300	55	200	250	80	174
Grey Wagtail	-	-	-	-	5	10	5	14
Pied Wagtail	-	-	1	22	50+		15	12
Nightingale	1	4	1	2	1	-	-	-
Common Redstart	2	4	3	3	23	5	4	3
Whinchat	5	6	9	7	17	24	12	21

Wheatear	10	50	50	40	300	200+	200	70+
Ring Ouzel								3
Grasshopper Warbler	3	9	3	10	6	105	5	3
Sedge Warbler	180	76	45	100+	70	4	-	6
Reed Warbler	5		7	30+	54	6	-	7
Lesser Whitethroat	6	12	8	13	17	11	3	2+
Common Whitethroat	220	130	150	350	175	100	33	40
Garden Warbler	10	12	9+	15	4	3	2	4
Blackcap	23	16	25	50	45	400	19	400
Wood Warbler	-	1	-	1	-	1	3	-
Chiffchaff	275	-	-	3	12	70+	35+	395
Willow Warbler	1	250	175	290	500	100	200	11
Spotted Flycatcher	-	10	1	14	15	12	5	12
Pied Flycatcher	2	2	1	1	5	2	2	1

Shrikes: Both **Red-backed** and **Woodchat Shrikes** were present on the Scillies this week

Red-eyed Vireo: Another star performer on the Scillies stage found (I think) by a resident birder on St Mary's who discovered it in his own back garden on the morning of Sep 13

Siskin: These only started to arrive as migrants this week but are now to be heard and seen all along the south coast with the first flocks reported in Kent and East Sussex on Sep 13, then in West Sussex on Sep 14 and in Dorset by Sep 15

Northern Waterthrush: Despite a name suggesting that it is a Thrush this is in fact an American Warbler but one that looks more like a Dipper and clearly a bit of a puzzle for the taxonomists who have placed it between the Finches and the Buntings. This is the most recent arrival on the Scillies, found there on Sep 17. For more info see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Northern_Waterthrush

INSECTS

[\(Skip to Plants\)](#)

Dragonflies:

Notable sightings this week:

Willow Emerald: After several reports from Suffolk, Essex and Kent we now have a sighting of two at Strumpshaw Fen in Norfolk

Species reported this week:

Southern Hawker, Brown Hawker, Migrant Hawker, Emperor, Gold Ringed Dragonfly, Keeled Skimmer, Four Spotted Chaser, Black Darter, Ruddy Darter, Common Darter, Beautiful Demoiselle, Emerald Damselfly, Willow Emerald, Red Eyed Damselfly, Small Red-eyed Damselfly, Blue-tailed and Common Blue Damsels

Butterflies:

Notable sightings this week:

Wall Brown: After a couple of tatty specimens were seen on Sep 2 there were no more until three fresh third brood insects were seen at the High and Over downland site above the Cuckmere Valley on Sep 15

Gatekeeper: Notable by its absence from reports this week - last was at Durlston on Sep 10

Species reported this week:

Silver-spotted Skipper, Clouded Yellow, Brimstone, Large, Small and Green-veined Whites, Brown Hairstreak, Small Copper, Brown Argus, Common Blue, Chalkhill Blue, Adonis Blue, Holly Blue, Red Admiral, Painted Lady, Small Tortoiseshell, Peacock, Comma, Speckled Wood, Wall Brown, Meadow Brown, Small Heath

Moths:

Selected sightings this week:

Goatmoth: A caterpillar seen crossing a path in the Lymington area on Sep 11 was photographed and can be seen on the Hampshire Butterfly Conservation web pages

Pale Eggar: The first of this uncommon species to get a mention this year was seen at Staplecross near Hastings on Sep 14

Hummingbird Hawkmoth: Six more sightings this week including two in a West Wittering garden (mouth of Chichester Harbour) on Sep 14

Other Insects:

Selected sightings this week:

Common Wasp: On Sep 11 I was asked to identify a nest of 'bees' emerging from the ground close to a long disused garage here in Havant - the owner wished to work on the ancient car in the garage and had started to clear brambles around the garage door when he discovered the 'bees' which were of course **Common Wasps**, still very active but no threat to anyone who does not directly attack their nest. See my Diary page for Sep 13 for my comments on what might have been the fate of the garage owner had these insects been the '**Median Wasps**' which only arrived in Britain in 1980 but are now quite common and have caused severe pain to gardeners attempting to clear bushes in which the wasps have hung their nests

Stag Beetles: While inspecting the Wasps nest I learnt that several **Stag Beetles** have been seen in that area of Havant this summer in contrast to my personal single sighting. I was also pleased to see that George Spraggs on south Hayling has seen at least one **Lesser Stag Beetle** this summer (on Aug 29)

Wasp Spider: Brian Fellows found one female still on her web at Brook Meadow in Emsworth on Sep 11 and this reminded me that this is the time of year that these spiders create their artistic egg sacs which look like small pink Japanese Lanterns hanging several inches off the ground near where their web was sited. The sac which looks as if it were made of paper is in fact made of a special form of spider silk and is hung from a cluster of grass leaves which are bound together with spider web at their tips to form a dome-like structure. Although hung differently from those that I have seen and described there is an excellent photo of the female spider guarding her newly constructed sac (up to 25mm in diameter) at <http://www.adriandowling-wildlife.co.uk/p208729493/h2BB38F2A#h2bb38f2a> - another photo which is closer to what I have described can be seen at <http://rxwildlife.org.uk/2006/09/24/wasp-spider-egg-sac/>

PLANTS

[\(Skip to Other Wildlife\)](#)

Sand Spurrey: Thanks to Brian Fellows' discovery in early July of what was eventually identified as this species in the part of Sinah Common north of the Golf Course and just east of the course maintenance buildings I subsequently realised that plants which I knew of in the area south of the mini-golf course and had wrongly thought of as **Lesser Sea-Spurrey** were in fact **Sand Spurrey** and now this week I have found a new site for the plants just east of the sand dunes around the south west corner of the main Golf Course - they were in full fresh flower on Sep 15

Common Gorse: Although I found the first single flower open on Aug 24 after the bushes ceased to flower at the end of May it was not until this week that whole bushes were covered with fresh flowers that will persist through the winter

Ice Plant (*Sedum spectabile*): These plants which are much visited by butterflies in autumn also started to flower this week

Slender Hare's Ear: Although well past flowering I was pleased to find a new site for this plant in the southeast-most field of Warblington Farm on Sep 13 - see my Diary for more detail. In another corner of the same field I saw **Lesser Water Parsnip** flowering where I cannot recall noticing it in the past.

Chicory: While on Hayling on Sep 15 I came on a 'new to me' site for **Chicory** with a good show for flowering plants beside Marine Walk in the south east corner of the Island. On the same trip I found the first flowers on **Garden Asparagus** growing beside Ferry Road opposite The Kench and a new location for **Corn Parsley** by the gate of 116 Sea Front

OTHER WILDLIFE

[\(Skip to Endweek\)](#)

Frogs and Toads: Clearance of overgrown wet grassland in the Brook Meadow reserve at Emsworth this week exposed a good number of both **Frogs** and **Toads** - presumably many were small youngsters hatched this spring. This is good news for gardeners in the area around the meadow who will have the help of these amphibians to control slugs and insects in their gardens, and it is good news for those who manage the Brook Meadow reserve and who are enabling a full range of the wildlife normal for wetland habitat to survive, but it is bad news for the majority of people in the wider area around Havant in that it reminds them of times that they still remember when there were sufficient of these amphibians to leave signs of their abundance in the form of **Frogspawn** in almost every small water body (even the old kitchen sink chucked out in the garden) and massive road kills of **Toads** slowly crossing roads leading to their more restricted number of breeding ponds.

Newts: Those of us who are not familiar with the size and identifying features of **Great Crested Newts** should have a look at <http://rxwildlife.org.uk/2011/09/13/newts/#more-15136> - the second photo showing a **Great Crested** and a **Common** or **Smooth Newt** side by side in what is presumably Brian Banks hand illustrates the size difference and brings out a feature of the **Great Crested** which I was not aware of - the 'rings on the fingers' of its back feet (the size of the creature and the 'two part' crest of the male should identify the species without need to pick out this feature). The main purpose of Brian's contribution to the RX website was to make us aware that all newt species are currently seeking places to spend the winter, often a long way from their breeding ponds

Common Lizard: This week Brian Fellows illustrates the ability of all **Lizard** species, including **Slow-worms**, to escape predators by shedding their tails, which then slowly regrow (sometimes giving the **Lizard** two tails for the price of one if part of the original tail was retained alongside the new one). See <http://www.emsworthwildlife.hampshire.org.uk/0-0-301-common-lizard-seagull-bm-10.09.11.jpg> for Brian's recent photo of a **Common Lizard** which had lost most of its tail

Fungi: This week my garden lawn has just started to show the variety of fungi which have been hidden beneath the grass for the best part of a year. **Blackening Waxcap, Parrot Waxcap, Butter Waxcap (Hygrocybe ceracea), Mycena fibula** and another small pale brown agaric which comes up annually (but which I cannot yet name) can all be seen currently but others have yet to show themselves - principally the black, paddle-shaped, **Trichoglossum hirsutum** and the **Meadow Waxcap**. While on Hayling's Sinah Common this week I came on several scattered fresh examples of what might be sold as small 'Chestnut mushrooms' but I think that these, growing in very sandy soil close to the sea, were **Agaricus litoralis**.

Squirrel-tail: Strange things go on in my garden at night and early this week I heard what sounded like a vicious fight between two or more cats - next morning in the middle of the lawn were **two halves of a Grey Squirrels tail** and nearby was a small pile of something nasty still covered with large **Slugs** enjoying their breakfast of it. I am pretty sure that the creatures making the noise (**maybe Cats, maybe Foxes**) did not include a **live Grey Squirrel** - I am not aware of **Squirrels** being nocturnal and I have heard that in an encounter between a **Cat and a Squirrel** the

Cat is likely to receive serious wounds from the Squirrel's claws. I suspect that some nocturnal carnivore (perhaps a Fox) had found the body of a dead Squirrel and was carrying it home for supper when it met up with another hungry carnivore (most likely another Fox) who contested the prize but I would welcome other suggestions

WILDLIFE DIARY AND NEWS FOR SEP 12 - 18 (WEEK 37 OF 2011)

Thu 15 Sep

Around Hayling in search of Brent Geese

My records for the last five years show that if it were not for the recent strong headwinds the **first migrant Brent** might be with us now (arrival dates were 2006-Sep 15, 2007-Sep 13, 2008-Sep 15, 2009-Sep 16 and 2010-Sep 22). Not expecting to see them, today's sunshine, light wind and midday high tide suggested a cycle ride round Hayling to check out both Langstone and Chichester Harbours and I did have some reward for so doing as, while I was sitting on the roof of a wartime pillbox overlooking the Mengham Rithe area in the mouth of Chichester Harbour, I had a clear view of **six Brent** - sadly there are at least **11 Brent** summering in Chichester Harbour this year and these six showed no signs of being worried by nearby boat movements. Another hint of arrival came from Cap Gris-Nez over the Channel where three were seen today (not having been reported there previously) but those too could well have been summering birds on the move in response to the migratory itch but probably originating from somewhere within a hundred miles or so, not from Russia.

A personal birding tick today was a couple of **Whinchat** seen by the Hayling coastal path and my other notes were of **22 Great Crested Grebe** in Langstone Harbour, **five Wheatear** along the Hayling Bay shore, and big flocks of **Black-headed Gulls** flying low over two separate newly ploughed fields apparently finding some airborne insects (I have not seen this form of low level 'anting' before - the birds were no more than 20 feet off the ground).

My butterfly list was of many **Red Admirals** and **(Small?) Whites** plus several **Small Heath** on Sinah Common and **Speckled Woods** in shaded areas with one **Comma** and a probable **Peacock**. On the sandy soil of Sinah Common south of the Golf Course I found several smallish mushrooms which seem to be **Agaricus litoralis**

One new flowering plant for my personal year list was **Garden Asparagus** growing wild beside Ferry Road and a new location for **Corn Parsley** (now well past flowering) was spotted as I cycled along the Sea Front road by the gate of number 116. I also found a new site for **Chicory** (still flowering) beside the Marine Walk road running behind the Megham Rithe Sailing Club.

On Sinah Common I found a new site for **Sand Spurrey** which was in flower on the north side of the broad track running east from Gunner Point just after passing the last of the sand dunes and before the track diverges into three (approx SZ 696 989) - since Brian Fellows discovered the identity of this plant earlier this year I have now come across three sites for it on Sinah Common. A little further east I was surprised how fresh-looking were the leaves of the **Polypody Fern** which has grown in this unlikely soil for many years. Further east both the **Pale Toadflax** and **Cocks Eggs**

were still in flower while both on Sinah Common and along the Coastal Path many **Gorse Bushes** were coming into full flower.

[Wed 14 Sep](#)

Counting Egrets under a Harvest Moon

This evening I arrived at Langstone Mill Pond at 18:35, just 45 minutes before sunset, to find the tide at it lowest, the wind light and the sky clear - ideal conditions for getting an accurate count of the **Egrets** coming to roost as, especially after a period of high winds when fishing in the exposed harbours would have been difficult, the birds would stay out as long as possible and only come in to roost when the light become too dim for fishing.

Before getting down to the business of counting Egrets I had an unexpected bonus of a **Buzzard**, lazily circling and drifting east over Wade Court.

On arrival at the pond I could only see **6 Egrets** already in the trees, all juveniles, meaning that the majority of this year's young had learnt to join the adults and fish for themselves but also suggesting that these six were still expecting their parents to feed them and failing to learn the necessary skills for their own survival. I was reminded of an **albino (or at least pure white) Blackbird chick** in a nest visible from the glass corridors of the IBM building where I worked in the past - at first the parents fed their brood in the nest but the normal chicks soon fledged leaving the one white chick alone in the nest (was it afraid to show itself to predators in its eye-catching plumage?). The parents presumably continued to care for their normal young but failed to return to the nest and after a few days the corpse of the albino was seen on the ground below the nest....

This evening as the time of sunset approached I was telling passers by who asked what I was doing standing on the wooden bench by the seawall, with my back turned to the panorama of the harbour (where they thought the birding interest must lie) and staring fixedly at the seemingly birdless trees around the pond, that I was very disappointed with the number of Egrets coming to roost (at sunset my count was just 40 compared to the 157 seen on Aug 30). However things changed dramatically in the half-hour after sunset during which birds poured in until it was too dark to see the numbers I had written on my notepad - it was only on getting home that I could add them up accurately to give **a total of 198** (probably a slight undercount of the real total)

As twilight drew on I had the added interest of a **large bat** hunting over the pony field north of the pond - it was flying, silhouetted against the sky well above the tree tops but occasionally making vertical dives of around 20 feet in pursuit of prey. This was almost certainly a **Noctule rather than a Serotine**, both of which are large, come out to hunt before it is dark, and fly high from their roost to their hunting area, but - based on a chart which I have that indicates the flight paths followed by eight different bat species when hunting - of the **Serotine** it says .. "it will fly around trees or along woodland edges, almost gleaning insects from the vegetation and in the open it will make steep dives to feed very close to or even on the ground". Of the **Noctule** it says .. "at its feeding ground it flies purposefully with frequent steep dives and short glides". This latter description fits what I saw - the bat remained at height and did not fly close to vegetation or the ground.

To end this outing I had a "once a year if you are lucky" treat - climbing down from my bench and turning to look over the harbour towards Emsworth I saw the sky dominated by **a huge, reddish, 'Harvest' full moon**, low in the sky but climbing

over Thorney Island. In the past ten years I have only once before had this same bonus to one of my Egret counts and I will remember this one, as I still do the last, for at least ten years.

Tue 13 Sep

Around Warblington Farm (and a bit about Wasp nests)

A late afternoon walk to Langstone Pond, along the shore to Conigar Point and back through the Warblington Farm fields, made a couple of 'discoveries' in the shape of 'new to me' sites for both **Slender Hare's Ear** and **Lesser Water Parsnip** both in Field W of Warblington Farm (see <http://ralph-hollins.net/warblington.htm>). There was a similar lack of news from a walk around Havant yesterday - the only surprise was to see **Green Amaranth** pushing up from the edge of a tarmac drive giving access to garages behind houses in Juniper Square - it has appeared here for several years but this sighting was the first for this year.

Going back to Sunday I was asked to give an opinion on the potential danger from what turned out to be a large and still very active **Wasp nest** in the ground close to garages off Oaklands Road in Havant - the wasps had been discovered when cutting back brambles which had previously covered its entrance and as neither the person originally cutting back the brambles nor any of us standing close to the entrance (with the wasps coming in and out around our legs) were attacked so my advice was to leave well alone.

These were our native **Common Wasps** but had the nest been hanging in the Brambles they would probably have been the much more dangerous **Median Wasp (*Dolichovespula media*)** which is much more aggressive in the face of any perceived threat to its nest and will chase and inflict multiple stings on a human disturbing its nest.

A good website for photographs of all the Wasp species likely to be encountered in England is <http://www.eakringbirds.com/eakringbirds2/insectswasps.htm> and the wasp nest shown at the top of that page is that of the **Median Wasp** (but taken in winter when the leaves have fallen). Another website about the **Median Wasp** is <http://www.naturespot.org.uk/species/median-wasp>

Other wildlife news that emerged from our conversation about the Wasp nest concerned both **Stag Beetles** and **Hedgehogs** - apparently **Hedgehogs** are still quite commonly seen in the Oaklands Road gardens which abut on the Warblington School playing fields and there have been several **Stag Beetle** sightings here this year (during which I have only seen just one)

WILDLIFE DIARY AND NEWS FOR SEP 5 - 11 (WEEK 36 OF 2011)

BIRDS

Divers: Two reports of **Red-throated** this week (one in summer plumage off the North Kent coast and the other of two birds off the German coast) and four reports of **Black-throated** (one off the Exe estuary in Devon, a second off the east coast of England and the others off the Netherlands and France)

Grebes: Four reports of **Red-necked** (one going west off Dungeness, two off the English east coast and one off the Netherlands) and two of **Black-necked** (one off Abbotsbury in Dorset and one (maybe two) off the Netherlands)

Petrels: The first report of a **Madeira Petrel** for the year was from Cornwall on Sep 6. On Sep 5 Cornwall also had a probable **Bulwer's Petrel** which would have been a first for the year. On Sep 7 a probable **Wilson's Storm Petrel** was off Porthgwarra (near Land's End), Start Point (near the southern tip of Devon) claimed **105 Storm Petrels** on Sep 6 and RBA reported a UK total of **41 Leach's Petrels** on that day.

Shearwaters: Plenty of these around in stormy weather - on Sep 6 RBA said they knew of a total of **27 Cory's Shearwater** that day and on Sep 4 their UK total of **Great Shearwaters was 249**. On Sep 6 Pendeen (just north of Lands End) reported more than **230 Sooty Shearwaters** and Berry Head (just south of Torquay in Devon) had **736 Manx**. On Sep 4 a single possible **Mediterranean (Yelkouan) Shearwater** was reported at Lands End and on Sep 6 a 12 hour seawatch at Berry Head set a new Devon county record of **304 Balearic Shearwaters** in one day.

Hérons: The **Night Heron** which had been at Weir Wood reservoir in north Sussex from Aug 30 to Sep 3 seems to have flown a few miles south west to be seen at Ardingly Reservoir on Sep 9. The Thornham Marshes (Thorney Island) **Cattle Egret** was still present on Sep 10, as was the **Great White Egret** at the Blashford Lakes. Oddity of the week was an RBA report on Sep 4 of **Five Glossy Ibis** flying over Atwick in Yorkshire. The only **Spoonbill** reports from England came from Poole Harbour where there were nine on Sep 4 but over in the Netherlands a flock of 39 were seen on Sep 9

Geese: Although I have not picked up any reports of **Barnacle Geese** in Sussex since the end of April (when there were 3 at Pulborough Brooks) I am pretty sure that a current report of **30 Barnacles** at Barcombe Mills near Lewes is of feral geese resident in Sussex through the year and not of the wild birds which are seen in the depths of winter. Also moving around to find suitable winter quarters were **340 Canada Geese** which flew south over Fareham on Sep 4 (we will soon be hearing reports from non-birders that **the Brent are back** based on their sightings of similar movements of **Canada Geese** over their house but the genuine Brent will also be arriving in our Solent harbours before long - any time after mid-September when the winds permit). Of local interest it appears that the lone Canada Goose which has been on Emsworth ponds since Aug 31 arrived of its own volition and may soon move on to join a feral flock on Petersfield Heath Pond

Ducks: The **Wigeon** which have been returning from breeding since mid-August were present in substantial numbers (82) for the Thorney Island WeBS count on Sep 2 and there were 30 in Pagham Harbour on Sep 6. **140 Teal** were at the Thorney Great Deeps on Sep 2 with another 54 over in the West Wittering area on Sep 3 and on Sep 7 there were 130 at Yarmouth on the Isle of Wight. Pagham Harbour had 12 Pintail on Sep 6 and the Blashford Lakes had 89 Shoveler by Sep 9. A single Goosander was reported to have been off the Hayling Oysterbeds on Sep 7 but I think this was seen distantly from Farlington Marshes and is more likely to have been a summering Merganser.

Raptors: A wave of departing **Honey Buzzards** on Sep 3 brought one over Rowlands Castle, another over Dungemess and a third over the South Foreland in

Kent plus up to 10 over each of six sites in the Netherlands. This was followed on Sep 4 by a count of 261 over one Belgian site (plus small numbers at five other sites) and on Sep 5 by 146 over one of 5 Belgian sites. The Sep 4 count seems to have been the peak of the autumn passage for north west Europe and was matched by a count of 2327 over southern Spain as the birds on various routes converged on their Mediterranean crossing point. The two summering **Black Kites** were still over west Cornwall this week and a report of a **White-tailed Eagle** over Germany on Sep 4 is more likely to have been of a new bird heading south west for winter rather than our last winter's bird which spent this summer in Lincolnshire but was last seen there on Aug 3 followed by a sighting over Tangmere (east of Chichester) on Aug 18 as if it were on its way back to Hampshire (but nothing has been heard of it since). Few reports of Harriers this week but birders on the Downs south of Pulborough watched both a male **Hen Harrier** and a female **Marsh Harrier** hunting in the same area (another Marsh Harrier was seen at Titchfield Haven on the same day - Sep 5).

Sep 8 found a young **Goshawk** over the Blashford Lakes near Ringwood (perhaps recently expelled by its parent from the New Forest site where it was hatched?) and Sep 9 brought the first indication of **Sparrowhawks** abandoning the far north for winter quarters further south when 73 passed over one German site. 16 reports of **Ospreys** at south coast sites is not unexpected. **Merlins** have been seen in Hampshire, Kent and Dorset this week and eight sightings of **Hobbies** show they are still with us

Game birds: A report of **20 Grey Partridge** and **30 Red-legs** both seen on the Sussex Downs near Ditchling Beacon on Sep 9 probably indicates the release of reared birds (not necessarily for shooting as I believe that there is still a voluntary ban on shooting Greys while their numbers are low - see http://www.shootingtimes.co.uk/features/395946/Wild_grey_partridges_the_recovery_story.html written in 2009)

Common Crane: In addition to the recently re-introduced birds in Somerset and the flock of 30+ which has established itself in Norfolk (starting with the arrival of two birds in 1979) we have this summer seen two birds exploring the Haywards Heath area of Sussex in July and then apparently settling in the Pevensy Levels from mid August until the present - is this to be another permanent colonisation?

Waders: On Sep 3 a group of 3 **Dotterel** flew over the Sussex Downs, another was seen over the South Foreland in Kent and at least two were seen in Belgium and this week one on a different route flew over Devon on Sep 5. Also on Sep 5 the first south coast **Sanderling** flock of more than 100 birds was at the Black Point wader roost in the mouth of Chichester Harbour (112 counted there). **Little Stint** were at eight south coast sites this week including one at Farlington Marshes on Sep 5 and over the water a flock of 39 were at a Netherlands site on Sep 9. Rarest wader of the week was a **Least Sandpiper** seen and photographed at Farlington Marshes by Jason Crook on Sep 8 (sadly it eluded all other observers) - this seems to have been the second to reach Britain this year after one in Yorkshire in May and it was the second ever to have been seen in Hampshire after one at Farlington in May 1977. The BTO has 28 records of the species between 1950 and 2007 and it seems that this year's two reports are the first since 2007. Least Sandpiper is

normally only seen in the Americas, breeding in Canada and moving to central America for the winter. Other uncommon species this week have been a **Baird's Sandpiper** at Hayle in Cornwall and several **Pectoral Sandpipers** in Cornwall and the Scillies. **Curlew Sandpipers** have been at nine southern sites including nine together at the Exe estuary on Sep 8 after more than 15 at Christchurch Harbour on Sep 4. Southsea Castle had its first **Purple Sandpiper** for this autumn on Sep 7 when another was at West Bay in Dorset (another had been on the north Kent coast on July 23) and up to 6 Buff-breasted Sandpipers have been in Cornwall and the Scillies this week (others have been in the UK since Aug 7). **Ruff** have been at eight southern sites this week including one inland at Alresford Pond near Winchester plus others at Farlington Marshes and Pagham Harbour. **Black-tailed Godwit** flocks reported this week include 62 at the Thorney Island Great Deeps roost on Sep 2, 339 at Farlington Marshes on Sep 7, 300+ at the Exe estuary on Sep 4 and 153 at Hook/Warsash on Sep 9 plus 98 at Yarmouth, IoW, on Sep 7. Three **Whimbrel** went past Dungeness on Sep 8 but their passage is more or less over. **Green Sandpiper** are still on the move with reports from seven sites including one of 14 birds at Weir Wood reservoir on Sep 8. Single **Wood Sandpiper** were seen at two sites in Cornwall and at Sandwich Bay this week while a juvenile **Spotted Sandpiper** was still at Plymouth on Sep 5. Only one **Red-necked Phalarope** was seen in Britain (Cornwall) but there were up to 7 **Grey Phalaropes** including one at Freshwater, IoW, and another at Lymington.

Skuas, Gulls and Terns: RBA reported a total of 36 **Pomarine Skuas** in Britain on Sep 5 including at least one off south Devon, on Sep 7 42 **Arctic Skuas** went past Pendeen in Cornwall and of 14 **Long-tailed Skuas** in Britain on Sep 5 one went past Dungeness and others were seen off Lymington and at Christchurch Harbour. One **Bonxie** was seen off Sandy Point, Hayling, on Sep 6 but across the Channel Sep 7 brought a count of 109 at a French site. One juvenile **Little Gull** was over Ivy Lake at Chichester and another was again seen at Hook/Warsash while elsewhere in Britain one site recorded 113 of them on Sep 7. On Sep 6 RBA reported a UK total of 99 **Sabine's Gulls** (one of them at Sandy Point on Hayling Island). The Christchurch Harbour **Ring-billed Gull** was seen on Sep 7 and 9 while the **Glaucous Gull** which has been at Dungeness since last winter was still there on Sep 9. By Sep 9 the only reported **Sandwich Terns** were just 40 at Christchurch Harbour with 100 **Common Terns** there. 10 **Arctic Terns** came past Dungeness on Sep 9 (when 5 were seen at the Blashford Lakes) but the last report of **Little Terns** was of 12 passing Dungeness on Sep 5 with 47 **Black Terns** though they have been followed by seven more sightings up to Sep 9

Auks: During the week Devon had sightings of up to 12 **Razorbills**, 2 **Guillemots** and just one **Puffin**

Passerines:

Bee Eater: Still at least one in the Scillies

Citrine Wagtail: Singles reported this week at Lymington, Norfolk, Orkney and the Scillies

White Wagtail: Singles seen at Portland and at Hook/Warsash

Blackbird: On Sep 6 an entry on the SOS website from someone living in Chichester reported the sorry sight of a Blackbird seen in their garden three weeks ago with both wings out of action (one drooping, the other hanging on by a thread). Three weeks after seeing this what must have been the same bird was seen again with the drooping wing still drooping and the other now missing altogether. The observer was surprised that the bird had survived for so long - presumably it can still feed and can hop up into the low branches of shrubs and so work its way up the branches.

Mistle Thrush: A flock of 19 birds first reported from Furze Hill (New Forest edge in the South Gorley area just north of the Blashford lakes) on July 14 has since been seen (with slightly differing numbers of birds) six times up to Sep 8. Four other flocks with numbers greater than just one family have been seen in southern England this summer but none have been seen more than once.

Melodious Warbler: One was at Portland Bill from Sep 5 to 8

Barred Warbler: RBA reported a UK total of 4 birds on Sep 5 but none were in the south of England

Arctic Warbler: One in Shetland on Sep 4 and 5

Firecrest: Two (presumed arrivals from the continent) were at Dungeness on Sep 9

** COASTAL COUNTS OF DEPARTING MIGRANTS **							
Bird Name	31/07	07/08	14/08	21/08	28/08	04/09	11/09
Turtle Dove	1	4	6	10	7	5	4
Cuckoo	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Nightjar	-	-	-	-	1	1	1
Swift	80	1500	20	29	22	24	5
Wryneck	-	-	1	3	1	2	3
Sand Martin	500	300	1000+	450	3000	1000	2000
Swallow	100	15000+	500+	150	1800	12000	2100
House Martin	50	80	250+	40	-	400+	550
Tree Pipit	4	14	8	10	70	15	5
Meadow Pipit		60	35		24	15	60
Yellow Wagtail	20	150	300	55	200	250	80
Grey Wagtail	-	-	-	-	5	10	5
Pied Wagtail	-	-	1	22	50+		15
Nightingale	1	4	1	2	1	-	-
Common Redstart	2	4	3	3	23	5	4

Whinchat	5	6	9	7	17	24	12
Wheatear	10	50	50	40	300	200+	200
Grasshopper Warbler	3	9	3	10	6	105	5
Sedge Warbler	180	76	45	100+	70	4	-
Reed Warbler	5		7	30+	54	6	-
Lesser Whitethroat	6	12	8	13	17	11	3
Common Whitethroat	220	130	150	350	175	100	33
Garden Warbler	10	12	9+	15	4	3	2
Blackcap	23	16	25	50	45	400	19
Wood Warbler	-	1	-	1	-	1	3
Chiffchaff	275	-	-	3	12	70+	35+
Willow Warbler	1	250	175	290	500	100	200
Spotted Flycatcher	-	10	1	14	15	12	5
Pied Flycatcher	2	2	1	1	5	2	2

Woodchat Shrike: One or two in the Scillies throughout this week

Rook: 14 'passage birds' flew west over Christchurch Harbour on Sep 4

Starling: Autumn flocks now building up in southern England. 800 were reported at Hook/Warsash on Sep 6 and I saw around 300 on wires over the field north of Nore Barn at Emsworth on Sep 9 while I am sure there are several other and bigger flocks now roosting unreported in southern reed beds, coastal piers and other places.

Finches: Both **Chaffinch** and **Brambling** appeared among the 'Trektellen Remarkable' sightings this week and a flock of 170 **Tree Sparrows** was reported from somewhere in northern Britain as was a flock of 2129 **Siskin** on Sep 7. **Linnet** flocks are also increasing with a peak of 320 at Sandwich Bay this week.

Lapland Buntings were in the news last winter with a peak count of more than 150 in Cornwall on Mar 6 and it looks as if they may be going to invade the west country again this winter after one appeared at the Lizard on Sep 4 becoming 8 in the Scillies on Sep 7

INSECTS

Dragonflies:

Notable sightings this week:

Nothing remarkable this week

Species reported this week:

Brown Hawker, Migrant Hawker, Black-tailed Skimmer, Keeled Skimmer, Common Darter, Emerald Damselfly, Blue-tailed Damselfly, Common Blue Damselfly,

Butterflies:

Notable sightings this week:

The only thing remarkable about this week is that any butterflies have been seen. Even the three white species failed to be reported though I am sure they were all on the wing when the temperature, wind and rain permitted

Species reported this week:

Clouded Yellow, Brown Hairstreak, Small Copper, Brown Argus, Adonis Blue, Red Admiral, Painted Lady, Small Tortoiseshell, Comma, Speckled Wood, Gatekeeper, Small Heath,

Moths:

Selected sightings this week:

Raspberry Clearwing: One seen in Brighton was remarkable for still being on the wing in September

Hummingbird Hawkmoth: Just one seen on the Sussex Downs

Elephant Hawkmoth caterpillar: One seen in a very exposed situation on a footpath in Storrington near Pulborough was carefully moved to a spot where it was less likely to be trodden on but I suspect it will have soon returned to the path if it thought that the path led to a suitable place for pupation in the soil

Other Insects:

Selected sightings this week:

Rhododendron leafhopper (*Graphocephala fennahi*): One found in a mothtrap at Staplecross near Hastings was a new species for me and worth having a look at (see <http://rxwildlife.org.uk/category/all-latest-news/insects/> which also tells us that this is an introduced American species and one of the very few that eats Rhododendron leaves)

PLANTS

Common Rampion Fumitory: Seen flourishing and flowering by the roadside fence of the New Lane allotments in Havant on Sep 9 where I had looked for it in vain in the spring

Early Dog Violet: At least three flowers seen on Sep 9 among the massive display of leaves left over from the spring flowering in the Havant Eastern Road cemetery

Corn Spurrey: My first sight of this in flower for the year by the edge of the Sweetcorn crop in the Warblington Farm field at Conigar Point - seen with **Field Woundwort** immediately inside the unobstructed way in over the sea wall

Spotted Medick: This had just started to re-flower (for the first time since June) at several places in Havant on Sep 9

Dog Rose: Single flowers seen among the hip on plants along the Langstone South Moors shore on Sep 5 and the Warblington Farm shoreline on Sep 9

Marsh Gentian: Not something I am likely to come across in the Havant area but I see that Graeme Lyons found one flowering at a Sussex site on Sep 6

Thorn Apple: The plants by the Havant Station Taxi Rank still have some flowers but most have now turned to the distinctive seed pods which give the plant its name - see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Datura_stramonium for an illustration of the leaves, flowers and seed pods

Sea Wormwood: This plant never seems to open its flowers but the white tinge to its flower buds which persists for most of the summer has now given way to a yellow tinge which I presume to be its shedding of pollen to show that it is now in flower

OTHER WILDLIFE

Harvest Mice: Volunteers clearing vegetation at Emsworth's Brook Meadow site on Sep 4 came across an occupied Harvest Mouse nest (two mice were seen fleeing from it!). The nest was left undamaged and work in that area was suspended in the hope that the mice would return. See <http://www.lboro.org/~wwatch/Infopages/mice.htm> for some basic info about these mice and this tells me that they are still active in summer mode- when they sleep by day and feed by night - until October (so there could have been young in the nest that was found) and that they then build a winter nest low down under e.g. a hedge and become active in daytime. Winter nests are only about 5cm in diameter and these small nests can be found in summer but a pregnant female builds a nest of around 10 cm in diameter and one of these breeding nests was found at Brook Meadow in 2007 so the nest found this week could well have had young in it.

Bat hunting over water by day: Brian Fellow's Emsworth wildlife website (<http://www.emsworthwildlife.hampshire.org.uk/0-0-0-wildlife-diary.htm>) this week has a superb photo by Richard Somerscocks of a bat hunting over a small pond among the 'deckhouses' adjacent to the Emsworth marina and after seeing the photo local bat expert Nik Knight said that it was not of a **Daubenton's Bat** (a species that hunts more or less exclusively over water) as that has a white belly (see photo of one catching prey at <http://www.bedsbatgroup.org.uk/bats%20in%20beds/daubenton.html>) and was probably a '**Sopano Pipistrelle**' on the grounds that that is the commoner of the two Pipistrelle species found hereabouts (called Soprano as its calls are higher pitched than those of the Common Pipistrelle)

Fungi: Still no massive autumn outburst of fungi but I did come across four species this week ...

a) **Giant Polypore (Meripilus giganteus)** was seen on tree stumps in Emsworth Road, Havant and in the Havant Eastern Road cemetery with others growing round the base of an old Horse Chestnut in Havant Park

b) **Dead Man's Fingers (Xylaria polymorpha)** was also found on a small tree stump in Havant Park at the foot of the brick wall along the east side of the Park between the public toilets and the exit to Havant Station

c) **Agaricus comtulus** - a possible id for a mushroom like fungus found by the edge of the slip road coming to the Langstone roundabout from the eastbound A27. The pure white cap could have been that of a **Field Mushroom** but the gills seemed to be pure white when first picked and that would make it a very out of season **St George's Mushroom** but by the time I got home the gills were turning pinkish and would I think have become a brown colour.

d) **Leccinum crocipodium** - again only a possible id for a small cluster of boletus-type fungi growing at the foot of an old Holm Oak beside the main road passing Langstone High Street. When found they were already old and dry but had cracked caps similar to Roger Phillips photo of **Yellow-cracking Bolete** except that there was no hint of yellow (the new English name for this species is **Saffron Bolete**) and when cut the flesh and stem did not go through the colour changes described by Phillips (though both these deficiencies may have been the result of the desiccated state of the specimen)

WILDLIFE DIARY AND NEWS FOR SEP 5 - 11 (WEEK 36 OF 2011)

Fri 9 Sep

Havant and Emsworth

This morning I took a walk around Havant finding the **Early Dog Violets** just starting to reflower in Havant Cemetery and **Common Ramping Fumitory** flourishing in the New Lane fenceline of the allotments (where I thought it had been eliminated as this is the first time I have seen it this year).

On my way home **Spotted Medick** was re-flowering in several places after not being seen since June and in Havant Park I not only found **Giant Polypore** starting to flourish at the foot of an old Chestnut Tree near the loos but also (a little bit further north on my way to Havant Station) I spotted something odd at the foot of the eastern wall of the park behind some shrubs - this was a small tree stump covered with small, jet-black, cylindrical spikes, each no more than 5 cm long and 2 cm in diameter. These were fresh examples of **Xylaria polymorpha**, the fungus commonly known as **Dead Man's Fingers**. Snapping one of these fingers off the stump I found that the 'flesh' showing where I had broken the finger was pure white and back at home, after putting the specimen down on some paper while I had lunch, I found that it had shot out a considerable number of black spores to leave a black outline on the paper when I picked up the fungus. Before getting home I found that the **Thorn Apple plants** in the station 'flower bed' adjacent to the taxi rank were now covered with thorny globular fruit.

This afternoon I cycled to Emsworth via Nore Barn and when in that area I diverted to Conigar Point to have a look in the Sweetcorn field at the point where I not only saw **Field Woundwort** still flowering but also my first **Corn Spurrey** of the year in flower. Stopping at the picnic bench by the Nore Barn saltings I not only found both **Greater** and **Lesser Sea-Spurrey** in flower but also found **Sea Wormwood** as near to being in flower as it ever gets (having a yellowish tinge to its flower-buds which have up to now been pure white).

Reaching Emsworth I rode up Lumley Road to confirm that the **Skullcap** is still in flower, then through Brook Meadow where I saw **Purple Loosestrife** and the 'pure white flowered' **Common Comfrey** which I have not seen elsewhere

Mon 5 Sep

Budds Farm and the Langstone area

A walk to Budds Farm and back via Langstone village gave me my first sight of fallen **Conkers** for the autumn but very little else other than two fungi of whose identity I cannot be certain. The first species was growing on the side of the sliproad leading from the eastbound A27 to the Langstone roundabout very close to the roundabout and appeared to have a pure white cap and pure white gills making it look very similar to the **St George's Mushrooms** of spring but by the time I got home the specimen that I picked already acquiring a pinkish tinge to its gills and they would soon, I feel sure, have turned mushroom brown as they shed spores had I left the specimen in situ. Using Roger Phillips book I felt fairly confident that the species was **Agaricus comtulus**. (I must go back and check for mature specimens!)

The second specimen was a **Bolete** (i.e. having a sponge like structure below its cap from which the spores emerge via tubes rather than the gills below the caps of 'mushroom like' fungi) and it was growing at the foot of a Holm Oak tree close to where the zebra crossing takes you over the main road to Langstone High Street. This was a much older specimen and almost dried out with a very cracked cap. The best name I could come up with was **Leccinum crocipodium**

WILDLIFE DIARY AND NEWS FOR AUG 29 - SEP 4 (WEEK 35 OF 2011)

BIRDS

Divers: One **Black-throated** off the Netherlands on Aug 31 and the first **White-billed** of the winter seen off Pembrokeshire on Sep 1

Grebes: Autumn flocks of **Great Crested** growing fast in both Portsmouth (15 seen on Sep 1) and Langstone Harbours (30 in Chalkdock on Sep 2). A Red-necked was reported to have been in the Little Lake area of Langstone Harbour (the area overlooked by Budds Mound) for a week prior to Aug 30 while other singles have been reported off Cap Gris-nez on Aug 30, off Dungeness on Aug 31, and heading south off Spurn Point on Sep 1. Perhaps more exciting was a **Black-necked** seen briefly in Pagham Harbour on Sep 3 - this sounds like the first autumn arrival in the south unlike the one seen at Blashford Lakes through July and August.

Black-browed Albatross: On May 21 one was seen off the Ayrshire coast of Scotland and it has just been spotted for the second time this year off the Yorkshire coast on Sep 1. This is likely to be the lone individual (now thought to be about 50 years old) which has been seen annually since 1967 seeking female company in various Scottish Gannet colonies during their breeding season but having to play the reverse role of Ancient Mariner wandering the north Atlantic for the rest of the year

Great Shearwater: I have noted 20 reports of this species during this year, all but three seen off Cornwall or the Scillies and all but two being of less than a dozen birds - on Aug 25 there were 70 off the Scillies and now 2003 were recorded passing Lands End on Sep 3 - I can only guess this is the work of Hurricane Irene which may also be responsible for the presence of an 'unprecedented' count of around 10,000 Manx Shearwaters off Portland on Aug 30

Swinhoe's Storm-petrel (*Oceanodroma monorhis*): A 'possible' report of one off Cornwall on Aug 31 has not been confirmed but would be only the fifth or sixth to have ever reached Britain from its home area in the China seas. The species is about the same size as a Leach's Petrel but has a brown plumage

Bittern: Breeding has been officially confirmed in the Kent Stour valley where an adult has been seen with three juveniles this week. Another report comes from north Devon where a non-birder saw a bird on Sep 1 at Sherpa Marsh (estuary of River Taw near Barnstable) which was probably a Bittern and if so an indication that Bitterns are already heading south to winter quarters

Night Heron: One has been at Weir Wood reservoir near Crowborough in north Sussex from Aug 30 to Sep 3 at least

Cattle Egret: The bird which has been on the Thornham Marshes by the Thorney Great Deeps east since Aug 14 was still there on Sep 3. Another has been at Dungeness since Aug 29 and third individual arrived at the Exe estuary in Devon on Sep 3

Little Egret: On Sep 1 the Scillies reported 'the usual autumn' influx of 14 birds and this significant autumn increase in numbers can be detected throughout southern England though no one has given an authoritative account of where the birds come from (and disappear to in the early spring). Some increase must come from breeding but the young do not all die in the first few months of the new year so I can only conclude that there is a significant migration from the continent to Britain each autumn with a return of many birds before the start of the next breeding season and that this movement is undetected because the birds do not flock and pass through the traditional migrant departure and arrival points. Latest local roost counts have been 123 roosting near the Thorney Little Deeps on Aug 27 and 157 at Langstone Mill Pond on Aug 30

Great White Egret: Although Little Egrets do not feature in Trektellen reports their larger cousins do show spring and autumn peaks - this year numbers peaked at 5 birds seen at one Belgian site on Apr 10 and at 23 birds at a Netherlands site on Sep 4

Grey Heron: On Aug 30 the count at one Netherlands site shot up to 200 birds

Purple Heron: On Aug 30 the count at one Netherlands site was 304

White Stork: Sep 1 brought the years highest count of 190 at a Belgian site

Spoonbill: There were four on Brownsea Island in Poole Harbour on Aug 27 but only three on Aug 30 (after one had been seen at both Christchurch Harbour and Pagham Harbour on Aug 29 - maybe the same bird was back over Christchurch

Harbour on Aug 31). Over in the Netherlands Aug 30 brought a count of 36 at one site (only second highest for the year after 58 on July 10)

Black Swan: A visit to West Ashling pond (west of Chichester) on Aug 29 confirmed the presence of a single pair there

Canada Goose: 225 turned up in Pagham Harbour on Sep 1 and Fareham Creek had 340 on Sep 4. A single bird arrived in Emsworth (on Peter Pond) on Sep 2 but this most probably arrived via human transport.

Wigeon: 12 arrived at Hook/Warsash on Aug 31, 12 were also new at Pagham Harbour on Sep 1 when Portsmouth Harbour had 26, there were 82 at the Thorney Deeps on Sep 2 (with 140 Teal) and on Sep 3 the Exe estuary in Devon had 47 with 175+ Teal

Pintail: Pagham Harbour had 17 on Sep 3 and smaller numbers have been reported this week at Dungeness, Exmouth and Lymington

Garganey: One was still in England on Sep 1 at Exeter in Devon and another was at Farlington Marshes on Sep 2

Shoveler: The Blashford Lakes at Ringwood had 32 on Aug 28 and Fleet Pond had 11 on Sep 3 while the Milton Lakes in Portsmouth had 7 on Aug 30 and Budds Farm pools had 8 on Sep 2

Scaup: Five females were reported at Weir Wood reservoir on Sep 2

Goldeneye: One was off Flamborough Head in Yorkshire on Aug 28

Honey Buzzard: We must now be at the height of their autumn migration, marked by a count of 2327 passing over a site in southern Spain on Sep 2. Here in northern Europe a German site reported 224 on Sep 1 and in England Dungeness had 6 over on Sep 2 (and Dulston reported one heading west over Dorset that day)

Marsh Harrier: One was seen over Farlington Marshes on three days this week

Hen Harrier: A male was seen at Wakehurst Place (Crawley in Sussex) on Sep 2 and one flew in to Sandwich Bay from the north east on Sep 3

Pallid Harrier: A juvenile male was in the Scillies from Aug 29 to Sep 3

Montagu's Harrier: A young bird was over the Isle of Wight on Aug 27 and 28

Osprey: Singles reported this week from nine sites in southern England with a peak count of 3 over the Exe estuary on Aug 31. The Thornham Marshes bird does not seem to have been seen since Aug 31 but one was still in the Pilsey area on Sep 3 when two separate birds were in Langstone Harbour.

Merlin: Now widespread in southern England with sightings at seven sites this week including a probable at the Thornham Marshes on Aug 27

Hobby: Sightings now getting fewer but one was over Newlands Farm south of Fareham on Aug 27 and one at the Thornham Marshes on Sep 3

Quail: Singles at Durlston on Sep 2 and Portland on Sep 3

Spotted Crane: One in Somerset on Aug 29 and a probable at the Exe estuary on Aug 30

Coot: A count of 630 at the Blashford Lakes on Aug 31

Avocet: Movement west through southern England is getting under way with 3 already at the Exe estuary by Aug 31 and subsequent sightings of 2 at Christchurch Harbour on Sep 2 and of another at the Thornham Marshes on Sep 3

Dotterel: Six sightings this week were mostly on the near continent but included two birds at Folkestone on Aug 31 and three on Kithurst Hill south of Storrington (Pulborough area) on Sep 3

Golden Plover: 300 at Dungeness on Aug 29 and 220 on Rye Harbour on Sep 2. Further west were 6 at Pagham Harbour on Aug 29, 6 at Climping (Worthing area) on Aug 31 and 1 at Christchurch Harbour on Sep 3

Knot: Biggest flock this week was of 80 at Dungeness followed by 50+ at the Exe estuary on Aug 30 (increasing to 94 there on Sep 3) Locally there were 53 at Farlington Marshes on Sep 3 but only three or four at Thorney Island for the week end WeBS count.

Little Stint: Present at eight southern sites this week with a promise of more to come (four birds at Rye Harbour on Sep 2)

Temminck's Stint: The bird at Pulborough Brooks has not been seen since Aug 27 and one reported at Farlington Marshes on Aug 31 was re-identified as a Little Stint.

Curlew Sandpiper: Numbers of these are also reaching autumn peaks with 11 at the Exe estuary on Sep 3

Ruff: Numbers of these are perhaps now past their peak - after a count of 14 at Pulborough Brooks on Aug 28 the highest count has been of 4 at Sidlesham Ferry (Pagham Harbour) on Sep 3

Black-tailed Godwit: Highest count this week was 375 at Hook (Warsash) on Aug 31. There were only 62 at the Thorney Deeps for the Sep 2 WeBS count

Bar-tailed Godwit: Very few in southern England but there were 1293 at Cap Gris-nez near Calais on Aug 30

Whimbrel: Autumn passage seems to be over though several will remain with us through the winter

Greenshank: On Sep 2 there were 24 at Farlington Marshes and 85 at the Thorney Deeps

Med Gull: These gulls rely on fields and other inland sites for nearly all their food so the start of autumn ploughing brings them a bonanza of worms - on Aug 30 Folkestone reported 209 of them following a plough

Ring-billed Gull: The bird that was at Christchurch Harbour on Aug 3 and 6 was not seen there again until Aug 28 but it was seen again on Sep 1. No others have been reported this autumn

Terns: A major departure was noted at Dungeness on Aug 27 when **11,000 Common Terns** were seen after counts of **1500 Sandwich, 55 Little and 27 Black** on the previous day. A single Whiskered Tern was seen at the Barnes wetland in London on Sep 2 and an American Black Tern was reported from Ireland on Sep 3 (the first for two years)

Short-eared Owl: Five reports this week are the first since May. The first of these was at Pagham Harbour on Aug 28 and on Aug 30 (when I was counting Egrets coming to roost at Langstone Pond) a passer by told me that a Short-eared Owl had been hunting over the Wade Court south meadow/pony field that morning. Aug 31 brought a Trektellen report of 2 seen in Fife (Scotland). More recently the 'first of the autumn' was logged at Portland on Sep 2 before the Oare Marshes in north Kent had one on Sep 3

Departing summer migrants: The following table gives some impression of the rate at which these birds are leaving by showing the single highest count recorded at an English coastal site during the week

** COASTAL COUNTS OF DEPARTING MIGRANTS **						
Bird Name	31/07	07/08	14/08	21/08	28/08	04/09
Turtle Dove	1	4	6	10	7	5
Cuckoo	1	1	1	1	1	1
Nightjar	-	-	-	-	1	1
Swift	80	1500	20	29	22	24
Wryneck	-	-	1	3	1	2
Sand Martin	500	300	1000+	450	3000	1000
Swallow	100	15000+	500+	150	1800	12000
House Martin	50	80	250+	40	-	400+
Tree Pipit	4	14	8	10	70	15
Meadow Pipit		60	35		24	15
Yellow Wagtail	20	150	300	55	200	250
Grey Wagtail	-	-	-	-	5	10
Pied Wagtail	-	-	1	22	50+	
Nightingale	1	4	1	2	1	-
Common Redstart	2	4	3	3	23	5
Whinchat	5	6	9	7	17	24
Wheatear	10	50	50	40	300	200+

Grasshopper Warbler	3	9	3	10	6	105
Sedge Warbler	180	76	45	100+	70	4
Reed Warbler	5		7	30+	54	6
Lesser Whitethroat	6	12	8	13	17	11
Common Whitethroat	220	130	150	350	175	100
Garden Warbler	10	12	9+	15	4	3
Blackcap	23	16	25	50	45	400
Wood Warbler	-	1	-	1	-	1
Chiffchaff	275	-	-	3	12	70+
Willow Warbler	1	250	175	290	500	100
Spotted Flycatcher	-	10	1	14	15	12
Pied Flycatcher	2	2	1	1	5	2

Hoopoe: Two reports this week from Somerset on Aug 28 and Pembrokeshire on Aug 29

Wryneck: Although the maximum count at any one site was only two the RBA service reported a total of 14 in the UK on Sep 2

Grey Wagtail: Ten reports this week show that this species is now on the move

White Wagtail: Singles seen at Portland on Aug 27 and at Hook/Warsash on Aug 31

Robin: On Sep 2 Durlston reported an influx with 40 new birds there and on that same day a Belgian site reported 48 passage birds

Black Redstart: 11 birds were at Folkestone on Aug 30

Stonechat: Christchurch Harbour reported the arrival of 33 birds on Sep 3

Grasshopper Warbler: Singles were reported from several Devon sites this week but the ringers at Titchfield Haven were almost overwhelmed with 105 birds in their nets on Aug 27

Aquatic Warbler: The third for this autumn in southern England was ringed at South Milton Ley in southwest Devon on Sep 3

Melodious Warbler: Singles at Prawle in Devon on Aug 29, Portland on Aug 30 and the Scillies on Sep 1

Blackcap: Mass exodus started on Aug 29 with 400 at Beachy Head (and 365 at a Belgian site on Aug 31)

Firecrest: Seen at 3 sites this week with a peak of 8 at Abbotsbury in Dorset on Sep 1

Red-backed Shrike: One in Norfolk on Aug 29 and a juvenile in the Bournemouth area on Sep 1

Woodchat Shrike: One in the Scillies this week

Jay: Birds at the Weir Wood reservoir in north Sussex were seen burying acorns this week

Carrion Crow: The regular flock which is seen in the Weston Shore area south of Southampton numbered 280 on Aug 28 but more interestingly a flock of 50+ birds gathered on the roof of a Portsmouth tower block on Aug 30 and held a ten minute 'court session' before flying off towards the Milton area of Southsea

Hawfinch: Two were an unexpected sight at Christchurch Harbour on Sep 1. An **Ortolan Bunting** was also there that day

INSECTS

Dragonflies:

Notable sightings this week:

Nothing special to report

Species reported this week:

Southern Hawker, Common Hawker, Brown Hawker, Migrant Hawker, Emperor, Gold Ringed Dragonfly, Black Darter, Ruddy Darter, Common Darter, Banded Demoiselle, Emerald Damselfly, Willow Emerald Damselfly, Small Red-eyed Damselfly, Large Red Damselfly, Blue-tailed Damselfly, Common Blue Damselfly, Azure Damselfly

Butterflies:

Notable sightings this week:

Both **Small, Dingy** and **Large Skippers** appear to have left the stage

Clouded Yellow: A minor influx on southerly winds brought reports from nine southern sites including Farlington Marshes, Portsdown Hill, Hayling North Common and Thorney Island Deeps.

Silver Studded Blue: A fresh looking specimen was seen in the New Forest on Sep 2 a full month after the last previous sighting (the latest for Hampshire in 2009 was Aug 31)

Red Admiral: Plenty of these seen this week with a peak count of 72 feeding on Hemp Agrimony at the QE Country Park near Petersfield on Sep 3

Silver Washed Fritillary: Two still flying this week, one in Sussex on Aug 31 and one in Hampshire on Sep 3

Pearl-bordered Fritillary: A captive bred specimen (kept outdoors in natural conditions) emerged in Sussex on Aug 25 but none have been seen in their woodland sites

Marbled White: Still flying at Durlston on Sep 2

Small Heath: A count of 213 fresh specimens on Sep 21 at Eelmoor near Farnborough

Species reported this week:

Lulworth Skipper, Silver Spotted Skipper, Clouded Yellow, Brimstone, Large White, Small White, Green Veined White, Brown Hairstreak, Small Copper, Silver Studded Blue, Brown Argus, Common Blue, Chalkhill Blue, Adonis Blue, Holly Blue, Red Admiral, Painted Lady, Small Tortoiseshell, Peacock, Comma, Silver Washed Fritillary, Speckled Wood, Wall Brown, Marbled White, Grayling, Gatekeeper, Meadow Brown, Small Heath

Moths:

Selected sightings this week:

Raspberry Clearwing: One in the Brighton area on Aug 27 was the first Clearwing report that I have seen this year

Oak Lutestring: One of several moths photographed by Tony Tindale in the Fareham area this week - the photos can be seen at <http://www.surfbirds.com/blog/amigo> in Tony's entry for Sep 3

Convolvulus Hawkmoth: Reports this week from Portland and Goring on the Sussex coast

Hummingbird Hawkmoth: Five more sightings this week in Dorset, Hampshire and Sussex

Bedstraw Hawkmoth caterpillars: Eggs laid by a migrant visitor to Portland in July have now turned into impressive caterpillars - see photo above the Aug 28 entry in http://www.portlandbirdobs.org.uk/latest_aug2011.htm

Beautiful Marbled (*Eublemma purpurina*): This pretty moth which was new to Britain in 2001 and new to Dungeness on Aug 30 this year can be seen in photos at <http://www.dungenessbirdobs.org.uk/faunatwo.html>

Red Underwing: This large and colourful (when it reveals its hind wings) moth got its first mention this week on the Planet Thanet website covering north east Kent

Other Insects:

Selected sightings this week:

Brown Heath Robberfly (*Machimus cingulatus*): I had a very brief but close look at what I believe was one of this species (which I have never seen before) on Portsdown Hill on Sep 1. See <http://www.uksafari.com/robberflies.htm>

Greenbottle (*Lucilia cesar*): Also seen on Portsdown on Sep 1 was a jewel-like mass of some 20 of these iridescent green blowflies laying their eggs in the corpse of a mouse

Bloody-nosed Beetle: Two of these were seemingly preparing to mate when I saw them on the Thorney Island seawall on Aug 29

Bush Crickets: Speckled, Oak, Dark and Great Green all reported this week

Araneus quadratus orb web spiders: Several seen by Graeme Lyons at Waltham Brooks (Pulborough) on Aug 29. These large female spiders come in a variety of colours from yellow to red (but all having the four spot pattern on their abdomens). See Graeme's blog for photos - <http://analternativenaturalhistoryofsussex.blogspot.com/> I used to see these spiders frequently at the IBM North Harbour site in Portsmouth where I also saw many Wasp Spiders and once got a photo of both male and female of that species. This week at my Havant home I have been watching a male and female of what I think are Garden Cross spiders - the female partly hidden in her 'retreat' and the male waiting his opportunity motionless on the periphery of her web for at least a whole day.

PLANTS

Rock Rose: When visiting Portsdown Hill on Sep 1 I was shown that the Rock Rose site which I discovered for myself in May was more extensive than I realised though few flowers were still out

Marsh Mallow: For several years I have made annual visits to Cobnor Point in Chichester Harbour to admire the large colony of Marsh Mallow which grows over a stretch of about 1 kilometre of the shoreline there and I have also visited the shoreline of Salterns Copse/Copperas Point around SU 829 018 when carrying out an Egret survey (watching birds entering their nest sites in Oldpark Wood across the water) but I had never seen Marsh Mallow growing there but this week Brian Fellows discovered a small colony of plants there

Common Gorse: Now starting to flower in several places though not yet forcing attention on itself

Hop: The first flowers that I have seen this year were on male plants around the edge of the Havant rail station carpark south of the track - seen on Aug 27

Ivy: My first sight of open flowers was at Bedhampton on Sep 2

Sea-heath (*Frankenia laevis*): On Sep 1 Brian Fellows found healthy plants (though not flowering) on the East Head sand dunes at the mouth of Chichester Harbour where he has found them in previous years.

Hybrid Monkey flower (*Mimulus x robertsii*): An impressive show of this seen on Aug 29 in the stream running along the east side of Watery Lane at its southern end where it leaves West Ashling pond heading north to Funtington

Small Teazel: I found this flowering at Racton in the Ems valley on Aug 29 - see my diary entry for photos

Shaggy Soldier: A good show of this found on Aug 29 in an unexpected place - the roadside gutter outside a bungalow in the narrow road called The Drive at Southbourne (SU 768 058)

OTHER WILDLIFE

Common Dolphin: 30 off the Scillies on Aug 25 and 5 off Durlston on Aug 30

Minke Whale: One of Whitburn, Co Durham, on Sep 1

Fallow Deer: Three does with four calves and one yearling which had been disturbed from the Stansted area were seen running at high speed over stubble fields south of the Racton Tower on Aug 29. They were uncertain as to where to go and would pause in the centre of a field then race off, crossing and re-crossing the minor road between Aldsworth and Racton as cars made their way along it.

Common Lizard: Plenty of these to be seen currently, nearly all of them vanishing into cover as soon as you spot them, but one young boy showed great 'fieldcraft' when he saw one in the Steyning area north of Worthing on Aug 29 and remained so still that a Lizard came to investigate him by 'licking his finger'

Snails: A few **Pointed Snails (Cochlicella acuta)** seen on the slope of the seawall above the west end of the Thorney Great Deeps on Aug 29 and a couple more **Striped Snails (Cernuella virgata)** found on Portsdown on Sep 1, their identity confirmed by the small size of their 'umbilicus'. Another snail seen in an unexpected place at the top of one of the windows of my house and identified by the whitish band around the extreme periphery of its otherwise mottled brown shell was a **Strawberry Snail (Trichia striolata)**

Fungi: Still very few species to be seen but on Aug 29 there was a massive growth of **Giant Polypore (Meripilus giganteus)** on the stump of a large tree (felled a couple of years ago on account of its diseased state and its position overhanging the Emsworth Road in Havant just east of Meadowlands). I also saw more **Brown Rollrim** outside Budds Farm alongside the Brockhampton stream

WILDLIFE DIARY AND NEWS FOR AUG 29 - SEPT 4 (WEEK 35 OF 2011)

Fri 2 Sep

Budds Farm and Broadmarsh

An afternoon cycle ride today took me to Budds Farm and along through Broadmarsh to Chalk Dock, then back via Bedhampton. Highlights were my first sight of **Ivy in flower**, **Mulberry in fruit**, and **Canada Geese** back on Budds Farm, all after seeing my first **Migrant Hawker** in my garden.

This is the time of year that **Canada Geese** would be starting long distance migratory flights back in their native American habitat, and while the geese imported into this country to ornament the lakes of country houses in the 18th century lost the need to migrate in order to survive the winter they still retain an urge to fly somewhere at this time of year so I was not surprised to find ten of them on Budds Farm pools, nor to read reports of much larger flocks turning up elsewhere (on Aug 5 214 appeared on Fleet Pond, on Aug 17 a flock of 50 at Barnstable in north Devon became 500, and on Aug 31 one turned up at Emsworth's Peter Pond)

My next stop was on the Broadmarsh 'mountain' where the **Hairy Vetchling** is still flowering and from there I cycled to the Chalk Dock corner of Langstone Harbour (next to the eastern entrance to Farlington Marshes but getting its name from the time when it was used as the place to offload materials for building the Palmerston

Fort on Portsdown). Here the **autumn flock of Great Crested Grebe had increased to 30 birds** and along the cycleway from which I counted them more **Gorse flowers** were seen among a much larger display of the **orange-yellow berries of Sea Buckthorn**.

Heading back over the old Broadmarsh playing fields **Creeping Yellowcress** was still flowering and passing the outstation of the Water Company Bedhampton Springs site the old **Mulberry Tree** which overhangs the Wayfarers Way path had a good crop of ripe fruit though what was left was too high up to reach. Just after this, where the path crosses the Hermitage Stream, a bank of **Ivy had started to flower** - the first I have seen though some was reported to be already attracting butterflies in the Andover area on Aug 20.

[Thu 1 Sep](#)

A good morning on Portsdown

This morning I spent three hours on the south face of Portsdown in the Fort Southwick area, highlights being my first **Clouded Yellow** butterfly of the year, the first **fresh flowers on Gorse** and 90 other flowering plants including **Basil Thyme**, what I thought was **Lesser Centaury**, and lots of **Autumn Gentian** but not a single **Autumn Ladies Tresses**. I also met Mike and Mary Gwilliam doing their butterfly transect - they showed me a definite **Brown Argus** and extended my knowledge of where to see **Rock Rose**.

I started from the unofficial car parking area immediately west of Fort Southwick and headed south west across the recently harvested arable field (where two **Yellowhammers** were feeding on the 'left overs') to Portchester Common where I soon found the **Basil Thyme** I was looking for close to a single plant of what I thought was **Lesser Centaury**. On first sight the deep pink of the flowers (the colour is very washed out in the photo of the 8cm tall plant but shows better in the single flower image) and the small size of the plant strongly suggested it was **Lesser** and not **Common Centaury** but when I stripped one of the main pair of bracts to show the length of the flower stem above it and below the calyx (see the second photo) I found there was another pair of bracts immediately below the calyx. If the measurement of a 4mm flower stem is that between the main bract at the junction of the two flower stems and the calyx then this qualifies as **Lesser**, but if the smaller bract at the base of the calyx is the determining factor then this is **Common Centaury**. The absence of a basal rosette of leaves and the 4mm length of each petal suggest **Lesser** in Stace's key but the flowers are too close together for **Lesser** (for which the branches of the plant should be more than 30 degrees, giving a much wider spread of flowers) and this feature, plus the doubt over which bract marks the base of the flower stem, force me to conclude that this is **Common Centaury**. The only plants of **Lesser** about which I have been certain in the past have been minute, single flowered specimens growing on bare chalk.

Close up of Centaury flower discussed above

General view of the Centaury plant - actual flower colour was a much deeper pink While in this area I enjoyed **Chiff Chaff song** before leaving the Common and heading south east to the base of the hill where I saw the **Clouded Yellow** flying north with the warm southerly wind helping it over the hill and far away - just after seeing it I met Mary Gwilliam who said she had seen another **Clouded Yellow** a little earlier so there may have been an influx this very morning. Mary then showed

me a **Brown Argus** which she had netted to be certain of its identity of which I would not have been certain when free flying - this contributed to a personal butterfly count of 12 species which included single **Chalkhill Blue** and **Comma**. Another insect remains unidentified though its large size, fast flight, long body and wings folded flat along its back (shorter than its body) made me think of the rare **Robber Fly (Asilus crabroniformis)** which I have seen on the hill in the past and which I believe to be still present. The problem with identifying it was the absence of any yellow on its body (and a very brief glimpse of it resting before it shot off as fast as it had arrived). An even more impressive insect sighting came towards the end of my outing when in a shaded area - on the ground was a compact mass of twenty or more bright iridescent green 'jewels' which turned out to be **Greenbottle blow flies (probably Lucilia cesar)** clustered as tightly as possible on the injured body of a small mouse (of which I could only see the tail and reddish brown fur of its back end - the rest of the body was totally obscured by the flies). Have a look at <http://www.naturespot.org.uk/species/lucilia-caesar> for a single image of one of these flies (click on the third image for a close up of the most impressive match to what I saw) and imagine the jewel-like quality of an 'incrustation' of twenty glowing up at me from the shaded ground. Had I come by a day later I would have seen the much less attractive sight of this dead body writhing with maggots (offering a good commercial opportunity to those who sell the maggots for the purpose of cleaning up nasty human wounds - I believe the maggots are very effective and not harmful when used for this purpose)

A couple of other plant observations deserve a mention. Firstly the **Rockrose** plants which I discovered at the base of the hill on May 19 and saw again on Aug 9 - today Mary Gwilliam showed me two large anthills covered with the plants (only a few flowers left) near the site I discovered showing that the colony of them is more substantial than I thought and Mary told me that Richard Jones (warden of the hill) has been collecting and scattering their seed to extend the colony. Secondly I was impressed by several big clusters of **Autumn Gentians** in flower which may be the result of inadvertent spreading of seed by walkers or animals as the clusters were clearly concentrated along the lines of well beaten walkers tracks. Finally, after reporting a single **flower on a gorse bush** at Cobnor Point during my walk on Aug 24, I can now report **half a dozen flowers seen on bushes** above the Paulsgrove Chalkpit today!

[Tue 30 Aug](#)

Langstone Pond Egret count

The conditions were good this evening for another count of Egrets coming to roost at Langstone and I spent an hour there (ending 15 minutes after sunset) recording 157 Egrets - effectively the same number as were the 153 that were there for my last count on Aug 16

[Mon 29 Aug](#)

Osprey, Black Swans and Small Teazels

My Bank Holiday outing was a cycle ride to West Ashling Pond via Thornham Marsh returning via Racton. At Thornham Marsh I saw one **Osprey** but missed the **Cattle Egret** which was there but had moved out of sight behind some reeds, at West Ashling I saw two **Black Swans** (and a good show of **Hybrid Monkey-flower** in the stream flowing down to the pond along Watery Lane, and at Racton I got some photos of the mass of **Small Teazels** that are now in flower. The fields south of the Racton Folly tower then gave me a prolonged show of some of this year's

young Fallow Deer with their mothers demonstrating how fast they can run across open fields and lastly I stopped at Aldsworth Pond to confirm that it now has no water left in it (possibly accounting for some of the recent increase in **Coot** numbers at Emsworth)

A couple of other observations deserving a mention were firstly a **pair of Bloody-nosed Beetles mating** on the Thorney seawall at the west end of the Great Deepes where I again saw a small number of **Pointed Snails**, and secondly a **Grey Wagtail** at the Hair Spring Watercress Beds by the A27 at Hambrook

WILDLIFE DIARY AND NEWS FOR AUG 22 - 28 (WEEK 34 OF 2011)

Overview

[\(Skip to Bird News\)](#)

Bird news highlights:

Wigeon: Now starting to return to the south coast - Christchurch Harbour had its first back on Aug 19 with six newcomers on Aug 22 and Hook (Warsash) had 5 on Aug 22 after just one on Aug 16. Pintail are also starting to appear with one in Devon (Axe estuary) on Aug 20 and one at Pagham North Walls on Aug 25. Over in Kent there were 77 Pochard on the R.Stour by Aug 24

Honey Buzzard: Other than one flying out to sea from Dungeness on Aug 21 there have been no reports from English sites, however there has been a big surge of migrants on the near continent - minimum counts were 17 on Aug 22, 16 on Aug 24 and 76 on Aug 25, but if we add up all the reports for e.g. Aug 25 (some of which are probably duplicates as the bird fly on south) we get a total of 133.

Montagu's Harrier: A juvenile has been seen in the Chale area of the Isle of Wight for at least four days this week

Osprey: Two have been temporarily resident in Langstone Harbour and at least one in Chichester Harbour this week while on Aug 24 Dorset had 8 separate birds but the report which caught my eye came from East Sussex where a young bird plunged in the Powdermill Reservoir (north of Hastings) without realising how shallow the water was and it became stuck in the mud, requiring human rescue. (I don't think it needed treatment for injuries but if so it would have gone to the RSPCA Mallydams centre which is celebrating its 50th anniversary this year)

Returning waders: Ringed Plover, Lapwing, Golden and Grey Plover have all been seen in flocks of 100 or more on the south coast and Knot were reported this week in flocks of 45 on Thorney Island. 40+ in Pagham Harbour and 36+ in Devon (Exe estuary) with smaller counts of 7 in Emsworth Harbour and 4 off Northney on Hayling Island

Shorebird rarities: RBA news this week has mentioned the following species seen somewhere in Britain or Ireland - **Semi-palmated Sandpiper, Temminck's Stint, White-rumped Sandpiper, Baird's Sandpiper, Sharp-tailed Sandpiper, Buff-breasted Sandpiper, Marsh Sandpiper, Phalaropes (Wilson's, Red-necked and Grey)**. They also report the first **Franklin's Gull** of the year at

Helford in Cornwall and a **Whiskered Tern** (plus a **White-winged Black Tern**) at Rainham Marshes in London plus a **Fea's Petrel - aka Cape Verde Petrel** - off Co Cork (Some further detail available on <http://www.rarebirdalert.co.uk/RealData/dailysummary.asp>)

Insect News Highlights:

Nothing much to report in the way of Dragonflies and Butterflies (other than the emergence of a third generation of Common Blues) but there is news of two rare and one impressive migrant moths and one spider which I was not previously aware of. We also have the story of a moth trap accidentally placed close to a Hornets nest and the arrival of this year's first migrant Western Conifer Seed Bug (see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Western_conifer_seed_bug)

Plant News Highlights:

A visit to the Chidham/Cobnor peninsula on Aug 24 to see Marsh Mallow in flower also gave me a single flower of Common Gorse and confirmation of both Narrow-leaved Ragwort and Early Golden Rod still flowering at Nutbourne plus the surprise sight of two large fields growing a crop of Millet Another unusual crop is Lucerne growing in a field near the south of Thorney Island

Although not yet in flower locally Ivy has started to flower in the Andover area

Ragwort: Comment from Durlston .. "Ragwort is a plant of mixed blessings – a poisonous plant to cattle and horses if left and cut with hay, but a vital food plant for the larvae of the Cinnabar moth and of course a great pollen source!" When growing in a field animals will know it is poisonous or will soon discover after a harmless nibble but in hay they cannot recognize it and the poisons are probably stronger in dead than live material as they are in Yew.

Other News highlights:

Risso's Dolphin: This gets the first mention for the year in the reports I have seen though it is present year round in all temperate waters (but far out, preferring the edge of the continental shelf). Although no longer than the Bottle-nosed it is bulkier having a whale like front end with a distinctive vertical crease down its 'forehead' and is of a whale-like grey colour overall. It is the bulkiest of the Dolphin species and is in a family of its own (**Grampus griseus**). The name 'Grampus' is often also used for the Orca (Killer Whale)

Clouds: For some unexpected cloud photos see <http://cloudappreciationsociety.org/asperatus-update/> - I came on this when browsing Cliff Dean's fascinating blog (<http://rxbirdwalks.wordpress.com/>). Another recent entry in this blog led me to discover an old fashioned gipsy caravan which has been converted into a touring cinema (see <http://rxbirdwalks.wordpress.com/2011/08/22/romney-marsh-cultural-tour/> and note that words in a reddish-brown colour are hyperlinks, usually well worth exploring)

BIRDS

Great Crested Grebe: Although a total of 40 were seen in Langstone Harbour on Aug 6 I have seen no other reports of the expected autumn build up of these birds in the harbour until this week when on Aug 22 I found at least 16 off the South Moors shore (there could well have been more in the Chalk Dock area and elsewhere in the harbour)

Shearwaters: Reports from Cornwall and the Scillies feature **Cory's, Great, Sooty, Manx** and **Balearic** plus **Storm Petrels**

Bittern: One seen in the Exmouth area of Devon on Aug 18 and 20 may have been a new arrival there but one in the Kent Stour valley on Aug 25 was no doubt a resident there. Also on Aug 25 a **Little Bittern** was seen in France

Cattle Egret: One has been seen on the Thornham Marshes (area north of the Thorney Island Great Deeps east of the main road) from Aug 14 to 27 at least. On the evening of Aug 27 it roosted near the Little Deeps with **123 Little Egrets** A different bird was in the Christchurch area on Aug 22 and 23

Great White Egret: The regular bird which seems to have been back at the Blashford Lakes near Ringwood since Aug 6 was seen on Aug 22 and 24. A possible indication of post breeding dispersal on the near continent gave counts of 9, 5, 3, and 1 at four different sites on Aug 26

Purple Heron: Although two birds seen at Dungeness on May 6 were thought to have been an adult with one of last years young from successful breeding there in 2010 there has been no official announcement of breeding in England this year. Nevertheless sightings of a young bird at the Elmley Marshes on Sheppey (north Kent) on Aug 6 and 14, plus a 'vagrant juvenile' at Dungeness on Aug 16 and a juvenile at Christchurch Harbour on Aug 17 may suggest further breeding in south east England but on the other hand a count of 29 of these birds at a continental site on Aug 17 may indicate that the occasional sighting here is just accidental overspill from breeding on the continent

Spoonbill: Two were seen at Christchurch Harbour on Aug 21 and four were at Arne on Aug 23 while a Netherlands site had 31 on Aug 23 and 36 on Aug 26

Shelduck: An adult with two fledged juveniles was in Emsworth Harbour on Aug 26 to show that there is still some local breeding. Shelduck are known to make life very difficult for their young by nesting several miles inland and then making their young march to the coast before they can fly, having to cross the busy A27 and electrified railway en route. A few do nest near the shore but there was no positive indication of breeding success at Budds Farm this year and the only recent report from Langstone Harbour was of seven birds seen there on Aug 19 (I suspect some of those were juveniles).

Wigeon: Now starting to return to the south coast - Christchurch Harbour had its first back on Aug 19 with six newcomers on Aug 22 and Hook (Warsash) had 5 on Aug 22 after just one on Aug 16. **Pintail** are also starting to appear with one in Devon (Axe estuary) on Aug 20 and one at Pagham North Walls on Aug 25. Over in Kent there were 77 **Pochard** on the R.Stour by Aug 24 while by Aug 26 the number of **Teal** in the Kent Stour valley was reported as 507 with 44 **Gadwall** also there.

Garganey: A few still with us - this week's reports are of 2 at Titchfield Haven, 2 in the Kent Stour Valley and 1 at Lodmoor (Weymouth)

Merganser: A summering bird was seen in Pagham Harbour on Aug 24

Goosander: A flock of 8 seen at Christchurch Harbour on Aug 20 were thought to have been from the nearby Avon valley

Honey Buzzard: Other than one flying out to sea from Dungeness on Aug 21 there have been no reports from English sites, however there has been a big surge of migrants on the near continent - minimum counts were 17 on Aug 22, 16 on Aug 24 and 76 on Aug 25, but if we add up all the reports for e.g. Aug 25 (some of which are probably duplicates as the birds fly on south) we get a total of 133.

Montagu's Harrier: A juvenile has been seen in the Chale area of the Isle of Wight for at least four days this week

Marsh Harrier: One has been seen in the Thorney Island Great Deep area on Aug 25 and 27 this week

Osprey: Two have been temporarily resident in Langstone Harbour and at least one in Chichester Harbour this week while on Aug 24 Dorset had 8 separate birds but the report which caught my eye came from East Sussex where a young bird plunged in the Powdermill Reservoir (north of Hastings) without realising how shallow the water was and it became stuck in the mud, requiring human rescue. (I don't think it needed treatment for injuries but if so it would have gone to the RSPCA Mallydams centre which is celebrating its 50th anniversary this year)

Merlin: One at Dungeness on Aug 21 was only the fourth in southern England this autumn so a 'probable' sighting at the Thorney Island Great Deep on Aug 27 would have been the fifth.

Quail: One still to be heard on the Sussex Downs near Worthing on Aug 22 and another seen in the Scillies on Aug 24

Avocet: The first to reach its winter quarters in the Exe estuary arrived there last week on Aug 19. Three more passed through Christchurch Harbour on Aug 25 with a further single on Aug 26

Stone Curlew: Not current news but proof that these birds do breed in Sussex is a ringing recovery of a bird ringed as a chick in Sussex in June 2010 was found in August 2010 in Worcestershire. I hope the bird has survived to this year but the direction it took on its first flight suggests it lacks the innate navigational skills need for a migrant!

Grey Plover: 45 birds roosting at The Kench on Hayling Island on Aug 25 had increased to 170 there on Aug 26

Knot: Reports this week show that substantial flocks are now back on our south coast - Thorney Island had 45 on Aug 22, Pagham Harbour had 40+ on Aug 24, and Devon had 45+ at Exmouth on Aug 26. Locally Aug 25 brought 7 to Emsworth Harbour and 5 to the Northney shore of Hayling

Bar-tailed Godwit: 15 were seen in the Hook (Warsash) area on Aug 20 and 25 were at The Kench (Hayling Island) on Aug 25

Other shore birds: As well as the expected **Lapwing, Ringed Plover, Dunlin, Sanderling, Ruff, Snipe, Little and Temmincks Stints** and **Curlew Sandpipers** RBA news this week has mentioned the following species seen somewhere in Britain or Ireland - **Semi-palmated Sandpiper, Temminck's Stint, White-rumped Sandpiper, Baird's Sandpiper, Sharp-tailed Sandpiper, Buff-breasted Sandpiper, Marsh Sandpiper, Phalaropes (Wilson's, Red-necked and Grey)**. They also report the first **Franklin's Gull** of the year at Helford in Cornwall and a **Whiskered Tern** (plus a **White-winged Black Tern**) at Rainham Marshes in London with a **Fea's Petrel - aka Cape Verde Petrel** - off Co Cork (Some further detail available on <http://www.rarebirdalert.co.uk/RealData/dailysummary.asp>)

Redshank: A substantial increase in the number seen locally on Aug 22 when I saw at least 300 in a walk around the Budds Farm and Langstone village area and I see that a **Spotted Redshank** was at Farlington Marshes on that day

Phalaropes: All three species get a mention this week - a juvenile **Red-necked** was at Brownsea Island in Poole Harbour, a **Grey** was on the Lymington shore and a **Wilson's (Phalaropus tricolor)** turned up in Northern Ireland. See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Phalaropus_tricolor_-_breeding_female.jpg to see why this bird gets its 'tricolor' name. **Wilson's** is an American species and only a rare vagrant to Europe

Skuas: A couple of **Pomarine**s were off Cornwall, a **Long-tailed** was off Spurn Head in Yorkshire, Dungeness had 15 **Arctics** and the Scillies had 10 **Bonxies**

Gulls: The only **Franklin's** of the year so far was at Helford in Cornwall and 390 **Little Gulls** were at Flamborough Head in Yorkshire while the Scillies had 3 **Sabines**

Terns: Locally the birds roosting in Langstone Harbour entrance on the evening of Aug 23 were 1132 **Common Terns** with 1 **Black** and 2 **Roseate**. 6 **Little Terns** were still passing Dungeness on Aug 25 with 37 **Black Terns** there on Aug 23 and a single **Whiskered Tern**, plus a **White-winged Black Tern**, were at Rainham Marshes in London on Aug 26

Alpine Swift: One seen in Somerset on Aug 20

Kingfisher: Now becoming a more frequent sight on the south coast with sightings this week at five local sites (Cobnor Point, both ends of the Thorney Great Deeps, the Brockhampton Stream in Havant and Titchfield Haven)

Departing summer migrants: The following table gives some impression of the rate at which these birds are leaving by showing the single highest count recorded at an English coastal site during the week

** COASTAL COUNTS OF DEPARTING MIGRANTS **						
Bird Name	31/07	07/08	14/08	21/08	28/08	04/09
Turtle Dove	1	4	6	10	7	

Cuckoo	1	1	1	1	1	
Nightjar	-	-	-	-	1	
Swift	80	1500	20	29	22	
Wryneck			1	3	1	
Sand Martin	500	300	1000+	450	3000	
Swallow	100	15000+	500+	150	1800	
House Martin	50	80	250+	40	-	
Tree Pipit	4	14	8	10	70	
Meadow Pipit		60	35		24	
Yellow Wagtail	20	150	300	55	200	
Grey Wagtail	-	-	-	-	5	
Pied Wagtail	-	-	1	22	50+	
Nightingale	1	4	1	2	1	
Common Redstart	2	4	3	3	23	
Whinchat	5	6	9	7	17	
Wheatear	10	50	50	40	300	
Grasshopper Warbler	3	9	3	10	6	
Sedge Warbler	180	76	45	100+	70	
Reed Warbler	5		7	30+	54	
Lesser Whitethroat	6	12	8	13	17	
Common Whitethroat	220	130	150	350	175	
Garden Warbler	10	12	9+	15	4	
Blackcap	23	16	25	50	45	
Wood Warbler	-	1	-	1	-	

Chiffchaff	275	-	-	3	12	
Willow Warbler	1	250	175	290	500	
Spotted Flycatcher	-	10	1	14	15	
Pied Flycatcher	2	2	1	1	5	

Wryneck: Reports from ten different sites in southern England this week (plus another seven on the near continent). The only Hampshire report was of one on the Lymington shore on Aug 27

Sand Martin: 3000 were over the Blashford Lakes at Ringwood on Aug 26

Swallow: 1800 came to roost at Farlington Marshes on the evening on Aug 22

Yellow Wagtail: 31 reports this week from all along the south coast but the highest count is of 200 in the Hook (Warsash) area on Aug 23

Citrine Wagtail: One in the Scillies on Aug 21

Grey Wagtail: Passage birds seen along the coast from Devon to East Sussex with a peak of 5 at Christchurch Harbour on Aug 24

Wheatear: The week's peak count of 300 was reported by Portland

Fieldfare: One was seen in the Netherlands on Aug 26 (one also reported there on Aug 2)

Aquatic Warbler: One in Poole Harbour on Aug 20 and another in Cornwall on Aug 23

Booted Warbler: One on Shetland on Aug 26

Melodious Warbler: Singles this week in the Scillies, at Portland and at Prawle in Devon

Greenish Warbler: One in Norfolk on Aug 26

Arctic Warbler: One in Shetland on Aug 25

Western Bonelli's Warbler: Singles at Dungeness, in Cornwall and in the Scillies

Gold and Firecrest: Both species have now joined the autumn movements. 12 **Goldcrests** were noted at Christchurch Harbour on Aug 24 and two **Firecrests** were seen at Arne with singles at both Christchurch Harbour and Pulborough Brooks

Bearded Tit: One seen flying over a Hill Head garden suggests that autumn dispersal has started as does the inclusion of one as a 'remarkable' sighting at a Netherlands site

Willow Tit: I'm not sure of the status of this species in Cornwall but a report of one in the Truro area on Aug 23 caught my eye

Shrikes: Both **Red-backed** and **Woodchat Shrikes** were seen in the Scillies this week

Starling: Autumn flocks now bulding up with a report of 1400 at Stokes Bay (Gosport) on Aug 25

House Sparrow: A flock of 250 birds seen on the Lymington shore on Aug 24

Tree Sparrow: Evidence of the arrival of continental birds comes from a report of 25 at Dungeness on Aug 22 plus a flock of 107 in the Spurn Point area on the Yorkshire coast on Aug 20

Finch flocks: More than 70 **Greenfinch** passed over Durlston on Aug 27 and 80 **Goldfinch** were at Hook (Warsash) on Aug 22. On Aug 26 Reculver in Kent had 70 **Linnet**

INSECTS

Dragonflies

Species reported this week: Southern Hawker, Common Hawker (at Thursley Common), Brown Hawker, Migrant Hawker, Emperor, Gold-ringed, Keeled Skimmer, Black Darter, Ruddy Darter, Common Darter, Banded Demoiselle, Emerald Damsel, Willow Emerald (in Essex), Red Eyed Damsel, Small Red-eyed Damsel, Large Red Damsel, Blue Tailed Damsel, Common Blue Damsel and Azure Damsel

Butterflies

Notable sightings this week:

Clouded Yellow: Singles seen at Isfield near Lewes, Steyning near Worthing, Thorney Island and Hook (Warsash)

Common Blue: 50 fresh males on the Sussex Downs near Worthing indicate the emergence of a third generation for this summer

Small Blue: A summer brood appeared in mid July at several sites but, other than a single report from an East Sussex Downs site on Aug 11, Durlston is the only site to have continued reporting them from July 26 to Aug 24

Painted Lady: Four were seen this week - one on the West Sussex Downs, one at Andover, one at Barton on sea and one at Emsworth

Species reported this week: Small Skipper, Lulworth Skipper, Silver Spotted Skipper, Clouded Yellow, Brimstone, Large White, Small White, Green-veined White, Brown Hairstreak, Small Copper, Small Blue, Brown Argus, Common Blue, Chalkhill Blue, Adonis Blue, Holly Blue, Red Admiral, Painted Lady, Small Tortoiseshell, Peacock., Comma, Speckled Wood, Wall Brown, Grayling, Gatekeeper, Meadow Brown, Small Heath

Moths

Pine-tree Lappet (*Dendrolimus pini*): One of these rare migrants arrived at Portland on Aug 23 to be the first ever recorded in Dorset

Convolvulus Hawkmoth: The first for the year arrived at Folkestone on Aug 20 and this week a second was found at Portland on Aug 26. This large migrant (10cm wingspan) turns up in small numbers most years but has not yet established itself in this country. After a major invasion in 2003 there was some breeding but very few caterpillars survived the winter

Hummingbird Hawkmoth: Just two individuals seen this week bringing the total recorded this year to 116

Bloxworth Snout: One seen at Folkestone on Aug 23. Until 1990 this rare species was only known as a migrant but since then it has established itself at several places along the south coast, including the Isle of Wight

Other Insects

Hornet: On the night of Aug 23 Barry Collins set up a moth trap near the east end of the Great Deeps on Thorney Island but very soon discovered that in so doing he had stirred up a Hornet's nest and he had some difficulty in getting back to the trap to turn off the light with around 100 Hornets swarming round it and objecting to its presence!

Brown Banded Carder Bee (*Bombus humilis*): Most of the bumblebee species surveyed in the Dungeness area this year suffered from drought withering the plants from which they would normally get their supply of nectar but this species was lucky in that its peak of activity comes later in the year than the others and by the time it was needing nectar the rains had come and had refreshed the plants

Western Conifer Seed Bug: What seems to be the first cross channel migrant for this year arrived at Dungeness on Aug 25

Neoscona adianta: This is apparently a not uncommon heathland orb web spider with a distinctive pattern (see <http://4.bp.blogspot.com/-uWiR-1k7YTo/TIPauAnBWqI/AAAAAAAAABI4/ML7VapJNXI0/s400/Southerham+spiders+026.JPG>) which Graeme Lyons made me aware of through his blog entry for Aug 23 describing a visit to the Sussex Wildlife Trust Farm at Southerham adjacent to Maling Down near Lewes. To follow Graeme's blog go to <http://analternativenaturalhistoryofsussex.blogspot.com/> and to learn about Southerham Farm visit <http://www.sussexwt.org.uk/reserves/page00033.htm>

PLANTS

Turkish Tutsan (*Hypericum xylosteifolium*): Plants growing alongside the Brockhampton Stream (west of Budds Farm) are now flowering where they were planted many years ago by the owners of a boat which moored here (immediately

below the second bridge) but which subsequently broke loose and drifted out into Langstone Harbour.

Marsh Mallow (*Althaea officinalis*): On Aug 24 I paid my annual visit to the only colony of this plant which I know of nearer than the colony on the banks of the River Hamble immediately north of the M27. The site I visit is on the shore of Chichester Harbour at the southwest tip of the Chidham peninsula and the plants grow along the high tide line below a strip of Oak woodland which also overhangs the water's edge.

Common Gorse: This normally restarts flowering in the first half of September after a summer break. While at Cobnor Point on Aug 24 I did see a single flower open but that was not a sign of an early general resumption of flowering

Lucerne: It is many years since I saw Lucerne planted as a crop (in the Hambledon area) but this year I hear that a couple of fields have been planted with it in the south of Thorney Island

Ivy: Although I have already commented that the flower buds on Ivy are getting near to flowering the only ones already in flower (and attracting insects) were seen near Andover on Aug 20

Red Bistort: Originally planted as garden flowers but since abandoned to their own devices are a cluster of plants beside the stream following the Langbrook stream south from Havant (across the stream from Brookmead Way gardens). I found them flowering on Aug 22

Tomato: Another fairly common escape from cultivation - Brian Fellows found a plant with flowers and fruit near the Emsworth shoreline on Aug 23

Heath Speedwell: I was surprised to find this reflowering on Aug 26 in the Hollybank Woods where I found it on Apr 24

Devils Bit Scabious: Although I had found the first flowers on this at Havant Thicket on Aug 5 I was still pleased to see it starting to flower at the Langstone South Moors on Aug 22. There has never been much growing here and it is always late in appearing but my interest is in recording its survival - each year I expect it will have vanished

Narrow-leaved Ragwort: Still flowering at Nutbourne Farm Lane when I was there on Aug 24 as was the **Early Golden Rod** which I first identified there this year

Millet: I was surprised to find two large fields beside Cot Lane at Chidham devoted to growing this as a crop when I was there on Aug 24

OTHER WILDLIFE

Bottle-nosed Dolphin: A pod of around 7 swam past Worthing on Aug 26

Risso's Dolphin: One seen from Land's End on Aug 22 - see highlights for more about the species

Hare: Two leverets were flushed from the grass bank around the Stansted Garden Centre when the grass on it was cut on Aug 22

Striped Snail (Cernuella virgata): A couple of samples of what I have up to now called 'Mint Humbug' snails checked on the Langstone South Moors seawall path on Aug 22 showed that they had only a small central 'umbilicus' between the whorls of their shells when viewed from underneath and were therefore Striped Snails (which are commoner in the south of England) and not the Heath Snails (*Helicella itala*) which look similar but which have a larger umbilicus (up to one third the overall width of the shell)

Fungi: Still very few to be found. During the week I only came on one specimen (a **Brown Rollrim** by the banks of the Brockhampton stream) and an hour and a half looking round likely spots in the Hollybank woods on Friday afternoon discovered just four clumps of **Common Earthball**, a single **Birch Polypore**, and a fragment of wood stained green by **Green Wood-cup (Chlorosplenium aeruginascens)** - wood with this natural colouring was once incorporated into a type of marquetry known as Tunbridge Ware (for an example of this 'art' see [http://www.bazaarboxes.com/phdi/p1.nsf/imgpages/bazaar_2d.jpg/\\$file/2d.jpg](http://www.bazaarboxes.com/phdi/p1.nsf/imgpages/bazaar_2d.jpg/$file/2d.jpg))

WILDLIFE DIARY AND NEWS FOR AUG 22 - 28 (WEEK 34 OF 2011)

Summary of past week's news

My latest weekly summary of reports is now available by clicking [Weekly Summary](#) here

Wed 24 Aug

Marsh Mallow at Cobnor Point

The forecast looked good for my annual pilgrimage to see the **Musk Mallow** plants at Cobnor Point which extends south into Chichester Harbour between Thorney Island and Bosham and the sun shone for the whole of this four hour 'potter' around the peninsula though a moderate breeze from the south west prevented any overheating.

I parked at Farm Lane in Nutbourne and first checked the roadside there for its two notable plants - the **Early Golden-Rod** and the **Narrow-leaved Ragwort**, both of which were still flowering.

Nutbourne Bay had no special bird interest before I took the new seawall path south - I noticed some people were still using the old abandoned path which is broken in so many places that you spend twice as much effort getting round the breaks as you do walking the same distance on the new level path. The other thing that I noticed here was that the ditch inside the new path, which had water in it (and supported a colony of darter dragonflies) in previous years was now bone dry. One thing that had not changed was the presence of a good number of **Small Heath butterflies** (in addition to the many **Whites** and a few **Gatekeepers**) and at one point a tiny **Common Lizard** scuttled out of my way. **Linnets** were still feeding in the harvest fields inland of the wall, **Meadow Pipits** were gradually making their way north over the grassy fields on the seaward side and at least one **Wheatear** was following the path south.

Nearing the shoreline Oak copse below which the **Marsh Mallow** grows I found the outliers of the Mallow which used to flourish in the seawall ditch had been diminished by the drying out of the ditch but the main colony which grows along the high tideline at the top of the shore was still surviving on the combination of fresh water it occasionally receives from rain and the more regular supply of salt water it gets from high tides.

No sign of any summering **Brent Geese** at the southern end of the Thorney Channel - nothing other than **Oystercatchers, Greenshank**, and a mixture of more distant waders hidden in the saltings.

Rounding the point I had the bonus of a single **Kingfisher** flying south (at a guess still looking for somewhere to spend the winter). Also noted here was **a single fresh flower on one Gorse bush** - hardly enough to claim that **Gorse** had started its autumn flowering season.

One thing noted on the way back was two large fields lining the west side of Cot Lane having a huge unharvested crop of **Millet**, making me wonder to what use the crop is put (surely it cannot all go to pet shops to feed Budgies!).

A Garden Cross spider (*Araneus diadematus*) which has set up home on a window frame of my house

Close up of this spider

[Mon 22 Aug](#)

Devil's Bit Scabious at Langstone South Moors

This morning I extended my normal circular walk down the Langbrook stream and across the Moors to Budds Farm from which I normally return along the shore to Langstone village but today I continued west along the shore to the mouth of the Hermitage Stream, then up the Brockhampton stream to come back to the shore down Southmoor Lane before making my way home.

The only new plant seen in the Langbrook section was a clump of **Red Bistort**, no doubt originally planted by a Brookmead Way houseowner trying to extend his garden into the IBM owned land on the west side of the stream but now established in its own right under the conifers that line the public path.

On the Moors I was successful in finding the first flowers of **Devils Bit Scabious** which surprisingly maintains a toe hold here though it never flowers until long after I have seen it in the less congested habitat of Havant Thicket - in fact it did well this year to appear only two weeks later than in the Thicket.

While scanning the Budds Farm Pools a flock of at least **50 Redshank** flew in and settled on the north-west shore - a reflection of the large number now back on the harbour shores (later I found at least 200 on the Langstone shore). **Gadwall** were noticeable among the relatively few duck here (but only five of them) and they were easily outnumbered by the **Dabchicks** and at least equalled a by a **family of Long-tailed Tits** that happened to fly by.

The Hermitage Stream still had **25 Swans** and when I reached the unused bridge over the Brockhampton Stream a single **Kingfisher** flew downstream below me. Close to the bridge the **Turkish Tutsan** was newly flowering (planted years ago by the owners of a large wooden 'schooner' that was once moored there - long after the boats which brought grain to the Corn Wharf upstream of the bridge). Also on

the stream bank here a solitary **Brown Rollrim** toadstool lay uprooted on the grass.

Back on the seawall and heading east I counted **16 Great Crested Grebes** on the water and **31 plants of Slender Hare's Ear** on the land with the odd flower on several **Dog Rose bushes** while the rough grass of the seawall gave me a couple of the small '**Mint Humbug**' snails for which I had recently discovered two alternative names. Picking them off the grass and turning them over I was able to decide which of the two names was the correct one by checking the size of their 'umbilicus' (the central hole between the whorls of the shell) - if the umbilicus was large (around 1/3 of the total width of the shell) they would be **Heath Snails (Helicella itala)** but these both had much smaller 'umbilici' and so were **Striped Snails (Cernuella virgata)** which my book says is the commoner of the two in southern Britain.

Near the Langbrook stream mouth half a dozen small waders flew by without settling but their pleasant piping calls told me they were the first returning **Ringed Plover** that I had encountered (elsewhere on the south coast flocks started to appear from Aug 8 onwards). Shortly after seeing them a single **Sand Martin** flew past and then a single **Yellow Wagtail** rose from the grass among the cattle on the Moors allowing me to hear and see it as it flew off in search of company of its own species.

WILDLIFE DIARY AND NEWS FOR AUG 15 - 21 (WEEK 33 OF 2011)

Overview

Bird News Highlights:

Local news of **Egrets** is of a **Cattle Egret** spending the whole of this week on Thorney Island and of at least **250 Little Egrets** spending their nights in the Chichester Harbour area

An inland **Sabine's Gull** feeding in a Hampshire Pig field is among the week's more unusual reports

Reports of **Rose-ringed Parakeets** in the Netherlands led me to discover more about their status on the near continent

Last winter's **White-tailed Sea Eagle** may be back in Hampshire after being reported near Chichester

Insect News Highlights:

This weeks news raises the question as to **why the 'Common' Hawker dragonfly is not seen in most southern counties.**

Another question concerns **why 300 Black Darters choose to congregate around a tiny Welsh pond**

In Sussex what may be the first sighting of **a single second brood Orange Tip butterfly** this century caused an enthusiast to get off a train before reaching his destination

Other Insect news introduces me to **an 18th species of Ladybird** and reveals that the **Bee-killer Wasp species** is now resident on Hayling

Plant News Highlights:

My personal botanic excitement came from a find of **Dwarf Mallow** growing on Langstone Bridge but John Goodspeed had a more exciting discovery of **a real Hampshire rarity at Portchester**

Two plants to look out for at this time are **Slender Hare's Ear** and **Henbane**

Other News Highlights:

Two very different **Reptiles** are in this week's news - one is a **Grass Snake** seen trying to swallow a **Vole** (leading me to investigate Grass Snake lifestyle) and the other is a **Leatherback Turtle** seen in the Scillies and thought likely to become a more frequent visitor to UK water following its **jellyfish** prey which has recently been in the news in account of a significant increase in numbers around our coasts.

BIRDS

Grebes: The first **Red-necked Grebe** to be seen in southern English waters this autumn was in the Tamar estuary (border between Devon and Cornwall) on Aug 14 and more **Black-necked Grebes** have reached the near continent (4 at a French site on Aug 14 and 5 in the Netherlands on Aug 16). A report of 27 **Little Grebes** at the Blashford Lakes (Ringwood) on Aug 14 may indicate the start of movement to winter sites by these small birds

Shearwaters: Aug 11 brought 4 **Great Shearwaters** to the Scillies and 1 to the Folkestone area on Aug 14. Lands End had 11 **Sooty Shearwaters** on Aug 16 (with 1831 **Manx** and 31 **Balearic Shearwaters**) while Berry Head in Devon had 66 that same day. Also in the Scillies more than 80 **Storm Petrels** were seen on Aug 11 with one **Wilson's Storm Petrel** on Aug 12

Cattle Egret: One has been seen on the Thornham Marshes (east end of Thorney Island Great Deeps) daily from Aug 14 to 19 (the RBA site says one is still in West Sussex on Aug 20 - presumably the Thorney bird)

Little Egret: The number in southern England will soon reach its autumn peak and roost counts in the copse near the Little Deeps on Thorney (105 on Aug 14) and the Langstone Mill Pond (153 on Aug 16) show significant increases on the recent past - an incomplete count of the Langstone roost on July 29 only recorded 42 birds. One thing revealed by the Langstone count is that it is not true that Egrets do not use their breeding sites as autumn roosts - the number spending the night there included some 20 juveniles that were hatched there - so there may well be more birds roosting in the Chichester Harbour area - no one has reported counts from the one-time major roost at the Thorney Great Deeps, the Thorney churchyard trees, the Tournurbury wood on south Hayling or the Oldpark Wood on the Bosham peninsula alongside the Fishbourne/Chichester channel. We will have to wait another month to see if the Langstone roost beats the count of 228 birds spending the night there on Sep 19 in 2006

Hérons: 98 **Grey Herons** were seen at one Netherlands site on Aug 15 with 91 at another site that day. Similar counts were reported on Aug 17 when three Netherlands sites reported 60, 41 and 13 respectively. I know that Herons which spent the summer near the Arctic circle are forced to migrate south in the late autumn but I cannot think that this migration is yet underway, and I also understand that very few of the Herons based in temperate latitudes show any tendency to leave their home areas in the winter so I can only conjecture that there has been a particularly good breeding season for Herons in Europe to cause dispersal on this scale. There has also been a dispersal of **Purple Herons** this week with nearly 50 in places where they are not normally present on Aug 17 (on Aug 16 one such young bird was seen at Dungeness - at least one pair has bred at Dungeness both this year and last but the current report emphasised that the bird on Aug 16 was not of local origin)

Storks: A total of around 20 **Black Storks** was reported at six continental sites on Aug 16 and on Aug 15 one German site reported 126 **White Storks** now on the move (their autumn migration seems to have started in earnest on Aug 10)

Spoonbill: None are settled in our area but some youngsters have been seen in both Hampshire and West Sussex (one over Chidham in Chichester Harbour on Aug 15 while on Aug 17 two were seen on North Binness island in Langstone Harbour before flying to the Pagham north walls area). Four others remain in north Kent.

Canada Goose: These are now mobile again as the adults have completed their summer moult and this years young are now able to fly with them. On Aug 17 a flock of around 500 descended on the estuary of the River Taw at Barnstable in north Devon where there had previously been no more than 50. Having witnessed at the IBM HQ site in Portsmouth the way in which these birds quickly turn parkland (where humans could relax on the lakeside grass just outside the site canteen) into wasteland covered with their droppings and with the grass that the geese pull out of the ground being replaced with coarse weeds I am not in favour of the attempt to attract them to Peter Pond in Emsworth by placing a 'cardboard cutout' of a goose at the waters edge (not that any number would be attracted there). I also find it difficult to see why the wildfowlers doing the pond conservation work at Emsworth would want to encourage that species whose behaviour is not that of a wary wild species, and so do not provide any 'sport' for wildfowlers, and, if shot, that are not tasty to eat!

Wigeon: These are just starting to return to southern sites - on Aug 19 Christchurch Harbour reported the return of the first two 'winter birds' at that site. **Teal, Shoveler, Pochard** and **Gadwall** are also returning and there have been **big increases in Mallards** this week on the River Itchen in Southampton (192 there on Aug 17) and in south west Devon (175 at Thurlestone Bay on Aug 18)

Garganey: Ones or twos have been seen at six southern English sites this week (including one at Titchfield Haven and one in Langstone Harbour) while a French site had 13 there on Aug 16

Goosander: Seven flew over Christchurch Harbour on Aug 17 but I suspect these had been in the Avon valley through the summer as have four seen at the Blashford

Lakes whereas a pair seen on the Avon Dam Reservoir on Dartmoor (on Aug 15) are likely to have been the first migrants from the north. The report of a female in the Oysterbeds area of Langstone harbour on that day sounds like a mis-identification of a Merganser which has summered in the harbour.

Honey Buzzard: If all the reports from continental sites Aug 15 are of different birds there were some 50 heading south that day (with one more passing over Poole Harbour) - even if we assume that all the sightings were duplicates the minimum number seen was 14 birds. Some birds were seen every day this week including one on Aug 19 which strayed across the channel to arrive off the sea at the South Foreland in Kent before heading back south across the Channel.

White-tailed Sea Eagle: The bird which spent last winter in the south west of Hampshire after appearing in Sussex on Dec 11 reached the Norfolk Coast on its return journey on Apr 3 but instead of crossing the North Sea it pottered around East Anglia, settling in Lincolnshire at the end of April. It was last reported there on Aug 3 but on Aug 18 a bird of this species was reported near Fontwell to the east of Chichester suggesting that this might be last winter's bird returning to Hampshire - so far no further sightings!

Harriers: Looking down into the Wallington River valley from the west end of Portsdown on Aug 18 Trevor Carpenter had a superb view of a **Marsh Harrier** flying over Whitedell Farm and on Aug 19 a female **Hen Harrier** was seen flying over Manston airfield in the Thanet area of Kent while at Folkestone in the south of Kent a **Montagu's Harrier** flew west on Aug 16.

Osprey: 16 reports this week come from 8 sites. Most sightings were on or around Thorney Island but they have also been seen at Fleet Pond in north Hants, the Wareham channel in Poole Harbour, Lyminster and Titchfield area

Merlin: A very early bird was back in Kent on July 25 but no more were seen until Aug 14 when one flew south out to sea at Folkestone. On Aug 17 Portland had their first of the autumn on Aug 19 one was seen over Piddleshinton (a village few miles north of Dorchester)

Quail: None reported in England this week but singles were still in the Netherlands on Aug 17 and 19

Coot: Brian Fellows reports a small increase in numbers there as the birds come to the end of their breeding season at inland sites and head for the coast but the total of 25 on the Emsworth ponds is nothing compared to the count of 536 at the Bashford Lakes on Aug 13

Crane: Two were photographed when they touched down at a farm in the Pevensey Levels area near Eastbourne on Aug 14

Avocet: The first two of the winter flock to arrive at the Exe estuary in Devon were seen there on Aug 19

Ringed Plover: A flock of 163 at Thurlestone Bay in south west Devon on Aug 18 is the most significant marker of an increase in wader numbers all along the south coast

Dotterel: One was seen in Lancashire on Aug 14 and others was seen on their southward journeys at German and Netherlands sites this week

Golden Plover: The first report for this autumn of a flock of 500 birds came from the Oare Marshes in north Kent on Aug 15 (previous max count was 178 - also in north Kent - on Aug 5)

Pomarine Skua: A total of 53 were seen to pass Berry Head in South Devon on Aug 16. Also passing there that day were 31 **Arctic Skuas** and 21 **Great Skuas**

Sabines Gull: One flew in over Christchurch Harbour on Aug 18 and joined other gulls flying inland to feed in pig fields at Sopley. It returned to the same fields on Aug 19 but does not seem to have been seen again

Rose-ringed Parakeet: Reports of 39 of these Parakeets at a Netherlands site on Aug 14 with 25 seen on Aug 15 made me wonder if they were newcomers to Continental Europe but it seems that there some 10,000 birds in the Netherlands and another 5,000 in Belgium where birds were set free when a park closed in 1987. As this species is not migratory (and is very reluctant to move outside the area where they were hatched) they do not often come to the attention to the birding sites which report their 'remarkable' sighting to the Trektellen website from which I pick up continental sightings. See

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rose-ringed_Parakeet

Departing summer migrants: The following table (which I forgot to include in last week's summary) gives some impression of the rate at which these birds are leaving by showing the single highest count recorded at an English coastal site during the week

** COASTAL COUNTS OF DEPARTING MIGRANTS **						
Bird Name	31/07	07/08	14/08	21/08	28/08	04/09
Turtle Dove	1	4	6	1		
Cuckoo	1	1	1	1		
Swift	80	1500	20	29		
Wryneck			1	3		
Sand Martin	500	300	1000+	450		
Swallow	100	15000+	500+	150		
House Martin	50	80	250+	40		
Tree Pipit	4	14	8	10		
Meadow Pipit		60	35			

Yellow Wagtail	20	150	300	55		
Nightingale	1	4	1	2		
Common Redstart	2	4	3	3		
Whinchat	5	6	9	7		
Wheatear	10	50	50	40		
Grasshopper Warbler	3	9	3	10		
Sedge Warbler	180	76	45	100+		
Reed Warbler	5		7	30+		
Lesser Whitethroat	6	12	8	13		
Common Whitethroat	220	130	150	350		
Garden Warbler	10	12	9+	15		
Blackcap	23	16	25	50		
Wood Warbler	-	1	-	1		
Chiffchaff	275	-	-	3		
Willow Warbler	1	250	175	290		
Spotted Flycatcher	-	10	1	14		
Pied Flycatcher	2	2	1	1		

Yellow Wagtail: 25 reports from southern England this week with a peak count of 55 at Dungeness on Aug 17. Locally 17 were at Sandy Point on Hayling on Aug 19

Grey Wagtail: Although these do not migrate far as a species many move to winter sites and a report of 10 at Alresford near Winchester on Aug 15 indicates that we may soon see birds back at local sites such as the Lymbourne stream at Langstone. White Wagtails are also now in 'channel hopping' mode (three were at Dungeness on Aug 17)

Robin: I heard the first autumn song on July 26 but it is only this week from Aug 15 on that I have heard them regularly in many places

Mistle Thrush: On Aug 13 a flock of 31 birds was seen on the west end of the New Forest and on Aug 14 28 birds were seen elsewhere in the New Forest

Aquatic Warbler: The first of these vagrants to appear in England this autumn was in the Exmouth area on Aug 17

Icterine Warbler: One in the Scillies on Aug 17

Melodious Warbler: This species has been reported at 11 different sites since May this year, of them being the old IBM HQ site in Portsmouth where it was seen very briefly on Aug 13 but not re-found.

Subalpine Warbler: One in an Essex park for at least three days starting on Aug 14 has left Lee Evans in some doubt as to whether the bird is of the Eastern or Western race of this species - see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Subalpine_Warbler for differences between three races.

Wood Warbler: Single birds seen at Sandwich Bay on Aug 15 and at Rye Harbour on Aug 18

Woodchat Shrike: Seen in both Cornwall and the Scillies this week

Raven: Among sightings at seven sites this week a pair of birds at Christchurch Harbour were seen eating Rowan berries on Aug 15 after being driven from the site on Aug 14 by a flock of Crows

Linnet: Both Linnet (120) and Goldfinch (50+) were in autumn flock mode at Durlston on Aug 19

Corn Bunting: After coming close to extinction in Hampshire in recent years it is good to see that one was in the Stubbington (Gosport) area on Aug 13 and another was at Broughton Down near Stockbridge on Aug 15

INSECTS

Dragonflies

Notable sightings this week:

Common Hawker: Despite living up to its name as a common species in England it is for some reason absent from most of the south coast other than the New Forest and Cornwall (where one was seen this week)

Lesser Emperor: A male was in Cornwall and a pair were egg-laying at Dungeness

Black Darter: A small pond (only 40 by 15 feet) in Wales had an extraordinary roost of some 300 Black Darters around it on Aug 13

Willow Emerald: 14 of these were seen in the Reculver Country Park (north east Kent) on Aug 19

Species reported during the week:

Southern Hawker, Common Hawker, Brown Hawker, Migrant Hawker, Emperor, Lesser Emperor, Black-tailed Skimmer, Black Darter, Ruddy Darter, Red Veined Darter, Common Darter, Banded Demoiselle, Emerald Damselfly, Willow Emerald, Small Red-eyed Damselfly, Blue-tailed Damselfly.

Butterflies

Notable sightings

Silver Spotted Skipper: A count of 70 there on Aug 15 was massively greater than any other site - it also reported 75 back on Aug 1 but the only other sites reported double figures this summer were Malling Down at Lewes with 20 on July 31 and Stockbridge Down with 12 on Aug 1

Orange Tip: It is very rare for this species to have a second brood so the sight of one from the window of a train which had stopped at Moulscumb station in Sussex on Aug 16 was enough to make one enthusiast get off the train to get a better view. Checking the Hampshire Butterfly Reports since the year 2000 I can only find one report of a single second brood insect seen on Aug 21 in 2008

Purple Emperor: With no reports since July 27 I was very surprised to see that one had been seen (on dog faeces) on Aug 12 at Loxwood near Horsham - I very much doubt we will hear of another this year!

Painted Lady: Aug 14 brought three reports after a gap of two weeks since the previous report (which had been of a pristine specimen) and Aug 17 brought a local sighting of another fresh specimen seen on Thorney Island. As it takes less than two months for an egg laid by this species to emerge as a butterfly I rather suspect that the insects being seen currently are ones that come from eggs laid here by earlier migrants and that would explain Brian Fellows surprise at seeing an insect which is said to be a migrant from North Africa appearing so fresh. In fact I understand that very few of the African insects ever reach us - the ones we normally see are their offspring which hatched in Italy or France and we are now probably seeing a third stage of 'generational migrants'

Species reported on the wing

Small Skipper, Essex Skipper, Lulworth Skipper, Silver Spotted Skipper, Large Skipper, Dingy Skipper, Clouded Yellow, Brimstone, Large White, Small White, Green-veined White, Orange Tip, Brown Hairstreak, Purple Haristreak, Small Copper, Brown Argus, Common Blue, Chalkhill Blue, Adonis Blue, Holly Blue, Purple Emperor, Red Admiral, Painted Lady, Small Tortoiseshell, Peacock, Comma, Dark Green Fritillary, Silver Washed Fritillary, Speckled Wood, Wall Brown, Marbled White, Grayling, Gatekeeper, Meadow Brown, Small Heath

Moths

Nothing significant this week

Other Insects

Tipula maxima: The first of these large Crane Flies with their patterned wings invaded my house at night on Aug 17 but was persuaded to leave in the morning

Volucella pellucens: Brian Fellows was the first to report this large hoverfly when he saw it feeding on Water Mint at Brook Meadow in Emsworth on Aug 15. This species is sometimes overlooked as (when not feeding) it flies in woodland just above head height though it can still be distinguished by the white band around the front of its abdomen

Adonis Ladybird (*Hippodamia variegata*): An 18th ladybird species to add to my personal repertoire thanks to a sighting in a wood at Peasmarsh near Hastings on Aug 18. This is an uncommon species of sandy soil areas and can be distinguished by the pattern on its pronotum (above its head) which looks like an old-fashioned black face mask outlined in white.

Tegenaria gigantea: The first of these large house spiders of the autumn appeared just inside my front door on Aug 17 and was gently persuaded out of the door but will no doubt be back.

Garden Cross Spider (*Araneus diadematus*): The only one that I have seen so far this autumn is already full size and has constructed her web in front of a window of my house giving her a safe and sheltered 'retreat' in the corner of the window frame where she can shelter from rain and wind while keeping one leg touching one of the main strands of the web to let her know when prey gets caught.

Wasp Spider (*Argiope bruennichi*): A second local specimen for the autumn was seen on Thorney Island on Aug 19

Bee-killer Digger Wasp (*Philanthus triangulum*): I forgot to mention this report when it occurred last week on Aug 8. I have long known of the species which lives in places with sandy soil where it digs nest tunnels in the sand, stocking them with paralyzed bees that it catches and carries to the nest to provide food for its young. I knew they could be found locally on Thorney Island but was not aware of them on Hayling Island (they are not mentioned in Pete Durnell's 'Wildlife of Hayling') until I saw this month's report of them catching bees in a Hayling garden just north of the sandy area of Sinah Common.

PLANTS

Corn Cockle: This was found growing with **Cornflowers** and **Apple of Peru** on the grassy promenade area beside the slipway at Lee on the Solent down which Hovercraft from the HMS Daedalus site were launched into the sea. Dave Savage found this unexpected collection of flowers there on Aug 19. Presumably they are the result of sowing wildflower seed.

Green Amaranth (aka Pigweed): A lot of this was growing among a crop of Pumpkins in a large field edge strip alongside the rack going west from Northney Church toward Northwood Farm. In the crop there was also plenty of **Common Fumitory**, **Sun Spurge**, **Small Nettle** and smaller arable weeds

Dwarf Mallow (*Malva neglecta*): While walking south on the east side of Langstone Bridge on Aug 19 I found one of these plants flourishing among the extremely close mown roadside grass just south of where boats from Langstone

Sailing Club cross the road to be launched into Chichester Harbour. Although the plant is not a rarity, and is recorded locally from south Hayling and from somewhere in Leigh Park, I have never come across it here before and have this year been lamenting the loss of the plant from a local Sussex site in the Nutbourne orchards (where the grass under the apple trees is no longer close mown). See my diary entry for Aug 19 for more detail and photos.

Red Clover: On Aug 19 I also discovered that a medium sized field at Northney (north Hayling) had been sown with a single crop of Red Clover - photo on my Diary page

Sand Lucerne: This hybrid between Lucerne and Sickle Medick is rare in Hampshire and a colony of it which John Goodspeed discovered on Aug 14 in the Portchester Castle Shore park on the sea wall of Paulsgrove Lake may well be the only place it is to be found in Hampshire. To my knowledge this colony has persisted there for ten years (maybe much longer). The plants look similar to Lucerne except for the colour of the flowers which which vary from plant to plant and can range from white to black (or anything in between though yellow flowers can usually be found).

Ivy: Although not yet in flower the buds of the first autumn flowers have already passed though the stage or 'tightly closed balls of buds' and the individual flower stems are now becoming full length - flowers might be seen before the end of this month

Slender Hare's Ear: Following my find of a dozen plants flower on the Langstone South Moors shore on Aug 13 Brian Fellows found a lot more on the North Hayling western seawall on Aug 17

Henbane: It is some years since I saw this in Hampshire fields but now is the time to look for it after a find in the Walland Marsh area (just east of Rye) on Aug 18

Skullcap: I could not see this at the Lumley (Emsworth) site where Brian Fellows found it on June 29 but a couple of fresh plants were flowering there on Aug 17

OTHER WILDLIFE

Cetaceans: A pod of 10 White-beaked Dolphins were off Whitburn on the Durham coast and one Minke Whale was off Yorkshire

Grass Snake: At the Oare Marshes in north Kent the cries of a Vole revealed that it was desperately trying to escape from a Grass Snake which was gripping the back end of its body. Wondering about the outcome of this struggle led me to a website giving me the facts about the diet and hunting methods of Grass Snakes - see http://www.surrey-arg.org.uk/SARG/08000-TheAnimals/SARGSpeciesData.asp?Species=Grass_Snake which tells me that Grass Snakes do not have fangs or venom and rely on swallowing their prey whole so only a big female would have a chance to swallow a Vole. Among other aspects of a Grass Snake's way of life this website tells me that their main prey are amphibians and because the Frogs and Newts spend only part of the year in water the Snakes follow them and at this time of year they will have left the ponds where they hunted in the spring and can be found in many different dry habitats. Another fact learnt from this website is that

Pheasants are among the main predators of young snakes. Among facts which I already knew are that, when attacked, the Snakes can generate a nasty smell from glands around their 'cloaca' (or anus) and can in a last resort feign death which may deter those predators which like their food to be fresh. In exceptional circumstances they will 'bite' an attacker but this is unlikely to harm a human (they do have small teeth)

Leatherback Turtle: One was seen in the Scillies area on Aug 14 and I found relevant info about the species in UK waters on the BBC Springwatch website at <http://www.bbc.co.uk/springwatch/meettheanimals/leatherback.shtml> - these creatures are not new to Britain but are thought likely to be seen here in increasing numbers following the increasing number of jellyfish around our coasts. Among other facts I learnt that these Turtles, unlike other reptiles, are warmblooded and that the name Leatherback because their shells are covered by a leathery skin

Fungi: Blackening Waxcaps were seen at Cowdray near Midhurst on Aug 19 and these should soon be a fairly common species - last year they appeared on my garden lawn on Sep 22. On Aug 19 I found my first **Giant Puffball** in the Northney area of Hayling Island and I see that last year they appeared in a Langstone garden on Aug 22 with others seen in the Havant Eastern Road cemetery at the beginning of September. Back on July 24 this year Durlston reported the find of the rare and colourful **Red Cage fungus (Clathrus ruber)** and this week they tell us that the 'cage' has now collapsed after the best part of a month.

WILDLIFE DIARY AND NEWS FOR AUG 15 - 21 (WEEK 33 OF 2011)

Fri 19 Aug

North Hayling

Today's forecast of uninterrupted sunshine sent me on a long walk starting with Langstone Pond, then over Langstone Bridge and around the north Hayling fields to Northney Church, then west across the fields to the Oyster beds before returning up the Billy Trail.

Reaching the seawall at the end of Wade Lane I was given a spectacular flying display, low above my head, by **a young male Sparrowhawk trying in vain to catch a Swallow** - the hawk followed every twist and turn of the Swallow's flight but never got within striking distance and soon gave up, disappearing into an Oak tree growing by the gate into the pony field.

Around the pond **some 20 Egrets (all juveniles)** were perched in the trees giving me the impression that they have not yet joined the adults on fishing expeditions but are still expecting their food to be brought to them although I think they are perfectly able to fly and should by now be learning how to feed themselves!

Crossing Langstone Bridge I got as far as the point where boats from the Langstone Sailing Club are sometimes wheeled across the busy road to launch on the Chichester side of the bridge when I made my best discovery of the day - a single plant of the **Dwarf Mallow (Malva neglecta)** which I have only previously seen in the Nutbourne orchards from which it seems to have disappeared now that the undergrowth below the abandoned apple trees has been allowed to grow, choking out the small, ground hugging, Mallow.

This plant was on the east side of the bridge nestling at the foot of a mysterious metal box (possibly something to do with measuring the traffic flow over the bridge as there is a matching box on the other side of the road) which is only a couple of yards south of the massive stone block bearing the inscription commemorating the opening of this 'new' bridge (that block itself is only just south of the slipway track by which boats reach the water). The photos below indicate the location of the plant and the detail of its flowers.

Location of Dwarf Mallow beside Langstone Bridge (plants are just beyond my notebook)

Dwarf Mallow - whole plant

Close view of Dwarf Mallow flowers

At the south end of the bridge I crossed the Northney road and took the path behind the Texaco garage which soon turns east towards Northney. Beside this path I found a single young specimen of what will become a **Giant Puffball**. Along the path I also noticed the **Ivy flowers were a step closer to opening** - most of them had ceased to be compact balls of buds and were spreading out, each bud now having a visible stem. At the end of this path you climb a stile into a field stretching north and east to the Northney Road and I was pleasantly surprised to find the field dedicated to raising a crop of **Red Clover** as shown in the photos below.

Red Clover crop with Northney Hotel and Marina in background

Closer view of Red Clover crop

Following the first section of the field edge path brought me to the back gardens of houses in Northney village near the church and in one garden which had a large pond I watched a **male Common Darter** on the wing. At the church, where a large scale funeral was taking place (the main door into the church was outlined with a massive display of Lillies and other floral decoration, something I have not seen done before), I went close enough to confirm that the **Strawberry Tree** at the roadside at the east end of the church was in full flower before leaving the graveyard and starting on the field track leading west across the open fields. On the south side of the first section of this track a crop of **Pumpkins** was growing, hidden in a tangle of arable weeds among which I noticed quite a lot of **Green Amaranth (Pigweed)**, some massive examples of **Sun Spurge** and lots of **Black Nightshade** and **Common Fumitory**. The next section of track was bare of any crop as the wheat (?) had been harvested, and where the track turned south towards Northwood Farm I stopped to study a new interpretation board telling me about the **Roman Temple** which had once stood in the field north of the board. I now left the broad farm track and took the field edge path running west to bring me to Victoria Road (the southern boundary of the Stoke Common housing). This road comes out almost opposite the track leading to the Northney Halt carpark at Stoke Bay (the southern end of the Oysterbeds area). When I arrived at the Oysterbeds lagoon I was stunned by the silence now that the nesting gulls and terns have left but the silence did not last long as a group of **Sandwich Terns** flew in and landed, among them seemed to be several young birds which had hatched here and which,

now that they can fly, follow their parents everywhere, still begging continuously for food.

I was puzzled to see a commercial fishing boat apparently dredging just off the Oysterbeds - hopefully it was not after Oysters as there is a close season for them from March 1 to October 31 each year.

Leaving the Oysterbeds pools I started back up the coastal path along which I noted a couple of items. The first was a very **fresh Small Copper** butterfly which paused for long enough to allow me one distant photo but as I was closing in to get a better shot a bicycle rushed by and the butterfly took fright.

Fresh Small Copper butterfly on Hayling Coastal Path

The second item concerned **Snails**. At this time of year in hot dry places I always find lots of small white snails with black bands around their shells. Although they can be found on the ground they normally, when it is hot as it was today, climb up plant stems (or anything else that gives them a chance to get above the very hot ground and into a zone where any breeze that there may be will help to cool them). I had never discovered their proper name and referred to them as '**Mint Humbug**' **snails** in view of their resemblance to those sweets. Today I saw many of them and this evening I made a further effort to name them, I think with success - it seems they are called **Heath Snail (*Helicella itala*)** but there is one other possibility which is the **Striped Snail (*Ceruella virgata*)**. To separate them you have to look at the centre of the underside of the shell where there is a hole in the centre of the whorls of the shell (called an umbilicus on account of its resemblance to our human 'belly button') - the **Heath Snail has a large umbilicus** around one third of the width of the whole shell where the **Striped Snail has a much smaller umbilicus**. Both species vary in their colour and striping from one individual to the next and both have the habit of climbing plant stems to get above the hot ground (see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ceruella_virgata for a good illustration of this)

Wed 17 Aug

Around Southbourne airfield

To get some fresh air today I drove to Emsworth and parked in Lumley Road, walked north up Lumley Lane to the A27 where, instead of crossing it, I turned south on the path following the west side of the flat fields stretching east to Southbourne (fields that were once an airfield and can be seen as an edited Google Satellite View on the internet at

<http://www.content-delivery.co.uk/aviation/airfields/Southbourne-2.html> - the only information about this airfield comes from the Chichester Harbour Conservancy website which says .. "**In 1917 an airfield was laid out at Southbourne where American pilots were trained to fly British heavy bombers to attack Germany. Today it is all farmland**").

Crossing the railway I intended to follow the official route which would bring me back to the A259 via Penny or Tupenny Lane but when a couple of people appeared on the path ahead of me though a gap in the hedge separating the fields from what I know as Southbourne Copse I decided to go into the copse which I have never visited before and see if I could find my way out via Woodfield Park Road (in fact I came out via an unofficial exit into Bramley Gardens so I still do not

know if there is public access to the wood which is clearly well used by local children!)

Getting out of my car at the start of this walk I was surprised to see a **strange 'cardboard cutout' figure of a Canada Goose** by the edge of Peter Pond and when I got home I learnt from Brian Fellows' website that this was part of the conservation work done (to encourage real **Canada Geese** to visit the pond) by David Gattrell of the Chichester Wildfowlers Association (you can see a full list of the local ponds which have benefitted from their voluntary conservation work at <http://www.swawma.org/index-3.html> - the entry for Peter Pond tells me that ..

"This pond is noted for a species of South American tubeworm which probably arrived via a boat hull.") I'm not sure if this last remark is correct as I believe I have read the same statement about the neighbouring Slipper Mill Pond (see http://www.smppa.org.uk/Natural_History/Invertebrates/Invertebrates.htm)

Further up Lumley Road, where the stream feeding Peter Pond passes in front of a row of cottages, I looked for and found the **lovely blue flowers of Skullcap** flowering on the stone wall of the culvert through which the stream passes - the best example was seen outside the southernmost of the cottages.

After passing Lumley Mill and following the bend in the road to the start of the straight section of Lumley Lane I enjoyed the **Orange Hawkweed** growing on the roadside grass of the final bend and near the bridge over the A27 I found garden escape **Montbretia** in flower but there was little of special interest in the field edge arable weeds along the edge of the 'airfield' or in the copse.

Tue 16 Aug

Egret roost count at Langstone Pond

With the tide very low and the weather fine I cycled down to Langstone Pond some 45 minutes before sunset and found **17 Egrets** (mostly juveniles) already in the trees. Egrets started to fly into the roost trees very soon after I took up position, standing on the seawall bench opposite the south end of the rough meadow north of the pond, and by the time that I left, some 20 minutes after sunset, **my count of Egrets spending the night in the trees around the pond was 153.**

A couple of nights earlier Barry Collins had counted **105 Egrets** entering the roost in trees just north of the Little Deeps on Thorney Island and I expect a similar number were there tonight making a total of around 250 birds at these two roosts (which are in sight of each other, even from ground level). I have no current information on other roosts that have been used in the past at Thorney Great Deeps, Thorney churchyard, Tournurbury Woods on south Hayling and trees on Horsea Island in Portsmouth Harbour but it could well be that some of these are also in current use. I have been told that Egrets do not use the trees of breeding sites as autumn roosts but the Langstone Pond site disproves that theory so there could also be roosts in the Elson Woods (within the Navy's Defence Munitions site at Bedenham, just south of where Fareham Creek enters Portsmouth Harbour), and in Oldpark Woods on the Bosham peninsula to the north east of Itchenor in Chichester Harbour.

Mon 15 Aug

Gninner Point and Sinah Common on Hayling

After a short break giving them time to lay and incubate a second clutch of eggs the two pairs of **House Martins** that still nest locally have been back in the air above

my garden for a few days, presumably catching insects that rise above the trees lining the old rail line passing the end of the garden to feed a second brood of young. They were very noticeable on this lovely sunny morning and this weather suggested a cycle ride down the rail line to south Hayling.

Nothing special to report on my way south though I did keep an eye on the **Gorse** bushes in case they had started flowering early (I expect to see new flowers in the first two weeks of September when looking for the first returning **Brent Geese** but in 2007 I saw flowers as early as Aug 21 and Durlston reported them on Aug 10 that year). I did note a **Greenshank** which flew up from the wet field immediately south of Texaco Bay and heard calls which I took to be coming from juvenile **Buzzards** in the trees lining the east side of that field (on the way back I heard similar calls in the area of the West Town Station and saw that they came from an airborne **Buzzard** low overhead). Another sound which I heard sporadically along the full length of the old rail track (including the Havant end) was **Robin song**, maybe from resident birds preparing to repel continental invaders from their territories or maybe the first continental birds establishing their own winter territories.

Reaching the seaside near the Ferry one of the first things I saw was a **Tree Lupin** in flower (just one bush re-flowering). Also in flower were quite a few **Yellow Horned Poppies** with a few of examples of most of the summer flowering species that grow in the Sinah area but the most significant sight in the Gunner Point area were **three Wheatears**, my first of the autumn.

By the time I was back at the Oysterbeds the spring tide was full but the only birds roosting in any numbers were perhaps **500 Oystercatchers** (though I did spot a single summer plumage **Grey Plover** and was deafened by the noise of terns on and around the nest islands)

WILDLIFE DIARY AND NEWS FOR AUG 8 - 14 (WEEK 32 OF 2011)

BIRDS

Great Crested Grebe: By Aug 6 the autumn flock of these birds had built up to 40 in number as they started to move from breeding to winter quarters

Great Shearwater: We don't see many of these off southern England but you can see a good close-up photo of one taken in the Scillies on Aug 4 at http://farm7.static.flickr.com/6196/6025031505_e7a038c2d1_o.jpg Between Aug 1 and 11 six sightings of single birds were reported at sites between the Scillies and Start Point in Devon

Balearic Shearwater: Most sightings of these are reported from the west country but on Aug 6 Dungeness reported 19 birds

Cattle Egret: One paid a brief visit to Hantsphire this week being seen in the Alresford area near Winchester on Aug 8 and 9

Grey Heron: I have always been wary of getting within stabbing range of a Heron's bill and my fears were justified this week when a Heron joined in the wave of 'mindless violence' by drowning a Starling at Pulborough Brooks. Human parents have been urged to control their children this week and looking back to Aug 15 I think the parents who allowed their children to feed hand-held bread to a juvenile

Heron on the Elvetham estate at Hartley Witney in north Hampshire should have had more thought for the safety of their children's eyes (especially as I see that on that same day a Heron at Cuckmere Haven in Sussex was seen to take a baby rabbit).

White Stork: Birds breeding on the near continent have already started to head south - 41 were reported at a Netherlands site on Aug 10

Greylag Goose: Fleet Pond is a good place to see a large variety of birds but on Aug 6 it became a bit crowded with flocks of **208 Greylags** and **214 Canada Geese**

Teal: No big numbers yet but on Aug 12 a count of 14 on the Pagham Ferry pool marked the change of season

Mallard: Tiny ducklings continue to appear on waters where these birds have stayed to breed but the presence of more than **250 Mallard** at Rye Harbour on Aug 12 heralds the return of birds that have bred elsewhere

Garganey: These have been reported from six sites this week with 7 present in the Kent Stour valley on Aug 6 and 10 at a French site on Aug 10 plus ones and twos at Dungeness, Pulborough Brooks, Christchurch Harbour and Titchfield Haven

Shoveler: Rye Harbour is among several sites noticing an increase in numbers this week. Another returnee to southern waters was a single **Long-tailed Duck** off the Netherlands on Aug 12 and a male **Red-crested Pochard** was at the Blashford Lakes on Aug 8 and 9

Honey Buzzard: Four were seen over one Netherlands site on Aug 6 (a total of 10 may have been present in that country) and five were at a Belgian site on Aug 11. There were also sightings of singles in England this week over the Kent Stour valley, at Sandwich Bay and at the Blashford Lakes in Hampshire

Black Kite: One remained in the Penzance area throughout the week

Osprey: On Aug 12 Barry Collins had his first sighting of one in the Thorney Island area of Chichester Harbour where one or more birds can be expected to take advantage of good fishing over the next couple of months before leaving for the south. There is a good chance that these birds will spend their nights in the trees of Stansted Forest. Other reports this week came from the Netherlands, Weir Wood reservoir in Sussex, Titchfield in Hampshire and the Wareham Channel in Poole Harbour, Dorset. Presumably the same bird caught a fish off the Pilsey area on the morning of Aug 13. Also on Aug 13 at least one Osprey spent some time in Langstone Harbour disturbing the waders during the period when they were being counted for the monthly WeBS count

Quail: Three reports indicate that at least two birds are still on the West Sussex downs in the Worthing area

Pheasant: One was still sitting on a clutch of 14 eggs in the South Gorley area not far north of the Blashford Lakes on Aug 12, reminding me of how I was fooled a few years ago into thinking that I had discovered a party of Quail on the Langstone South Moors when the birds seen (at a late summer date when Quail were heading

south) turned out to be baby Pheasants that are able to fly short distances at an early age when their size and colouration suggest Quail though their 'baby bird' piping calls should have revealed their true identity.

Corncrake: At least one of these was heard 'singing' in a hay field near Newquay in Cornwall on Aug 7. Many years ago I had proof that these migrants do pass over the Havant area when I was given the corpse of one that had broken its neck on wires above a south Hayling field (that individual can still be seen in the Hampshire county collection of stuffed specimens!)

Ringed Plover: The three latest reports of flock sizes (35, 44, and 108) from Sussex, Hampshire and Kent show how numbers are now building up

Golden Plover: The first reports of flocks in excess of 100 since April are of 154 at Dungeness and 178 at Seasalter on the north Kent coast, both this week

Temmincks Stint: Two birds were seen in East Kent this week but numbers in England have not changed significantly since June

Stilt Sandpiper: The bird which arrived at Lodmoor (Weymouth) on July 23 seems to have left on Aug 7

Black-tailed Godwit: Flock sizes reported on the south coast this week have been 76 in Emsworth Harbour, 139 at Farlington Marshes, 100 at Titchfield Haven, 410 at Hook (Warsash) and 40 in Pagham Harbour (Ferry Pool).

Arctic Skua: Counts of 28, 35, 80 and 18 at Dungeness on successive days this week show that autumn passage of this species is now underway

Common Tern: A count of 7400 in Pegwell Bay (East Kent) on Aug 11 co-incided with an evening roost count of 650 in Langstone Harbour and a report of 250 at Titchfield Haven

Little Tern: These continue to pass west along the English Channel but the peak count on the English side this week was just 16 (at Church Norton in Pagham Harbour) compared to a count of 176 in Normandie (France)

Black Tern: Plenty of reports this week but the highest count reported was only 16+ at Pegwell Bay in Kent on Aug 11

Bee Eater: One in the Scillies on Aug 9 has probable been there unseen since the last sighting on July 27

Wryneck: None reported yet on the south coast but Aug 12 brought news of the first autumn passage birds - one on Englands east coast and one in the Netherlands

Yellow Wagtail: A count of 300 at Rye Harbour on Aug 12 and of 40 at Reculver on the north Kent coast are the only substantial counts this week - the max at Dungeness was 25 and none were reported in Hampshire this week

Grey, Pied and White Wagtail: All three species get a mention this week but only for single birds on passage

Song Thrush: These were singing each evening up to July 29 but only one has been heard since then (at Brook Meadow in Emsworth on Aug 10)

Icterine and Melodious Warblers: Three Icterine Warblers were seen on the east coast on Aug 12 and a Melodious which was at Christchurch Harbour on Aug 12 may have been the same bird that was at Portland on Aug 10

Greenish Warbler: The first in Britain this year was on Fair Isle on Aug 12

Woodchat Shrike: A juvenile reported from the Scillies on three days this week was new there on Aug 6 but a separate bird in Gloucestershire seems to have been there since Aug 3

Raven: These were reported from nine sites this week including some in each of Dorset, Hampshire, East and West Sussex and Kent

Black-bellied Storm Petrel: A bird thought to be of this species was seen off Madeira on Aug 9 - hardly of interest to birders in Britain but for those seeking to have the longest possible list of bird species this would add one to the number of birds that can be recorded in the Western Palearctic - I look forward to seeing its photo on the Three Amigos blog. This is not the first time that this Antarctic/South Atlantic species has crossed the equator - see <http://uk400clubrarebirdalert.blogspot.com/2009/11/mega-of-megas-blackbellied-storm-petrel.html> for a probable sighting in Britain (Severn Beach area) on 25 Nov 2009. There had been just one other possible sighting off the Norfolk coast on 10 Dec 2007 but with both these British sightings there were no photos to prove whether it was a **Black-bellied** or a **White-bellied Storm Petrel** (two separate species)

INSECTS

Dragonflies

Significant sightings this week:

Southern Migrant Hawker: A male was seen in Essex on Aug 7

Willow Emerald Damsel: More than 12 were seen in the Chislet Marshes (Thanet area of Kent) on Aug 9 and several more were in the Sandwich Bay area on Aug 11

Species on the wing this week:

Brown Hawker, Southern Migrant Hawker, Emperor, Scarce Chaser, Ruddy Darter, Emerald Damsel, Willow Emerald Damsel

Butterflies

Significant reports:

Clouded Yellow: One seen on Windover Hill (north of Eastbourne) on Aug 9 was the first to be reported as a Helice variant this year

Small Blue: Second brood insects seen at Durlston and the East Sussex Downs up to Aug 11

Species on the wing this week:

Small Skipper, Essex Skipper, Lulworth Skipper, Silver Spotted Skipper, Dingy Skipper, Clouded Yellow, Brimstone, Large White, Small White, Green-veined White, Brown Hairstreak, Small Copper, Small Blue, Brown Argus, Common Blue, Chalkhill Blue, Adonis Blue, Holly Blue, Red Admiral, Small Tortoiseshell, Peacock, Comma, Dark Green Fritillary, Silver Washed Fritillary, Speckled Wood, Wall Brown, Marbled White, Grayling, Gatekeeper, Meadow Brown, Small Heath, Ringlet

Moths

Garden Tiger: Some traps on Portland have been attracting up to 80 of these colourful moths each time the trap is put out - see http://www.portlandbirdobs.org.uk/mp_garden_tigers_2_000811_500.jpg for a few of them

Marbled Green: See <http://ukmoths.org.uk/show.php?id=323> for a good looking moth taken in Thanet (Kent) on Aug 7

For a good selection of other recent moths see <http://www.surfbirds.com/blog/amigo> and scroll down to the moth related entries for Aug 13, 9, and 7

Other Insects

Lesser Stag Beetle: The first to be reported this year was seen at Durlston on Aug 11. This seems to have been an extremely poor year for **Stag Beetles** - I have had just one sighting of a male here in Havant on May 21 and have only two other entries for the species in my database (a male at Woods Mill in Sussex on May 31 and a second report from there on June 26 reporting 'bits of one' lying on the ground, possibly after the beetle had been killed and eaten by a Magpie)

Glow-worm: Three were still glowing at Durlston on Aug 6

Bush Crickets: Both Grey and Dark species seen at Durlston on Aug 11

Curculio species Weevils: On Aug 13 Gordon Jarvis found a couple of tiny Weevils mating in woods at Peasmarsh near Hastings and his excellent photo of them can be seen at

<http://rxwildlife.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2011/08/curculiodae-curculio-betu-la.jpg> - don't miss this one!

Wasp Spider: I saw my first for the year on her web in the long grass of the Havant Eastern Road cemetery on Aug 8

PLANTS

Rock Rose: The Havant Wildlife Group enjoyed the sight of this in flower when they visited Kingley Vale on Aug 6 and I also found it flowering on Portsdown on Aug 9 (for a photo see my Diary entry for that day)

Bastard Toadflax: This was also found at Kingley Vale on Aug 6

Shining Cranesbill: One plant was reflowering in Havant on Aug 8 long after the spring flowering ended on June 2

Sickle Medick: The roadside plants near The George pub on Portsdown were still managing to support a few flowers despite being extremely close mown when I saw them on Aug 9

Cockspur Thorn (*Crataegus crus-galli*): Brian Fellows visited the 'Westbourne Open Space' area of Emsworth (a grassy area with a footpath across it to continue the northward line of Westbourne Avenue to the Westbourne Road on the north east fringe of Emsworth) and remarked on a tree which he had found there last year and discovered to be a relative of the Hawthorns but which cannot be confused with them on account of its larger, toothed oval, leaves, large white flowers and large fruit (up to 2cm across). It bears a variable number of thorns but these too are large and can be 10cm long.

Dog Rose: Some bushes regularly bear a second crop of flowers among their Hips long after their leaves have fallen - last year I thought this 'winter flowering' had started early when I found flowers on Oct 19 but this year that date has been superseded by a bush growing on the Langstone South Moors which I found bearing three flowers on Aug 13

Ivy: Not yet flowering but on Aug 13 I found several bushes bearing prominent flower buds for the first time

Pepper Saxifrage: On Aug 8 I discovered a new to me colony of these plants in the Warblington Farm field closest to Nore Barn woodland

Slender Hare's Ear (*Bupleurum tenuissimum*): I found this flowering for the first time this year on Aug 13 at a place where in the past I could rely on finding it each year but where the plants have vanished in recent years (I think because the footpath across the site has ceased to be used allowing coarse grass to grow and choke out these slender plants). The site in question is the low ground immediately inside the line of the seawall path along the South Moors shore at Langstone (in recent years every has used the path along the top of the wall). On Aug 13 I found that there is once again a well trodden path along the lower ground at the west end of the seawall and, as in the past, a dozen or more of the small and wiry Hare's Ear plants have come up at the edge of the trodden area of bare earth and now grow overhanging the path, enjoying any sunshine but not having their roots trampled by walkers.

Autumn Gentian (aka Felwort): These had started to flower at Durlston back on Aug 2 but I did not find them on Portsdown until Aug 9

Field Woundwort: This had been seen in flower near Hastings on July 13 but I have not heard of any in the Havant area until I found some in a Warblington Farm field on Aug 8

Carline Thistle: Flowers on this plant were just opening on Portsdown on Aug 8

Montbretia (Crocospia): This bright coloured flower is now to be seen in many gardens but is also thriving on Portsdown as a long term garden escape

Branched Bur Reed: Brian Fellows found this flowering in the narrow channel at Westbourne carrying water from the River Ems at Westbourne down to Lumley Mill at Emsworth

OTHER WILDLIFE

Cetacean sightings: A pod of **10 Bottle-nosed Dolphins** were off County Durham on Aug 7 when **2 Harbour Porpoises** were off Berry Head in Devon. Sadly Aug 12 brought news of a freshly dead Porpoise, not yet grown to full adult size, at Winchelsea Beach in Rye Bay (no apparent cause of death). Nack in the North Sea **3 Minke Whales** and **1 Humpback** were off County Durham on Aug 6 with both species seen there again on Aug 7

Common Seal: On Aug 6 the Reculver News from north Kent carried a photo of a young seal, looking very healthy, on the beach (see <http://www.kentos.org.uk/Reculver/images/commonseal811marc.JPG>)

Hedgehog: I'm pretty sure that the recent increase in Hedgehog sightings has been caused by parent 'hogs' putting in overtime to find food for their young and this week Brian Fellows has heard of two sightings of young 'hogs' taking their first outings in the Emsworth area

Slow-worm: Butterfly hunters at the Park Corner Heath near Eastbourne saw both an Adder and one or more Slow-worms there this week and here in Havant I discovered a Slow-worm in a slightly unusual setting, hiding in a dense bed of Sage plants which allowed it to enjoy the warmth of the sun while hiding it from the eyes of the Jackdaws which would happily eat it - maybe the strong aroma of Sage gave it extra protection against predators which might detect it by scent.

Sunfish: One came so close to the Devon shore near Berry Head that it could be heard as the waves slapped against its dorsal fin protruding above the water. The name of the observer also caught my eye - Ivan Lakin must surely be the same person who I knew before he left his family home in the East Cosham area of Portsmouth

Shark species: On Aug 10 the Scillies Birding website carried the following note (probably referring to a **Blue Shark** though the species is not named) ... "Of interest, after over 10 years of shark tagging, in which time more than 500 sharks have been caught, on this trip the first shark that was already tagged was caught. The tag was from Rhode Island, U.S!"

Fungus Foray: I see from the local Hollybank Woods website (<http://www.hollybank-woods.hampshire.org.uk/>) that a member of the Hampshire Fungus Recording Group will be leading a foray into the woods on Saturday Aug

27. I believe anyone can join in and if you are interested the foray lasts from 10am to Noon and you should meet at the junction of Hollybank Lane and Long Copse Lane (where Hollybank Lane becomes an unmade track leading into the woods)

WILDLIFE DIARY AND NEWS FOR AUG 8 - 14 (WEEK 32 OF 2011)

Sat 13 Aug

A walk to the Langstone South Moors

This afternoon I walked to the South Moors with two plants in mind - first was **Devils Bit Scabious** (which had started to flower in Havant Thicket back on Aug 5 but which is always later on the South Moors and present in such small numbers that each year I expect it to cease growing there). The other target was **Slender Hare's Ear** which used to flourish inside the sea wall there but which has almost vanished in recent years.

No luck with the **Scabious** today but I was very pleased to see a good show of a dozen plants or more of the **Hare's Ear** starting to flower. Going from west to east most people walk along the top of the sea wall and while I have seen **Hare's Ear** growing there it seems to prefer the low ground inside the sea wall where (until now) no one normally walks and the thick grass has choked or hidden the **Hare's Ear**. Today I found a narrow, well trodden path on the low ground and the **Hare's Ear** apparently rejoicing in the light once more reaching the ground (the plants grow along the edge of the trodden path but overhang it, making them easy to spot) Other plants which caught my attention today started with **Ivy** - for the first time I noticed that this was holding up its tight closed flower buds ready to mark the start of autumn by opening its flowers. Secondly I found **Gipsywort** in full flower as I walked by the Langbrook stream and thirdly, after leaving the 'orchid field' on the Moors I found a **Dog Rose** bush near the entry into the old IBM Playing Fields which had three flowers open among its hips. A final fresh flowering plant was **Welsh Poppy** with two plants holding up their yellow flowers as I started back up the Billy Trail from the main road at Langstone (further up the track two **Robins** were proclaiming their winter territories with song).

Tue 9 Aug

Autumn flowers on Portsdown

Having heard last week that **Autumn Ladies Tresses** were in flower locally I went to look for them on Portsdown this afternoon. I first checked out the small area immediately south of The George pub where the **Sickle Medick** plants have been cut back to almost nothing. No luck here but walking back to the car through the unmown area east of the London Road I found a cluster of **Autumn Gentians (aka Felwort)** to make this diversion worth while.

Continuing towards the place that I felt more likely to have the orchids on show I drove beyond it to park on the west side of Fort Southwick from where I walked to the foot of the hill in order to have another look at the place where I found **Rock Rose** in flower back in May and I was pleased to find it still flourishing.

Rock Rose backlit by late afternoon sun

Having come down the hill I now had to climb it again to the area above the Paulsgrove Chalk Pit to look for the orchids but on the way up I found a new site for **Bastard Toadflax** which has been thriving on Portsdown this year. At the top I added **Carline Thistle** to my flowering plant list with at least two plants having very newly open flowers and when I reached the gully where I expected to see the orchids I was not disappointed.

One of the Autumn Ladies Tresses on Portsdown and a closer but out of focus view of another

Rather than go all the way downhill and up again I headed back to the car along the path running close to the road and in the area south of Fort Southwick I passed four glorious displays of **Montbretia (Crocsmia)** at its best.

The path came out onto the roadside at the first of the two mini-roundabouts serving the NHS Park and Ride carparks and the Driving Test centre and there is a sufficient roadside grass verge to take me safely back to where I had parked if I had kept on the south side (foolishly I chose the north side and had to walk on the busy road for some distance at the end of this section!)

Mon 8 Aug

My first Wasp Spider of the autumn

A short walk before lunch took me to the section of the Havant Eastern Road cemetery which is not maintained by the local council and which in consequence has a good crop of blackberries for my meal. It also has a lot of long grass among which I spotted one **Wasp Spider (Argiope bruennichi)** and recorded quite a few wild flowers to kick off the week's list.

Later in the afternoon I took a longer walk to Langstone and along the shore to Nore Barn at Emsworth. I took the footpath through the new housing at Langstone to check on the **Least Yellow Sorrel (Oxalis exilis)** which was flourishing along a 100 metre stretch of the path side but saw nothing else of much interest till I reached Langstone Pond on which the number of **Egrets** was definitely up on my last visit though I could only be sure there were at least 25 present well before the night roost birds arrive. Also on the pond **two female Mallards had tiny ducklings** (one had two, the other four).

Further east along the shore I was delighted to see a group of newly returned **Grey Plover still in their breeding plumage** (jet black belly and breast contrasting with silver grey upper parts) and the image was enhanced by the calls of a **Lapwing** flying south towards Hayling, probably having only just arrived here from wherever it may have been attempting to breed.

After rounding Conigar Point I had a quick look into the arable field which currently has a crop of Maize - this year a narrow field edge has been left unplanted and several plants of **Field Woundwort** could be seen (my first for the year). Returning homeward from Nore Barn across the Warblington Farm fields I noticed a small patch of **Pepper Saxifrage** plants (which I cannot recall finding on the farm in previous years) and on the final stretch along the 'twitchel' path north of the A27 I was surprised to see **Shining Cranesbill** reflowering.

BIRDS

Black-necked Grebe: The non-breeding bird which turned up at the Blashford Lakes near Ringwood on July 24 is now a regular sight there. On Aug 1 a bird in breeding plumage arrived at Weir Wood reservoir in north Sussex but has probably flown on south.

Atlantic Petrel (*Pterodroma incerta*): see entry in Overview section above

Great Shearwater: The first to be seen in the Scillies this year was there on Aug 1 and maybe the same bird was off Penzance on Aug 4

Night Heron: The 23rd report I have logged of this species in England this year is of one in Somerset on Aug 4

Cattle Egret: On Aug 3 Lee Evans told us that a pair have bred (not for the first time) in England this year - the nest was near Southend in Essex and at least one juvenile was seen there at the start of August. A different bird made a short appearance at The Kench on Hayling Island on Aug 2 but has not been seen again

Little Egret: After a roost count of 88 at Rye Harbour on July 29 a count of 40+ came from Elmley Marshes, Sheppey, on Aug 3 and 71 birds left the Rye Harbour roost on the morning of Aug 5

Great White Egret: The bird which has been at Dungeness since the start of June was still there on Aug 3. The bird which has spent long periods at the Blashford Lakes over recent years had not been seen there since Feb 11 until this week when one turned up on Aug 6. Last year the bird left on Feb 18 and returned on Aug 16, while in 2009 it left on Jan 14 and returned on Aug 24

Spoonbill: The Rare Bird Alert team were reporting a total of 29 birds in England spread across 9 counties at the end of June but I think the number has diminished since then and this week's news speaks of one in Dorset (seen at Brownsea Island and Christchurch Harbour), up to 3 on Sheppey in Kent, one at Brading Marshes (IoW), and one flying north over the Pulborough area.

Mute Swan: On Aug 1 the herd in the Fishbourne Channel near Chichester numbered 140 and there were 38 in the Hermitage Stream where it flows into Langstone Harbour

Garganey: These have been reported at four sites this week with up to six in the Kent Stour valley, a couple at Pulborough Brooks, one at Rye Harbour and another at Elmley Marshes

Shoveler: At least one was back at the Budds Farm on Aug 4 with two at Pulborough on Aug 5 and 6 at each of the Stour Valley in Kent and the Blashford Marshes in Hampshire

Tufted Duck: These always produce their young late in the season and so I was not surprised to find 3 families of tiny (but deep diving) ducklings at Budds Farm in Havant on Aug 4, nor to hear of five similar broods at the Blashford Lakes on Aug 6

Goosander: Seven females were at the Blashford Lakes on Aug 3 - almost certainly birds that have stayed in the Avon valley this summer

Honey Buzzard: Some may now be on their way south - on Aug 1 seven were seen in Belgium, four in Germany and two in the Netherlands and an entry in Graeme Lyons blog for that day describes a recent sighting he had of one somewhere in Sussex.

Black Kite: Two seem to have settled in southern England recently - one has been in west Cornwall since June 26 and the other in mid Devon since July 28 - both were still present this week

Osprey: These should become a regular sight over the Solent harbours in the next few weeks. On July 30 one caught a fish in Pagham Harbour and one was over the Langstone South Moors on July 31. On Aug 3 one flew south to sea without stopping at Dungeness and on Aug 5 one seen in the Cuckmere Valley (East Sussex) flew inland to find a perch for the night while another was at Bembridge Harbour (IoW) and another was in the Morden area west of Poole Harbour.

Golden Pheasant: One was a very unexpected sight in a garden on the outskirts of Herne Bay in Kent on Aug 2

Spotted Crane: One was in the Kent Stour valley on Aug 3 (when Lee Evans reported another in Lincolnshire)

Golden Plover: Four birds were seen in the east side of Hayling Island on Aug 2 and other flocks seen this week have been 94 on the north Kent coast (Aug 1) and 178 in the same area on Aug 5 plus 26 at Sandwich Bay on Aug 2

Little Stint: One was at the Sidlesham Ferry Pool (Pagham Harbour) from July 30 to Aug 1, another was at the Weir Wood reservoir on Aug 1 and 2 were in Pegwell Bay (Kent) on Aug 4. A rare relation (a **Red-necked Stint**) was in Ireland on Aug 3

Curlew Sandpiper: One was in Christchurch Harbour on July 31, another at Elmley Marshes (Sheppey) on Aug 1 and on Aug 2 two were at Pegwell Bay in Kent (with 3 there next day).

Stilt Sandpiper: The bird which arrived at Lodmoor (Weymouth) on July 23 was still there on Aug 5

Ruff: Singles seen at five sites this week including Winchester sewage farm and both Pagham and Langstone Harbours

Black-tailed Godwit: 188 were counted at Hook (Warsash) on Aug 4, 147 were at Farlington Marshes on Aug 2 and 101 were feeding on mud near the Lymington Ferry terminal

Spotted Redshank: These are now appearing along the south coast - on July 31 eight different birds were seen in Dorset

Greenshank: On Aug 2 there were 34 at the Oare Marshes in Kent and on Aug 6 there were 34 at Farlington Marshes

Green Sandpiper: The Lower Test Marshes had 16 on July 30, Brading Marshes (IoW) had 14+ on Aug 5 and Pulborough Brooks had 12+ on Aug 3 but the highest count was from the Kent Stour Valley with 25 on July 31

Wood Sandpiper: Sandwich Bay had four on Aug 4, Pegwell Bay had 3 and Elmley Marshes had 3 leaving singles at six other sites including Pagham Harbour, Winchester sewage farm, Christchurch Harbour and Thurlestone Bay in Devon

Skuas: Autumn passage is now getting into full swing - 35 **Arctic Skuas** were included in the Dungeness report for Aug 4 which said .. "The highlights were two **Balearic Shearwaters**, four **Manx Shearwaters**, 1050 **Gannets**, 35 **Arctic Skuas**, four **Great Skuas**, two **Little Gulls**, 110 **Kittiwakes**, 700 **Sandwich Terns**, 900 **Common Terns**, six **Arctic Terns**, two **Little Terns** and 51 **Black Terns**." A single **Long-tailed Skua** was off Portland on July 31

Ring-billed Gull: The first to be reported this autumn was at Christchurch Harbour on Aug 3 (seen again there on Aug 6)

Terns: One **Roseate** has been at Titchfield Haven all this week while **Common Tern** passage has been a stream with 1650 dropping off for a nights rest in Langstone Harbour on Aug 1. The only count of **Arctic Terns** was six at Dungeness on Aug 4 and there was a similar count of 22 **Little Terns** that came in to Pagham Harbour on Aug 2 before carrying on west. **Black Terns** were seen at nine sites including the Langstone Harbour night roost (2 birds seen on Aug 1) but by far the highest count was of 120 birds at the Oare Marshes in north Kent on Aug 4 (maybe this suggests that these birds continue west up the Thames estuary and cross southern England by an inland route)

Departing migrants: The following table will show, for each species, the highest count reported anywhere along the south coast during the week ending with the date shown at the head of the column in the table. To avoid undue complexity any other comments (including reports of numbers on the continent) will be listed in the main text

** COASTAL COUNTS OF DEPARTING MIGRANTS **						
Bird Name	31/07	07/08	14/08	21/08	28/08	04/09
Turtle Dove	1	4				
Cuckoo	1	1				
Swift	80	1500				
Sand Martin	500	300				
Swallow	100	15000+				
House Martin	50	80				
Tree Pipit	4	14				

Meadow Pipit		60				
Yellow Wagtail	20	150				
Nightingale	1	4				
Common Redstart	2	4				
Whinchat	5	6				
Wheatear	10	50				
Grasshopper Warbler	3	9				
Sedge Warbler	180	76				
Reed Warbler	5					
Lesser Whitethroat	6	12				
Common Whitethroat	220	130				
Garden Warbler	10	12				
Blackcap	23	16				
Wood Warbler	-	1				
Chiffchaff	275	-				
Willow Warbler	1	250				
Spotted Flycatcher	-	10				
Pied Flycatcher	2	2				

Cuckoo: One adult was seen this week on Aug 5 at Cissbury Ring on the Sussex Downs. Juveniles were in Dorset (one being fed by a Wren on Aug 2), at Dungeness and at Pulborough Brooks

Woodlark: An indication that these are moving to winter sites came from the Chandlers Ford area north of Southampton on Aug 5 when one flew west over a suburban garden

Sand Martin: A gathering of around 1000 birds was at Christchurch Harbour on the evening of July 28 but the birds were not seen the following morning so presumed to have flown south overnight.

Swallow: Thurlestone Bay on the south west coast of Devon reported a night roost of 15000+ on Aug 2

Yellow Wagtail: 19 reports from southern sites indicate a stepping up of movement from the north. Rye Harbour had the highest counts for both last week (20 on July 30) and this week (150 on Aug 6)

Stonechat: Two reports on Aug 3 show that these are starting to move to coastal sites for the winter. One was seen on Milton Common in Southsea (Portsmouth) and the other on the Downs above Worthing

Winter Thrushes: A **Redwing** was seen at Beachy Head on Aug 6 and a **Fieldfare** was reported at a Netherlands site on Aug 2

Song Thrush: Still singing at dusk in Langstone on July 29

Aquatic Warbler: First mention of this species for the year comes from Netherlands where one was reported on Aug 3

Reed Warbler: Max count in England was 15 on Milton Common (Portsmouth) on Aug 3 but that same day brought a count of 236 at a Belgian site

Melodious Warbler: One at Beachy Head on Aug 6

Dartford Warbler: Continuing dispersion on Aug 5 brought Durlston its first **Dartford Warbler** since the spring

Spotted Flycatcher: Families are now starting to move south and have been seen at Itchen Abbas near Winchester and in the Meon valley this week

Golden Oriole: 5 were seen at a Netherlands site on July 31 and 2 were again in the Netherlands on Aug 3

Red-backed Shrike: A male was in Suffolk on Aug 3

Woodchat Shrike: One reported in Gloucestershire on Aug 3 - the first autumn bird for Britain

Raven: More than 70 were reported in an area of central Devon (near Kennerleigh) on July 30 and the farmer on whose land the current **Black Kite** is currently based says that up to 400 gather there in the winter. Locally a pair of **Ravens** was over the Creech Woods at Denmead on Aug 5

Tree Sparrow: The first to be reported in southern England since April was at Winchelsea Beach (Rye Bay) on Aug 4

Goldfinch: The first substantial autumn flock of 200 birds was seen at Bishopstoke in the Itchen Valley near Eastleigh on Aug 6

Two-barred Crossbill: After recent reports of single birds in Yorkshire and Shetland Lee Evans tells us that 'vast numbers' are now moving south through Scandinavia

INSECTS

Dragonflies

Notable observations this week were of ...

Southern Migrant Hawker: This rare migrant from the Mediterranean is fast becoming a resident in Essex and north Kent and was seen in both these counties again this week

Lesser Emperor: Eight reports this week show that this migrant is also becoming a much more frequent sight in England. Reports came from Cornwall, Hampshire and Kent with a pair egg-laying at Dungeness

Red-veined Darter: Reports of this rare migrant came from Southampton Common this week with others seen in Cornwall

Willow Emerald: On July 30 one of these rarities was seen in the Moors Valley Country Park near Ringwood

Species on the wing were Southern Hawker, Brown Hawker, Migrant Hawker, Southern Migrant Hawker, Emperor, Lesser Emperor, Gold Ringed Dragonfly, Black-tailed Skimmer, Ruddy Darter, Red-veined Darter, Common Darter, Banded Demoiselle, Emerald Damsel, Willow Emerald, Small Red-eyed Damsel, Blue-tailed Damsel, Common Blue Damsel, Azure Damsel, Variable Damsel.

Butterflies

Notable reports were of ...

Silver Spotted Skipper: a good count of 75 on Broughton Down near Stockbridge in west Hampshire on Aug 1

Clouded Yellow: three reports of singles at Seaford on July 30, Noar Hill near Petersfield on Aug 1 and Martin Down on Aug 2

Small Blue: Reports from Durlston on July 26 and Aug 1 show that it is the only site so far to report the appearance of a second brood this year

Silver Studded Blue: The first appeared early on May 17 and they ceased to be reported after July 13 but a single late individual was seen in the New Forest on Aug 2

Duke of Burgundy: A fresh second brood specimen seen at Noar Hill on Aug 3 - last of the first brood was seen on May 21

Purple Emperor: Late news of one in the Goodwood Trundle area north of Chichester on July 27 marks the end of the Emperor for this year

Painted Lady: The only report for the week is of a pristine specimen seen by myself near Apuldram Church (Chichester) on Aug 1

38 species on the wing this week: Small Skipper, Essex Skipper, Lulworth Skipper, Silver Spotted Skipper, Large Skipper, Dingy Skipper, Clouded Yellow, Brimstone, Large White, Small White, Green-veined White, Brown Hairstreak, Purple Hairstreak, Small Copper, Brown Argus, Small Blue, Silver-studded Blue,

Common Blue, Chalkhill Blue, Adonis Blue, Holly Blue, Duke of Burgundy, Purple Emperor, Red Admiral, Painted Lady, Small Tortoiseshell, Peacock, Comma, Dark Green Fritillary, Silver Washed Fritillary, Speckled Wood, Wall Brown, Marbled White, Grayling, Gatekeeper, Meadow Brown, Small Heath, Ringlet

Moths

39 species reported this week include the Mint Moth (*Pyrausta aurata*), Oak Eggar, The Drinker, Rosy Wave, Balsam Carpet, Chalk Carpet, The Many-lined (extinct in Britain but a rare migrant seen this week at Elmley Marshes on Sheppey). Beautiful Carpet (one of several species seen by the Fareham moth group on an outing to West Meon - see

<http://www.surfbirds.com/blog/amigo/21731/Satin+Lutestring%2C+Scallop+Shell+and+August+Thorn+at+West+Meon.html>), Latticed Heath, Lunar Thorn, Bordered Grey, Annulet, Hummingbird Hawkmoth, Dingy Footman, Pigmy Footman, Scarce Footman, White-line Dart, Garden Dart, White-point, Southern Wainscot, Tree-lichen Beauty, Copper Underwing (seen both in Fareham and in Kent), Double Kidney, The Olive, Saltern Ear (on Thorney Island and in Fareham), Rosy Rustic, The Crescent, Webb's Wainscot, Fen Wainscot, The Uncertain and Waved Black.

Other Insects

Glow-worm: Still three females glowing at Durlston on the evening of Aug 6

Lady-birds: Hundreds coming in off the sea in the Thanet area of Kent on Aug 2 - no species named but possibly a lot of them were Harlequins?

Roesel's Bush Cricket: Yet another seen in strange circumstances - on July 30 one was found alive in a Fareham garden with its right back leg missing. As this was a long winged type my guess is that it was on a long distance flight and that a bird (perhaps a Gull after flying ants) made a grab at it, pulled off the leg leaving the cricket to seek refuge in a garden below it. This theory could explain the find of a dead specimen in the Havant Retail Park carpark on July 26 which also was missing a back-leg.

PLANTS

Dittander: I found this flowering as expected by the Fishbourne channel near Chichester on Aug 1 - see my Diary entry for that day for more detail

Spreading Hedge Parsley: I could only find one flowering plant in the set aside field edge by Fishbourne Channel on the northern edge of Salterns Copse when there on Aug 1 but I am told that it is flowering again in a Langstone garden where it mysteriously appeared at this time last year.

Corn Parsley: Also my first sight of this in flower by the Fishbourne Channel on Aug 1

Amphibious Bistort: Another first flower for the year in the Fishbourne meadows on Aug 1

Buckwheat (*Fagopyrum esculentum*): My first ever find of this plant at Apuldram Manor Farm during my Aug 1 outing - see my diary entry for more detail and photos

Yellow Loosestrife: Freshly flowering in the Havant Thicket/Staunton Country Park area on Aug 5 - see diary for detail

Autumn Gentian: First autumn flowers reported at Durlston on Aug 2

Lesser Skullcap: First find of this in flower at Havant Thicket on Aug 5

Phacelia: Also flowering at Apuldram Manor Farm on Aug 1 - see diary for photos. Said to be planted by farmers to attract bees for the pollination of other crops

White Comfrey: Normally this only flowers in early spring but both last year and this I have found it re-flowering at this time of year - this week by the Brockhampton Stream in Havant on Aug 4

Devils Bit Scabious: First flowers seen in Havant Thicket on Aug 5

Cotton Thistle: An impressive array of perhaps a dozen huge plants flowering at Apuldram Manor Farm on Aug 1

Hieracium sabaudum: First sight of this Hawkweed 'species' seen flowering in Havant Thicket on Aug 5

Butcher's Broom: My earliest ever find of fresh flowers on this plant came in Havant Thicket on Aug 5

Violet Helleborine: Plants reported to be in flower beside the road to Stansted House on Aug 2 - no sign of the expected plants at another regular site in Stansted Forest when I visited on Aug 3

Autumn Ladies Tresses: First report of this orchid in flower came from Portsdown (and a Waterlooville garden) on Aug 3 followed by Durlston on Aug 5

OTHER WILDLIFE

Weasel: While sitting on a bench overlooking Nutbourne Bay on Aug 2 a contributor to John Goodspeed's website watched a **Weasel** carry three of its 'kittens' from the wet meadow area around the Hambrook stream, over the seawall path, and into the rocks piled on the seaward side. Maybe this was in response to flooding of their birthplace after rain but I can find no other references indicating that 'moving house' is regular **Weasel** behaviour (though I had previously heard that it does occur). A good source of information about **Weasels** is

<http://www.ypte.org.uk/animal/weasel/193> and a superb account with photos of a Weasel moving your kittens can be found at

<http://www.birdchick.com/wp/2010/05/unexpected-weasel-encounters-in-utah/>

Slow-worm: Just before writing this on Aug 7 I was cutting back the exuberant growth of Sage plants in my garden when I noticed the tail of a Slow-worm disappearing into the Sage under which it had presumably been enjoying the warm sunshine until I arrived. This is my second sighting of a Slow-worm in the garden this summer (the first was another view of a disappearing tail in long thick grass which I was cutting back with a motor mower at the edge of the grass on July 5). In

previous years I have seen a Magpie pulling a Slow-worm out of the long grass to feed its newly fledged young and I have found the corpse of a Slow-worm with several pin-prick wounds inflicted by the claws of a cat which had caught and played with it with no intention of eating it. As cats still hunt in the garden I guess the choice of a hide-out in a bed of very aromatic Sage is a good way of 'putting the cats off the scent'.

Pointed Snail (*Cochlicella acuta*): Hot weather on July 14 enabled me to find these snails on the Thorney Island seawall west of the Great Deeps and this week similar heat enabled me to discover another colony by the Fishbourne Channel near Chichester. The snails there had climbed the stems of Dittander plants growing around the bridge over the River Lavant where it flows into the Fishbourne Channel (at SU 83935-03756)

Sunfish: Four of these were seen at Porthgwarra (just south of Lands End) on Aug 1

Fungi: After rain this week and warm weather forecast for next week it should be worth looking out for a variety of fungi but there have been no reported finds this week other than my own find of a fresh ***Russula aeruginea*** in Havant Thicket

WILDLIFE DIARY AND NEWS FOR AUG 1 - 7 (WEEK 31 OF 2011)

Fri 5 Aug

Staunton Country Park

This afternoon I drove to the Havant Thicket carpark and walked south to the Leigh Park gardens lake, around the Thicket Lawn 'meadows' and back across Killdeer Plain. My targets were **Lesser Skullcap** and **Yellow Loosestrife**, both of which were found with bonus finds of **Devils Bit Scabious**, the **Hawkweed Hieracium sabaudum**, a very early flower on **Butchers Broom** and late flowers on **Heath Speedwell**

Crossing the Gipsies Plain I turned south from the broad east-west track across the plain onto the 'orchid ditch' track leading south to Hammonds Land coppice.

Despite having to climb gates at both ends of this track it is nearly always worth the effort and today the ditch had a colourful show of **Dwarf Gorse**, **Lesser Spearwort**, **Sneezewort** and **Betony** in flower with **Small Heath** butterflies to add to the **Common Blues** and **Gatekeepers** seen all over the plain.

Reaching the southern end I was expecting the **Marsh Woundwort** and **Yellow Loosestrife** which flower on either side of the track which leads into the woodland and I enjoyed the double bonus of two pristine butterflies - a **Holly Blue** and a female **Green-veined White**. No **Silver Washed Fritillaries** were seen in the wood and as I neared the lake I checked out some **Butcher's Broom** which surprisingly already had a couple of flowers (my earliest find of these flowers last year was Sep 15 and my earliest ever was on Aug 28 in 2007). **Three cygnets** with their parent **Swans** on the lake among the **White Water-lilies** looked very small for this date. Nearby a **Nuthatch** was noisy in the trees of the avenue.

South of the lake I enjoyed the flower rich Thicket Lawn rough meadows but the only additions to my flower list were **Corky-fruited Water Dropwort**, **Marsh**

Cudweed, Stone Parsley and lots of **Lesser Spearwort** plus lots more **Yellow Loosestrife**.

Re-entering the woodland I followed a path which runs close to the edge of the Deerslaughter Plain grassland west of the Long Avenue. Seeing a stile giving access to the grassland I ventured out onto it without knowing if I would find an exit from it but managed to get back to the Long Avenue track by a relatively easy though unofficial route (but not before being given a flying display by a **Buzzard** riding the fresh west wind).

Emerging from the north end of the Avenue, in the short gap before entering the big block of Austrian Pines bordering the Gipsies Plain grassland to the east, I found my first cluster of **Hieracium (Hawkweed)** plants - these were of the group with stiff hairs and short triangular leaves all up their stems, and with multiple flowerheads in a 'candelabra' formation which are classified as the **Hieracium sabaudum** group. While taking in the detail I noticed a clump of **Heath Speedwell** still in fresh flower (maybe a second flowering as I first found this plant in flower this year on Apr 25) The **Lesser Skullcap** was easily found immediately I came to the tiny stream which runs south through the plantation of **Austrian Pines** and while making my way out of the trees I came on two unexpected finds - one was a flowering plant of **Wall Lettuce** growing up through the bed of pine needles, the other was a fresh, light green capped, **Russula aeruginea** toadstool in damper ground under willow and birch fringing the pine plantation. My final note for the day came as I emerged from the trees onto the track leading north from the path along the edge of the Gipsies Plain - quite near the south end of this track several plants of **Devils Bit Scabious** were already in flower.

[Thu 4 Aug](#) [Budds Farm](#)

A short cycle ride to Budds Farm gave me views of three **Tufted Duck families**, the fluffy ducklings diving as competently as their parents for their food. A male diving duck might have been a **Scaup** in eclipse (the 'saddle' was not the silver grey of an adult and I did not pay attention to the head shape) but there was no doubt that at least one **Shoveler** was back. A few **Swallows** and around 20 **Martins** were flying high, and on the concrete wall along the north west side of the pools was a small collection of waders - several were **Redshank** but one seemed taller, had very bright red long legs and strikingly white underparts and breast which I would have taken for a winter plumage **Spotted Redshank** at a later date. Another smaller bird was probably a **Green Sandpiper** but was too distant for me to see if it had the 'semi collar' of a **Common Sandpiper**.

Coming down Southmoor Lane towards the sewage works I checked out the **Melilot** which I suspected might be **Small Melilot** on an earlier visit. It now had ripe seed pods that were jet black in colour showing that the plants were neither **Small**, nor the commoner **Ribbed**, but **Tall/Golden Melilot**. On my way home I passed the unmistakable fresh flowers of **White Comfrey** growing alongside the Brockhampton stream.

[Wed 3 Aug](#) [Stansted Forest west](#)

This afternoon I drove up Woodberry Lane towards Rowlands Castle to park in Glendale and use the 'wall stile' to access Stansted Forest with the aim of seeing

Violet Helleborine in flower (Michael Prior tells us that the plants beside the approach road to Stansted House are now flowering though I was heading for a different site where they have been seen for a good many years - last year one of the plants here had 40 flowers on Aug 7). Sadly there was no sign of any plants this year and I can only assume that the few original plants here have died without leaving any successor - this seems to have happened to another small cluster of plants not far from here.

Nothing very special to compensate for this loss but I did find quite a lot of **Round-leaved Fluellen** flowering in the arable field south of the main avenue. I also enjoyed a few late **Silver Washed Fritillaries** and saw a single **Marbled White** near the junction of the Broad and Shooting Avenues (where I was looking for **Wasp Spiders** without finding them!)

Coming back down the west edge of the forest a **Forest Bug** landed near my feet and where I reached the Ornamental Drive (at the entrance to the isolated house) a female **Southern Hawker** had set up her base on a large wet log and was making regular patrols up and down the Ornamental Drive. When I stopped to watch her she obliged by landing on my walking stick and seeming to tap it with her tail as if egg laying.

Mon 1 Aug

A walk by the Fishbourne Channel

This afternoon I parked in Fishbourne village and took a five mile walk down the east shore of the Fishbourne Channel to Salterns Wood then back by an inland route past the New Barn of Apuldram Manor Farm and Apuldram church before rejoining the coastal path across Fishbourne Meadows.

My aims were to add the expected **Corn Parsley** and **Dittander** to my flower list for the year and to look for the **Spreading Hedge Parsley** in a field edge near Salterns Copse but I did much better than that with **five new flowering plants for the year** (one of them a 'lifer' which I had never seen before) plus my first **Painted Lady** for the year and a **possible sighting of two young Red Kites**, though the glimpse of these was too brief and out of context to count as a tick. I also found a 'new to me' colony of **Pointed Snails**.

My first new plant came before I had left Fishbourne village and was the mass of erect **Marestail** coming up through the water of the village pond - impossible to tell if the plants were flowering but looking healthy enough to warrant a tick. I normally see this plant on Aldsworth Pond just north of Westbourne but the trees around the pond have obscured the 'drive-by' vision and I have not been there on foot recently - I'm pretty sure it still flourishes there and can be seen from the sluice which takes water out of the pond to flow under the road.

In Fishbourne Meadows the first tick was of flowers on a few of the **Amphibious Bistort** plants but there was no sign of **Dittander** on the northernmost stretch of shoreline where it was abundant a few years back. What I did see from the point, with the tide fully up, was the **herd of Swans numbering 140** and accompanied by several **Lesser Blackback gulls**.

Continuing south past the first inlet I took the optional path following the seawall and, as expected, found plenty of **Corn Parsley** along the southern section of the path where I also collected a sample of a puzzling plant which had the appearance of **Upright Hedge Parsley** except that it was 'procumbent' and showed neither bracts or bracteoles to the naked eye - when I got home and had a closer look I

found both the bacts and bracteoles were present but closely adhering to the rays of the umbels.

Another pleasing observation on the seawall path showed me that I have now 'got my eye in' for recognising **Sea Clover**. The trick for me is to recognize the pale pink colour of the flowers, then note that the flower head is oval in shape, and then to see that the flower head is subtended by two small leaves/bracts (opposite each other and at the top of a relatively long, straight section of stem. Having noted a good candidate plant through the above steps I looked for other flower heads that had ceased flowering and which, I have been told, should display distinctively shaped wide-mouthed calyces. What I had not been told is that the dead remnants of the petals remain in the calyces, obscuring my view of the calyx mouth. Plucking out these dead remnants revealed the shape.

Around here my eye was caught by movement in the hedgerow trees along the edge of the nearby inland fields and I glimpsed a couple of large, long-tailed and long-winged brown birds seemingly flying up from the ground to perch awkwardly in the tree branches. Thoughts of **Buzzard** and even **Pheasant** went through my mind but were ruled out by a glimpse of one long, thin, pointed wing and I was left wondering if I had seen a couple of **young Red Kites**. Sadly I saw no more of them.

Coming to the outflow of the Lavant Stream near the sewage works I found the **Dittander** that I was looking for and several young plants were in flower. Also here, and quite unexpected, were several **Pointed Snails** attached to the upper stems of some of the plants to keep cool on this very hot and dry day.

The predominant plant beside the path from here down to Apuldram Quay was **Black Horehound** - I have never seen so much! - but I did find **Tamarisk** and **Tree Mallow** flowering in the Quay area. Continuing south there was very little in the way of botanic interest though **Linnets** in the stubble fields and **Swallows** over the water kept my attention alive.

Reaching the Salterns Wood area I think I found the field edge strip (around 100 metres long and 3 or 4 metres wide) which I had been told was set aside and managed by the Harbour Conservancy for **Spreading Hedge Parsley**. Today however it was so thick with **Wild Oats** and the dried remains of other plants that it was impossible to see what was growing on the ground other than immediately at my feet so, having found just one plant of the **Spreading Hedge Parsley**, I walked on into the welcome shelter of the trees.

The relatively new Salterns Way cycle route, bringing cyclists from the Fishbourne area of Chichester down to Salterns Wood and the adjacent marina, was well used on this sunny day and I had to be aware of cyclists coming up from behind me in the narrow field edge section of the path between Salterns Wood and the New Barn farm buildings (after that it becomes a broad road). Thoughts of cyclists were totally dispelled as I came to the farm building and found that a strip some 20 metres wide and at least 200 metres long on the south side of the buildings had been sown with wildflower seed in which a dominant colour was the blue of **Phacelia tanacetifolia** just coming into flower. **Sunflowers** were included in the mix but not yet flowering and **Flax** was also starting to open its blue flowers as it pushed up through a mass of **Fat Hen**. Among this colour were many touches of seemingly pure white on stems around 60 cm tall with large green heart shaped leaves with pointed tips. The plants looked as if they might be related to **Japanese Knotweed** but the name running through my head in attempting to name them was **Copse Bindweed** and,

back at home, I found the plant on the same page as the Bindweed but under the name of **Buckwheat** - the first time I have ever come across the plant which has been a human food plant in some parts of the world since prehistoric times and is sown in this country as a crop to feed game birds. It is also used as a homeopathic remedy for a very long list of symptoms (see <http://abchomeopathy.com/r.php/Fago>)

After taking some photos of the plants at ground level I raised my eyes to the top of the bank surrounding the farm buildings and realised that it had many huge **Cotton Thistles** growing on it (these are not usually upstaged by other plants!). Also flowering nearby was a clump of **Tansy**.

Just one noteworthy observation on the way back to the car when a pristine **Painted Lady butterfly** landed briefly at my feet

WILDLIFE DIARY AND NEWS FOR JULY 25 - 31 (WEEK 30 OF 2011)

BIRDS

Great Northern Diver: One in summer plumage was already back in the Exe estuary (Devon) on July 21 and a **Black-throated Diver** off Yorkshire on July 24 may have been on its way south

Red-necked Grebe: One off Yorkshire on July 29 may also be heading south

Black-necked Grebe: One that turned up at the Blashford Lakes near Ringwood on July 24 and was still there on July 29 was not in breeding plumage. A **Slavonian Grebe** in the Exe estuary (Devon) on July 21 seems to have been there since May 6 if not longer

Sooty Shearwater: Eight reports this week came from two sources - the north east coast where 31 were off Flamborough Head (Yorkshire) on July 25 with others off Durham and Fife, and the Cornish coast where 13 were seen near Lands End on July 26

Storm Petrel: I think of these as a north Atlantic species which can occasionally be seen from our west coasts but they also appear in the North Sea and (on July 24) 183 were seen in Fife, 62 in Lothian, 132 in Northumberland, 75 in County Durham, five in Yorkshire and just one off Norfolk while the only report from Cornwall was of 20 off Penzance. Peak counts during the week came from Whitburn (near the mouth of the Tyne near Newcastle) where 139 were seen on July 25 and 358 on July 26

Bittern: Visitors to the RSPB reserve at Dungeness were told to keep their eyes open for Bitterns flying over open water carrying food for young in two occupied nests. On July 27 a **Little Bittern** was reported in Belgium.

Cattle Egret: The bird which appeared in the Pagham north fields on July 16 was still there on July 26 and a different bird was at Budleigh Salterton on the Devon coast from July 20 to 24 at least while what may have been a third bird was at

Lodmoor (Weymouth) on July 25 with a possible fourth at Middlebere in Poole Harbour.

Little Egret: Until this week the last time that Rye Harbour reported the number of Egrets roosting there was Mar 26 when only 30 were present - now, on July 29, the count was 88 with higher counts to be expected (102 in mid-August last year). By chance I made a partial count at Langstone on July 29 but only recorded 42 in 40 minutes around sunset (almost certainly an undercount as I could not see the full number in the trees when I arrived and did not wait until it was fully dark). The highest counts are to be expected in the mid-August to mid-September period after the arrival of birds which have bred elsewhere (including on the Continent) and before the birds start to move inland to avoid winter weather on the exposed coast.

Grey Heron: Although Herons based in our latitudes do not migrate south after breeding (as they do nearer the Arctic circle) there is a certain amount of dispersion as seen with the appearance of 2 birds at Portland on July 27 when a Netherlands site recorded 67.

Spoonbill: A dispersing juvenile arrived at the Brading Marshes (Isle of Wight) on July 29 when a different bird appeared at Brownsea Island in Poole harbour

Gadwall: A female with 6 ducklings was seen on the Drayton pit east of Chichester on July 26

Pochard: Also on the Drayton pit at Chichester was a female with two ducklings but we can expect more of these soon as on July 27 there were 172 at a Netherlands site

Eider: The winter peak of these in the west Solent off Lymington was 39 on Mar 23 and by July 27 the number of returning birds had risen to 43

Black Kite: On July 28 one was over the village of Kennerleigh in Devon (north west of Exeter) and maybe the same bird was seen over St Just (close to Lnds End in Cornwall) on July 29

Marsh Harrier: One over Farlington Marshes on July 26 was (as far as I know) the first seen there since the beginning of Marsh

Osprey: The first returning bird was reported at Newtown on the Isle of Wight on July 28 (others have been seen since July 1 at Christchurch Harbour, Pagham Harbour, River Test at Romsey and the Kingsbridge estuary in south Devon)

Kestrel: A group of seven were all hovering over a small area of the Sussex Downs near Cissbury Ring on July 27 but I do not think they were attracted by a sudden glut of prey - more likely the majority were juveniles from one or two local nests getting instruction and practice in the art of feeding themselves from one or two adults. In the past I have seen a similar group spread out in a line above Sinah Common on south Hayling, each bird less than 100 metres from the next so that each can see what the others are doing and the juveniles can imitate the adults.

Merlin: What seems to be the first to return to our south coast area was seen over the Oare Marshes near Faversham in north Kent on July 25

Little Crane: One was reported at the Lower Test marshes near Southampton on July 22 (only one report with no subsequent confirmation though **Spotted Crakes** have already been seen in the Netherlands on July 12 and in Belgium on July 28)

Golden Plover: No local sightings of returning birds yet but two were at Christchurch Harbour on July 29 though there have been flocks of up to 42 in Kent recently

Grey Plover: Summer plumaged birds were seen on July 29 at Christchurch Harbour (one bird) and Newtown Harbour, IoW, (three birds)

Lapwing: By July 29 Rye Harbour was reporting a night roost of 2000 birds

Little Stint: One was seen at Dungeness on July 21 and another single was in the Black Point high tide wader roost in Chichester Harbour mouth on July 28. Other uncommon waders seen this week include a **White-rumped Sandpiper** on the Ythan estuary in Aberdeenshire on July 29, a **Pectoral Sandpiper** at Dungeness from July 22 to 24, and a **Curlew Sandpiper** at Dungeness on July 19

Stilt Sandpiper: One at Lodmoor (Weymouth) from July 24 to 31 seems to be only the 26th bird to have been seen in Britain (excluding Ireland) since 1950 and the first since July 2009 when there was one in Aberdeenshire. Hampshire had one in 2002 (found by Russell Wynn at Lymington) and West Sussex had one in 1972. This species is normally confined to the Americas

Ruff: Birds seen this week at Oare Marshes in north Kent, at Christchurch Harbour and Pagham Harbour

Green Sandpiper: The Lower Test Marshes near Southampton retain their reputation for having a good show of these passage birds with a count of 19 there on July 27. Sandwich Bay came next with 16 and Rye Harbour had 12. Also on July 27 a Netherlands site reported 29 birds

Wood Sandpiper: Only two reports from southern England this week with one bird at Christchurch Harbour on July 29 and two at Oare Marshes in Kent on July 27

Common Sandpiper: A Netherlands site reported a count of 134 on July 27

Yellow-legged Gull: Numbers of this species start to build up to an autumn peak around now with the Lower Test Marshes reporting 29 on July 27 and Poole Harbour having 48 in the Holes Bay area on July 29

Terns: The regular species are now moving down channel as they leave us but are stopping off for the night at roost sites just inside the Solent harbours and other place such as Rye Harbour. Some birds seem to be taking longer breaks in their journey at Titchfield Haven where up to three **Roseate Terns** have been present throughout this week, as have one or two **Black Terns** (on July 27 one of these came into Chichester Harbour and was seen at Black Point). **Arctic Terns** have not been seen along the south coast but large numbers (up to 700 by July 29) have been off the Newcastle area with others off the Yorkshire coast

Plain Swift: Among the hundreds of **Common Swifts** there was a report of two 'possible' **Plain Swifts** in Cornwall on July 29 and I see there is a species of this

name based in the Canary Islands which normally travels no further than west Africa

Kingfisher: More of these are now reaching the coast and on July 25 one was seen flying along the seawall by Langstone Pond - a good place to settle for the winter as it offers fishing opportunities in the sea as well as the pond. The only drawback is that (other than at the top of the highest tides) sea fishing has to be done by hovering over the water rather than diving from a perch.

House Martin: The birds which nested in east Havant and which could be seen over my garden from early May to the beginning of July seem to have left the area after attempting to raise a single brood but others have been seen at two places in Sussex collecting mud to build or repair nests for a second brood (and in many years they will have a third brood keeping them here until October). Another indication of this conclusion to their first attempts at raising young comes from Steve Copsey, now back at home in the Fareham area after his round the world tour on HMS York. On July 28 Steve found a **juvenile House Martin** on his lawn, unable to get airborne until Steve threw it high in the air (a less violent first attempt, placing the bird on the roof of a summer house, only resulted in the bird flying back to cling onto Steve's shirt). Steve also recites the common story that **House Martins** used to nest on his house until **House Sparrows** decided to take over the old nests before the **Martins** returned in the spring - this is not the only factor deterring the **Martins** from nesting, among others are an increasing shortage of sources of mud for building nests and a growing shortage of airborne insect food (plus the proud housewives who knock down any nests that are built to avoid droppings falling around their house and the builders who use materials to which it is difficult to attach mud-built nests)

Yellow Wagtail: Sandy Point on Hayling had its first three passage birds arrive from the north on July 27 while the Hook area at Warsash reported its first autumn bird on July 26 and the Lymington area reported the first 'juvenile from the north' reaching them on July 21. Interestingly July 28 brought the first report of a **Grey Wagtail** seen flying west over north Kent and assumed to have come from the continent to spend the winter here. **Pied Wagtails** too are now on the move and the first report of a night roost developing in the Pevensy Levels came on July 25 with some 30 birds settling in the Wartling area near Eastbourne

Dunnoek: A couple of short bursts of song heard on July 26 in response to the territorial autumn song of a **Robin** reminded me how quiet the air is when **Wood Pigeons** and **Collared Doves** are not singing and most of the **House Sparrows** have left our gardens to enjoy the harvest of the fields and hedges. The only other birds I have heard singing this week have been **Song Thrush** (at dusk), **Yellowhammer** and **Reed Bunting** - even the **Goldfinches**, **Greenfinches** and **Linnets** seem to have ceased though **Wrens** can still be heard on most days.

Nightingale: Singles were reported at Dungeness and Seaford this week reminding me that one way to illustrate the southward flow of our passerine summer visitors is to list the species and show for each the peak count reported somewhere on the south coast ...

Sand Martin 500

Swallow 100

Tree Pipit 4

Yellow Wagtail 7

Nightingale 1 (but 40 at a Netherlands site on July 28)

Common Redstart 2

Whinchat 5

Wheatear 10

Grasshopper Warbler 3

Sedge Warbler 180

Reed Warbler 5

Lesser Whitethroat 6

Common Whitethroat 220

Garden Warbler 10

Blackcap 3

Wood Warbler 1

Chiffchaff 0 (?)

Willow Warbler 275

Spotted Flycatcher 1

Pied Flycatcher 2

Blackbird: On July 25 the following anecdote appeared among the Hoslist messages .. "I have a high number of ants in my very scruffy lawn and most years see Blackbirds 'anting'. A couple of weeks ago a Green woodpecker was probing about for ants and was joined by a female Blackbird who was making the most of the ants that had been disturbed by the woodpecker. The two tolerated each other for a while, but eventually the Blackbird became a little over confident and was positioned almost directly under the woodpecker's beak when a sudden jab made the Blackbird leap away sideways! Undaunted, it immediately returned, but this time did not get quite as close. The two then spent a happy couple of minutes together before the woodpecker flew off."

Icterine Warbler: One at Sandwich Bay on July 27

Melodious Warbler: One was trapped at Portland on July 28

Starling: Autumn flocks of continental (?) birds are starting to build up with a report of more than 3000 on Milton Common (beside Langstone Harbour in the Southsea area)

House Sparrow: A flock of around 50 birds was in the hedges around a wheat field at Prinsted (east of Emsworth) on July 25 and from then on the birds which nested in my road and came to my garden in their search for food have vanished and have presumably moved to similar fields and hedges (though I do not have to walk far in Havant to find some still in gardens)

Two-barred Crossbill: In addition to the many Crossbills still moving into southern England from the continent there have been reports this week of a single **Two-barred Crossbill** in Yorkshire and another in Shetland. This week's reports of **Common Crossbill** include a sighting of six in the Botley Woods north of Fareham

INSECTS

Dragonflies

Notable observations were of:

Lesser Emperor: Reports came from Dungeness where one was seen on on July 24 and three were present on July 28; from the Avon Valley near Ringwood where what may have been the same insect was reported from the Moors Valley Country Park and from the Blashford Lakes, both on July 25; and from Tundry Pond to the west of Fleet in north Hampshire where a male was seen briefly on July 24

Willow Emerald Damsel (*Lestes viridis*): Although the species had been known in Britain in the past it was not until 2009 that it was found in numbers in Suffolk with a few in Norfolk and Essex, Last year it spread southwards though Essex to north Kent. Unlike the majority of dragonflies which lay their eggs under water this species lays in the bark of Willow or Alder trees overhanging the water from which the larva drop into the water after hatching. The adult insects can be overlooked as they spend much of their time hanging on the twigs of these trees

Species reported this week were .. Southern Hawker, Brown Hawker, Lesser Emperor, Ruddy Darter, Red-veined Darter, Common Darter, Banded Demoiselle, Emerald Damsel, Willow Emerald Damsel, Red-eyed Damsel

Butterflies

Notable reports were of ...

Dingy Skipper: A sighting of 12 on Mill Hill at Shoreham on July 28 provoked the comment that there had been an 'unusually strong second brood this year'

Clouded Yellow: Just one report of a single seen at Prawle in south Devon on July 23

Brown Hairstreak: First of the year was seen near Haywards Heath on July 23 followed by two at Shipton Bellinger near Andover on July 24 followed by four more sightings at Sussex sites.

Small Blue: Their main emergence period normally ends before July so a single report of one at Durlston on July 26 was very late

Adonis Blue: The emergence of a second brood at Shoreham Mill Hill on July 22 was reported last week and despite late news of a further emergence at a site nearer Eastbourne on July 23 there have been no further reports this week

Purple Emperor: Three were still to be seen in the Alice Holt Forest near Farnham on July 23 but they may be the last for the year and what has been a poor season for the breeding on account of windy and wet weather

Marbled White: These normally fly well into August so I was puzzled by seeing none on Portsdown when I was there on July 28. Two suggestions for their absence occur to me - one is that I read that they do not like a lot of heat and try to avoid it by getting into shaded places and sitting tight with their wings closed until the air cools down (it was very hot when I was on the hill). The other possibility is that the apparent continuity of the species is the result of regular re-emergences of new insects to replace ones that have died off - on the day that I was there I did see just one very fresh specimen away from the open downland so maybe the majority had died off and their replacements had not yet emerged.

Species seen during the week were ...

Small Skipper, Essex Skipper, Silver-spotted Skipper, Large Skipper, Dingy Skipper, Clouded Yellow, Brimstone, Large White, Small White, Green-veined White, Brown Hairstreak, Purple Hairstreak, Small Copper, Small Blue, Brown Argus, Common Blue, Chalkhill Blue, Holly Blue, White Admiral, Red Admiral, Painted Lady, Small Tortoiseshell, Peacock, Comma, Dark Green Fritillary, Silver Washed Fritillary, Speckled Wood, Wall Brown, Marbled White, Grayling, Gatekeeper, Meadow Brown, Small Heath, Ringlet

Moths

Raspberry Clearwing: One lured with a pheromone in the Brighton area on July 29 was the first Clearwing species I have heard of this year although I think all the common species fly in June or July

Brown-tail Moth: The first report of the moth was on July 15 with the second not coming until July 30 (from Durlston). I believe that this moth has been known for several hundred years to have a fairly regular cycle of something like 17 years during which the numbers of moths (and caterpillars) waxes and wanes. Maybe we are now at a low ebb in this cycle?

Jersey Tiger: What seems to be the first report of this species for the year comes from Devon on July 21

Other Insects

Mason Wasp (*Odynerus spinipes*): Derek Hale found and photographed what he believes to be this species at Newtown Harbour (Isle of Wight) on July 24 and you can see his photo by going to his website at <http://iowbirds.awardspace.com/IOW.htm> then scrolling down to the entry for July 24 and clicking on the 'camera image' beside the name. I found another photo of the species at <http://www.pbase.com/crustacean/image/117994861> and the text associated with this picture tells me that after digging out the underground chamber in which the eggs will be laid and a food store created for the larva's sustenance, this species will build a small curved 'chimney' above the entrance to the chamber (presumably to prevent entry by unwanted predators while allowing the larva to exit the chamber at the appropriate time)

Donacia dentata (Beetle Species): This beetle was found by Graeme Lyons on July 27 when investigating the ditches at Amberley Wildbrooks. The beetle is associated with Arrowhead species water plants but why the beetle needs to have legs as shown in his photo is an unanswered question - see http://2.bp.blogspot.com/-1I6LTNab-h8/TjBW9kFDisI/AAAAAAAAABkE/rM_SDvE3kZU/s1600/Donacia+on+arrowhead.jpg

Glow-worm: 13 glowing females and one male were seen at Durlston during a walk on the evening of July 27 and I had a reminder of a Portsdown Hill site which I had forgotten about through a contribution to John Goodspeed's website saying that only one Glow-worm had been seen at the Gilman Lane site on July 25 (John thought that more would have been seen had the observer been there after it was fully dark). Gilman Road runs north up Portsdown Hill from Havant Road in the Farlington area, connecting with Eveleigh Road, Grant Road and Woodfield Avenue before becoming a narrow lane (not useable by cars) which emerges on Portsdown Hill Road opposite College Road and the eastern entrance to Fort Purbrook

Water Ladybird (*Anisosticta 19-punctata*): Yet another species brought to my attention by Graeme Lyons in connection with his survey of ditches at Amberley Wildbrooks. To learn about this Ladybird species go to http://www.ladybird-survey.org/species_desc.aspx?species=6455%2059201

Roesel's Bush Cricket (*Metriopectera roeselii*): In last week's Summary I wrote .. "Both male and female of this species were found at Emsworth by Bryan Pinchen on July 13 - good photos and facts can be seen at <http://www.orthoptera.org.uk/account.aspx?ID=16> (click on the images to enlarge - the central picture is of a female with her impressive ovipositor for slicing into the plant stems where she lays her eggs)" This week another specimen was found in a moribund state by Nik Knight's daughter in the carpark of Havant Retail Park (across Solent Road from Tesco) and Nik expressed surprise that this and the

Emsworth specimen were not in the stated habitat according to his sources (coastal marshes) but the species has been greatly expanding its range for several years and I see from reports in 2008 that even then it could be found in large numbers on the South Downs on Kithurst Hill above Storrington - that report had the comment that the species was expanding fast throughout southern Britain. Another 2008 report was dated Aug 6 and came from the Steyning area north of Worthing - this had the comment .. "increasing fast here - often caught by Wasp Spiders" .. and Wasp Spiders are generally found in dry habitat. A further comment from the Steyning area on July 30 in 2007 pointed out that the specimens found there were of a .. "mobile, macropterous (long-winged) form (diluta), which occurs in order to assist the species with increasing its geographical range"

Wasp Spider (*Argiope bruenicchi*): First report of this impressive species for the year comes from Graeme Lyons during his survey of the ditches at Amberley Wildbrooks on July 28

Harvestman species: First report of these came on July 21 from Durlston but they get a mention again through my finding one on my garden wall when clearing overgrown vegetation of July 30

PLANTS

Soapwort: After seeing news that this was in flower last week in the Southsea area (Milton Common) I checked the Havant site where I had found plants last summer (on the east side of Park Road North immediately north of the bridge over the railway west of Havant Station) and found the plants flowering there on July 25

Water Chickweed (*Myosoton aquaticum*): Back in July 2007 I found this plant in what I thought to be unusual habitat (on the very dry ground near the top of the seawall around Prinsted Bay) and on July 25 I found it still flourishing in the same place (see my Diary page for more detail)

Spiny Restharrow: I found this for the first time this year flourishing on North Common at Northney (Hayling) on July 27. Again see my diary for more detail

Fragrant Agrimony: Another first for the year on July 27 at North Common (Northney). Again see my diary for photos and more detail

Cow Parsley: On July 25 I found a small plant re-flowering and on July 26 Brian Fellows found another in Emsworth

Pepper Saxifrage: Although this had been reported at Durlston since June 20 I had seen no other reports of this in flower until I came across it myself on July 27 when cycling down the Hayling Coastal Path

Lesser Centaury: On July 28 I felt sure that I had found a patch of these plants flowering on Portsdown but after writing up my find (with photos) in my diary I realised that the 'test of genuineness' that I had used to determine their identity was a wrong interpretation of what I had read in the text books - again read the detail and see the photos in my diary

Blue Water Speedwell: The hybrid version of this plant is common but the true species is difficult to find and I see that Brian Fellows did so in Emsworth on July 27

Gipsywort: Brian Fellows also takes the credit for seeing this in flower for the first time this year on July 27

Harebell: Although I had found a single specimen of this in flower on Portsdown on May 6 I did not find it again until July 28 when it was becoming (as usual) one of the dominant flowers on the hill side

Narrow-leaved Ragwort: This was found on July 25 in Farm Lane at Nutbourne where I had first found it in 2007 and I have described the site and included photos on my diary page for that day

Canadian Goldenrod: This was just starting to flower on Portsdown on July 28

Early Goldenrod: I found what I believe to be this species in Farm Lane at Nutbourne on July 25. Details on my Diary page

Michaelmas Daisy: I saw the first flowers on 'wild' plants growing on Portsdown Hill on July 28

Shaggy Soldier (*Galinsoga quadriradiata*): Flowering on July 25 in the abandoned market garden plot at Prinsted

Orange Hawkweed: John Goodspeed was the first to find this flowering in the wild on Hazleton Common (between Waterlooville and Horndean) on July 26

Broad-leaved Helleborine: John Goodspeed was also the first to report this orchid species in flower (along Sheepwash Lane near the A3M in the Waterlooville area) on July 26

OTHER WILDLIFE

Common Dolphin: An estimated 1000 were in Mounts Bay (between Penzance and The Lizard) on July 27.

Wood Mouse (*Apodemus sylvaticus*): This species is referred to by a variety of English names including **Field Mouse** and **Long-tailed Field Mouse** but is separate from the **Yellow-necked Mouse (*Apodemus flavicollis*)**. The name Field Mouse was used by the author of the Sandwich Bay Bird Observatory website on July 27 when he wrote .. "a very pleasant non-avian incident when a field mouse ran up to my boot and allowed me to tickle it under the chin" Maybe the observer had some attractive scent on his boots or maybe the mouse was very young and inexperienced as I think the species is usually very wary of approaching any other species (most of which would regard it as prey)

Tope: This small shark was seen at Durlston on July 24 chasing **Mackerel** (despite the fears expressed last week that Mackerel and other fish were being excluded from our inshore waters by millions of **Jellyfish**)

Jellyfish: An observer in the Bexhill area on July 28 reported a sighting of a **Rhisostoma pulmo** jellyfish in the sea and a little research revealed that **Rhisostoma pulmo** is a large Mediterranean jellyfish up to 60cm diameter and

10kg weight. The sting from its tentacles is not a serious threat to humans and the species is edible. It also produces a blue dye. I am not sure if this is a first for the English Channel. While on the subject of Jellyfish I found a 'Readers Digest' type website giving "10 Amazing Facts about Jellyfish"

1. Jellyfish first appeared about 650 million years ago and are found in every ocean, from the surface to the deep sea. Some are also found in fresh water
2. Medusa (plural medusae) is another word for jellyfish. Medusa is also the word for jellyfish in: Greek, Finnish, Portuguese, Romanian, Hebrew, Serbian, Croatian, Spanish, French, Italian, Hungarian, Polish, Czech, Slovak, Russian and Bulgarian
3. Since jellyfish are not actually fish, some people consider the term jellyfish a misnomer, and American public aquariums have popularized use of the terms jellies or sea jellies instead
4. A group of jellyfish is called a bloom or swarm
5. Jellyfish do not have a respiratory system since their skin is thin enough that the body is oxygenated by diffusion
6. Jellyfish do not have a brain or central nervous system, but rather have a loose network of nerves, located in the epidermis, which is called a "nerve net."
7. Jellyfish are composed of more than 90% water. Most of their umbrella mass is a gelatinous material (the jelly) called mesoglea, which is surrounded by two layers of cells which forms the umbrella (top surface). The subumbrella (bottom surface) of the body is known as the bell
8. Jellyfish are dioecious; that is, they are either male or female. In most cases, to reproduce, both males and females release sperm and eggs into the surrounding water, where the (unprotected) eggs are fertilized and mature into new organisms
9. **Box jellyfish** venom is the most deadly in the animal kingdom and has caused at least 5,568 recorded deaths since 1954. Each tentacle has about 500,000 stinging cells which are harpoon shaped needles that inject venom into the victim
10. The **lion's mane jellyfish** is the largest known species of jellyfish. The **Arctic Lion's mane jellyfish** is one of the longest known animals and the largest recorded specimen had a bell (body) with a diameter of 2.3 m (7 feet 6 inches) and the tentacles reached 36.5 m (120 feet). It was found washed up on the shore of Massachusetts Bay in 1870

Fungi: Several people have come across large unidentified fungi in the past week and I found a small clump of **Common Puffball (*Lycoperdon perlatum*)** but the clear highlight of the week was a **Red Cage (*Clathrus ruber*)** seen at Durlston on July 24 - see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Clathrus_ruber for a picture and info.

WILDLIFE DIARY AND NEWS FOR JULY 25 - 31 (WEEK 30 OF 2011)

Thu 28 July

A walk on Portsdown

This morning I drove to the carpark immediately west of Fort Widley for a walk west along the hill to the Paulsgrove chalk pit where I went down to the foot of the 'cliffs' before climbing up again at the far end of the pit to return along the top of the hill. My first two target were achieved within a few metres of where I parked - both **Ploughman's Spikenard** and a mass of **Lesser Centaury** were both found within 20 metres of the point where the western hedge around the Fort Widley area meets the main hill top road. The **Lesser Centaury** was growing in an area where a lot of bare chalk shows through the thin layer of grass and flowers such as **Wild Thyme** at SU 65455-06484 and my photos will give you an impression of how many plants grow there (where I found it last year) and the inclusion of a penny coin will tell you their size.

Close view of a Lesser Centaury plant

More Lesser Centaury Plants in this area

Yet more plants in the same area

At this point in writing this diary entry I have to admit that I have just realized that the diagnostic test which I have been applying to separate **Lesser** from **Common Centaury** seems to be wrong and based on my misunderstanding of botanic terminology. My closeup photo shows a noticeable length of bare stem ('pedicel') immediately below the petals of the flower and above the top of the green calyx tube sheathing the lower part of the pedicel, and up to now I have taken it that the appearance of this bare section of pedicel above the calyx is confirmation that I am looking at Lesser Centaury. Today, double checking my reading of the books, I realize that the bare section of pedicel which is the diagnostic feature used in Stace's key is the section which comes below the calyx and above the bracts from which the pedicel originates. Marjorie Blamey's drawings (in the Fitter and Fitter guide) show this feature for both species to which it applies (**Lesser** and **Slender Centaury**) but sadly in my close-up photo the section of the pedicel below the calyx is hidden by the bracts. I live and therefore I learn to misquote Descartes. (I am still pretty confident that the plants were **Lesser Centaury** and not just close mown **Common Centaury**)

Crossing the Portsdown Hill Road I took a new route by following well used paths downhill in a south west direction to cross the Portsdown Hill Road (coming up from the Q A Hospital) at SU 66187-06435 where a gate gives access to the open space on the west of the road. Had I followed this straight path in the south west direction it would have brought me to Meadowsweet Way in the housing which lies north west of the QA Hospital in the Wymering area - and it would have answered a question that has puzzled me for years. People occasionally refer to 'the Wymering Pit' as a small version of 'the Paulsgrove Pit' whose chalk cliffs can be seen for miles around, and the Google satellite view of the area around Meadowsweet Way

shows that this is the 'Wymering Pit' which is hidden from view by (a) much lower cliffs where it cuts into Portsdown and (b) having its base covered with modern housing which partially hides any chalk cliff that was visible in the past. The cliffs, which can be seen on the Google satellite view, run west for 300 metres from SU 650-064.

I did not go down into the Wymering housing but turned uphill to follow the south face of Portsdown and soon began to see the many **Chalkhill Blues** which have replaced the **Marbled Whites** as the dominant butterfly species since my last visit (normally **Marbled Whites** can be seen until the end of August but today I literally saw just one and this may be because of the heat - Jeremy Thomas says of the species that "in the heat of the day they sit with their wings tightly closed to reflect rather than absorb warmth" Another change since my last visit (on June 29) was the appearance of the many **Harebells** which normally adorn the hill in summer (along with too many other plants to mention!). One other change that I noticed was a welcome increase in the number of **singing Yellowhammers** (at one point I think I could hear four).

General view of the big patch of Bastard Toadflax

Closer view of the Bastard Toadflax

A close view of the Bastard Toadflax flowers

Reaching the spot close to the northeast corner of the Paulsgrove pit I took some photos of the big patch of **Bastard Toadflax** which I had discovered on June 29 before following a path downhill to the eastern entrance into the floor of the Chalkpit where much **Lucerne** was in flower (also one late flowering example of **Sainfoin**). Climbing up the path at the west end of the pit I refreshed myself with the many giant blackberries that are now ripe before a fairly uneventful walk back along the top of the hill where my only notes of interest were finds of **Canadian Golden Rod** and **Michaelmas Daisies** showing their first flowers.

[Wed 27 July](#)

[\(Link to previous day's entry\)](#)

Around North Hayling

This afternoon I cycled to the Hayling Oysterbeds, then via Daw Lane and Cope Lane to Northney where I visited the North Common Open Space before returning home.

My only new flower on the west side of Hayling was **Pepper Saxifrage** just starting to flower on the east side of the Coastal Path just north of the Pillbox where I turned off the Coastal Path to head across the Island but I had a lost more interest at North Common. Before reaching that I noticed the first flowers on the **Strawberry Tree** at Northney Church (the various local trees all seem to flower at different times of year) and cycled past a garden in the village with some **huge thistles** (over 2 metres tall?) **having huge flowers of a bright blue** (not reddish purple) colour - so far I have failed to identify them.

At North Common I spent a little time just inside the gate from the carpark, attracted there by the brilliant display of **white flowered Goats Rue** (unlike the blue flowered plants at the Oysterbeds carpark) and while there found what I think is **Tall (or Golden) Melilot** with all petals of its flower (keel, wings and standard) of equal length but so far all the seeds remain green and none have become black.

Next stop was in the area behind the houses south of the Northney marina inlet. This area has always been good for flowers but since I was last here a couple of years ago a ring of wooden posts, each some 2 metres high, has appeared scattered around the area to act as perches for the owls and kestrels which have both used the nest box attached to the telegraph pole visible from the path as you enter the Common from the carpark (judging by the smears of droppings on several posts they have been a success). No birds were using them today but close to the north east post I found an unexpected plant growing up through the brambles and teasels in what is currently a very dry area (but, being low lying, it may become a wetland in the winter). The plant was **Purple Loosestrife**. Also found in this area was my first **Spiny Restharrow** for the year (several bushes of it flowering beside the path nearest the houses). Not as unexpected as these two was the small forest of **Wood Small Reed**.

Purple Loosestrife growing among Brambles

Close up of Purple Loosestrife flowers

Returning to the main path used by most visitors to this area I checked out the **Fragrant Agrimony** plant and took some photos showing the way in which the spines around the seeds have a tendency to bend backward towards the main stem of the plant. Beside the **Agrimony** I noticed a patch of **Small Nettles** growing alongside a patch of **Common Nettles** and took some more photos to contrast the two.

Fragrant Agrimony plant

Distinctive 'backward bending' spines around Fragrant Agrimony seeds

Close view of Fragrant Agrimony flowers

Small Nettle plants are just visible to the right of Common Nettles

Close view (not well focussed) of Small Nettle flowers clustering in the leaf axils

Mon 25 July

Prinsted and Nutbourne

After enjoying the 'thrill of the chase' last week, when my selection of places to visit was determined by the objective of seeing how many species of wild plants I could find in flower during the week without changing my normal habit of enjoying the local wildlife on foot or by bike (with any use of the car limited to a circle of 12 miles radius around my home in Havant, allowing me to visit Titchfield Haven in the east, Petersfield in the north and Pagham Harbour in the east), the competitive instinct has been aroused in me and I started this week with the same objective. Last week I achieved a total of 260 species and today I made a good start on the new week with a day total of 114, including the identification of one species that I had never named before and four more species which were 'firsts for the year'.

My target today was to renew acquaintance with a plant that I identified in 2009 after being puzzled by its identity in previous years. This is **Narrow-leaved Ragwort (*Senecio inaequidens*)** which has been a rare alien in Britain though

probably now spreading (as it has done in northern France) as the temperature rises. The only location I know for it is in Farm Lane at Nutbourne (east of Emsworth) so today I drove to Prinsted to start a circular walk which would take in this site

Heading east along the seawall of Prinsted Bay I turned north on the field path going through the Nutbourne orchards. In the orchards I paused to scan the base of the (now abandoned) apple trees immediately east of the house in the orchards (SU 7741 0535). When these trees were cultivated and the grass under the trees was mown **Dwarf Mallow (Malva neglecta)** grew in the short grass but the last time I saw it was in 2009.

Continuing through the houses at the west end of Farm Lane I crossed the two small streams which run under the road. The **Narrow-leaved Ragwort** grows in the thick scrub on the north side of the road (SU 7768 0535) approximately 23 metres east of the second stream (40 metres west of the start of the path leading to Nutbourne Bay) and its yellow flowers can be seen from the road but look very similar to those of **Common Ragwort** which also grows there so you have to get close enough to see the 'narrow leaves' shown in my photos (they leave you in no doubt that this is not **Common Ragwort** but they also look very different to Marjorie Blamey's illustration of **Narrow-leaved** in the popular Fitter and Fitter flower guide!).

Narrow-leaved Ragwort as seen today

Sample of Narrow-leaved Ragwort photographed in 2009

Creeping Yellow Cress at Nutbourne Farm Lane (note leaf shape)

While here I also found **Creeping Yellow Cress** near **Meadow Sweet** west of the **Ragwort**, **Wetted Thistle** nearer the **Ragwort** and, in the open grass opposite the path to the shore, I investigated a circular patch (at least a metre in diameter) of yellow flowers (at SU 7770 0537) which looked like **Canadian Goldenrod** (though the flowers were no more than 30cm off the ground). Subsequent checking on the lack of hairiness everywhere on the plant and the number of veins in the leaves I am convinced that this is **Early Goldenrod (Solidago gigantea** - though the low height of the plants belies this name) which becomes a new species for my database.

I now walked to the shore and round to the east end of the bay but the only plant of interest here was a little **Dyer's Greenweed** still in flower.

Turning east I followed the seawall back to Prinsted Bay where the path turns north along the side of the bay. Most people continue on the seawall along this north-going section but I opted for the broader track at the foot of the seawall in the hope of finding a plant, **Water Chickweed (Myosoton aquaticum)**, that I have only come across once before (in July 2007) growing on this seawall. Against expectation I did find it here again but, despite being a fair sized plant with white flowers 1 cm across (much bigger than other **Chickweeds**), it does not stand erect but is procumbent amongst the grass and other vegetation with its stems creeping down the upper slopes of the embankment. If you want to find it (at SU 7689 0495) I suggest you go to the northern end of the low-lying broad track along the foot of the seawall. Do not go up the slope but turn round and walk back 55 of my paces. As that is a vague distance check that you are in the right area by looking at the

post and wire fence around the field to the east. Look for a single section of the fence where the top wire is replaced by a wooden bar (this may be partly hidden by a small shrubby tree not much taller than the fence). The **Chickweed** is on the seawall opposite (maybe a little further south of) the south end of the wooden bar. If the plant is still in flower you should spot the large white flowers. As the plant is a perennial and seems to have been there since 2007 it may well be there in future years.

Driving home I stopped (at the south end of the last straight section of Prinsted Lane which takes you back to the main A259) and walked west into the field footpath that starts here. Sadly the market garden plot immediately west of the last building on the north side of the path has been abandoned this year but it did still allow me to tick **Shaggy soldier (Galinsoga quadriradiata)** still attempting a feeble flowering

After tea I got on my bike for a short ride which found **Thorn Apple** flowering at Havant Rail Station, **Soapwort** on the east side of Park Road North (just north of the bridge over the railway, in the edge of the brambles on the embankment running down from the east side of the road), and finally the New Lane regulars (**Weasel's Snout** along the edge of the allotments and **Duke of Argyll's Teapant**, **Burnet Saxifrage**, and the various 'wildflower seed' plants on the graves in the cemetery

WILDLIFE DIARY AND NEWS FOR JULY 18 - 24 (WEEK 29 OF 2011)

BIRDS

Shearwaters: July 18 brought another surge of Shearwaters past Cornwall. Highest count of **Cory's** was 107 off the Scillies with 30 **Sooty** off Lands End after birders at Sennen (the nearest village to Lands End) had reported more than 14000 **Manx** on July 17. **Balearic Shearwaters** were over on the French side of the Channel with 73 off Normandie on July 19

Storm Petrels: Highest count from the English side of the channel was 30 off Thurlestone Bay (east of Plymouth in Devon) on July 18. One **Wilson's** was again off the Scillies on July 20

Cattle Egret: One arrived in the north of Pagham Harbour on July 16 in breeding plumage and was still there on July 19 but has not been reported since. It probably flew west to appear in Devon at the mouth of the River Otter (just east of Exmouth) where one turned up on July 20 and remained at least until July 22

Brent Goose: The summer flock in Chichester Harbour has at last been spotted with 11 seen near Ella Nore (south east of Thorney Island) on July 19. On July 22 there was an unexpected sighting of one flying over the sea off Christchurch Harbour (direction not stated but maybe heading for the Solent)

Pale-bellied Brent: The single summering bird was seen again at Hook (Warsash) on July 20 and 23

Teal: Starting to return to southern England with e.g. the appearance of two at Fleet Pond in north Hampshire on July 16

Garganey: From now on you have to look for the white spot at the base of the bill to pick out eclipse **Garganey** from the increasing number of **Teal** - one was at Titchfield Haven on July 17

Pochard: A female was seen with two young ducklings at the Drayton gravel pit east of Chichester on July 18 and on July 22 a group of 6 were seen in the Netherlands (possibly heading for southern England)

Eider: A group of four were inside Chichester Harbour near Pilsey Island on July 15 and 19 (reminding me of the year 1989 when 70 Eider were in the same place throughout July)

Honey Buzzard: A couple of early morning birders at Weir Wood reservoir in north Sussex had a close view of one as it took off from the water's edge on July 22. I have not heard of other sightings in this area so this was possibly a bird already on passage south, as maybe was one reported as a 'remarkable' sighting in Belgium on July 21

Black Kite: Two reports of wandering birds this week - on July 15 one was seen at a London sewage works (Beddington) and on July 23 one was seen over Devon

Marsh Harrier: A pair bred successfully at Lodmoor (Weymouth) in 2009, the first breeding in Dorset for some 50 years, and this year a second pair has also nested at nearby Radipole. This week brought the first official announcement that four juveniles have fledged at Radipole with two more at Lodmoor

Sparrowhawk: This week brought confirmation that a pair have once again nested at the Nore Barn woods on the Emsworth west shore despite the large number of people who visit this small woodland daily. It also bears tribute to the skill of the adult birds who built the nest and brought food to the young that they were not detected by the conservation group which cares for the woodland though I am surprised that the cries of the young were not heard during the last week or so prior to fledging. Interestingly I had my first sighting of an adult Sparrowhawk for some time from my bedroom window early on the morning of July 23 - the hawk was flying high and straight over Havant as it did early in spring to mark its territorial boundary but this time it may have been marking the end of the period during which it needed to defend its territory.

Buzzard: Early last year a juvenile Buzzard became a regular sight in Brook Meadow at Emsworth in the period from Feb 12 to Mar 12 though it did not acquire a mate and set up a breeding territory there. This year the only sighting of a Buzzard perched in the Meadow was on July 21 - again it did not stay

Red-legged Partridge: A group of 24 birds (two families) was seen at Reculver on the north Kent coast on July 22 suggesting that birds which have successfully bred in the wild are now out and about but we will have to wait a little longer before birds bred for shooting are released next month in time for the start of the Partridge shooting season on Sep 1 (Pheasants are safe until Oct 1 while Grouse can be shot from Aug 12 - for a full table of shooting season dates see <http://www.basc.org.uk/en/departments/game-and-gamekeeping/game-shooting/shooting-seasons.cfm>)

Golden Plover: A flock of 42 seen at Oare Marshes near Faversham in north Kent on July 23 seems to be the first group of post breeding birds back in southern England. A single **Pacific Golden Plover** (in breeding plumage) was at Hayle in north Cornwall on July 20 after two of them had been seen in Ireland on July 14

Grey Plover: The first to return in summer plumage was at Christchurch Harbour on July 10 and there were maybe more of them in the flock of 42 seen on Pilsey Sands (Chichester Harbour) on July 15 but there were definitely four more at Rye Harbour on July 22

Lapwing: Post breeding flocks have been seen since mid-June but the first to be reported in Pagham Harbour was 60 birds on July 20

Knot: 10 were already back in Chichester Harbour for the July 15 WeBS count on the Pilsey Sands and 309 were seen at Spurn Point on the Yorkshire coast on July 17

Sanderling: 17 were back at Ferrybridge (Weymouth) on July 18 and there were 22 there on July 20 when 4 were in Pagham Harbour

Temminck's Stint: One was on the Lincolnshire coast on July 19 and **Pectoral Sandpipers** have been seen this week at Aberdeen (July 19) and at Dungeness on July 22. A **Curlew Sandpiper** was at Lymington on July 19 and 20 and a summer plumage **Purple Sandpiper** was at Reculver (north Kent) on July 23. A **Marsh Sandpiper** was in Lincolnshire on July 11 and was still in Yorkshire on July 21

Dunlin: Nine reports of flocks this week. Peak counts were 245 in Yorkshire on July 17 when 224 were at Lymington. On July 20 there were 54 at Ferrybridge (Weymouth) and on July 21 there were 56 in Pagham Harbour

Godwits: In addition to the regular summering flocks there were around 50 **Black-tailed Godwits** in the Emsworth Channel on July 21 (after 57 had been at the nearby Thorney Great Deeps for the July 14 WeBS count) and 80 **Bar-tailed** were on the Pilsey sands on July 15

Whimbrel: Small numbers have been seen on passage since mid-June but a flock of 94 flying west along the north Kent coast on July 22 marked a step up in numbers

Redshank: The July 14 WeBS count at the Thorney Island Great Deeps recorded 380 birds and 50 were in Emsworth Harbour on July 21

Greenshank: 39 were at the Thorney Great Deeps on July 14, 24 were at Farlington Marshes on July 16 and 11 were at Brownsea Island in Poole Harbour on July 19

Green Sandpiper: On July 21 there were 32 at Sandwich Bay and on July 22 there were 8 at Pulborough Brooks plus 14 at the Lower Test Marshes and 13 at Brading Marshes on the IoW. Single **Wood Sandpipers** were at Fleet Pond (north Hampshire) on July 16 and 17, at Exmouth on July 16 and at Sandwich Bay on July 21 with a **Terek Sandpiper** in Northumberland on July 19. **Common Sandpiper** numbers peaked at 46 at Sandwich Bay on July 21. A **Spotted Sandpiper** remained at Rutland Water (Leicestershire) from July 13 to 19

Turnstone: 16 were back in Southampton Water on July 16 and 12 were at Titchfield Haven on July 21

Phalaropes: One **Red-necked** was in the Scillies on July 20 and single **Greys** were in Ayrshire and the Scillies on July 20

Little Gull: One remains in the Hook area near Warsash and a flock of 520 were said to be at Hornsea Mere in Yorkshire on July 19 when a long staying **Bonaparte's Gull** was still at Exmouth. Late news from the Scillies is of a **Sabine's Gull** there on July 7

Little Tern: The count of 52 at Pilsey Island in Chichester Harbour on July 15 may have been the remnant of the birds which failed to breed in Langstone Harbour this summer. At least eight were still there on July 19 (seen distantly from the Wittering area). On July 21 Rye Harbour reported 'almost zero productivity' for all three Tern species breeding there (**Sandwich, Common and Little**)

Black Tern: I am not sure if singles seen at Selsey Bill on June 21 and 28 were 'coming' or 'going' but a report of 2 at Lymington on July 21 and one of 3 birds off the Normandie coast of France on July 22 were of birds already on Autumn passage

Turtle Dove: A count of 22 on wires at Oare Marshes (north Kent) on July 21 marked the start of their autumn passage, as did a single bird at Christchurch Harbour on July 23

Nightjar: At least two were still on breeding territory in Havant Thicket on July 20

Sand Martin: Some were heading out to sea with **Swallows** at Pagham Harbour on July 20 and around 200 were making a stop-over at Pulborough Brooks on July 22

House Martin: A count of 46 occupied nests at Plumpton Agricultural College at Lewes showed an increase of 9 over last year's count - I suspect that such an increase has been very much the exception this year

Tree Pipit: One at Christchurch Harbour on July 22 seems to have been the first departing bird of the autumn

Nightingale: Counts from France of 47 on July 10, 63 on July 20 and 79 in the Netherlands on that day shows they are now heading south

Wheatear: Durlston reported the first passage birds on July 13 and this week the first autumn birds have appeared at Climping (east of Bognor), at Christchurch Harbour and at Portland

Sedge Warbler: A peak count of 77 at a Belgian site on July 20 followed reports of passage at Portland, Christchurch Harbour, Durlston and other sites. Similar reports of autumn passage for **Reed Warbler, Grasshopper Warbler, Common and Lesser Whitethroat, Garden Warbler, Blackcap, Wood Warbler and Chiffchaff**

Willow Warbler: 13 reports of departing birds, several noting the bright yellow colour of juveniles, came from several coastal sites. Portland had the peak for the week with 35 on July 23.

Paddyfield Warbler: Dorset had its first ever record of this species when one was trapped near Weymouth on July 21 and a **Melodious Warbler** turned up at Dungeness on July 20

House Sparrow: A report of a flock of 60 at Furze Hill in South Gorley on the western fringe of the New Forest probably marks the start of what I call the '**Corn Sparrow season**' when **House Sparrows** leave their breeding areas and move to the countryside to pick up the left over of harvest crops and hedgerow berries

Crossbill: At least eleven reports this week of more birds arriving in southern England. On July 17 a family of five were seen perching on rooves and aerials in the Portslade area of Brighton while two reports of 40 birds came from East Sussex (others were from Southampton and Dorset)

INSECTS

[\(Skip to Plants\)](#)

Dragonflies

Southern Hawker: Still not common but local sightings this week in the Havant area

Brown Hawker: Seen on the Pevensy Levels

Migrant Hawker: Residents seen on the Pevensy Levels and migrants arriving at Dungeness

Emperor: Seen at Pevensy Levels and reported on Sinah Common (Hayling Island) though as that was away from water it may have been another **Southern Hawker**

Lesser Emperor: This normally rare migrant has now been seen on at least seven occasions including a report of three together at Dungeness on July 15 with earlier sightings in Cornwall, Staffordshire and Warwickshire

Black Tailed Skimmer: Now common

Ruddy Darter: Now being seen in large numbers at appropriate sites

Common Darter: Now common

Blue-tailed Damsel: Now common

Azure Damsel: Now common

Variable Damsel: Reported in small numbers from sites in Kent and East Sussex

Butterflies

Silver Spotted Skipper: A single report of a female seen on Malling Down near Lewes on July 15 is the first and only report for the year so far

Clouded Yellow: One seen in Brighton on July 18

Brown Argus: Reports of second brood emergence at Basingstoke and Dungeness this week (though a very fresh specimen was reported at Cissbury Ring on June 30)

Chalkhill Blue: The first reported on Portsdown (30 of them) were seen on July 13 though the first had been seen in the Eastbourne area before July 9

Adonis Blue: First summer brood reported at Mill Hill, Shoreham, on July 22

Purple Emperor: On or about July 16 one was seen on the ground close to the Stansted House Chapel building

Painted Lady: One seen in the Pilsey area was the first to be seen on Thorney Island this year

Large Tortoiseshell: A single insect seen by several people on the Scillies on July 13 - it was only the fifth recorded on the Scillies and the fourth was seen many years ago. This was also the fifth migrant to be seen this year, the first being on the Isle of Wight on Mar 14

On the wing this week: Small Skipper, Essex Skipper, Lulworth Skipper, Silver Spotted Skipper, Large Skipper, Dingy Skipper, Clouded Yellow, Brimstone, Large White, Green-veined White, Small White, Purple Hairstreak, White Letter Hairstreak, Small Copper, Small Blue, Silver Studded Blue, Brown Argus, Common Blue, Chalkhill Blue, Adonis Blue, Holly Blue, White Admiral, Purple Emperor, Red Admiral, Painted Lady, Small Tortoiseshell, Large Tortoiseshell, Peacock, Comma, Dark Green Fritillary, Silver Washed Fritillary, Speckled Wood, Wall Brown, Marbled White, Grayling, Gatekeeper, Meadow Brown, Small Heath, Ringlet

Moths

Bedstraw Hawkmoth: The first to reach southern England this year was at Portland on July 21 with a second arriving there next night

Brown-tail moth: The first adult moth of the year was in Brighton on July 15

Other Insects

Scaeva pyrastris hoverfly: One had been reported at Rye Harbour on July 4 but no others until July 22 when one was at Durlston

Marmelade Hoverfly (*Episyrphus balteatus*): A further invasion of migrants arrived on July 22 and they are now to be found everywhere.

Hornet Hoverfly (*Volucella zonaria*): These have been on the wing since June 21 but July 22 brought one to Dulston and another to Havant where I saw it on a Danewort umbel

Giant Tachinid Fly (*Tachina grossa*): This ugly looking 2 cm long hairy fly which lays its eggs in large hairy caterpillars was first reported on the Isle of Wight on July 14 but this week a second example was seen at Dungeness on July 20

Glow-worm: At least 15 were seen in Havant Thicket on the evening of July 20

Bush Crickets: Durlston reported both the **Great Green Bush Cricket** and the **Speckled Bush Cricket** on July 21

Harvestman: First report of these spider-like creatures also came from Durlston on July 21

PLANTS

[\(Skip to Other Wildlife\)](#)

Creeping Yellow Cress: I found a large colony of this on the old Havant Borough playing fields (now abandoned) at Broadmarsh back on June 9 and this week it was still looking fresh on July 23

Heath Milkwort: Seen by Brian Fellows in the New Forest on July 19, reminding me that it probably occurs in Havant Thicket but I have not yet searched for it

Indian Balsam: This seems to be spreading up the Hermitage Stream from the Bedhampton Mill area and I found flowering plants close to the Wayfarers Way path on July 23 (in previous years I have only seen it there by walking downstream in search of **Buttonweed** which I have not done this year)

Soapwort: Seen flowering on Milton Common in Southsea on July 20

Hollyhock: What must have been self sown plants were flowering on waste land at the junction of Southmoor Lane and Penner Road in Havant this week

Spiny Restharrow: I have not seen this locally so far this year but on July 19 I read that it is a dominant plant at the Oare Marshes reserve of the Kent Wildlife Trust

Bush Vetch: I was surprised to find this still flowering on a roadside in Racton hamlet (Ems valley) on July 21 where I last saw it on Apr 25

Bitter vetch (*Lathyrus linifolius*): This is usually abundant on Blendworth Common (west fringe of Havant Thicket) but a search for it on July 19 found many leaves but only one plant with a single flower

Sickle Medick: This plant is very rare in Hampshire and although there are old records from Southampton and Bournemouth it was not found in Portsmouth until 2003 and it has survived at one roadside location by the London Road near the top of Portsdown since then despite (or because of) close mowing. This year I visited it on July 22 when it was looking healthy and flowering but had not yet developed any of the seed pods which make it easily identifiable.

Sainfoin: Only one plant could be found flowering on Portsdown on July 22 surrounded by dead and withered plants

Caucasian Stonecrop: First flowers appearing this week in the Havant cemetery

Spreading Hedge Parsley: In past years I have found this in arable fields at Stansted and in a Langstone garden, and I have been told of a colony in a field just north of the Chichester marina on Fishbourne Channel, so I was pleasantly surprised to stumble on a single plant in an arable field beside the Emsworth Common Road immediately west of the Funtington MoD site on July 21

Black Nightshade: My first sight of this in flower this year came on July 21 in a field edge on Racton Park Farm near Funtington

Moth Mullein: I also saw this for the first time on July 21 beside a track going south from the Emsworth Common Road opposite the Funtington MoD site though the plants had clearly been flowering for some time. Two days later I came on another cluster of flowering plants on waste ground beside Southmoor Lane in Havant

Field Cow Wheat: The plants growing on the M27 motorway bank above Portchester which I had seen on June 2 were still flowering on July 22. The colony there is very well established and is extending its range

Bifid Hemp Nettle: Several plants were just starting to flower in a field edge on Racton Park Farm near Funtington on July 21

Basil Thyme: This was flowering on Portchester Common (Portsdown above Portchester) on July 22

Fen Bedstraw: Found in the New Forest by Brian Fellows on July 19 and may be found again in the Langstone South Moors 'orchid field'

Small Teazel: I checked the plants at the road junction at Racton in the Ems valley on July 21 but while they were full grown there was no sign of flowering yet in this very shaded site

Ploughman's Spikenard: This has been flowering at Durlston since July 8 and must be out on Portsdown though I have not yet seen it

Canadian and **Guernsey Fleabane:** Both seen in flower for the first time in Havant this week

Tansy: First flowers seen on Portsdown on July 22

Sneezewort: First flowers seen in Havant Thicket on July 19

Marsh Cudweed: First flowers also seen in Havant Thicket on July 19

Wetted Thistle: Flowering in the Funtington area on July 21

OTHER WILDLIFE

Weasel: Two sightings in East Sussex this week probably reflect increased hunting activity to supply extra food for growing babies in their dens. One observation from the Pevensey Levels was of a **Weasel** vainly trying to drag the body of a dead **Lapwing** down its burrow. It won't be long now before we hear of family parties of **Weasels** (and **Stoats**) out hunting together.

Humpback Whale: When I saw a report of this species off the coast of the Netherlands back in February I had to add a new species to my database as I had not previously heard of this one occurring anywhere near southern England. Now I see there has been another sighting reported off the coast of Spain on July 19 - I wonder if the news of **Jellyfish** (below) is relevant?

Hedgehog: On July 20 one was seen foraging by day under a bird feeder in an Emsworth garden. Brian Fellows in reporting this wonders if there has been an increase in Hedgehog numbers but I think a more likely reason for more sightings of **Hedgehogs** out in daytime is the same as that which brings **Barn Owls** out to hunt by day in early summer, namely to increasing pressure for parents to find food for growing young which cannot yet hunt for themselves

Sunfish: One seen off Start Point in Devon on July 16 and another in the Scillies on July 20

Jellyfish: On July 21 Barry Yates (warden of Rye Harbour) drew our attention to news on the BBC and Guardian websites suggesting that increasing acidification of the oceans was so beneficial to **jellyfish** that they were increasing to numbers that were crowding out fish such as **Mackerel** from our coastal waters and closing down water cooled nuclear power stations. Read the original reports at <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-14235582> and <http://www.monbiot.com/2011/07/08/jellyfish-rule/> These articles greatly increased my knowledge of **jellyfish species** - among those mentioned were **barrel, moon, compass, blue** and **lion's mane**. I had previously only heard of **Compass, Common** and **Comb Jellyfish** plus **Portugese Man-of-war**

Fungi: Eight species got into my own notebook this week - **The Blusher** (*Amanita rubescens*), **Fairy Ring Champignon** (*Marasmius oreades*), an un-named **Russula species**, **Horse Mushroom** (*Agaricus arvensis*), **Shaggy Ink Cap** (*Coprinus comatus*), what was probably an aged **Bay Bolete** (*Boletus badius*), a fresh **Giant Polypore** (*Meripilus giganteus*), what were either **Common or Scaly Earthballs** (*Scleroderma citrinum* or *verrucosum*), and a 'smelt only' **Stinkhorn**

WILDLIFE DIARY AND NEWS FOR JULY 18 - 24 (WEEK 29 OF 2011)

Sat 23 July

Broadmarsh and Bedhampton

A final ride this morning completed a week doing something I have not attempted before - seeing how many flowering plant species I could see here in the local Havant area. The final number turned out to be 260 after rejecting two dubious 'possibles' (Small Melilot and Lesser Centaury).

The morning began with a **Sparrowhawk** seen from my bedroom window flying high and straight over the neighbouring houses, perhaps reverting to the springtime routine of marking its territory now that it has completed its domestic duties for the year.

On my bike a little later I headed for the Broadmarsh 'mountain' where I felt sure I could add **Hairy Vetchling** to my week list but before getting there I made a

diversion down Southmoor Lane to see if any of the **Knotted Hedge Parsley** was having a second flowering. No luck with that but a little further down the road, on the plot of waste ground just north of Penner Road, I thought I had found **Small Melilot** (which I convinced myself I had seen here several years ago) but although the plants were smaller than those of **Ribbed Melilot** there was a hint of hairiness on the seed pods - I must go back later when the seed pods are fully mature and see if they have the required olive-green colour rather than turning brown or black. Also on this plot I found a lot of **Centaury** with flowers that seemed to have the deeper red colour of **Lesser Centaury** but which (like those I said I had found yesterday on Portsdown) did not stand up to scrutiny.

What I did find here which could not be disputed were four more plants of **Moth Mullein** (already on the list) and two plants of self-sown **Hollyhocks**, one white flowered, the other red, plus many plants of **Large Flowered Evening Primrose**. Back on Harts Farm Way, passing the Amenity Tip site, a couple of small **Elder** trees had fresh flowers and immediately after crossing the Hermitage Stream there was cluster of **Shasta Daisy** plants to add to the list.

On top of the mountain I took photos of the **Hairy Vetchling** to show the flowers, the seed pods and the 'two fingered' leaves. Next I headed towards Farlington Marshes along the shore line paths, adding **Hemlock, White Melilot, Pyramidal orchid** and **Spearmint** and seeing the now bright yellow/orange berries on the **Sea Buckthorn** (not counted as flowering!).

Hairy Vetchling flowers (usually two on a stem, one above the other)

Hairy Vetchling seed pods

Hairy Vetchling leaves (long thin upward pointing pairs - see lower centre of picture)

Heading back home I crossed Harts Farm Way (where it meets the big new roundabout) onto the abandoned playing fields where a mass of **Creeping Yellow Cress** and a plant of the **hybrid between Red and White Campion** went on the list.

Next I headed north over the A27 footbridge to pass Bedhampton Mill where the Wayfarers Way path alongside the railway gave me an unexpected sight of **Japanese Knotweed** flowers before bringing me to the point where the Bedhampton Springs overflow into the Hermitage Stream, adding **Himalayan Balsam, Brooklime** and **Hybrid Water-Speedwell** to the list

[Fri 22 July](#)

[\(Link to previous day's entry\)](#)

Warblington and Portsdown

This morning I took a short cycle ride east towards Emsworth, passing fresh growth (first for this year) of **Giant Polypore fungus** on the stump of the tree beside East Street which was cut down last year because of the fungal 'infection'.

Emerging from the A27 underpass I checked on the 'Emsworth Waysides' site where **Burnet Saxifrage** and **Musk Mallow** were (I think) appearing for the first time this year at the A27 sliproad end. Also here, in the close mown grass, was **Slender Speedwell**.

Next stop was in the Warblington cemetery to record **Round-leaved Fluellen** in this week's flower list before visiting the cemetery extension to find **Chicory** among

the wildflower seed sown 'jungle' - in today's warm sunshine the 'jungle' was attracting a **mass of hoverflies** (mainly the migrant '**Marmalade**' species with several other species, one of which was probably **Melangyna cincta**) and butterflies including **Whites, Red Admiral, Comma** and **Gatekeeper**. I went home via Langstone Pond where there were still at least **20 Egrets** despite the tide being low enough for them to be out fishing. While here I noted **3 adult Common Gulls** and a similar number of distant **Black-tailed Godwits**. I also added **Lesser Sea Spurrey** and both **Common** and **Lax Sea Lavender** to the week list.

On the way back through the new part of Langstone I added **Least Yellow Sorrel** to the week's flowers and on one of the **Danewort** flower umbels at the end of Grove Road I had my first sight of a **Hornet Hoverfly (Volucella zonaria)** for the summer.

After lunch I drove up onto Portsdown to photograph the **Sickle Medick** plants (the only ones in Hampshire!) which seem to be thriving despite or because of close-mowing of the grass they grow in. Also in this area around the London Road coming up from Cosham I added **Sainfoin** (just one fresh flower among a mass of dead plants), **Small Scabious, Squinancywort, Wild Thyme, Dwarf Thistle, Kidney Vetch, Hoary Plantain** and my first **Tansy** flowers of the year.

Close mown patch of Sickle Medick with flowers but as yet no seed pods

Close view of Sickle Medick flowers

I then drove to Portchester Common in pursuit of **Basil Thyme** which seemed to be more prolific than usual and while there got some more ticks for the week list including **Bladder Campion** which had recently started a second flowering. Further down Skew Road not only was the **Field Cow-wheat** still flowering but I also found **Strawberry Clover** which I did not expect here.

Basil Thyme plants in flower

Close up of Basil Thyme flower

Field Cow Wheat plant in flower

One of several masses of Field Cow Wheat now flourishing on the M27 bank alongside Skew Road

Thu 21 July

[\(Link to previous day's entry\)](#)

Racton and Marlpit Lane

This morning I parked at Racton in the Ems Valley to check on the **Small Teazels** which grow hidden among trees and the huge leaves of **Butterbur** plants at the junction of the B2146 and 2147 roads. The pictures I took show that the flower heads (smaller than those of common **Teazels** but on plants growing well over 2 metres high) are not yet showing any of their white flowers.

Small Teazel plants and a closer view of the flower heads

Crossing the river and turning south on the road to Racton Park Farm I found **Musk Thistles** lining the route, while the field immediately beyond the farm had a few

Small Nettles and a distantly seen **Horse Mushroom** like fungus but my first significant find of new flowers came as soon as I had gone through the gate onto the track down the east side of Racton Park Wood. Here, in the edge of a huge field of wheat, was a massive patch of **Scentsless Mayweed** hiding my first sight of **Bifid Hemp-Nettle** and **Black Nightshade** in flower as well as **Black Bindweed** and other plants attracting **Small** and **Green-veined Whites** plus **Meadow Browns** and **Gatekeepers**.

Bifid Hemp-nettle (white flowered) and Black Nightshade

Further along this field edge I noted **Sharp-leave Fluellen** (no currently open flowers but many buds), **Field Pansies**, **Scented Mayweed** and late flowering **Cleavers**. A **Stock Dove** was singing in the wood.

Crossing the Funtington road I continued down Marlpit Lane and into the sandy 'waste land' where there was a colourful display of **Vipers Bugloss**, **Vervain**, **Great Mullein**, **Wetted Thistle**, **Wild Basil** and more unexpected **Slender Speedwell**. Also seen was a **Common Blue** butterfly plus more than one **Whitethroat** and a singing **Song Thrush**. A surprise item here was my first **'Lawyers Wig' Shaggy Inkcap**.

My intention was to cross this waste land from its north west to south east corners and then take a narrow footpath east to a track running north to emerge on the Emsworth Common Road along the east side of a property selling Animal Foodstuffs, Logs, etc to the passing traffic. I eventually achieved this but with some difficulty as the stile leading to the narrow path was totally hidden from view by vegetation and the path itself was blocked by **Bracken** and **Brambles** taking me at least 30 minutes to cut my way along its 200 metre length (luckily I had secateurs with me)

The effort to reach the track heading back north was amply recompensed when I reach a small clearing on the west side of the track at around SU 788 079 where a couple of **Moth Mullein** plants were flowering and lots of **Blue Fleabane** was about to flower. One of the very erect **Mullein** plants stood some 1.5 metres high and its flowers measured 3cm across.

Moth Mullein plant and its leaves

Moth Mullein flower and seed capsule

After crossing the Emsworth Common Road to the fence of the MoD site I followed it to its southwest corner and then headed north up the bridle way but right at the start of this field edge path I checked for 'weeds' among the wheat and was immediately rewarded with a second unexpected rarity - a single ground hugging plant of **Spreading Hedge Parsley** at SU 785 082 (as it had just started to rain I collected a sample branch of the plant and photographed it when back at home - in addition to the id features you can see in the photos I can vouch for the wiriness of the plant's stems which I could only break at a joint).

Spreading Hedge Parsley plant plus close views of Leaf and flower Umbel
Coming back up the tree lined path I was accompanied by the piping of unseen **Bullfinches** and when nearly back to the R Ems bridge I found **Bush Vetch** flowering by the roadside.

[Tue 19 July](#)

[\(Link to previous day's entry\)](#)

Havant Thicket

With more rain forecast for the afternoon I set out this morning to avoid the soaking I had yesterday in the afternoon (lucky I did as the rain started within 15 minutes of arriving back home).

My destination was Havant Thicket and the warm sunshine gave me a good list of butterflies - **Meadow Brown, Gatekeeper, Ringlet, Marbled White, Red Admiral** and **Silver Washed Fritillary** plus **Small Skipper, Large** and **Green-veined Whites** plus what I think was my first **Purple Hairstreak** but only seen in flight around trees well above my head. Towards the end of my visit a single **Southern Hawker dragonfly** was seen assiduously patrolling one track.

The bird list included **Yellowhammer, Chiffchaff, Skylark** and **Song Thrush** all in song plus the calls of **Bullfinch** and what I think was **Siskin** (a single high-pitched plaintive note coming repeatedly from more than one bird seen flying overhead).

Heard distantly from the trees of the Long Avenue running south from the main woodland was what I at first thought was a distant **Buzzard** but later decided was more likely to be coming from hungry young **Sparrowhawks** in the tree-tops.

The heathland habitat gave me another 23 flowering plants not seen yesterday including **Tormentil, Wood Sage, Dwarf Gorse, Betony, Red Bartsia** and **Ling Heather** (this latter still with very few of its flowers yet open) but also a good selection of unexpected finds such as **Golden Rod, Sneezewort, Dyers Greenweed, Marsh Cudweed** and **Cross-leaved Heath. Wild Angelica, Rosebay Willowherb, Common Figwort** and **Hemp Agrimony** went on the list but could have been found in other habitats but there was one plant that I have only ever found here and which I went out of my way to see on the edge of Blendworth Common on the west side of the Thicket - this plant is given slightly different names in different books (either **Bitter Vetch** or **Bitter Vetchling** in English and either **Lathyrus linifolius** or **L. montanus** in Latin) and is by no means rare though it is only found on acid soils. Today I was early for it and found just one flower but also saw the leaves of many plants yet to flower. While searching for it I disturbed a large **Grass Snake**.

One other plant which I included as flowering was **Hoary Ragwort** - plenty of plants seen but only one flower on one plant could be described as 'open' as both disk and ray florets were exposed. Other plants worth a mention were **Common Milkwort, Heath Speedwell, Vervain,** and **Lesser Spearwort** plus a good show of **Foxgloves**.

Also on my list were two or three species of **fungi** - three examples of **The Blusher**, a crushed example of a bright red **Russula**, more **Earthballs** and one species that I found in several places but which I cannot name. A young 'button' of it had a cap coloured white with the rose pink flush (on both cap and stem) of a young Oak Apple but mature specimens had light brown caps 7cm across with hollow white stems (no ring) that had lost the pink flush and were 7cm high and 2 cm in diameter. The gills were all white but the mature ones had a faint ochre tinge that may have reflected the spore colour. Cutting the gills produced no milk.

Mon 18 July

[\(Link to previous day's entry\)](#)

Two walks in the Havant area

Today was my 80th birthday but the family get together to celebrate this had taken place last Saturday so I was free today to celebrate in my own way with a couple of

walks around Havant visiting my wild flower friends and by the end of the day I had said 'hello' to 164 of them.

In the morning, after visiting the bottle bank to dispose of Saturday's 'empties', I walked up the northern section of the Billy trail and then around the Eastern Road cemetery (the western section of which is currently a wonderful 'wildflower meadow' in which I particularly enjoyed my first **Burnet Saxifrage** among the many flowers that were already out last week, including a big patch of **Field Scabious**. In the eastern section much of the colour and variety comes wildflower seed sowing in previous years (giving us **Corn Cockle**, **Cornflower** and **Common Flax** plus **Ladies Bedstraw**, **Musk Mallow**, **Marjoram** and exotic **Californian Poppies**).

New for the year in this section were the first flowers on **Caucasian Stonecrop**. A short stroll up New Lane found the **Weasel's Snout** flowers at their best and a diversion on the way home added **Marsh Woundwort** in the bed of the Lavant stream just before it goes underground below the station carpark and Havant Town centre to re-emerge along the southern edge of Havant Park. Also on this list were the **Perennial Wall-rocket** in the southern carpark for the station and the **Pellitory of the Wall** which has resisted the weed killer alongside the buildings immediately north of the Level Crossing on the east side of the road. **Hedgerow Cranesbill** was a newcomer to the northern side of this industrial property where it faces Eastern Road, and beside the Billy Trail I was able to contrast **Large** with the much less common **Hedge Bindweed**. At the start of this walk the first flowers were open on **Canadian Fleabane** in the Arts Centre 'forecourt' with my first sight of the white flowers of **Stone Parsley** nearby.

After lunch I set out for a longer walk via the Langbrook Stream and South Moors to Budds Farm, then back along the shore and up the Billy Trail. Right at the start I had **Sticky Groundsel** in Town Hall Road and in Juniper Square I enjoyed the mass of tiny white flowers on a **Japanese Spindle bush (Euonymus japonicus)** before ticking the regular **Yellow Flowered Strawberries** and the **Small-flowered Cranesbill**. New in this area were my first **Guernsey Fleabane** (taller and greyer - on account of its hairiness - than the **Canadian Fleabane**) and a mass of **Autumn Hawkbit** was also new here (easily picked out by the finely segmented basal leaves as well as the way that the stem runs smoothly into the flowerhead without the bulge seen on similar yellow daisies).

At the Langstone Roundabout the **Narrow-leaved Pepperwort** had ceased to flower and gone to seed but across the sliproad I could see a mass of the fresh **Upright Hedge Parsley** on the flyover embankment. By the Langbrook Stream **Water Mint** was newly in flower, and when I reached the South Moors I added **Marsh Ragwort**, **Fool's Water Cress** and **Tufted Forget-me-not** plus **Corky-fruited Water Dropwort** and **Hairy Buttercup**.

Over the water of the Budds Farm Pools more than 20 **House Martins** were skimming for insects and a single adult **Lesser Blackback gull** was the only other bird interest.

Heading back along the Southmoor seawall with the wind driving heavy rain at my back I found a small flock of **Meadow Pipits** feeding in the tideline (I'm pretty sure none were **Rock Pipits**) while a single **Whimbrel** flew by.

Despite the rain I made a diversion to the southern tip of the old rail bridge embankment, adding **Vipers Bugloss**, **Blue Fleabane**, **Common Centaury**, **Eyebright**, **Hop Trefoil**, **Wild Parsnip** and **Sea Radish** to my list, and beside the

section of Billy Trail leading to the embankment I spotted a cluster of **Common Earth-ball fungi** (my first this year)

Back at home I recorded 164 flowering plant species for the day.

WILDLIFE DIARY AND NEWS FOR JULY 11 - 17 (WEEK 28 OF 2011)

Late News

Hedgehog: These have been in the local news this week with an unexpected sighting in Brook Meadow at Emsworth followed by a report of a family of three living in a neighbour's garden here in Havant. The neighbour told me that he had made them a wooden **Hedgehog house** from which they emerged nightly for a meal of catfood before setting out on their nightly journeys. He also described how on one recent morning he found the wooden house had been moved out into the centre of his lawn (probably by a **Fox** trying to get at the occupants) - luckily the **Hedgehogs** had curled up in their house and the Fox had gone away hungry. On Saturday night (July 16) I actually had a live **Hedgehog** in my own garden, detected but unharmed by visiting dogs.

WeBS count on Thorney Island: After I had processed the wildlife reports for this week I had another look at the SOS News and saw the results of Barry Collins WeBS Counts (for the Thorney Deeps on Thursday 14 July and for the Pilsey area on Friday). At the Deeps there were (amongst other items) 380 **Redshank**, 57 **Black-tailed Godwit**, 40 **Lapwing**, 39 **Greenshank** and 6 **Common Sandpiper**. At Pilsey there were 80 **Bar-tailed Godwit**, 52 **Little Tern**, 42 **Grey Plover** and 13 **Whimbrel**. While the **Grey Plover** may well have been non breeding birds summering in the harbour the other counts give a good impression of how far advanced the the autumn wader passage already is. The number of **Little Terns** was particularly striking but may reflect birds that have abandoned nests in Langstone Harbour (see entry for **Little Tern** below)

Waders at Farlington Marshes: On July 16 there were 24 Greenshank, 5 Whimbrel and 2 Common Sandpiper around Farlington Marshes

Cattle Egret at Sidlesham: One was watched for half an hour on Saturday evening (July 16) in fields north of Pagham Harbour and east of Sidlesham

BIRDS

Shearwaters: **Cory's**, **Sooty**, **Balearic** and **Manx** were still around the Cornish coast on July 17 brought in by the big low pressure system which affected the whole of Britain. Other than **Manx** (with more than 14,000 recorded at Sennen) the highest count was **28 Sooty** off Pendeen where **5 Cory's** and **3 Balearic** were also seen with **20+ Storm Petrels**

Little Egret: Numbers at feeding sites continue to rise steeply with 38 at Christchurch Harbour on July 14. Weir Wood reservoir had 23 on July 12 and the Lower Test Marshes reported 16 on July 13. During the couple of months before June 23 (when Weir Wood reported 4 Egrets of which one was a juvenile) the only

news of the species was from breeding sites but it is not clear whether the current reported increases are solely the result of dispersion from local nests, or whether there is a significant element of immigration from continental sites. On July 13 Portland reported the arrival of one Egret from the south and these sizeable and white birds, which catch the eye when seen at short range against a background of greenery, are surprisingly difficult to see against the sea or sky at a distance so many individuals could cross the channel unreported provided that they arrive singly and do not check in at birding hotspots.

Spoonbill: Late news of a flock of 58 at a Netherlands site on July 10 suggests that this species is on the move though with no indication of where they are heading.

Brent Goose: Still no news of any summering flocks which I would expect to be lurking in the Solent harbours but sightings of one in the Emsworth Channel at Mill Rythe on July 9, another flying up the Beaulieu River from the Solent on July 13 and another two heading into Langstone Harbour on July 14 suggests that the birds that are here for the summer may be sensing the onset of their flightless moult period and be heading for inland hideaways where they can survive the moult.

Pale-bellied Brent: One was still at Exmouth on July 10 and another was seen in the Warsash area on July 11

Teal: A count of 85 at a Yorkshire site on July 9 may reflect a movement of failed or non-breeders heading south in search of places in which to spend their eclipse period

Ferruginous Duck: One was reported in Somerset on July 13 and maybe the same moved on to East Holme in Dorset on July 14

Marsh Harrier: The pair nesting at Radipole (Weymouth) had two juveniles airborne with them on July 10 but there has been no news yet of the family at nearby Lodmoor

Osprey: One was at Arne (Poole Harbour) on July 10 with one over Pagham Harbour on July 11 and another over Fishlake Meadows by the R Test at Romsey on July 13

Common Crane: Two, possibly three, flew over Wivelsfield Green near Haywards Heath on July 10

Golden Plover: A flock of 43 in Yorkshire on July 9 was probably returning from more northerly breeding sites and may be heading our way

Grey Plover: Christchurch Harbour had what I think was its first bird returning from breeding in summer plumage on July 10

Knot: Two were back at Lymington on July 11

Sanderling: One was seen at Lymington with 93 Dunlin on July 14

Little Stint: One at Ferrybridge (Weymouth) on July 11. Other vagrants this week include a **Temmincks Stint** in Orkney on July 9 and a **Pectoral Sandpiper** in Essex on July 14

Ruff: A total of 16 were at Rye Harbour on July 9, a single male was at Hayle in Cornwall on July 14 when another single was at Lymington (with a single **Snipe**)

Black-tailed Godwit: Possible indications of more birds returning from Iceland include a group of five over Sandy Point on Hayling on July 10, a flock of 58 arriving at Christchurch Harbour on July 11 from inland and then flying on east, and a count of 14 at Pulborough Brooks on July 12

Sandpipers: On July 12 Pulborough Brooks had 8 **Green Sandpipers**, the Lower Test reserve had 11 on July 13 and on July 15 Rye Harbour had 16. Single **Wood Sandpipers** were in the Rye Bay area on July 10, on the north Devon coast near Hartland Point on July 15, and at Fleet Pond in north Hampshire that same day (still there on July 17). **Common Sandpipers** are now widespread and numerous - a count of 28 was made at Prawle on the Devon coast back on July 10 when there were 14 at the Longham Lakes on the northern fringe of Bournemouth. On July 11 Christchurch Harbour had 13 and on July 15 Rye Harbour had 23

Spotted Sandpiper: One was at Rutland Water on July 13 and 14

Turnstone: Christchurch Harbour had its first six passage birds on July 8 and a small flock of sixteen were at Weston Shore on Southampton Water on July 16

Little Gull: A recent major increase in passage was marked by a report of 1327 at a Yorkshire site on July 9

Arctic Tern: A single first summer bird was seen at Sandy Point on Hayling on July 10

Little Tern: After a disastrous breeding season for all the gulls and terns nesting in Langstone Harbour, and a rather stupid discussion on Hoslist which assumed that all the losses were due to the insatiable appetite of a single Fox, the RSPB warden (Chris Cockburn) has set out the facts which include: -

1. The nests involved were Med Gull 498, Black-headed Gull 4580, Lesser Blackback Gull 1, Sandwich Tern 161, Common Tern probably 50 nests hidden in vegetation, Little Tern probably 56 nests
2. Problems were caused by (a) Strong winds making it difficult for parents to collect fish for their young on six occasions (one lasting for 4 consecutive days), (b) A long dry spell making it difficult for the Med Gulls (which do not fish but rely on earthworms, etc) to feed their young, and (c) High tides swamping many nests on three occasions (despite building up some areas with shingle the great majority of the nesting area is less than three feet above the normal high tide mark)
3. In addition to inter-species predation among the birds one or more Foxes have learnt to access the island at low tide and have probably been out there during 64 low tide periods (day and night) since the first sighting of a Fox on May 20
4. As a result the total known productivity of the 5616 known nests has been the fledging of two Black-headed Gull plus one Little Tern chicks.

An observation of 70 Little Terns at Sandy Point (mouth of Chichester Harbour) on July 10 may reflect the abandonment of nests in Langstone Harbour by the majority

of the estimated 112 birds which had failed to nest there (though some of them have attempted a to raise a second brood there)

Swift: The first to reach the south coast that I know of was seen in the Shoreham area on Apr 5 and by Apr 27 a flock of 305 was seen at a Netherlands site with a count of 8277 birds there on Apr 30 and by mid-May counts in hundreds were regular in England. I suspect these were mostly birds intending to breed this year. A further surge seems to have reached Britain at the end of May (e.g. 8098 over Spurn Point on the east coast on June 27) and these were probably non-breeders which have since been seen in varying numbers all over southern England (e.g. one or two over Havant on various days since June 30 and a group of around 20 which spent most of July 12 over Emsworth). On July 14 I even had two low over my house late in the evening when I went out of my front door to put the milk bottles out (the only time I saw an evening flight this year - in all previous years it was a regular occurrence to see what I assume were at least partly the non-sitting partners of the local breeding birds collecting over the houses from 8pm onwards before climbing to 'sleeping height' as dusk fell)

Pallid and Pacific Swift: Singles of these two rarities were over the east coast of Britain on July 9

Sand Martin: These continue to stream away from their breeding sites with counts on July 11 of 950 over Dungeness. 320 over Christchurch Harbour, 220 roosting at Thurlestone (near Plymouth), 60 roosting at Lymington and 50+ passing over Pagham Harbour. **Swallows** were also on the move but the only report I have is of 330 roosting at Thurlestone on July 12.

Crag Martin: A single bird was over Christchurch Harbour for 5 minutes on July 10 before heading north inland

Red-rumped Swallow: One was reported in Surrey on July 8 and 9. Maybe the same bird passed over Sandy Point on Hayling on July 10

Albino Martin: A bird seen over the Heath Pond at Petersfield on July 14 was either a **House** or **Sand Martin**

Sedge Warbler: Ones and twos of most of our summer migrant species are now on the way south but the only positive report of this comes from Portland where they trapped the first autumn passage bird there on July 15

Golden Oriole: Reports of birds heading south come from Belgium on July 12, the Scillies on July 13, and from the Mundham area just south of the Chichester lakes on July 15 (this one not seen but song heard)

Lesser Grey Shrike: The bird which turned up in Pembrokeshire on July 6 was still there on July 9

Starling: Autumn flocks will soon start to build up in southern England as birds come over from the continent. A foretaste was given by a report of 3044 birds at a Netherlands site on July 10

Leucistic House Sparrow: Brian Fellows had on June 23 been sent a picture of a leucistic juvenile recently fledged in an Emsworth garden and on July 14 what may

have been the same bird was seen again in the Nore Barn area at the west end of the Emsworth shoreline

Crossbill: A dozen more reports this week as the irruption into England continues. On July 10 birders visiting West Dean Woods near Chichester reported 'many flocks moving around' and other reports came from the New Forest, Dorset, Cornwall, and Sussex

INSECTS

Dragonflies

Southern Hawker: The first were reported at the Lower Test reserve on May 24 but they did not start to emerge seriously until July 2 in Sussex and the first in Hampshire were seen by Paul Winter in the New Forest on July 14

Brown Hawker: Although there had been an early report of these from Berkshire on May 19 I have heard no more of them until July 14 when they were in Paul Winter's list of sightings on the western fringes of the New Forest by the Latchmore Brook where he recorded 15 species. For his full list go to <http://www.british-dragonflies.org.uk/content/latest-sightings> and scroll down to the entry for July 14 marked "Hampshire PDW"

Migrant Hawker: An immature had been seen in Devon on June 23 but regular reports started on July 12 and by July 16 one had been found in a north Kent moth trap

Lesser Emperor: The fifth report for the year was of one in Warwickshire on July 15

Black Darter: These were first reported on June 30 in both Surrey and Wales (Ceredigion) and there have now been seven reports including one female photographed at Iping Common near Midhurst on July 9

Common Darter: The first for the year seem to have been at Keyhaven near Lymington on June 14 but their general appearance is only starting around now

Southern Damselfly (*Coenagrion mercuriale*): Paul Winter found 38 of these at the Latchmore Brook in the New Forest on July 14 and the only previous report that I can see of this species is of four at an Oxfordshire site on June 30

Butterflies

Wood White: Second brood starting to emerge since July 7 with several at Botany Bay in Surrey on July 13

Small Blue: Summer brood emerging from July 10 near Brighton (maybe July 5 at Durlston but not noted as fresh)

Common Blue: Summer Brood reported at Kithurst Hill in Sussex on July 11 though a pristine specimen was seen near Henfield on June 26

Red Admiral: An unexplained assembly of around 100 in one field was seen on the Isle of Wight on July 9

Wall Brown: Second brood seems to have started to emerge on June 26 near Horsham but there was then a gap in reports until specimens near Eastbourne were reported as the new brood on July 10

Grayling: First for the year was claimed at Lymington on May 21 but there were no further reports from anywhere until July 8 at Browndown near Gosport after which there were reports on July 9, 11 and 14

Large Heath: Not included in my list of southern species below but I see these were flying at their Cumbrian stronghold on July 4

Species seen this week were Small Skipper, Essex Skipper, Lulworth Skipper, Large Skipper, Wood White, Brimstone, Large White, Small White, Green Veined White, Purple Hairstreak, White-letter Hairstreak, Small Copper, Small Blue, Silver Studded Blue, Brown Argus, Common Blue, Chalkhill Blue, Holly Blue, White Admiral, Purple Emperor, Red Admiral, Painted Lady, Small Tortoiseshell, Peacock, Comma, Dark Green Fritillary, Silver Washed Fritillary, Speckled Wood, Marbled White, Grayling, Gatekeeper, Meadow Brown, Small Heath. Ringlet.

Moths

Hummingbird Hawkmoth: Another five reports this week as a moderate inflow of migrants continues. On July 12 a house in West Sussex was lucky enough to have one fly in through an open door, nectar from some cut Sweet Peas and fly out again

Old Lady: This large moth has just appeared on the scene with a first report from Henfield in Sussex on July 8 followed on July 9 by a report and photo of four together in a garden shed at Cowplain (Waterlooville) - this latter report included a message saying that the moths probably explained the regular appearance during June of large green droppings (from unseen caterpillars) below the ivy around the shed

Other Insects

Marmelade Hoverfly (*Episyrphus balteatus*): These have been around for some time but this week brought a surge of new migrants (e.g. reported at Portland on July 12) so that the species become common almost everywhere

Hornet Hoverfly (*Volucella zonaria*): First report of this large and impressive insect came on July 9 when at least four were seen in the Brighton area

Long Hoverfly (*Sphaerophoria scripta*): This was one of very many insects found by Bryan Pinchen during an insect survey of Emsworth roadsides on July 13 - a full list is expected later but Brian Fellows managed to photograph this distinctive individual. For photos of some of the insects found during this survey visit see <http://www.emsworthwaysides.hampshire.org.uk/few-NEWS.htm>

Giant Tachinid Fly (*Tachina grossa*): On July 14 Derek Hale took a photo of this very impressive (in its ugliness) insect (which parasitises large caterpillars) at Brighstone on the Isle of Wight. To see it go to <http://iowbirds.awardspace.com/IOW.htm> and scroll down to the entries for July 14, then click the 'camera' image alongside the words 'Tachina grossa'. You can find out more at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tachina_grossa

Flying Ants: Several reports this week but no mass co-ordinated flight across the whole region

14-spot Ladybird (*Propylea 14-punctata*): This was also found by Bryan Pinchen at Emsworth on July 13 and photographed by Brian Fellows. Note that there is another 14 spot Ladybird called **Calvia 14-guttata** which is distinctly different and is called the **Cream Spot Ladybird**. See the list of Ladybird species at http://www.ladybird-survey.org/species_list.aspx and scroll down it to find the two names - clicking on the Common Name of a species in this list brings up its photo and id features

Roesel's Bush Cricket (*Metrioptera roeselii*): Both male and female of this species were found at Emsworth by Bryan Pinchen on July 13 - good photos and facts can be seen at <http://www.orthoptera.org.uk/account.aspx?ID=16> (click on the images to enlarge - the central picture is of a female with her impressive ovipositor for slicing into the plant stems where she lays her eggs)

Great Green Bush Cricket (*Tettigonia viridissima*): A large male was seen at Durlston on July 16 and details of this most impressive species (twice the size of the Roesel's) can be found at <http://www.orthoptera.org.uk/account.aspx?ID=10>

PLANTS

[\(Skip to Other Wildlife\)](#)

Long-headed Poppy (*Papaver dubium*): This plant has two sub-species one of which is normally called **Long-headed** and the other **Yellow-juiced** but to add to the confusion a find by Graeme Lyons in Sussex this week is named **Babington's Poppy**. For this and many other interesting plant finds by Graeme see his blog at <http://analternativenaturalhistoryofsussex.blogspot.com/> which currently starts with his first find of '**Weasel's Snout**' (aka **Lesser Snapdragon** or **Misopates orontium**) which still grows under the roadside fence of the New Lane allotments here in Havant

Dense Flowered Fumitory: Another of Graeme Lyons finds this week

Common Flax (*Linum usitatissimum*): Although the species is not specifically stated a find of a Flax plant flowering by the Slipper Mill Pond at Emsworth on July 12 is assumed to be a self sown plant of the Common Flax grown as a commercial crop rather than the smaller Pale Flax or the rare Perennial Flax

Proliferous Pink: On June 21 I re-discovered the plants on Sinah Common (Hayling Island) which had originally been named as **Childing Pink** but could not see any flowers, only what appeared to be the empty husks of the calyces

belonging to flowers already over, so when I looked again at the plants on July 11 I was surprised to find 11 tiny flowers which I take to be a second flowering.

Night-flowering Catchfly: Another recent find by Graeme Lyons on July 10

Sand Spurrey: I managed on July 11 to locate the plants found earlier by Brian Fellows at Sinah Common and my diary entry for that day includes a Google satellite view of the area which should help others to locate the plants which I found distributed over a larger area than I had expected

Strawberry Clover: First sighting of this in flower comes from Brian Fellows at Northney on Hayling on July 10

Sulphur Cinquefoil: A find of this by Brian Fellows in Emsworth on July 14 made me realise that I have for years been wrongly naming **Shrubby Cinquefoil** as **Sulphur Cinquefoil** and must admit to never having seen the plant which Brian found

Purple Loosestrife: This has just started to flower in the Brook Meadow area at Emsworth - first report by Brian Fellows on July 12

Ash key galls: Brian Fellows diary entry for July 15 at <http://www.emsworthwildlife.hampshire.org.uk/0-0-0-wildlife-diary.htm> has a photo and description of galls caused by a mite called **Eriophyes Fraxinivorus** (a member of the Arachnid or Spider tribe)

Broad-leaved Spurge: Another of Graeme Lyons finds made near Bexhill on July 13. Also at the same site (Filsham Reedbed) he found **Fine leaved water dropwort**

Stone Parsley: Brian Fellows was the first to find this with open flowers in Emsworth on July 15

Wild Angelica: Another first flowering at Emsworth seen by Brian Fellows on July 15

Lesser Water Parsnip: This had started to flower in the Lymbourne stream at Langstone on July 9

Blue Pimpernel: Another of Graeme Lyons discoveries made on July 10 and on view in his blog at <http://analternativenaturalhistoryofsussex.blogspot.com/>

Lesser Centaury: First flowering reported by John Goodspeed on Old Winchester Hill in the Meon Valley on July 6

Common Dodder: First flowering noted by myself on gorse at Sinah Common on July 11 - poor photos on my diary page

Small Toadflax: Another of Graeme Lyons finds (along with **Round** and **Sharp-leaved Fluellen**) on July 10

Field Woundwort: Another first of the year for Graeme Lyons on July 13

White Horehound: Another first of the year for Graeme Lyons on July 10

Hounds Tongue: After many years knowing of only one Hayling Island site for this plant (at Sandy Point) two new sites have been found this summer - one near the Oysterbeds on May 29 and now one on the Northney shoreline (just west of the Marina slipway) found by John Norton on July 10.

Purple Viper's Bugloss: This plant has only two regular sites in southern Britain, one in the Scillies and the other in Cornwall, but it can occur elsewhere as a casual and Graeme Lyons found one such site in Sussex on July 10

Teasel: Flowering of this started on July 11

Hoary Ragwort: This too seems to have started flowering on July 11

Sea Aster: First flowers found in the Langstone area on July 9

Frog Orchid: First report of this in flower came from John Goodspeed at Old Winchester Hill on July 6 - as 30 spikes were found the plants had probably started to flower a little earlier than they were seen

OTHER WILDLIFE

Hedgehog: See 'Latest News' above

Slow-worm: When mowing my lawn this week I cut back long grass at the edge of the lawn and at one point saw a large Slow-worm slithering away from what had been a dense tussock - luckily it appeared to be unharmed.

Pointed Snail (*Cochlicella acuta*): This small land snail colonises dry habitats, often near the sea and in places such as sand dunes where you might not expect to find snails. With a shell shaped like a church steeple, but only at most 15mm tall, it easily escapes the attention of anyone not looking for it except in hot weather when the temperature of the sun baked ground can rise to a point at which there is a serious risk of a tiny mollusc becoming cooked in its own shell. To avoid this fate these snails climb a few centimetres up whatever is nearest (plant stems or fence posts) until they are cooled by whatever breeze is blowing. In these conditions the snails, no longer hidden by the vegetation and sticking out a right angles to whatever they have climbed, become quite easy to spot. I have only come across them at two sites - firstly around the carparks of the IBM Portsmouth HQ (now called Lakeside 1000), and secondly on the inner slope of the Thorney Island seawall where it passes the west end of the Great Deeps. There were plenty to be seen at the Thorney site in 2005 and 6 but since then I have had great difficulty in seeing any until this week when I found at least 20 there (a tiny count compared to the many hundreds that could be seen at the IBM site). For a good picture go to <http://idtools.org/id/mollusc/factsheet.php?id=280>

Fish eating Flying Ants: Unlike some recent years when there have been huge eruptions of flying ants all occurring on the same day, attracting massive flocks of birds to catch them in flight, this year's mating flights seem to have been sporadic and unco-ordinated. One flight at Durlston on July 12 seems to have been especially badly timed, with the ants only taking off late in the day and then being blown out over the sea where many thousands of the Ants end up on the water where they were enjoyed by Mullet and other fish

WILDLIFE DIARY AND NEWS FOR JULY 11 - 17 (WEEK 28 OF 2011)

Mon 11 July

South Hayling with a new camera

My 80th birthday is coming up next week and I have been given a new camera as an early present. This morning I set out to learn how to use it, my first target being the **Sand Spurrey** which Brian Fellows found about a week ago on Sinah Common in the area north of the Golf Course and south of Ferry Road where it passes the Sinah Warren 'holiday camp'.

On the way south I had a look at the Oysterbeds area where **Teazels** are coming into full flower and many of the **Black Headed Gulls** have taken their **newly fledged young** into nearby Stoke Bay. While I was there a **Peregrine** flew low overhead but seemingly with no intention of hunting and thus causing no panic among other birds.

Reaching Ferry Road I cycled past the open grass along the east end of the Sinah Gravel Pit Lake but then turned down the concrete road leading the gates into the lake area before turning west (at the point marked 'Park' on the satellite image) along the main track nearest the lake and followed it until a short distance before it turns north to rejoin Ferry Road. Here, where a minor path crosses the main track at right angles, is the site of the **Sand Spurrey** (in case you fail to see the cross track it is about a dozen metres east of a wooden bench situated on the north of the track and currently backed by a large area of burnt gorse).

Satellite view of Sand Spurrey site area

The largest cluster of the very small **Spurrey plants** grows in the minor track on the south side of the main track, right at the junction of the two tracks, but there are quite a few individual flowers of the **Spurrey** to be found on both sides of the main track - once you have got your eye in they can be found over quite a large area. My photos show an overview of the site with my haversack placed near the cross track - the second photo is an example of one of the other small clusters of flowers that can be seen nearby and the third shows the main cluster of plants.

Sand Spurrey site (my Haversack marks the cross track) and a group of three flowers

Main cluster of flowers at the cross track

These photos have come out surprisingly well considering that the new camera does not have a viewfinder, only a display screen on the back, and in the bright sunlight I could see virtually nothing of the image that I was trying to take. Heading on west to the Ferry and then down the side of the harbour entrance channel to the sandy grassland south of the golf course I added both **Small Copper** and **Small Heath** to my butterfly list (which also had **Large White**, **Marbled White**, **Meadow Brown**, **Speckled Wood** and several **Gatekeepers** and **Red Admirals**). In the area where the **Green Veined Orchids** grew a couple of months ago I stumbled on a patch of **Centaury** plants which had prominent basal leaf rosettes and I took a couple of photos of these in case they might be examples of **Seaside Centaury** (I thought basal rosettes at flowering was a significant feature but see it is not - my photos do however provide some evidence on which

an expert might decide if they are **Seaside Centaury**, the two critical factors being leaf shape and the relative lengths of the calyx length and corolla tube length)

Possible Seaside Centaury basal rosette and stem leaves plus flower showing calyx length

My next target was the **Pale Toadflax** flowers growing close to the south east corner of the mini-golf course but just before reaching that site I was stopped in my tracks by a great display of **Dodder parasitising Gorse** (my first sight of this plant for the year).

Over view of Dodder on Gorse and closer view of Dodder flowers

Pale Toadflax flowers

Having tried to get photos of these two plants I carried on east to the **Proliferous Pink** site where I had, on June 21, refound the husks of several plants which were apparently all well past flowering. I was very surprised today to find that eleven of these 'dead' plants had flowers and without being able to see what the camera was pointing at I managed to bring home one image.

Two views of the only tiny Proliferous Pink flower I could capture (out of eleven flowers)

Before leaving the Sinah Common area I ticked off the **Cocks Eggs** plants along with flowers on the **Duke of Argyll's Teaplant** and opening seeds on **Euonymus japonicus (Japanese Spindle)** and on the way home I came on my first **Vervain** in flower.

WILDLIFE DIARY AND NEWS FOR JULY 4 - 10 (WEEK 27 OF 2011)

Late News

Sand Spurrey on Hayling Island: On July 1 Brian Fellows came across some plants in the area north of the Hayling Golf Course and just south of the Ferry Road which seemed to be related to **Lesser Sea-spurrey** but flourishing on stony sandy soil at least 300 metres from the nearest harbour mud and he at first guessed they might be **Rock Sea-spurrey** but after a week long investigation they have been shown to be **Sand Spurrey**

More rare plants and insects in Sussex: Graeme Lyons blog continues to provide daily interest and education - see <http://analternativenaturalhistoryofsussex.blogspot.com/> for his latest finds of **False Ladybird** (see <http://www.uksafari.com/falseladybirds.htm> to learn about these tiny fungus eating beetles which disguise themselves as unpalatable Ladybirds) and **Purple Viper's Bugloss** (previously only known from Cornwall and the Channel Islands) plus **Night Flowering Catchfly** and what he calls **Babington's Poppy** (a plant which is found in Stace as **Papaver dubium** or the **Long-headed Poppy**)

BIRDS

Grebes and Divers: A single diver (probably **Great Northern**) was off the Devon coast at Exmouth on July 4 and a single **Black-necked Grebe** was off the Netherlands that day while Lee Evans latest round up of rarities in Britain on July 6 included a **Slavonian Grebe** at Pitsford Reservoir near Northampton and a **Red-necked Grebe** in south Yorkshire (both in summer plumage)

Shearwaters: This week brought an extraordinary number of **Cory's Shearwater** to the south west tip of Cornwall. 800 were reported off Gwennap Head (the southern tip of the Lands End area) on July 6 with 60 there on July 7 and 125 on July 8. Among them were at least three **Great Shearwaters** and at least 14 **Sooty Shearwaters**. More normal was a count of 1012 **Manx Shearwater** off Start Point in Devon but the peak count of **Balearic Shearwaters** was just 8 in the Weymouth area

Petrels: One **Wilson's Storm Petrel** was still off Gwennap Heap on July 8 when 18 **Storm Petrels** were caught and ringed

Night Heron (aka **Black-crowned Night Heron**): Two of these were in the Kent Stour Valley (occasionally making their strange croaking sounds) from June 29 to July 3 at least.

Cattle Egret: Lee Evans reported one in Yorkshire on July 6

Little Egret: This week has brought several reports indicating that there are more breeding colonies along the south coast than I was previously aware of and juveniles have been appearing at several coastal sites away from their nests (including Christchurch Harbour, the Lower Test near Southampton, Hook/Warsash, Pagham Harbour, Arlington Reservoir in the Cuckmere valley and Weir Wood Reservoir near Crowborough). Still no local reports of juveniles in Langstone or Chichester Harbours.

Great White Egret: One was still at Dungeness on July 7 and another was at Pitsford Reservoir near Northampton on July 6

White Stork: One reported at a farm on the northern edge of Dartmoor on both July 5 and 6

Spoonbill: One flew east over the Lymington marshes on July 5 and a flock of 8 were present on Sheppey in Kent on July 3

Marbled Duck: Last week I reported one seen at Arlington Reservoir in Sussex on July 3 as an escapee but it was still there on July 7 and classed by Lee Evans as a genuine wild bird (which tallies with its unringed and fully feathered state) and it may have come from Spain or further afield (earlier this year a flock of 40,000 was seen in Iraq). Sadly the bird at Arlington is thought to have an injured leg.

Red Crested Pochard: A single bird of unknown origin was on a small New Forest pond (just south of Burley) on July 5 and this could, like the Marbled Duck, be a genuine wild bird from southern Europe but is much more likely to be an escapee

Red-breasted Merganser: A single female was seen in Pagham Harbour on both July 6 and 7

Marsh Harrier: The first confirmation that these have bred at Radipole (Weymouth) came with news that the first of what is thought to be several chicks fledged there on July 7. Young in another nest at Lodmoor (where the first pair to breed in Dorset for at least 50 years did so in 2009) are expected to fledge soon.

Peregrine: A juvenile hunting over Pagham Harbour on July 7 was probably one of the young from Chichester Cathedral. This week has also brought news of three young fledging from the nest on Shoreham Power Station chimney and of at least 2 young having fledged from the nest on the Sussex Heights tower block in Brighton

Common Crane: One flew over the Burgess Hill area in Sussex on July 3

Black-winged Stilt: One reported by Lee Evans to be in Suffolk on July 6

Golden Plover: The first returning breeding birds were in north Kent on June 30 and another single bird in summer plumage was seen at Reculver on July 5

Pacific Golden Plover: Two were reported in Northern Ireland on July 6

Lapwing: 30 were back at Pulborough Brooks on July 8

Dunlin: After seeing one at Christchurch Harbour on June 27 there were 6 there on July 3

Black-tailed Godwit: 30+ were at the Sidlesham Ferry Pool on July 6 and 7. There is no evidence that these had returned from Iceland but two birds at Pulborough Brooks on July 8 had probably come from the north.

Redshank: 5 on the Langstone village shore on July 6 where probably the first back there

Green Sandpiper: On July 5 there were 10 returning birds at the Lower Test Marshes near Southampton and on July 8 Pulborough Brooks had 6

Common Sandpiper: A flock of 13 were back at the Otter estuary in Devon on July 2 and 6 were at Swanage on July 7 with another 2 on the Lymington shore. I heard my first on the Langstone shoreline on July 9

Skuas: A good mixed bag of these streaming down channel this week starting with **Poms** (one off Selsey Bill and three off Portland with another three off Devon and ten passing Gwennap Head south of Lands End). Not so many **Arctics** and just two **Long-tailed** (passing Christchurch Harbour and Abbotsbury). **Bonxies** were mostly seen from Cornwall (nine off Gwennap Head on July 6 and ten there on July 8 with one off Portland on July 7 when Gwennap had three)

Gulls: A single **Little Gull** remained in the Hook/Warsash area and Fleet Pond had a single **Yellow-legged** which rested a while after arriving from the north. The first returning **Common Gull** was on the Langstone shore on July 6 and if these numbers give the impression that there were few gulls in the English channel July 8 brought a count of **2868 Lesser Blackbacks** off the Netherlands

Terns: These are already starting to move west down the English Channel with around 30 **Common** passing Christchurch Harbour on July 2 and 4 (then 1316 off the Netherlands on July 8). Three **Roseate** were with them on July 7 (one at

Dungeness and to at Lodmoor) and three Little were seen on July 5 (two at Exmouth and one at Christchurch Harbour). A flock of 241 Black Terns plus 2 White-winged were off the Netherlands on July 7.

Swifts: After a dearth of these until the end of June good numbers have been seen recently (I suspect non-breeding birds). On July 3 Dungeness had 30 over and on July 5 a flock of 300 were over Magdalen Hill Down at Winchester. Smaller groups seen locally were of around 20 over Nore Down at West Marden, 20+ over Emsworth and 7 over Sandy Point on Hayling. Not local was a single **Alpine Swift** over Lincolnshire on July 6

Kingfisher: One post breeding bird was at Eastleigh Lakeside on July 6

Woodlark: Of local interest there was a sighting on July 3 of Woodlarks which normally breed in the East Park of the Stansted estate

Sand Martin: Night roosts of passage birds have been seen in the Thurlestone Bay area (south west Devon) since July 5 (200+ birds). On July 5 what was presumably a pre-roost flock of around 400 birds was seen resting on a sand bank out in the bay.

Swallow: These are also night roosting at Thurlestone with a count of 850+ on July 3

House Martin: Swifts have ceased to nest in the Havant area this year but a few House Martins still do so. I have a couple of pairs feeding over my garden almost every day and this week I found one nest on a house just across the old rail line that borders my garden - earlier in the week some 15 nests had been found in Westbourne village just across the Sussex boundary.

Western Bonelli's Warbler: This contender for the week's top rarity was singing in Debyshire this week

Lesser Grey Shrike: One in Pembrokeshire this week was the other contender for the top spot when it became species number 383 on Lee Evans year list for the birds of Britain and Ireland

Chough: At least four pairs have nested in Cornwall this year and have produced 15 fledged young

Jackdaw: A major corvid night roost at Weston Shore on the east shore of Southampton Water is already in autumn mode and holding 110 Jackdaws and 310 Carrion Crows

Crossbill: The pace of this year's Crossbill irruption into Britain seems to be increasing. On July 5 Sandy Point on Hayling had a group of 15 passing north and on July 8 flock of 94 were seen in Yorkshire - the latter report may be the first sign of the small groups that have been arriving daily since mid-March forming major flocks.

INSECTS

Dragonflies

Southern Hawker: The first of these were out at the Lower Test reserve near Southampton as early as May 24 but it is only now that they are beginning to appear in numbers

Lesser Emperor: This rare migrant from the south was first seen at Lands End on June 3 and it was not until July 5 that a second individual turned up at Dungeness

Norfolk Hawker: This species is normally restricted to East Anglia but the very first to head south over the Thames estuary was in the Kent Stour valley from June 4 to 8 and on July 1 one was seen at Sandwich Bay

Ruddy Darter: These started to appear on June 28 and by July 3 were being reported in 'hundreds'

Red-veined Darter: This vagrant from the south started to form colonies in Britain in 1995 and this year the first was seen in Staffordshire on July 4

Southern Emerald Damselfly (*Lestes bararus*): After one or two exuvia were found on Sheppey last year the first live resident specimens were found in Kent on June 30 and ten were still present on July 3. The species had been known as a migrant since 2002

Willow Emerald Damselfly (*Lestes viridis*): This has only appeared in Britain in any numbers since 2009 when it was only found in and around Essex but in 2010 it extended its range to appear in Kent - so far this year it has only been seen in Suffolk

White-legged Damselfly: Seen near Horsham on July 1 after first appearing in Gloucester on May 1

Small Red-eyed Damsel: This was not known in Britain until 1999 but has now spread rapidly and can be found at many sites in southern England. It was reported at two sites in Kent on July 5 and 6

Dainty Damselfly: This was regularly seen in Essex from 1946 to 1952 but was exterminated by the winter floods at the start of 1953. It re-appeared on Sheppey in Kent in 2010 and can now be found at several sites along the River Swale (though only one has public access)

Butterflies

Noteworthy reports:

Chalkhill Blue: first two reports for the year came from Chantry Hill (Sussex Downs above Storrington) on July 5 and from Magdalen Hill Down at Winchester on July 6. These were preceded by what I thought might be a slightly dubious report from the Friston Forest area on June 30

Purple Emperor: This seems to be being reported from more sites than usual this year - I have seen reports from 22 separate woodlands, local ones being Stansted Forest, Creech Woods at Denmead and Huntbourn Woods near Newtown in the Meon Valley while the Botley Woods between Wickham and Fareham have

produced three separate reports (the last being on July 5 when one landed on Ashley Whitlock's hand and stayed there for 30 minutes)

Dark Green Fritillary: This species seems to be having a good year after emerging on June 1 and producing a report of more than 200 in the Friston Forest area near Eastbourne (June 23) and and 40+ on the Downs above Worthing (June 26 and July 3). Old Winchester Hill in the Meon valley had at least 14 on July 3 but the only report from Portsdown so far has been of just 3 (also seen on July 3)

Species flying this week:

Small Skipper, Essex Skipper, Lulworth Skipper, Large Skipper, Brimstone, Large White, Small White, Green-veined White, Purple Hairstreak, White-letter Hairstreak, Small Copper, Silver-studded Blue, Brown Argus, Common Blue, Chalkhill Blue, Holly Blue, White Admiral, Purple Emperor, Red Admiral, Painted Lady, Small Tortoiseshell, Peacock, Comma, Dark Green Fritillary, Silver Washed Fritillary, Speckled Wood, Marbled White, Gatekeeper, Meadow Brown, Small Heath, Ringlet.

Moths

Swallow-tailed Moth: Durlston reported the first for the year on July 5

Hummingbird Hawkmoth: The pace of arrival of these migrants seems to be speeding up with ten reports this week, six of them being of more than one insect peaking with a sighting of 9 at Old Winchester Hill in the Meon valley on July 3

Other Insects

Scaeva pyrastris: First report of this eye-catching black and white Hoverfly comes from Rye Harbour on July 4. Look out for them hovering just above head height in woodland from now on.

Ant mating flight: First and so far only report of this phenomenon comes on July 2 from the Clennon Valley which runs inland from Torbay in Devon.

Leaf-cutter Bee: When I was at Sandy Point (Hayling Island) on July 4 my eye was caught by a long thin Iris-type leaf suddenly vibrating for no apparent reason but a closer look showed a neat circular piece of leaf had been removed and the vibration was presumably caused by the reduction in weight as the bee took off with its circular 'door' to be used in sealing up its nest chamber

PLANTS

Wild Cabbage: Reported as flowering on the cliffs at Durlston on July 8 - this plant grows on chalk or limestone cliffs and so is found in Dorset and the Isle of Wight but not in Hampshire (though it has in the past been found on the cliffs of the Paulsgrove chalk pit at Portsdown Hill, but not, I think, since 1978)

Sea Rocket (*Cakile maritima*): Found flowering on July 4 around Black Point at the mouth of Chichester Harbour

Saltwort: Just one plant seen on the sand at Black Point on July 4 (not in flower)

Spanish Gorse: Several bushes in full flower at Black Point on July 4

Dwarf Gorse: Just starting to flower in the old Hospital Grounds near the Sandy Point Lifeboat Station on July 4

Rough Clover: Also flowering in the sand near the Hayling Lifeboat Station on July 4

Cherry Plum: Ripe fruit now being shaken from several trees by recent high winds

Stone Parsley: Said to be flowering at Durlston on July 5 - here in Havant flowers had begun to appear on July 6 but none were open and showing white petals

Pepper Saxifrage: Durlston reported this was flowering on July 5

Sea Holly: The first flowers were found on July 1 in the Gunner Point sand dunes on Hayling Island

Sea Knotgrass: A few years ago several hundred plants could be seen on the shingle along the west side of the Chichester Harbour entrance but on July 4 this year I only saw a couple of plants to the north of the Lifeboat Station - I think all those south of it had been covered by shingle piled on the beach to act as an increased flood defence for the area and we will have to wait and see if this tough plant pushes up through the shingle.

Alkanet (*Anchusa officinalis*): Plants of this species (not to be confused with the common Green Alkanet) were flowering at Black Point on Hayling on July 4

Round-headed Rampion: I think the first reported find of this at Nore Down (West Marden) on July 2 was omitted from last week's summary

Ploughman's Spikenard: First report of this in flower comes from Durlston on July 8

Hemp Agrimony: This has been showing pink flowerheads for some time but I did not see or hear of it with open flowers until July 6

Prickly Lettuce: The first flowers for the year were seen in Havant on July 6

Stinking Hawksbeard: This close to extinction plant had produced around 2000 flowers at Dungeness last year after being given care and attention but this year the period of dry weather reduced the number of surviving plants to just 229

OTHER WILDLIFE

White-beaked Dolphin: Two off Lands End on July 6 were the first I have heard of in southern waters this year. The species is common in northern waters of the Atlantic and is most numerous in British waters at this time of year but rarely comes south of Yorkshire in the North Sea or Northern Ireland in the west. The species grows to a little over 8 feet long and has a tall sickle shaped dorsal fin

Harbour Porpoise: A pod of 8 were also off Lands End this week and two more were seen off south Devon

Sunfish: One seen on July 6 off Rame Head (easternmost point of the Cornish south coast near Plymouth)

Hedgehog: A chance encounter with a neighbour in Havant on July 9 gave me the good news that the neighbour has a family of three well grown Hedgehogs in his garden which come to catfood put out for them each night

Water Vole: With dense vegetation along the banks of watercourses which have not recently been cut sightings of Water Voles are currently difficult to get but the RSPB warden at Elmley Marshes in Sheppey (Kent) identified the first he knew of for several months on his reserve this week by the sound of its munching.

WILDLIFE DIARY AND NEWS FOR JULY 4 - 10 (WEEK 27 OF 2011)

Sun 10 July

A personal bonus this afternoon was to find a **Gatekeeper** butterfly in my Havant garden. These are normally to be found everywhere but this year, although they have been reported in various places since June 2, the only site where they seem to have appeared in normal numbers was the Littlington area north of Eastbourne on June 29. Here in the Havant area I am pretty sure I saw one as early as June 20 (on the Langstone South Moors) but I have not seen another until today.

Sat 9 July

Around Langstone

After a week of wet and windy weather followed by family visitors for most of today I was free to enjoy the evening sunset during a brief cycle ride around Langstone. With the tide high there were no birds on the shore line and the vegetation around the pond greatly obstructed my view of the roosting **Egrets** of which there were at least 25 including some juveniles. The only new observation here was of the first **Sea Aster flowers**.

Crossing to the Langstone Harbour side the selection of flowers on the old rail bridge embankment was rewarding and included **Vipers Bugloss**, **Blue Fleabane** and **Eyebright** but the only newcomer to my list was **Wild Parsnip** which had started to open its yellow flowers. While here I heard the piping of a **Common Sandpiper** somewhere along the tideline but I never saw it.

Just one further addition to my flower list came on the way home while passing the Lymbourne stream where it borders the Wade Court grounds just before turning away from the Billy Trail - here the mass of **Lesser Water Parsnip** had put up its white flowers.

Earlier in the day, on the way home from shopping, I had met an acquaintance who lives nearby and who told me that he had **three Hedgehogs living in a wooden box** in his garden. I assume they were a family though no longer babies - I was told that they came to have a meal of cat food each night before setting out on their search for further natural food, and that they had been lucky to avoid being eaten themselves when what must have been a **Fox** had lifted their wooden home and moved it some distance without being able to dislodge the **Hedgehogs** within it.

Mon 4 July

Sandy Point

This morning another single **Swift** flew over my garden in which the hot sun brought out a **Comma** as well as a **Green-veined White**.

After lunch I drove to the Sandy Point area of Hayling, parking in Bosmere Road and making a circuit on foot via the Black Point Sailing Club, the Lifeboat Station, and then around the Sandy Point reserve.

Along Bracklesham Road I noticed that a lot of the **Dovesfoot Cranesbill** flowers in the grass were white and along the causeway many of the **Sea Holly** plants were starting to flower. At the point where you descend to the beach (at the north end of the causeway) there was a good show of the usual **Alkanet** in flower and at the water's edge a lot of **Greater Sea Spurrey** had its large whitish flowers while both **Common** and **Lax Sea Lavender** were on show. At the far end of the path, before the beach becomes private, there was a massive show of **Spanish Gorse** and below these bushes I saw **Sea Rocket (Cakile maritima)** in flower along with a mass of **White Stonecrop** which seems to be much more prominent than usual this year.

Back on the causeway a group of **7 Swifts** flew over as I followed the beach side of the road back south, finding just one plant of **Saltwort** (not yet flowering), a little **Sea Bindweed** and a couple of plants of **Rough Clover** (the white flowered version of the **Knotted Clover** that seems to have been eliminated from the parking areas alongside the causeway). Close to the front of the Lifeboat Station I found some of the very rare **Sea Knotgrass** usually only seen on the shingle south of the Lifeboat Station where on this visit I could find none in what used to be its stronghold (though I didn't make an extensive search). Maybe it has just been covered up by the addition of new shingle for flood defence and will push through but it would be sad for Hampshire to lose this species which grows nowhere else in the county.

While on the shingle I did come across a single isolated plant of **Centaury** in full flower making me wonder if this could be **Seaside Centaury** so I consulted the books back at home. What I found is that it is not impossible for this to be the Seaside plant but I did not notice any basal rosette and I see that there has in the past been inconclusive argument about some plants found at both Sandy and Gunner Point areas so it is probably wise to assume this was a normal plant which had chosen an odd location

Reaching the fence of the nature reserve I turned right to follow it back towards Sandy Point Road but only went as far as the area where **Dwarf Gorse** and both **Bell** and **Ling Heather** grow. The **Dwarf Gorse**, my first for the year, was flowering well (though only just starting) and the **Bell Heather** was fully out though I could find no flowers on the **Ling** yet but I did add **Heath Bedstraw** to my list. As I was heading back towards the beach my eye was caught by **an unexplained vibration of a long Iris type leaf** - I did not see the insect which caused the vibration but a close look at the leaf showed that a **Leaf Cutter Bee** had just cut a small, perfect circle out of the leaf and the vibration must have been caused when it flew away (taking its weight off the leaf) to line its nest tunnel.

Within the Sandy Point reserve many white butterflies, including **Marbled Whites**, were active and along the promenade to the west I looked for **Hoary Stocks** but only saw them in one garden (a few years ago they had established a foothold on the shingle beach). Leaving the seafront I passed **Tree Mallows** which still had

some fresh flowers and next to them was a large patch of **Mint** with its flowers in three 'spires' which I think was **Sharp-leaved Mint** as it had long pointed (not rounded) leaves.

WILDLIFE DIARY AND NEWS FOR JUNE 27 - JULY 3 (WEEK 26 OF 2011)

Late News

First Goosander family at Christchurch Harbour: Two ducklings and a parent appeared in the harbour on July 2, presumably having swum down stream from a nest in either the Avon or the Stour. A female with 9 ducklings had been seen on the Exe estuary as early as June 19

Dorset Bird News reports that there were **45 Spotted Redshanks at Brownsea Island** in Poole Harbour on July 2 (all in summer plumage) but I have no confirmation that this is not a misprint for a more likely figure of '4 or 5'

Here in Havant on July 3 I was surprised to hear the menacing chuckles of a pair of adult **Herring Gulls** which seemed to have taken over the rooftop of the house opposite mine. While these gulls fly over daily I have never seen them land on houses here - maybe next year they will be back to nest and to fill our ears with sounds to replace those of the **Swifts** that have ceased to breed this year (I would much prefer the **Swifts**!)

The British Dragonfly Society reports a **mass emergence of Common Darter dragonflies** in Essex on July 1 and the appearance of the **first Black Darters at Thursley (Surrey)** on June 30 - perhaps the latter are now out in the New Forest?

George Spraggs has a photo of a smart **Gold Triangle moth**, caught in Hayling West Town area on July 2, on his blog at <http://www.bird-watching.co.uk/blog.htm> - below it is the colourful **Orache Moth** which he caught the previous night

Also on July 2 Graeme Lyons went to Beachy Head to search for a very small plant which hides in short turf disguised as **Dwarf Spurge** (only the leaves look similar, not the flowers!). He did not find the plant but did make me aware of a species which has only two sites in mainland Britain (Beachy Head and south Devon). The plant in question is **Small Hare's-ear (Bupleurum baldense)** which flowers earlier than its 'common' relative (Slender Hare's-ear). To get an idea of its size see [http://www.ukwildflowers.com/Web_pages/bupleurum baldense small hares ear.htm](http://www.ukwildflowers.com/Web_pages/bupleurum_baldense_small_hares_ear.htm)

Round-headed Rampion: This attractive dowland speciality was seen on Nore Down near West Warden (north of Stansted Forest) for the first time during the Havant Wildlife Group outing on July 2

BIRDS

Black-necked Grebe: These have been known to breed in Hampshire but while there is not hint of that this year there have been three sightings off the Netherlands this week plus one (an adult in summer plumage) on the north Kent coast at the Oare Marshes near Faversham on June 30

Storm Petrel: These have been appearing for some time off the West Country and as far up channel at Selsey but I was surprised on July 1 to see that one had been seen off Flamborough Head on the Yorkshire coast

Night Heron: On June 19 one turned up in Hertfordshire and on June 29 one caused great excitement to Kent birders by turning up in the Stour Valley east of Canterbury

Little Egret: Reports of increasing numbers at several sites where these do not breed seems to show that post breeding dispersal is now under way. On July 1 the number at Weir Wood near Crowborough had shot up to 17 (from 4 on June 23) while the Lower Test Marshes near Southampton suddenly acquired 14 Egrets and Christchurch Harbour had 23. On July 2 Weston Shore on Southampton Water had 12 which had not been there in June. There is no clear evidence of more birds in the Solent Harbours but at Langstone Pond the young have mostly left their nests for lower perches around the edge of the water.

Glossy Ibis: One spent the day on June 27 in the Kent Stour Valley but does not seem to have been seen anywhere before or after.

Brent Goose: Still no reports of summering birds in Langstone Harbour but one was seen in the Fishbourne Channel of Chichester Harbour on June 19 - in recent years I have come to expect at least half a dozen to stay in Langstone and probably around a dozen in Chichester Harbour. At Hook (Warsash) it seems that one of last year's young has stayed on (though it shows no sign of injury) while in Devon the Exe estuary is hosting singles of both Dark and Pael-bellied birds

Garganey: The number of sightings has dropped off as the males loose their flight feathers but two males were seen in the Warsash area on June 24

Eider: The flock of around **2000 Eiders** which is moulting on the sea off Murcar golf course (just north of Aberdeen) continues to attract other birds (**Common** and **Velvet Scoters** plus rarer **Surf Scoters**) including a second north American rarity to add to the **White-winged Scoter (Melanitta deglandi)** that was reported last week - this time it is a **Black Scoter (Melanitta americana)**

Hen Harrier: A ringtail was an unexpected sight over Beaulieu Heath in the New Forest on June 30

Osprey: Another sign of an 'early autumn' is an Osprey back on the south coast - one has been fishing at Christchurch Harbour daily from June 27 to July 1 at least. Other June Ospreys have been seen at Weir Wood in north Sussex on June 1 with a gap in sightings until June 21 when singles were seen on the Test near Romsey and at Lodmoor on the coast at Weymouth

Peregrine: On June 29 an adult was still taking food to its nest on the cliff of Paulsgrove Chalk Pit at Portsmouth while on June 30 one of the young in the Chichester Cathedral next was flying well enough to chase off a Kestrel which drifted into the local airspace

Quail: Heard at 11 different sites across Dorset, Hampshire and Sussex (plus one in Cornwall) between June 19 to July 1

Stone Curlew: One seen at Lodmoor (Weymouth) on July 1 seems to have been a very early departure (maybe it had encountered disturbance at its breeding site?)

Lapwing: The first to return to the Langstone village shore was seen by me on June 29 but there were already 51 back at Christchurch Harbour that same day

Temminck's Stint: On June 26 singles were in Norfolk and Orkney and a **Pectoral Sandpiper** was also in Norfolk to start the summer 'vagrant' season

Ruff: Unlike the Phalaropes it is the Reeves (female Ruffs) which stay on in the north to rear the young so it is normal for males to start to return to southern England around now and males have been seen in the Kent Stour valley on June 28 and at the Oare Marshes near Faversham on June 29 and 30

Black-tailed Godwit: A good number of non-breeding birds stay with us through the summer but a report of 11 birds in summer plumage at Pulborough Brooks on June 29 (where I have not heard of any summering birds) suggests that some are starting to return from Iceland (perhaps having suffered from volcanic disturbance to their breeding?)

Spotted Redshank: Elmley Marshes on Sheppey had already seen a 'flock' of 8 returning birds last week and Brownsea in Poole Harbour had reported two birds there in June 29 but there was nothing to hint at the flock of 45 birds reported to be back there on July 2

Redshank: A flock of 40+ were at the Exe estuary in Devon on June 27.

Greenshank and **Whimbrel** are also now returning to the south coast

Green Sandpiper: Reports this week show that this species is now present throughout southern England and that numbers are increasing at several sites - Pulborough Brooks had 12 on July 1 and Rye Harbour had 15 on July 2 while one Netherlands site had 73 as early as June 27

Wood Sandpiper: Present at five southern sites this week with three together at Pulborough Brooks on June 28

Common Sandpiper: Returning birds can be seen at many sites with six together at Christchurch Harbour on June 27 and 5 at West Bexington north of Weymouth on July 1

Med Gull: These are just coming to the end of a very successful breeding season in which a not inconsiderable part of the success is due to the parent birds' ability to take chicks from the nests of other gull species in order to feed their own young. Newly fledged young were seen in both Christchurch and Pagham Harbours on June 28 and the families are already moving away from coastal breeding sites -

Med Gulls may find the safety of harbour waters desirable for their night roosts but they always prefer to spend their days (when not tied to nests) on field away from the water, either following the plough during spring and autumn ploughing or catching insects on hot summer days. Even when not with their parents it is possible to distinguish their juveniles from those of Black Headed Gulls by their plumage - Black Headed have bright gingery patches of juvenile plumage where the young Meds are greyish.

Laughing Gull: The first to be reported around British coasts this year was on the Lothian coast in Scotland on June 29

Black-headed Gull: These, along with **Little, Common and Sandwich Terns**, have had a disastrous breeding season on the RSPB reserve islands in Langstone Harbour thanks to high tides in May which washed out nests built too low on the shoreline plus predation of their chicks by both the Med Gulls and Foxes. Those which nested at the Hayling Oysterbeds were more successful, as I think were those based in Pagham Harbour where juveniles began to fledge by June 28 - other juveniles were seen on June 30 by the River Itchen in Southampton and at Bishopstoke on the R Avon the other side of Southampton.

Glaucous Gull: The first winter bird which was at Dungeness last winter is still there on July 1

Sandwich Tern: At Rye Harbour, as in Langstone Harbour, the terns have lost the majority of their chicks to Mediterranean Gulls

Roseate Tern: These have been seen recently at Rye Harbour, Dungeness, Lodmoor and Portland

Little Tern: Just one chick remains this week to reward the efforts of all 50+ pairs that tried to nest in Langstone Harbour this year. I have so far been unable to find out what success the colony has had on the Chesil Bank at Weymouth where round the clock volunteers have been protecting the nests of 17 pairs of Little Terns - even they had failed to stop one Hedgehog getting through and eating one clutch of eggs when the first 10 chick hatched on June 13

Rose-ringed or Ring-necked Parakeet: Just two sightings in Hampshire this year, both on June 27 when what may have been the same bird was seen at both Eastleigh and Lymington (I see there had been one earlier sighting at Lymington on Feb 3)

Swift: A sudden surge of these birds (probably weather induced) brought a report of **8098 of them passing over Spurn Point** in Yorkshire on June 27, and on June 28, just after a belt of heavy rain had passed over my house (and most of England!), I saw my very first two **Swifts** of the year (probably benefitting from flying insects sucked up by the rainbelt). On the following day (after the weather had moved east) Sandwich Bay reported **800 Swifts** overhead

Alpine Swift: At least three of these were among the thousands of Common Swifts over Spurn Point on June 27

Wryneck: A sighting of one on Fair Isle on July 1 may have been a precursor of others travelling south.

Sand Martin: Several reports now indicate that some of these have finished their breeding season and are already heading south while from south Devon comes the first report on July 1 of more than 500 entering a night roost on the coast at Thurlstone Bay

Yellow Wagtail: Another species showing the first signs of autumn passage - on June 27 a few flew over Dungeness and others were seen at Durlston

Common Redstart: Singles at Pulborough Brooks on June 29 and at both Christchurch Harbour and south Devon on June 30 were seemingly heading south

Dartford Warbler: One seen at Portland on June 30 appeared to be a dispersing juvenile

Carrion Crow: The large flock which seems to be present year round at Weston Shore on the east bank of Southampton Water had increased from around 150 to around 250 by July 2 - presumably joined by newly fledged young and their parents now relieved of domestic duties

Starling: A report last week from the Hastings area said that autumn flocks were assembling early this year and this week a report from south Devon on July 1 is of the first autumn reedbed night roost

Crossbill: These have been pouring into this country in small family groups since the start of March (if not earlier) and this week two reports show that Hampshire and West Sussex are immune from these movements. On June 23 one was seen flying south along the River Hamble at Curbridge near Botley and on June 30 a family of four dropped in briefly at the Arundel Wildfowl reserve before flying on north

Corn Bunting: I think numbers in the south of England may be increasing - they do not seem to be endangered in Sussex but it seemed likely that they might soon cease to breed there. This year shows encouraging news of birds singing in the Martin Down area now (June 30) and in early April, at Old Winchester Hill in the Meon Valley on May 21, and at Danebury Hill near Stockbridge on May 31 and June 11

Foreign Birds: I have created this new 'species' under which to record the many fascinating species pictured by Steve Copsey on the Three Amigos website during his world tour on board HMS York. You too can enjoy Steve's pictures by following <http://www.surfbirds.com/blog/amigo>

Vagrants: The latest addition to the Scoter/Eider flock on the sea of Aberdeen (the **American Black Scoter**) was still present on July 1

INSECTS

Dragonflies

Southern Migrant Hawker: The Migrant Hawker which we see every year in numbers is at least partially resident here but this week I have come across a new Southern Migrant Hawker (*Aeshna affinis*) which is an uncommon migrant starting to appear on our shores (one seen in Essex on June 29). It looks similar to the Migrant Hawker but has a distinct bluer tinge to its colouration - for pictures and details see <http://www.british-dragonflies.org.uk/species/southern-migrant-hawker> (the first photo is of one seen by the River Adur when the species first reached Britain in 2006)

Norfolk Hawker: This species is supposedly restricted to Norfolk and Suffolk but this summer one was reported to have been in the Kent Stour Valley from June 4 to 8 at least

Ruddy Darter: The first report came from Oare Marshes in Kent on June 28 and on June 29 more than five were seen in Essex (since then the first **Black Darters** have been seen on June 30 at Thursley in Surrey)

Common Darter: Dungeness had the first sighting on June 24 and since then a mass emergence in Essex has been reported on July 1 (**White-faced Darters** were seen in Cumbria on June 27)

Emerald Damsel (*Lestes sponsa*): The first report came from Graeme Lyons at Graftham in West Sussex on June 24

Southern Emerald Damsel (*Lestes barbarus*): Two migrants were reported in North Kent on June 30

Small Red-eyed Damsel: More than 28 were seen at an Essex site on June 27 - this species first reach Britain in 1999 and can now be found throughout most of England (including Farlington Marshes and Hayling Island)

Dainty Damsel: Last year the only evidence of its presence in Britain were one or more exuvia found on Sheppey. This year one live specimen was found there on June 19 and 2 were present on June 30

Butterflies

Notable reports have been ...

Wood White: Second brood had emerged at Botany Bay in Surrey on June 27

Small Copper: Summer brood have been seen since June 14

Holly Blue: Three sightings of summer brood insects reported on June 26 (and I have seen them in Havant on July 1 and 3)

Purple Emperor: First seems to have been at Bentley Wood (west of Stockbridge) on June 24 and I have now seen reports of them at 11 sites. One interesting find was of a 'small, battered specimen trapped inside the window of an office in the Aldershot area'

Large Tortoiseshell: One reported in Cornwall on June 28

Dark Green fritillary: apparently having a great season with one report of more than 200 in the Friston Forest area north of Eastbourne on June 23 and another of more than 40 in the Worthing area on June 26

Wall Brown: An isolated report of one in the Southwater Country Park at Horsham on June 26 was presumably an early emerge of the summer brood as the first brood have not been seen since June 1

Species on the wing this week have been ...

Small Skipper, Essex Skipper, Lulworth Skipper, Large Skipper, Dingy Skipper, Wood White, Clouded Yellow, Brimstone, Large White, Small White, Green-veined White, Purple Hairstreak, White-letter Hairstreak, Small Copper, Small Blue, Silver Studded Blue, Common Blue, Holly Blue, White Admiral, Purple Emperor, Red Admiral, Painted Lady, Small Tortoiseshell, Large Tortoiseshell, Peacock, Comma, Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary, Dark Green Fritillary, Silver Washed Fritillary, Speckled Wood, Wall Brown, Marbled White, Gatekeeper, Meadow Brown, Small Heath, Ringlet.

Moths

The Lappet: This strangely shaped moth has been photographed by George Spraggs and can be found on his website at

<http://www.bird-watching.co.uk/blog.htm> though I think the moth was actually caught by Simon Wright elsewhere on south Hayling on June 28

July Belle: An early report of this from Dungeness on June 14

Hummingbird Hawkmoth: Along with many other migrants arriving this week there has been a surge in these with a total of 23 reports this week (one from Southwater Country Park at Horsham on June 29 being of more than ten moths seen there in a two hour period). Local sightings around Havant have included one in a Denmead garden on June 26, one on Thorney Island that day, three moths seen in Kingley Vale on June 30 and one at The Kench on Hayling on July 1

Orache Moth: Another colourful moth which you can see on George Spraggs' website

Other Insects

Amblyteles armatorius: This is probably the name of a large black and yellow Ichneumon which landed in my garden on July 1

Stag Beetle: After finding one in Havant on May 21 and hearing of one in Henfield on May 31 the only other report I have come across is also from the Henfield area on June 26 but is a report of finding bits of a Stag Beetle on the ground - I have watched one being devoured by a Magpie in the past.

Great Green Bush Cricket: A sighting of one on Portsdown on June 29 was hopefully of the first fully adult insect

PLANTS

Water Cress: The first flowers that I know of for this species were seen on June 30

Hairy St John's Wort: First flowers found by Brian Fellows at Nore Down near West Marden on June 24

Slender St John's Wort: First flower in Havant Thicket on June 27

Rock Sea Spurrey (*Spergularia rupicola*): Brian Fellows found this on Sinah Common (Hayling Island) on July 1 and if correct it would be a great find for Hayling but I think the plants will need expert examination before they can be accepted as the only previous records of the species anywhere in Hampshire east of Southampton Water have been at Portchester and the differences between species are not easy to determine.

Bastard Toadflax: This seems to having a good year and has by now been found in perhaps half a dozen places on Portsdown and also on the Sussex Downs at Kingley Vale this week

Wild Liquorice: This 'new to me' plant was found flowering in the Arun valley (near Bury) by Graeme Lyons on June 28 and his picture of it can be seen at <http://2.bp.blogspot.com/-d8lvEoHRJc0/Tgi1kZtnh9I/AAAAAAAAABgM/MNMFRehOOT4/s1600/Henbane+053.JPG>

White Melilot: First flowers seen at Broadmarsh in Havant on June 30

Spear-leaved Willowherb: This is a rare Willowherb in Hampshire (the distribution map in the Hants Flora show just 10 locations for it) and although there was a find in the Sinah area of Hayling Island in 1969 I do not expect to find it there today. On June 28 however Graeme Lyons did find some plants near Stedham in Sussex but only managed to photograph one leaf of the plant (during a thunderstorm!)

Upright Hedge Parsley: I think this 'last of the series' Cow Parsley is about to appear and I found one example of it at Broadmarsh on June 30 which I can't claim as a first having already claimed an odd very early plant on Hayling on May 30

Wild Parsnip: The first plant I have seen this year was in the process of unfurling its yellow flowers on Portsdown on June 29

Sea Holly: First flowers found by Brian Fellows in the Gunner Point sand dunes on Hayling on July 1

Henbane: Flowering in West Sussex on 28 June - found by Graeme Lyons

Wild Basil: Flowering on Portsdown on June 29

Skullcap: First flowers found by Brian Fellows on the wall of the stream flowing alongside Lumley Road at Emsworth on June 29

Betony: Flowering on Portsdown on June 29

Sticky Groundsel: Flowering in a Havant garden on July 2

Golden Samphire: First flowers seen near Farlington Marshes on June 30 and more seen at The Kench next day

Shasta Daisy: First flowers at Broadmarsh on June 30

Cotton Thistle: Flowering in a Westbourne garden on June 28 and probably occurring as a garden escape elsewhere locally

OTHER WILDLIFE

Serotine Bat: On the evening of June 27 Nik Knight took his bat detector into the fields east of Langstone Mill Pond and north of Langstone High Street and that both **Serotines** and **Noctules** as well as **Pipistrelles** were active there. Over at Arundel a **Hobby** was seen chasing, but not catching, a **Noctule**

Marsh Frog: Birders at Swalecliffe on the north Kent coast heard **Marsh Frogs** on June 14 and I suspect they have been calling in several places in Kent and in the New Forest on recent warm nights

Grass Snake: A Mallard dosing beside the water at Titchfield Haven this week suddenly hurled itself into the water and a nearby Moorhen led its chicks away to safety when a Grass Snake suddenly appeared where the Mallard had been sleeping.

Sun Fish: These strangely shaped large fish which swim like a large dinner plate balanced on its rim have started to appear in our water with reports of them from the Scillies on June 20 and from Durlston on July 1 (for a photo see <http://www.whitewatercharters.co.uk/images/sunfish/sunfish-100-l.jpg>). Also seen at Durlston this week have been **Smooth-hound Sharks**, **Gurnard**, **Undulate** and **Cuckoo Rays**, **Tope (another small shark species)**, **Bass**, **Mackerel**, **Garfish**, **Tub Gurnard** and **Black Bream**.

Basking Shark: More than 8 of these were seen off Lands End on June 28 with others present around the Scillies

Turtles and Alligators in Florida: Among Steve Copsey's photos taken in the Florida Everglades and appearing on the Three Amigos blog this week are images of **Alligators** plus **Florida Softshell** and **Florida Red-bellied Turtles** (see <http://www.surfbirds.com/blog/amigo/21018/Everglades+National+Park+-+Alligators+and+Turtles%2C+.html>)

Fungi: Still no great outburst but I did see the first of the large boletes in Havant Thicket on June 27 (possibly a **Brown Birch Bolete** and definitely a **Leccinum species** by the black flecking on its stem) and also during the week I came on two examples of the edible **Agaricus bitorquis** which likes to grow in dusty and gravelly soil.

WILDLIFE DIARY AND NEWS FOR JUNE 27 - JULY 3 (WEEK 26 OF 2011)

[Thu 30 June](#)

Broadmarsh

A cycle ride to the Chalk Dock area just east of Farlington Marshes started with a find of some small **Agaricus bitorquis mushrooms** on roadside soil in Havant and this reminds me that a few days ago I had come across some others of the species (which is edible though it usually grows in very dusty or gravelly soil which requires the mushrooms to be cleaned well if you are not to harm your teeth by biting on small stones or tarmac!)

Passing the Brockhampton Stream I saw it was choked with **Water Cress** in flower (a first for my list) and shortly after I was able to add **Shasta Daisy** to my list and at the Broadmarsh west carpark I also found **White Melilot**.

I went as far as the east entrance to Farlington Marshes where the seawall gave me another new flower - my first **Golden Samphire** near some **Upright Hedge Parsley** (the first I have seen since an exceptionally earlier plant seen on May 30). Heading back along the cycleway past the hundreds of **Pyramidal orchids** (two of them pure white) I added my first **Dark Mullein** and **Balm** before climbing the Broadmarsh 'mountain' on which the **Hairy Vetchling** is still in full flower.

On the Hermitage Stream the **summer flock of Swans numbered 36** and out over the harbour a **Sandwich Tern** was calling incessantly - I assume it was a newly fledged youngster reminding its mother of its need for food. Continuing along the shore past Budds Farm I was able to add **Teazel** to my first flowers and up on the mound I could see neither **Swans** nor **Shelduck** on the pools

Note: In Tuesday's entry I wrongly named the very impressive Thistles seen at Westbourne as **Woolly Thistles** whereas they were actually **Cotton Thistles**. I have corrected the entry below and given a link to a photo of the species taken on Mill Hill at Shoreham.

Wed 29 June

Bastard Toadflax on Portsdown

This afternoon I went to Portsdown hoping to find **Bastard Toadflax** on the slopes above the Paulsgrove Chalkpit where I have found it in two places in past years. I parked in the layby beside James Callaghan Drive not far west of the hilltop roundabout and walked west enjoying the mass of wildflowers and butterflies with **Skylark** song above and soon had a couple of new flowers for my year list with **Betony** plus **Squinancywort** (and a surprisingly late **Hairy Violet**) all in flower. At the first of the sites where I have found it in the past I did find one paltry plant of **Bastard Toadflax** before heading on west towards the second site.

En route I decided to vary my usual route and set off over ground where there was no regular path, and in doing so I stumbled on the biggest patch of this tiny plant (the Toadflax) that I have ever come across (approx 45 x 30 cm of the rigid, ground hugging stems with their tiny white stars of flowers).

Reaching the site which usually has two or three plants I counted ten of them before heading back along the path nearest the road where my first **Marjoram** and **Wild Basil** were both in flower with **Wild Parsnip** showing the yellow of its flowers though not yet strictly in flower. To offset the pleasure of these flowers I found myself looking down at a small bird with its wings wide spread and its head looking up at me - it looked in such perfect condition that I had difficulty in realising it was dead until I picked it up and saw that it was a female **Yellowhammer** which must have been hit by a car as it flew across the road.

Back at the layby where I had left my car there had been another minor accident and my own car was surrounded by several others and two ambulances - as far as I could see there had been no serious harm to people or cars but one side of the road had been blocked causing a long tail back of traffic

Tue 28 June

Emsworth and Westbourne

Today's heavy rain and thunder brought my very first Swifts of the year over my garden hunting insects in the wake of the rain.

In the hope there would be no more rain I cycled to Emsworth and had a look at the Bridge Road carpark flower rich fringes where I saw my first fully open **Fleabane** flowers near the **Narrow-leaved Water Plantain**. Nearby a White butterfly settled for long enough for me to be sure it was one of the second brood **Green-veined Whites**. Next stop was at Brook Meadow where I found Brian Fellows investigating what was almost certainly a **Hairy Buttercup** while numerous butterflies were enjoying the warm sunshine - among them several fresh **Commas** and a single **Peacock**.

Cycling on up Lumley Mill Lane I had nearly reached the A27 when an unexpected **White Admiral** flew past heading south (maybe towards Brook Meadow).

Nothing more of great interest along the lane or 'towpath' leading into Westbourne where I turned west along the road leading back to Havant. At the start of this section (just about where the Hampshire county boundary crosses the road) I was impressed by a group of huge **Cotton Thistles (Onopordum acanthium)** just starting to flower on the north side of the road - admittedly these were planted in a garden but they do occur in the wild and are impressive in their greyish white colour and their height which can easily reach 2 metres (see photo of one on Mill Hill at Shoreham at <http://www.glaucus.org.uk/CottonThistle037.jpg>)

Mon 27 June

Havant Thicket

A brief visit to Havant Thicket today gave me my first **White Admirals** and **Ringlets** of the year along with **Slender St John's Wort** and the very first flowers of **Ling Heather** plus my first **large Bolete type fungus** with a black-flecked stem indicating a **Leccinum species** but with a dark brown (almost black) cap which I cannot match with my books.

Another sign of the times was **Purple Moor Grass** coming into flower but **no hint of Dwarf Gorse flowers** yet.

WILDLIFE DIARY AND NEWS FOR JUNE 20 - 26 (WEEK 25 OF 2011)

Late News

Common Fleabane: First flowering of the year in Emsworth yesterday (June 25)

Red-breasted Merganser: A summering female was photographed at Mill Rythe (east shore of Hayling Island) yesterday - see Brian Fellow's website at <http://www.emsworthwildlife.hampshire.org.uk/0-0-0-wildlife-diary.htm>

Osprey: See entry in main text below which includes mention of an almost complete project to attract Ospreys to breed at Arne in Poole Harbour and hints at a similar project to be run in Chichester Harbour (perhaps based on Thorney Island?)

BIRDS

Sooty Shearwater: On June 18 six were seen off Brittany, on June 20 one was seen in the Scillies and on June 23 two were off Polzeath in Cornwall with a single off Lands End on June 25

Manx Shearwater: Plenty of these around, mainly in the West Country (peak counts of 2000 off Cornwall, 1475 off Devon and 1000+ off Portland) but on June 22 Sandy Point on Hayling had 39 with another 3 there in June 24.

Balearic Shearwater: Seven reports during the week but the peak count was only 17 off Christchurch Harbour on June 18

Storm Petrel: I suspect there have been a good number of these in the English Channel during the week but few being seen from coastal sites. Pelagic expeditions from the Scillies found a peak count of 100+ on June 20. Two were seen off Selsey on June 21 and four were off Brittany on June 18. Just one **Wilson's Storm Petrel** was reported off the Scillies on June 20

Night Heron: One in Hertfordshire on June 19

Squacco Heron: The bird which turned up at Dungeness on June 15 was not reported after June 19

Little Egret: I anticipated that juveniles would start to appear in the Langstone area around June 17 but the closure of the foot path around the Langstone Pond meant that all I could be sure of was that some young were still in their nest trees on that day. The only report of a juvenile seemingly out on a fishing trip with its parents came from Weir Wood reservoir in north Sussex on June 23

Great White Egret: The long staying bird at Dungeness was still there on June 23

Grey Heron: A report of a juvenile out with adults came from Farlington Marshes on June 21 but I think juveniles were out with their parents as early as May 15 at the Weir Wood near Crowborough.

White Stork: A couple of reports of singles at Netherland sites on June 18 and 23 qualified as 'remarkable' and I take this as an indication that these birds may already be starting their autumn passage.

Brent Geese: There has been a surprising lack of reports of summering birds in our Solent Harbours so far this year but one **Dark-bellied Bird** was seen by the Fishbourne Channel near Chichester on June 19. Elsewhere one **Dark-bellied bird** at the Exe estuary was joined on June 21 by a **Pale-bellied bird**, another of which has been seen at the Hayle estuary in Cornwall from June 13 to 20

Eider: The summer moult flock of 2,000 birds was still to be seen off Murcar Links a few miles north of Aberdeen on June 22 (with them were still **1200 Common Scoter, 92 Velvet, 3 Surf, and one North American White-winged Scoter**). Down here in the Solent the Eider flock off Lymington increased to 33 (the highest number there since the end of April and the second highest for the year after 39 on Mar 23)

Red-breasted Merganser: Late news is of a female seen off the east coast of Hayling Island on June 25 (maybe the single female that has been summering in Pagham Harbour though that one was reported on June 21 to have an injured wing and the photo of this latest bird (see <http://www.emsworthwildlife.hampshire.org.uk/0-0-356-red-breasted-merg-CV-25.06.11.jpg>) looks fit (and does not have the white patch on the wing that would appear on an eclipse male).

Goosander: One at Dungeness on June 21 was unexpected at this time of year but a female with 9 juveniles on the River Exe in Devon was clearly a local breeder (we will probably soon hear of similar families on the Hampshire Avon)

Honey Buzzard: What are presumably non-breeding birds were seen this week over the Scillies and over Ringmer near Lewes in Sussex

Black Kite: One over Anglesey in Wales on June 20

White-tailed Sea Eagle: 'Our' Hampshire bird from last winter is still in Lincolnshire

Marsh Harrier: Two newly fledged juveniles are now flying at Rye Harbour and one (presumably adult) was seen at Lodmoor (Weymouth) where one or two have been reported in each month of this year (and a pair bred last year though the first mention of young did not come until the end of July) A pair also bred there in 2009, stated to be the first breeding in Dorset for 50 years.

Osprey: Singles were seen at Romsey and Lodmoor on June 21, presumably non-breeding birds, but it may not be long before we do have them breeding in southern England. On Springwatch we saw chicks had hatched in Wales and another three seem to have hatched at Rutland Water (despite the suspected killing of one male there this year and two(?) last year). Also this year Roy Dennis (Osprey expert from the Scottish Highlands) has visited Poole Harbour to support an RSPB project there and you can find out what they are doing there by visiting <http://www.rspb.org.uk/reserves/guide/a/arne/work.aspx> and watching the video at the foot of that page - it includes a mention of a similar project in Chichester Harbour but I have no information as to how far that has got but I would not be surprised if Thorney Island was involved.

Peregrine: The nest on the cliff face of the Paulsgrove chalkpit (south face of Portsdown, Portsmouth) had three chicks in it on June 14 but they may have fledged by now (June 26)

American Golden Plover: Photos of one at Isley Marsh (on the Taw estuary in North Devon) appeared on the Devon Birding website on June 25

Whimbrel: Ten reports from sites all along the south coast this week suggest that a good many birds are already returning from breeding

Curlew: These are also returning to our coasts - on June 22 the Christchurch Harbour website reported seven as 'returning birds heading west.'

Spotted Redshank: 8 were back at the Elmley Marshes on Sheppey by June 18 and a summer plumaged bird was seen at Pett Levels on Rye Bay on June 21

Green Sandpiper: Reports of returning birds come from 8 southern sites this week including 7 seen on Sheppey, 3 at Sandwich Bay, 6 at Rye Harbour plus singles at Pulborough Brooks, Portland and Cornwall

Wood Sandpiper: The first to be reported in the south since mid May was at Dungeness on June 23

Common Sandpiper: Six reports of birds returning south this week come from Dorset, Sussex and Cornwall

Red-necked Phalarope: One was seen at Slimbridge on the River Severn, well south of its breeding grounds, on June 22

Med Gull: A visitor to Rye Harbour on June 23 was impressed by the ease with which Med Gulls could take Black-headed Gull chicks to feed their own young

Lesser Black-backed Gull: The first autumn bird was back the the Emsworth Slipper Mill pond on June 23

Little Tern: Some are already leaving their breeding sites to start their autumn travels - on June 24 eight were on the Lymington shore and on June 25 two were at Christchurch Harbour.

Black Tern: Indications that these are starting thier autumn passage come from reports of one in the Scillies on June 14, one passing Spurn Point on June 18 and one seen off Selsey Bill on June 21

Cuckoo: At Gunner Point on south Hayling on June 21 a Cuckoo flew west low along the shoreline and into the wind giving the impression it was looking for a good place from which to start its journey to Africa

Lesser Spotted Woodpecker: On June 20 a male spent 15 minutes on a bird feeder somewhere in Sussex

Meadow Pipit: Recently I was lamenting the absence of breeding birds on the Langstone South Moors so I was very pleased to hear and see the song flights of an estimated five birds there on June 20

Blyth's Reed Warbler: The first report of this species came from Orkney on June 23

Wood Warbler: Concern was expressed this week about tree felling in the New Forest when at least one tree was seen to be marked for felling despite the likelihood that it would fall a Wood Warbler's nest

Spotted Flycatcher: Very few still breed in south east Hampshire but this week reports of breeding birds came from Hoe Gate north of Wickham in the Meon valley, from the hamlet of Dean just north of Bishops Waltham, and (just across the Sussex boundary) from Stansted House. Other reports of young being fed in and near their nests suggest that those like myself who have not yet seen a Flycatcher will have a chance of doing so as family parties move south and pause at the coast.

Starling: Although we are still in June there was an indication of autumn flocks already building up at Catsfield near Hastings where a flock of 40 seen on June 22 increased to 120 on June 23.

Foreigners: While HMS York is temporarily berthed in the US Naval Base at Key West in Florida Steve Copsey has taken the opportunity to photograph many bird species that he would not see when back at home in Portsmouth. See his entries on the Three Amigos website (<http://www.surfbirds.com/blog/amigo>) dated June 22, 23 and 24. Species which caught my eye were of **Double-Crested Cormorant plus Grackles, Cardinals and Red-winged Blackbirds, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Turkey Vulture and Osprey, Brown Pelican and Magnificent Frigatebird, Eastern Kingbird and Black Vultures plus a Great White Heron**

INSECTS

Dragonflies

Migrant Hawker: First for the year was an immature seen in Devon on June 23

Emerald Damselfly (*Lestes sponsa*): The first I have recorded was one seen by Graeme Lyons at Graffham on the West Sussex Downs on June 24 but a search of the British Dragonfly Society website show the species has been on the wing since June 13 in Norfolk, June 14 (Cumbria), June 19 (Hants - seen by Richard Carpenter in Botley Woods) and June 21 in Cornwall

Dainty Damselfly (*Coenagrion scitulum*): A much rarer first was recorded on Sheppey on June 19 when one of these was found after several hours of searching at a site where two exuvia had been found last year. Photos of this species can be seen at <http://www.british-dragonflies.org.uk/species/dainty-damselfly> followed by a description of its Status and Distribution which reads .. "Found in Essex during 1946–1952, when its known breeding sites were then destroyed during the catastrophic floods of winter 1952–53. Recently (June 2010) re-discovered in Kent, where apparently breeding (two exuviae found)."

Butterflies

Significant Sightings

Essex Skipper: A 'probable' sighting on the Sussex Downs above Storrington on June 14 was not confirmed and the first definite report came from the Botley Woods north of Fareham on June 19. Brian Fellows had the third of the year on Nore Down at West Marden (north of Emsworth) on June 24 and took a photo showing the ink black

tips to its antennae (see <http://www.emsworthwildlife.hampshire.org.uk/0-0-357-essex-skipper-nore-down-24.06.11.jpg>) as it rested on the opening flowers of Common Ragwort.

Lulworth Skipper: On June 24 Durlston had its first but Portland had the very first on June 18 (see http://www.portlandbirdobs.org.uk/wp_lulworth_skipper_4_180611_500.jpg). Looking at this photo you might think it too had black tips to its antennae but its the underside of the antennae which counts and in the Lulworth Skipper this is cream coloured (you can just detect that colour as a sort of halo around the left antenna) while the id is confirmed when you look at the right wing and see a 'Peacock's Feather' pattern with the tips of the 'feathers' showing as a semicircle of lightish streaks near the wingtip and the outline of the feather marked with faint black lines curving back to the body end of the wing

Grizzled Skipper: None this week (last was seen on June 14)

Brimstone: None reported this week - maybe last summer's brood have finished and we should soon be seeing this summer's fresh emergence

Green-veined White: This week's sightings were probably all of the year's second brood which began to emerge on June 14

Small Copper: One seen at Cissbury Ring above Worthing on June 19 was noted as 'pristine' and probably marked the emergence of the main summer brood which normally appears in July

Pearl-bordered Fritillary: None seen since June 4 and the single

Small Pearl-bordered seen this week was probably the last of the year

Species on the wing

Small Skipper, Essex Skipper, Lulworth Skipper, Large Skipper, Dingy Skipper, Large White, Small White, Green-veined White, Purple Hairstreak, White-letter Hairstreak, Small Copper, Small Blue, Silver-studded Blue, Common Blue, White Admiral, Red Admiral, Painted Lady, Small Tortoiseshell, Peacock, Comma, Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary, Dark Green Fritillary, Silver Washed Fritillary, Speckled Wood, Marbled White, Gatekeeper, Small Heath, Ringlet

Moths

Leopard Moth: On June 24 Ralph Cousins, who lives in the Stockheath area of Leigh Park here in Havant, sent me a photo of a moth clinging to the clothes line in his garden and I was able to suggest it was a Leopard Moth based on the distribution of black dots on its otherwise white 'plumage'. See

<http://www.hantsmoths.org.uk/species/0161.php> for photo and detail for this very distinctive moth which I have not seen reported by other observers so far this year (normally it does not appear until July)

Dystebenna stephensi: One of these found at Cowdray Park near Midhurst by Graeme Lyons on June 23 - searching for a photo of it I found that the UK Moths website does not have a photo of it but I found one at

<http://www.suffolkmoths.org.uk/cgi-bin/mos/account.cgi?code=0907>

and found out more about its habits from Mike Wall's Hantmoths site at <http://www.hantsmoths.org.uk/species/0907.php>

Hummingbird Hawkmoth: Just two of this migrants seen this week - one at Portland and the other at Billingshurst near Pulborough

Puss Moth: One freshly emerged specimen photographed hanging on a leaf at the Arundel Wildfowl Trust site on June 18

Cinnabar Moth caterpillars: First report of these yellow and black striped caterpillars feeding on Ragwort is dated June 19

Other Insects

Unknown Bush Cricket (?) in Florida: During his current visit to Florida Steve Copsey took a photo of a colourful insect which is well worth a glance - see <http://www.surfbirds.com/blog/uploads/a/amigo1/30441.jpg>

Hornet Hoverfly (*Volucella zonaria*): An impressive insect that is fully at home in our south coast counties was seen near Horsham on June 21 (first reported for this year)

Chrysotoxum cautum (Hoverfly): On June 24 George Spraggs photographed this 'unknown hoverfly' resting on a leaf at Northney on Hayling Island (see <http://www.bird-watching.co.uk/blog.htm>) and after seeing his picture I discovered its identity on a webpage which has a lot of info about hoverflies including how to distinguish males from females by looking at the size and separation between their eyes (males have bigger eyes which meet in the centre of the head, females are smaller and distinctly separated). See

<http://www.microscopy-uk.org.uk/mag/artmay07/cd-hoverflies.html>

Other hoverflies: On June 23 Graeme Lyons found a rare Hoverfly called **Xylota florum** inside the Sussex Wildlife Trust HQ at Woods Mill (Henfield) and on June 25 Sam Smith at Rye Harbour found another unusual hoverfly called **Anasimyia contracta** which occurs with Bulrushes (See <http://rxwildlife.org.uk/2011/06/25/castle-water-137/#more-14968> - on this same page the photo of the hoverfly is followed by one of a **Dark Bush Cricket nymph** showing the light coloured band along its 'spine' which appears to be a feature distinguish a nymph from an adult of the species)

Robin's Pincushion gall caused by **Diplolepis rosae Gall Wasp**: This relatively common and easily spotted gall was photographed for the first time this year on Harting Down by Colin Vanner on June 19 (see

<http://www.emsworthwildlife.hampshire.org.uk/0-0-359-rose-bedeguar-gall-CV-19.06.11.jpg>)

Other Beetles found by Graeme Lyons this week: See Graeme's blog at <http://analternativenaturalhistoryofsussex.blogspot.com/> for the names of several beetle species including **Tomoxia bucephala** whose larvae live on deadwood but which cannot bore their own way into trees and have to rely on the 'tunnels' made by other species to reach their food (perhaps not an ideal arrangement).

Harlequin Ladybird: One of the reasons why this recent invader is not liked in England is its penchant for eating our native ladybird species and this week George Spraggs has captured one in the act of having such a meal (albeit of a Ladybird larva rather than an adult). See the entry for June 24 on <http://www.bird-watching.co.uk/blog.htm> Incidentally all the entries on this blog have a slight problem in that a small section of the text or picture is obscured by part of a Web Error Message saying that "The webpage cannot be displayed" and in the case of this entry it obscures part of the George's text about weather at the coming weekend - if this frustrates you it is possible to reveal the text by using your mouse to highlight the area of the visible and hidden text then using CTRL+C to copy it and CTRL+V to paste it into a text box (e.g. Wordpad, Notepad or other Word Processing document) when the text will appear without the obscuring error message.

Strangalia maculata Longhorn Beetle: Unlike the unusual beetle species reported by Graeme Lyons this fairly common and easily identified species was seen this week at the Hook Heath Nature Reserve at the north foot of Portsdown. If you are not familiar with the species see http://www.adriandaviesimaging.com/photo_6529115.html

Dark Bush Cricket: Brian Fellows captured an image of an adult on Brook Meadow at Emsworth this week. It can be difficult to distinguish adults and nymphs of these Bush Cricket species but in this case the all dark adult (see <http://www.emsworthwildlife.hampshire.org.uk/0-0-361-dark-bush-cricket-bm-19.06.11.jpg>) is easily distinguished from the nymph which has a pale stripe down its 'spine' (see <http://rxwildlife.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2011/06/rxdarkbushdsc03226.jpg>

PLANTS

Old Man's Beard (aka Traveller's Joy): This had started to flower in Havant on June 21

Field Pepperwort: I have had doubts about my own identification of this plant earlier this year and this week a photo taken by Graeme Lyons at Friston near Eastbourne gives me further doubts as I expect Field Pepperwort to have lance shaped leaves which grow pressed up against the stem (as with *Arabis hirsuta* - Hairy Rock Cress) where Graeme's plant has broader leaves held out at right angles to the stem. See <http://2.bp.blogspot.com/-2PhPAzg9Ffs/TgNnTjEr8BI/AAAAAAAAABfs/Y1RCEiR2iYw/s1600/Friston+012.JPG> and compare the plant shown to the seven photos at

http://www.aphotoflora.com/d_lepidium_campestre_field_pepperwort.html (to display the different images run your cursor over the panel to the left of the main photo). My conclusion is that this species is variable in appearance and changes with age

Hairy St John's Wort: First flowers for the year found by Brian Fellows on June 24 at Nore Down

Proliferous Pink: During the years 2003 to 2006 a plant thought to be **Childing Pink** grew at just one site on Sinah Common (South Hayling) but it displayed differences from the Childing Pinks which grew on the Worthing shore (the only other known site for the species) and it was re-identified as **Proliferous Pink** - at that time only found in East Anglia. In 2007, after clearance of Gorse to 'conserve' this rarity, the plants appeared to vanish so I was delighted on June 21 to find some 30 stems of these plants (more than I ever saw in the past) back in the original area but the plants were long gone over so I cannot be positive that these 'husks' were genuine **Proliferous Pinks** (though I am personally convinced by the size and shape of these 'husks' that they were).

Rose Campion (*Lychnis coronaria*): Plenty of these on the sandy ground south of the Hayling Golf Course on June 21

Nottingham Catchfly: Also seen at its usual site on the Hayling Beachlands near Gunner Point on June 21 and in greater numbers than usual (estimated 70 plants, some still in flower but mostly gone over)

Night Flowering Catchfly (*Silene noctiflora*): Seen 'somewhere in Sussex' by Gaeme Lyons on June 19

Bastard Toadflax: Although this has been found in flower in both Sussex and Dorset since May 25 I have failed to find it on Portsdown so I was pleased to see that John Goodspeed has seen it in flower at a regular site above the Paulsgrove chalkpit on June 24

Little Robin: On June 21 I managed to find just one plant on the shingle of Hayling Beach south of the Golf Course

Dyer's Greenweed: Two finds this week - on June 19 I found just two plants flowering beside the Lavant Stream alongside the Bartons Road playing fields on the northwest fringe of Leigh Park here in Havant and on June 23 John Goodspeed found plenty in flower on Northney Marsh fields accessed by the permissive path from St Peter's Road in Northney village to the east sea wall of north Hayling.

Hare's Foot Clover: Freshly flowering on the sandy South Hayling shore on June 21

Bladder Senna: A single woody stemmed bush of this yellow flowered plant has grown for many years beside the path (about two thirds of the way from Ferry Road to the shingle) up the eastern side of The Kench at South Hayling. This was flowering on June 21 and will later have translucent 'bladder' seed pods.

Yellow-flowered Strawberry: Both flowers and fruit could be seen at the Juniper Square site in Havant on June 20

White Stonecrop: This is not uncommon in the Warblington cemetery (presumably planted on graves) but a couple of plants which I found on June 21 were on the sand dunes near Hayling's Gunner Point and might be 'native'

English Stonecrop: Masses of this flowering on the Gunner Point area sandy grassland on June 21

Evening Primrose: Many of these plants were flowering for the first time at South Hayling on June 21

Pepper Saxifrage: Reported as flowering at Durlston on June 20

Rock Samphire: Flowering for the first time this year on the South Moors sea wall at Langstone on June 20

Bell Heather: In full flower on the Hayling Golf Course close to Ferry Road at The Kench on June 21

Lax Sea Lavender: First flowers seen in the saltings east of Nore Barn at Emsworth on June 21

Brookweed: This was already in flower in the Warblington SSSI on May 24 but I was interested to see that it still grows at the Langstone South Moors (close to the Tamarisk pool)

Sea Bindweed: This was in flower in many places on the south west Hayling shore sands on June 21

Cocks Eggs (*Salpichroa organifolia*): Masses in flower at the usual Sinah Common site (opposite the south end of Staunton Avenue on Hayling) despite earlier close mowing of the area

Deadly Nightshade: First report of flowering comes from Brian Fellows on Nore Barn near West Marden (north of Stansted Forest) on June 24. If anyone still thinks this another name for Bittersweet (or Woody) Nightshade they should see Brian's photo at

<http://www.emsworthwildlife.hampshire.org.uk/0-0-357-deadly-nightshade-nore-d-own-24.06.11.jpg>

Dark Mullein: First flowers seen in Emsworth pm June 23

Pale Toadflax: This was already flowering by June 21 at its only South Hayling site

Marjoram: Already in flower at Nore Down near West Marden on June 24

Marsh Woundwort: Flowering at the Langstone South Moors on June 20

Cut-leaved Self Heal (*Prunella laciniata*): Flowering at its only Sussex site on a roadside near Brighton on June 18 - found by Graeme Lyons

Wood Sage: Just starting to flower on South Hayling on June 21

Nettle-leaved Bellflower: First report of this in flower comes from Nore Down near West Marden on June 24

Clustered Bellflower: First report of this in flower comes from Nore Down near West Marden on June 24

Sheep's Bit: This was newly out at South Hayling on June 21

Danewort: This is probably flowering now at its Havant site alongside the Hayling Billy trail passing the end of Grove Road but it was well in flower at an unspecified Sussex site where it was seen by Graeme Lyons on June 19

Narrow-fruited Cornsalad (*Valerianella dentata*): This whitish flowered downland species was found by Peter Raby in the Fort Widley area of Portsdown on June 22

Heath Bedstraw: First flowering seen on Sinah Common near the Cock's Eggs site on June 21

Wild Madder: Flowering at Durlston on June 19

Squinancywort: Flowering at Durlston on June 20

Field Scabious: Flowering at Durlston on June 23 and at Nore Down near West Marden on June 24

Marsh Ragwort: Seen flowering at two Havant sites on June 19 and 20

Lizard Orchid: Flowering at an East Sussex site on June 19

Southern Marsh Orchid: The annual count of the plants flowering in the Langstone South Moors 'orchid field' found 8805 plants on June 25, not quite as high as last year's total of 9234 but way above the annual average of counts since 1995 which have ranged from 6763 down to 491. Although I do not have exact figures I recall a peak count of around 8000 before the site was partially destroyed by the construction of what is now Southern Electric offices on Penner Road so that regrettable change to the habitat has not destroyed the site!

OTHER WILDLIFE

Florida Wildlife: Steve Copsey has been in Florida this week having some time off while HMS York is visiting Key West. As usual his photos taken there are well worth seeing - go to <http://www.surfbirds.com/blog/amigo> to see his entry for June

25 and his pictures of **American Alligator**, **Florida Softshell Turtle**, **Florida Red-bellied Turtle** and **Key Deer** (a subspecies of **White-tailed Deer**)

Durlston Marine Life: The Durlston Rangers report for June 22 lists some of the fish and other marine life now on offer there including **Undulate** and **Cuckoo Ray**, plus **Tope**, **Bass**, **Mackerel**, **Garfish**, **Gurnard**, **Tub Gurnard** and **Black Bream**

Scillies Marine Life: Pelagic boat trips have this week seen the first **Sunfish** of the year and tagged more **Blue Sharks**

Fungi: No doubt a good many species have responded to the rainfall but the only one that I saw was **Dung Roundhead** in several places on the Langstone South Moors

WILDLIFE DIARY AND NEWS FOR JUNE 20 - 26 (WEEK 25 OF 2011)

Tue 21 June

West Hayling and Sinah Common in the sunshine

I had to wait until 3:30pm for the forecast sunshine but the sun then stayed out for the 3 hours of my cycle ride to Sinah Common and back and I enjoyed a bonanza of finds including my first **Little Terns** of the year (two over Langstone Harbour entrance channel) and my first sighting of a **Cuckoo** (flying west low over the Sinah beach - maybe heading towards a favourable headland and wind for its channel crossing?). My only other bird entry in my notebook came as I passed the Oysterbeds on the Coastal Path and was told by the photographer who had shown me a **juvenile Little Owl** there exactly a week ago that today he had seen **four of them** flying in a group though he was unable to distinguish between adults and juveniles.

On the way south I added flowering **Old Man's Beard** (aka **Traveller's Joy**) to my year list and noticed just one puny **Bee Orchid**. Nothing more of great interest until I reached The Kench where, a little more than half way up the eastern side, the long established **Bladder Senna** bush was already showing its yellow flowers, and back on the Ferry Road I found **Bell Heather** in flower just within the Golf Course with plenty of my first **Evening Primrose** flowers out on the roadside.

Turning into the harbour entrance carpark I found the first of many **Sea Bindweed** flowers by the Golf Course fence where the **Tree Lupins** had almost all finished flowering since my last visit here in mid April (though I was eventually able to tick a 'first flower'). Also seen here were the first of many **Sheep's Bit** flowers.

Next stop was in the first of the sand dunes behind the mass of Tamarisks and here I added both **Hare's Tail grass** and **Hare's Foot Clover** (the grass was not a 'first' as I had come across an out of place clump near the Havant Bus Station on June 16). A surprise here was to find **White Stonecrop** in flower - I have already seen it on graves in Warblington Cemetery where it was presumably planted in the past but this find in the sand dunes was possibly a native. Also seen in the dunes was **Sea Holly**, though none was yet in flower.

Moving round to the grass and shingle south of the Golf Course I had more good finds including an estimated 70 plants of **Nottingham Catchfly** though very few still had flowers. Two plants that were more colourful and more numerous were the **English Stonecrop** (literally everywhere) and **Rose Campion** (fewer in number but even more eye-catching). A search of the shingle found one plant of **Little**

Robin which had had many flowers but only two were left to show me their yellow anthers and an equally diligent search was needed to find one of the thousands of **Sea Kale** plants which still had a few flowers. Just before leaving this area (just outside the practice driving range of the Golf Course) were both a good show of **Yellow-Horned Poppy** and a single (very out of place) stunted plant of **Yellow Iris** with a flower!

At the east end of the mini-golf course (near the public toilet block) **Pale Toadflax** was already in flower and beyond the Skate Park (the new sign attracting the youngsters to it is written in Graffiti lettering as 'SK8 PARK') I headed for the area where **Proliferous Pinks** used to grow. I last found the plants in 2007 and assumed that they were now extinct at this site so it was a very pleasing surprise to find some 30 plants (long past flowering but bearing the remains of flowerheads on the thin vertical stems) to show that **the colony has survived** and is flourishing - in 2005 I found at least 42 plants starting to flower on May 26.

Just two more finds here - one was a mass flowering of **Cocks Eggs** out on the open ground which had been 'close mown' earlier in the year, the other was a new find in the same area of **Heath Bedstraw**.

I did not look for further plants on my way north up the Coastal Path but while passing Stoke Bay the evening sunlight lit up the flowers of my first **Rosebay Willowherb** of the year to round off a very good outing.

Mon 20 June

A walk to the South Moors

Appropriately for the start of Wimbledon I came on Strawberry fruits in Juniper Square at the start of this outing but they were on the **Yellow Flowered Strawberry** plants that are described on the Southampton Natural History Society website as 'utterly tasteless' (see <http://www.sotonnhs.org/alif070.asp> for photos). Still in Juniper Square the recent rain had encouraged much wildflower growth including the **Small Flowered Cranesbill** and while making my way down the Langbrook stream I came on two more garden escapes illustrated on the Southampton NHS site (scroll down the plant names on the left side of the page link given above to find them) - one was **French Cranesbill**, the other my first **Monkey Flower** of the year growing in the stream by the 'Mallards' housing.

Coming out into the grassland of the South Moors I left the normal path and followed the fenceline on my right round to the trees and brambles growing along the small stream which drains the Moors into the 'Tamarisk Pool' near the sea wall. Here I found more **Marsh Ragwort** starting to flower (first found yesterday and noted in the prefix to my Weekly Summary) and where the bushes came to an end at the wire fence which forced me back to the normal path I was delighted to find several tall flowering plants of **Marsh Woundwort** pushing up through the brambles.

Following the stream down to the Tamarisk Pool - something I have not done for several years - I was pleased to find **Brookweed** still grows there but even more pleased to see and hear **Meadow Pipits** (perhaps five of them) about which I had commented on June 6 that this seemed to be the first year in which I had (up to that date) seen no evidence that they were breeding there. Another find induced by the recent rain was a couple of clusters of **Dung Roundhead** fungi.

Next I ventured a short distance into the field that I still think of as the IBM Sports Field hoping to see a **Bee Orchid** where I have found them in the past - no luck with

that I did see at least five **Marbled White** butterflies and what I think was my first **Gatekeeper** though I did not see the upper wings when it settled - my guess at its identity was based on its rapid flight and its association with the hedgerow shrubs rather than the open grassland where several **Meadow Browns** were seen. Emerging from the field and taking the path to Southmoor Lane I passed a settled **Large Skipper** and close to it saw the bright orange, unmarked upper wings of my first **Small Skipper**.

Heading uphill to the Budds Farm pools view point I noted that the **Kestrel** nest box was empty though I later discovered that some of the young were still hidden in the tree by the tremendous noise they generated when one of the adults flew in with some food.

On the pools I saw just **one small cygnet** with no other sign of the rest of its family - before leaving I did spot the pair of **adult Swans** but never saw the **four other cygnets**. Among the usual suspects on the pools were two adult **Shelduck** still in waiting mode (hopefully they have sitting mates which will soon bring ducklings out of their nest tunnels). A surprise sight on the wooden 'table' at the view point was a **Ladybird larva** walking along the woodwork, probably looking for a suitable place to pupate - less unexpected was a **family of Long-tailed Tits** moving past me through the trees. Elsewhere on the mound I noticed a **Small Toroiseshell**.

Heading home along the South Moors seawall I found lots of **Lesser Sea Spurrey** in flower (Brian Fellows says he has difficulty separating this from the **Greater Sea Spurrey** and I admit I may be missing a trick here but I find an obvious difference in both size and colour between these two - **Lesser** has tiny rose pink/mauve flowers while the flowers of **Greater** are twice as large and look very white with just a tinge of mauve). A new flower on the outside of the seawall towards the east end was **Rock Samphire** but that was the last noteworthy observation for this outing.

WILDLIFE DIARY AND NEWS FOR JUNE 13 - 19 (WEEK 24 OF 2011)

Late News

With sunshine this morning I made a quick cycle trip to the Bartons Road playing fields, adding two new plants to my 'first flowering' list. The first was **Lesser Burdock** growing beside New Lane, the second was **Marsh Ragwort** on the banks of the Lavant stream where it runs between the Bartons Road playing fields and the railway. Back in my own road I was able to add a third plant with flowers on the **Tree of Heaven** towering over Glenhurst School from the next door garden.

Back at home I made a quick scan of my 'favourites' on the internet and came up with the following items posted since my final scan yesterday and so not yet in the database from which the main summary is taken.

Glowworm: I already have reports of these seen glowing at Durlston on May 13, on Portsdown on May 31 and in Broadwater Forest near Crowborough on June 4 but none of these stated whether the glow was coming from larvae or mature beetles and that is still the case with a report of them in Parkhurst Forest on the IoW seen last night (June 18)

Lulworth Skipper: The first report I know of for this year was of one at Portland on June 18

Wild Madder: The Durlston Ranger's report for today (June 19) says that **Hemp Agrimony** flowers are open (first I know of) and more interestingly that **Wild Madder** is in flower. This is an uncommon relative of the very common **Field Madder**, is slightly 'bigger and bolder' and has whitish green flowers to be followed by black berries. It grows on exposed chalk at coastal sites and so is only found in Hampshire on the New Forest shoreline but it is plentiful around the Isle of Wight

Cut-leaved Self-Heal: This is thought to be extinct in Hampshire (Stace marks the species with a single R to indicate it is found in less than 100 Ten Km squares in south and central England) but it was found and photographed yesterday (June 18) by Graeme Lyons on a roadside near Brighton (its only known Sussex site). See Graeme's blog at <http://analternativenaturalhistoryofsussex.blogspot.com/> for this find and the **Large Thyme** which he found on Friday (June 17)

Puss Moth: Although there was an early report of this moth from Kent at the end of April it is well worth a look at the June 18 entry on <http://www.sussex-butterflies.org.uk/sightings.html> for a magnificent photo of one seen at Arundel (not at a moth trap) showing 'red veins' in its otherwise black and white 'plumage' that I have not noticed in other photos of the species.

BIRDS

Sooty Shearwater: These birds breed in the southern hemisphere and so are now 'wintering' in the northern hemisphere where we do not normally see them from coasts until the August to October period when they are heading back south but this year's unusual weather patterns have brought a few of them to our shores from the start of May. The first six reports (from May 7 to June 16) were all of singles and most were off Devon and Cornwall though June brought two reports from Portland and on June 14 one was found in very poor health on the shore close to Titchfield Haven - although it was taken into care it died next day. It seems we may see more casualties as on June 17 eleven of the birds were seen off Berry Head (just south of Torbay in Devon), and three were seen from Portland, all heading west and probably victims of the severe storms which have been hitting the north of Scotland and which have probably been ejecting battered and hungry **Shearwaters** into the North Sea from which they have been trying to make their way back to the normally calm (in June) north Atlantic, but forcing the birds to take the long way round the British Isles in order to do so.

If you want to extend your knowledge of other sea birds which are normally never seen in British inshore waters do check out Steve Copsey's blog entries on the Three Amigos site at <http://www.surfbirds.com/blog/amigo> Steve, on HMS York, has been taking photos of birds we do not normally see since HMS York Portsmouth on Feb 22, crossed the Equator on Mar 18 and reached the Falklands on Apr 10. Since then he has rounded Cape Horn, sailed up the Pacific coast of South America and then through the Panama Canal. On June 18 he was photographing birds on a Jamaican golf course.

Manx Shearwater: Numbers of these seen off south Devon have shot up this week with peaks at Berry Head of 1394 on June 12 and 2884 on June 17. I assume that many of these are birds on extended fishing trips to feed young in burrows on

Skokholm but have no evidence for this. Berry Head has also seen a sharp rise in the number of **Balearic Shearwater** with a peak of 56 passing on June 17

Storm Petrel: Peak counts this week have both come from boats rather than the coast - on June 10 more than 50 were seen off Start Point in south Devon and on June 13 a pelagic trip from the Scillies recorded more than 60 (with one **Wilson's Storm Petrel**). Some do come inshore and one was seen from Selsey Bill on June 12 while Portland succeeded in catching three on the night of June 13 after luring them ashore with tape recordings.

Squacco Heron: The first I am aware of for the year arrived at the Dungeness RSPB site on June 15 and was still there on June 17

Pale Bellied Brent: In mid-April the birds which had been wintering on the shore of the Bay of Biscay stopped off on the Dorset and Devon coast (214 in Weymouth Bay and 274+ in the Exe estuary on Apr 16) on their way back to Greenland/Canada, provoking comment that these numbers were higher than usual. Since then it seems that at least one is thinking of staying for the summer at the Hayle estuary on the north Cornish coast (still there on June 16) and on June 15 Lee Evans commented - "**Many unseasonal PALE-BELLIED BRENT GEESE have been seen around our coastlines of late**". Just before this, on June 9, Simon Woolley saw one out of the water feeding on the Titchfield Haven foreshore (giving a view of the white underparts) though it soon flew off towards the Isle of Wight and has not been reported again. On June 11 a group of three **Brent** were photographed in Tipner Lake at Portsmouth which were originally misidentified (by John Clark) as **Pale Bellied** though Andy Johnson quickly corrected this to **Dark Bellied**.

Tufted Duck: A pair of these have been resident on Langstone Pond this spring and I am half expecting to see their ducklings in the near future following the first report of a Tufted Duck with 9 ducklings seen in Devon on June 11.

Eider: Not local but impressive is news of a moulting flock of around **2000 Eider** off the Aberdeen coast in Scotland. Twitchers are being drawn to this area as there are also **1200 Common Scoter** there and among them is just one **North American White-winged Scoter** which (if accepted) will be a first for Britain. (See <http://birdingfrontiers.com/2011/06/12/american-white-winged-scooter/>) To add spice to this assembly of birds there are also **90 Velvet Scoter** and 4 **Surf Scoters** there and a single **King Eider** in the Ythan estuary (just north of Aberdeen).

Red-breasted Merganser: The last of the wintering birds left us at the start of May (one past Seaford on May 5) and a pair seen off the Hayling Oysterbeds on May 7 were probably intending to stay for the summer. No more sightings were reported until June 13 when a pair were at Ferrybridge (Weymouth), followed by a female in Pagham Harbour on June 14 and then on June 17 the pair re-appeared off the Oysterbeds. I presume something triggered this sudden burst of re-appearances (maybe a last look at the outside world before their summer moult forces them into hiding?) but cannot be sure what it was that brought these sightings.

Peregrine: A report of two juveniles over Christchurch Harbour on June 11 without an adult escort is a reminder that other young birds, such as the four from the

Chichester Cathedral nest, will soon be leaving their nest sites and learning to fend for themselves.

Quail: A bird was heard at a new site for the year on June 11 when one was reported at Old Winchester Hill in the Meon valley

Spotted Crake: The first to be reported in England this year (other than a single report from Warwickshire on Apr 5) was in Orkney on June 11 - presumably an early autumn passage bird.

Coot: Another indication of autumn came from Emsworth this week when **28 Coot** appeared near the entrance to the marina on June 16

Avocet: No news so far of breeding in Hampshire or Sussex but June 10 brought news of more than 80 chicks at Elmley on Sheppey

Ringed Plover: On June 16 a **Heron** landed on the north Kent shore at Reculver close to a **Ringed Plover nest** in which four chicks had recently been rung. Thanks to a prolonged 'broken wing' display by one the **Plover** parents the **Heron** was drawn away from the nest and the chicks survived.

Greater Sand Plover: A sighting of a smart adult on June 17 at Dornoch on the Scottish coast in Sutherland has been adding to the travel expenses of British twitchers

Whimbrel: Although a few have remained in southern England I am pretty sure that some of this weeks sightings (e.g. six at Dawlish in Devon on June 12, four at Landulph in Cornwall on June 11 when two were at Christchurch Harbour - the first there this year) strongly suggest that autumn passage is starting.

Spotted Redshank: Seven 'black' breeding plumaged birds at Elmley on Sheppey and one on the Lymington shore, both on June 15, seem to have been the first autumn passage birds (this was supported by the appearance of three more in the Netherlands that day)

Green Sandpiper: These too are now returning to southern England with sightings of new birds at Slapton in Devon (one on June 12), Lytchett Bay in Poole Harbour (one on June 13), Weir Wood reservoir in north Sussex (one on June 14), Elmley marshes on Sheppey (three on June 15), Testwood Lakes near Southampton (three on June 16), plus singles at Longparish near Andover and at Rye Harbour (both June 18)

Common Sandpiper: One was back at Pagham Harbour on June 16 - the first there since Apr 30.

Phalaropes: **Red-necked** females seen this week were in Ireland (two in Wexford on June 9) plus singles in both Leicestershire and Worcestershire on June 10. More surprising was **Grey Phalarope** in full breeding plumage on the Ythan estuary in Aberdeenshire on June 17

Common Gull: None had been reported from Hampshire since May 4 until one was seen in Southampton Water on June 18 and claimed as the first autumn bird

Herring Gull: Reports of pure white individuals have been made for a good many years (many causing confusion with **Iceland Gulls**) and one even acquired the pseudo name of *Larus argentatus bonserii* when Richard Bonser was a student at Southampton University in 2002. Latest in this long line of 'white Herring Gulls' was captured on camera at Christchurch Harbour on June 18 and can be seen with the entry for that day at <http://www.chog.org.uk/Pages/Sightings.htm>

Little Tern: The first ten chicks hatched at the Chesil Bank site (Weymouth) on June 13

Guillemot: The first chicks were jumping from the nest ledges at Durlston on Jun 16 to join their parents on the sea

Tawny Owl: One was seen at Furze Hill (South Gorley just north of Ringwood) attempting to catch **Pipistrelle Bats** in flight - despite some great aerobatics the owl failed to make a catch.

Roller: The first to be reported in Britain this year was seen in Suffolk on June 13 and a second was reported from the Isle Mull in Scotland on June 16

Short-toed Lark: One was on Portland from Apr 3 to 11 and one was on St Mary's in the Scillies from May 13 to 20. There was also a brief sighting in Cornwall on Apr 9. Now there has been an equally brief sighting at Christchurch Harbour on June 16

Sand Martin: These are usually among the first of our summer visitors to start to head south and this year the first to depart were four seen leaving Portland on June 14 (many more are still with us caring for young)

Nightingale: Several were still singing at Pulborough Brooks on June 13

Mistle Thrush: The few that have bred in southern England this year seem to have had good breeding success and one indication of this has been a report of an 'autumn flock' of 16 birds on Stockbridge Down near the River Test west of Winchester on June 14

Marsh Warbler: One was heard singing at Weir Wood reservoir on June 17 and may be still there. Another was in Norfolk on June 12 and other reports came from Shetland on June 11.

White-throated Robin: The bird which turned up at Hartlepool (possibly having flown from Turkey) on June 6 to become the third for Britain was still there on June 10 but has not been reported since.

Nuthatch: While these are very common in woodland they seem to have an aversion to the sea and are rarely seen within half a mile of the coastline so the sighting of one at Brook Meadow in Emsworth on June 14 was a bonus for that site

Red-backed Shrike: Another sign of autumn has been three reports of these birds this month. A male was at Dungeness on June 7 (it may have been lurking in that area after sightings there on May 9 and 10), an adult female was on the Essex coast on June 11 and a pair arrived in the Orkneys on North Ronaldsay on June 17

Rose Coloured Starling: The adult first seen in north Devon on June 7 was still there on June 18

Corn Bunting: Still holding on as a breeding species in Sussex singing birds were heard at three West Sussex downland sites on June 14

INSECTS

Dragonflies

The only item of note this week is confirmation that **Emperor dragonflies** are now out at two local sites - Brook Meadow at Emsworth and the IBM Lake at Portsmouth

Butterflies

Noteworthy reports:

Essex Skipper: First and so far only report is of one seen on June 14 on the Sussex Downs above Storrington (and which flew off before it could be recorded on camera)

Lulworth Skipper: The first for the year was seen on Portland on June 18

Dingy Skipper: None reported this week for the first week since they appeared on Apr 8

Green Veined White: Fresh second brood specimens seen on June 14

Holly Blue: None reported this week

Peacock: No butterflies reported but 200 caterpillars were found at a site near Fareham

Comma: Several of the bright orange Hutchinsonii summer brood seen

Pearl-bordered Fritillary: None seen this week

Glanville Fritillary: None seen this week

Ringlet: One seen at Brook Meadow on June 16 was surprisingly battered for a freshly emerged specimen - probably the result of emerging during a period of high winds. If we accept the record of one on Hazeley Heath in north Hampshire (reported on the exceptionally early date of May 29) the Emsworth sighting was the third for Hampshire and earlier than any sighting reported in Sussex (a report on the Sussex butterfly website of a sighting on June 15 was in the Botany Bay woodland near Chiddingfold in Surrey)

Full list of species reported this week:

Small Skipper, Essex Skipper, Lulworth Skipper, Large Skipper, Grizzled Skipper, Brimstone, Large White, Small White, Green Veined White, Purple Hairstreak, White Letter Hairstreak, Small Copper, Small Blue, Silver Studded Blue, Brown Argus, Common Blue, Adonis Blue, White Admiral, Red Admiral, Painted Lady, Small Tortoiseshell, Comma, Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary, Dark Green Fritillary,

Silver Washed Fritillary, Speckled Wood, Marbled White, Gatekeeper, Meadow Brown, Small Heath, Ringlet

Moths

Five Spot Burnet: A report of 'numerous Five Spot Burnets' at a site a little south east of Henfield in West Sussex on June 18 contradicts the UK Moths website which says that Five Spots are only to be found in the west country and in Wales and I suspect that the moths seen at Henfield were the **Narrow Bordered Five Spots**

Orange-blotch Cosmet (*Chrysoclista lathamella*): A photo of one in the Eastbourne area on June 11 turns out to be only the second Sussex record, the first being back in 1880

Pine Hawkmoth: First for the year was found on Heyshott Common near Midhurst on June 11 and the species was taken by George Spraggs on Hayling on June 16

Hummingbird Hawkmoth: Four more reports this week bring the total of reports which I have seen for the year to just 26 so no massive invasion of migrants yet!

Other Insects

Hornet Robber Fly (*Asilus crabroniformis*): A noteworthy report of one seen carrying a moth which it had just caught came from Portsdown on June 11

Ruby-tailed Wasp: One seen by George Spraggs on Hayling on June 9

Hornet: One seen in the Staunton Country Park at Havant on June 11

Bilberry or Mountain Bumble-bee (*Bombus monticola*): This was a new species to me when I saw it reported on the Devon birding website on June 10 but on checking I found this is a species of mountain and moorland, only likely to be found on Dartmoor in southern England

PLANTS

Rough Poppy: First report for this year comes from Graeme Lyons in Sussex on June 17

Bastard Cabbage: On June 14 I visited the Hayling Island site where I have found this new invader since 2008 and found it had spread to the full length of the short stretch of seawall which protects the Saltmarsh Lane area of west Hayling

Dyers Greenweed: After seeing reports of this in flower at Durlston I visited the Thornham Marshes site on the east shore of Thorney Island and found a mass in flower there on June 13. On June 14 I found more starting to flower on west Hayling and on June 19 a couple of plants were in flower at the Bartons Road playing fields on the north east fringe of Leigh Park in Havant

Goats Rue: The plants around the Stoke Bay carpark by the Hayling Coastal path were in full flower by June 14 but remain the first I am aware of this year

White Stonecrop: Plants on graves in the Warblington cemetery had started to flower when I was there on June 17

Wild Celery: First flowers for the year seen by Langstone Mill Pond on June 17

Vervain: First report of this flowering comes from Brian Fellows who found it out in the Emsworth Bridge Road carpark area on June 14

Great Mullein: Although caterpillars of the **Mullein Moth** have been seen eating the leaves of this plant for some time the first report of flowers comes from the Hayling coastal path on June 14

Round-leaved Fluellen: First flowers seen at Warblington cemetery on June 17

Large Thyme: Flowering in Sussex on June 17 when it was found by Graeme Lyons

Salsify: I was not aware of how many species of *Tragopogon* exist nor of the hybrids that can occur until June 15 when I saw the photo of a Salsify plant with brown petals on the Rye Bay website and followed up the link to Wikipedia - see <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Salsify>

Chicory: The wildflower seed sown by Havant Borough in the Warblington cemetery extension was starting to flower on June 17

OTHER WILDLIFE

Minke Whale: One seen from a boat off the Scillies on June 13. A much larger but **un-named Whale** can be seen on the Three Amigo's blog entry for June 16 by Steve Copey - taken from a Lynx helicopter just after HMS York (with Steve on board) had left Lima and was heading for the Panama Canal. This impressive creature is **probably a Blue Whale which can be 33 Metres in length**. To see it go to <http://www.surfbirds.com/blog/amigo> and scroll down until you come to the photo taken from above.

Blue Sharks: Boat trips off the Scillies recently caught and tagged several Blue Sharks (four on June 6 and 5 on June 13)

Brown Hare: At least one was seen near the Breech Pool by the North Walls of Pagham Harbour on June 14

Adder: An unusual sight at Furze Hill (eastern edge of the New Forest near South Gorley) on June 14 was of **an Adder in the process of swallowing a Linnets** - sadly there was no way of telling if the Adder caught the Linnets alive or came across it already dead. In trying to check this out I looked at <http://www.forestry.gov.uk/forestry/adder> which says they will take young birds from their nests (I think Adders are quite capable of climbing to a nest) and I suppose an adult Linnets might have returned to its nest while an adder was there, and I guess the bird's feathers would not give it protection from an Adder bite

Pointed Snail (*Cochlicella acuta*): On June 16 Durlston mentioned a find of this small snail and this is around the time which they become large enough to be noticed (especially in a heat wave when they climb plant stems and wooden posts

to escape being 'fried' on bare ground) so I had a good look for them on the Thorney Island seawall at the west end of the Great Deeps when I was there on June 13 but although I found half a dozen empty shells I could not see any live specimens

WILDLIFE DIARY AND NEWS FOR JUNE 13 - 19 (WEEK 24 OF 2011)

Fri 17 June

Four new flowers at Warblington

Some time ago I calculated that the young **Egrets** at Langstone should leave their nests around June 16 so I walked down to the pond today to see how they were doing but the barriers across the sea wall path (the path is closed for repair of the pond wall which partially collapsed last year) prevented me from getting a good look at the nests and all I can say is that some juveniles (I suspect most if not all) are still in the nest trees.

On my way down Wade Lane loud **Buzzard** calls attracted my attention to one flying over Pook Lane and being mobbed by a **Crow**, and on the pond six well grown juvenile **Coots** from two families provided the only other bird interest that I was able to see but I did spot a newly flowering plant - **Wild Celery** - before moving on to Warblington.

In the old cemetery I added three more plants to my flowering list - **Round-leaved Fluellen**, **White Stonecrop** and **Ladies Bedstraw** - before visiting the vast patch of wildflower seeded plants in the new cemetery extension where **Chicory** was just starting to flower among the species previously noted.

Yesterday I had a surprise addition to my Havant town plant list when I came on a patch of **Hare's Tail grass** growing under the street name board of the new road on the west side of Park Road North opposite Elm Lane (the road passing the Bus Station)

Tue 14 June

Dyers Greenweed, Goats Rue and Bastard Cabbage

Durlston reported **Dyer's Greenweed** in flower on May 23 but I have not heard of it from others sources so I cycled to Thornham Point on Thorney Island yesterday evening (May 13) and found masses in full flower there.

Today I headed for the Hayling Coastal path where **Goats Rue** was flowering around the little used carpark behind the Esso garage before continuing south to the Saltmarsh Lane seawall where **Bastard Cabbage** has extended its colony to the full length of this short section of seawall and was easy to identify as all the plants had many of their distinctive seedpods on show. Among it was just one plant of **Lucerne**.

I had expected a good show of **Bee Orchids** along the coastal path in this middle section alongside the West Lane fields but saw none (just one **Pyramidal Orchid**). Back at the Oysterbeds the **Milk Thistle** flowers were well past their best and on the nesting island three large juvenile **Black-headed Gulls** were well grown but still a week or more from flying

Re-joining the coastal path I found a photographer patiently watching the area where **Little Owls** are often seen inside the field gate on the east side of the track so I stopped and asked if he had seen one and he pointed me to where a single juvenile was visible in a wild rose bush. After a while the young bird moved to a bare oak tree branch and gave unobstructed full frontal views.

Back on the mainland I had my first sight of **Sea Lavender** in flower by the creek alongside the north pier of the old railbridge and at its seaward end I found a single **Pyramidal Orchid** which I don't recall seeing here before as well as the **Blue Fleabane** which is regularly found here.

Back at home the Portsmouth NEWS had a piece by the Langstone RSPB warden (Chris Cockburn) confirming that he has 50 pairs of Little Tern nesting on the Langstone Harbour Islands, so almost certainly by far the biggest surviving colony on the south coast.

WILDLIFE DIARY AND NEWS FOR JUNE 6 - 12 (WEEK 23 OF 2011)

Late News

Hornet Robber Fly: First news of this rarity for the year comes from Mark Tutton who saw one on Portsdown (struggling to carry a large moth) on June 11. He also found 8 White-letter Hairstreaks at the North Harbour ex-IBM site in Portsmouth

Tree Creeper: Paul Palmer saw a pair on the exposed wood of the electricity poles a few yards north of the bridge over the Lymbourne Stream from the Billy Trail in Havant to Wade Lane. I wonder if these were birds that have nested there (I saw one at the northern end of the trees running north beside the stream to the A27 embankment back on Jan 24 exploring Ivy stems that would make a good nest site for them)

Inca Tern: If you want to see a bird species that you have probably not come across before have a look at <http://www.surfbirds.com/blog/uploads/a/amigo1/30146.jpg> and for much more bird variety from the southern oceans do follow Steve Copsey's posts on the Three Amigos blog at <http://www.surfbirds.com/blog/amigo>

BIRDS

Divers: The only reports this week were of **single Black-throated** seen in the North Sea off Whitburn (near the mouth of the Tyne) and **one Great Northern** also in the North Sea off Spurn Point plus **one sighting from Portland** on June 9. Further north **a White-billed Diver in breeding plumage** was a more unusual sight in the Orkneys on June 7

Great Crested Grebe: Singles seen in Langstone and Chichester Harbours this week were probably of non-breeding birds that have been there for some time but could be the first returning birds (maybe failed breeders). Another possible sign of birds moving south towards the coast came in a report of 83 seen on Weir Wood reservoir in north Sussex on June 7 (though I think that at least 20 pairs breed there and if each had two juveniles with them at this time of year that means a base count of 80 birds)

Sooty Shearwater: One (maybe two) were off Portland on June 8 - the first ever June record of the species at Portland. There have also been sightings of up to 10 in the Bay of Biscay recently with a single bird seen several times off Cornwall, and another in the North Sea, during May. I see that the group name for Shearwaters is 'an Improbability' but maybe the sightings will become more probable as food

becomes less readily available in the southern oceans where they breed and they start looking for other parts of the world that may be more hospitable.

Mute Swan: Late breeding pairs have produced first reports of cygnets at two local sites this week - a pair had 4 cygnets at Emsworth Marina on June 4 and the pair at Budds Farm pools had five cygnets on June 6

Greylag Goose: These are uncommon in south Hampshire but this week 6 adults were seen with 9 goslings on the River Itchen north of Southampton

Pale-bellied Brent: Simon Woolley was surprised to see one in the Hill Head harbour area close to Titchfield Haven on June 9 before it flew off to the Isle of Wight - he wonders if this is the first ever summer record of a Pale-bellied bird in Hampshire. The reports that I have seen show that the last Pale-bellied bird for Hampshire this year was at Stokes Bay on Apr 14 while the last anywhere on the south coast were in Weymouth Bay on Apr 17

Mandarin Duck: A count of 27 birds on Ardingly reservoir on June 8 was the first I have seen reported there this year. In Dorset a pair were seen with young near Wimborne Minster on June 4

Pintail: Two males were still present at Brading Marshes (IoW) on June 5 and one was at the Blashford Lakes near Ringwood on June 10

Goldeneye: I was surprised to see a report of ten at a Netherlands site on June 11 (in southern England the last I know of was at Radipole (Weymouth) on May 8)

Red Kite: These continue to be seen almost daily in the west country with a peak count of 10 over Hayle on the north Cornwall coast on June 5. Many of the birds seem to be moving east (as was a single **Honey Buzzard** seen over Devon on June 6) making me wonder if continental birds from perhaps Spain are moving north, then turning east when they reach the Scillies or Cornwall - they could of course be coming from Wales to escape the rain!

Kestrel: On June 6 I saw four well feathered juveniles huddling in a nest box near the view point for the Budds Farm pools in Havant and they were photographed that day by Roy Ewing from Emsworth who said there were six young in the box

Quail: In England this week up to three were observed at Sixpenny Handley in north east Dorset and one was on nearby Martin Down in Hampshire while Sussex had at least one on Lancing Downs near Worthing. I also investigated the French site where relatively large numbers are regularly reported (max 32 on May 30) and find it is a ringing station catching the birds in mist nets - it is called the **Site ornithologique des Cinq Tailles** and is located a little inland from the Calais area. Some of the birds are resident there but of the 32 birds recorded on May 30 only one was a 're-capture' and 31 were 'new'.

Little Stint: One was seen in summer plumage at Christchurch Harbour on June 10 - these birds breed in northern Europe and Asia and do not normally return to our shores on passage until August so maybe this one was still heading north east though it was the first I know of since May 18 (when one was at Ferrybridge at Weymouth)

Black-tailed Godwit: The flock of summering birds at Hook (Warsash) increased from 102 on June 3 to 156 on June 9

Common Sandpiper: Reports of sightings in the Scillies on June 4, at Lee on the Solent on June 5 and at the Blashford Lakes (Ringwood) on June 10 were the first since May 11 and probably reflect the end of the breeding season for these birds

Black-headed Gull: On June 9 an observer at Cuckmere Haven in Sussex reported .. "A first-summer Black-headed Gull was making repeated shallow feeding dives into the water, although somewhat unsuccessful in its attempts to catch anything!" .. and I take this to mean that the first of this year's young has fledged and left its nest and is attempting to feed for itself.

Herring Gull: For several years I have suspected that Herring Gulls had nests on industrial buildings in Havant beside the railway going north alongside New Lane but I have never seen any firm evidence other than the presence of adult birds. This week, however, Martin Hampton has seen at least one nest when walking along Brockhampton Lane between Solent Road and West Street (behind the Retail Park across Solent Road from the Tesco store)

Little Tern: A nesting colony at the Weymouth end of the Chesil Bank is having good breeding success despite financial cutbacks which have reduced the number of paid wardens from four last year down to one this year - a number of volunteers have stepped in to provide round the clock protection against human disturbance and predation by foxes and crows (though it seems that a Hedgehog got through and took one clutch of eggs). Within a week of the first pair starting to nest there were 17 pairs there by May 23 and most pairs laid three eggs which started to hatch on June 5.

White Wagtail: Another hint of autumn passage comes from Eastbourne where a male White Wagtail was seen on June 8 - the first I know of in southern England since Mar 25

Dunnoek: An albino juvenile was found in a nest at Emsworth on June 5

Nightingales: Still singing in Sussex this week

Wheatear: A few migrants are still arriving and a male bird seen at Latchmore Bottom in the north west of the New Forest on June 6 was almost certainly just passing through rather than being paired to a nesting female

Blue Rock Thrush: A bird seen closely on Dartmoor on June 2, and very probably of this species, has not been re-found

Dartford Warbler: A pair with two fledglings was seen in the New Forest on June 8 - I hope it is not the only one to breed in the Forest this year.

White-throated Robin: On Jun 6 only the third known to have visited Britain turned up in mist nets at Hartlepool on the Cleveland coast - even the ringer did not

recognize it and thought it was a Blue-throat. It was still there on Jun 10 but the many twitchers who rushed there to tick it have had difficulty in getting a glimpse of it - see

<http://www.mirror.co.uk/news/animal-magic/2011/06/08/twitchers-flock-to-see-rare-robin-115875-23186830/> for a picture of the lucky few who brought ladders with

them peering over the high brick wall of the local bowling club. Others were luckier when a local doctor let them into his garden (but he refused to open up again next day). Best view of the action was captured on video by the Peterlee Mail - well worth taking a look at this see

http://www.peterleemail.co.uk/news/local/the_bird_that_had_them_all_in_a_flutter_1_3456583 In case anyone is interested in the bird rather than the antics of the

birders they should go to

<http://www.birdguides.com/species/species.asp?sp=130057#status> and

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/White-throated_Robin

Golden Oriole: Only one reported this week - a female at Farley Mount near Winchester on June 7

Red-backed Shrike: A smart male was at Dungeness on June 7 (where there had been another sighting on May 9 and 10 after one at Portland on May 7 and 8) Before that one was reported in Chichester Harbour on Apr 18 (perched on a pontoon near the Chichester marina).

Jackdaw: A lonely looking fledgling was on the ground in St Faith's churchyard in Havant on June 11

Crossbill: The irruption of continental birds into Britain continues in a steady trickle - the largest count this week was of 23 flying east over Folkestone on June 4

Common Rosefinch: One was in the Scillies on June 1 and maybe the same bird was singing at The Lizard in Cornwall on June 6 and 8

Girl Bunting: The first to be seen in the Channel Isles for 7 years was singing in Jersey on June 6

Yellowhammer: The decline in numbers of this species in southern England was brought home to me when I realised that a couple of birds that I heard calling and singing on Portsdown on June 10 were the first I had come across this year bringing my paltry year list to 125 species

INSECTS

Dragonflies

Species reported this week were **Emperor, Broad-bodied Chaser, Common Darter, Beautiful Demoiselle** and **Azure Damsel**. The only general interest is that the list includes the **start of emergence of Common Darters**, reported by Rye Harbour on June 7

Butterflies

Small Skippers began to make a general appearance from June 4 when they were seen in Sussex near Lewes and in Hampshire at Fleet but the highest count so far is only 4 seen near Lewes on June 7

Purple Hairstreak: One had been reported near Pulborough in Sussex on May 15 but none others were seen until June 4 when one was recorded on Browdown near Gosport in Hants

White-letter Hairstreak: The first were seen at the ex-IBM site at Portsmouth on June 3, followed by reports from Brighton on June 4 and 5

Small Blue: These have been doing exceptionally well everywhere this summer but a site in the Hollingbury area of Brighton deserves a special mention. Not long ago the developers of new warehouse buildings here called in a local ecologist (Ben Kimpton from Lewes) and asked him to make good use of the excavated chalk on site and he designed a tiered mound (to minimise slippage) facing south west. There is no mention of planting vegetation on the chalk so I presume the plants are minimal and are natural invaders from the local Downs and this, coupled with the south-west facing aspect of the mound, generates a hotter than average ground temperature which suits the Small Blues with the result that up to 1000 were seen there this week

Large Blue: The re-introduction site at Collard Hill in Somerset was visited this week by Colin Knight from Sussex who has described his visit at <http://colinknight.blogspot.com/2011/06/large-blues-at-collard-hill.html>

White Admiral: Seen at ten sites this week including both Havant Thicket and Stansted Forest

Comma: Fresh **Small Tortoiseshells** and **Commas** have been emerging in good numbers this week and at least two of the Commas were of the **rich orange coloured Hutchinsonii form**

Gatekeeper: Not yet widespread but a report of four at Magdalen Hill Down (Winchester) on June 4 shows that they are about to emerge in force

The full list of species reported during the week is **Small Skipper, Large Skipper, Dingy Skipper, Grizzled Skipper, Wood White, Brimstone, Large White, Small White, Green-veined White, Green Hairstreak, Purple Hairstreak, White-letter Hairstreak, Small Copper, Small Blue, Silver Studded Blue, Brown Argus, Common Blue, Adonis Blue, Holly Blue, Large Blue, White Admiral, Red Admiral, Painted Lady, Small Tortoiseshell, Peacock, Comma, Small Pearl-bordered Fritillay, Pearl-bordered Fritillary, Dark Green Fritillary, Silver Washed Fritillary, Glanville Fritillary, Speckled Wood, Marbled White, Gatekeeper, Meadow Brown, Small Heath.**

Moths

A small selection of this week;s new moths

Six-spot Burnet: An estimated count of 300 at Magdalen Hill Down on June 4 was matched by a very large count of **Narrow-bordered Five-spots** at Langstone South Moors on June 10

Rannoch Looper: The massive invasion of southern counties by this moth from the Scottish Highlands continues with reports from seven sites this week. These include both Pagham Harbour and Fareham

Hummingbird Hawkmoth: Also seen at seven different sites this week

Lobster Moth: First of the year was photographed by Tony Tindale on June 5 when he attended a Fareham Moth Group meeting near Wickham Common in the Meon Valley - see

<http://www.surfbirds.com/blog/amigo/20828/Twenty-one+new+moth+species+at+Wickham+that+included+Scarce+Merveille+du+Jour.html> for pictures of this and several other good moths

Scarce Merveille du Jour: Also taken by the Fareham Moth Group of June 5 but not photographed by Tony Tindale

Other Insects

Spotted Cranefly: Brian Fellows photographed this distinctively marked insect near Emsworth rail station on June 9 and his photo can be seen on his website (or directly at

<http://www.emsworthwildlife.hampshire.org.uk/0-0-370-spot-crane-fly-station-09.06.11.jpg>). A clearer view of the insects markings can be seen at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Crane_fly (click the photo to see a larger version)

Honey Bee: Following the swarm found in a Hawthorn tree near Emsworth Marina May 30 another swarm was seen on the Sussex Downs near Eastbourne on June 3. For advice on contacting the nearest Bee Keeper prepared to come and collect the swarm (thus helping counter the dire shortage of bees to pollinate our crops and flowers) see

http://www.bbka.org.uk/help/do_you_have_a_swarm.php

Glow-worm: A report of one seen at Fort Purbrook on Portsdown on the early date of May 31 did not state whether what was seen was a well developed larva or a mature female beetle and a look at

<http://www.uksafari.com/glowworms1.htm> will show you that both the larva and adult look fairly similar and both can 'glow' in the dark. This site will tell you how to distinguish between them and has photos of both (click the link to 'female' on the first page to see the details of the adult). I knew that the larvae fed on snails but I did not know that they have a brush on the tip of their tails wipe the snail slime from their mouth parts after a meal

Meadow Grasshoppers: These are not abundant and active on Brook Meadow at Emsworth

PLANTS

Hairy Buttercup: I have always had difficulty in distinguishing Hairy from Bulbous Buttercup as both are hairy and have downturned sepals but I believe I can recognize a difference in the flower colour (**Hairy** flowers being a lighter and more glossy yellow) and I twice came on what I thought were Hairy rather than the

commoner Bulbous plants this week. One was on the Langstone South Moors which is of course a nature reserve and in part an SSSI so I did not dig up plants there but when I found them again on the Broadmarsh abandoned playing fields I dug one up and found that (while the multiple stems were swollen above ground) there was nothing but normal roots below ground. I have not yet done the same for bulbous but I have seen one photo on the internet showing what looks like a small potato which would be totally hidden below ground (1 to 3cm below ground level and up to 3cm in diameter). I will no doubt change my opinion when I have investigated more plants but I am currently of the opinion that the illustration of Bulbous Buttercup by Marjorie Blamey in the Fitter and Fitter Domino Guide is actually of a Hairy Buttercup (more anon ...)

Creeping Yellow Cress: I found a couple of patches of this on the abandoned Broadmarsh playing fields this week - the first I have seen this year

Narrow-leaved Pepperwort: When at the Portsdown hilltop roundabout on June 10 I left the carpark there by walking south over the road (James Callaghan Drive) to find a new site for this plant in the tarmac along the south side of the road

Large Bittercress: On June 10 Brian Fellows refound the plant I had seen at the Langstone South Moors and took a photo of it which you can see at <http://www.emsworthwildlife.hampshire.org.uk/0-0-369-large-bittercress-zz-south-m-10.06.11.jpg>

Slender St John's Wort: First flowers seen on June 8 during an HWT walk at "Creek Woods" which I think may be a typo for Creech Woods at Denmead - anyway it should soon be widely distributed

Field Pansy: Plenty of these (the first I have seen) flowering in the Top Field on Portsdown on June 10

Musk Mallow: First flowers seen on the Broadmarsh 'mountain' on June 9

Dyer's Greenweed: Reported to be in flower at Durlston on June 10

Alsike Clover: The red-tinged white flowers of this uncommon clover were out on Portsdown on June 10 and in the Havant Eastern Road cemetery next day.

Tufted Vetch: Flowers first seen at Broadmarsh on June 9

Hairy Vetchling: Great masses of this had started flowering on the Broadmarsh 'mountain' when I was there on June 9 making it hard to believe that this is the only site in Hampshire (and I believe in all the adjacent counties) where it grows.

Ribbed Melilot: First flowers seen on the roadside at Broadmarsh on June 9

Meadow Sweet: This started to flower by the Langbrook Stream in Havant on June 6 and was out in Brook Meadow at Emsworth next day

Great Willowherb: A single flower was open on a plant by the Langbrook stream in Havant on June 9

Hoary Willowherb: An early flowering plant seen by Emsworth rail station on June 9

Square-stalked Willowherb: Flowering in Havant on June 6

Knotted Hedge Parsley: Yet another plant found in a totally new site (roadside outside 17 Juniper Square in Havant) on June 7

Fools Water Cress: Another first seen on June 8 in the Westbrook stream at Emsworth

Knotgrass: First flowers seen in Havant on June 6

Black Bindweed: First flowers seen on Portsdown on June 10

Common Sea Lavender: First flowers at Bosham in Chichester Harbour on June 4

Common Centaury: First flowers at Broadmarsh cycle way on June 9

Yellow-wort: Also flowering at Broadmarsh on June 9

Hairy Bindweed (*Calystegia pulcra*): Flowering by Apuldram Lane near Fishbourne church (Chichester) on June 5 - photo on Brian Fellows website

Thorn Apple: Three plants (one in flower) at Havant rail station on June 7 - see my Diary page

Lesser Snapdragon or Weasel's Snout (*Misopates orontium*): First flowers appeared along the roadside of the Havant New Lane allotments on June 3 and a good number of them could be seen by June 11

Red Bartsia (or Red Rattle): Flowering at Durlston on June 7 and on Portsdown on June 9

Gipsywort: Found in the Westbrook Stream at Emsworth on June 8 (presumably in flower)

Water Forget-me-not: First flower along the Langbrook Stream on June 6

Buddleia: First flowers in Havant on June 7

Common Marsh Bedstraw: A mass of this in flower at Langstone South Moors on June 6

Lady's Bedstraw: Reported flowering at Durlston on June 11

Mugwort: First flowers seen in Havant on June 9

Marsh Thistle: Seen by me at the South Moors on June 6 but I think I have failed to note an earlier sighting by Brian Fellows

Creeping Thistle: Also opening its flowers in Havant on June 6

Perennial Sowthistle (*Sonchus arvensis*): Also flowering in Havant on June 6

Narrow-leaved Water Plantain: 28 plants found flowering in the Westbrook Stream at Emsworth on June 8

Spiked Star-of-Bethlehem: 42 spikes flowering by Apuldram Lane near Fishbourne (Chichester) on June 5

Hairy Garlic: This has been appearing at several new sites this year, one them being Durlston where it was found on June 8

OTHER WILDLIFE

Stoat: Michael Prior (Head Forester of Stansted Park) wages war against **Grey**

Squirrels and last weekend he reported an unexpected way in which a **Stoat** had recently come to his aid. Michael uses baited traps to catch **Squirrels** which he then kills, leaving the corpses in open ground as food for **Buzzards**. Last week he described a variation on this routine .. he says "I found a **stoat** in one of my squirrel cages that had despatched the two squirrel occupants, feasted on one and was released unharmed."

Bottle-nosed Dolphins: Up to 10 were seen off Wembury near Plymouth this week and a bigger pod of 30 were in the North Sea off Whitburn in County Durham (between South Shields and Sunderland in the Newcastle area)

Noctule Bat: One was seen by a birder visiting Martin Down on the western fringes of Hampshire south of Salisbury

Adder: These normally feel the vibrations of your approaching footsteps and slide away into cover long before you are close enough to see them but the snakes are more lethargic on cold mornings when possibly they climb onto e.g. a heather bush to get more of what sun there is and the heather insulates them from the vibrations which (not possessing ears) they would otherwise feel through the ground. This may account for Bob Eade's encounter with one at Iping Common early on June 7 which he described on the Sussex Butterfly Conservation website thus .. "Well, it took about 45 minutes to even find any **Silver Studded Blues** at Iping Common which was very frustrating after all the reports coming in to the web site. However, it was cool and breezy. Eventually I found a couple and on approaching a male I almost trod on a female adder that hissed loudly at me and even got into striking position!!" The careful approach intended to avoid disturbing the butterfly would also reduce the warning given to the snake.

WILDLIFE DIARY AND NEWS FOR JUNE 6 - 12 (WEEK 23 OF 2011)

Fri 10 June

In pursuit of Venus on Portsdown

On May 19 Richard Jones reported a find of **Venus' Looking Glass** in his newly acquired 'Top Field' lying between the Portsdown Hilltop roundabout and the old ASWE (now Qinetiq) Defence Research establishment near Fort Southwick and on June 4 the Havant Wildlife Group Saturday outing also found the species there so this morning I set out to add the plant to my personal list guided by instructions from Rosalind Norton as to where the HWT group saw it.

Rather than go straight to the carpark by the roundabout I stopped in the carpark west of Fort Widley to give myself a chance to see other plants while walking to the roundabout. The first two additions to my year list came from the arable field to the north of this carpark where **Musk Thistle** and **Knapweed Bromrape** could be seen, and as I started to head west I had a more significant first when **I saw and heard a couple of Yellowhammers calling and singing.**

Reaching the roundabout I went through the carpark area into the flower rich 'Top field', stepping over a 'supine' telegraph pole into the bare chalk of the field, and it was at the north end of this very first section of the field that I stooped down to look at a **Field Pansy** plant (another first for me) and saw the single plant of **Venus' Looking Glass** beside it. I think it was past flowering (at any rate the sun was not out and this plant only opens its flowers when the sun shines) but the size and stance of the plant is unmistakable, especially the look of its seed pods. Nearby I added two more first flowerings when I came on **Henbit Dead-nettle** and **Black Bindweed** in flower.

Leaving the roundabout area I crossed the road south of it, finding **Narrow-leaved Pepperwort** growing in the roadside tarmac on the south side (this has been out for some time at the Langstone roundabout in Havant). Turning east along the path leading back to the Southwick Hill Road coming up from the Q A Hospital the sun was now trying to come out and the warmth began to bring out butterflies including my first **Marbled Whites** (a dozen seen before I got back to my car) and a couple of **Small Blues**. (Also seen this morning were **Red Admiral**, **Meadow Brown**, **Large Skipper** and a lovely fresh **Small Tortoiseshell**).

Crossing the Hill Road I found a single large flowerhead of **Alsike Clover** held high with its white florets all tinged with red but had no other noteworthy finds.

Thu 9 Jun

An evening at Broadmarsh

With the sun shining and the wind diminishing I cycled to Broadmarsh this evening to check on the **Hairy Vetchling** which was out in profusion and can be found by taking the path up onto the 'mountain' from the height restriction gate where vehicles turn off Harts Farm Way to reach the slipway. Keep on this path heading east along the northern edge of the grassland until the trees on your left fall back to form a bay of grassland, then start looking for the plants when you are more than halfway across this bay and you should find plenty in the bay before turning south and climbing onto the higher grassland where there are many more.

Continuing east down the steep slope to the path along the Hermitage Stream I rode north until close to the A27, then headed back to the slipway counting the **summer moult flock of Swans** (35 seen).

At the start of my ride I had seen my first flowers open on **Greater Willowherb** by the Langbrook Stream near the Tesco store in Havant, and then found my first **Musk Mallow** flowers as I reached the Broadmarsh mountain top grassland, on which I also noted a **Burnet Moth** which only had 5 spots (the common 6 Spot has two spots, often overlapping, near the tip of its forewing - this definitely only had one spot at its wingtip but is very unlikely to have been a standard 5 Spot as that is rare in this part of Hampshire - it was almost certainly the **Narrow-bordered 5 Spot** - see <http://www.hantsmoths.org.uk/species/0171.php>)

Next I rode along the seawall of the Broadmarsh grassland to the cycleway running below the A27 embankment and here I turned west and went as far as the chalk dock area before turning back to count the great display of **Pyramidal orchids** flowering beside the track. There were **over 500 of these** and interspersed among them were perhaps **40 Bee Orchids** together with my first flowering **Yellow-wort** and **Common Centaury** plus **Tufted Vetch** and **Red Bartsia**.

Near the big roundabout I passed my first **Melilot** in flower (back at home I decided it was **Ribbed Melilot** as the wings and standard petals were longer than the keel). Where Harts Farm Way reaches this roundabout I crossed over the road onto the rough ground which was once maintained as football pitches by Havant Borough and here I came on vivid yellow patches of **Creeping Yellow Cress** and much less conspicuous **Meadow Barley grass** before reaching the site of the mystery 'chamomile' plants first found on May 12 and which I had subsequently decided were **Corn Chamomile** (a new species for me). Today I collected a couple of specimens to send to Martin Rand (south Hampshire BSBI Plant Recorder) for his opinion and also dug up one of numerous plants which I was pretty sure were **Hairy Buttercups** (and not **Bulbous**). Sure enough there was no bulb at the base of the stems.

Just one more significant find on my way home when I passed a plant of **Mugwort** that had lost the shining white look of its closed flower buds and taken on a dull and dusty look as if it were past flowering - this effect is caused by the brown petals of the flowers which had only just opened.

Tue 7 June

New flowering plants around Havant

A short walk to the shops and back today gave me a couple of significant new flowerings and yet another find of **Knotted Hedge Parsley** in a new site.

My first find was at Havant rail station where, in a small unused flower bed by the 'out of hours' entrance to the station by the Taxi turning circle, the supposedly deadly poisonous **Thorn Apple plants** are now starting to grow and already have one long white tubular flower - this gives the plant one of its many names - 'Devil's Trumpet'. Wikipedia tells you all you need to know about this fairly common weed, including the fact that J K Rowling created a fictional version of it which she called 'Devil's Snare' - see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Datura_stramonium

After visiting the shops I passed the entrance to the multi-storey carpark where I saw my first **Buddleia flowers** of the year, and continuing south down Park Road South I was saddened to see that the mass of **Water Cress** in the 'North Pond' opposite Solent Road **appeared to have been sprayed with weed killer** to 'clean up' the pond.

Completing my circuit through Juniper Square and taking the first left turn up the road leading towards Slindon Gardens I failed to see any of the **Pigweed (Green Amaranth)** that usually appears beside the access road to garages behind the

houses but as I came out of that cul de sac and turned north again a very dusty plant growing in edge of the roadway turned out to be yet another example of **Knotted Hedge-Parsley** appearing this year where it has not been seen before. Back at home I had an email from Martin Hampton extending my knowledge of the bird life of Havant - he had today been in Brockhampton Lane (which opens off Solent Road west of the road entrance to Tesco and runs north east behind the 'Retail Park' opposite Tesco) and had seen **Herring Gulls at a nest on the roof of one of the industrial buildings**. This is the first proof that I know of for **Herring Gulls** breeding on Havant rooftops though I am pretty sure they do so on industrial buildings in New Lane, and only a few days ago I noticed an adult bird 'loitering with intent' on an East Street rooftop.

[Mon 6 June](#)

South Moors and Budds Farm

Despite the dull conditions and threat of further rain I set off to walk to Budds Farm this morning, finding a dozen new flowering plants for my year list (including the first **Large Bittercress** I have seen for years) and a nest box with at least four young **Kestrels** in it and a family of five cygnets on the pools.

Knot Grass and **Square Stalked Willowherb** were the first two new flowers, both found within the first 500 metres from my front door and before I had reached the Langbrook Stream near Tesco's I had **Perennial Sowthistle**, **Spear Thistle** and **Creeping Thistle** on the list, while by the 'water wheel' in the stream the first **Meadow Sweet** was seen, along with **Water Forget-me-not** plus **Water Figwort**.

Continuing down stream into the shade of the trees south of the Langstone Technology Park approach road I added my first **Enchanter's Nightshade** (actually a **Willowherb** with no relation to the **Nightshades** which had a relative in one of the gardens where **Potato Vine, aka Jasmine Nightshade**, was now in flower). I do not normally include grasses in my list but I did put in an impressive cluster of **Reed Canary Grass** holding its flowers up to my head height.

On the grassland of the Moors I soon found my first flowering **Marsh Thistle** before spotting a large patch of **Sea Milkwort** (not new but I don't recall seeing it here before). Near the stream which feeds the Tamarisk Pool I may have cheated a bit as I added **Hairy Buttercup** merely on its general looks and the colour tone of its flowers without checking that it was not **Bulbous**, and I also wrote down **Lesser Stitchwort** despite thinking that it 'looked different' - next time I must check it out for being **Bog Stitchwort** though I think that unlikely as that has short petals and these were if anything larger, giving a 'lampshade' effect.

In the orchid field there were **Southern Marsh Orchids** everywhere I looked but as I crossed the drainage ditch which surrounds the wetland I almost trod on a plant I have not seen for some years - **Large Bittercress** with the white of its petals offset by the purple tinge of its anthers. In the long grass I saw a number of the silk 'nursery tents' created by **Pisaura mirabilis spiders** to shield their egg sacs from the rain and found both a single **Common Blue** butterfly, which had chosen to spend the night totally exposed to rain and wind hanging on to the tip of a tall grass, and a single **Narrow-bordered Five-spot Burnet moth** which is regularly found here.

At the north end of the field I made my way to an eye catching patch of white which turned out to be **Common Marsh Bedstraw** and did not have the tiny points to its leaves which the less common **Fen Bedstraw** shows. Other than **Marsh**

Horsetail, whose cones were widespread in the grass, I did not find anything more of great interest here so I headed for Budds Farm.

Walking up the approach road to the pools I heard the squeaking of young birds and, just before reaching the 'observation bench' for the pools, I could see four **young Kestrels** (apparently fully feathered) in the open ended nest box above my head. [Before posting this entry I saw on Brian Fellows website a photo of these birds taken today by Roy Ewing who was told that there are six juveniles in the box though I cannot see more than four in the photo.] From the view point bench I was pleased to see that the **Swan pair** had **5 healthy looking cygnets** and that a single **Shelduck** was (I assumed) waiting patiently for its mate to hatch their brood of ducklings (rather late compared to other pairs). The other obvious sight was of a good number of both **Swallows** and **House Martins** skimming low over the water, hopefully getting a good meal of small insects and as I watched them I heard not only **Cetti's Warbler** song (second of the morning as another was singing at the Orchid Field) but also a **Lesser Whitethroat**.

Heading back home along the South Moors shore more **Swallows** were feeding over the grass of the old playing fields and a **Skylark** was singing over the Moors though there has been **no sign of Meadow Pipits breeding** here this year (I think the first year they have not been present in my memory). Flying east just offshore was a pair of **Swans** (probably heading for the moult flock on the water at the mouth of the Hermitage Stream while they still have their flight feathers) and earlier I had had a distant view of perhaps eight **Canada Geese** flying east (perhaps to join others spending their moult month on the Thornham Marshes - interestingly it seems that, with birds breeding earlier than usual this year, the moult may also be early - **Canada Geese** normally become flightless in July and we are hardly into June now)

Reaching Langstone Pond I found a strong wooden gate in position where the path is narrowest above the Mill sluice and was told that by the end of the day a similar gate would block access from the east and that they would be locked to ensure that no one was able to use the path for a month or more while the pond wall is rebuilt. The gate was still open and I was able to take a last look at the **Egret nest trees** which were crowded with adults and juveniles plus a single **Grey Heron**, reminding me that this is **the only Egret breeding site in Hampshire which was not already a Heronry** before the Egrets arrived. On the water the **Swans** still had their **three cygnets** looking considerably bigger than when I last saw them a week ago.

Checking my notes back at home I found that the number of flowering plant species on my notepad was up to 115 as June starts to 'burst out all over' despite (and because of) the rain

WILDLIFE DIARY AND NEWS FOR MAY 30 - JUNE 5 (WEEK 22 OF 2011)

This week the advent of summer was marked at the weekend by a drop in temperature and the arrival of some rain but also by the emergence of **Marbled White, White Admiral, Silver Washed** and **Dark Green Fritillary** butterflies plus **White-letter Hairstreak, Small Skipper, Gatekeeper** and **Ringlet**

An influx of late bird migrants brought **Cuckoos** to many places in southern counties where hope of hearing one this year had almost been abandoned.

Another unexpected report confirmed that the **White-tailed Sea-Eagle** which spent the winter in Hampshire has failed to leave the country and is still present in Lincolnshire.

Among Other Insect news I have included links to the Bee-keepers Association website which enables you to contact a local bee keeper who will come and collect **a swarm of bees such as the one seen on Thorney Island** - with **Honey Bees** dying at an alarming rate and the need to fertilise our crops being urgent we should not neglect such a find.

My Plant news refers to a series of good finds on Portsdown on June 2 and points readers to my diary entry for that day which has more detail and photos of the **Field Cow-wheat, Small Yellow Foxgloves** and the thriving colony of **Ivy Broomrape**.

Other Wildlife news explains how I have at least reached an understanding of the sex life of **Roe Deer**.

BIRDS

Grebes: A **Slavonian** was in the Exe estuary on June 1 and 2 suggesting that it may remain for the summer and a **Black-necked Grebe in breeding plumage** was at the RSPB Northward Hill reserve in Kent on June 2

Storm Petrels: A good number of **Storm Petrels** are now present in the west country with more than 40 seen during a boat trip off the Scillies on May 31 and on May 29 one was seen as far east as Selsey. On June 1 the first **Wilson's Storm Petrel** of the year was reported from the Scillies

Little Egret: At Langstone Pond on May 30 I could see at least 5 well grown juveniles around their nests. As I first saw nests here in mid April, and Wikipedia tells me that the incubation time is from 21 to 25 days with the young remaining at their nests for 40 to 45 days, I calculate that these young birds hatched around May 7 and will leave the pond around June 16. The footpath running past the Mill building (from which the nests are visible) may now be closed for repairs but if you are not able to see the young there you should be able to pick them out in the harbours after they have fledged by the grey-green colour of legs and bills which contrast with the black of the adults

Great White Egret: One was near Wadebridge in Cornwall on May 29 and it or another was at the Dungeness RSPB reserve from June 1 to 3 at least

Mute Swan: The pair which nest on Langstone Pond have in past years protected their young from the local Foxes by leading them away from the pond and onto the harbour water as soon as they have all hatched but this year they failed to do so and the 7 cygnets which hatched on or just before May 9 were down to 3 cygnets by May 30.

Gadwall: On June 3 a single duckling was with two pairs which have remained to nest at Hook (near Warsash)

Honey Buzzard: The majority of those which breed in England should be back at their nest sites by now and on June 1 Lee Evans told us they can now be seen at Wykeham Forest in north Yorkshire from a public 'raptor viewpoint'. The Forestry

Commission website tells you how to get there and the Scarborough Birding website says the Buzzards were back by May 24 with three different birds seen on June 1

Red Kite: The general increase in numbers has stepped up in Cornwall this week with 25 flying over the Penzance area on June 3 and more than 40 over Porthgwarra on the morning of June 4

White-tailed Sea Eagle: According to Lee Evans the bird which arrived in the Pulborough area on 11 Dec 2010 and flew across the Hampshire border on Dec 12 to stay in the New Milton area of Hampshire from Jan 6 to Feb 2 (and then near Basingstoke from Feb 23 to Mar 13 this year) is currently in north Lincolnshire. It was seen on the Norfolk coast on Apr 3, moving north to Lincolnshire on Apr 28 and being seen at Spurn Point on May 15 - latest sighting was of it flying over Manby Flashes in Lincolnshire on May 31

Montagu's Harrier: One was hunting the banks of the R Arun south of Arundel on May 30

Kestrel: On May 11 Alistair Martin told me that the 'owl box' mounted on a telegraph pole near the houses west of the entrance to the North Common Open Space (Northney, Hayling Island) seemed to be occupied by Kestrels feeding young and when I visited the site on May 30 a male Kestrel was perched in the entrance to the box, blocking any view of the interior.

Merlin: An unusually late bird flew over Sheppey in Kent on May 28

Hobby: 20 were still present in the Kent Stour Valley on May 29

Quail: On June 1 a Gloucestershire site had five birds. In Dorset one has been heard regularly near the village of Sixpenny Handley, not far from Martin Down in Hampshire where another was heard on June 2. On June 3 one was on Steep Down at Lancing near Worthing.

Corncrake: Two reports from different sites in Cornwall on May 31 and June 1

Avocet: By May 31 one of 21 chicks at the RSPB Elmley reserve on Sheppey was attempting to fly

Ringed Plover: Four chicks had hatched at Dungeness by May 30

Lapwing: Post breeding flocks were starting to assemble at Elmley by May 31 - no doubt they will soon be starting to appear back along the south coast

Sanderling: As the **Lapwing** come to the end of their breeding season a good number of **Sanderling** have still to set out on their journey north to their breeding sites - Christchurch Harbour had flocks of 47, 50 and then 40 on May 31, June 1 and 2 respectively and two were an unexpected inland site at Weir Wood reservoir near Crowborough on May 30

Snipe: First report of Snipe 'drumming' comes from the Kent Stour valley on June 1 - as Snipe normally start breeding in April I'm pretty sure this was not a 'first'

Black-tailed Godwit: A flock of 102 was at Hook (Warsash) on June 3 (probably all summering birds by now?). In Devon more than 80 were at Exmouth on June 1

Turnstone: The last report of a flock was from Rye Harbour where 20 birds were present on May 2 so the presence of 2 at the Hayling Oysterbeds on May 30 was a surprise. Christchurch Harbour also had one on June 4 - could these be already returning failed breeders?

Little Gull: One or two have been at Hook near Warsash since May 26

Caspian Gull: Both a male and female (both first summer birds) have been at the Lower Test Marshes near Southampton from June 1 to 4

Little Tern: Those who follow the Three Amigos adventures (Steve Copsey is now off the coast of Chile getting pictures of e.g. a **Chilean Skua** downing a less manoeuvrable **Blackbrowed Albatross** into the Pacific Ocean, and Mark Cutts was last heard of photographing butterflies at Taranto in Italy) will know that Tony Tindale has had to put up with the less exciting wildlife in his Fareham moth trap but did have to adventure as far as the Hayling Oysterbeds this week and got excited by seeing a group of **Little Terns** apparently nesting on the shingle topping of one of the 'fingers' of land separating the north pools. It did not take him long to discover these were dummies placed on the shingle nesting area that was created last year but has not yet attracted any interest from live Terns. In the end Tony was successful in seeing a **single live Little Tern** flying close to the Oysterbeds. I still haven't seen one anywhere but I understand that there are some **50 Little Terns** attempting to breed on South Binness Island and that among the Black-headed Gulls nesting at the Oysterbeds there may be **150 Common Tern** and **16 Sandwich Tern** nests at the Oysterbeds (I may have misheard this info and will be waiting to see it confirmed in print!)

Cuckoo: A large number of **Cuckoos** seem to have reached southern England in the past couple of weeks. This week at least one was singing continuously in the Langstone village area and Brook Meadow in Emsworth had its first ever recorded sighting of one in the reserve area. Elsewhere three were present on the Pevensy Levels near Eastbourne and another three were heard on Ibsley Common near the Blashford Lakes at Ringwood and on June 2 one was heard on Sinah Common (south of Hayling Island) where they are usually uncommon.

Long-eared Owl: These replace **Tawny Owls** on the Isle of Wight so the 'rusty bicycle' calls of families of young in both Parkhurst Forest and Walter's Copse at Newtown Harbour were not unexpected this week. A few do nest in southern mainland counties so the distinctive hooting of an adult in wood near Arundel on June 3 was good news (they are also hopefully nesting on the Downs above Brighton where they were discovered in recent years)

Swift: Still no sign of them in my home area of Havant (this is the first year since I arrived here in 1967 that they have not nested locally) but Brian Fellows did see a group of five flying around houses in Emsworth on June 2 (a group of 4 were seen here on May 12)

Kingfisher: A very unexpected glimpse of one at Langstone Mill Pond on May 30 may have been a juvenile which had fledged early and been driven out of its home territory by parents anxious to get on with a second brood or may have been an adult which has failed to find a nest site or sufficient food to raise its first brood.

Hoopoe: Almost daily reports of these birds (mainly in Cornwall and the Scillies) from Mar 6 onwards dried up on May 16 but this week has brought a new report of one at Acres Down near Lyndhurst in the New Forest on June 2

Wheatear: One seen at Ocknell Plain in the New Forest on May 29 roused hopes that they were breeding again - none are known to have even attempted to breed in Hampshire since 2005 (two juveniles seen in 2007 were thought to have been hatched outside the county and were just passing through)

Marsh Warbler: One was at Dungeness on June 1 and a **Great Reed Warbler** was in Somerset on May 30

Spotted Flycatcher: A migrant paused briefly at Sinah Warren (south Hayling) on May 29

Golden Oriole: Reports of singing birds this week came from Dungeness, the Downs near Eastbourne (and maybe the same bird on nearby Lullington Heath next day) with late news of one in a Birdham garden near Chichester on May 3. Since the first report from Devon on Apr 12 I have collected 47 reports (possibly covering 67 individuals) with the last (so far) in Cornwall on June 3.

Magpie: An unusual 'colour defect' caused the black areas of a Magpie's plumage seen at Wickham in Kent to be the pale brown that a **Jay** normally shows

Escapees: 5 **Helmeted Guineafowl** were an unexpected sight in Eyeworth Wood (near Fritham in the New Forest) on June 1. If you are unfamiliar with the species have a look at <http://www.arkive.org/helmeted-guineafowl/numida-meleagris/>

INSECTS

[\(Skip to Plants\)](#)

Dragonflies

With many very early appearances of insect species this summer I have checked the British Dragonfly Society News Reports to try to establish the first dates for Dragonfly species, coming up with the following tentative list:

Southern Hawker May 24 at Lower Test near Southampton

Brown Hawker May 19 Berkshire (very early)

Emperor Apr 28 (I think this may be a mistaken id for a Hairy Dragonfly as general emergence is only now getting under way with reported firsts from Dorset and Devon sites on June 3 and a probable first sighting at Brook Meadow in Emsworth on June 2)

Lesser Emperor First and so far only report from Lands End on June 3

Norfolk Hawker May 19 in Suffolk
Green Ringed Dragonfly May 24 in New Forest
Club Tailed Dragonfly May 8 in Oxfordshire
Downy Emerald Apr 26 Mill Hill at Shoreham
Brilliant Emerald May 10 Berkshire
Black Tailed Skimmer May 8 Norfolk
Keeled Skimmer May 15 Cornwall
Broad-bodied Chaser Apr 16 Devon
Scarce Chaser Apr 29 Testwood Lakes nr Southampton
Ruddy Darter May 19 Surrey
White-faced Darter Apr 29 Shropshire
Scarce Emerald Damselfly May 30 Essex
Willow Emerald May 30 Reculver in Kent
White Legged Damselfly May 1 Gloucestershire
Small Red Damselfly May 25 Lymington area
Scarce Blue-tailed Damselfly May 19 Devon
Variable Damselfly Apr 23 Rye Harbour
Southern Damselfly May 31 New Forest

Butterflies

First appearances this week have been:-

White Admiral seen at Markstakes Common near South Chailey (Haywards Heath area) in Sussex on June 2 and in Friston Forest near Eastbourne plus Pamber Forest (north Hampshire) both on June 3 then in both north and south Hampshire on June 4 with another on the Wiltshire border that day

Silver-Washed Fritillary - first seen on June 3 at Broxhead Common in north Hampshire and on the Isle of Wight with more sightings at Pamber Forest in north Hampshire and Botley Wood in south Hampshire both on June 4

Dark Green Fritillary - seen at Lullington Heath near Eastbourne on June 1 and at two other nearby sites plus Beeding Hill in West Sussex on June 3 and Whitely near Fareham in Hants on June 4

Marbled White - seen on Downs above Brighton on May 31 and on Portsdown on both June 3 and 4

Gatekeeper - Reported at Sheffield Park near Crowborough on June 2 and backed up with a report of 4 at Magdalen Hill Down (Winchester) on June 4

White-letter Hairstreak out at the Portsmouth ex-IBM site on June 3 and in a Brighton cemetery on June 4

Small Skipper - after several mistaken id reports of Large Skipper Gary Palmer has at last seen a genuine Small Skipper near Lymington on June 3

Ringlet - one seen at Hazeley Heath in north Hampshire on May 29 (but no other reports during the week)

Noteworthy sightings:-

Painted Lady - start of a major invasion on June 1 when many were seen on the beach and cliff top at the South Foreland in Sussex. Six other coastal reports between May 30 and June 3

Small Tortoiseshell - Four reports of newly emerged butterflies including a report of 11 seen near Henfield on June 3

Glanville Fritillary - said to be widely spread across the Isle of Wight this year with one found by the Medina River south of Cowes

Wall Brown - first brood nearly over - only one to be found on June 1

Butterfly species seen this week have been:-

Large Skipper, Small Skipper, Dingy Skipper, Grizzled Skipper, Wood White, Brimstone, Large White, Small White, Green-veined White, Orange Tip, Green Hairstreak, Small Copper, Small Blue, Silver Studded Blue, Brown Argus, Common Blue, Adonis Blue, Holly Blue, White Admiral, Red Admiral, Painted Lady, Small Tortoiseshell, Peacock, Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary, Pearl-bordered Fritillary, Silver Washed Fritillary, Dark Green Fritillary, Glanville Fritillary, Heath Fritillary, Speckled Wood, Wall Brown, Marbled White, Gatekeeper, White-letter Hairstreak, Meadow Brown, Small Heath, Ringlet (Total 37 species)

Moths

Goat Moth: On May 31 Rye Harbour had its first adult moth of this species for ten years

Rannoch Looper: Unlike many species that are moving north in response to global warming this moth has recently invaded southern England from central Scotland. This moth was unknown in Sussex until 2009 but a trap in Rewell Wood near Arundel on June 3 found it the most numerous species caught. One was also taken at Portland on the night of June 3, becoming the second ever to be recorded there, and its photo (together with that of the first **Red-necked Footman**) can be seen on the Portland website above the June 4 entry

Scarlet Tiger Moth: A late report of one at Eastbourne on May 14

Dewick's Plusia: It is some time since George Spraggs put out his moth trap in the West Town area of Hayling Island but when he did on June 3 he was rewarded not only with this rare vagrant but at a date outside its previous expected dates (never before recorded other than between July and October)

Other Insects

Helophilus pendulus Hoverfly: I feel fairly confident about the id of this Hoverfly (which was in my Havant garden on June 1) on account of the pattern of longitudinal black and yellow stripes on its thorax and the latitudinal markings on its abdomen but it could have been the slightly larger and more boldly marked **H. trivittatus**

Yellow Meadow Ant: Durlston reported these on June 1 'farming black aphids from which they get honeydew to drink'

Honey Bee swarm: The May 31 diary entry on Brian Fellows Emsworth website (<http://www.emsworthwildlife.hampshire.org.uk/0-0-0-wildlife-diary.htm>) has a photo taken by Richard Somerscocks of a swarm of **Honey Bees** hanging in a Hawthorn tree near the deck houses beside the coastal path south of Emsworth Marina. Richard says the swarm was there for several days and if it is still there he should visit http://www.bbka.org.uk/help/find_a_swarm_coordinator.php and enter the post code of the location of the swarm to find contact details for the nearest Beekeepers Association Swarm Collector who will collect the swarm and transfer it to a hive where it will help to counteract the dramatic loss of bees which we have witnessed in recent years - a much more practical way of 'saving the planet' than most such ideas! Before contacting a Bee-keeper make sure that the insects concerned are Honey Bees (they have a help page at http://www.bbka.org.uk/help/do_you_have_a_swarm.php) and be aware that the bee keeper may ask for money to cover travel expenses (though I would think that the value of the swarm to them should cover this in most cases).

Tree Bumblebee (Bombus hypnorum): This species was new to Britain in 2001 but is now widespread (see photos and map at http://www.bwars.com/bombus_hypnorum_map.htm) The combination of ginger hairs on its thorax, a black abdomen with a pure white tail end is unique and there should be no difficulty in identifying one if you get a good look as I did on the evening of June 4 when pulling Bindweed out of my garden hedge and finding one within a few inches of my hand (investigating Snowberry flowers and in no hurry to move on). I had just read up on the description after seeing reports of it on the Devon Birding blog.

Stag Beetle: I had close views of a male on my neighbour's house wall on May 21 but have seen no other reports until May 31 when one was seen at Henfield in Sussex

Nursery Tent spider (*Pisaura mirabilis*): Brian Fellows is the first to report seeing the silk tents in which these spiders hang their eggsacs when near hatching (previously they carry the sacs around under their bodies) - he saw them in Emsworth on May 30

Sailor Beetle: I was puzzled by the use of this name on the Durlston website but it turns out to be a common 'English name' for the black bodied version (*Cantharis rustica*) of the 'red bodied' Soldier Beetle (*Cantharis livida*)

Rose Chafer: Graeme Lyons has had a holiday in the New Forest and come on these beetles there on June 2. As usual his blog has much more interest than that (including observations from the Isle of Wight) - get his news from <http://analternativenaturalhistoryofsussex.blogspot.com/>

PLANTS

[\(Skip to Other Wildlife\)](#)

Lesser Meadow Rue: Flowering on Portsdown on June 2 by the entrance gate from Skew Road to Portchester Common on Portsdown - established here for many years

Opium Poppies: Started to flower in the Havant area on June 3

Pale Flax: This has been flowering since May 2 but on May 30 I found a new site for it on the seaward site of the Hayling Coastal path just south of Stoke Bay (the car park area for the Hayling Oysterbeds)

Long-stalked Cranesbill: Brian Fellows has been told by Peter Milinets-Raby of a 'new to me' site for this plant at around SU 785076 in the south east of the Marlpit Lane 'waste land'. Previously the only local site I knew of for this plant was at SU 753154 in field edges on Old Idsworth Farm south of Huckswood Lane - this site straddles the Hampshire Sussex border but is on private land.

Bloody Cranesbill: On May 30 Brian Fellows made a surprising discovery of one plant in flower hiding beneath a Spear Thistle plant alongside Southleigh Road connecting Havant to north Emsworth - the site is at SU 740073 approx and the plant is obviously a 'garden escape' but in an odd place

Broad-leaved Everlasting Pea: This imposing wild Sweet Pea was flowering on Portsdown on June 2

Biting Stonecrop: This bright yellow plant of walls and rocky places only gets a mention here because I was puzzled by the name of 'Wall Pepper' used for it on the Durlston website

American Willowherb: This is the second Willowherb I have seen this year, found on May 31 and separated from **Broadleaved Willowherb** by having club shaped stigmas where Broad Leaved stigmas are cross shaped.

Enchanter's Nightshade: This is the third Willowherb of the year and first flowers were found by Brian Fellows in Stansted Forest on June 1

Upright Hedge Parsley (*Torilis japonica*): A surprisingly early find of a single plant starting to flower in Hayling Island on May 30

Argentine Vervain (*Verbena bonariensis*): First flowers on this common garden escape seen by the Billy Trail in Havant on May 30

Small Yellow (or Straw) Foxglove (*Digitalis lutea*): Starting to flower at its Portsdown site on June 2 (see diary for that day for details and photos)

Common Toadflax: First flowers seen on Hayling on May 30

Weasel's Snout or Lesser Snapdragon (*Misopates orontium*): Two plants had started to flower as 'weeds' in the Havant New Lane allotments on June 3

Field Cow-wheat (*Melampyrum arvense*): First flowers seen at the Portsdown Skew Road site on June 2 (see diary entry for that day for more details and photos)

Self Heal: First flowers seen on June 2

Viper's Bugloss: First flowers seen on Hayling on May 30

Ivy broomrape (*Orobanche hederæ*): Flowering on Portsdown at a long established site among new housing on June 2 (see my diary entry for more details and photos - the plants are flourishing here and one resident seems to have set aside a whole flower bed for part of the colony).

Small Scabious: First flowers seen on Portsdown on June 2

Sticky groundsel (*Senecio viscosus*): What I am pretty sure were the first flowers of this species were on show at the Havant New Lane level crossing on June 3 (but I have not been back to check them out)

Spear Thistle: First flowers seen by Brian Fellows at the Langstone South Moors on May 31

Milk Thistle: Around 50 plants were in full flower at the Hayling Oysterbeds on May 30

Bristly Ox-tongue: First flowers seen on Hayling on May 30

Stinking Iris: One plant flowering in the wild on Hayling on May 30

Pyramidal Orchid: First flowers out on Portsdown on June 2

Bog Orchid: Found by Graeme Lyons at an un-named site on the Isle of Wight on June 1 - see photo on his website at

<http://analternativenaturalhistoryofsussex.blogspot.com/> which also now has photos of **Bithynian Vetch** which he found at Brighton on June 4

OTHER WILDLIFE

Roe Deer: Earlier this year in March marks on bushes at Brook Meadow at Emsworth seemed to indicate that Roe Deer were present and that a buck had been 'thrashing' the bushes to clear 'velvet' from his growing antlers and now, on May 30, there is further proof the Roe frequent Brook Meadow at night in the shape

of a very young kid discovered in the long grass by dog walkers (more probably by their dogs!) around 6am. Another report of Roe this week came from Durlston where a buck was seen with his antlers 'ready for action' and in the course of checking on the internet I was able to clarify my own understanding of their breeding cycle. I have long thought that their 'rut' (i.e. mating) occurred at this time of year but what I have now learnt is that the activity at this time of year (including the creation of the circular or figure of eight 'race tracks' around prominent trees) is a 'male only' affair in which the bucks are establishing their territories. The mating does not occur until later (end of July into August) but (to make it more complicated) the fertilised eggs remain floating about in the doe's uterus for five months until the end of December when (to quote from the full account given in <http://www.roedeer.com/roereproduction.htm>) .. "At the end of December or early January, when the embryo is little more than 0.3mm long, it is genetically programmed to reactivate from the period of delayed implantation. The embryo sends a message to the mother in the form of a protein unique to the roe deer. When the mother receives this message she starts a 'cascade' effect of hormones (mostly oestrogens), which enables the embryo to rapidly expand. After a short period of very fast growth, the embryo attaches to the inner wall of the uterus, forming a link with the mother through the placenta, and normal fetal growth follows for a further five months." This source explains the reasons for this strategy.

Brown Long-eared Bat: On May 29 a cat owner in East Sussex was presented with a bat of this species - I rather suspect the bat did not survive but the report does not make that clear. Another item of Bat news comes from Peter Milinets-Raby via Brian Fellows website (diary entry for June 1) on which there is a photo of a hairless **baby Pipistelle bat** which Peter took on May 30 at Bodium Castle (I think this is a spelling error for Bodiam Castle, a National Trust property close to the A21 at Robertsbridge, north of Hastings). I think this is a few weeks early for the normal birth time and I assume the photo was taken during night-time when the mother would be out feeding (leaving her young unattended, possibly in a creche). The photo shows numerous 'ticks' on the bat and I suspect this is not unusual.

Basking Shark: One was seen off Chesil Cove at Portland on May 28 - this seems to be as far east as these creatures go in the English Channel. Little seems to be known about where they spend our winter months but when the plankton blooms and attracts them to our waters the sightings cluster around the south coast of Cornwall and Devon in the south and the whole west coast of Scotland with some seen at the north end of the east coast

WILDLIFE DIARY AND NEWS FOR MAY 30 - JUNE 5 (WEEK 22 OF 2011)

[\(Skip to previous week\)](#)

[Sun 5 June](#)

[\(Link to previous day's entry\)](#)

[**Summary of past week's news**](#)

My latest weekly summary of reports is now available by clicking [Weekly Summary](#) here

[Thu 2 June](#)

[\(Link to previous day's entry\)](#)

A great morning on Portsdown

My target this morning was to check on the sites near the west end of Portsdown in the Skew Road area above Portchester but I made a quick first stop in the carpark east of the London Road to have a look for **Bastard Toadflax**, which I did not see, but I did see my first **Mother Shipton moth** and **Meadow Brown butterflies** while listening to a singing **Lesser Whitethroat**.

At Skew Road my first stop was at Portchester Common and just inside the entrance gate from the road the **Lesser Meadow Rue** plants (long established there but probably of garden origin) were in flower as was the **Wild Privet** with its much narrower leaves than the garden variety. A little further in along the north edge of the site my first **Broad-leaved Everlasting Pea** was in flower with a **Small Blue** butterfly nearby. Next new flower was **Small Scabious** accompanied by **Brimstones** and **Common Blue** at ground level with an unseen **Skylark** high overhead. No sign of the **Basil Thyme** I was hoping for but as I headed back west I came on late **Hairy Violet** flowers and my first **Self Heal** flowers plus **Common Centaury plants** nearing the flowering stage.

Back at Skew Road I discovered that it is now possible to walk through the field west of the Portchester Common fenceline down to the parking area near the bridge over the M27 but as I had my car I drove down to that area and then walked a little further west along the M27 fenceline to find the **Field Cow-wheat** which has been established there for more than ten years but which is thought to be an 'illegal' introduction of plants from the Isle of Wight by someone referred to as 'the Portchester Postman'. Whatever their origin the plants are still thriving there and if you want to see them walk west along the fenceline a little beyond the 30 mph road sign until you are opposite a bare patch in the scrub on the north side of the road - you will find them mainly on the motor way side of the fence but with some now growing at your feet on your side of the fence. (One or two plants are now growing by the crash barrier at the bend leading to the road bridge - behind this barrier two clumps of **Common Spotted Orchids** are flowering, one clump having 12 spikes).

Close view of a Field Cow-wheat plant plus a representative group of the many plants now on show

Another cluster of Field Cow-wheat

I now walked south over the bridge, crossing to its west side, and about 20 yards south of the bridge I climbed over the crash barrier onto a tarmac path leading through a grassy area around the housing, and when this path started to go downhill and the housing come into view I saw I had reached another target species, a large colony of **Ivy Broomrape** flourishing at the foot of the Ivy rich hedge on the west side of the path but also growing in a garden bed that seems to have been specially created for it at the foot of a garage wall (see photo below). There are at least 50 spikes in this bed but the total number growing under the ivy covered hedge is much larger - I guess the total number of spikes is well over 200 (maybe 300).

A very few of the 200+ spikes of Ivy Broomrape seen today at Portchester

A view approaching the Ivy Broomrape site (most plants are out of sight to the right of the picture)

Back north of the bridge I turned left into Nelson Lane and walked up it until it turns north and enters the shade of trees. I did not go round that bend but crossed to the north side of the road where the **Small Yellow** (or **Straw**) **Foxgloves** can still be found on the steep south facing hillside, though the large number that were once here has been greatly diminished by increasing scrub (I think these plants have been here since the Motorway was built in the 1970s - they too may be the work of the Portchester Postman?)

Three views of the young Yellow Foxglove plants beside Nelson Lane
Returning to my car I found several **Pyramidal Orchids** just starting to flower

One of the Pyramidal Orchids now starting to flower

Mon 30 May

[\(Link to previous day's entry\)](#)

Baby Egrets now out of their nests

This afternoon I set off on a bike tour of north Hayling but made a first stop at Langstone Pond to check on the **Egret nests** which had been built in early April with 12 nests occupied by Apr 16. Wikipedia tells me that **Little Egrets** lay 3 to 5 eggs, incubate them for 21 to 25 days and that the young birds then stay in or around the nests for 40 to 45 days before leaving home. This means that the first eggs should have hatched on or soon after May 7 and that the juveniles will not start to leave the nests until around June 16.

Today I saw at least 5 juveniles and watched a couple of them being fed at one nest. At least one had ventured quite a way from its nest out to the end of a branch where I could clearly see its size and the state of its plumage (both of which could have made an inexperienced observer, who did not query its greenish legs and bill, take it to be an adult).

The most surprising bird seen here was a **Kingfisher** giving one close but brief flight view before vanishing. As **Kingfishers** normally have two broods we do not normally see adults away from nest sites until late summer. Juveniles of the first brood are chased out of their home territories as soon as they can fly and so this bird was likely to be a juvenile though it could have been an adult whose nest has been destroyed by man or nature. Whatever the reason for its unexpected presence there is a chance that having reached the coast it will stay around if it can find fish (and absence of fish in its nesting area could be another reason for its appearance here - the Brook Meadow site at Emsworth had a **Kingfisher** sighting on May 15 which may have been attributed to this cause)

Another unexpected bird was a **Cuckoo** that called continuously while I was at the pond and which has been reported by Wade Lane residents for at least a couple of days, so seemingly settled here. (It was my first of the year but I still have not seen a **Swift**)

Other notes from Langstone Pond are that (a) the **Swan Pair are still present though now down to three cygnets** (from seven on May 9), (b) a **female Mallard was shepherding 10 ducklings** (probably hatched today as that number are

unlikely to survive a whole day of predation) **while fending off the male desires of five drakes** surrounding her despite the efforts of a young lady attempting to drive them off in response to the duck's loud and continuous quacking of 'No, not now, go away', (c) the **dead bodies** of a **Black-headed Gull** and a well grown **Mallard duckling** were floating head down on the water, (d) a **male Tufted Duck** was still present (a pair has been here since Apr 16) and a troop of black ducklings can hopefully be expected soon, and (e) I think I heard a **Sedge Warbler** singing in the scrub at the north end of the pond in addition to the regular **Reed Warblers**. Crossing Langstone bridge I stopped to watch a single **Herring Gull viciously harrying a Heron** - another aspect of the avian desire to take advantage of the food offered at this time of year by the eggs and young of other species (and sometimes their own), and the equally strong desire of parents to defend their young.

Nearing the Oysterbeds I found the **Hound's Tongue plant** still present but looking a bit withered by drought, while in the damper ground of the field inland of the old rail line I could just make out with my naked eye a splattering of what might have been large snowflakes but which my bins showed to be **Greater Sea-Spurrey**.

Entering the Oysterbeds area through the north gate I soon found my first **Viper's Bugloss** in full flower and among the seaweed strewn stones around the main pool I watched a **Turnstone** - unusual here in summer but apparently two were present today. Then, from the view point where RSPB staff Chris Cockburn and Tim Callaway were trying to enthuse children with views of **nesting Terns** through their telescopes, I (by turning my back on the bird interest) had a magnificent view of at least **50 Milk Thistle** plants in full flower with many more **Slender Thistles** flowering 'at their feet'. I was told that Jason Crook had counted **150 Common Tern nests** here but, although there were clearly **many Common Tern** and (I was told) **16 Sandwich Tern nests**, I may have misheard these numbers. No **Little Terns** have attempted to nest here but I think Chris Cockburn said that **up to 50 pairs have attempted to nest on South Binness island**.

Not far from the **Milk Thistles** the shingle on the shore of Stoke Bay had a plant of **Bittersweet (Woody Nightshade)** which stood out on its own below the high tide mark of the other plants and rubbish swept up by the recent strong winds and high tides. On close inspection I found that it was firmly rooted (strongly enough to resist wind and tide but unable to stand erect against the onslaught) and had stout woody lower sections of its stems probably around 60cm long - this must have been the **'marinum' variant of the normal plant**.

A short diversion back up the old rail line found three healthy **Common Spotted orchids** in flower just north of the gate into the fields east of the railway, and a ride south to look for **Dyer's Greenweed** failed to find that in flower (but did find that the big metal 'container' belonging to Huntingdonshire council had, after a good many years, been removed!). Other finds in this area were lots of **Yellow-horned Poppy** at its best, a single first flower of **Common Toadflax**, and a newcomer to this area, **Pale Flax** growing on the seaward edge of the rail track not far south of the gate out of the riding stables.

The short path joining the pill box beside the railway to the West Lane road bends had a plant of **Stinking Iris** in flower and the hedge of West Lane had a mass display of **Honeysuckle flowers** while **Field Roses** were flowering along Daw Lane. Nearing Northney a **Skylark was singing** above the huge Potato crop in the north Hayling fields (does that make a good nesting choice for them?) and at the

North Common Open Space I found the nestbox on a telegraph post near the houses west of the entrance to the Common had a **Kestrel** perched in its entrance (I was told of **Kestrels possibly nesting** there earlier this spring). A tour of the site found a healthy looking plant of **Fragrant Agrimony** (no flower buds yet but several plants of common **Agrimony** were in flower elsewhere on this afternoon's tour) and a small patch of **Ragged Robin** flowering on very dry soil. On the way out I saw many plants of **Hedgerow Cranebill** still flowering while along the north bank of the parking area the flowers of several large plants of **Viper's Bugloss** attracted me to take a closer look and in so doing I found my first **Bristly Ox-tongue flowers** along with an extremely early plant of **Upright Hedge Parsley** just coming into flower around a month early.

Back at home I had a good look at a couple of 'daisy' flowers collected en route and found them both to be my first **Scented Mayweed**.

WILDLIFE DIARY AND NEWS FOR MAY 23 - 29 (WEEK 21 OF 2011)

BIRDS

Divers: This week there have been **no reports of Black-throated** and only **one of Red-throated Divers** along the south coast. **Great Northern** seemed to dry up after May 23 when 5 were seen from Christchurch Harbour but at the end of the week there were still two in the Exmouth area of Devon

Black-browed Albatross: 44 years ago (in 1967) an Albatross from the Falkland Islands lost his bearings and found itself in Shetland. Since then he has returned each spring to the Scottish Islands in the hope of finding a mate but the Gannets which he has approached have all turned him down. As these birds can live for more than 70 years he is likely to keep trying for many more years and he is back again this year, reported off Ayrshire on May 21.

Sooty Shearwater: After 8 winter sightings in Jan and Feb there were no more until May 7 when one was off Cornwall with another report from Devon on May 11. This week there has been another report from Lands End on May 26

Manx Shearwater: These return to our coasts to nest in April and by now they are to be seen off the west country on their daily fishing trips. Most of the sightings are on the north coast of Cornwall (e.g. 7500 of them off Pendeen on May 26) but quite a few are to be seen in the English Channel (e.g. 150 off Portland on May 22) and on May 26 Sandy Point on Hayling has a sighting of six birds

Storm Petrel: These also are back with us to nest and 85 were off Start Point in Devon on May 23 but the report which caught my eye came from Portland on May 25 when 6 birds were lured in by tape recordings to be caught, ringed and released

Bittern: One was heard booming in the Kent Stour valley on May 21

Little Bittern: First report for the year came from St Martin's in the Scillies on May 18. According to the BTO around four of these birds visit Britain each year and breeding was confirmed in 1984 when a pair raised three young in Yorkshire

Red-breasted Goose: On May 21 one flew low and close to the observer on the shore at Goring (Worthing), near enough to see it was not ringed, possibly indicating that some escapees from captivity have now started feral breeding in this country (young 'born free' would not be ringed)

Shelduck: More ducklings appeared this week at Testwood Lakes near Southampton and at Christchurch Harbour (brood of 11 on May 25)

Mallard: One was seen on the Itchen near Winchester on May 22 with 19 ducklings. The brood of a single female does not normally exceed 10 so I suspect this was a merging of two broods.

Hen Harrier: One was seen in the Findon Valley area at Worthing on May 23 making me wonder if this could in fact have been a Montagu's Harrier but a look at Birds of Hampshire shows that even in the early 1990s the 'winter and passage' period when the species could be expected in the county had extended into June

Red-footed Falcon: Since May 17 there have been sightings in Cornwall, Somerset and Kent

Hobby: These have by now mostly dispersed to their breeding sites but as many as 19 could still be seen in the Kent Stour Valley on May 24

Quail: This could well turn out to be a good 'Quail year' with a dozen reports this week, half of them from different sites in southern England and the rest from the continent where e.g. May 26 saw 12 at one Fench site, 13 at a Netherlands site and 43 at a different Netherlands site. On May 22 a French site had 28 birds.

Stone Curlew: A late migrant was at Sandwich Bay on May 26

Kentish Plover: The third for this spring was at Pegwell Bay on May 21 while others have been seen in Somerset and Lancashire (plus Belgium and the Netherlands, but none yet on the Pilsey Sands of Thorney Island!)

Least Sandpiper: The first to be seen in Britain this year was in Yorkshire on May 26

Pectoral Sandpiper: The second for the year was at Wadebridge in Cornwall on May 26 and 27 (first was on the Lymington shore on May 7)

Curlew Sandpiper: Singles were at Christchurch Harbour and the Bembridge Marshes (IoW) on May 21 (possibly the same bird?)

Purple Sandpiper: More than 20 were still on the Cornish coast in the Penzance area on May 24

Broad-billed Sandpiper: One was in Norfolk on May 27 after the first of the year in Nottinghamshire on May 13

Black-tailed Godwit: A report from the Elmley Marshes on Sheppey on May 22 is of "hundreds of Icelandic Birds heading north". The first report of birds heading for Iceland came from Christchurch Harbour on May 10. I wonder how the eruptions and dust clouds will affect their breeding this year?

Red-necked Phalarope: I do not normally hear of these birds in England (presumably females returning south after completing their egg-laying duties) until mid-June but this year the first was seen on May 6 and this week a second was seen on May 20 while May 24 brought news of three birds in England and another two in the Scottish Islands (these may be nesting there) - have these been forced to retreat from Iceland without breeding?

Long-tailed Skua: On May 24 observers on North Uist reported 304 birds heading north to breed - I see these birds are dependent on Lemmings to fuel them and thus their breeding success varies with the numbers of these animals each year so maybe they influence the breeding success of the Brent (if the Skuas eat too many Lemmings the Arctic Foxes are forced to eat Brent goslings?)

Little Tern: On May 21 Rye Harbour reported that Little Terns were only then pairing up (but another report on May 27 was of just 15 Little Terns at that site). No further news from Langstone Harbour.

Guillemot: Durlston reported the first chicks hatching on May 25

Cuckoo: A strange second hand story from Groombridge (near Crowborough in north Sussex) says that on April 22 a bird which looked like a Cuckoo was seen to fly up out of a chicken pen and what was thought to be its egg was subsequently found in one of the chicken nests. The only theory which seems to make sense of this is that the wild bird nest in which the Cuckoo had intended to lay had been destroyed just when the egg had already formed within the Cuckoo, which could not stop the egg-laying process and laid its egg in the first available nest. Without further information I can't make sense of this story - most chicken nests are within a wooden coop where they would be hidden from the Cuckoo and in any case I would have thought the Cuckoo would be more likely to abort its egg on the ground than to enter the Chicken coop (though some Chickens do create their own outdoor nests)

Nightjar: There were probably five present in three different clearings of Havant Thicket on May 18 (assumed date) and two were in the West Walk woods near Wickham in the Meon Valley on May 26. On May 18 what was presumably an exhausted migrant was seen on a garden fence in Selsey village and it was still around that area on May 22.

Rock Pipit: These have gradually been extending their breeding range eastward along the Hampshire coast in recent years and on May 27 there were signs that a pair were breeding in West Sussex for the first time at Shoreham

Bluethroat: One was singing at Seasalter on the north Kent coast on May 17 and maybe the same bird was heard and photographed at Oare Marshes near Faversham on May 21

Chiffchaff: On May 25 yet another report of one of these warblers singing both Chiffchaff and Willow Warbler songs came from Sandwich Bay in Kent

Spotted Flycatcher: One was seen at Sinah Warren (south Hayling Island) on May 29

Golden Oriole: Reports this week of birds in the Scillies, Cornwall, Dorset and Kent with others in Belgium and the Netherlands. The Dorset report is of a bird trapped and ringed at Portland on May 25

Woodchat Shrike: There have been at least 25 reports of this species on Scilly Islands since Apr 4 but on May 19 one bird that has been on St Martin's since May 10 was pronounced to be of the Balearic Race (*Lanius senator badius*) which was added to the British List in 2004 after one was seen at Portland. The British Ornithologists Union announcement of this included:- "This is the first, and to date, only British record of this subspecies of Woodchat Shrike which is known to breed only on Corsica, Sardinia and the Balearic Islands. It is distinguishable mainly by the absence of (or greatly reduced) white primary patch, and this feature was accurately detailed in the written descriptions submitted to support the record. Other features are the slightly less black on the forehead and a slightly heavier bill, but these two features are difficult to determine in the field and are best considered as 'in the hand' features."

Magpie: Two reasons for this species to be in the news this week. The first is that the parents of a family regularly seen in my garden have changed their behaviour and turned into avian equivalents of Apache ground attack helicopters as they seek to capture nestlings and fledglings of other bird species in order to feed their own fast growing young. This aggressive behaviour was also exhibited this week by a **Carrion Crow**, described on Hoslist by Richard Creer (who I think lives not far from Havant) who said:- "Yesterday (May 23) my partner was mobbed by a crow and received a peck on the head, hard enough to draw blood. It then followed her for some distance as she beat a retreat. Presumably there were nestlings nearby but is this unusual?"

The second story comes from Simon Ingram in Eastleigh. When he came home on May 23 he found a **sickly Magpie** in his garden and at daybreak on May 24 he was woken by the noise of at least 100 Corvids (mainly **Jackdaws**) perched everywhere in and around his garden, all focussing their interest on something he could not see at the end of his garden. Eventually he saw the cause of the mass gathering was the **sick Magpie** which was struggling to hop over a fence around a compost heap. After a short while (long enough to brew and drink a cup of tea) the mass of corvids fell silent and dispersed and when Simon went into the garden he found **the Magpie was dead**. So far as I know they had not attacked the Magpie but had somehow been summoned to assemble in order to witness its death throes - as soon as it died they lost interest. Maybe this was a version of a **Rooks Parliament** (something I have only seen once near Portchester Castle) when many Rooks formed a noisy circle on the ground with one bird in its centre seemingly being tried for some misdemeanour under Rook Law.

Common Rosefinch: The first that I have heard of this year was at Portland on May 25

Corn Bunting: At least one was singing (and presumably breeding) in Hampshire this week - seen at Old Winchester Hill in the Meon valley on May 21

INSECTS

Dragonflies

Golden Ringed Dragonfly: First sighting was near Brockenhurst in the New Forest on May 21

Southern Hawker: First seen at the Lower Test Marshes near Southampton on May 24

Brown Hawker: First in Berkshire on May 19

Norfolk Hawker: First in Suffolk on May 20

Keeled Skimmer: Seen at Cadnam in the New Forest on May 19 after the first report from Cornwall on May 15

Scarce Blue-tailed Damsel: First sightings in Devon and Glamorgan both on May 19

Ruddy Darter: First seen in Surrey on May 19

Butterflies

Species seen this week have been **Large Skipper, Dingy Skipper, Grizzled Skipper, Large, Small and Green-veined White, Orange Tip** (now becoming scarce but 5 caterpillars were seen near Portchester Castle), **Green Hairstreak, Small Copper, Small Blue** (Durlston reports their highest ever numbers of 1000 or more and at Brighton they are doing so well that there is no room for more at the Dorothy Stringer School 'Butterfly Haven' site causing them to overflow into a tiny front garden lawn which happens to have downland turf), **Silver Studded Blue** (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Silver-studded_Blue tells us that the caterpillars are protected by Black Ants which enjoy the 'honeydew' exuding from the caterpillars and this relationship with ants continues after the emergence of the adults - witnessed at Iping Common near Midhurst on May 26), **Brown Argus, Common Blue, Adonis Blue, Holly Blue, Duke of Burgundy, Red Admiral, Painted Lady** (four reports of probable migrants this week), **Small Tortoiseshell** (I was reluctant to report a couple of fresh specimens seen on Portsdown on May 19 as early summer brood insects but this week the emergence has been reported from Gosport on May 24), **Peacock, Comma, Small Pearl-bordered and Pearl-bordered Fritillary, Glanville Fritillary** (seen not only on the Isle of Wight but also at Farnborough where 2 have been present for six days - probably an attempted introduction), **Heath Fritillary** (large numbers in the Blean Woods at Canterbury on May 24 - they emerged there on May 18), **Speckled Wood, Grayling** (one seen on the Lymington shore on May 21- previous earliest for Hampshire was 3 June in 1992), **Meadow Brown** (seen in Dorset, Hants and Sussex this week after the first emerged near Battle in East Sussex on May 19) and **Small Heath**.

Moths

Selective list of newly emerged species

Six-spot Burnet: First reported in West Sussex on May 24

Privet Hawkmoth and Eyed Hawkmoth: First reports on May 26 and May 24 respectively. These join the Poplar (first seen May 5), Narrow-bordered Bee (May 4), Broad-bordered Bee (May 3), Humming-bird (Feb 24), Elephant (May 13), and Small Elephant (May 8) Hawkmoths which have been out since the dates shown

Cinnabar Moth: Only now becoming common this species has been seen since Apr 22 (many were reported on Oxenbourne Down back on May 8)

Mullein Moth caterpillars: These gaudy creatures are reported to have been seen on Oxenbourne Down as early as May 8 and have since been found in Langstone (Havant) and Shoreham (both on May 22)

The Concolorous (*Chortodes extrema*): This species was new to me when I saw a report of it from Thanet in Kent on May 26. UK Moths tells me it is a .. "A very local species occurring mainly in the Huntingdonshire fens. There have been a few records in the south, which are attributed to migrants, and its larvae feed internally on the stems of Small Reed species"

Other Insects

For those interested in extending their knowledge of Bumblebees, Spiders, Flies, Insects and the like I strongly recommend that they follow the regular contributions by Chris Bentley and Brian Banks to the Rye Bay website at <http://rxwildlife.org.uk/> and Graeme Lyons blog at <http://analternativenaturalhistoryofsussex.blogspot.com/> as I am not qualified to comment on their curious finds (which I nevertheless find fascinating)

Green-legged Sawfly: A photo of a long-bodied, winged insect was published on the Sussex Butterfly Conservation website entry for May 23 inviting anyone to identify it and what sounds likely to be the correct name of Green-legged Sawfly (*Tenthredo mesomelas*) was contributed by Mark Colvin. See <http://www.naturespot.org.uk/species/tenthredo-mesomela> for photos, distribution map and a full description of this insect and its lifestyle (although based in Leicestershire this website seems to be an excellent source of information on almost all branches of wildlife and I thorough recommend adding it to your Favourites - the homepage is at <http://www.naturespot.org.uk/home>)

Hornet: A close-up photo of a 'Hornet devouring a Drone Fly' which appeared on the Kent Stour Valley birding site (<http://www.kentos.org.uk/Stodmarsh/Maysightings2011.htm>) in the entry for May 24 may convey a wrong impression of the diet of adult Hornets - in fact the adults are gentle creatures which love a good meal of pollen but their larvae insist on being fed insect meat and the Hornet which has just chewed up a hoverfly will carry it back to its nest and disgorge the pre-digested meal for its larvae to consume

Uncommon Bumblebees: Two or three of the Large Garden Bumblebee (*Bombus ruderatus*) were seen in the Pett Level area (Rye Bay) on May 27 and on May 28 one of the Tree Bumblebees (*B. hypnorum*) which are now spreading through England became the 9th to be seen in Devon (only two known to have reached Cornwall so far). Other Bumblebee species are suffering from the drought in south east England which is withering the wild flowers on whose pollen the Bees depend.

'Thigh Beetle' (Oedemera nobilis): A report for May 17 on the north Kent Seasalter website made me aware for the first time that these easily identified beetles are all males - the females do not have the swollen legs. This fact can be checked out on the Naturespot website recommended above where you can see a photo of the thin, graceful legs of the female (and become aware that there are other somewhat similar 'swollen leg' beetle species in the group called 'False Blister' Beetles

PLANTS

Black Mustard: The first mention of this in flower comes from Durlston on May 24

Perennial Wall-Rocket: This had begun to flower again on May 23 at its site south of the disused railway signal box by the New Lane level crossing in Havant but it was difficult to detect the new growth and flowers among the mass of dead stems from last year.

Perforate St John's Wort: First flowers seen beside the railway track east of Havant Station (and just west of the disused Signal Box)

Tree Mallow: First report of this in flower came from the Slipper Millpond site at Emsworth on May 25

Bastard Toadflax: First report (with a close photo of the flowers) appeared on May 26 (see Graeme Lyons website at <http://analternativenaturalhistoryofsussex.blogspot.com/> which also has photos of several New Forest specialities such as **Lesser Bladderwort, Hampshire Purslane** and **Lesser Marshwort** taken today (May 29) and so not yet incorporated in my database from which I extract my new flowering plant info) On May 28 Durlston also reported **Bastard Toadflax** with the 'new to me' information that the plant is host to a **rare rust fungus call Puccinia thesii**

Hedgerow Cranesbill: A patch of white flowered plants which has been flowering in a tony strip of earth around a lamp-post in the Havant Bus Station annually since at least 2007 has in the past been wrongly identified by me as a garden escape of **Pencilled Cranesbill** but a closer look at it on May 27 showed that it is a **white flowered form of Hedgerow Cranesbill**

Dyer's Greenweed: Reported to be in flower at Durlston on May 24

Rest Harrow: The first flowers that I know of where seen by me in an unlikely situation beside the Petersfield Road running through Leigh Park (Havant) on May 23

Sea Clover: This had started to flower at a regular site on the Warblington Farm fields on May 24

Clustered Clover: Brian Fellows found this had started to flower again on May 20 in its only known SU 70 site by the A27 underpass at Warblington. A good photo of the tiny flowers is on his website at <http://www.emsworthwildlife.hampshire.org.uk/0-0-0-wildlife-diary.htm>

Grass Vetchling: This was flowering abundantly at several places in the Broadmarsh area at Havant on May 25

Hop Trefoil: First flowers were seen on May 22 on the North Thorney seawall

Parsley Piert: Flowering in St Faith's Church yard (Havant) on May 24

Agrimony: First flowers reported at Durlston on May 24

Caper Spurge: A mass of flowering plants seen on the Portsmouth Water Company's private waste tip at Bedhampton on May 23

Fool's Parsley: One plant flowering in Havant Park flowerbeds on May 28

Knotted Hedge Parsley: This species is flourishing this year with finds during this week of multiple plants appearing at three sites in the Havant area where they have not been seen before

Brookweed: This had clearly been flowering for some time before I came across it for the first time this year in the marshy SSSI at Warblington Farm on May 24

Dotted Loosestrife: The first garden plants were flowering in Havant on May 24, probably indicating that the wild **Yellow Loosestrife** is also probably flowering on the Gipsies Plain near Rowlands Castle (by the north east exit from Hammond's Land Coppice)

Sea Milkwort: Also seen in the Warlington SSSI on May 24 was a great mass of these flowers

Tufted Forget-me-not: Also well in flower at the Warblington SSSI on May 24 (and no doubt also on the Langstone South Moors by the central stream)

Carrot Broomrape: Reported flowering at Durlston on May 28

Corn Chamomile: On close inspection involving dissection of the flowerhead to see the shape of the scales among the disk florets I am pretty well certain that the semi-aromatic plants I found on the old Broadmarsh playing fields on May 12 and re-visited this week on May 25 are not the alien **Chamaemelum mixtum** that I suggested in my diary entry for May 25 but are in fact examples of the sadly declining British native **Corn Chamomile** which I have never seen before (a different species from the continental *Anthemis austriaca* which is sold and widely planted under the name of name of Corn Chamomile, making money for the wildflower seed companies and supplying a feel-good factor to those who unknowingly plant it as a 'native British' species)

Dwarf Thistle: The first of these 'picnic thistles' was flowering at Durlston on May 26

Musk Thistle: Also first flowers at Durlston on May 28

Wall Lettuce: I came on the first flowers on May 23 and it is now widely flowering in the Havant area

Hawkweed Oxtongue: First flowers in Havant on May 23

Wild Onion (aka Crow Garlic): First find in Emsworth by Brian Fellows on May 27

New Zealand Cabbage Palm (Cordyline australis): Although a garden plant I first noted the white flowers on these trees in Havant gardens on May 23

Bird's Nest Orchid: Flowering at Ebernoe near Midhurst on May 27

Fragrant Orchid: Just starting to flower at Noar Hill near Petersfield on May 22

OTHER WILDLIFE

Slow Worm: A reptile survey of the very dry ground at the Marlpit Lane site between Funtington and Woodmancote over the past couple of months was described in Brian Fellows website entry for May 22 - he wrote:- "Peter Milinets-Raby has just completed a six visit survey of the site for reptiles using Roofing Felt Mats. A total of 80 mats were put down in various locations around the site. Two visits produced counts of over 50 Slow Worms. Only a maximum of 4 Common Lizards were noted and a maximum of two Grass Snakes were seen. Peter believes the male "eating" the female in the photo is mating behaviour."

Medicinal Leech: The entry for May 24 on the Kent Stour Valley birding website includes the sentence:- "The deep pool along the Nature Trail between the Lampen Wall and the Alder Wood had a small jack Pike and at least one Medicinal Leech in it." I am intrigued as to how the birder discovered the presence of the Leech as I understand that the only practical way to prove their presence is to wade into the water and wait for the Leeches to attach themselves to you in the hope of drawing your blood (this does not involve too much loss of blood if you are wearing wellies!)

WILDLIFE DIARY AND NEWS FOR MAY 23 - 29 (WEEK 21 OF 2011)

Wed 25 May

Grass Vetchling and maybe Chamaemelum mixtum?

On May 12 I discovered what seemed to be **Chamomile** plants growing along the northern edge of the abandoned Broadmarsh playing fields north of Harts Farm Way at SU 701 057 just south of the A27 between the Hermitage Stream and the relatively new A27 interchange junction. My objective this morning was to have a further look at these plants but first I visited the top of the Broadmarsh mountain to look for the **Hairy Vetchling** of which I found the leaves (but no flowers yet) in several places. What I did find was a huge mass of both **Grass Vetchling** and **Salsify** (plus many freshly flowering **Hogweed** plants) and as I had my camera with me I took the photos below.

A typical view of Grass Vetchling and a close up of the large fleshy leaves with one flower

>

Side view of a couple of flowers

Salsify flowers and a panoramic view of the multitude of plants (about one third of the total)

Descending the mountain to the slipway I headed north under Harts Farm Way alongside the Hermitage stream (on which I counted **33 Swans** today)

Reaching the 'Chamomile' site I took more photos and brought home a further sample about which more below. While here I saw my first **Cinnabar moth** in flight as well as **Common Blue**, **Speckled Wood** and **Red Admiral** butterflies.

Chamaemelum Mixtum ? Overview of site and close up of some plants

Chamaemelum Mixtum ? flower head and leaves

Checking out the 'Chamomile' at home I found that it could not be **Scented Mayweed** as that is hairless and my plants were hairy throughout but it was unlikely to be **Chamomile** as the plants found today were not aromatic as the May 12 sample had been - that sample soon lost its scent and the one I handled today seemed to have no or very little scent. The bracts (Phyllaries) surrounding the flowerhead had white edges (correct for **Chamomile**) but the top phyllaries were edged with brown hairs which might indicate **Scentless Mayweed** (but that is hairless) or **Corn Chamomile** (but that has all-green phyllaries and broader leaves).

Turning to Stace's Flora I found that he lists a rare alien called **Chamaemelum mixtum** which is non-aromatic and has the densely pubescent phyllaries of my samples so I have sent photos and my notes to Martin Rand for his opinion (maybe he will send me on to Eric Clement!)

Tue 24 May

A walk to Warblington SSSI

Before my afternoon walk I logged my first **Redshank** flower spikes in a Havant alleyway and found **Parsley Piert** starting to flower in St Faith's church yard. After lunch I set off along the Emsworth Road passing a garden which had my first **Dotted Loosestrife** in flower as well as a single tiny **ripe Wild Strawberry fruit**. In the original Warblington Cemetery **Round-leaved Fluellen** plants were full grown but had no flowers yet, and at the west end of the new cemetery extension the 'natural burial' area was looking colourful with its massive display of wildflower seed sown plants - the majority where the white **Corn Chamomile look-alike Anthemis austriaca** but amongst them were **Corn Cockles**, **Poppies** and **Cornflowers** (no sign of **Chicory** so far).

Moving on to my target area, the SSSI wetland field which carries the main Warblington Farm stream down to the sea east of the old cemetery, I found a great display of **Ragged Robin** and began to count the **Southern Marsh orchids** which totalled 113 (probably quite a few more hidden in the long grass). Other plants noted here were **Brookweed**, **Tufted Forget-me-not** and **Brooklime**. At the southern end of the field it was dominated by **Sea Milkwort** and **Celery-leaved Buttercup** but I failed to find the **Subterranean Clover** flowers that I was expecting (I found the leaves but the flowers were finished).

Climbing over the seawall with the tide fairly high I thought there was enough dry beach for me to get to Nore Barn at the Emsworth end without getting my feet wet (which I did, but near Conigar Point the water rose very near to the top of my boots!).

The extreme south east field of Warblington Farm also failed to give me **Subterranean Clover** but did give me my first sight of **Crested Dog's Tail** and **Common Saltmarsh** grass and fresh flowers of **Sea Clover**.

Continuing north up the public path along the east end of the farm fields I passed a very noisy **Great Spotted Woodpecker** whose non-stop 'Chik, Chik' calls may have been a warning to juveniles in a nest to keep quiet so as not to reveal their presence to me.

Reaching the Havant Road I crossed over and found, at the foot of the wooden fence extending west from the Selangor Avenue junction, a line of **Knotted Hedge Parsley** plants flowering at the second 'new site' that I had come across in two days (continuing the list of new sites which Brian Fellows has found recently in Emsworth). Heading homewards I noted a single plant of **Red Dead Nettle** still in flower (normally extremely common this plant is currently 'resting') before reaching the A27 underpass area where the **Clustered Clover** is flowering for at least its fifth year. Here I found Jonathon Huett searching for these plants, which are not easy to spot, and was able to show them to him.

Mon 23 May

A walk in Havant on a windy day

Last week I had been asked to look at a minor development site in Leigh Park to comment on its wildlife interest and as the wind was so strong today I decided to walk there rather than cycle. This gave me a chance to look for new plants along a route that was partly new to me but the first two newly flowering plants were near the New Lane level crossing in the railway carpark that I am very familiar with.

Here I found both **Hawkweed Oxtongue** and **Perennial Wall-rocket** newly in flower with **Perforate St John's Wort** just starting to flower on the railway ballast. Just across the level crossing I was pleased to see that the new occupants of the industrial site (who had sprayed weedkiller around the outer walls of their buildings) had not succeeded in killing off all the **Pellitory of the Wall** and I hope the few plants which are still alive will soon colonize the whole area that had been sprayed. Next came the Havant cemetery where the **Duke of Argyle's Teapant** (which seemed to have ceased flowering when I was last there) had been refreshed by a touch of rain and was once more covered in flowers.

Crossing the Petersfield Road I made a more significant discovery by the pavement on its west side where **Rest Harrow** was newly flowering. Next new flower find was more unexpected, especially in a small Leigh Park front garden, and was of a **New Zealand Cabbage Palm (Cordyline australis)** with a mass of fresh flowers, and when I got to my destination (a currently dry but usually boggy area called Hooks Row on the south side of the Barncroft Primary and Junior schools) there was another unexpected find - a single clump of **Glyceria plicata Sweetgrass**. This grass, plus some **Yellow Iris** in flower, were the only points of interest at ground level but above them the scene was redeemed by some **50 healthy oak trees** which I fear will be diminished by any development here.

I came home via southern route through old Bedhampton past **Greater Celandine** plants at the Bidbury Mead carparks and my first **Wall Lettuce** flowering appropriately on top of an old wall. From Mill Lane I followed the Wayfarers Way path back to Havant and this took me past the old water storage tanks in the Bedhampton Springs site which have long been converted to a rubbish dump for Portsmouth Water and on the mounds of rubble lots of **Caper Spurge** had just started to flower.

At the junction of Brockhampton Lane and Solent Road (on the north side of Solent Road just west of the Tesco store entrance road) **Knotted Hedge Parsley** was an

unexpected sight and nearby the first flowering spike of **Great Plantain** was seen. Finally, in the stream originating at the Havant Homewell Stream, **Brackish Water Crowfoot (*Ranunculus baudotii*)** was flowering in the section of the stream passing the Parchment Housing Development - although not normally found in streams it flowers in the more static Homewell Spring pool and has spread a short distance down the stream.

WILDLIFE DIARY AND NEWS FOR MAY 16 - 22 (WEEK 20 OF 2011)

BIRDS

Little Bittern: First report of this species for the year came from the Scillies on May 18

Heron: Three reports on May 15 started with news from Weir Wood near Crowborough that the first youngsters had left their nests and were catching fish for themselves. The second report came from the Hartley Witney area of north Hampshire and concerned **a young Heron taking bread from the hands of children** - I found this worrying and fear that the children involved are in **serious danger of losing their eyes to the Heron's bill**, and this worry is re-inforced by the third report of a **Heron at Cuckmere Haven in Sussex stabbing and then carrying off a baby Rabbit**

Black Stork: On May 20 one was seen in Worth Forest near Crawley

Peregrine: John Goodspeed reports at least one chick in the regular nest on the cliffs of the Paulsgrove Chalkpit (Portsmouth) on May 18

Sparrowhawk: One seen carrying food towards its nest site at Christchurch Harbour on May 21 probably implies that other nest sites will soon be revealed by the loud and persistent cries for more food made by the youngsters.

Shelduck: At least three reports of young Shelduck this week. On May 15 a pair was seen with 9 tiny ducklings on the sea off Lundy and on May 20 a pair had 11 ducklings at Christchurch Harbour

Buff Breasted Sandpiper: First report of the year is of one in Cheshire on May 16

Woodcock: Roding reported this week from Havant Thicket, Parkhurst Forest on the IoW, and Morgaston Wood near Basingstoke

Med Gull: The appearance of four adults at Christchurch Harbour on May 20 was thought to be possibly the result of recent high tides in Langstone Harbour which had washed away several nests

Gull-billed Tern: One was an unexpected sighting at Christchurch Harbour on May 17 (possibly the same bird that was at Pulborough Brooks on May 8)

Little Owl: These are usually difficult to see during their breeding season but once their young have fledged they become very visible (often perching openly on telegraph poles well before dusk). That does not usually happen until well into June but maybe we will see them out earlier this year as one was reported on May 20 perched on power lines by the B2188 road at Groombridge on the Kent/Sussex border near Tunbridge Wells

Nightjar: Four were churring in Parkhurst Forest (IoW) on May 16, three were heard in Broadwater Forest near Crowborough on May 17 and at least one was heard in Havant Thicket on May 19

Swift: These were back at nest sites in Emsworth last week (May 12/13) but by May 22 none had been seen in the area of Havant where I live - sadly it seems that the birds which have been nesting here for more than the 40 years I have lived here have abandoned the town

House Martin: At least two pairs are apparently nesting close to my home despite the dry ground and absence of mud for nest building - maybe these birds have artificial nests and are not forced to the dangerous practice adopted by birds somewhere in Sussex where Martins have been seen taking hot liquid tar from road repair sites as an alternative to mud.

Willow Warbler: In recent years there have been an increasing number of reports of birds singing songs which mix up the songs of Chiff Chaff and Willow Warbler and on May 19, when I was on the south slope of Portsdown in the Paulsgrove area I heard two separate Willow Warblers singing their normal songs plus a third bird which began its song with notes suggesting it was a Chiff Chaff but ended each burst with the downward scale of a Willow Warbler

Spotted Flycatcher: At least a dozen reports this week including a peak count of 20 at Portland on May 18

Bearded Tit: The first report of juveniles out of the nest came from the Kent Stour Valley on May 16

Long-tailed Tit: Similarly a report of a pair out with 15 juveniles in north Hampshire on May 15

Willow Tit: Now a rarity in Hampshire there is evidence that the species is not yet extinct with news of a bird (or birds) in a wood lying between Ropley and Four Marks in east Hampshire. Hopefully there are others in the area of the northern end of the 'Wayfarer's Way' long distance path and at a site nearer Andover where at least three pairs were found in 2007

Blue Tit: 14 chicks fledged from a nest box in the Gosport area on May 21

Golden Oriole: This week migrants have been seen on Lundy, in the Scillies, at Christchurch Harbour, Pulborough Brooks and Sandwich Bay. Here in Havant a commuter cycling to work around the north of Langstone Harbour clearly saw one fly across the cycle way on May 17

Woodchat Shrike: Singles have been seen this week on Lundy, in the Scillies and at Sandwich Bay in Kent

INSECTS

Dragonflies

Species on the wing this week were **Emperor, Black-tailed Skimmer** (first seen at Rye Harbour on May 19), **Broad-bodied Chaser, Four Spotted Chaser, Banded**

Demoiselle, Beautiful Demoiselle, Red-eyed Damsel, Blue-tailed Damsel, Common Blue Damsel, Azure Damsel and Variable Damsel

Butterflies

On May 19 an observer in Sussex saw his first **Skipper** of the year and carefully checked its antennae to ensure that it was **not an Essex Skipper** before putting it down as a **Small Skipper** without perhaps considering that it was much more likely to be a **Large Skipper** at this date so without the evidence of the pure orange upper wings of a **Small Skipper** I feel reluctant to pass on the report.

Butterflies confidently reported this week were **Large Skipper, Dingy Skipper, Grizzled Skipper, Clouded Yellow** (one migrant at Portland on May 19 - sixth for the year in my list), **Brimstone, Large White, Small White, Green-veined White, Orange Tip, Green Hairstreak, Purple Hairstreak** (one at Kirdford near Pulborough was the first for the year at a very early date of May 15 - previous earliest in Sussex was 14 June and in Hampshire 1 June), **Small Copper, Small Blue, Silver studded Blue** (male near Lymington was first for the year on May 17), **Brown Argus, Common Blue, Adonis Blue, Holly Blue, Duke of Burgundy, Red Admiral, Painted Lady, Small Tortoiseshell, Peacock, Comma, Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary, Pearl-bordered Fritillary, Marsh Fritillary** (many out at Cerne Abbas in Dorset in May 19), **Glanville Fritillary, Speckled Wood, Wall Brown, Meadow Brown** (surprisingly only one report so far - first for the year near Battle in Sussex on May 19), and **Small Heath**.

Moths (Selective list only)

Fox Moth: First of year was a female in Brighton on May 14 with another at Durlston on May 21

Oak Hook-tip: First at Ebernoe near Midhurst on May 16

Silver-ground Carpet and Yellow Shell: Also at Ebernoe on May 16

Little Thorn: First at Barton on sea near Lymington on May 16

Obscure Wainscot: First in Kent on May 12

Levant Blackneck: One in Kent on May 7 was only the second seen for the county (first in 1952)

Marbled Minor: First in Kent on May 13

Silky Wainscot: First in Kent on May 8

Late news of **Scarce Forester** moths seen at the Sussex Wildlife Trust reserve at Southerham near Lewes on May 21

Other Insects

Urophora cardui: If you are not familiar with the insect that causes the commonly seen galls on thistle stems see

<http://rxwildlife.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2011/05/urophora-cardui.jpg>

Checkered Beetle (*Thanasimus formicarius*): This 10mm 'ant mimic' beetle was found in the Rother Valley north of Hastings on May 17 for photo see <http://rxwildlife.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2011/05/checkered.jpg>

Stag Beetle: The first that I know of was a male on brickwork by the front-door of my neighbour's house when I went to visit on May 21

'Thigh' beetle (*Oedemera nobilis*): First sighting of this common species was in Brook Meadow at Emsworth on May 15

Great Green Bush Cricket nymph: On Portsdown on May 19 I saw what was almost certainly a nymph of this species but still less than half the size of the monster it will become

Earwig nymphs: Cutting open an acorn found in Brede High Wood (north of Hastings) on May 16 revealed the 'earwig nursery' shown in the photo at <http://rxwildlife.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2011/05/dscn6931.jpg>

PLANTS

Small-flowered Buttercup: This is a plant which I have never yet seen and a photo taken recently by Peter Milinets-Raby shows me that the plant looks different to what I had expected - I was aware of it having small flowers and distinctive hooked spines on its fruits but the illustration in Francis Rose's Wildflower Key shows an upright plant looking much like the commoner species whereas Peter's photo show a sprawling plant with greyish hairy leaves, flowers more like **Celery-leaved Buttercup** than **Meadow** or **Bulbous** species and with hooks on its achenes looking like big bramble thorns. I had also not appreciated its preference for bare ground such as is found at the Marlpit Lane site near Funtington where Peter found the plant

Celery-leaved Buttercup: Brian Fellows was the first to find this in Emsworth on May 16

Yellow-horned Poppy: Brian also found the first of this species at Fort Cumberland in the Eastney area of Portsmouth on May 18

Common Fumitory: The first flowers that I know of opened in my garden in Havant on May 22

Smith's Pepperwort: This has probably been in flower at south Hayling for a couple of weeks but the first that I am sure of was found by myself of Portsdown on May 19 - although it had mainly gone to seed there were enough flowers left to show the diagnostic purple anthers that separate it from **Field Pepperwort**

Rockrose: On May 19 I made a chance discovery of this plant flowering on Portsdown - no doubt it was once common there (the nearest road to my find in the Paulsgrove housing estate is named 'Rockrose Way') but this is the first time I have found it here (though I know of sites for it in the South Downs area)

Fairy Flax: This had also just started to flower on Portsdown on May 19

Corn Cockle: First report of this in flower came from Ravelin Park, part of the Portsmouth University campus in the city, on May 18

Hybrid Red x White Campion: I found a patch of this growing (with both parents) on Milton Common in Southsea on May 16

Subterranean Clover: First flowers found by Brian Fellows in the Fort Cumberland area of Eastney (Portsmouth) on May 18

Clustered Clover: First flowers also found by Brian Fellows at its only known site in SU 70 near the pedestrian underpass of the A27 between Havant and Emsworth on May 17 - see Brian's photo at <http://www.emsworthwildlife.hampshire.org.uk/0-0-389-clustered-clover-warb-ws-20.05.11.jpg>

Meadow Vetchling: First flowers seen on May 19 on Portsdown

Lucerne: First flowers seen at Fort Cumberland in Eastney by Brian Fellows on May 18

Sainfoin: Although the first flowers were reported at Durlston on May 9 I was greatly impressed by the size of the flowering colony on Portsdown which I saw on May 19 - photos on my diary page

Dwarf Spurge: First flowers at Durlston on May 18

Knotted Hedge Parsley: Brian Fellows has discovered two new sites in Emsworth where this plant is flourishing this year - see <http://www.emsworthwildlife.hampshire.org.uk/0-0-0-wildlife-diary.htm> entries for May 18 and 13

Rough Chervil: This was first reported in flower at Durlston on May 16 and then found on Portsdown on May 19

Wild Parsnip: First flowers reported at Durlston on May 18

Early Gentian: First flowers reported at Durlston on May 16 and at least 12 flowering plants found on Portsdown by John Goodspeed on May 19 (photo of one of these plants on my Diary page for that day)

Large Bindweed: First flower seen on Portsdown on May 19

Black Horehound: Flowering at Fort Cumberland at Eastney on May 18

Hoary Plantain: First flowers on Portsdown on May 19

Sea Plantain: First flowers at Eastney on May 18

Broad-leaved Harebell (*Campanula rhomboidalis*): What I believe to be an escape of this garden plant was flowering by the approach road to Farlington Marshes on May 16

Venus looking glass (*Legousia hybrida*): Richard Jones (Portsmouth City's Conservation Warden for Portsdown) discovered this flowering on Portsdown on roughly the same day (May 19) that I was mourning its loss from the hill with the

end of cultivation of fields west of Fort Southwick. Richard's find was in what he called the Portsdown Top Field which is the arable field west of the Portsdown hill top roundabout and this led me to discover from

<http://www.portsdown.hampshire.org.uk/places.htm> that this field had been abandoned by the previous farmer and had passed into Richard's care last year

Hedge Bedstraw: Just starting to flower on Portsdown on May 19

Field Scabious: First flowering at Durlston on May 19

Common Ragwort: Just starting to flower on Portsdown on May 19

Greater Knapweed: Flowering on Portsdown on May 19

Smooth Hawksbeard: Flowering in Portsmouth on May 18

Fly and **White Helleborine** orchids: Both were newly flowering in the Heyshott Down area near Midhurst (together with **Greater Butterfly** and **Twayblade**) on May 21

OTHER WILDLIFE

Bottle-nosed Dolphin: A pod of up to six were in the Christchurch to Swanage area of the Dorset coast on May 17 and 18

Mole: On May 15 there was a report on the Planet Thanet website of a **Mole seen swimming** in the River Stour in Kent. I wondered if this might be a mistaken identity and the swimmer was in fact a **Water Vole** but the video at <http://www.arkive.org/mole/talpa-europaea/video-06.html> offers proof that **Moles can swim**. While on this subject have a good laugh at <http://www.themouthpiece.com/vb/archive/index.php/t-26608.html> (read it right through to the end). Note that **Scalopus aquaticus** is a **North American Mole species**.

Hare: I used to see these regularly in the Eames Farm fields (immediately north of the west end of the Thorney Island Great Deeps) but thought they had now vanished from Thorney Island so it is good to read on Brian Fellows' website that Martin Hampton has seen at least four and maybe six there earlier this year (no dates given so not necessarily this year)

Wall Lizard: I would imagine these are flourishing at their south coast sites in this year's hot and dry weather but I had not seen any mention of the species until May 15 when two photos taken on the island by Paul Baker appeared on the Portland website (see http://www.portlandbirdobs.org.uk/wp_wall_lizard_9_150511_500.jpg and http://www.portlandbirdobs.org.uk/wp_wall_lizard_10_150511_500.jpg). Spurred by this news to check up on the status of Wall Lizards in the UK I discovered a website detailing 46 sites in the UK - well worth a look at <http://www.surrey-arg.org.uk/SARG/02000-Activities/SurveyAndMonitoring/WallLizard/PMSitePicker.asp> if you have any interest in this subject. 46 sites (with a minimum English population of 20,400 Lizards!) is a great deal more than I had expected and it set me off searching for information about whether this apparent recent spread of the creatures is connected with global warming but so far all I have

learnt is that most of the creatures have been introduced (probably escaped pets) though this seems to have been going on since the 1860s (see <http://ventnorblog.com/forum/viewtopic.php?t=716> re the Ventnor colony on the Isle of Wight)

WILDLIFE DIARY AND NEWS FOR MAY 16 - 22 (WEEK 20 OF 2011)

Thu 19 May

A great morning on Portsdown

Armed with information from John Goodspeed I set out for Portsdown this morning hoping to find both **Early Gentian** and **Yellow Vetchling (Lathyrus aphaca)**. Both were found (photos below) but they were only two of the stars among a plant list of 86 species, 15 of which were 'first for the year' for me.

I started with a look at the area on the east side of the London Road coming up the hill from Cosham, parking in the area just west of where Farlington Avenue meets the Portsdown Hill Road. Just below the parking area here there is a strip of grassland which is deliberately not mown to allow a variety of wild flowers to grow and today this area had the best show of **Sainfoin** that I can recall seeing there.

One of many clumps of Sainfoin on Portsdown

An impression of the extent of the Sainfoin

From there I walked north west past the north east corner of the Collyer's Pit woodland where several clumps of **Rosy Garlic** were flowering in the long grass. Continuing across the slip road connecting the Hill Road to the southbound London Road I enjoyed masses of **Wild Thyme** and some **Slender Speedwell** flourishing in the close mown grass before entering the second area left unmown so that wild flowers can survive and here I found my first **Common Spotted Orchid** in flower together with **Horseshoe Vetch**, **Kidney Vetch**, **Quaking Grass**, and **Hoary Plantain** as well as **Hedge Bedstraw** and **Common Ragwort** (both just opening their very first flowers).

Driving on west past Fort Southwick (opposite the Driving Test Centre) I parked on the north side of the road immediately beyond the fencing of the Fort Southwick area and then walked south over the abandoned fields in which my first flowers of **Greater Kapweed** were seen. At the bottom of the second field I turned left through a kissing gate into the scrubby downland which has never been cultivated and made my way down the steep slope to the path running east along the northern edge of the Paulsgrove housing.

Beside this path much **Rough Chervil** was starting to flower (another first for me) and after some distance I took a path uphill again thinking I had passed the 'no go' area south of Fort Southwick but at the top of this path I found I was at the locked gates across the now unused tarmac road around the south west perimeter of the Fort Southwick area so I had to return down hill again. Luckily this was not a wasted effort as during my time there I saw a pristine **Small Tortoiseshell** (the first of two for the day) and discovered a small cluster of **Rockrose** flowers (another first for me). Later I saw from the map that the nearest road to this point within the

Paulsgrove estate is named Rockrose Way (maybe a reminder of times when the plant abounded here?)

Eventually, at the foot of an electricity pylon, the downland above me opened out and I was able to head diagonally up hill to the top of the west end of the Paulsgrove Chalkpit and it was not far from that point that I found both the **Early Gentian** and the **Yellow Vetchling**. I only saw one each of these but when I got home I found an email from John Goodspeed saying there are about a dozen plants of the **Gentian** this year and a good number of plants of the **Vetchling** - also that the **Peregrines nesting on the Chalkpit cliff have at least one chick** in their nest and that **Small Blues** continue to abound there. On this visit I added my first **Large Skipper** of the year while here. Also hereabouts lots of **Fairy Flax** was now out and I saw my first **Greater Bindweed** flower.

Early Gentian flower - not easy to spot!

A small plant of Yellow Vetchling plus a closer view of a flower (note leaf shape) On my way back I had two more good plant finds - one was a cluster of **Smith's Pepperwort** flowers (mainly seeds by now but enough flowers to let me see the purple anthers which distinguish **Smith's** from **Field Pepperwort**). The other find was my first of the very common **Meadow Vetchling**.

Butterflies seen today in addition to the **Skipper** and **Tortoiseshell** were **Common** and **Holly Blues**, **Speckled Wood** and **Orange Tip** and I think both **Large** and **Small White**. Also seen were two **Bloody Nosed Beetles** and what I am pretty sure was a **Great Green Bush Cricket nymph**.

The only special interest among the birds was a trio of **Willow Warblers**, two singing normally and one seeming to sing both a version of **Chiffchaff song ending each burst with a Willow Warblers descending scale**.

[Mon 16 May](#)

The Havant to Southsea Cycle Path

With the fresh wind in my face (but hopefully behind me on the return journey) I set off after lunch to see how long it would take me to get to Milton Common in Southsea (and thus if cycle trips to the Eastney shoreline and Fort Cumberland would be practical later in the summer).

No problem getting to Milton in 45 mins, seeing one large **Common Broomrape** en route, and once there finding the **Rosy Garlic** which has been reported there in the past few years plus singing **Sedge Warblers** on the lakes, but I failed to spot the **Yellow Pea (Lathyrus aphaca)** which is also established there in what I believe to be its last known Portsmouth site. The surprise item here was a patch of the **hybrid between Red and White Campion** with both parents present.

Coming back I had another surprise find as I entered the Farlington Marshes approach road from the roundabout - under the railings separating me from the A27 sliproad (almost opposite the 100 yard single chevron sign for motorists approaching the roundabout) was a plant similar in size to the Garden Aquilegia that is currently common but with **flowers resembling large and dark blue Harebells**). Unfortunately I did not take note of the leaves on the lower parts of the flower stems but I suspect if I had I could be more certain that this was **Broad-leaved Harebell (Campanula rhomboidalis)** which had found an odd place to escape from its garden home.

Beside the cycle way north of the Farlington reserve I added **Corky-fruited Water Dropwort** to my list of newly flowering plants, and when back in Havant I made a short diversion down Southmoor Lane to confirm that the **Knotted Hedge-parsley** was in flower there as it had been in Emsworth on May 13

A couple of minor notes from the Langstone Pond area which I visited yesterday on a family walk - my first **Greater Sea-Spurrey** was in flower on the north side of the vehicle entry to the Mill building and the whole **Swan family** had disappeared from the pond.

WILDLIFE DIARY AND NEWS FOR MAY 2 - 8 (WEEK 18 OF 2011)

BIRDS

Black-throated Diver: This species is normally less numerous than **Red-throated** and **Great Northern** along the south coast in winter but this week has brought more reports of **Black-throated** than of the other two species (both of which were still present). Dungeness reported 10 passing on both May 1 and 3, increasing to 15 on May 5 (when 1 was seen from Sandy Point on Hayling and 2 from St Catherine's Point (IoW)). Biggest count of **Great Northern** was of 5 off Selsey on May 1 (Selsey also had the peak number of **Red-throated** with 14 on May 2)

Red-necked Grebe: One was off Selsey Bill on both May 2 and 3

Slavonian and **Black-necked Grebe:** Singles of both species (both in full summer plumage) were in the Exe estuary up to May 6 (but not seen on May 7)

Fulmar: The cliffs east of Seaford Head had at least 15 pairs at their nests on Apr 30

Sooty Shearwater: After several sightings in Jan and Feb there have been no more reports until May 7 when one was seen off the Cornish coast

Storm Petrel: A party of 8 had been seen from Durlston on Feb 13 and 3 were off south Devon on Apr 25 with a single seen off the Scillies on Apr 27. This week one was off the Dorset coast on May 4 and more than 5 were seen 30 miles off the Scillies. For those interested in less usual Petrel species Steve Copley's wonderful photos from Antarctic waters this week introduced me to the **Black-bellied Storm Petrel** and the **Common Diving Petrel** (which looks much more like an Auk than a Petrel) as well as **Wilson's Petrel** which is not unknown in British waters - see the Three Amigos blog at <http://www.surfbirds.com/blog/amigo>

Night Heron: The Bournemouth bird was seen again on May 3 in the Stour Valley nature reserve

Cattle Egret: One which turned up at Lodmoor (Weymouth) on Apr 30 moved north to Abbotsbury on May 1, then a little south to West Bexington on May 5 and was last seen at Swyre near Dorchester (maybe heading east to Hampshire?)

Great White Egret: One was at Lodmoor on May 7 (and another near Penzance in Cornwall that day)

Purple Heron: Last year a pair nested in the Dungeness area and on May 6 a male plus a juvenile (one of last year's young?) were seen in that area

Glossy Ibis: After sightings in Berkshire and at Dungeness in January I have not heard of others until this week when one was in Essex on May 2 and another at Rutland Water on May 5

Canada Goose: 10 goslings were hatched in north Kent on Apr 27 and on May 5 another pair hatched young on the Portland Harbour breakwater

Barnacle Goose: I am puzzled by the large number of these geese currently in Germany and the Netherlands. Trektellen reports a surge of 'remarkable reports' over the three days from May 4 to 6 with a minimum of 30,000 birds on May 4 and 5, dropping back to 2000 on May 6 (if we assume no double counting between the reporting sites there were 82,000 in the area on May 5). Wikipedia tells me that the Netherlands area supports a wintering population of around 130,000 birds which breed in Novaya Zemlya (north of the Ural mountains in Russia) and I can only suppose that these birds are now leaving their wintering grounds and becoming 'remarkable' by turning up at sites where they are not normally seen

Brent Goose: Very few seen as migrants this week - biggest count was 13 flying east past Seaford on May 5

Garganey: 17 reports this week, the majority of them being of males only, probably indicating that the females have already settled to nesting at (maybe) six sites in Kent, Sussex, Hampshire and Dorset but others are still arriving (one flew in from the sea to Titchfield Haven on May 7)

Long-tailed Duck: One was seen at Hurst Beach (Lymington) as late as May 5

Common Buzzard: 136 were reported at a German site on May 6 when 74 **Sparrowhawks** were reported from the Netherlands - presumably passage birds still heading north

Rough-legged Buzzard: A very unexpected species for southern England at this time of year but we have three confident reports this week. On May 1 one was seen over Pegwell Bay in Kent, another was seen near Basingstoke on May 3 and a third was over Dungeness on May 6. All three may have been part of the passage indicated by the continental reports of Buzzards and Sparrowhawks.

Osprey: One was over Langstone Harbour on May 1 and the latest I have heard of flew north at Seaford on May 4

Black-winged Stilt: RBA reported a group of four in Essex on Apr 30

Avocet: The first two chicks were hatched at the Oare Marshes in north Kent on Apr 6

Dotterel: A party of 4 were seen in the Cheesefoot Head area east of Winchester from May 1 to 4 (On May 2 RBA reported a total of 50 Dotterel in the UK)

Lapwing: The first three chicks were seen at Farlington Marshes on Apr 29 and at Puborough Brooks on May 1

Knot: Counts of over 1000 came from continental coastal sites this week and on May 1 Seaford saw 303 passing while Dungeness recorded 668

Little Stint: On May 1 four were seen on the Lymington shore with 3 there the next day

Temmincks Stint: On May 1 one was seen at Sandwich Bay and on May 4 one was at Christchurch Harbour

Pectoral Sandpiper: On May 7 the first to be seen anywhere along the channel coasts was on the Lymington shore

Curlew Sandpiper: On May 1 one was at Rye Harbour and on May 3 three were seen across Rye Bay at The Midrips while another was in the north of Pagham Harbour. On May 4 one was in the Cuckmere Valley and on May 7 more than 15 were at two sites in Belgium

Long-billed Dowitcher: The bird which has been at Lodmoor (Weymouth) since Nov 8 last year (after first appearing in Cornwall on Sep 30) was last seen at Lodmoor on Apr 30 with no further reports until one turned up in the Netherlands on May 3

Bar-tailed Godwit: Peak counts for this year's spring passage have been 5475 past Dungeness on May 1 with 2124 past Seaford that same day. Dungeness had another 703 on May 2 and 630 on May 3. Seaford still had a count of 11 on May 7

Whimbrel: These have also been moving all week but the peak count I have seen was of only 150 in Rye Bay on May 3. I think these low numbers are the result of many Whimbrel heading north over land when they reach the Hampshire coast

Wood Sandpiper: One was at Farlington Marshes on both May 1 and 2. There were two in the Kent Stour valley on May 2 and three at Pulborough Brooks on May 3 while over the Channel a couple of Netherlands sites had at least 44 on May 3. Latest report is from Sheppey where the warden (Gordon Allison) saw 2 on May 5 and told us that when they reach their northern breeding sites the birds may well nest in old thrush nests up in trees.

Spotted Sandpiper: RBA reports one in Worcestershire on May 3 and says it is the county's first ever record

Red-necked Phalarope: Also from RBA comes news of one 'somewhere in England' on May 6. I know that females often appear in England on return passage as early as June (leaving the males to feed the young which they have incubated) but I think it is rare for one to be seen in England on the way north.

Pomarine Skua: It seems that numbers along the English coast are larger than usual this spring and by May 3 Chris Janman (current leader in the Selsey Pom King competition) already had 76 to his credit though the numbers seen at Selsey are usually much lower than those at sites further east (at Dungeness they had 77 birds in one day on May 1 when Seaford had 40). Sandy Point on Hayling had 11 on May 1

Gulls: The first winter **Glaucous** was still at Dungeness on May 7 and an **Iceland Gull** was seen in Belgium on that day with a **Ross's Gull** in the Netherlands. In Sussex at least **500 pairs of Kittiwake** were seen nesting on the cliffs east of Seaford on Apr 30

Roseate Tern: Nine reports this week include one at Selsey on May 4, two in Stokes Bay (Gosport) on May 6 and one off Sandy Point on Hayling on May 7

Little Tern: I'm not sure if reports of these back at the Hayling Oysterbeds are being censored because they breed there but so far there have been no such reports (there was just one report of a single bird seen from Farlington Marshes on Apr 26). In 2009 the first were at the Oysterbeds by Apr 28 and this year Little Terns have been in the Channel since Apr 2 and by May 1 Dungeness was reporting 125 passing while Titchfield Haven area had 57 on May 2

Black Tern: Local reports this week are of 6 in Stokes Bay (Gosport) on May 1 and 18 there on May 2. Selsey Bill had 27 on May 2 and 15 on May 3. On May 4 there were 19 off Titchfield Haven, 7 at Lymington and 6 in Hayling Bay. On May 5 there were 17 at Selsey and on May 7 Sandy Point on Hayling had 5

White-winged Black Tern: On May 2 one was over Ivy Lake at Chichester and on May 3 it had moved to the Westhampnet Lake

Short-eared Owl: Seen at five coastal sites this week including one at Farlington Marshes on May 5

Nightjar: First reported sighting was on Apr 20 in Dorset and first reports of churring came from Devon on Apr 28 and the New Forest on May 3

Swift: There was a major arrival on the other side of the Channel on Apr 30 when more than 8,000 were in the Netherlands and they have been filtering into southern England this week with 100+ over the Blashford Lakes at Ringwood on May 1, 50 in the Romsey area on May 2, 30 at Christchurch Harbour on May 3, around 100 over Chichester on May 6 and 26 over Winchester Cathedral on May 7

Bee-eater: Seven reports this week from Poole in Dorset, St Catherine's Point on the IoW, Selsey and Portland

Wryneck: These have been in England since Apr 1 (Scillies) and this week they have been seen in Kent (Thanet), Christchurch Harbour and Pulborough Brooks

House Martin: Still in short supply but this week there were 30 at Eastleigh sewage farm on May 1 and a dozen over Budds Farm at Havant on May 2

Yellow Wagtail: Still trickling into Britain with a max of 11 at Portland on May 1

Grey-headed Wagtail (*Motacilla flava thunbergi*): Just one seen at Reculver on the north Kent coast on May 7

Whinchat: At least ten reports this week with a peak of 22 at Portland on May 1. On May 2 one was seen on Thorney Island

Stonechat: A pair were feeding young at Waltham Brooks (Pulborough) on May 4

Blue Rock Thrush: A surprise visitor to St Agnes in the Scillies on May 5

Blackbird: On May 5 a **Blackbird was feeding three fledged young** at Cosham (Portsmouth) and in the Lymington area that same day a **Song Thrush was out with three young**

Fieldfare: Several still around this week at least up to May 5

Melodious Warbler: One singing at Nanquidno in Cornwall on May 4

Spotted Flycatcher: Five new reports this week including one singing in the New Forest on May 6 (first report was on Apr 22 near Basingstoke - total of 14 reports so far)

Golden Oriole: One singing at Portland on May 6 and two more in Cornwall and the Scillies

Red-backed Shrike: One arrived at Portland on May 7 and was still there on May 8

Woodchat Shrike: One was still at Prawle in Devon on May 1 but no other reports this week

INSECTS

Dragonflies

Emperor: First of the year seen near Eastbourne on May 5 with another at Portland on May 6

Vagrant Emperor: Another specimen in a Weymouth town garden on May 2 (see previous week)

Hairy Dragonfly, Broad-bodied chaser and Four spotted chaser: All seen again this week

Scarce Chaser (*Libellula fulva*): First report from the Kent Stour Valley on May 2

Beautiful Demoiselle, Large Red Damselfly, Blue-tailed Damsel, Common Blue, Azure and Variable Damsel: All seen again this week

Butterflies

Dingy and Grizzled Skippers, Brimstone, Large, Small and Green-veined White, Orange Tip, Green Hairstreak, Small Copper and Small Blue, Brown Argus, Common, Adonis and Holly Blue, Duke of Burgundy, Red Admiral, Painted Lady, Small Tortoiseshell, Peacock, Comma, Pearl-bordered Fritillary, Speckled Wood, Wall Brown, Small Heath: All these seen during the week - no newcomers

Small Tortoiseshell caterpillars: A larval nest of 60 seen at Great Fontley Farm north of Fareham on May 2

Moths

Plain Gold (*Micropterix calthella*): First in Thanet on May 4

Common Swift (*Hepialus lupulinus*): First at Durlston on May 2

Lampronia flavimitrella: First seen in Brede High Wood north of Hastings on May 5 (Nationally rare)

Adela rufimetrella: A new Longhorn species for the year seen in Thanet on May 4

Skin Moth (*Monopis laevigella*): First in Thanet on May 1

***Monopis obviella*:** First in Thanet on May 7

***Tinea semifulvella*:** First at Newhaven on May 3

***Tinea trinotella*:** First in Thanet on May 7

Azalea Leaf Miner (*Caloptilia azaleella*): First in Thanet on May 6

Oak Leaf miner (*Phyllonorycter harrisella*): First in Thanet on May 4

***Phyllonorycter maestingella*:** First in Thanet on May 7

Leaf Miner Horse Chestnut (*Cameraria ohridella*): First at Newhaven on May 1

***Metriotes lutarea*:** First in Thanet on May 4

Bluebell Conch (*Hysterothrips maculosana*): First in Brede High Wood north of Hastings on May 5 (larvae live and feed in Bluebell seed capsules)

***Syndemis musculana*:** First in Thanet on May 6

***Epiblema cynosbatella*:** First in Thanet on May 5

***Epiblema scutulana*:** First at Newhaven on May 3

***Cydia succedana* now called *Cydia ulicetana*:** First at Newhaven on May 3

***Thisanotia chrysonuchella*:** At Portland on May 8 - first ever at Portland and first in Dorset for 50 years

Garden Pebble (*Evergestis forficalis*): First in Thanet on May 7

Common Carpet (*Epirrhoe alternata*): First at Beacon Hill in Meon Valley on May 1

Common Marbled Carpet (*Chloroclysta truncata*): First in Thanet on May 6

Grass Rivulet (*Perizoma albulata*): First near Haywards Heath on May 6

Sandy Carpet (*Perizoma flavofasciata*): First in Thanet on May 7

Square Spot (*Paradarisa consonaria*): First at Portland on May 7

Common Heath (*Ematurga atomaria*): First at Newhaven on May 3

Light Emerald (*Campaea margaritata*): First at Thanet on May 6

Poplar Hawkmoth (*Laothoe populi*): First in Thanet on May 5

Narrow-bordered Bee Hawkmoth (*Hemaris tityus*): First at Bentley Station Meadow near Alton on May 4

Broad-bordered Bee Hawkmoth (*Hemaris fuciformis*): First in Bentley Wood west of Stockbridge on May 3

Buff-tip (*Phalera bucephala*): First in Thanet on May 7

Cream-spot Tiger (*Arctia villica*): First near Eastbourne on May 3

Patton's Tiger (*Hyphoraia testudinaria*): This rare migrant from southern Europe was first found in Britain in May 2005 by Sarah Patton (Ivan Lang's predecessor as Pagham Harbour warden) and the first to be seen this year was a new species for Portland on May 7

The Flame (*Axylia putris*): First in Thanet on May 1

Alder Moth (*Acronicta alni*): First in Thanet on May 1

Rustic Shoulder-knot (*Apamea sordens*): First in Thanet on May 7

Vine's Rustic (*Hoplodrina ambigua*): First in Thanet on May 5

Plain Golden Y (*Autographa jota*): First in Thanet on May 6

Other Insects

Large Crane Fly (*Daddy Long-legs*): First in Thanet on May 6

Marmelade hoverfly (*Episyrphus balteatus*): This and two other Hoverfly species seen (at Rye Harbour on May 7) laying their eggs on leaves already infested with aphids which the Hoverfly larvae will start to eat as soon as they emerge from the eggs

Tachinid Fly (*Phasia hemiptera*): Mating pair seen on May 1 at Bixley Wood (Peasmarsh) north of Hastings

Ruby-Tailed Wasp (*Chrysis ignita*): Seen in the Newhaven area on May 1 searching walls for the nests of Mason Bees in which to lay their eggs

Melecta albifrons: Seen at Rye Harbour on May 2 this **Cuckoo Bee** is a cleptoparasite of the **Hairy Footed Flower Bee (*Anthophora plumipes*)**. For an account of cleptoparasitism see <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bee>

Minotaur Beetle (*Typhaeus typhoeus*): This impressive beetle was found dead near Eastbourne on May 1 but a live example was seen in Thanet on May 3

Soldier Beetle (*Cantharis rustica*): The first report of these comes from Portsdown on May 6

Cardinal beetle (*Pyrochroa coccinea*): First seen in Thanet on May 6

14-spot Ladybird (*Propylea 14-punctata*): First at Newhaven on May 1

Kidney-spot ladybird (*Chilocorus renipustulatus*): First at Newhaven on May 1

Wasp Beetle (*Clytus arietis*): Also at Newhaven on May 1

***Tibellus oblongus*:** First report of this wet grassland spider from Thanet on May 6

Nursery tent spider (*Pisaura mirabilis*): First report of one carrying her egg-sac comes from the Hastings area on May 1

PLANTS

Great Horsetail (*Equisetum telmateia*): Plants at Warblington Farm (Havant) were already a metre tall on May 3

Thread-leaved Water Crowfoot (*Ranunculus trichophyllus*): Flowering at Durlston on May 4

Mousetail (*Myosurus minimus*): Seen flowering in Newtown Harbour nature reserve (IoW) on May 2

Oriental Poppy (*Papaver pseudoorientale*): This impressive garden escape was flowering by the Lavant stream north of Havant rail station on May 6

Hairy rock cress (*Arabis hirsuta*): Flowering on Portsdown on May 6

Narrow leaved pepperwort (*Lepidium ruderale*): Flowering by the Langstone roundabout at Havant on May 2

Sea kale (*Crambe maritima*): Flowering at Rye Harbour (and no doubt Hayling Island) on May 7

Wild mignonette (*Reseda lutea*): Lots of this flowering on Portsdown by May 6

Pale Flax (*Linum bienne*): Reported flowering at Durlston on May 2 and seen locally in Paulsgrove Chalkpit (Portsdown) on May 6

Pale dog violet (*Viola lactea*): Flowering near Ningwood Common (IoW) on Apr 30 - see <http://www.emsworthwildlife.hampshire.org.uk/isle-wight-may-2011.htm> for Brian Fellows photos of this and the Heath Dog Violet.

Heath dog violet (*Viola canina*): As for Pale Dog Violet

Bladder Campion: Flowering on Portsdown on May 6

Lesser Stitchwort: Flowering at Newtown Harbour (IoW) on May 2 and in Havant on May 6

Three veined sandwort (*Moehringia trinervia*): First flowers seen at Nore Barn (Emsworth) on May 3

Annual pearlwort (*Sagina apetala*): Starting to flower at Langstone on May 2

Common Mallow: First flowers in Havant on May 2

Least Yellow Sorrel (*Oxalis exilis*): Flowering in Langstone on May 2

Sea pea (*Lathyrus japonicus*): Flowering at Rye Harbour by May 7

Japanese Rose (*Rosa rugosa*): Flowering in the Havant area by May 2

Creeping Cinquefoil: Flowering in Havant on May 6

Yellow-flowered Strawberry: First mass flowering in Havant on May 2

Purging Buckthorn: Flowering on Portsdown on May 6

Spindle: First flowers at Nore Barn (Emsworth) on May 3

Manna Ash (*Fraxinus ornus*): First flowers seen at Egham in Surrey on May 4 and then on Portsdown on May 6

Burnet Saxifrage: Flowering in the Havant cemetery on May 6

Sanicle (*Sanicula europaea*): Flowering on Portsdown on May 6

Wild privet (*Ligustrum vulgare*): Flowering on Portsdown on May 6

Bittersweet (Woody) Nightshade: Flowering at Durlston on May 2 and in Havant on May 6

Foxglove: Starting to flower in Havant on May 2

Yellow Rattle: Flowering at Durlston on May 4 and on Portsdown on May 6

Common gromwell (*Lithospermum officinale*): Flowering on Portsdown on May 6

Buckshorn Plantain: Flowering in Havant on May 2

Harebell: A single flower seen on Portsdown on May 6

Yarrow: Starting to flower in Havant on May 2

Slender Thistle: First flower seen in Southmoor Lane (Havant) on May 2

Hairy Garlic: Flowering at a new site in Mill Lane at Langstone on May 2 and at Nore Barn in Emsworth on May 3

Twayblade orchid: Flowering at Durlston on May 5

Sea Arrowgrass: Flowering at Newtown Harbour (IoW) on May 2

Dense-headed Heath Woodrush (*Luzula multiflora congesta*): Flowering in Hollybank Woods (Emsworth) on May 7

Yellow Sedge (*Carex viridula*): Flowering at Ningwood Common (IoW) on Apr 30

Common Spike Rush (*Eleocharis palustris*): Flowering at the Langstone South Moors on May 2

OTHER WILDLIFE

Fox: First report of a cub above ground on May 4 when a cub was seen with its mother at Pulborough Brooks

Stoat: On Mar 25 one was seen hunting at Reculver on the north Kent coast and it showed no reluctance to plunge into water and swim in search of prey. Now on May 1 the warden at the Elmley RSPB site on Sheppey came on a dripping wet Stoat which had just emerged from swimming a water filled ditch

Red Squirrel: While on holiday on the Isle of Wight last week Brian Fellows put up a bird seed feeder in the grounds of his holiday home and it was visited daily by a Red Squirrel, giving him close views from a window. On most visits it appeared to 'suck' seed from the feeder but on a couple of occasions it knocked the feeder to the ground and ate the spilt seed avidly.

Hybrid Newt: On May 2 Brian Banks re-visited a pond at Staplehurst in west Kent (where he had found a hybrid Common x Palmate Newt on Apr 27) and found a second specimen (the pattern of spots on its belly showed it was a different animal to the previous find)

Grass Snake: After several reports in March when they were starting to emerge there was no news of these snakes in April but on May 1 a large specimen (more than 3 feet long) was seen on Wolstonbury Hill at Pyecombe near Brighton

Tope (*Galeorhinus galeus*): Birders seawatching at Seaford Splash Point on May 1 saw a fisherman land on one of these small Sharks which hunt for fish in shallow coastal waters (often doing so in small packs). Among the interesting facts about this species I see that it has a nictating membrane (as do birds) with which to protect and clean its eyes and that females give birth to as many as 20 'pups' at one go. Its flesh is not edible but its liver is a good source of vitamin A and its fins are used in making Sharks Fin soup. Luckily the larger Tiger Sharks (fellow members of a group appropriately called 'Requiem Sharks') do not normally come into shallow waters - they are known to be man eaters.

WILDLIFE DIARY AND NEWS FOR MAY 2 - 8 (WEEK 18 OF 2011)

Fri 6 May

A good day on Portsdown

With rain forecast for the next two days I took a longish walk on Portsdown today starting from the layby just west of the hilltop roundabout and making a circuit of the big Paulsgrove chalkpit.

A good proportion of the 55 flowering plant species which I noted were 'first of the year' for me, starting with **Wild Mignonette**, **Bladder Campion**, and **Common Gromwell**. Several trees of **Manna Ash** were in flower and there were many patches of colourful **Aquilegia** though neither were firsts and one or more species of **Hieracia** only give me one tick under the aggregate name as I cannot name the species. More straightforward was my first **Harebell** (this will soon be numerous on the hill but today I only saw one flower). **Horseshoe Vetch** was abundant but I was too early for the **Early Gentian** flowers which were on my wish list though I did find **Spignel** and the flowers of **Privet** and **Buckthorn** before reaching the west end of the chalkpit and descending to the foot of the hill. Another new flower seen in several places was the **Hairy Rockcress (Arabis hirsuta)**.

I had already seen several butterfly species by this time but as I began the steep descent into the quarry I was surprised by the large number of **Small Blues** that I saw (the most I have ever seen together, certainly a minimum of 20 or 30) and with them was the first of four **Green Hairstreaks** that I had close views of. Other butterflies seen were both **Holly** and **Common Blue** plus **Brimstones**, **Orange Tips** and **Whites** with at least two other species that I did not get a good enough look at to be sure of their names (one may have been **Speckled Wood** but all I saw was two dark shapes endlessly circling in an unresolved battle until out of sight, the other may have been a **Grizzled Skipper** resting on a bramble leaf and only giving me a forshortened view of the underside of the leading edge of its wings).

Other insects included the first **Soldier Beetles** of the year (the dark backed **Cantharis rustica** species) and on many 'yellow daisy' flowers there was one or more brilliant green beetles of the **Cryptocephalus hypochaeridis** type.

Returning to the flowers the base of the chalkpit gave me two significant firsts - **Field Bindweed** and **Pale Flax** plus more **Spindle** flowers (and a single **Common Lizard**). Back on top of the hill, just before reaching the car, I came on a small cluster of the **Bluebell-like** flowers which had puzzled me on May 3 and which Martin Rand has suggested are a form of **Italian Bluebell (Hyacinthoides italica)** though we are awaiting an expert opinion from Fred Rumsey at the Natural History museum.

After lunch I took a short cycle ride around Havant and unexpectedly added five new plant species to my first flowers list. At the point north of the railway station where the Lavant stream disappears into the underground channels which prevent it from flooding the centre of Havant (as it sometimes did in the past) I found a big

plant of **Oriental Poppy** and near it was my first **Lesser Stitchwort**. Further on, in the Eastern Road cemetery, one plant of **Burnet Saxifrage** was in fresh flower and also there I found **Bittersweet Nightshade** and **Creeping Cinquefoil** in flower. To end this short trip I had two **House Martins** over my house when I got home (they did not stay).

Wed 4 May

Manna from heaven?

Today I had to go to Egham in Surrey to see my daughter installed as C of E Chaplain to some 9,000 students at Royal Holloway University - a magnificent ceremony in a really impressive college chapel with a tremendous organ and top class choir (they recently broadcast Choral Evensong on Radio Three). At the reception after the service I too was 'blessed' by the Bishop of Dorking who had conducted the ceremony when he was introduced to me and in my surprise I spilt a full glass of red wine down by posh shirt and trousers but more relevant to this blog was a newly flowering tree which I saw growing in the University Campus and which I recognized as '**Manna Ash**' which I have only seen in flower once before on Portsdown Hill. You can see a picture of the tree on Wikipedia at

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fraxinus_ornus which comments on its association with **Biblical Manna** -- it says

"A sugary extract from the sap is extracted by making a cut in the bark; this was compared in late mediaeval times with the biblical manna, giving rise to the English name of the tree, and some of the vernacular names from its native area ("fresno del Maná" in Spanish, "frassino da manna" in Italian). In fact, the sugar mannose and the sugar alcohol mannitol both derive their name from the extract."

A couple of other new flowerings (for my personal list) noted today were **Goat's Beard** and **Mouse-ear Hawkweed**.

Tue 3 May

A new plant for myself and maybe for Hampshire?

Following my find of **Hairy Garlic** in Langstone yesterday I set out today to see if the plants at Nore Barn in Emsworth were also in flower but before arriving there I stopped off at the east end of the subway under the A27 at Warblington to see if there was any sign of the rare **Clustered Clover** I had found there on May 29 in 2007. I did not find that but on the slope up to the A27 sliproad, currently accessible though a broken wooden fence, I found **several 'bluebell-like' flowers which I did not recognize** so I took a specimen for later identification.

Pressing on to Nore Barn I found the **Hairy Garlic** in flower and while looking at it I was approached by two ladies who, when shown my 'bluebell' agreed that it was almost certainly a **Squill species** and they told me that they had just seen a similar plant flowering in Pook Lane.

Nearby in the Nore Barn woodland I found a **Spindle bush** in flower and as I left that area and headed north up the footpath running along the eastern boundary of the Warblington Farm fields I found another newly flowering plant which I could not name on the spot. I thought at first it was **Bog Stitchwort** which I have regularly found in the wet field between the path I was on and the 'eastern' stream of the farm. Back at home I found this plant had hairs all round its stem which ruled out the Stitchwort while the three distinct veins on the underside of its leaves showed that it was **Three-veined Sandwort (Moehringia trinerva)**

A little further north up this path I saw that the **Giant Horsetail plants** had grown to my waist height (a good metre tall).

Reaching Pook Lane I left the tarmac road (confusingly named Pook Lane and built to provide access to the Old Rectory and Pook Lane stables when they were cut off from the northern (residential housing) section of the lane by construction of the Havant bypass). Half way to the sea down the real 'lane' I found the **Scilla plants** reported by the two ladies - they were in a tight cluster of more than twenty flower stems, each about 30cm high, on the west side of the lane just north of the gate into the Wade Farm field.

I may well have passed these plants in past years and ignored them as pale flowered Bluebells but a close look at the flowers showed they were definitely not Bluebells and when I got home and consulted Stace's Flora I became pretty certain that they were **Scilla liliohyacinthus** or **Pyrenean Squill**. My other specimen collected at the A27 underpass also fell within Stace's description of this species and if I am right then this could be a new species for Hampshire county as it is not mentioned in the current Hants Flora, and Stace's account of its distribution says it occurs occasionally from south Somerset and Berkshire north to Scotland (and that would rule out Hampshire and the rest of south east England). I have sent full details and photos of these plants to Martin Rand, south Hampshire plant recorder, and await his comments.

Before posting the above I had a reply from Martin Rand saying that he could not name the 'Squill' precisely but he could say **it was not a Squill by virtue of the size and shape of the bracts**. He believes it to be **a garden cultivar of the Bluebell family (Hyacinthoides)** and has referred it to the expert Fred Rumsey at the Natural History Museum who may be able to give it a precise name.

Mon 2 May

My first House Martins and a new site for Hairy Garlic

A busy morning included a short cycle ride to Langstone to visit friends and on the way home I came through the new part of the village to check on the **Least Yellow Oxalis** site by Southbrook Road where it had just started to flower. This addition to my flowering list was followed by two commoner species - **Common Mallow** and **Foxglove**

I didn't get another chance to get out until mid-afternoon when it was too windy for cycling far so I opted to walk to the South Moors and before leaving the paved streets of Havant I found five new species of flowering plants plus a general outburst of one of the few grasses that I recognize (**Soft Brome** or **Lop Grass**). The flowers were **Hemlock Water Dropwort** in the pond beside Park Road South, **'Love in the mist'** or **Nigella damascena** around the multi-storey carpark, and, close to the Langstone roundabout, my first **White Clover**, **Bucks-horn Plantain** and **Narrow-leaved Pepperwort**.

Leaving the roads for the path beside the Langbrook stream I came on the first flowers on two very common species - **Hogweed** and **Broad-leaved Dock** - before discovering a mass of flowers on the small patch of **Yellow-flowered Strawberry** (this was already on my year list though only through isolated discoveries of one or two flowers in February and March). The patch seen today occurs just a few yards south of the approach road to the Langstone Technology Park and near it **Red Campion** was also in full flower (another species that I had only found a couple of

isolated plants in flower last month). Also seen in gardens by the stream was **Solomon's Seal** in full flower, a reminder that wild plants should now be out. A little further downstream I found my first **Common Comfrey** in flower (Brian Fellows had this in flower at Brook Meadow back on Apr 20). This was flowering at a regular site close to the stream but at the end of the walk I found another big cluster of similar plants beside the Lymbourne stream immediately south of the Havant bypass where I cannot recall seeing them before and I will have a close look at these (probably an escaped garden cultivar) as the flowers 'looked different'.

Passing the east end of Penner Road I made a small diversion to check out that area, finding **Greater Pond Sedge** in full flower along the ditch around what is now the Southern Electric site (previously Autoliv) and by the gate into the site carpark I was mystified by a bold notice giving '**Five Golden Rules for Site Safety**' These were listed as "**Reverse Park, Wear PPE, Assess Risks, Hold Handrails, and Accept Challenges**". 'Wear PPE' was particularly puzzling to me as I had read PPE (Philosophy, Politics and Economics) at Oxford but am unsure how to wear it - I suppose this was one of the challenges to be accepted.

Emerging onto the South Moors grassland I found lots of **Divided Sedge** now in flower while through the fence of the orchid field I could see a mass of **Spike Rush** now in flower.

Reaching Southmoor Lane I found **my first Thistle flower** of the year - just one open on the **Slender Thistles** that still survive by the roadside under the **Cherry Plum trees**, some of which are **already covered with incipient fruit**.

On the Budds Farm pools I met Mike Collins who pointed out a distant **Common Sandpiper** and commented on the apparent absence of **Gadwall** which normally breed here. For myself I was pleased to add my first **House-Martins** (a dozen of them) before taking the seawall path from which I heard my first **Whimbrel**.

Crossing the stream into Mill Lane I noticed a fresh plant of **Annual Pearlwort** flowering among the **Rustyback Fern** on the wall of the mill but at the east end of the lane (beside the driveway into the penultimate house going east before you come to the one with the beautifully kept and showy garden on the roadside bank) I came on a much more surprising plant - **Hairy Garlic** - which I have never seen here before and only know of one site at the Nore Barn woodland at Emsworth. At least three flowerheads caught my eye rising from a typical mass of prostrate flat leaves which showed hairy edges through my hand lens. I cannot believe these have been recently planted here but I can believe I have overlooked the leaves in many years of walking past them.

On the final stretch homeward along the Billy Trail I had my second find of **Cut-leaved Cranesbill** and near it were the yellow flowers of **Welsh Poppy** which had been planted.

WILDLIFE DIARY AND NEWS FOR APR 25 - MAY 1 (WEEK 17 OF 2011)

BIRDS

Divers: All three regular species are still present in southern waters with five or six Great Northern on the sea off Selsey Bill being a regular sight for the birders there and a summer plumaged Black-throated was still off Penzance on Apr 30. More unusual was a group of 5 White-billed Divers off the

Aberdeenshire coast in the north while one was still to be seen off the French coast on Apr 27

Grebes: Trektellen has three reports of Red-necked Grebe this week (two off the Netherlands and one in British waters). Both Slavonian and Black-necked seem to have left British waters but one Slavonian and two Black-necked were still off the Netherlands at the start of this week

North Atlantic Little Shearwater (*Puffinus baroli*): Little Shearwater is possibly the most numerous bird species in the southern hemisphere but it does not cross the Equator. There is a similar but distinct northern hemisphere species and I became aware of it as a 'mega rarity' in British waters when one settled on Lundy during the breeding season last year and could be heard 'singing' for a mate from its chosen nest hole. This year it was back on Lundy on Apr 26 (still, so far as I know, without a mate)

Storm Petrel: A group of 8 birds were reported off the Dorset coast on Feb 13 but I am not aware of any others in the English Channel until Apr 25 when a fishing boat off the south Devon coast saw three of these Petrels on Apr 25

White Stork: Many Devon birders were excited to see a White Stork this week until someone noticed a metal ring on its foot and Shaun Barnes did some research showing ..

"Fylde Bird Club (Blackpool area of Lancashire) noted that on 26th March 2011 Bob Danson and Barry Dyson discovered a White Stork feeding in a flooded field at Pilling Lane Ends, before it relocated to a field alongside Taylor's Lane, Stake Pool. However, the presence of a narrow metal ring above the bird's left foot proved it to be an escape from captivity, and the same individual that had earlier been noted in Scotland over Fairlie, Ayrshire on 13th March 2011, then at Ormiston, Edinburgh and Whitecraig, Lothian on 17th-19th March. After leaving the Fylde it overflew Halton, Lancashire then Tebay, Cumbria on 27th March before visiting Lockerbie and Moffat, Dumfriesshire on 9th-10th April and Banchory, Aberdeenshire on 11th-12th April 2011. The bird originated from Harewood House, north of Leeds, West Yorkshire, where free-flying White Storks are known to have been kept as exhibits since at least April 1997, and they successfully fledged young later that year. Ringed White Storks from this source are occasionally recorded at large around northern England and southern Scotland, particularly in the early spring

Goslings: Both Greylag and Canada geese hatched young this week

Garganey: Reports this week have come from Dorset (Abbotsbury and Poole Harbour), Sussex (Rye Harbour), Kent (Dungeness and Sheppey), and Cornwall (The Lizard). Locally a female was on Baffins pond in Portsmouth on Apr 30

Long-tailed Duck: One was seen at Hurst beach (Lymington) on Apr 27 and 28, and maybe this bird was the one seen passing Dungeness on Apr 30. Two others were off the Netherlands on Apr 28

Sawbills: All three species still reported this week. A single Smew was off the Netherlands on Apr 30, a Red-breasted Merganser went past the South Foreland in Kent on Apr 28 and two Goosanders flew past Dungeness on Apr 30

Honey Buzzard: Of local interest Martin Hampton had a very brief view of what was almost certainly one flying north over his Havant garden on Apr 22 and another flew east over Newlands Farm (south of Fareham) on Apr 29

Black Kite: Several seem to have crossed the Channel to be seen in southern England this week. For a comparison of Red and Black Kites see Graeme Lyons photos at

<http://analternativenaturalhistoryofsussex.blogspot.com/2011/04/how-often-do-you-get-to-write-this-on.html> - elsewhere at least one has been in south Cornwall, one at Folkestone, one at Dungeness and one at West Meon near Petersfield in Hampshire with another over Ibsley near Ringwood.

Montagu's Harrier: As well as several continental sightings this week this species has been reported from Kent (Folkestone, Oare Marshes and nearby Sheppey, Thanet and Sandwich Bay) and The Lizard in Cornwall

Rough-legged Buzzard: Trektellen reports show that a few of these were moving north over the Netherlands this week so a couple of reports from southern England on Apr 25 are made the more likely- two were reported at Folkestone and one was seen well in the New Forest

Osprey: More than seven reports this week include one eating a fish in the Pilesey area (Thorney Island) and another seen carrying a fish over the Fareham end of Portsdown (both on Apr 25) and another seen in Langstone Harbour on Apr 28

Red-footed Falcon: In addition to three reports from the Netherlands this week one flew in from the sea at Folkestone on Apr 30 and there is a late report of one over the Axminster area of Devon on Apr 22

Merlin: I had thought that most of these had now returned to Britain but on Apr 29 at least 15 were seen in the Netherlands (probably birds intending to spend their breeding season a lot further north)

Hobby: At least 32 reports this week as these lovely birds flood into southern England - locally one flew north over Martin Hampton's house in Havant on Apr 22 and two were over Portsdown on Apr 30. In Kent more than 17 were hunting over the Stour Valley on Apr 27 and I expect to hear similar reports from e.g. the New Forest as flocks of 20 or 30 birds that have travelled together feed up before dispersing to their own territories.

Peregrine: A Sussex birder reported hearing one making an unusual 'honking' noise as it checked out a couple of radio controlled gliders which had invaded its air space in the Newhaven area on Apr 27

Stone Curlew: A late arrival was seen on the Isle of Wight on Apr 16

Collared Pratincole: On Apr 24 one was seen in Yorkshire and on Apr 27 and 28 what was presumably the same bird was in Lincolnshire

Lapwing: One was seen with three chicks at Farlington Marshes on Apr 29

Little Stint: One on the Lymington shore on Apr 29 (a Temmincks Stint was seen in Belgium on Apr 30)

Curlew Sandpiper: One was at Brownsea Island in Poole Harbour on Apr 24 and another was in the Rye Bay area on Apr 29

Purple Sandpiper: Most of these have now left us but one was still at Southsea Castle on Apr 30

Ruff: Among more expected reports from Lymington, Sheppey and the Isle of Wight was a sighting of 2 pausing briefly with Sanderlings on the shore of Hayling Island at Sandy Point on Apr 30

Jack Snipe: Another unexpected report was of one at Durlston on Apr 29

Bar-tailed Godwit: This has been the week in which huge numbers of Barwits have been streaming up the English Channel. On Apr 28 Dungeness reported a total of 7317 falling back to 2450 on Apr 29 and 1151 on Apr 30. Just to show that it was not just Barwits that were on the move the Dungeness website entry for Apr 30 included ...

"Preliminary totals include two Black-throated Divers, five Gadwall, two Pintails, 32 Shoveler, five Velvet Scoters, a Long-tailed Duck, two Goosanders, 193 Grey Plover, 97 Knot, 1151 Bar-tailed Godwits, 128 Whimbrel, singles of Spotted Redshank and Greenshank, 79 Pomarine Skuas, 18 Arctic Skuas, six Great Skua, seven Mediterranean Gulls, 110 Little Terns, 50 Arctic Terns and three Black Terns."

Marsh Sandpiper: Not yet reported in England, but one to look out for, was a single Marsh Sandpiper seen in Belgium on Apr 30

Wood Sandpiper: Reports this week from Sheppey, Weir Wood reservoir in north Sussex, the Kent Stour valley, Blashford Lakes at Ringwood, Christchurch Harbour and the Selsey west fields (on Apr 30 a count of 259 was reported from a Netherlands site)

Common Sandpiper: Reported from at least 10 sites this week including 2 in the Portsmouth docks and 5 at Sandy Point on Hayling.

Pomarine Skua: Dungeness recorded 79 on Apr 30 when Seaford had 63 but coastal sites further west struggled with counts of 7 at Selsey Bill and St Catherine's Point but only 1 at Titchfield Havant

Little Gull: On Apr 25 there were 13 seen in Hayling Bay and on Apr 26 Stokes Bay at Gosport had just 3. Across the Channel the Netherlands had 1498 on Apr 27; 2978 on Apr 28; and 3459 on Apr 29

Little Tern: Just one report from Langstone Harbour of a single bird seen from Farlington Marshes on Apr 26 - plenty of others all along the Channel shore and round into the North Sea

Black Tern: 11 reports from sites along the English Channel shore this week but 7 was the maximum count on our shore compared with 103 at a Netherlands site on Apr 27 and 61 at a French site on Apr 28 (when 3 were inland at the Blashford Lakes near Ringwood). Just one report of a single White-winged Black Tern from a Netherlands site on Apr 25

Turtle Dove: On Apr 25 two were heard purring at Marlpit Lane near Funtington in the Chichester area and on that day I heard my first a mile or so to the south in Hambrook village (just east of the Chichester Grain Storage site). At least one was back at Martin Down in the west of Hampshire on Apr 20.

Tawny Owl: First report of owlets out of the nest comes from Hythe on Southampton Water on Apr 24

Long-eared Owl: An unexpected report of one at Portland on Apr 30 while Short-eared have been seen at seven coastal sites (including Farlington Marshes) this week

Nightjar: First report of churring comes from Devon on Apr 28

Swift: A major arrival in mid-week brought reports of 38 in the Romsey area on Apr 26 and 16 over the Blashford Lakes on Apr 27 (when one Netherlands site had a count of 305). On Apr 30 there were reports of 51 over Portsdown Hill and 75 at Christchurch Harbour (and 8277 at a Netherlands site)

House Martin: Plenty of Swallows now back with us but House Martins are still in short supply. Locally three pairs were back at the six nest boxes provided by Tony Tupper on his house near the Hermitage Stream in Leigh Park (Havant area) on Apr 24 and on Apr 30 John Chapman reported a dozen birds over the Hayling Bay shore (of the 34 reports I have noted this spring this count was only beaten by one of 20 birds in Devon on Mar 31 and equals one of 12 birds near Crowborough on Apr 2)

Yellow Wagtail: Still few and far between with a maximum count of 16+ in north Kent on Apr 23 followed by a count of 14 at Christchurch Harbour on Apr 25 (on Apr 24 there was a Citrine Wagtail in Norfolk)

Waxwing: Still 11 in the Poole area of Dorset on Apr 26 but nothing since then

Nightingale: This continues to be a bumper year for the species and on Apr 25 we even had one singing on the Langstone South Moors as it paused to recover its composure before flying on to a breeding site

Savi's Warbler: This week one has been heard reeling at Slapton Ley in Devon from Apr 24 to 27 at least

Subalpine Warbler: What was probable the bird ringed at Portland Bill on Apr 24 decided to stay on in the area and was seen again on Apr 27 at the south end of Tavern Lawns opposite The Nothe Tavern at The Nothe, Weymouth

Willow Warbler: A big surge of these arrived this week - totals at Portland were 200 on Apr 27 and an estimated 300 on Apr 30

Spotted Flycatcher: Since the first reached us on Apr 22 (near Basingstoke in Hampshire) there have been eight more reports, all in Dorset and Devon

Golden Oriole: These have been reported since Apr 12 (mostly in the Scillies but there was one in Sussex on Apr 19). This week Devon had its second with a report of a male singing at Berry Head in Devon on Apr 29

Woodchat Shrike: On Apr 28 a female was found at Prawle in Devon (no recent news from the Scillies where up to 5 have been seen earlier this month)

Crossbill: Reports of 13 in the Thanet area of Kent on Apr 27 and 32 at Dungeness on Apr 30 might be signs that these early breeding birds are planning an invasion of this country from European breeding sites

Escapees: This week we have reports of a male Peacock at the Isle of Wight Brading RSPB site and of Japanese Quail found in a Midhurst town garden

INSECTS

Dragonflies

Vagrant Emperor: After a 'probable' report of one at Portland on Apr 23 we now have sightings of this sub-Saharan species from The Lizard in Cornwall, Dungeness and Folkestone in Kent and Christchurch in Dorset. The Dungeness sighting was seen on the Sussex Butterfly Conservation website which added news that there had already been an invasion of this insects in France but I still have not discovered if the invaders have actually come from south of the Sahara or from colonies that the species has recently established north of the desert.

Downy Emerald (*Cordulia aenea*): First report of this species comes from Mill Hill at Shoreham on Apr 26

Four-spotted Chaser: A report from Fort Purbook on Portsdown (on Apr 25) must have been of a newly emerged insect on its pre-breeding fly-around which can take dragonflies to places they would never otherwise visit

Also seen again this week have been Hairy Dragonfly, Broad-bodied Chaser, Large Red Damselfly, Blue-tailed Damselfly, Common and Azure Damselflies plus a Variable Damselfly seen in Kent (Thanet)

Butterflies

Species reported in previous weeks and seen again this week are:

Dingy and Grizzled Skippers, Continental Swallowtail (in the Netherlands and Belgium), Wood White, Clouded Yellow (now seen as far west as Portland and Devon), Brimstone, Large, Small and Green-veined White, Orange Tip, Green Hairstreak, Small Copper, Common Blue, Holly Blue, Duke of Burgundy, Red Admiral, Painted Lady, Small Tortoiseshell, Large Tortoiseshell (one seen in the Netherlands after reports from the Isle of Wight on Mar 14 and Bentley Wood near Stockbridge on Apr 6), Peacock, Comma, Pearl-bordered Fritillary, Speckled Wood, Wall Brown and Small Heath.

New species were:

Small Blue: First seen at Martin Down on Apr 23, then on Portsdown on Apr 25 and on Kithurst Hill above Storrington on Apr 28.

Brown Argus: First was on Levin Down near Midhurst on Apr 24 with eight at Bonchurch (IoW) on Apr 25 followed by Butser Hill (Hants) and Kithurst Hill (Sussex) on Apr 29

Adonis Blue: First at both Mill Hill (Shoreham) and Durlston on Apr 26 followed by Bonchurch (IoW) on Apr 29

Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary: Seen at Park Corner Heath near Eastbourne on Apr 28

Marsh Fritillary: Second hand news that these were flying in Somerset on Apr 27 (normally expected in the second week of May)

Glanville Fritillary: First seen in the Ventnor area (IoW) on Apr 23

Marbled White: Reportedly seen on the Sussex Downs near Lewes on Apr 27 (the very early Gatekeeper reported at Folkestone on Apr 22 did not figure again this week - possibly a misidentification of a Wall Brown or even a Small Heath?)

Moths

Adela reaumurella Longhorn Moths: After a first report from Emsworth last week I found the species in Havant on Apr 25 when 'hundreds' were seen at Park Corner Heath in the Eastbourne area with subsequent reports from two sites on the Sussex Downs

Elachista biatomella: One found at Shoreham Mill Hill on Apr 24 was said to be the first recorded in West Sussex for 100 years

Esperia sulphurella: First in Thanet on Apr 25

Plum Fruit Moth (Grapholita funebrana): First in Thanet on Apr 23

Peach Blossom (Thyatira batis): First at Cuckfield (Haywards Heath area) on Apr 26

Maiden's Blush (*Cyclophora punctaria*): First in Thanet on Apr 24

Flame Carpet (*Xanthorhoe designata*): First in Thanet on Apr 25

Garden Carpet (*Xanthorhoe fluctuata*): First in Thanet on Apr 24

Common Carpet (*Epirrhoe alternata*): First at Noar Hill near Petersfield on Apr 25

Galium Carpet (*Epirrhoe galiata*): First at Shoreham Mill Hill on Apr 24

May Highflyer (*Hydriomena impluviata*): First at Thanet on Apr 24

The Fern (*Horisme tersata*): First at Shoreham Mill Hill on Apr 24

Lesser Treble-bar (*Aplocera eformata*): First at Shoreham Mill Hill on Apr 24

Brown Silver-line (*Petrophora chlorosata*): First at St Leonard's Forest near Horsham on Apr 24

Lime Hawkmoth (*Mimas tiliae*): First at Portslade (Brighton) on Apr 24

Puss Moth (*Cerura vinula*): First in Thanet on Apr 23

Pebble Prominent (*Eligmodonta ziczac*): First in Thanet on Apr 24

Great Prominent (*Peridea anceps*): First at Cuckfield (Haywards Heath area) on Apr 26

Coxcomb Prominent (*Ptilodon capucina*): First at Portslade (Brighton) on Apr 24

Pale Prominent (*Pterostoma palpina*): First at Cuckfield (Haywards Heath area) on Apr 26

Chocolate-tip (*Clostera curtula*): First in the West Town area of Hayling Island on Apr 16

Garden Tiger (*Arctia caja*): First at Ventnor (IoW) on Apr 25

Light Feathered Rustic (*Agrotis cinerea*): First at Durlston on Apr 29

Heart and Dart (*Agrotis exclamationis*): First at Portslade (Brighton) on Apr 24

The Shears (*Hada nana*): First at Shoreham Mill Hill on Apr 24

Light Brocade (*Lacanobia w-latinum*): First at Shoreham Mill Hill on Apr 24

Broad-barred White (*Hecatera bicolorata*): First in Thanet on Apr 28

Toadflax Brocade (*Calophasia lunula*): First on Thanet on Apr 25

Reed Dagger (*Simyra albovenosa*): First seen as a migrant in Thanet on Apr 24

The Coronet (*Craniophora ligustri*): First at Cuckfield (Haywards Heath area) on Apr 26

Clouded-bordered Brindle (*Apamea crenata*): First at Cuckfield (Haywards Heath area) on Apr 26

Treble Lines (*Charanyca trigrammica*): First at Shoreham Mill Hill on Apr 24

The Spectacle (*Abrostola triplasia*): First at Shoreham Mill Hill on Apr 24

Mother Shipton (*Callistege mi*): First on Butser Hill (Petersfield) on Apr 29

Other Insects

Hemyda vittata: This very uncommon Tachinid fly was found by Gordon Jarvis at Peasmarsh in East Sussex on Apr 28. The species was new to Britain in the 1950s and is a parasitoid of small bugs. In reporting it on the Rye Bay website Chris Bentley commented that its life style is a dangerous one - he says he has heard of one of these flies being devoured by the bug in whose abdomen it had been developing and from which it had emerged while the bug was still alive.

Dance Fly (*Empis tessellata*): A new species for me equipped with a dagger like proboscis used both for sucking the juices out of small insects as a first course, then taking up nectar from flowers for dessert - reported at Rye Harbour on Apr 26

Syrphus ribesii Hoverfly: First report from Thanet on Apr 24

Helophilus pendulus Hoverfly: First report from Thanet on Apr 24

Myathropa florea Hoverfly: First report from Thanet on Apr 24

Epistrophe eligans Hoverfly: First report from Thanet on Apr 4

Amblyteles armatorius Ichneumon: First report from Thanet on Apr 24

Dolichovespula media Wasp: This large 'German Wasp' found in Sussex by Graeme Lyons on Apr 24

Andrena nitida Mining Bee: A 'new to me' species reported by Graeme Lyons on Apr 26

Mason Bee (*Osmia bicolor*): First report from Kingston near Lewes on Apr 25

Ground Beetle *Leistus fulvibarbi*: Seen by Graeme Lyons at Dungeness on Apr 25

Cockchafer (*Melolontha melolontha*): First reported by George Spraggs at Hayling West Town on Apr 15

***Helops caeruleus* Darkling Beetle: Reported at Rye Harbour on Apr 26**

Cepero's Groundhopper (*Tetrix cepero*): Reported at Dungeness on Apr 25

European Turtle Bug (*Podops inuncta*): Reported at Rye Harbour on Apr 26

Denticulate Leather Shieldbug (*Coriomeris denticulatus*): Found at Kingston near Lewes on Apr 25

Segestria florentina Spider: See

<http://analternativenaturalhistoryofsussex.blogspot.com/search?updated-max=2011-04-24T13%3A30%3A00%2B01%3A00&max-results=7> for pictures of this fearsome spider found by Graeme Lyons in old walls at Chichester. In the same post Graeme writes of finding two other impressive spiders at the same place but while I have heard of one of them (*Steatoda nobilis*) the name he uses for the second (*Armadillidium depressum*) is the name for the Southern Pill Woodlouse - some mistake here

Four-jawed Spider (*Tetragnatha extensa*): This more common species was seen in Thanet on Apr 24 along with a species that I am not familiar with called *Anelosimus vittatus* which you can discover at <http://www.stevehopkin.co.uk/cornishspiders/042ANEvit/>

PLANTS

(Skip to Other Wildlife)

Wild Radish: My first find of this for the year was in an arable field near Funtington on Apr 25

Red Campion: First flowers to be seen in the wild by myself were found on Apr 25

Ragged Robin: First flowers reported at Brook Meadow in Emsworth on Apr 26

Small-flowered Cranesbill: First flowers seen in Havant on Apr 30

Cut leaved Cranesbill: First flowers by the roadside at Broadmarsh in Havant on Apr 27

Horseshoe Vetch: First flowers reported at Durlston on Apr 29

Kidney Vetch: First flowers reported at Durlston on Apr 30

Dog Rose: First flowers seen on Thorney Island on Apr 25

Japanese Rose (*Rosa rugosa*): These semi-wild plants started to flower on Apr 25

Dewberry: The large white flowers of this first Bramble were first seen at Hambrook near Chichester on Apr 25

Silverweed: First flowers seen at Broadmarsh by Langstone Harbour on Apr 27

Common Nettle: The first tassel flowers seen on Apr 25

Pignut: First flowers found in the Hollybank Woods at Emsworth by Brian Fellows on Apr 28

Yellow Pimpernel: First flowers found in the Hollybank Woods on Apr 25

Purple Toadflax: Flowering in Havant on Apr 30

Heath Speedwell: First flowers in the Hollybank Woods on Apr 25

Wall Speedwell: First flowers seen in Havant on Apr 30

Eyebright: First flowers reported at Durlston on Apr 29

Wood Sage: First flowers reported at Durlston on Apr 27

Hoary Plantain: First flowers reported at Durlston on Apr 25

Elder: First fully open flowers seen at Hambrook near Chichester on Apr 25

Perennial Cornflower: First flowers in my Havant garden on Apr 25

Cornflower: Wildflower seed plants in Havant cemetery started to flower on Apr 25

Cat's Ear: First flower found at Broadmarsh (Havant) on Apr 27

Rough Hawkbit: First flowers open in Havant cemetery on Apr 25

Beaked Hawksbeard: First flowers open in Havant cemetery on Apr 25

Mouse-ear Hawkeed: Reported flowering at Durlston on Apr 26

Yellow Iris: After an isolated early flowering plant had been seen on Apr 7 general flowering began on Apr 27

OTHER WILDLIFE

Stoat: The warden of the Elmley Marshes RSPB site on Sheppey smelt burning as he got out of his little used car on Apr 26 and on lifting the bonnet he found the source of the smell in a some padding which had fallen onto the hot engine - luckily it had not ignited and after he had removed it he checked the engine compartment, finding a rabbit's skull and other left overs indicating that a Stoat had been using the engine compartment as a dining room in which it thought it would be safe from disturbance. Luckily the Stoat seems to have been out hunting for its next meal when the vehicle was started up.

Bottle-nosed Dolphin: A pod of around ten was seen off Christchurch Harbour on Apr 25

Basking Shark: One was seen off the Kent coast at Folkestone on Apr 28 (I think they are unusual so far east in the channel)

Water Vole: I am aware that Water Shrews can be found far from water but I was not aware of Water Voles living away from running water until this week when the Rye Bay website quoted an email from Dave Bunney, a resident at Dungeness, who said .. "I realised a Water Vole was coming to the pond in my wildlife garden at Dungeness, but capturing it on camera proved impossible, so we bought a Bushnell camera trap, and straight away got these images. The Vole has several holes around the pond, I think the pond attracted him because of the vegetation around it and I have an open compost heap with lots of vegetable peelings right next to the pond, although it can attract undesirables such as a Brown Rat a few years ago. I

don't know if many people have any records of Water Voles in their garden." .. This email does not indicate how the Vole might have reached the pond and this raises another question as to how far a Water Vole is prepared to travel across dry land. If the house was one of those strung out along the shore from the Dungeness village pub ('The Pilot' near the Lifeboat station) down to the Lighthouse and Power Station it would seem that this Vole must either have crossed a minimum of 500 metres of dry shingle from the nearest fresh water on its own feet or been transported by 'other means'.

Black Common Seal: See my diary for Apr 27 for the story of someone swimming near the entrance to Chichester Harbour who found a metre long, all black, Common Seal pup 'breathing down his neck' and follow the link to the BBC Wales video of a similar black seal pup being cared for at a Seal rescue centre

Hedgehog babies: Also in that Apr 27 diary entry is the unconfirmed report of baby Hedgehogs 'squeaking' in a Hayling garden. Available information on when baby Hedgehogs are born tells me that they should not be born until early May but I got the same information regarding the appearance of Seal pups and it is clear that they have been 'out' for a couple of weeks or so.

Hybrid Newts: Brian Banks recently found a newt showing features of both Smooth and Palmate species and he suggests that if more people looked carefully at the newts in their ponds more hybrids could be found. Take a look at

<http://rxwildlife.org.uk/2011/04/27/another-smooth-x-palmate-newt-hybrid/#more-14816> for Brian's entry for Apr 27 which has a photo taken at Staplehurst (south of Maidstone in Kent) and his comments on the features indicating hybridisation.

Fungi: Back on Apr 2 I found early examples of St George's Mushrooms here in the Havant Eastern Road cemetery on Apr 2 and shortly after that some small specimens appeared in my own garden. This week another visit to the Havant cemetery on Apr 25 gave me a much better timed 'fairy ring' of more than 20 large specimens which must have been out on Apr 23 to celebrate their patron saints day

WILDLIFE DIARY AND NEWS FOR APR 25 - MAY 1 (WEEK 17 OF 2011)

Wed 27 Apr

More flowers, a black Seal pup, and maybe young Hedgehogs

Today my neighbour's **Rowan tree** is in full flower and a cycle ride to Broadmarsh this evening added **Silverweed**, **Cut-leaved Cranesbill** and **Cat's Ear** to the list of summer flowers. Although it is three weeks since Brian Fellows found **Yellow Iris (Flag)** in flower on the South Moors I have not seen any flowers until today when many were out at Budds Farm Pools and in the Homewell stream pool opposite the Solent Road junction here in Havant. Also seen today were several more **Wild**

Rose bushes with flowers and a good show of **Hedgerow Cranesbill** in Southmoor Lane

At the Budd's Farm pools an adult **Lesser Blackback** gull flew in and landed on one of the settling tanks while on the main pools singles of **Mute Swan**, **Shelduck** and **Canada Goose** indicated that they have mates now sitting on eggs.

A phone call this evening from Rosemary Webb told me that she has had a **Hedgehog** active in her Hayling garden for some time and that squeaks suggested that there might also be **newborn young Hedgehogs** (should we call them Hedge piglets?). Whether there are young or not the very dry ground at the moment means that the **worms and slugs** which form a major part of a **Hedgehog's diet** (although they are almost omnivorous and will eat **Beetles, Bird's eggs, Mammals, Baby birds and most insects**) will be in short supply so Rosemary will get tins of dog or cat food to supplement their diet (if the **Foxes** that also frequent her garden do not get to it first).

Checking on the internet I found information about their breeding at <http://www.wildlife-web.org.uk/hedgehog/facts/breeding.html> which tells me that their breeding season is from April to September though most mating occurs in May and June. Gestation takes four and a half weeks and the babies remain in the nest for another month so it is unlikely that young have been born before the end of April despite the early season.

A similar question as to whether it is too early for young mammals to have been born was raised last week when a sighting of a **Seal Pup** was reported in north Kent and in my Summary for last week I suggested that it was too early for this year's young seals but I now find that I was wrong. Scanning through recent HOSLIST messages today I read that ... "I was swimming off Hayling on Apr 22 and on hearing breathing behind me (only 50 feet out) I turned to find a seal 6 inches from my face. It was totally black and about 3 foot long at maximum. I know the harbour/common seal colony at Thorney Island and as far as I know none are black (although I have read somewhere they can come in almost any colour - a lot of the locals I have seen are red/brown/grey mottled). This one was also very small - and again as far as I know young harbour seals are not black).

"I've seen it 3 times over the last 6 days - it seems very bold and comes close to shore. A lot of the locals have also seen it regularly. It has been seen from Creek Road right round to the end of the Sandy Point Nature Reserve."

In response to this question about **Black Seal Pups** George Spraggs told us that we could see proof that there are such things by visiting

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/wales/8402738.stm> to watch a video of a **Black Pup** currently being fed at a rescue centre in Wales.

Mon 25 Apr

A great day out with a Sewage Fly spectacular

After a late night at my computer completing my Weekly Summary I took a late morning stroll round the Eastern Road cemetery here in Havant where a 'fairy ring' of more than 20 '**St George's Mushrooms**' told me that I should have been there a couple of days earlier when they were celebrating their Saints Day. Also seen were botanic reminders that we are now entering summer when 'yellow daisies' dominate the scene - both **Rough Hawkbit** and **Beaked Hawksbeard** were in flower (as was the **Common Nettle**). Less natural reminders of the summer season came from several of the 'wildflower seed' sown plants in the soil of several

graves - these included **Californian Poppy (Eschscholzia)**, **Cornflower**, a Flax species and another colourful 'garden flower' which I did not recognize).

Reaching the corner where the **Duke of Argyle's Teapant** cascades its flowers from an ornamental holly tree I found that corner had been taken over by a moth called **Adela reaumurella** which had appeared in Emsworth the previous day (and can no doubt be currently encountered in many other woodland rides and shrubby gardens). If you are not familiar with this species have a look at

<http://ukmoths.org.uk/show.php?id=896> where one has posed to show off its 'fly like' body to which are appended extraordinarily long white antennae. In this photo the wings and body of the moth appear to be black but in real life the wings will probably seem to have a coppery metallic sheen from certain angles. The other thing you will notice is that these moths are normally seen in large swarms and I understand that this is because they want to make sure that they catch the eye of any females of their species and they do this by congregating around a bush or small tree and 'dancing in the air'. The long antennae give these moths the general name of '**Longhorn moths**' and we have 18 species of them in the UK.

After lunch I got on my bike and headed to Thorney Island in the hope of adding **Sedge Warbler** to my year list but I only heard a couple of **Reed Warblers** plus both **Common** and **Lesser Whitethroat**, though I did see my first **Small Copper** butterfly.

Continuing east along the Environment Agency track to the Thorney main road I passed my first **Dog Rose flower** of the summer and then, crossing the road into Thornham Lane, I had the totally unexpected sight of millions of '**sewage flies**' imitating the spectacular aerial displays put on by Starlings to boost the viewing figures for the Autumnwatch TV programmes. I tried to catch the spectacle on my camera but the best I could do is shown below - before I got the camera out the insects formed long swirling smoke clouds of solid black against the blue sky but although I waited for some time the ongoing show was much less impressive.

Unknown flies forming smoke-like clouds above the Thornham Sewage Works
From Prinsted I rode over the railway at Southbourne and continued east along Cooks Lane and Priors Leaze Lane to Hambrook where (at SU 784063, just after passing the massive Chichester Grain Storage buildings) I had the bonus of hearing the purring of an unseen **Turtle Dove**. Also in this area I noted two more signs of the changing season - one was a couple of fully open umbels of **Elder flowers** and the second was the first 'blackberry' flowers of the summer (I think these were **Dewberries**).

Once across the A27 I turned west and then north again into Marlpit Lane where I heard two (maybe three) **Nightingales singing** (but no **Turtle Dove!**). Crossing the Emsworth Common road I took the bridleway north to Hares Lane in the hope of encountering the **Corn Bunting** which Brian Fellows had seen, heard and photographed on Apr 22. Before reaching the spot where I expected to see it (at SU 786 092 in an overgrown farm dump or chalk pit on the north side of the lane at the brow of the steep slope up from the River Ems at Racton) I noted two new flowers (**Wood Avens** and **Wild Radish**), but the bird proved frustrating. I certainly did not hear the **Corn Bunting** song but there was a bird making a repetitive 'single note' call from an Ash tree - eventually this bird flew, showing me that it was definitely not the 'fat bird of the corn' with its 'bumblebee like' flight.

At the bottom of the hill the River Ems was thickly carpeted with **Stream Water-crowfoot flowers** and the steep slope up towards Aldsworth was still full of wildflower colour (including now **Red Campion**). Passing Aldsworth Pond I did not stop but I did glimpse what I am pretty sure were the first spikes of **Mare's Tail** plants showing above the water surface.

After crossing back into Hampshire I took the route through the Hollybank Woods to see if the **Heath Speedwell** was in flower. This grows in the west section of the wood and when I felt sure I had passed the area where it grows without seeing it I stopped to turn round but as I did so I found a magnificent patch of **Yellow Pimpernel** in flower so I dismounted to take a photo and where I put down my bike what should I see but a couple of flowers of the **Heath Speedwell**.

Yellow Pimpernel flowering in Hollybank Woods despite the drought

The best example of Heath Speedwell I could find

WILDLIFE DIARY AND NEWS FOR APR 18 - 24 (WEEK 16 OF 2011)

BIRDS

Slavonian Grebe: One was seen at Castle Water (Rye Harbour) in full breeding finery on Apr 17 and maybe the same bird was off Folkestone on Apr 19

Bittern: Reports of 'booming' this week come from the Stour Valley and Dungeness RSPB reserve in Kent and also from the Walland Marsh area near Rye

Night Heron: One has been at the Stour Valley nature reserve in the Eynesbury area of Bournemouth from Apr 17 to 23 at least. There have been no reports of the West Bexington bird since Apr 18 but it may have moved to the Blashford Lakes at Ringwood where there was 'probable' sighting on Apr 23. Tony Tindale from Fareham saw the Bournemouth bird on Apr 22 and you can see his photo of it at <http://www.surfbirds.com/blog/amigo/20322/Black-crowned+Night-heron+on+the+River+Stour%2C+Dorset.html>

Little Egret: A dusk visit to Langstone Pond on Apr 20 showed me at least 12 Egrets are now on nests there

Purple Heron: No reports of the Sussex Ouse bird since Apr 16 but there was still at least one in Cornwall (Falmouth) on Apr 22 and a flock of 18 at a Netherlands site on Apr 19 shows potential for more arrivals in southern England

Black Stork: The New Forest bird was still being seen on Apr 22

Brent Goose: Still a few moving along the south coast - on Apr 19 Seaford had 117 and on Apr 22 there were 39 there

Pale Bellied Brent: Last reports that I am aware of were on Apr 17 when there were more than 150 in the Exe estuary and 31 in Weymouth Bay

Teal: A duckling was seen with its mother on the Scillies on Apr 18 (no doubt there are others in most southern counties)

Mallard: Ducklings were seen on Langstone Pond and the Westbrook in Emsworth this week (first ducklings were at Pulborough Brooks on Apr 5)

Honey Buzzard: Reports this week from Weir Wood in north Sussex, Fishlake Meadows at Romsey as well as the New Forest

Hen Harrier: On Apr 18 a female was reported twice perching in trees in the Langstone area to escape mobbing by gulls and crows but I think this would be unusual behaviour for a Harrier (which normally nests and roosts on the ground) and the presence of a Harrier along the Hayling Billy old rail track in the Langstone village area would also be unusual. Without having seen the bird I tend to think that it was more likely to have been a Buzzard

Montagu's Harrier: In addition to sightings in Cornwall this week a male was at Dungeness on Apr 17 and another(?) in the Thanet area on Apr 21

Sparrowhawk: I was surprised by the number passing through the Netherlands this week (27 on Apr 18, 50 on Apr 19, 59 on Apr 20 and 93 on Apr 23)

Buzzard: Also still on passage over the Netherlands were 122 Buzzards on Apr 20

Osprey: These are still passing through the Havant area - on Apr 17 one was fishing in Tipner Lake beside the M275 and another was at the Blashford Lakes while a third was at Aresford Pond near Winchester. On Apr 19 one was over Stokes Bay at Gosport and on Apr 22 one was eating a fish on Pilsey Sands in Chichester Harbour

Kestrel: Also moving over the Netherlands were 43 Kestrels on Apr 19 and 50 on Apr 23

Red-footed Falcon: One had been seen in Lincolnshire on Apr 6 but the next two reports came this week with one in Devon on Apr 22 and 2 over the Netherlands on Apr 23

Hobby: This year saw a very early bird at Arne in Dorset on Mar 23 with another in the Test valley on Mar 31. I now have 35 reports from all along the south coast

Corncrake: First report of the year is a 'possible' at West Bexington in Dorset on Apr 22

Black-winged Stilt: Following the first for the year (a pair in Lancashire on Apr 15) a pair has been seen at Bude in Cornwall on Apr 17 and another in Belgium on Apr 22

Kentish Plover: First for the year was seen in Belgium on Apr 20 followed by one (probable only) at Pegwell Bay in Kent on Apr 21

Dotterel: On Apr 19 the RBA website mentioned that there were 22 **Dotterel** in England but I have no idea where they were seen or if they were a single flock. What I do know is that the Trektellen website is reporting a total of 22 seen at three sites on the near continent since Apr 19.

Woodcock: Three were seen roding in Ashdown Forest on Apr 2 and now I see a second report of one bird roding at the Flexford nature reserve (Chandlers Ford near Eastleigh) on Apr 23

Bar-tailed Godwit: It seems that their spring passage up the English Channel is getting under way with 21 passing Splash Point at Seaford on Apr 19 and 69 passing Portland on Apr 22

Whimbrel: These are now well into their spring passage with many reports including 395 passing Splash Point on Apr 22 and 256 off Portland that day. Dungeness had 188 on Apr 19

Lesser Yellowlegs: First report for this year is of one at Shapwick in Somerset on Apr 20

Pomarine Skua: Spring passage through the Channel got under way this week with two passing Dungeness on Apr 18 and three there on Apr 19 when one was seen at Selsey. Splash Point had its first on Apr 22

Little Gull: Splash Point had 41 on Apr 19 when Dungeness had 20, Sandy Point on Hayling had 16, Selsey Bill had 10 and Stokes Bay had 6. As usual these birds prefer the other side of the Channel and the Netherlands had 492 on Apr 19 increasing to 1093 on Apr 21, 2205 on Apr 22 and 1996 on Apr 23

Iceland Gull: Apr 23 brought reports of three different birds on the Sussex coast - a first summer was reported at Selsey, an adult at Worthing and a second year bird at Spalsh Point

Roseate Tern: First for the year were 2 at Stokes Bay (Gosport) on Apr 17 and another (probable) was there on Apr 22

Arctic Tern: Apr 19 brought the first of year sightings to both Stokes Bay and Splash Point. Lymington then had a couple on Apr 21 but Stokes Bay reported 30 on Apr 22

Little Tern: Still no reports from Langstone Harbour but Chichester Harbour had 5 on Apr 20 and plenty have passed our Solent Harbours by (Dungeness had 41 as early as Apr 19)

Black Tern: These have been in the Channel since Apr 9 and this week the Netherlands had 183 on Apr 19, 429 on Apr 20 and 281 on Apr 21. No English site has had more than 5 birds in a day so far but Sandy Point on Hayling has had 1 and Lymington 2 (both on Apr 22)

Guillemot: There are now at least 250 on the Durlston breeding ledges and the first eggs were seen there on Apr 24

Nightjar: First for the year was in the Poole area of Dorset at Broadstone on Apr 20 and on Apr 22 three birds were seen at somewhere called 'Gus Common' which I have so far failed to track down (probably also in east Dorset)

Swift: I now have 27 reports of **Swifts** covering all the south coast counties but they are still thin 'on the ground' (perhaps in the air is better!). Cornwall had a **Pallid Swift** on Apr 8 and now reports two **Little Swifts** on Apr 21

Bee Eater: Reports of these are no longer confined to the Scillies - Devon had one on Apr 19 and Dorset on Apr 21 with 5 over Kent on Apr 22

Red-rumped Swallow: Single birds were in both Sussex and Dorset this week

House Martin: On Apr 20 some were collecting mud from the Otter estuary in Devon and on Apr 22 a group of 11 were seen at Laughton near Seaford in Sussex

Yellow Wagtail: On Apr 23 at least two seen at Reculver on the north Kent coast were described as 'Channel Wagtails' which are hybrids between our **Yellow Wagtail** and the continental **Blue-headed Wagtail**. These can be picked out by having a combination of blue crown and white throat

Waxwing: No reports since Apr 18 when 14 birds were still in the Poole (Dorset) area.

Subalpine Warbler: One was caught and ringed on Portland in Apr 24

Sardinian Warbler: One was singing at Orcombe Point in the Exmouth area of Devon on Apr 20

Spotted Flycatcher: First of the year was in the Candover Valley (south of Basingstoke) on Apr 22 and the second was seen at Portland on Apr 23

Willow Tit: On Apr 19 there were two independent reports of one seen and heard singing in Old Down Wood (SU 6533) between Four Marks and Ropley in east Hampshire

Golden Oriole: Now four reports - on Apr 12 one was in Devon, on Apr 16 a male was in the Scillies, on Apr 19 a male was near Beddingham in the Adur valley (west Sussex) and on Apr 20 the Scillies bird was seen again

Red-backed Shrike: After an isolated report of one in the Scillies on Mar 24 there is now another sighting on Apr 18 of a male perched on a pontoon in the Chichester Channel off the Chichester marina at Birdham

Woodchat Shrike: I now have 26 reports of this species, nearly all of them in the Scillies where a maximum of 5 were recorded on Apr 16 and at least one was still present on Apr 20

Corn Bunting: I have not heard of any in Hampshire since Apr 4 when a couple were at Martin Down on the Hampshire border south of Salisbury but on Apr 22 Brian Fellows found one at a regular site only a few miles into West Sussex from Emsworth - it was singing from a tree beside the highest section of Hare's Lane which runs from Racton in the Ems valley to Funtington

Escapees: It is possible that there has been a mass breakout from captivity by **Crimson Rosella** parrots of Australian origin. One of these was at Dungeness from Apr 9 to 11 but this week there have been reports of the species from Bockhill (south Foreland in Kent) on Apr 17, Belle Tout wood on Beachy Head on Apr 21, Sandwich Bay on Apr 22, and I even heard a report on Radio 4 of one having been recently captured and being kept in a cage in the hope of re-uniting it with its owner (I didn't catch the location of this one)

INSECTS

Dragonflies

Vagrant Emperor (Hemianax ephippiger): There is a possibility that a distantly seen dragonfly at Portland on Apr 23 was of this species and may have come from sub-Saharan Africa. All parts of that statement are open to question as insects of this species do not normally arrive from Africa until August but I think the species may now have established colonies north of the Sahara with different timing to its life cycle.

Hairy Dragonfly: First report for the year from Rye Harbour on Apr 19 but some must have emerged earlier for the females to be ready for egg-laying which was seen on Apr 21. This species was seen on Apr 23 at both Reculver in Kent and the Thorney Little Deeps

Broad-bodied Chaser: After the appearance of this species in Devon on Apr 16 it was seen again in Devon on Apr 19

Large Red Damselfly: Now being widely reported (first emerged Apr 7)

Blue-tailed Damselfly: Out at Rye Harbour on Apr 23

Common Blue Damselfly: Out at Rye Harbour on Apr 21

Variable Damselfly: First seen at Rye Harbour on Apr 23

Butterflies

Dingy Skipper, Grizzled Skipper: Not new

Swallowtail: Seen in the Netherlands on Apr 23

Wood White: First seen on Apr 18 (male at Plaistow near Horsham)

Clouded Yellow: First two presumed migrants at Beachy Head and Newhaven on Apr 22

Brimstone, Large White, Small White, Green-veined White, Orange Tip, Green Hairstreak, Small Copper, Holly Blue, Duke of Burgundy, Red Admiral, Painted Lady, Small Tortoiseshell, Peacock, Comma and Speckled Wood - all seen but not new

Pearl-bordered Fritillary: First seen in Rewell Wood near Arundel on Apr 17 and subsequently at other Sussex and New Forest sites

Wall Brown: Seen in the Eastbourne and Folkestone areas on Apr 22 and at Portland on Apr 23

Gatekeeper: One seen at Folkestone on Apr 22

Small Heath: Seen on Malling Down near Lewes on Apr 19 and at Folkestone on Apr 22. For a new tentative theory of a seven year cycle (five poor years followed by two good years) governing the numbers of this species see

<http://www.ukbutterflies.co.uk/phpBB/viewtopic.php?f=16&t=4270>

Moths

Phylloporia bistrigella: First in Thanet on Apr 21

Nematopogon swammerdamella: First in Rewell Wood (Arundel) on Apr 19

Nemophora degeerella: Possible id for Longhorn moths seen near Alresford on Apr 18

Adela reaumurella: First in Rewell Wood (Arundel) on Apr 17

Caloptilia leucapennella: First in Thanet on Apr 20

Zelleria hepariella: First in Thanet on Apr 19

Brown House-moth (Hofmannophila pseudospretella): First in Thanet on Apr 19

Small Purple Flat-body (Agonopterix purpurea): First in Thanet on Apr 19

Agonopterix rotundella: First in Thanet on Apr 19

Garden Cosmet (Mompha subbistrigella): First in Thanet on Apr 20

Eudonia angustea: First in Thanet on Apr 20

Mint Moth (Pyrausta aurata): First in Thanet on Apr 19

Bee Moth (Aphomia sociella): First in Thanet on Apr 19

Poplar Lutestring (Tethea or): First in Thanet on Apr 20

Frosted Green (Polyploca ridens): First at Pagham Harbour on Apr 19

Blair's Mocha (*Cyclophora puppillaria*): First at Pagham Harbour on Apr 22

Lead Belle (*Scotopteryx mucronata*): First in the New Forest on Apr 22

Small Phoenix (*Ecliptopera silaceata*): First in Thanet on Apr 18

Grey Pine Carpet (*Thera obeliscata*): First in Thanet on Apr 19

Currant Pug (*Eupithecia assimilata*): First at Portland on Apr 22

Common Pug (*Eupithecia vulgata*): First in Thanet on Apr 21

Oak-tree Pug (*Eupithecia dodoneata*): First in Thanet on Apr 19

The Seraphim (*Lobophora laterata*): First in Thanet on Apr 19

Yellow-barred Brindle (*Acasis viretata*): First in Thanet on Apr 20

Scorched carpet (*Ligdia adustata*): First at Durlston on Apr 20

Speckled Yellow (*Pseudopanthera macularia*): First at Rewell Wood (Arudel) on Apr 17

Iron Prominent (*Notodonta dromedarius*): First at Lewes on Apr 22

Lesser Swallow Prominent (*Pheosia gnoma*): First in Thanet on Apr 19

Swallow Prominent (*Pheosia tremula*): First in Thanet on Apr 18

Chocolate-tip (*Clostera curtula*): First in Thanet on Apr 19

Ruby Tiger (*Phragmatobia fuliginosa*): First in Thanet on Apr 20

Cinnabar moth (*Tyria jacobaeae*): First in Eastbourne area on Apr 22

Bright-line Brown-eye (*Lacanobia oleracea*): First in Thanet on Apr 19

The Champion (*Hadena rivularis*): First in Rye area on Apr 19

Chamomile Shark (*Cucullia chamomillae*): First in Thanet on Apr 19

Poplar Grey (*Acronicta megacephala*): First in Thanet on Apr 22

Knot Grass (*Acronicta rumicis*): First in Thanet on Apr 22

Burnet Companion (*Euclidia glyphica*): First at Shoreham Mill Hill on Apr 16

Other Insects

Oak Apple gall wasp (*Biorhiza pallida*): First Oak Apple in Havant Thicket on Apr 18

Hornet: First sighting of a Queen at Langstone on Apr 18 with two more seen in Sussex on Apr 22

Minotaur Beetle (*Typhaeus typhoeus*): First seen at Rye Harbour on Apr 20

Dock Leaf Bug (*Coreus marginatus*): Probable id of many beetles seen on Nettles at Emsworth on Apr 18

PLANTS

Adder's Tongue Fern: Photos of a Portsmouth colony on my diary page for Apr 22

Meadow Buttercup: First flowering on Apr 20

Brackish Water-Crowfoot (*Ranunculus baudotii*): Flowering the Homewell spring pool at Havant on Apr 23

Garden Aquilegia: Seen in Emsworth on Apr 18 but described as **Columbine** (see my diary page for Apr 22 and

<http://www.plantpress.com/wildlife/o11113-columbine.php>)

Sea sandwort (*Honckenya peploides*): First flowers at Langstone on Apr 20

Large-flowered Pink-sorrel (*Oxalis debilis*): Garden escape flowering in Havant on Apr 20

Lesser trefoil (*Trifolium dubium*): First flowers found at Langstone on Apr 22

Bird's foot trefoil (*Lotus corniculatus*): First flowers found at Langstone on Apr 22

Greater bird's foot trefoil (*Lotus pedunculatus*): First flowers on Portsdown on Apr 22

Horseshoe vetch (*Hippocrepis comosa*): First flowers at Shoreham Mill Hill on Apr 17

Wild Plum (*Prunus domestica*): First flowers seen in Emsworth area on Apr 17 (already mostly over)

Crab Apple (*Malus sylvestris*): Also flowering in Emsworth Hollybank Woods on Apr 17

Tormentil (*Potentilla erecta*): First flowers in Havant Thicket on Apr 18

Salad burnet (*Sanguisorba minor ssp. minor*): First flowers reported at Durlston on Apr 18

Wood avens (*Geum urbanum*): First flowers at Emsworth Brook Meadow on Apr 23

Beech (*Fagus sylvatica*): Trees in full flower at Havant Thicket on Apr 18

Broad leaved dock (*Rumex obtusifolius*): First flowers at Brook Meadow in Emsworth on Apr 19

Scarlet pimpernel (*Anagallis arvensis*): First flowers at Hayling Oysterbeds on Apr 22 (probably flowering a day or two earlier in Emsworth)

Yellow rattle (*Rhinanthus minor*): First flowers at Durlston on Apr 24

Wild Clary (*Salvia horminoides*): This normally flowers in early June but a report of 'Wild Clay' in flower at Durlston on Apr 24 probably referred to this species

Field forget-me-not (*Myosotis arvensis*): Flowering at Langstone on Apr 22

Common comfrey (*Symphytum officinale*): Flowering in Emsworth on Apr 20

Ox eye daisy (*Leucanthemum vulgare*): In full flower at Havant on Apr 20

Nipplewort (*Lapsana communis*): First flowers at Emsworth on Apr 23

Prickly sowthistle (*Sonchus asper*): First flowers open in my Havant garden on Apr 23

Black bryony (*Tamus communis*): First flowers in Portsmouth on Apr 22

Lily of the valley (*Convallaria majalis*): The wild colony in Havant Thicket had started to flower on Apr 18

Wood Sedge (*Carex sylvatica*): Flowering in Emsworth Hollybank Woods on Apr 17

Distant Sedge (*Carex distans*): Flowering at Brook Meadow, Emsworth, on Apr 21

OTHER WILDLIFE

Fox: Cubs will by now be large and hungry so when waiting for the Egrets to come to roost at Langstone pond at dusk on Apr 20 I not only saw the expected male Fox set out on his evening hunt but also, shortly after, he was followed by a Vixen

Dolphins: On Apr 22 around 40 **Bottle Nosed Dolphins** were seen off Portland and on Apr 13 a much larger group of 177 **Common Dolphins** were off the Spanish coast

Common Seal: At least five were seen in Langstone Harbour on Apr 18 while on Apr 16 a report from Swalecliffe on the north Kent coast was of a **Common Seal pup** - this sent me to check on when Common Seal pups are born and I found that they arrive in the period from May to July. Does that mean that the one seen at Swalecliffe was born earlier than usual this year? or that it was nearly a year old but still distinguishable as a pup?

Common Lizard: These are not uncommon but the only views I ever get of them are at best of a tail disappearing into cover as they are very quick to hide when danger threatens. This was not the case with one found by Brian Fellows in Emsworth on Apr 18 - Brian found one on (I think) a roadside pavement and was able to get a photo of it before helping it to safety away from road traffic and human feet. The photo shows that this creature had already lost its tail in some previous encounter with danger but the tail seemed to be re-growing (indicating that the loss was not very recent) leaving me to speculate on the Lizard's. apparent lack of safety consciousness

Basking Shark: The first that I have heard of this summer was off the Lizard in Cornwall on Apr 22

WILDLIFE DIARY AND NEWS FOR APR 18 - 24 (WEEK 16 OF 2011)

[Fri 22 Apr](#)

Common Terns, Adders Tongue Fern and a Lesser Whitethroat

With the tide high after lunch I cycled to the Oysterbeds to see if any **Little Terns** were yet in but all I found there was a good number of **Common Terns** plus **Scarlet Pimpernel** in flower and **Dame's Violet** in bud.

Next I drove to Hilsea to check out the **Adders Tongue Fern** site on the south side of the Ramparts along Scott Road. These were at their best though not the most colourful of flowers - nor was the **Black Bryony** which had also started to flower there.

Adders Tongue Fern

Two more views of the Adders Tongue plants

From Hilsea I drove up Portsdown Hill and headed west for Skew Road where I took a walk around Portchester Common and heard the rattle of my first **Lesser Whitethroat** and added **Salad Burnet** to my flowering list. Further downhill at the junction of Nelson Lane with Skew Road I added **Greater Birds Foot Trefoil** and **Garden Aquilegia** to my list (although the 'genuine' wild **Columbine** is also called **Aquilegia vulgaris** it only appears in a blue flowered form - the variously coloured garden forms apparently do not have the generous supply of nectar for insects - see <http://www.plantpress.com/wildlife/o1113-columbine.php>) The wild flower can be seen at Coulters Dean nature reserve on the downs above Buriton near Petersfield.

This morning I had a look at the internet in preparation for my Weekly Summary and it looks as if I will have a busy Easter Weekend collating all the news of the past week - among the birds I see the first **Nightjars** have arrived, as have both **Arctic** and **Roseate Terns** in Sussex and **Golden Oriole** and **Red-backed Shrike** in Sussex. Dorset has had up to two **Night Herons** this week and Cornwall has had both **Black-winged Stilt** and **Little Swift**. Not firsts for the year were a **Montagu's Harrier** at Dungeness and **Honey Buzzard** in the New Forest while Portland has had an **Ortolan Bunting**. **Common Swifts** have been seen at four Hants sites this

week (as well as at Christchurch Harbour) and Hill Head (off Titchfield Haven) had over **100 Common Terns**. A check on **Nightingale sites** around Henfield in the Adur valley found a total of 41 birds.

In the insect news I see the first **Wood White** and **Pearl Bordered Fritillaries** are on the wing and **Hairy Dragonflies** plus both **Common Blue** and **Azure Damselflies** have been seen at Rye Harbour. Here in Langstone a **Hornet** has been seen, presumably a queen searching for a nest site in which to start this year's generation.

Wed 20 Apr

Ox-eye Daisies and 12 Egret nests

Another sunny, windless evening took me through Juniper Square and over the Langstone roundabout foot bridge (where the **Ox-eye Daisies** were in flower on the south facing embankment of the A27) and then along the old Billy trail to the north pier of the railway bridge where I added five more new flowers to my year list (make it six if you count a patch of garden escape **Large-flowered Pink Sorrel** or **Oxalis debilis**).

First of these five was **Meadow Buttercup** and next was **Field Forget-me-not** which I at first thought was **Changing Forget-me-not** because of its tall, thin stance but a closer look showed that all the tiny flowers were of a uniform blue with no white or yellow flowers.

The thin, dry soil of the rail embankment was covered with **Common Vetch** flowers and **Hairy Tare** was also in full flower but I already had these on my list unlike the single flowering plant of **Bird's-foot Trefoil** near which I found my first example of **Lesser Trefoil (*Trifolium dubium*)**. At the foot of the embankment in the beach shingle was the last of the five - **Sea Sandwort**.

Over on the Langstone village shore two more flowering plants were out - **Duke of Argyll's Teapant** (which I have already seen) and **Lesser Sea Spurrey** (which I thought I already had on my list but may be another addition as it is not recorded in my database).

With some time in hand before sunset I had a good look round the trees overhanging Langstone pond, noting **12 visible Egret nests** plus the first singing **Reed Warblers** at this site. Overhead passed a thin but continuous stream of **Swallows** and as the light faded **two Foxes** emerged from the reeds to set off across the pony field north of the pond (causing a **Cock Pheasant** to stroll away from their route while keeping a close eye on them). I waited until 20 minutes after sunset but only counted **16 Egrets** flying in to roost (making 28 with the birds on nests)

Tue 19 Apr

500 Early Purple Orchids and 2 Nightingales

I did not complete my day's business until nearly 4pm but the warm sunshine suggested that I still had time to visit the Longcopse Hill section of the Hollybank Woods to check on the **Early Purple Orchids** and to visit the Marlpit Lane **Nightingale** site before sun set.

Before reaching the orchid site I found a magnificent **Crab Apple tree** in full flower in a place where I have not noticed it before (though I do know of a couple of other **Crab Apple trees** elsewhere in the woods). A short distance further on I reached

another cluster of much smaller fruit trees whose precise identity I have puzzled about for several years - conclusion is that they are **Wild Plum (Prunus domestica)** as they have some spines and are not noticeably hairy.

Crab Apple flowers and tree

Wild Plum tree and its leaves

Wild Plum flowers

Reaching the orchid area it was clear that most of the plants had reached the peak of their flowering earlier than usual this year (I had guessed this would be the case on account of the warm weather and my own find of one in flower at The Holt site near Horndean on Apr 7 followed by a report of one flowering at Durlston on Apr 8). Wandering around the site I noted a total of 490 flowering spikes so I guess the full total will have been well over 500. Another less eye catching plant in flower here (my first sight of it this year) was **Wood Sedge** and I also noticed a couple of clumps of **Common Dog Violet with flowers having a pinkish tinge** (as **Sweet Violets** sometimes do). Another personal first was **Wood Speedwell** which Brian Fellows had come across elsewhere in these woods on Apr 13.

Good example of an Early Purple orchid

A tall plant and a couple of youngsters

Driving on to Marlpit Lane I parked in the dip and walked back up the hill to where **one Nightingale was in full song** at the brow of the hill, then heard another singing near the access track to the woods. I did not expect to hear the purring of **Turtle Dove** this late in the day though they may well still be present, probably in trees on the west side of the Lane.

Mon 18 Apr

[\(Link to previous day's entry\)](#)

A great morning in Havant Thicket

Seeing a few **Lily of the Valley** flowers were out in my garden yesterday I went to Havant Thicket this morning to see if the **patch of wild plants** that I found in the Thicket a few years ago (and eventually persuaded the Forestry Commission should be respected as such and not mown each year) was now starting to flower. The photos below show that they are and that my message has got through. The **wild plants** are not a rarity but the Hants Flora says they are 'very local' and only shows them as present in less than twenty 10 km Squares (not including SU 71 in which the Thicket lies)

One of the patches of Lily of the Valley

A closer look at the patch

Lily of the Valley starting to flower

Continuing my walk I was pleased to add a new bird to my year list when, after hearing them piping in three places, a male **Bullfinch** flew over, clearly showing its black head, grey back and distinctive white rump in the sunshine. I paused here to watch a female **Brimstone** circling a small **Alder Buckthorn** tree - knowing that this is the favourite foodplant of the **Brimstone** caterpillar I was not surprised to see the butterfly land on the leaves of the tree and when it had moved away I went to look at the leaves and found two 'new laid eggs' under one of them.

Next I began to hear **Willow Warbler song** from an area of birch scrub and as I neared the sound I found it was coming from a bird silhouetted against the blue sky, perched at the tip of a dead yew (probably killed by fire). I now turned south and came on a fresh **Green-veined White** sunning itself on the ground and giving me great views.

A little further on a different insect flew towards me and landed right at my feet - a **Green Tiger beetle** which gave me the briefest of glimpses before it took off again leaving me to try to track down another singing **Willow Warbler** in Birch scrub (no luck in seeing this one!) More interest on the ground came from a patch of flowering **Wintercress** - I think both the early form with pinnate leaves and the standard form with more solid leaves. This was followed by another plant - **Bugle** in full flower.

Bugle plants and flowers

By now I was at the southern fringe of the woodland with the Gipsies Plain grassland ahead and here I turned west into the northern tip of the Long Avenue of trees which stretches south to the Leigh Park Gardens Lake. I did not follow it south but crossed the stream which feeds the small lake at this north end and here I photographed the **Wood Sorrel** which was liberally mixed with **Dog Violets**.

Wood Sorrel patch and flower

Another patch of Wood Sorrel

Wood Sorrel with Common Dog Violet

Turning back east along the southern edge of the trees I took a record shot of the **Tormentil** that is now flowering and then of the **Broom** which has put out its yellow flowers since I was last here. A chance find among the **Broom** was a fresh and very pretty **Oak Apple** on a young Oak tree - these 'Apples' are the communal home of larvae of the gallwasp called **Biorhiza pallida** and you can see pictures of it at <http://hedgerowmobile.com/Biorhizapallida.html>

Tormentil now flowering

Broom bushes in flower

Close view of Broom flowers

First view of Oak Apple

Second view of Oak Apple

Each apple contains a number of the gallwasp larvae but male and female larvae are found in separate 'unisexual' apples - an apple can also contain larvae of other insects which are not able to create their own galls but lay their eggs in the Biorhiza 'apples' where they live as '**inquilines**' (a term defining an animal which shares the home of another species, like a lodger, without doing harm to the house owner). When the adult male gallwasps emerge in the summer they search for the females and mate. The males are then free to enjoy a summer holiday but the females (despite having wings) are condemned to crawl down the trunk of the oak tree and burrow into the ground where they lay their eggs on the tree roots, creating a different type of gall (one larva in each) from which (after a year spent underground) wingless females (no males this time) will emerge at the start of the third year and these females will climb back up the tree and (without further mating) lay their eggs on the new growth buds of the tree, causing the **Oak Apples** which restart the life cycle. For more on this underground generation see

<http://maria.fremlin.de/stagbeetles/galls.html>

Other things seen in this outing were the fresh flowers of **Beech trees**, many **Beeflies** (at one time I had at least half a dozen flying around my feet), a few new **Crane Flies** and several other butterfly species (**Comma, Peacock, Holly Blue** and **Orange Tip** - both males and one close view of a female).

Late news for last week

Four items that I intended to include in last week's Summary but which got overlooked when writing it were

- a) the sighting of the first two **Roseate Terns** of the year, seen on Apr 17 at both Hurst Beach and Stokes Bay as they flew east through the Solent
- b) the first local **Turtle Dove**, seen at Marlpit Lane near Funtington on Apr 17 (first in the country was in the Scillies on Apr 9 with others seen prior to this one in the New Forest, north Sussex, and north Kent). Another unexpected sighting at this mainly very dry site was a **Green Sandpiper**, presumably one of the many migrants now moving north and east through southern England and not a resident here.
- c) **Lampreys** are a fascinating group of creatures which I was first made aware of when they were described after being found in a stream at Winchester and which I subsequently found came in several species some of which (**Brook Lampreys**) spend their whole lives in the stream where they are 'born', others (**River Lampreys**) lead a life similar to **Sea Trout** spending several years in fresh water, then going off to sea for a couple of years before attaching itself to a Salmon that is heading back to mate and then die in fresh water, while other species (**Sea Lampreys**) spend most of their lives in coastal waters though returning to fresh water to breed. This subject was raised in the Apr 14 entry on Cliff Dean's blog at <http://rxbirdwalks.wordpress.com/> and that entry has a photo of a Brook Lamprey found by an Environment Agency team 'electro fishing' a water ditch to monitor the living things in the water. I get the impression that the various sources of information on this subject have not agreed on the taxonomy of the species, nor do they agree on all aspects of the creatures life styles, but it is a fascinating subject to follow up

d) ...and finally I must mention the name of a bird species whose photo appears with Steve Copsey's Apr 15 entry on the Three Amigos blog. The bird is called a **Dark-faced Ground Tyrant**. Steve is currently in the Falkland Islands so this bird is not the only species new to me but the name has a great ring to it. A scan through this blog (at <http://www.surfbirds.com/blog/amigo>) is highly recommended.

WILDLIFE DIARY AND NEWS FOR APR 11 - 17 (WEEK 15 OF 2011)

BIRDS

Divers: **Red-throated** still being seen all along the south coast this week with a peak of 50 going east off Dungeness on Apr 14. 30 **Black-throated** were off France that day and by Apr 16 a site in Latvia reported 1400 mixed diver species. **Great Northern** were still to be seen

Grebes: No Slavonian mentioned in British reports this week but three summer plumaged Black-necked were off Titchfield Haven on Apr 14

Night Heron: Two were in the Scillies on Apr 10 and one was in a private garden at Abbotsbury in Dorset on Apr 15

Little Egret: At least 12 birds were on nests visible from the seawall footpath at Langstone Pond on Apr 16

Purple Heron: One flew in off the sea at Lands End on Apr 2 and the species has been reported in the Scillies and Cornwall since then. Apr 10 brought a surge of more than 18 to the Netherlands and on Apr 15 one was found on the Sussex Ouse at Southease on Apr 15 and was still there on Apr 16 but could not be found on Apr 17

Black Stork: One was seen in the New Forest on Apr 11 and was still there on Apr 16 but had maybe become fed up with being pursued by birders and it has not been reported since then

Glossy Ibis: One had been in southern England in the first half of January but no further sightings after Jan 19 until this week when RBA reported a flock of 8 over Leytonstone in London on Apr 11 (no further news of them)

Spoonbill: On Apr 10 a flock of 107 were seen in the Netherlands and since then what may have been a single bird has been wandering about southern England, seen on Sheppey on Apr 12, at the Posbrook flood at Titchfield on Apr 14 (where it was seen to have a prominent ring marked FJ9) and in the Southampton area (Lower Test and Testwood Lakes) on Apr 16. Also on Apr 16 a different immature bird was seen at Wadebidge in Cornwall where it had been reported on Apr 8

Mute Swan: On Apr 14 the start of a regular summer moult flock was at the Broadmarsh slipway area of Langstone Harbour with 20 birds seen (in past years up to 100 birds have spent several months here). Also that day Brian Fellows saw two eggs in an established nest at the Camber Docks in Portsmouth

Dark Bellied Brent Goose: Small numbers still flying east along the south coast (100 passing Portland on Apr 13; 18 passing St Catherine's Point, IoW, on Apr 14; 11 passing Selsey Bill on Apr 15; 12 passing Gosport on Apr 16)

Pale-bellied Brent: On Apr 14 a flock of 38 seen off Stokes Bay at Gosport (also seen as 34 off Titchfield Haven) were thought to be on their way north after wintering on Jersey. Apr 16 brought two more reports of birds making their way north (probably from the French Atlantic coast) seen at the Exe estuary in Devon (270+ birds) and in Weymouth Bay (214 birds)

Garganey: 15 reports this week probably referred to just over 20 birds, including one at Newton Harbour on the IoW and 4 flying east off Worthing

Long-tailed Duck: Just one was seen off Gosport on Apr 16 when a site in Latvia reported a flock of 3450.

Velvet Scoter: Latvia reported 4000 of these on Apr 16 while Dungeness had 12 on Apr 14 and Christchurch Harbour had 6 on Apr 15

Montagu's Harrier: First of the year was near Hayle on the north coast of Cornwall on Apr 10, and presumably a second bird was at the Lizard on the south coast on Apr 16

Sparrowhawk: For a 40 minute period on Apr 14 motorists on a busy Devon road had to slow down while a **Sparrowhawk** devoured a **Woodpigeon** which it had brought down in the centre of the road

Osprey: At least 9 birds reported making their way north this week over sites from Devon to Kent as more **Merlin** and **Hobby** arrived from over the Channel

Red Grouse: A few do breed on Dartmoor and a pair were seen there on Apr 16

Little Crane: The bird at the Arundel Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust site which arrived on Apr 9 was last seen on the evening of Apr 12. Many birders saw the bird lawfully but those responsible for switching off the electric fence around the site and breaking in at night are to be deplored not only for criminal damage but also for potentially exposing the whole of the wildfowl collection to deadly attacks by Mink and Foxes.

Black-winged Stilt: The first arrivals for the year were two **Stilts** seen at Martin Mere in Lancashire on Apr 15

Black-tailed Godwit: The birds that fly to Iceland to breed usually leave in the second half of April though they may be off early this year on account of the good weather we have been having. No evidence of departure so far but I have been surprised to see that up to 100 have been feeding on the mud of the River Itchen in 'downtown' Southampton recently. Elsewhere the most recent reports have been of 42 at Titchfield Haven on Apr 15 when 122 were in the Fishbourne Channel at Chichester and, on Apr 16, 150 were in the Hook area at Warsash.

Bar-tailed Godwit: The arrival of 18 in the Hook/Warsash area on Apr 16 may mark the start of their spring movement through the channel

Whimbrel: A count of 65 in the Stokes Bay area at Gosport on Apr 10 (and 26 there on Apr 14) shows that their passage is under way

Spotted Redshank: Still being seen daily - one at the Fishbourne Channel near Chichester was in full summer plumage on Apr 15

Wood Sandpiper: Since the first for the year turned up in Cambridgeshire on Apr 2 there have been reports from the Scillies, the Netherlands, and Brading Marshes on the IoW.

Common Sandpiper: 20 reports since Apr 8 show that migrants are now arriving. Spotting on the plumage of one seen at Weir Wood reservoir in northern Sussex may indicate it was a **Spotted Sandpiper**.

Med Gull: Looking up this species in Birds of Hampshire (published in 1992) I see that the status is given as "a scarce but regular visitor which has bred". By 2006 Langstone Harbour had 264 breeding pairs with others nesting at Titchfield Haven and Lymington and since then, though the number of pairs in Langstone Harbour may have decreased this is almost certainly due to some of the birds moving east to nest at Rye Harbour where 280 birds were present by Mar 26 and 300+ were reported there on Apr 15. My reason for giving these figures is that on Apr 10 around 150 birds were at Elmley Marshes on Sheppey, said to be twice the number there at the same time in 2010. Not only are total numbers likely to breed in Britain this year likely to be higher than ever but the number of sites where they breed is likely to continue to expand around our coastline.

Sabine's Gull: On Apr 13 a first winter bird was at Hayle on the Cornish north coast

Bonaparte's Gull: On Apr 14 a young bird of this species arrived at Hayle and stayed until at least Apr 16 while another which had turned up at the Otter estuary in south Devon on Apr 13 was still there on Apr 15

Little Tern: I have not yet heard of any within Langstone Harbour but on Apr 15 more than 10 were in the Lymington Hurst beach area and 11 were seen at Selsey Bill

Wiskered Tern: On Apr 10 one was at Elmley on Sheppey and another was in Poole Harbour, then on Apr 14 one was perched on a buoy at Stokes Bay, Gosport. This is a marsh tern species which nests in Spain and France - maybe global warming is urging it to move north?

Black Tern: 26 were at a French site on Apr 10 when one was off Portland Bill

Puffin: One flew east at Selsey Bill on Apr 16

Barbary Dove: On Apr 12 Brian Fellows had what he thought was a very pale coloured **Collared Dove** in his garden but after investigation he now thinks it may have been a **Barbary Dove** - I had not previously heard of this species but a Google search quickly told me that I could have one for £10

Turtle Dove: The first normal migrant (excluding the **Oriental Turtle Dove** still on show at Chipping Norton and the possible wintering bird seen in December and February at Folkestone) was in the Scillies on Apr 9 and another was in the New

Forest on Apr 10 followed by one at Bewl Water near Crowborough on Apr 14 and one at Oare Marshes in Kent on Apr 16

Cuckoo: 20 reports this week with a maximum of 4 birds at a New Forest site. Locally one was heard in the Langstone area on Apr 15 but did not stay.

Swift: Singles seen this week at Pett Level and Rye Harbour (same bird?) and at Lodmoor (Weymouth)

Hoopoe: In addition to three or more birds in the Scillies, Cornwall and Devon there have been sightings at Dungeness power station and Arne in Dorset

Wryneck: First for the year was in the Scillies on Apr 1 with sightings in Devon on Apr 4 and Cornwall on Apr 11. Nearer to Havant was one at Cissbury Ring (Worthing) on Apr 8

House Martin: One was inspecting artificial nests on a Leigh Park house on Apr 13 - this will be the 7th year that the nests have been used

Yellow Wagtail: Plenty of reports this week from sites including Lymington, Fareham, Gosport and Chichester but none of goups exceeded 10 birds

Waxwing: Four reports still this week from the Romsey, Eastleigh and Fleet areas in Hampshire and Canford Heath in Dorset. Max counts of 12 and last date was Apr 15

Nightingale: Plenty around this week including one singing at Marlpit Lane near Funtington west of Chichester on Apr 15

Whinchat: First was in the New Forest on Mar 26 and the latest was number 11 for the year at Forton Lake in Gosport on Apr 16

Ring Ouzel: I now have 54 reports for the year including one seen this week at Steyning Round Hill near Worthing which had white spotting on its underparts, possibly making it a southern sub-species **Turdus torquatus alpestris**

Savi's Warbler: One was singing from reeds at Farlington Marshes on Apr 15

Great Reed Warbler: One in Cornwall on Apr 10 - a **Subalpine Warbler** was also in Cornwall that day

Lesser Whitethroat: Regular reports of this species since Apr 11

Golden Oriole: Just one report from Devon on Apr 12

Great Grey Shrike: No reports since Apr 10 when one was still in the New Forest

Woodchat Shrike: Since the first report from the Scillies on Apr 4 I have seen 15 reports, the majority from the Scillies and Cornwall with a max count of 3 on Apr 10. One has also been seen in Poole Harbour and another in Essex (this last bird is reported to have been killed after being seen catching Bumble Bees on Apr 12 but I cannot discover the cause of death).

Black Scoter: On Apr 14 RBA announced a sighting off the Northumberland coast and said it was the second for England (there have been others in Wales)

Crimson Rosella: This colourful Australian parrot was seen at Dungeness from Apr 9 to 11 (photos on <http://www.dungenessbirdobs.org.uk/lateframe.html>)

Golden Eagle: One reported in the Ashdown Forest area on Apr 11

INSECTS

Dragonflies

Broad-bodied Chaser: First to emerge anywhere in Britain were flying at Stover in Devon on Apr 16

Large Red Damselfly: Following the first report from Devon last week (Apr 7) more were seen on Apr 16

Butterflies

Dingy Skipper: More sightings this week but all at Shoreham Mill Hill

Grizzled Skipper: In addition to Shoreham Mill Hill these have been flying at Magdalen Hill Down (Winchester) since Apr 7 and at Freshwater (Afton Down) on the IoW since Apr 10

Brimstone, Large, Small and Green Veined Whites, Orange Tip, Green Hairstreak, Small Copper, Holly Blue all on the wing during the week

Duke of Burgundy: Still only seen at Noar Hill near Petersfield with a max count of 7 on Apr 15

Red Admiral: The first to emerge from pupation this year flew this week

Painted Lady: Seven more sightings this week were mainly at coastal sites and suggest the arrival of migrants

Small Tortoiseshell, Peacock, Comma all on the wing

Pearl Bordered Fritillary: No sightings 'in the wild' so far but a captive bred specimen was flying in the Eastbourne area on Apr 16

Speckled Wood: Now becoming numerous

Moths

Caloptilia syringella: First in Thanet on Apr 11

Semioscopis steinkellneriana: First at Shoreham Mill Hill on Apr 11

Agonopterix ciliella: First in Thanet on Apr 11

Chinese Character (Cilix glaucata): First in Thanet on Apr 15

Red Twin-spot Carpet (Xanthorhoe spadicearia): First at Shoreham Mill Hill on Apr 11

Green Carpet (Colostygia pectinataria): First at Shoreham Mill Hill on Apr 11

Small Waved Umber (*Horisme vitalbata*): First at Shoreham Mill Hill on Apr 11

Latticed Heath (*Semiothisa clathrata*): First in Henfield area on Apr 10

Brimstone Moth (*Opisthograptis luteolata*): First at Shoreham Mill Hill on Apr 11

Waved Umber (*Menophra abruptaria*): First at Shoreham Mill Hill on Apr 11

Least Black Arches (*Nola confusalis*): First at Shoreham Mill Hill on Apr 11

Flame Shoulder (*Ochropleura plecta*): First at Shoreham Mill Hill on Apr 11

Burnet Companion (*Euclidia glyphica*): First at Shoreham Mill Hill on Apr 8

Other Insects

St Marks Fly: First seen in Thanet on Apr 6 and then in Emsworth on Apr 16

Abia sericea sawfly?: See report and photo on the Rye Bay website for Apr 13 at <http://rxwildlife.org.uk/category/all-latest-news/insects/>

George Spraggs Havant area finds: See <http://www.bird-watching.co.uk/blog.htm> for photos of **Green Tiger Beetle**, **16 spot Ladybirds**, a **European Tortoise Bug**, a **Green Shield Bug** and a **Common Crab Spider (*Xysticus cristatus*)**

PLANTS

Adder's Tongue Fern: First find at Durlston on Apr 15 - time to check the Farlington Marshes and Hilse Lines local sites

Goldilocks Buttercup: On Apr 12 I found two new sites for this species - see my Diary for details

Green Hellebore: Flowering on Apr 12 beside Woodlands Lane east of Stansted East Park

Greater Celandine: First flowers at Bidbury Mead in Bedhampton on Apr 14

Annual Wall-rocket: First flowers in a Mengham area pavement on Hayling on Apr 15

Wintercress: First flowers in the Stansted area on Apr 12

Eastern Rocket: I had found this flowering at Sinah Common (south Hayling) on Apr 6 but did not take photos until Apr 15 (see my Diary for that day)

Hoary Cress: Starting to flower generally in the Havant area on Apr 14

Field Pansy: First reported in flower on the Sussex Downs on Apr 9

Red Campion: First flower on wildflower seed planting in Havant Cemetery on Apr 11

Sea Campion: Flowering on Sinah Common on Apr 15

Hedgerow Cranesbill: Flowering at Southmoor Lane in Havant on Apr 14

Wood Sorrel: Flowering in Stanuton Country Park on Apr 7

Broom: Flowering at the Broadmarsh road intersection on Apr 14

Red Clover: Flowering at the Broadmarsh road intersection on Apr 14

Common Vetch: Flowering at the Broadmarsh road intersection on Apr 14

Hairy Tare: Starting to flower in Havant on Apr 11

Wild Strawberry: Flowering at Racton in the Ems valley on Apr 12 and in the Emsworth Hollybank Woods on Apr 13

Pellitory of the Wall: Flowering at Bidbury Mead in Bedhampton (Havant) on Apr 14

Horse Chestnut: First flowers seen in Havant on Apr 12. Other trees flowering this week were **Sycamore, Field Maple** and **Pedunculate Oak**

Bur Chervil: This umbellifer of sandy soil was flower on Sinah Common on Apr 15

Sorrel: First flowers at Brook Meadow in Emsworth on Apr 15 when **Sheep Sorrel** was also out at Sinah Common

Duke of Argyll's Teaplant: Flowering the Havant Cemetery on Apr 11

Wood Speedwell: Flowering in the Hollybank Woods on Apr 13

Thyme Leaved Speedwell: First flowers found at Marlpit Lane near Funtington on Apr 9

Yellow Archangel: Flowering in Woodlands Lane near Walderton on Apr 12 after the garden cultivar had been seen in the Hollybank Woods on that same day

Bugle: First flowers beside the cycle track at Broadmarsh on Apr 14

Crosswort: First reported flowering at Durlston on Apr 11

Ramsons (Wild Garlic): Flowering at Racton on Apr 12

Orchids: On Apr 15 more than 1000 **Green-winged** were flowering on Sinah Common and the **leaves of Twayblade and Lizard orchids** were seen in Kent (Thanet)

OTHER WILDLIFE

Bottle-nosed Whale: On Apr 13 a pod of 11 (including a calf which at one point jumped out of the water and over one of the adults) was seen off Durlston and on Apr 14 Portland reported a pod of 10 (probably the same animals)

Orca (Killer Whale): This is the largest and probably the most numerous species of Dolphin. It has a worldwide distribution and those who watched the first Springwatch programme on TV this week will know that it is regularly seen off the northern isles of Britain but it seems to be very rare in the English Channel so a pod of four feeding a mile off Dungeness on Apr 9 was the first I have recorded on my website and the species is not listed among the Dolphin species to be found in British waters on the British Marine Life Study Society website at <http://www.glaucus.org.uk/>

Hare: Michael Prior (Head Forester at Stansted) this week reported the presence of four hares in the Horsepasture Farm fields south of the Stansted Main Avenue (west end) and another three (plus a leveret) in the East Park fields. The finding of a leveret made me search for information on their breeding habits - I had assumed that breeding took place in March or April when females cease to 'box off' the Mad March Male Hares but I see that they in fact breed throughout the year and a healthy female will have three litters of four leverets each year (fertility does not seem to be the cause of the great decline in Hare numbers during my lifetime)

Black Adder: One was seen by several people at Shoreham Mill Hill this week and you can see pictures of it mating with a normal female by visiting Colin Knight's blog at <http://colinknight.blogspot.com/> in his Apr 15 entry

Medicinal Leech: If you are interested in these have a look at <http://rxwildlife.org.uk/2011/04/16/east-guldeford-medicinal-leech/#more-14780> My first introduction to them was in the New Forest but I subsequently found that there is a more local population in the Portsmouth area in Cunigre pond at SU 589053 in the Cams Hall golf course at Fareham (probably accessible without difficulty though it is on private land)

WILDLIFE DIARY AND NEWS FOR APR 11 - 17 (WEEK 15 OF 2011)

Fri 15 Apr

A walk around Sinah Common

After an early appointment in South Hayling I drove to the free parking area by Ferry Road north of the Sinah Gravel Pit Lake and walked around Sinah Common seeing my first **Stonechat** and **Green Veined White** for the year and finding well over 1000 **Green-winged Orchids** now in flower.

Other new flowers for my year list were **Sheep's Sorrel**, **Bur Chervil** and **Sea Champion** at Sinah and **Annual Wall-rocket** in the pavement of the built up area at Mengham. Although I had seen it on my last visit to Sinah Common (Apr 6) I also took a couple of photos of **Eastern Rocket** to show the distinctive shape of the leaf. A tick for my personal list was **Thrift** although it was reported out at Durlston on Apr

8 and a new addition to the year list which I actually saw yesterday but did not mention in this diary was **Sweet Vernal Grass** which was out on Sinah

Patch of Bur Chervil plants

Closer view of Bur Chervil

Eastern Rocket Plant

Eastern Rocket leaf and flowers

Latest bird news

Items which I have picked up in the last few days which may be of general interest are:-

Purple Heron - this species has been reported from the Netherlands since Mar 27 and was seen at 8 continental sites (one had 18 birds) on Apr 10. One appeared in Cornwall on Apr 2 and it looks as if we now have one settled at Falmouth and two in the Scillies

Black Stork - one was seen in the New Forest on Apr 11 (after flying over Southampton on Apr 8) but has not been refound

Glossy Ibis - one or two were in southern England in the first half of January and we may now see more after one flew over Leytonstone in London on Apr 11

Montagu's Harrier - the first to reach England flew over Cornwall on Apr 10

Whimbrel - the first substantial flock of 65 flew east through the Solent on Apr 10 (seen from Gosport)

Common Sandpiper - an indication that migrants are now arriving came on Apr 11 when one was seen at Newtown Harbour on the Isle of Wight (no wintering birds reported from the IoW this winter). On Apr 10 birds seen at Fleet Pond in north Hampshire and at Radipole (Weymouth) were similarly firsts for the year at those sites.

Little Tern - after the first on Apr 3 at Dungeness this week has brought news of 4 off Titchfield Haven (and Lyminster) on Apr 10 and 5 east past Selsey Bill that day, then 3 at Christchurch Harbour on Apr 11

Black Tern - four were in the Exe estuary on Apr 9 and one was seen at Portland on Apr 10 (when 26 were off the French coast)

Turtle Dove - first migrants were singles in the Scillies on Apr 9 and the New Forest on Apr 10

House Martin - one back to inspect artificial nests in Leigh Park (Havant) on Apr 13

Lesser Whitethroat - first for the year was at Titchfield Haven on Apr 8 with others on the Isle of Wight and at Christchurch Harbour on Apr 9 but only 8 reports in total to date

Golden Oriole - first and so far only report is of one in Devon on Apr 12

[Thu 14 Apr](#)

[\(Link to previous day's entry\)](#)

Bedhampton and Broadmarsh

Despite the dull and chilly weather (in comparison to recent days) this afternoon I cycled through Bedhampton to Broadmarsh and back via Budds Farm and Southmoor Lane. To my surprise I came on 8 newly flowering plants which I have not seen reported by others plus **Common Sedge** which was a first for me but had been found by Brian Fellows.

Having just heard from Tony Tupper in Leigh Park that he already has **House Martins** back at his artificial nest boxes my first objective was to look at the house in Staunton Road near Bedhampton Station which has similar artificial nests but had no **House Martins** today. Then on towards Bedhampton Mill seeing plenty of **Stream Water Crowfoot** in the Water Company overflow channel and two pairs each of **Gadwall** and **Tufted Duck** on Bedhampton Mill pool.

Next target was **Greater Celandine** in flower on the western edge of Bidbury Mead and this, with **Pellitory of the Wall**, gave me my first two new ticks for the year list. Continuing along Lower Road at Bedhampton I followed the footpath south through the busy Forty Acres roundabout complex heading for Broadmarsh and a roadside patch of grass here gave me three more ticks - both **Common Vetch** and **Red Clover** were in flower while **Ox-eye Daisies** were already showing a few white petals (but not enough for me to claim them as flowering). Another new flowering here was **Broom**.

On the Havant to Portsmouth cycleway below the A27 I found **two Sedges flowering** - one was **Pendulous Sedge** which I did count and the other was **Common Sedge** which Brian Fellows has already listed. To make up for that one I found **Bugle** in flower nearby.

Next item of interest came at the Broadmarsh slipway where I had my first sight of the **Summer moult flock of Swans** on the water - just 20 of them so far. After this came Budds Farm with three **Swallows** overhead and **8 Shelduck** on the ground along with some **20 Tufted Duck**, two pairs of **Gadwall** and singles of **Canada Goose** (presumably with a nesting mate nearby) and **Cormorant** plus the other usual suspects (including the **Cetti's Warbler**). Not sure if the **Swans** were nesting as I could not see one on a nest in the usual place (but that spot is now very overgrown and they may well have chosen a new site) - all I did see was **one Swan** cruising round on its own.

My final 'new flower' tick was of **Hedgerow Cranesbill** as I rode up Southmoor Lane. Not new, but now flowering in profusion, were **Hoary Cress** and **Hawthorn**

[Tue 12 Apr](#)

[\(Link to previous day's entry\)](#)

A ride through Stansted to Walderton

This afternoon I got on my bike and headed for Woodlands Lane which connects the Stansted East Park to the village of Walderton in the Ems valley. My primary target was to see the **Green Hellebore** plants whose colony in Lordington Copse spills out into the public domain alongside Woodlands Lane at the point where the lane begins its steep descent into the valley.

Before reaching that point, while crossing the Stansted East Park, I found more **Wintercress** in flower in the field edges and as soon as I reached Woodlands Lane I found both **Crosswort** and **Bush Vetch** in flower to add to my year list. Next came **Yellow Archangel** and then a great show of the **Green Hellebore** (with the bonus of more **Goldilocks buttercups** to add to those found on Apr 7).

Bush Vetch among Crosswort flowers

Crosswort and Bush Vetch

Yellow Archangel plant and flower

Green Hellebore flower and leaf

Green Hellebore site and a Goldilocks Buttercup found there
Riding down the road from Walderton to Racton I passed a mass of **Ramsons (Wild Garlic)** leaves with at least one which flowerhead open. At Racton village I turned up the steep hill to take the short cut to Aldsworth and on this flower rich roadside I found my first **Wild Strawberry** flowers and also another cluster of **Goldilocks Buttercups**.

Wild Strawberry plant and flower

Reaching Westbourne village I decided to follow the River Ems south towards Emsworth and was rewarded, just before the point where Mill Lane resumes its southward direction after the bridge over the A27, with another cluster of **Wintercress** plants with the lobed leaves of **Barbarea vulgaris** (the previous plants seen elsewhere all showed affiliation to **Barbarea intermedia** by having more pinnated leaves). Leaving Mill Lane by the bridge over the river at Constant Spring I found **Greater Celandine** with unopen flower buds pushing some of its leaves through the wire mesh of the fence on the north side of the path adjacent to the final bit of fencing across the path immediately west of the river crossing.

Wintercress plants beside Lumley Mill Lane

Closer views of the Wintercress

Just two more notes before reaching home - at the A27 Underpass I found **Dove's Foot Cranesbill** had started to flower and at the junction of Pook Lane with Havant Road (opposite the One Stop shop) the first few white flowers of **Horse Chestnut** were open.

[Mon 11 Apr](#)

[\(Link to previous day's entry\)](#)

My first Holly Blue and Wintercress plus news from the week-end

On Saturday (Apr 9) I could at last see pale blue flowers on the **Cornsalad** plants which, by growing in top of the wall around St Faith's Church Hall, have avoided destruction by Havant Borough's street cleaners whose orders are to make the Borough 'Cleaner and more prosperous' by removing from the streets the natural life and colour which contributes to my wellbeing.

On Sunday my eldest son brought his family over in the afternoon and we all walked to Langstone pond and back. At the pond other families were over-feeding the ducks and peering through the reeds to see the **Swan** on her nest but I did not see anyone taking the least interest in the many **Egrets** in the trees, at least half a dozen of which were already sitting on primitive stick platforms which serve them as nests. Offshore here with the tide high well over 50 **Black-tailed Godwits** were roosting on the outer edge of the saltings that were still above water.

Today (Apr 11) I took a short walk around the Billy Trail behind my house, extending it into the Havant Cemetery where I saw my first **Holly Blue** butterfly and found the first flowers on the **Duke of Argyle's Teapant**. At the start of this outing the slope down into the carpark below the Art Centre gave me two more new flowers - at the top of the slope white flowerbuds had appeared on the **Hairy Tare**

plants at the foot of the new notice board announcing the availability of the County Council Social Services offices when the staff move into the new Civic Centre premises and at the foot of the slope, as you turn north up the Billy Trail, many plants of **Early (or Intermediate) Wintercress** had suddenly shot up and started to flower. North of East Street a **Speckled Wood** was on the wing and I noticed my first Sycamore tree flowers. In the cemetery I found a mass of newly flowering **Germander Speedwell** and quite a few **Bulbous Buttercups** plus a single **Red Campion** flower on the 'wild flower seed' plants sown last year.

WILDLIFE DIARY AND NEWS FOR APR 4 - 10 (WEEK 14 OF 2011)

BIRDS

Divers: All three common species still being seen off our south coast

Grebes: Slavonian and Black Necked still being reported in the south up to Apr 8 with a group of **8 Red-necked** off the Netherlands on Apr 8

Shearwaters: Sightings of 100+ Manx Shearwaters from both Devon and Cornwall this week as the birds return to breed

Leach's Petrel: Last week I expressed some disbelief about a report of one in Berkshire on Apr 1 but I have since seen that this bird which turned up at Theale lakes was part of a windblown 'wreck' of these birds and was no April fool's joke

Immature Imperial Shag: Those who like me have been extending their knowledge of south Atlantic bird life by following Steve Copsey on board HMS York as the ship has been heading to the Falklands will have been introduced to this indecent sounding bird this week and despite all the talk about defence cuts we have also been able to share Mark Cutts' shipboard encounters with migrants heading our way as HMS Liverpool has been on patrol on the Mediterranean while at the same time following Tony Tindale monitoring bird populations on Ascension Island. There's never a dull moment on the Three Amigo's blog and as UK Taxpayers who make these birding expeditions possible we might as well get the benefit of their observations and photographs - if you don't have the link among your Favourites it is <http://www.surfbirds.com/blog/amigo>

Little Egret: Walking with grandchildren around Langstone Pond this afternoon (Apr 10) I was able to see at least half a dozen Egrets already on their nests

Great White Egret: Also on Apr 10 a **Great White** flew south over Pagham Harbour but continued out to sea

Purple Heron: On Apr 2 18 of these were seen at a Belgian site and may be one that was part of the same northward movement of the species flew in off the sea at Lands End that day and from then until Apr 9 at least there have been daily sightings of the species in both Cornwall and the Scillies

Black Stork: One appeared over the Scillies on Apr 2 may have been seen in Somerset next day and over Southampton on Apr 8 - it may not be the only one in southern England as Apr 8 also brought a report of one over Hythe in Kent

Spoonbill: A group of three were seen in the Lymington area on Apr 2 and Apr 3 when they moved west over Christchurch Harbour and Poole Harbour and perhaps further west to be seen at Wadebridge in Cornwall on Apr 8. What must have been another group of three were over Pagham Harbour on Apr 7. Perhaps it was one of these that flew south west over Thorney Island on Apr 8 to appear over Titchfield Haven on Apr 9 (the Farlington bird has not been reported since Apr 1)

Mute Swan: 172 were counted at Harbridge on the River Avon on Apr 7

Brent Goose: Reports on Apr 2 of 167 east past Seaford and then 169 passing Dungeness that day seemed to mark the final departure of our winter birds. No more reports of them until Apr 10 when a flock of 51 were seen at Weston Shore on Southampton Water.

American Wigeon: One reported at Dawlish Warren in Devon on Apr 7

Mallard Ducklings: The duckling season has now begun with a family of 9 at Pulborough Brooks on Apr 5, one of 10 ducklings at the Leigh Park Gardens lake in Havant on Apr 7 and another of 6 ducklings on the Pevensy Levels near Eastbourne on the same day

Garganey: Between Apr 2 and Apr 8 there were sightings at the Exe estuary in Devon, Christchurch Harbour, Titchfield Haven, Lewes Brooks, Dungeness and Sandwich Bay. On Apr 9 a flock of 18 were seen at Cap Gris-nez in France

Marsh Harrier: Of local interest among several reports of **Harrier species** this week was a sighting of both **Marsh** and **Hen Harrier** hunting over the east end of the Thorney Deeps on Apr 8

Osprey: 16 reports of birds heading north this week - the one that caught my eye was of an **Osprey** over Chichester on Apr 6 which was 'seen off' by the **Peregrines** nesting on the Cathedral

Hobby: The first to arrive was seen at Arne in Dorset on Mar 23 and I now have 11 reports including two in Hampshire (an early bird in the Southampton Test area on Mar 31 and another over the Blashford Lakes on Apr 6)

Red-legged Partridge: These have a habit of turning up in unexpected places but the most unusual I have heard of came this week when a birder watching an **Eider** off the north Kent coast at Seasalter was surprised when a **Red-leg Partridge** flew into the same field of view and promptly fell into the sea and drowned.

Spotted Crake: One seen in Warwickshire on Apr 5 and 6

Little Crane: One was picked out by a visitor to the Arundel Wetlands Centre on Saturday Apr 9 and when the photo of it was seen by the staff they arranged to extend their opening time on Sunday to 8pm - a good many people paid the £10-30 admission to see it and were not disappointed on Apr 10

Purple Sandpiper: 15 were seen at Southsea Castle on Apr 4 and 17 were at Start Point in Devon on Apr 5

Woodcock: First roding flights seen at Ashdown Forest on Apr 2

Whimbrel: Spring passage now getting under way - first passage birds seen around Mar 20 but the highest count so far has been just 11 at Lyminster on Apr 8

Wood Sandpiper: Lee Evans reported the first of the year in Cambridgeshire on Apr 2 and so far the only other report I have seen is of 3 at a Netherlands site on Apr 9.

Gull-billed Tern: One has been at Sennen near Lands End from Apr 6 to 9 at least

Sandwich Tern: These started to move up the English Channel in mid February and counts began to exceed 100 by mid March but they only started to move into Langstone Harbour on Apr 4 and into Portsmouth Harbour on Apr 5

Common Tern: One was over Ivy Lake at Chichester on Apr 5 and the count of Common Terns at Selsey Bill reached 135 on Apr 10

Little Tern: First of the year was at Dungeness on Apr 2. Locally two were over Pilsen in Chichester Harbour on Apr 8 and counts of birds flying east at Selsey Bill were 2 on Apr 9 and 5 on Apr 10

Wiskered Tern: One was in the Western Isles of Scotland on Apr 5

Black Tern: Apr 9 brought four birds into the Exe estuary in Devon and reports of one at Cap Gris-Nez plus three off the Netherlands

Cuckoo: The first was heard near Hastings on Mar 30 and I now have 14 reports including one of three birds in Ashdown Forest on Apr 6 and 2 at Acres Down in the New Forest on Apr 8 but I fear that the ongoing decline in Cuckoo numbers is unlikely to be reversed this year

Swift: Cliff Dean from Pett in East Sussex was on a train near Shoreham in West Sussex when he saw the first of the year on Apr 5. Two more were seen at Sennen near Lands End on Apr 8, and on Apr 9 one was over Pulborough Brooks (with three more over the Netherlands)

Pallid Swift: One was over Dungeness on Apr 5 (and reported again on Apr 6) followed by a 'possible' sighting at Sennen in Cornwall on Apr 8

Alpine Swift: One reported over Norfolk on Apr 2 when another was reported over Belgium. On Apr 3 there was one in Yorkshire

Bee Eater: First was at Fowey in Cornwall on Apr 2 when another was seen in the Scillies and on Apr 3 there was a sighting over the Lizard (plus one in Norfolk). Still in Cornwall were sightings over the Lizard and then Lands End on Apr 7 and 8

Hoopoe: Between Mar 6 and Apr 9 I have picked up 53 reports, all of single Hoopoes, from Cornwall, Devon, Dorset and the Scillies plus the Crondall village area in north Hampshire and a couple of isolated sightings at Castle Hill north of Newhaven on Apr 2 and the Paulsgrove chalk pit at Portsmouth on Apr 7

Wryneck: Between Apr 1 (when one turned up on the Scillies) and Apr 8 (when one was at Cissbury Ring near Worthing) one was also seen on the edge of Dartmoor plus another in the Netherlands

Short-toed Lark: One was present on Portland from Apr 3 to Apr 8 and on **Apr 9** there was a sighting in Cornwall which was probably a different bird

Red-rumped Swallow: Apr 2 brought reports from The Lizard and from Ireland, then on Apr 4 one was in the Wareham area of Dorset and on Apr 8 one was over Portland (spotted by Joe Stockwell from Andover though Martin Cade thought Joe was asleep in an armchair when he called the sighting!)

House Martin: Still in short supply but by Apr 6 a group of four were back inspecting artificial nestboxes at Ringmer near Lewes

Yellow Wagtail: These have been reaching England since Mar 15 but so far no sighting has been of more than the 18 at Rye Harbour on Apr 5. The first in Hampshire were three at Farlington Marshes on Apr 6 (with one at Sandy Point on Hayling on Apr 7 and one at Lymington on Apr 8 followed by one at Stubbington south of Fareham on Apr 9)

Waxwings: Still hanging on in southern England though some have changed their diet from berries to flower buds. This weeks sightings have been at six Hampshire sites, half a dozen Sussex sites, a couple in Dorset and one in Kent. Poole in Dorset had the highest count with over 100 on Apr 5 but Folkestone had 60, Winchester had 40 and locally there were 28 in Waterlooville and 27 at Denmead. Latest reports were on Apr 9 at Fleet Pond and Bursledon in Hampshire and Canford Heath in Dorset

Nightingale: A wave of reports on Apr 6 shared the honour of first for the year between the Eastbourne area, Pulborough Brooks, Farlington Marshes. On Apr 7 reports came from the north Kent coast and Warsash in Hampshire and on Apr 8 they were heard in the Test valley and at two Dorset sites. With news from some 16 sites by Apr 9 I checked out the Marlpit Lane site near Funtington in Sussex but had no luck

Whinchat: Although there had been singles seen on Mar 26 and 28 (in the **New Forest** and near Littlehampton) this week has only brought three more reports from Christchurch Harbour on Apr 8 and from Dorset and Cornwall on Apr 9
Ring Ouzel: 16 more sightings this week

Grasshopper Warbler: The first eleven reports for the year were all in this weeks news with the first in Norfolk on Apr 3 and the first in the south on Apr 6 at Ashdown Forest. As well as Sussex they have been heard in Dorset and Kent but not Hampshire nor west of Dorset

Sedge and Reed Warbler: Both are now abundant

Subalpine Warbler: One in Lincolnshire on Apr 3

Sardinian Warbler: One in Norfolk on Apr 7

Lesser Whitethroat: Just two reports so far - first at Titchfield Haven on Apr 8 and second at Christchurch Harbour on Apr 9 (there had also been early reports of a wintering bird at Ramsgate on Jan 28 and of one thought to be of a central Asian race in Ireland on Mar 24 plus an unconfirmed report of one singing on the Isle of Wight on Mar 23)

Common Whitethroat: 28 reports since the first in Sussex on Apr 3

Garden Warbler: Since one was reported on Apr 3 in Cambridgeshire there have been reports from Dorset and the Test valley but I suspect uncertainty over separating their song from that of a Blackcap has deterred many people from claiming this species so far.

Blackcap: Now abundant

Wood Warbler: The first was in Devon (Yarner Wood) on Apr 2 and there have since been reports from the New Forest (Apr 6), Cornwall (Apr 7 and 8), and Christchurch Harbour on Apr 8

Chiffchaff and Willow Warbler: Both now well established

Pied Flycatcher: The first was back at a nest box in Yarner Wood (Devon) on Mar 27 and since then there have been a dozen more reports from Portland and other Dorset sites, Dungeness, Cornwall and Pagham Harbour

Red Backed Shrike: This week has brought a delayed report of one in the **Scillies** on Mar 24

Woodchat Shrike: First report from the Scillies on Apr 4 and RBA news says that two were somewhere in Britain on Apr 8

Escapees: Helmeted Guineafowl was a new species to me when I saw a report of one in the Exe estuary area on Apr 7 (but Devon Birding indicates that there is a local source of these birds which regularly escape)

INSECTS

Dragonflies

Large Red Damselfly: First to fly this year were out on Apr 7 at Rye Harbour and at Chudleigh in Devon

Butterflies

Dingy Skipper: Just one sighting so far at Shoreham Mill Hill on Apr 8

Grizzled Skipper: First was also at Mill Hill last week on Apr 2 but they have now been seen in Hampshire at Magdalen Hill Down

Brimstone: Abundant

Large White: After four isolated sightings starting on Mar 11 this species took off with three reports on Apr 6 from Portland, Northington near Winchester and Henfield in Sussex were followed by three more sightings on Apr 7 and 9

Small and Green-veined White: Both species now established

Orange Tip: Now abundant

Green Hairstreak: Magdalen Hill Down at Winchester had the first six out on Apr 7 and one was seen at Cissbury Ring in Sussex on Apr 9

Small Copper: Just one report of two seen at Darwell near Hastings on Apr 7

Holly Blue: Now well established

Duke of Burgundy: Apr 9 brought the first for the year at Noar Hill near Petersfield

Red Admiral: Only three reports this week

Painted Lady: 14 sightings this week, none of them further west than Hampshire, (and with several migrant moth sightings) suggest that we are now seeing the first migrants of the year

Small Tortoiseshell: Plenty of new reports (one of 50+ insects at the Minster marshes in east Kent)

Large Tortoiseshell: Following a single seen well on the Isle of Wight back on Mar 14 we now have another report of the species at Bentley Wood on the Hants/Wilts border on Apr 6

Peacock and Comma: Both species now well established

Speckled Wood: After six early sightings from Mar 4 there have been regular reports from Apr 5

Moths

Common Oak Purple (*Eriocrania subpurpurella*): First report from Thanet on Apr 8

Caloptilia robustella: First report from Thanet on Apr 8

Caloptilia stigmatella: First report from Thanet on Apr 3

Zelleria hepariella: First report from Thanet on Apr 3

Variable Smudge (*Ypsolopha ustella*): First report from Thanet on Apr 8

Diamond-back moth (*Plutella xylostella*): First at South Hayling on Mar 28

Pammene argyrana: First report from Thanet on Apr 8

Twenty-plumed moth (*Alucita hexadactyla*): First report from Thanet on Apr 8

Pyrausta purpuralis: First at Mill Hill, Shoreham, on Apr 3

Pyrausta nigrata: First at Mill Hill, Shoreham, on Apr 3

Emperor Moth (*Saturnia pavonia*): First report from Thanet on Apr 7

Yellow Horned (*Achlya flavicornis*): First report from Thanet on Apr 8

Birch Mocha (*Cyclophora albipunctata*): First report from the Eastbourn area on Apr 8

Water Carpet (*Lampropteryx suffumata*): First report from Thanet on Apr 8

Brindled Pug (*Eupithecia abbreviata*): First report from Thanet on Apr 8

The V-Pug (*Chloroclystis v-ata*): First report from Thanet on Apr 8

Early tooth-striped (*Trichopteryx carpinata*): First at Ashdown Forest on Apr 2

Purple Thorn (*Selenia tetralunaria*): First at Ashdown Forest on Apr 2

Peppered Moth (*Biston betularia*): First report from Thanet on Apr 3

Hummingbird Hawkmoth: Fifth sighting for the year was of an insect nectariug on the Eastbourne seafront on Apr 3 and this suggests a migrant arrival

Lunar Marbled Brown (*Drymonia ruficornis*): First at Ashdown Forest on Apr 2

Muslin Moth (*Diaphora mendica*): The first date for this was given last week as Apr 2 but George Spraggs had on on south Hayling on Mar 28

Turnip Moth (*Agrotis segetum*): First at Portland on Apr 4

Dark Sword-grass (*Agrotis ipsilon*): This migrant species was first taken at Porland on Feb 10 but has re-appeared there on Apr 4 with a new wave of migrants

Shuttle-shaped Dart (*Agrotis puta*): First report from Thanet on Apr 4

Large Yellow Underwing (*Noctua pronuba*): An early first migrant at Portland on Apr 4

The Mullein (*Cucullia verbasci*): First in the Worthing area on Apr 6

Tawny Pinion (*Lithophane semibrunnea*): The previously given first date of Mar 30 has been ousted by George Spraggs on south Hayling where had one on Mar 24

Angle Shades (*Phlogophora meticulosa*): First at Durlston on Apr 5

Pale Mottled Willow (*Caradrina clavipalpis*): First report from Thanet on Apr 4

Oak Nycteoline (*Nycteola revayana*): A first for George Spraggs on south Hayling on Mar 28

Nut-tree Tussock (*Colocasia coryli*): Another first for George Spraggs on south Hayling on Apr 7

The Herald (*Scoliopteryx libatrix*): A first for George Spraggs on south Hayling on Mar 24

WILDLIFE DIARY AND NEWS FOR APR 4 - 10 (WEEK 14 OF 2011)

Fri 8 Apr

My first Reed Warbler, Field Madder and Shining Cranesbill

This morning I set off on my bike for the Thorney Deeps (west) in the expectation of hearing a **Sedge Warbler** but in fact heard a **Reed Warbler** and saw/heard my second **Common Whitethroat** close to where a **Meadow Pipit** was half singing (giving the notes it makes as it climbs above its territory but not those that accompany its subsequent parachute drop back to earth). Other birds noted were a **Cormorant** flying west over the Slipper Mill pond, **Greenshank**, **Redshank** and **Oystercatcher** along the tideline and a couple of **Cetti's Warblers** at the Little Deeps with **20+ Shelduck** and a pair of **Great Blackback Gulls** at the Great Deeps.

On the way to Emsworth I found my first **Field Madder** flowering in the short grass of the triangle at the A27 underpass and then, best of all, found **Shining Cranesbill** flowering at both ends of the footbridge over the A27 which joins the new section of Pook Lane to the genuine old Lane.

Shining Cranesbill plant at south end of A27 footbridge

Two of the Shining Cranesbill flowers - neither captures the intense pink of the actual flowers

A further look at the Prinsted 'market garden plot' confirmed that its cultivation has been abandoned and also confirmed that **I was wrong in claiming to have found Field Pepperwort there** on Mar 19 (and probably wrong with my two subsequent claimed finds on Portsdown and on Hayling Island). The reason for this mistake was that, while I know **Shepherd's Purse** to be a very variable species I thought its seed pods always had their distinctive 'purse shape', but I now know this is not always so. The clump at Prinsted was bigger than any plant of **Shepherd's Purse** that I had ever seen (and was also more leafy and hairy) and not one of its many seed pods had the 'purse shape' - the closest match I could find for them was **Field Pepperwort**. Since mid-March I have been taking a close look at all the **Shepherd's Purse** plants that I come across and a couple of weeks ago I collected a plant which again had no 'purses'. I kept it in water and it was well over a week before its tiny round seedpods suddenly changed and became purse shape. Today the 'bush' at Prinsted was similiary covered with 'purse shaped' seed pods

Also seen at Prinsted was my second **Small Tortoiseshell** butterfly and back in my garden I had another **Orange Tip** (and while in Havant after lunch I noticed my first open **Lilac** flowers).

[Thu 7 Apr](#)

An unexpected Early Purple Orchid when looking for Goldilocks

This afternoon I drove to the Pyle Farm area (just south of Horndean) to check out the roadside of what I think is called Pyle Lane for the **Goldilocks Buttercups** which grow just west of the farm close to where the footpath from Rowlands Castle emerges from 'The Holt' woodland. These buttercups are difficult to photograph because they drop their petals very soon after the flowers open and the thin-stemmed plants flutter wildly in the slightest breeze, so I am pleased to have got one decent picture showing the small flowers and long thin leaf segments.

Goldilocks buttercup near Pyle Farm

Having got this picture I thought I would check the progress of the **Early Purple orchids** in the north west corner of The Holt and was pleased to find one already pushing up a sheathed flower stem before coming on the very unexpected sight of **one plant already in flower**.

Early Purple orchids in The Holt wood

Before leaving the wood I also came on **Woodruff** in flower and to round off the visit I took a general view of the bluebells that are now abundant. Also new to me here were **Southern Woodrush** and the first unfurling leaves of **Male Fern**

An impression of Bluebells in the northern area of The Holt wood

First Woodruff flowers

[Wed 6 Apr](#)

[\(Link to previous day's entry\)](#)

Green Winged Orchids and a Whitethroat on Hayling

Before describing today's outing to south Hayling I need to record a couple of observations from Monday (Apr 4) when a short walk around Havant found **Stream Watercress** starting to flower in the Langbrook stream, **Ribwort Plantain** and **Cleavers** flowering by roadsides, and lovely racemes of white flowers on a **Bird Cherry** tree planted in a garden. Not quite in flower were **Hoary Cress** outside the West St multistorey carpark and **Oxeye Daisies** in several places.

The target of this walk was to have another look at a plant that I found on Apr 1 and reported in my Diary for that day as being **Round-leaved Cranesbill** on account of the shape and the depth of the 'cuts' in its leaves, plus the reddish tinge to its stems and their hairiness. I was not entirely happy with this id and on Monday I took the photos which appear below and collected some specimens which showed me this plant was the much commoner **Dove's Foot Cranesbill**. The most obvious clue came from the photo of the flower which showed that each of the five petals has a deep 'indentation' at its tip (**Round-leaved** does not have this but **Dove's Foot** does). Further proof came via my microscope which showed that the **hairiness** of the stems and leaf pedicels consisted of simple hairs (not the glandular hairs that would be found on Round-leaved)

Dove's Foot Cranesbill plant and close up of flower

Today I set off on my bike in glorious warm sunshine and before reaching the main road at Langstone I had added **Orange Tip** butterfly and **Herb Robert** flowers to my year list, then came a **Willow Warbler** singing right above my head in trees behind the houses on the west side of the main road in Langstone.

In Texaco Bay **70+ Black-tailed Godwits** were feeding, and shortly after passing the Oysterbeds area I stopped to listen to a **Common Whitethroat** singing from trackside bushes at Stoke Bay. Also here I watched an **interaction between two pairs of Buzzards** - one of the resident pair dived at the intruders to show that they were not wanted there, sending them out over Langstone Harbour to seek an unoccupied territory on Portsea Island.

Further down the track I added my first **Small Tortoiseshell** to my personal year list and on Sinah Common I found the **Tartarian Honeysuckle** had begun to flower (it dominates the corner on your left as you come out of the road from the Sinah Lake 'Gun Emplacement' site and turn left onto Ferry Road and is covered with pale pink tubular flowers).

Turning left again into the Ferry carpark I passed a good show of **Eastern Rocket** and as soon as I was through the carpark and on the shingle track leading towards Gunner Point I began to see the **Spring Beauty** which dominates this area with its strange 'saucer like' leaves supporting clusters of tiny white flowers. Stopping to photograph a specimen I found that I had found a 'double first' with flowers of **Common Ramping Fumitory** entwined with it.

Spring Beauty plus Common Ramping Fumitory together

The Fumitory and Spring Beauty (*Claytonia perfoliata*) separately
Next stop was at the remnant of a sand dune which can be reached by trudging along the shingle to the first way in through the **Tamarisks** but which is easier to access by taking the narrow path along the edge of the Ferry Sailing Club boat compound which misses out the shingle. Here my target was the tiny **Spring Vetch** whose flowers are solitary and only 5 or 6 mm across (so very difficult to spot

without getting down to ground level!). My photo shows that I did find two or three plants but I also made a surprise find of a good clump of **Early Forget-me-not** (which I have not previously found anywhere in the Gunner Point area other than in the shorr-grass the roundabout where you turn into the Harbour Entrance carpark from Ferry Road). I also took a photo of the tiniest flower seen here - **Grey Field Speedwell**

Early Forget-me-not at a new site in the sand dunes

Spring Vetch (with Sea Mouse-ear) and Grey Field Speedwell

Before leaving the shingle of the harbour entrance area I must mention that the **Sea Kale** plants were well grown but not yet showing any sign of the white flowers to come.

Along the south side of the Golf Course I headed for the **Green-winged Orchid** site and found at least seven plants starting to flower (by the end of April there may well be 5,000 of them) and after taking a few pictures I sat on the grass to eat an apple and only then noticed that several plants of **Spring Vetch** were flowering within arm's reach, confirming my point that you do not see this flower unless you get down and search for it.



First stages of Green Winged Orchid flowering

Slightly more advanced Green Winged Orchid flowers

Further east, on the southern edge of the 'Pitch and Putt' golf course, I found the **Shepherd's Cress** plants which I failed to spot on my previous visit (also here Lesser Sea Spurrey was in flower) and I searched the leaves of many **Bur Chervil** plants but failed to find any flowers (maybe next time...).

Shepherd's Cress and Lesser Sea Spurrey

Leaving Sinah Common opposite Staunton Avenue there was a great show of garden chuck-out '**Spring Starflower**' (**Tristagma uniflorum**) before I headed north for home.

About halfway up the Coastal Path I stopped to ask a naturalist (down on his knees with camera at the ready) what he had spotted and he showed me a motionless medium sized spider which he could not name but which we both thought could be a member of the Tegenaria genus.

A little further up the track there was no doubt about the identity of a couple of noisy **Sandwich Terns** near the Oysterbeds which were my first for the year and (with the **Willow Warbler** and **Whitethroat**) brought my year list to 109. Just two more finds for the year were the first **Lords and Ladies** which had opened its sheath to expose its spadix and a big cluster of **Glistening Inkcap** fungi (suffering from drought despite recent rain)

[Tue 5 Apr](#)

[\(Link to previous day's entry\)](#)

Correction re Bee-Flies to my Weekly Summary for Week 13

When preparing my Weekly Summary last Sunday my imagination ran away with itself after reading an entry for Mar 27 on the Rye Bay website by Brian Banks about Dotted Bee-flies. Brian's intention was to help people to identify the species by pointing out that the dots on the wings (easy enough to see when the insect is at rest) become impossible to see when the fly takes off but even then you can identify the species by the black band around the tip of its abdomen which contrasts with the rich brown of the front of the abdomen.

He then added a paragraph which excited my imagination and led me to talk about the Flies 'playing Blow Football with their eggs' and he has asked me to point out that he never wrote anything to justify this incorrect fanciful idea.

Brian has now supplied me with a correct account of how the Fly's eggs are sent on a path which may or may not cause them to reach the Bee larvae which they predate. He says .. "The egg laying behaviour of the bee flies is summarised in the book "British soldierflies and their allies" by Alan Stubbs and Martin Drake. These insects land on bare earth and fill a chamber at the end of the body (the sand chamber) with small particles of soil. The minute eggs are coated with this material before they are flicked out onto the ground, using an ovipositor spine while the insect is hovering over suitable egg laying sites. The particles of soil may make the eggs heavier and easier to be accurately aimed when flicked. The eggs are laid on suitable looking ground where bees are likely to nest, rather than directly into the burrows, and they frequently lay eggs before bees actually start to make their nest tunnels."

Pursuing this new information Google took me to a photo (see <http://www.flickr.com/photos/roly2008/4558070861/> taken at Durlston in Dorset) which shows the ovipositor at the back of the Bee-fly and the accompanying text says .. "Although it looks like this bee fly has a bad case of piles I am pretty certain the swollen behind is for egg laying as this one kept dipping down onto the ground in the same way as a dragonfly dips the surface of a pond while laying." (I presume the apparent absence of a forward pointing proboscis in this photo is a matter of it being out of focus in this shot and I must resist letting my imagination run away with the idea of the proboscis being a detachable item of the insect's anatomy which can be taken off the front end and plugged in to the back end when needed as an ovipositor!!!)

Yet another account of the egg-laying process is provided by the 'Bugs and Weeds' website. See <http://www.bugsandweeds.co.uk/flies%20p2.html> which says that the Bee-fly lays its eggs on the ground where they hatch out and the new-born larva which emerges makes its own way to and down the Mining-bee tunnel (and at the end of its underground development has to 'head-butt' its way out - no doubt swearing like Wayne Rooney as it does so!) Note that this link takes you to the top of a long page of fly species and you have to scroll down a long way to find the 'Bee Fly' section - alternatively you can use CTRL + F to find the words 'Bee Fly' and then scroll down the Bee Fly entry

Just one final reference - Brian Banks told us that prior to egg-laying the Bee-fly scoops sand into a special chamber at the rear of her abdomen and that this sand sticks to her eggs to make them heavier (and so less likely to be blown away from the place where they land after laying?). Photos showing this behaviour can be seen at

<http://www.wildaboutbritain.co.uk/forums/insects-and-invertebrates/52016-curious-bee-fly-behavior.html>

Apologies for a lengthy correction but at least I now know a lot more about Bee Flies.

WILDLIFE DIARY AND NEWS FOR MAR 28 - APR 3 (WEEK 13 OF 2011)

Highlights

Bird News highlights

Much of this week's news is taken up with **reports of departing wildfowl** and with **details of all the summer migrant species that have reached us so far** (including the first **Cuckoo** and **Little Tern**). A surprise is the arrival of **Bee Eaters** in the west country (will they breed again? See

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bee-eaters_in_Britain for previous attempts at breeding). Perhaps an even more unusual sighting was of a **Red-flanked Bluetail** at Durlston on Apr 2. Finally we still have lots of **Waxwings** (even if two found dead at Hove have been sent off for post-mortems)

Insect News highlights

The first **Grizzled Skipper** (and the second **Painted Lady**) has been seen and lots of **Orange Tips** are now out.

More rare moths have been found to be relatively common in Sussex while Farlington Marshes has lots of tiny **Brown-tail moth caterpillars** now out of their winter tents

In the Other Insects section read **how Dotted Bee-flies play 'blow football'** to get their eggs into the nests of the mining bees which their larvae predate (and I discover that those **mining bees can excavate tunnels that go down 60 cm** into the ground). I also learn **how male Pisaura mirabilis try to get away with their lives when mating with the larger females** - the secret is to feign death while holding a food offering in your mouth, then (having lured the female close with the food offering) get on with the job and get away before she finishes eating'

Plant News highlights

Rue-leaved Saxifrage is 'flowering plant of the week' but **Early Spider Orchid** is a contender for that title (and **Common Spotted Orchid leaves** have appeared at Emsworth

Other Wildlife News highlights

Two fungi in the news are an early find of the common **St George's Mushroom** three weeks early for St George's Day and a find of an uncommon fungus **Gymnosporangium clavariiforme** on Juniper

BIRDS

Divers: Apr 2 brought a surge in departing winter birds passing Dungeness among them were **31 Red-throated** and **9 Black-throated**. **Great Northern** reports were all of singles (including one off Selsey Bill on Mar 29). On Mar 28 a **White Billed Diver** was seen in Orkney. The long staying **Pacific Diver** at Penzance has not been reported since Mar 14

Grebes: No reports of **Red-necked** since Mar 27 but **6 Slavonian** and **5 Black-necked** flew past Splash Point on Apr 2 (when **2 Black-necked** were still in Portland Harbour). Locally one **Great Crested** was seen on the Slipper Mill pond at Emsworth on Mar 22 and again on Mar 27 (no indication of any intention to breed there)

Manx Shearwater: The first birds returning to southern British waters were 15 off Portland on Apr 1 with 7 there on Apr 2 (one bird had been seen on Feb 17 but no others until now)

Leach's Petrel: A report of one in Berkshire on April 1 sounds like an April Fool spoof to me but it was included in the RBA news for that day

Bittern: Singles reported this week at Titchfield Haven, Lodmoor, Rye Harbour and at Penzance in Cornwall

Night Heron: On Mar 27 a site in Belgium reported the presence of 17 birds

Little Egret: A partial night roost count at Langstone Mill Pond on Apr 1 recorded a minimum of 53 birds compared to 42 on Mar 17

Grey Heron: On Mar 28 there were already some young in 23 nests at the Weir Wood reservoir near Crowborough and on Mar 30 the Heronry at Winchelsea was reported to have 17 nests (double the count for last year)

Purple Heron: On Apr 2 a Netherlands site reported 18 birds after the first report of the species back there on Mar 27

Black Stork: One seen in the Scillies on Apr 2 was the first I have heard of anywhere this year

Spoonbill: The single bird which turned up at Farlington Marshes on Mar 24 was still there on Apr 1. More have been arriving recently in Europe with 24 at a Belgian site on Mar 29 and 3 flying over the Lymington area on Apr 2 (probably the same 3 that were over the Isle of Wight on Apr 1 when 2 were at Saltash on the Devon Cornwall boundary)

Mute Swan: Still only two birds known to be nesting in the Hampshire area (Langstone Pond on the mainland and Fishery Pond on Hayling) but it seems these are early nesters as on Apr 1 the BBC were reporting that 31 nests at Abbotsbury was a significant increase on just two active nests there on the same date last year).

Black Swan: Brian Fellows visited the West Ashling pond (between Emsworth and Chichester) on Mar 29 and found just two adult swans (apparently no young produced by them during the past winter)

Brent Goose: Very few migrants are still left along the English south coast (I could only see 64 on the Langstone South Moors shore on Apr 1). The tailing off in numbers passing Dungeness is recorded in the following recent figures - 1600 on Mar 26, 476 on Mar 29, 470 on Mar 30, 446 on Mar 31 and 169 on Apr 2.

Ruddy Shelduck: One was seen on Apr 2 at Mill Rythe on the east coast of Hayling Island - maybe the bird seen at West Wittering on Mar 17 after previously being seen there on Feb 12

Shoveler: Another indication of our departing winter wildfowl comes from counts of Shoveler passing Dungeness - 12 on Mar 27, 48 on Mar 29, 175 on Apr 2

Red-crested Pochard: A pair were seen at Ivy Lake (Chichester) on Apr 1

Scaup: Around 30 of these were at Abbotsbury in Dorset during Jan and Feb this year with only 8 left by Mar 17 and just 6 on Mar 28 since when none have been seen anywhere

Long-tailed Duck: One over the Netherlands on Mar 27 was the last I have heard of - last in southern England flew east past Titchfield Haven on Mar 26

Scoters: A final (?) surge of **2113 Common Scoter** flew past Dungeness on Apr 2 along with **63 Velvet Scoters**

Osprey: After the early report of 2 heading north east over Cornwall on Mar 18 I have picked up 19 reports from southern England including two sightings at Gutner

point on Hayling on Mar 26 and 27. April sightings have been of one over Poole Harbour on Apr 1 and again on Apr 2, and one at Yarmouth (IoW) on Apr 2

Hobby: First was at Arne in Dorset on Mar 23 with one over the River Test near Southampton on Mar 31, another over the Charminster area of Bournemouth on Apr 1. Latest arrival flew in off the sea at Portland on Apr 2 (when another was seen in Belgium)

Peregrine: The pair nesting on Chichester cathedral laid their first egg on Mar 21 and had their full clutch of four by Mar 27

Grey Partridge: Two birds were seen in a field east of Prinsted (north east of Thorney Island) on Mar 22 and four were seen there on Mar 26. These were thought to be two pairs intending to nest but I somehow doubt they were entirely wild birds. Some years back I thought I was on the trail of a **Grey Partridge** on the Cobnor peninsula until I traced the calls to a 'hen coop' outside the back door of a farm cottage close to the approach road to the Cobnor Activities Centre and since then (during the five years I spent monitoring the wildlife on Great Idsworth Farm, north of Rowlands Castle) I witnessed a well meaning attempt to re-introduce **Grey Partridges** to the farm by the purchase and release of 50 birds, all of which had 'vanished' before the year was out. Nowadays I am of the opinion that any **Grey Partridges** seen in southern England (from which the native birds were driven by changes in agricultural practices which deprived the birds of the soft bodied insects which are necessary food for their young during the first few months of their life) are almost certain to have been cage-reared and purchased either to support the shooting on which some farmers are financially dependent or with the charitable intention of 'saving wildlife'. The introduction of 'beetle banks' running across fields and wider headlands around them does help breeding pairs to find the caterpillars to feed their young but does little to educate the adults in other aspects of survival in the wild which they might have learnt had they been hatched and reared in the wild.

Coot: The first newly hatched chicks were seen in a nest on one of the rafts of the Slipper Mill Pond at Emsworth on Apr 2

Stone Curlew: One was seen in daylight at Christchurch Harbour on Mar 28 and another was heard flying north in the dark over Worthing on Apr 2. These were the fifth and sixth birds for the year after the first seen at Martin Down on Feb 21

Long-billed Dowitcher: Still at Lodmoor on Apr 2

Little Gull: Spring passage continues to increase with counts on Apr 2 of 74 passing Dungeness and 42 at Splash Point, Seaford. This week's sightings include one at Fleet Pond, one at Ivy Lake (Chichester), three at Sandy Point on Hayling and four at the Blashford Lakes

Common Tern: Since the first English sighting at Dungeness on Mar 26 these have now been seen at Sandy Point on Hayling and at Fleet Pond in north Hampshire and by Apr 2 the number at Dungeness was 38

Little Tern: First for the year was reported at Dungeness on Apr 2

Cuckoo: Three reports so far. On Mar 30 one was at Battle near Hastings and on Apr 2 one was in Ashdown Forest near Crowborough and another at Bolderwood in the New Forest

Short-eared Owl: The bird which arrived at Farlington Marshes on Mar 19 was still there on Apr 1

Bee Eater: On Apr 2 one was reported in the Scillies and another (?the same?) in Cornwall

Hoopoe: This week there was at least one in Devon and another at Portland while on Apr 2 one was in Sussex at Castle Hill north of Newhaven

Sand Martin: The first started to arrive around Feb 23 and they are now widespread and numerous with an estimated 200 over Ivy Lake at Chichester on Apr 2

Swallow: First to arrive in England was on Mar 12 and now Apr 2 brings news of 775 at a Netherlands site

Red-rumped Swallow: First for the year were one in Cornwall and another in Ireland, both on Apr 2

House Martin: First was at Fleet Pond on Mar 13 and only 13 reports up to Apr 2

Tree Pipit: First was in Belgium on Mar 24 - only two so far in England (Ashdown Forest on Mar 29 and New Forest on Apr 2)

Yellow Wagtail: First reached England on Mar 15 and so far only 7 reports from England

Waxwing: Still 27 new reports this week with Poole having two flocks totalling 140 birds on Apr 2. Other flocks seen in April were at Hove (Brighton), Horsham, Fleet in north Hampshire, a garden centre in Pulborough, Ivy Lake at Chichester, Worthing, and Hedge End (Southampton). Following reports of birds falling down dead at Hove two of these birds are being sent off for post-mortems

White-spotted Bluethroat: One in the Scillies on Mar 25 (after one in the Netherlands on Mar 21)

Red-flanked Bluetail: One at Durlston on Apr 2 and 3 was only the second ever record for Dorset (first was in 1993) and the more unusual for being here in spring rather than autumn. Only 20 previous sightings in Britain, latest were at Houghton Forest in Sussex on Mar 4, Dungeness on Nov 16 2010 and at Sandy Point (Hayling) on Oct 23 2010

Common Redstart: 13 reports so far: first was in Kent on Mar 26 and by Apr 2 there were sightings at Ashdown Forest, New Forest, Hayling Oysterbeds, Christchurch Harbour and Pagham Harbour

Whinchat: Just two reports: one in the New Forest on Mar 26 and the second at Climping (between Bognor and Littlehampton) on Mar 28

Wheatear: First arrival on Feb 12 in the New Forest with numbers increasing to 120 at Portland on Mar 23

Ring Ouzel: First was at Portland on Mar 20 and on Apr 2 the latest of 19 reports were of 3 at Portland and 4 at Dungeness

Fieldfare: Last sighting so far was of one on south Hayling on Mar 30

Redwing: Lst report from southern England was of 25 at Dungeness on Mar 30 but Apr 2 brought a report of 1478 at a Netherlands site

Sedge Warbler: The first was singing at Rye Harbour on Mar 28 and since then they have been reported at north Devon, Lodmoor, Pagham Harbour and Farlington Marshes (six on Apr 2)

Reed Warbler: Just two reports so far - one at Hook/Warsash (two birds) on Apr 2 and probably the same birds further up the Hamble river at Swanwick on Apr 3

Lesser Whitethroat: One was reported singing at Freshwater (IoW) on Mar 23 but no further reports (they normally arrive in mid-April)

Blackcap: First definite report of a new arrival was at Folkestone on Mar 12

Chiffchaff: Probable first migrant arrival on Mar 11

Willow Warbler: First arrivals on Mar 20

Pied Flycatcher: Just one report of two birds back near their nest boxes in Devon's Yarner Wood on Mar 27

INSECTS

Butterflies

Grizzled Skipper: First for the year at Shoreham Mill Hill on Apr 2

Brimstone: Only three reports this week

Large White: A fourth report for the year on Apr 2 at Henfield (Sussex) after other singles on Mar 1 (Hants), Mar 18 (Kent) and Mar 27 (Hants)

Small White: Three reports this week

Green Veined White: Four reports so far on Mar 26 (first for year near Eastbourne), Mar 28 (Brighton), Apr 1 (Brook meadow at Emsworth) and Apr 2 (Haywards Heath)

Orange Tip: First for the year was on Mar 23 in Sussex and on Apr 1 Emsworth had its first (15th for the year) and on Apr 2 the village of Five Oaks near Horsham had 11 on the wing

Holly Blue: First was seen on Mar 20 at Arundel and Brook Meadow at Emsworth had the third on Mar 23. We now have an eighth report on Mar 28 (I have included one reported in Devon on Mar 27 as a 'Common Blue')

Red Admiral: Only two reports this week

Painted Lady: Second report for the year comes from Abbots Wood near Eastbourne on Apr 2 (as with the first at Titchfield on Feb 14 this was almost certainly an insect emerging from hibernation rather than a migrant)

Small Tortoiseshell: Still doing well this year with another 8 reports this week (including 10 seen at Gosport on Mar 27) bringing the total of reports so far to 69

Peacock: More than 30 were seen at a Devon site on Mar 27 to bring the year total to 39 reports

Comma: Three more reports this week

Speckled Wood: Now starting to emerge seriously with four reports on Mar 27, 28 and 29

Moths

Panalia leuwenhoekella and Panalia schwarzella: Two rare micros seen at Shoreham Mill Hill on Mar 28 - see Graeme Lyons account of them at <http://analternativenaturalhistoryofsussex.blogspot.com/> (you have to scroll down to 'older posts' before reaching his entry for Mar 29 but it is worth doing so)

Pyrausta despicata: Also recorded at Mill Hill on Mar 29 two weeks earlier than expected

The Streamer: First for the year in Sussex on Mar 29

Barred Tooth-striped: First at Lewes on Mar 27

Hummingbird Hawkmoth: Numbers four and five for the year coming out of hibernation in Sussex on Mar 23 and 26

Brown-tail moth: A 'good' showing of their caterpillars around Farlington marshes on Mar 28

Muslin Moth: First at Worthing on Apr 2

Powdered Quaker: First in Sussex on Mar 29

Tawny Pinion: First in Kent on Mar 30

Small Purple-barred: Another first at Mill Hill (Shoreham) on Mar 29

Other insects

Dotted Bee-fly: See <http://rxwildlife.org.uk/2011/03/27/dotted-bee-fly-3/#more-14726> for Brian Banks' account of the Dotted Bee-flies which this year are common in his Northiam garden near Hastings. I learnt from this how the flies get their eggs into the nests of the mining bees which they parasitise. The technique is to lay their eggs on bare ground near the entrance to a mining bee tunnel, then to use the down draught from their wings to blow the eggs into the tunnel.

Correction re Bee-Flies

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He then added a paragraph which excited my imagination and led me to talk about the Flies 'playing Blow Football with their eggs' and he has asked me to point out that he never wrote anything to justify this incorrect fanciful idea.

Brian has now supplied me with a correct account of how the Fly's eggs are sent on a path which may or may not cause them to reach the Bee larvae which they predate. He says .. "The egg laying behaviour of the bee flies is summarised in the book "British soldierflies and their allies" by Alan Stubbs and Martin Drake. These insects land on bare earth and fill a chamber at the end of the body (the sand chamber) with small particles of soil. The minute eggs are coated with this material before they are flicked out onto the ground, using an ovipositor spine while the insect is hovering over suitable egg laying sites. The particles of soil may make the eggs heavier and easier to be accurately aimed when flicked. The eggs are laid on suitable looking ground where bees are likely to nest, rather than directly into the burrows, and they frequently lay eggs before bees actually start to make their nest tunnels."

Pursuing this new information Google took me to a photo (see <http://www.flickr.com/photos/roly2008/4558070861/> taken at Durlston in Dorset) which shows the ovipositor at the back of the Bee-fly and the accompanying text says .. "Although it looks like this bee fly has a bad case of piles I am pretty certain the swollen behind is for egg laying as this one kept dipping down onto the ground in the same way as a dragonfly dips the surface of a pond while laying." (I presume the apparent absence of a forward pointing proboscis in this photo is a matter of it being out of focus in this shot and I must resist letting my imagination run away with the idea of the proboscis being a detachable item of the insect's anatomy which can be taken off the front end and plugged in to the back end when needed as an ovipositor!!!)

Yet another account of the egg-laying process is provided by the 'Bugs and Weeds' website. See <http://www.bugsandweeds.co.uk/flies%20p2.html> which says that the Bee-fly lays its eggs on the ground where they hatch out and the new-born larva which emerges makes its own way to and down the Mining-bee tunnel (and at the end of its underground development has to 'head-butt' its way out - no doubt swearing like Wayne Rooney as it does so!) Note that this link takes you to the top of a long page of fly species and you have to scroll down a long way to find the 'Bee Fly' section - alternatively you can use CTRL + F to find the words 'Bee Fly' and then scroll down the Bee Fly entry

Just one final reference - Brian Banks told us that prior to egg-laying the Bee-fly scoops sand into a special chamber at the rear of her abdomen and that this sand sticks to her eggs to make them heavier (and so less likely to be blown away from the place where they land after laying?). Photos showing this behaviour can be seen at

<http://www.wildaboutbritain.co.uk/forums/insects-and-invertebrates/52016-curious-bee-fly-behavior.html>

Apologies for a lengthy correction but at least I now know a lot more about Bee Flies.

Yellow-dung flies: These had first been reported at Rye Harbour on Mar 8 but I did not come across them until Apr 1 when young cattle were turned out to graze the Langstone South Moors and the flies were abundant on the fresh cow-pats

Mining Bees: The Havant wildlife group walk on Apr 2 was at Nutbourne and during it they came on a colony of mining bees actively digging their tunnels - they also got a photo of one of the bees which was thought to be one of the *Andrena* species and my comparison of this photo with one I found at http://www.omlet.co.uk/breeds/breeds.php?breed_type=Bees&breed=Minig%20Bees suggested the species might be ***Andrena carantonica*** (a species not in my Michael Chinery book but said to be common at this time of year). For further info on this species see http://www.gardensafari.net/en_picpages/andrena_carantonica.htm Another thing that surprised me during this investigation was that the Bumblebee Conservation Society website tells us that **these mining bee tunnels can be as much as 60 cm deep** (some digging!)

Oil beetle (*Meloe proscarabaeus*): The first find of one for the year is reported on the Devon Birding website at a site near Plymouth on Mar 27

Spiders: Several species now becoming mature and attracting attention. At Brook Meadow in Emsworth Brian Fellows found a **Nursery Tent spider (*Pisaura mirabilis*)** on Apr 1 and aroused my curiosity when he pointed out something that I did not know, namely that when you see a female walking around with her eggsac held under her abdomen between her long legs she is actually holding it in place with the 'fangs' at the tip of her 'chelicerae' which she uses to grasp her prey and inject them with poison through the fangs. This must mean that she abstains from food during the period when she is carrying her egg-sac prior to hanging it up in her 'nursery tent'. Another new piece of knowledge about the males of this species came from Wikipedia - I was aware that most male spiders are much smaller than the females (in this species they are 10 to 12 mm long while the females are 12 to 15 mm long) and that the males are often eaten by the females during the mating process but Wikipedia says .. "Males of this species offer food gifts to potential female mates. **Some *Pisaura mirabilis* have also been observed to feign death, remaining still while holding the food gift in their mouths.** When the female approaches and tries to take the food away, the male springs back to life and attempts to mate. The strategy of playing dead more than doubles a male's odds of successfully achieving copulation, from 40% to 89%" - in other words he gets on with his job while the female still has her mouth full and may get away with his life before she has finished eating.

Four more Spider species described by Chris Bentley on the Rye Bay website (entry for Mar 28) are .. "***Phrurolithus festivus* (The Pretty Ant**

Spider - great name!), **Neon pictus** and today several other jumping spiders, including **Heliophanus flavipes**, **Euophrys frontalis**, and best of all, **Sitticus inexpectus**, another species which, while not common nationally, is fairly regular at Rye Harbour."

PLANTS

Great Horsetail: Fertile cones had started to appear on Warblington Farm on Apr 1

Marsh Marigold: The number at the Langstone South Moors had increased substantially to more than 64 plants, some of them having 30 or more flowers, by Apr 1 Other sites are also doing well

Medium flowered (or Intermediate) winter cress (*Barbarea intermedia*): This is likely to be the species which Brian Fellows found coming into flower near West Ashling on Apr 1

Cuckoo Flower: First report of flowering had been near Alton in east Hampshire on Mar 23 - it was then seen at Henfield on Mar 27, in Emsworth on Mar 30 and at the South Moors at Langstone on Apr 1

Garlic Mustard: This started widespread flowering from Mar 29

Honesty: First seen flowering in Havant on Mar 28

Great Stitchwort: First flowers found in the Locks Farm area of Havant on Mar 29

Herb Robert: First flowers found by the Havant Willdife Group at Nutbourne on Apr 2

Round-leaved Cranesbill: This species is spreading in the Havant area and I found a plant in flower on Apr 1

Spotted Medick: First flowers found in Emsworth on Mar 28 with others in Havant on Mar 29

Hawthorn: A single flower open on a tree in Havant on Apr 1

Rue-leaved Saxifrage: Started to flower in Havant on April 1 (photos on my Diary page)

Norway Maple: Bright yellow flowers seen on these trees from Mar 28

Silver Birch: First catkins seen in Havant on Apr 2

Hemlock: Just one of thousands of leafy plants had flowers on Mar 28 at Broadmarsh in Havant

Wild Angelica: An unconfirmed report of this flowering at Nutbourne on Apr 2

Oxford Ragwort: First flowers seen in Havant on Apr 2

Smooth Sowthistle: First flowers at Langstone on Mar 28

Spanish Bluebell: First flowers seen in Emsworth on Mar 28

Lords and Ladies: Sheathed spikes appeared on Apr 1 - none yet flowering

Early Spider Orchid: First flowers reported at Durlston on Mar 20

Common Spotted Orchid: Leaves seen at Emsworth (Brook Meadow) on Apr 1

OTHER WILDLIFE

Water Vole: Spring weather and plant growth has brought a significant increase in the number of sightings at Brook Meadow in Emsworth where (on Apr 1 but no hoax) one was seen nibbling a nettle. I can vouch for young nettle leaves also making an enjoyable addition to human meals (providing that only the topmost leaves are picked and then boiled they are quite as tasty, and a lot less expensive, than Spinach). Also this week on the Rye Bay website Kelly Payne of the National Trust staff at Winchelsea reported .. "2011 is the year of our **Water Vole** habitat management trial along one of the ditches just west of New Gate, Winchelsea. After completing vegetation management in February, creating a wiggly channel of open water with scalloped "bays", the electric fence went live on 10th March. This will protect the bank from trampling and poaching by livestock and leave the voles a wider strip of grass to feed on. Their activity will be monitored from next month. " I wonder if we will see electric fencing used at Brook Meadow to keep livestock (in this case humans and their dogs) away from the voles.

Slow Worms: The first report I have seen of **Slow Worms** coming out of hibernation this year was on Mar 20 in Hollybank Woods at Emsworth. A couple of days later a couple were seen at Bovey Heath in Dorset and on Mar 28 three more were seen at Northiam in East Kent. The first indication that I see of their presence in my garden is when the local Magpies start to take an interest in the long grass, watching it intently then dashing in to grab a **Slow Worm** that they have detected.

Fungi: On Apr 2 I found a fresh clump of four **St George's Mushrooms** in the Havant Eastern Road cemetery - see my Diary page for photos. These were three week's early for St George's Day on Apr 23. A much less common fungus was brought to my attention this week in Graeme Lyons blog at <http://analternativenaturalhistoryofsussex.blogspot.com/>

His entry for Mar 31 has a picture of **Gymnosporangium clavariiforme** on Juniper at Stockbridge Down (west of Winchester) - this species was new to Graeme and contributed a tick to his personal '**pan species life list**' for which his current ambition is to reach 4,000 species (so far he has reached 3,200 and he can find out more about this list in his blog

WILDLIFE DIARY AND NEWS FOR MAR 28 - APR 3 (WEEK 13 OF 2011)

During the past week the '**Good Friday Grass**' (**Field Wood-rush** or **Luzula campestris**) has been gradually coming into flower on my lawn and I took this photo today to show its progress

'Good Friday Grass' flowers closeup and normal view

[Sat 2 Apr](#)

St George's Mushroom in Havant cemetery

A brief walk to the Eastern Road cemetery after lunch found several plants of **Oxford Ragwort** with the first flowers I have seen since mid-January and the first **Silver Birch catkins** for the year. Also new but not flowering were leaves opening on **Common Lime** trees and the first 'unlit candles' on a couple of **Horse Chestnut** trees, while the **Duke of Argyle's Teapant** in the cemetery was covered in unopen flower buds.

An unexpected find in the cemetery was a small cluster of **St George's Mushrooms** (three weeks early for the Saints Day on Apr 23). These are said to be edible and good and as they are unmistakable I think the specimen shown below will be on my dinner plate tomorrow

The 'all white' St St George's Mushroom

One other observation while I was out was my first visual on a male **Blackcap** which has been singing in the trees along the Billy Trail behind my garden for several days now, and while I was in the cemetery a male **Brimstone** flew through.

[Fri 1 Apr](#)

[\(Link to previous day's entry\)](#)

Rue-leaved Saxifrage flowering and Egrets, Peregrines and a Swallow

A short walk to post a letter this morning was extended to see what might be newly flowering in Havant and this added **Hawthorn** (just one open flower among many buds), **Spanish Bluebell** (found in several places), and **Rue-leaved Saxifrage** (in The Pallant carpark) to my year list.

Rue-leaved Saxifrage on the wall of The Pallant carpark

Rue-leaved Saxifrage flowers and leaves

When the sun came out in the late afternoon I took a longer walk to the South Moors and Budds Farm with the intention of returning via Langstone Mill Pond around sunset and making a second count of the **Egrets** coming to roost to compare with the count of 42 which I recorded on Mar 17.

This walk started with a surprise find of **Round-leaved Cranesbill** in flower by the pavement edge at the Langstone Roundabout and then, walking beside the Langbrook stream, I found the first of several **sheathed flower spikes (spathes) on Arum (Lords and Ladies)**.

On the South Moors young cattle were out for the first time and this gave me my first sight of **Yellow Dung Flies** on their cowpats. I also found the gate into the 'orchid field' had been left open in the hope that the cattle will devour some of the rough vegetation there before the orchids season starts (at the moment the cattle definitely prefer the richer grass in the 'hay field' beside the Langbrook!). Walking to

the north end of the Orchid Field I was delighted to find **well over 50 plants of Marsh Marigold**, some of them having up to 50 flowers now at their best. Also seen here were my first **Cuckoo Flowers**.

At the Budds Farm pools I watched my first **Swallow** and heard the resident **Cetti's Warbler** with several **Chiffchaffs** and **possibly a Willow Warbler** (heard twice but on both occasions too faint and brief to be certain). The **Swans** had not settled to nest yet, nor had the **three pairs of Shelduck** which were present.

Coming back along the shore with the tide well out **64 Brent** were feeding on the mud and near the mouth of the Langbrook the grass above the high tide mark had a lot of **Sea Mouse-ear** starting to flower.

I did not reach Langstone Pond until 7:25 pm, about 10 mins before sunset, so many of the **Egrets** had already arrived, but with few leaves yet on the trees I was able to count **36 Egrets** already present and during the next 15 mins **another 17 arrived to give me a minimum of 53 birds against the 42 I recorded on Mar 17**. Back at home the local newspaper told me that the **pair of Peregrines nesting on Chichester Cathedral** had laid their first egg on Mar 24 and had completed their clutch of four eggs by Mar 26. The TV news then told me that **31 pairs of Swans** had started nesting at Abbotsbury by April 1 compared to just two pairs by the same date last year.

[Tue 29 Mar](#)

Greater Stitchwort and Norway Maple flowers in Havant

A short cycle ride to the Denvilles area of Havant this morning confirmed that the **Greater Stitchwort** was now flowering at the Locks Farm site (junction of Southleigh and Eastleigh roads) and while there I found the **Garlic Mustard** (first seen last Saturday) was now starting to flower generally.

Greater Stitchwort first flower

More Stitchwort flowers with Lesser Periwinkles and Crosswort

Garlic Mustard starting to flower

Garlic Mustard flowers

When nearly home I visited the Havant cemetery and photographed catkins on **Hornbeam** and flowers on **Norway Maple** (both have been on show for a few days) and while there found several flowering clumps of **'Glory of the Snow'** (**Chionodoxa forbesii**) which I had not noticed in previous years.

Hornbeam catkins

Norway Maple flowers

Peak of Early Dog Violet flowering and patch of *Chionodoxa forbesii* (can be seen in previous picture!)

Common Dog Violet flower showing blunt (not pointed) spur and long pointed sepals

[Mon 25 Mar](#)

A walk around Farlington Marshes to see the Spoonbill

This morning the first flower had come out on self sown **Honesty** in my garden as I set out on a short cycle ride to the north pier of the old Hayling Billy rail bridge at Langstone. Before reaching the pier I stopped where the cycle way crosses the east end of Mill Lane at Langstone and here I counted 49 flowers (many fresh and some already withered) on the **Snake's Head Fritillary** plants beside the Mill Lane path east of the cycleway while at the junction of this path and the cycleway I admired another fairly natural planting of **Cowslips** now in flower.

Returning via Langstone village and pond I added flowering **Smooth Sowthistle** to my year list and brought today's count of **Brent** to around 50 with just 8 **Teal** on the water. The **Swan** was looking thoroughly settled on her nest and as I passed the pond a **Cetti's Warbler** shouted at me.

In the afternoon I drove to Broadmarsh for a walk around Farlington Marshes where I had good views of the **Spoonbill** spending most of its time asleep but occasionally waking and bringing its unusually shaped bill out to prove its identity. Just after it had done this and I was moving off I spoke to a couple who had just reached the area and been using a scope to look in the general direction of the **Spoonbill** - when I asked if they had seen the bill I was surprised at the reply of 'Yes, we saw six of them' which I eventually found out revealed they had confused the **Spoonbill** with another species having extra broad bills - the **Shovelers** on the Deeps. The moral of this is (especially with plants) not to rely too much on the English names for species as a guide to identification.

Very soon after adding the **Spoonbill** to my year list I had another species to add with a pair of adult **Yellow-legged Gulls** feeding among seaweed around the pile of rubble near 'The Point' (the southernmost tip of the Marshes). Some people may not be aware that this pile of rubble is the site of a house built around 1820 and inhabited for over 100 years (it had its own fresh water supply from a well dug down through the chalk which underlies the harbour). The lady who lived in the 'Coastguard Look-out' next to the Ship Inn at Langstone told me more than once that in her youth she often rowed out to the building to visit her uncle who lived in it. See <http://www.haylingu3a.org.uk/aug08.htm> which tells us in its third paragraph that the house was built there to protect the valuable oyster beds in the inlet running up the eastern seawall of the present nature reserve against oyster poachers. I think the building was demolished in the 1940s.

Going back to the gulls I was pretty sure of their identity from their size and very smart plumage but had to wait some time before one emerged from the seaweed to show the bright yellow of its legs.

Other birds which caught my attention were the large number of **Shelduck** (at least 60 and maybe 100) and **Brent** (at least 200 on the marshes with a similar number in Chalkdock Lake seen as I walked between Broadmarsh and Farlington). There were also many **Teal** with a few **Gadwall** and **Shoveler** and good showings of **Black-tailed Godwit** and breeding **Lapwings**. At the other end of the scale I only saw one pair of **Mergansers** and singles of **Common Gull** and **Cetti's Warbler** (heard and I think seen in flight) plus a single **Greenshank** (heard only as were one or more **Grey Plover**).

Also noted were 'good' numbers of **Brown-tailed Moth caterpillars** now out and sunning themselves on their silk nests. The only new flower seen was one plant of **Hemlock** in flower among hundreds of not yet flowering.

WILDLIFE DIARY AND NEWS FOR MAR 21 - 27 (WEEK 12 OF 2011)

Highlights

Bird News highlights

Langstone Swan on nest on Mar 25

White-tailed Sea Eagle seen again on Mar 24 (after its departure on Mar 17!)

Goshawks have 18 territories in the New Forest

New migrant arrivals in England are **Hobby** in Dorset on Mar 23, **Whinchat** in the New Forest on Mar 26, **Ring Ouzel** at Portland on Mar 20, **Lesser Whitethroat** on the Isle of Wight on Mar 23, a **Quail** in the Scillies on Mar 14 and **Tree Pipits** had reached Belgium on Mar 24

The main arrival of **Common Terns** started on Mar 26 and of **Yellow Wagtails** on Mar 20

A Curlew Sandpiper was at Pett Level on Mar 25

Insect News highlights

First **Green-veined White** in Sussex on Mar 26 and a second **Large White** in Kent on Mar 18.

Orange Tips have been out since Mar 23 and **Holly Blues** since Mar 20

Small Tortoiseshell doing well with 34 reports this week

A second **Speckled Wood** was seen on Mar 22 after one on Mar 4

Lots of 'first for the year' moth reports include a **Hummingbird Hawkmoth out of hibernation** at Stansted House on Mar 20 and a **Silver Y migrant** at Portland on Mar 20

Among the Other Insect News the account of a **Stylopid parasite on an Andrena bee** is fascinating

Plant News highlights

This week brought the **first Larch Roses, Cuckoo Flowers, Bulbous Buttercup, Garlic Mustard and English Scurvygrass** while a new site for the rare **Shepherd's Cress** was discovered by accident on a Hayling roadside

A **count of Butterbur flower spikes** at Emsworth shows that the colony is growing rapidly and this year had 859 flowering plants

Grasses and Sedges get their first mention for the year

Other Wildlife highlights

An interesting photo of a **Deer Tick on a Common Lizard** leads to information on the effects of **Lyme Disease**

There is also a link to a photo of a **dozen Grass Snakes emerging from communal hibernation**

In addition to the first report of **Minke Whale** in English water we have news of **Dolphins** not only in English waters but also some in the South Atlantic

A **white coated Roe Deer** has been seen in West Sussex and a **Stoat** in Kent was seen showing off his jumping, diving and swimming abilities

BIRDS

Divers: All three common species still being seen in the channel but no large numbers now. No mention of the **Pacific Diver** off Cornwall since Mar 14 so I guess it has departed

Grebes: **Great Crested** still to be seen in winter mode on the sea this week - more than 100 were moving east off Rustington (Worthing area) on Mar 22 and 200+ were off Saltdean near Brighton on Mar 19. One of those on the move was seen on the Slipper Mill Pond at Emsworth on Mar 22 but did not stay. **Red-necked** were still in the Channel on Mar 26 when one was off Dungeness and five were off the Netherlands. A few **Slavonian** were seen at seven sites this week, including one in Hayling Bay on Mar 18 and three off Splash Point at Seaford on Mar 25.

Black-necked were also at seven sites with one still at the Blashford Lakes on Mar 25 and 6 in Torbay (Devon) on Mar 26 while Swanage still had 14 on Mar 19

Bittern: One was still at Marazion (Penzance) in Cornwall on Mar 25 and one at Rye Harbour on Mar 26. On Mar 21 one that intends to stay in Kent to breed was heard booming from the Walland Marsh east of Rye. Other reports this week came from the Dungeness RSPB site and from both Radipole and Lodmoor at Weymouth

Little Egret: The high tide roost at Langstone Pond on Mar 25 held 21 birds mostly adorned with long and beautiful breeding plumes

Great White Egret: One seen at Titchfield Haven on Mar 26 was the first to be reported there this year

Spoonbill: One which was at the Selsey West Fields on Mar 21 seems to have moved to the Deeps at Farlington Marshes and has been seen there from Mar 24 to 26

Mute Swan: Other than the bird which settled to nest at Lakeside on south east Hayling on Mar 17 the only other one I know to be on its nest is at Langstone Pond where I saw it on Mar 25

Whitefront Goose: Perhaps the last significant report of winter geese came in a count of 11,324 at a Netherlands site on Mar 20

Brent Goose: Small flocks of up to 50 birds can still be seen in Langstone and Chichester Harbours but I suspect the birds are different each day and are just stopping off for no more than a day before continuing their eastward movement during the night. Where they all come from I do not know but Dungeness was still recording 1600 passing on Mar 26 with 700 on Mar 25. What was probably the last major departure occurred on Mar 19 when 5650 went past Dungeness with another 2514 seen from the French coast

Garganey: 11 reports this week include 2 birds at Yarmouth (IoW) on Mar 23, a pair at the Selsey west fields on Mar 21 and three birds at the Dungeness RSPB site on Mar 20. Latest news is of singles at two different Devon sites on Mar 25

Shoveler: No recent reports from England a wave of departing birds were seen on the continent - on Mar 23 a French site had 191, then on Mar 24 a Belgian site had 241 and on Mar 25 a Netherlands site had 324

Scaup: These were still being seen in southern England this week with four at Lymington on Mar 17 (and 19), three at Rye Harbour on Mar 20 when two were at Pagham Lagoon. On Mar 22 five were at Lodmoor and on Mar 25 there were six at Abbotsbury and one at the Blashford Lakes on both Mar 25 and 26

Long-tailed Duck: A female was last seen in Devon at Torbay on Mar 21 and a female (maybe the same bird) flew east by Dungeness on Mar 26

Smew: No new reports since Mar 19

Goosander: 30 were still at the Blashford Lakes on Mar 19 and 7 were at Tundry Pond near Fleet on Mar 20 but the only report since then was of two at the Longham Lakes on the northern fringe of Poole on Mar 25 (these possibly intending to stay and breed in the Avon valley area)

White-tailed Sea Eagle: After an apparently clear report of the Basingstoke bird leaving on Mar 17 there was an unexpected report of it over the Cheriton area near Winchester on Mar 20 and then another report of it back over Basingstoke but flying east on Mar 24

Hen Harrier: Up to nine birds seem to have been in the New Forest on the weekend of Mar 19/20 but none seen since

Goshawk: No news so far of nest cameras showing Goshawks breeding in the New Forest but on Mar 22 Lee Evans told us he had heard of 18 occupied territories there this year.

Common Buzzard: No shortage of them here but even more were being seen on the continent this week as birds fly north back to territories they had to vacate during the winter. The following numbers were reported this week (mainly from Germany) - 393 on Mar 20, 267 on Mar 21, and 534 on Mar 22. During the New Forest survey over the weekend of Mar 19/20 a total of 103 Buzzards were seen at 26 sites.

Golden Eagle: A bird of this species was reported in Cornwall each day from Mar 20 to 24, each time in a different area. The first report indicated that the bird may have been around since the beginning of March. This could well be an escaped falconer's bird but so far we have had no clue as to its origin

Osprey: After a report of two birds heading north over Cornwall on Mar 18 two more were seen over Rutland Water on Mar 25 and on Mar 26 one settled on a post at Gutner Point (east coast of Hayling Island) to eat a fish it had just caught.

Hobby: The first and so far only report is of one in the Arne area of Dorset on Mar 23

Quail: A very early arrival of one in the Scillies on Mar 14 has only just been reported

Common Crane: None straying into English airspace this week but plenty arriving back in the Low Countries with a peak of 553 in Belgium on Mar 21

Avocet: The count at Titchfield Haven was up by one to 18 on Mar 23 and 2 were at Sidlesham Ferry on Mar 24 but that day brought a peak movement on the continent with 461 seen at a Belgian site

Stone Curlew: Fourth report of a migrant arrival came on the evening of Mar 21 when one was heard flying over Christchurch in Dorset in the dark

Little Ringed Plover: Arrival of these migrants is warming up with nine reports this week including one at The Kench (south Hayling) on Mar 19, two at the Selsey west fields on Mar 20, one at Farlington Marshes on Mar 21 and one at Rye Harbour on Mar 26

Curlew Sandpiper: A winter plumage bird at Pett Level on Mar 25 was the first news of one in southern England this year

Woodcock: A good number of birds that have wintered here are currently returning to the continent - at least two this week were seen in gardens on the Sussex coast

Black-tailed Godwit: The first news of them at Titchfield Haven for the year comes this week with 100 there on Mar 19 and 170 on Mar 20

Bar-tailed Godwit: Their spring passage up the English Channel is starting with 35 at Dungeness on Mar 26

Whimbrel: A report of 14 at the Hayling Oysterbeds on Mar 20 was not confirmed but on Mar 23 Dungeness reported 8 passing and singles flew past Folkestone on Mar 25 with further singles on Mar 26 at Seaford and Farlington Marshes

Spotted Redshank: The Nore Barn bird at Emsworth was last seen on Mar 19 and the number at Lymington declined from 6 on Mar 20 to 4 on Mar 21 and 2 on Mar 26. One was still at Christchurch Harbour on Mar 25

Green Sandpiper: One was at Budds Farm in Havant on Mar 26

Common Sandpiper: Reports of one at Waltham Brooks (Pulborough) and two at the Lower Test Marshes (Southampton) were probably of birds that have been wintering here.

Med Gull: As the numbers build up at their breeding sites there were 240 at the Hayling Oysterbeds on Mar 21 (these will probably nest on the nearby RSPB Islands) and 280 at Rye Harbour (already at their nest sites)

Little Gull: Dungeness had 120 passage birds on Mar 26 when there were 17 at Splash Point (Seaford) and 8 inland at Fleet Pond (probably birds going overland via the Thames valley).

Common Gull: Numbers have already dropped of at south coast sites but on Mar 26 around 400 were seen among sheep on the Sussex Downs at Steyning

Sandwich Tern: There were more than 130 at Rye Harbour on Mar 19 and by Mar 26 Rye Harbour had 200 while Dungeness had 580 passing birds

Common Tern: Although there had been reports of early arrivals in Cornwall and at the Ouse Washes the main body of migrants started to arrive this week with 5 at Dungeness and 1 at Splash Point both on Mar 26. Singles had been seen in the Netherlands on Mar 23 and 25

Puffin: One was unexpectedly seen at Seaford on Mar 20

Short-eared Owl: One was seen at Farlington Marshes from Mar 21 to 26 at least

Kingfisher: A pair were nest building at Radipole (Weymouth) on Mar 24

Hoopoe: The Portland bird of last week was last seen there on Mar 17 but I think there were at least two birds still in Cornwall up to the end of this week

Lesser Spotted Woodpecker: This seems to have been a good spring for seeing these birds but I have not kept details of the many sightings reported

Sand Martin: Lots have already arrived and have been checking out their breeding cliffs.

Swallow: A steady arrival now with 18 per hour coming in at Portland on Mar 21

House Martin: Seven new reports this week but no sighting of more than two birds so far

Tree Pipit: First two arrivals in Belgium on Mar 24 and 25 but none in England so far

Meadow Pipit: Moving north in hundreds all week - highest count of 1260 at Christchurch Harbour on Mar 24

Yellow Wagtail: After the first to reach England on Mar 15 Portland had three on Mar 20

Waxwing: Still 16 reports this week from Hampshire, Dorset and Sussex (plus one bird in Cornwall on Mar 23). Dorset had 50 in the Bournemouth area on Mar 24, Hampshire had 22 at Fleet on Mar 17 and Sussex had 28 at Hove on Mar 26. Locally there were 10 in a Chichester carpark on Mar 23 and 9 at the Knowle site near Fareham on Mar 17

Dipper: One was seen as close to Hampshire as Wareham in Dorset on Mar 20

Robin: At least one brood had fledged in Sussex on Mar 20 while migrants continue to be seen at Portland (see http://www.portlandbirdobs.org.uk/aa_latestnews.htm for a photo of two held in one hand - the one with the greyer plumage is a continental bird and the one with a richer brown colour is a British bird)

Whinchat: The first arrival was seen at Acres Down in the New Forest on Mar 26

Wheatear: Highest count of arrivals this week was 120 at Portland on Mar 23. Locally there were 11 in the Hayling Bay area on Mar 26

Ring Ouzel: The first three reports for the year were on Mar 20 - one in the Netherlands, one in Cornwall and one at Portland. The first for Hampshire was at Southampton Lower Test Marshes on Mar 26 and Sussex has no arrivals so far

Dartford Warbler: One got onto my personal yearlist on Mar 23 when I was on south Hayling

Lesser Whitethroat: One was singing at Freshwater (IoW) on Mar 23 - presumably a new arrival though the species can winter here (one was seen in the Ramsgate area of Kent on Jan 28). Another report came from Ireland on Mar 24 and this was thought to be a subspecies (*Sylvia curruca halimodendri*) from central Asia

Willow Warbler: 16 reports this week include one of two birds singing at Sinah gravel pit lake on Mar 26 and two more at the Lower Test Marshes that day

Great Grey Shrike: Seen at some ten sites this week as our wintering birds have been joined by others moving north after wintering on the continent

Chaffinch: Huge numbers have been on the move this week with close on 7000 moving north at the South Foreland in Kent on Mar 19 and over 15,000 going north in Belgium on Mar 25

Brambling: A flock of 150 was at Cadman's Pool in the New Forest on Mar 20 and there were still 21 in a Chandlers Ford garden near Eastleigh on Mar 24

Linnet: Many have already returned to their breeding sites in southern England but Portland was still able to count 135 coming in off the sea in a 75 minute period on Mar 26

Lapland Bunting: Although the winter flocks have now left us there were isolated late singles seen at Durlston on Mar 18, in the Stubbington area south of Fareham on Mar 20, at Farlington Marshes on Mar 21 (probably the Stubbington bird) and at Seaford also on Mar 21.

Snow Bunting: Similar 'late singles' were in Cornwall on Mar 21 and at Hook/Warsash on Mar 24

INSECTS

Butterflies

Brimstone: Numerous everywhere

Large White: One had been reported in the Southampton area on Mar 11 but no others have been reported until Mar 18 when one was seen at Folkestone in Kent

Small White: Nine reports this week

Green-veined White: One seen at Herstmonceux near Eastbourne on Mar 26 is the only report so far

Orange Tip: Ten reports of males seen this week after appearing at three sites on Mar 23

Holly Blue: Five reports from Hampshire and Sussex following the first at Arundel on Mar 20 and another at Ryde (IoW) on Mar 21. Brook Meadow at Emsworth came in with the third for the year on Mar 23 and it was followed by one at Clanfield (south of Petersfield) on Mar 26

Red Admiral: Only three reports this week

Small Tortoiseshell: 34 reports for this week (and 61 for the year to date) seems to reflect a genuine recovery in the numbers of this species. Highest counts have been 12 at Rye Harbour on Mar 22 and 13 at Hastings on Mar 25

Peacock: Widespread reports

Comma: Also widespread

Speckled Wood: One had been seen in Southampton on Mar 4 and now another is reported at Rye Harbour on Mar 22

Moths

Adela cuprella: A new species for me was reported in the Fleet area on Mar 24 - it is probably as common as the other tiny Longhorn Moths which cluster around bushes at this time of year but this species holds its meetings around tree tops

Light Brown Apple moth (Epiphyas postvittana): The first of these very common moths was reported in Kent (Thanet) on Mar 23

Lichen Button (Acleris literana): Another first in Thanet on Mar 22

Light Orange Underwing (Archiearis notha): A close relative of the common **Orange Underwing** for which have had seven reports this week the **Light Orange Underwing** was considered a rarity in Sussex (not seen there for 26 years!) until this week when one was found in the Brede Woods in East Sussex. Spurred by this find Graeme Lyons went to the West Sussex reserve near Pulborough called The Mens and found half a dozen of them. It would seem that their rarity has been due to the need to net them before they can be separated from the common species. See

<http://analternativenaturalhistoryofsussex.blogspot.com/> for Graeme's account of his find (and some other interesting reports)

Double-striped Pug (Gymnoscelis rufifasciata): Another first from Thanet on Mar 23

Early Thorn (Selenia dentaria): A first at Edburton in West Sussex on Mar 23

Small Brindled Beauty (*Apocheima hispidaria*): A first at Henfield on Mar 23

Brindled Beauty (*Lycia hirtaria*): An out of area first at Aberystwyth in Wales on Mar 25

The Engrailed (*Ectropis bistortata*): First at Thanet on Mar 22

Hummingbird Hawkmoth: A local first nectaring on Pansies at the Stansted Garden Centre near Chichester on Mar 20 - presumably this insect had hibernated there and was not an early migrant

Pine Beauty (*Panolis flammea*): A first at Pulborough Brooks on Mar 23

Blossom Underwing (*Orthosia miniosa*): Another first at Pulborough on Mar 23

Lead-coloured Drab (*Orthosia populeti*): A first at Henfield on Mar 22

Early Grey (*Xylocampa areola*): First near Eastbourne on Mar 26

Dotted Chestnut (*Conistra rubiginea*): First at Pulborough on Mar 22

Silver Y (*Autographa gamma*): First of this migrant species at Portland on Mar 20

Other Insects

Bee Fly: The first were seen on Mar 20 at Emsworth Hollybank Woods, Rye Harbour and Henfield with others seen the next day on Portsdown, in Emsworth and at Sandwich Bay

Styloid parasite on *Andrena* bee species: On Mar 25 the RX website had this entry from Chris Bentley who said "Yesterday, Colin Boyd sent me a couple of pictures, taken in his garden in Sedlescombe on the 23rd of this month, with a request to identify the 'passenger' on this *Andrena* bee. I think I may have sworn then, as this is an insect I have never seen alive in over 25 years as an entomologist! It is a male styloid, a member of a small order of insects with a bizarre and complicated lifecycle. If you know where to look, there is also a female in this picture - the red blob at the end of the males abdomen is the tip of the legless, wingless and antennaless female with which he is mating!" See

<http://www.amentsoc.org/insects/fact-files/orders/strepsiptera.html> for fuller information about these tiny parasites and their strange lives (when the males emerge they chase after bees and sniff at their backend to see if one of the Styloid females is already inside the bee and then mate with her - if she is not discovered by a male she will still produce viable young!) The RX web entry with the photos can be seen at

<http://rxwildlife.org.uk/2011/03/25/the-passenger/#more-14716>

White-tailed Bumblebee (*Bombus lucorum*): First seen at Durlston on Mar 22 and one in my garden on Mar 27

Red-tailed Bumblebee (*Bombus lapidarius*): First reported at Durlston on Mar 24

Green Tiger Beetle (*Cicindela campestris*): First report from Bovey Heath in Devon on Mar 23

Eyed Ladybird (*Anatis ocellata*): First report from Peasmarsh near Hastings on Mar 19

Pine ladybird (*Exochomus quadripustulatus*): First report from Peasmarsh near Hastings on Mar 19

Bloody Nosed Beetle (*Timarcha tenebricosa*): Pair mating at Durlston on Mar 26

Whirligig Beetle (*Gyrinus natator*): First sighting in the Westbrook Stream at Emsworth on Mar 24

Common Green Shield Bug (*Palomena prasina*): First in Newhaven area on Mar 19

Gorse Shield Bug (*Piezodorus lituratus*): First on heathland in the Fleet area on Mar 23

Western Conifer Seed Bug (*Leptoglossus occidentalis*): Second report of the species for the year at Sandwich Bay on Mar 23 (after John Goodspeed's finding of one in his bath on Feb 9 - presumably roused from hibernation in his house earlier than normal)

PLANTS

European Larch: First sighting on green needles and blood red Larch Roses on a mature tree in Havant on Mar 25

Bulbous Buttercup: First flower at Langstone on Mar 25

Cuckoo Flower: First report of flowers from the Alton area on Mar 23

Garlic Mustard: First flower in Havant on Mar 24

Shepherd's Cress (*Teesdalia nudicaulis*): First flowers discovered by chance on Mar 23 at a previously unknown roadside site on South Hayling

English Scurvygrass: First flowers seen near the Hayling Oysterbeds on Mar 23 with more in flower at Nore Barn at Emsworth on Mar 24

Hairy Violet: First report of flowering was at Durlston on Mar 12 - I did not see any until Mar 21 when they were abundant on Portsdown and included a large clump of pure white flowers

Greater Stitchwort: Probably flowering by this weekend in the Locks farm area of Havant where I photographed flower buds close to opening on Mar 24

Sea Mouse-ear: This abundant flower on the south Hayling sandy shore had started to flower when I was there on Mar 23

Black Medick: A plant in full flower discovered at Havant on Mar 24

Hornbeam: First open catkins seen in the Langstone area on Mar 23

Basford Willow: Had started to flower at Brook Meadow in Emsworth on Mar 25

Wild Cowslips: First flowers reported at Durlston on Mar 18 and seen on Portsdown on Mar 23

Butterbur: The colony of male flowers at Brook Meadow in Emsworth continues to grow - this year Brian Fellows counted 859 flower spikes on Mar 23

Wild Daffodil: The colony in the West Dean Woods near Chichester was in full flower on Mar 17

Sedges and Grasses: **Greater Pond Sedge** was starting to flower at Brook Meadow in Emsworth on Mar 25 and by Mar 27 the '**Good Friday Grass**' (*Luzula*

campestris or Field Wood-rush) was in flower on my Havant Lawn. On Mar 23 Upright Brome was ready to flower on Portsdown and if you visit Graeme Lyon's blog in pursuit of his report of Light Orange Underwing moths you can scroll down to his photo of **Bulbous Meadow Grass** seen at Woodvale, Brighton (near the crematorium on the Lewes Road)

OTHER WILDLIFE

Stoat: A good observation at Reculver on the north Kent coast where a Stoat was seen hunting along one side of a water channel, then stopping beside some reeds, standing up on its hind legs for a look round before jumping over the reeds, diving into the water and swimming across to continue hunting on the far side

Bottle nosed Dolphin: This week brought the first reported sightings of the species in the English Channel. First report was of 35 Dolphins off Spain on Mar 19 with another 4 seen from Portland that day, then 15 seen off Swanage on Mar 22. For more exotic news of Dolphins check out Steve Copsey's entries in the Three Amigos Blog (<http://www.surfbirds.com/blog/amigo>). He is on board HMS York now in the south Atlantic and on Mar 26 he has photos of Striped Dolphins and if you scroll back to his entry on Mar 22 he has more marine life with pictures of Flying Fish being caught by Gannet-like Masked Boobies

Porpoises, Common Dolphins and a **Minke Whale:** All these are reported in this week's news with **Porpoises** off Devon and Folkestone, **Common Dolphins** off Dorset and Devon, and a **Minke Whale** getting its first report on Mar 19 when it was seen off the north east coast of England at Whitburn in Co Durham

Common Seal: On Mar 24 one had swam up the Sussex Ouse half way to Lewes to be seen at Piddinghoe

Roe Deer: Further confirmation of their presence close to Brook Meadow at Emsworth came with a sighting on Mar 24 of two in fields beside Lumley Mill Lane which follows the Ems north from Brook Meadow to Westbourne - the lane offers a short and unimpeded route to the Meadow for a nighttime foray. Another interesting report came from the Arundel area of West Sussex where a **white coated Roe** was seen on Mar 20 (**white Fallow** have long been a regular feature in West Sussex but I think this is the first time I have heard of a **white Roe**)

Rats and Water Voles: As expected **Water Vole** sightings at Brook Meadow are now becoming almost daily but more unusual was a report on Mar 22 of a **Brown Rat** on the river bank which the voles inhabit. There was no news of any interaction between the two species but I am told that **Rats could kill baby voles** but I do not think that there is any real threat of this - I am sure **Rats** have always been present in the area (as they are everywhere in Britain) and I read in <http://www.the-piedpiper.co.uk/th1a.htm> that they will kill and eat small animals (even other Rats) - this source also tells me that weight is the most important factor in establishing a Rat's position in their social hierarchy (maybe encouraging males which want to move up their social ladder, and so get more chances to mate, to eat more than they need). Wikipedia made me smile with its comment on Rat's diet .. "The brown rat is a true omnivore and will consume almost anything, but **cereals** form a substantial part of its diet. Martin Schein, founder of the **Animal Behaviour Society** in 1964, studied the diet of brown rats and came to the conclusion that the

most-liked foods of brown rats were (in order) **scrambled eggs**, macaroni and cheese, and cooked corn kernels. According to Schein, the least-liked foods were raw beets, peaches, and raw celery"

Red Squirrel: These were taking food from human hands at the Alverstoke nature reserve on the Isle of Wight on Mar 23

Grass Snakes in communal hibernation: Among the butterfly news from Sussex is an account with photo (see Mar 24 entries on <http://www.sussex-butterflies.org.uk/sightings.html>) of a sighting by Richard Roebuck of more than 12 grass snakes in one intertwined mass - he suggests that this was not a mating orgy but the result of these snakes having all spent the winter together in some underground cavity whose entrance to close to where they were seen and this was just a continuance of the intimacy they had enjoyed through the winter.

Common Lizard: Several newly emerged **Lizards** were seen in the Hollybank woods at Emsworth on Mar 20 and on Mar 23 a total of 44 were out on Bovey Heath in Dorset. The Hollybank Woods observation was by John Bogle who sent it with a couple of photos to Brian Fellows who published it in his Emsworth Community website (<http://www.emsworthwildlife.hampshire.org.uk/0-0-0-wildlife-diary.htm>) on Mar 21. The second of John's photos shows a **Deer Tick on the face of the Lizard** (but not attached to it) and in checking for more about such Ticks I came across a web entry that mentions the threat to humans from such ticks which can transmit Lyme disease to a human - see <http://naturalunseenhazards.wordpress.com/category/ticks/> and if you want to hear a personal description of the effect of this disease go to the Blashford Lakes and ask Bob Chapman who has suffered from it in the past

Slow-worm: These are also now emerging from hibernation and were seen at both the Hollybank Woods and the Bovey Heath sites mentioned above

WILDLIFE DIARY AND NEWS FOR MAR 21 - 27 (WEEK 12 OF 2011)

During the past week the '**Good Friday Grass**' (**Field Wood-rush** or **Luzula campestris**) has been gradually coming into flower on my lawn and I took these photos today to show its progress

Fri 25 Mar

Larch Roses, Bulbous Buttercup and the Langstone Swan on her nest

A stroll to Langstone pond this afternoon took me through Juniper Square where a **mature Larch tree had acquired a haze of green** as its first needles emerged and with them was a good show of **blood red Larch Roses**. I had not been expecting that lovely sight but I was hoping to see **Bulbous Buttercup flowers** in the meadow across which the path to Langstone Mill runs beside the Lymbourne Stream. From my photo you will see I was not disappointed but this was the only flower I saw in the meadow that will soon (when we get some rain!) be carpeted with them.

Reaching Langstone Mill Pond with the tide high I found **21 Egrets, nearly all sporting beautiful long plumes**, on the trees of the island near the seawall. Even nearer to the seawall (close to the 'Interpretation Board') **the Swan was at last on her nest**. I had a good view of her standing in the nest and poking about at something hidden in the base of the 'cup' - maybe she was turning an egg but more likely she was just making the nest more comfortable for her long sit (just over five weeks).

On the sea there were perhaps **50 Brent** and just **4 Teal** as I headed along the shore to Pook Lane, from which I had another look for the **Little Owl** but did not see it (I had the impression that a bit of dead wood had fallen in front of the nest hole in which the owl was seen yesterday - not big enough to block the entrance but making it unlikely that we will get good views of the bird unless it comes out into the open or the dead wood falls to the ground)

Earlier in the day I had another tick for my first flower list with a single fertile cone on **a Field Horsetail plant** in the damp ground of the Billy Trail where it has recently been flooded north of the East Street bridge. Also in that area I had another sighting of **a Small White butterfly**, and on my way home this evening I found **Hawthorn flowers close to opening** on the east side of the southern exit from the Town Hall carpark on the Billy Line - while looking at them I heard strange calls from a nearby tree which turned out to come from a fledged but **very young Magpie**

[Thu 24 Mar](#)

More new flowers and that Warblington Little Owl again

Having seen **English Scurvygrass** in flower on Hayling yesterday, but been unable to photograph it, I set out today for the Nore Barn saltings where I found several plants in flower and got pictures of one plant. While doing so I was puzzled by some leaves near the base of the Scurvygrass (but unconnected with it) that I can only describe as having been 'Bar Coded' for some future easy identification system - until I find out what that system is (or find that the black transverse markings on the leaves are natural) I cannot tell you more!

English Scurvygrass on the Nore Barn saltings



Puzzling 'Bar Coded' leaves seen near the Scurvygrass

Before reaching Nore Barn I had seen the Warblington Old Rectory **Little Owl** standing boldly in its nest hole (in clear view from the driveway of the Old Rectory) and also my first **Horse Chestnut leaves** which had burst from their bud cases and will soon be fully open. After leaving Nore Barn I came on a possible candidate for the '**Intermediate Periwinkle**' that I have been wrongly identifying (sadly I think what I found today in the a path between Beacon Square and the Emsworth shore is probably a garden cultivar of Lesser Periwinkle)

Coming home via Southleigh Road I stopped at the junction of East Leigh Road where I found unopen flower buds on **Greater Stitchwort** plants and **Ground Ivy** in flower, and as I cycled up East Leigh Road I passed my first **Garlic Mustard** in flower (but on the dangerous blind corner where I dare not stop with my camera!). This missed opportunity was compensated for when I reached Bartons Road at the top of the hill and found **Black Medick** in full flower

[Wed 23 Mar](#)

Four new flowers, one butterfly and one bird on Hayling

A cycle ride to Gunner Point on south Hayling in this afternoon's spring weather gave me a couple of sightings of **Small White** butterflies (as well as several **Peacocks** and a **Brimstone**), plus an unexpected triple view of my first **Dartford Warbler** for the year. The warbler was seen at the east end of the 'pitch and putt' mini golf course - as I turned north to use this path it flew across the path a couple of yards ahead of me and only about a foot off the ground to disappear into the bottom of a low bramble bush and I was almost certain of its identity by its size and long tail but it did not have the dark, almost black, colour that I associate with these birds. I stopped in the hope it would re-appear, which it did but still only giving me a back view, so I waited a bit longer until it re-appeared facing me and showing reddish on its breast - certainly not a full blown spring male but maybe a female or one of last year's young.

The first of my new flowers was **English Scurvygrass** with a couple of clumps of the white flowers pushing up through the mass of **Sea Purslane** covering the saltings south of Stoke Bay. The plants were on the far side of the water channel separating me (on the Coastal Path) from the saltings so I did not get a photo but this is a place where the species grows each year and the white flowers could not be anything else (they should soon be out at the Nore Barn saltings at Emsworth) The next flower was one that was my target species for the trip, **Shepherd's Cress (Teesdalia nudicaulis)** but growing in a place that I had never seen it before and so did not at first recognize it, especially as it was surrounded by a mass of the **Field Pepperwort** which has been haunting me this week but, as the plants had been close mown among the roadside grass, diverted my attention by the need to be sure that they really were **Field Pepperwort** by looking at their seed pods. The location of these plants is on the south side of Ferry Road immediately west of the road leading into the Golf Course opposite Sinah Lane from which I had just emerged. They are to be found very close to the road name board for Ferry Road.

The third new species came among the sand dunes as I was nearing Gunner Point and was something that can be found almost everywhere in this sandy soil - the tiny **Sea Mouse-ear** - but the fourth was not seen until I was back in the Wade Court area at Langstone. This was **Hornbeam** just opening its catkins on the tree that overhangs the path from the Billy Trail to Wade Lane as soon as you have crossed the bridge over the Lymbourne.

Other notes for this trip relate to birds. On the way south I passed only one **Brent Goose**, a loner left in the Oysterbeds, until I reached the Kench where 55 of them were feeding at the waters edge. I suspect these then swam north as on the way home there were several smaller groups of **Brent** scattered along west Hayling and around Langstone bridge. On the Gunner Point grassland south of the Golf Course just one **Skylark** was singing and only two **Meadow Pipits** and two **Linnets** were seen. After passing the Oysterbeds on the way home I heard a loud call from a **Buzzard** and looked up to see it making a vertical dive towards the Stoke Common trees - its way of claiming that area as its chosen nest site (not, I think, for the first time). Another unexpected sight was of six **Little Egrets** sitting out the high tide in the field between Aston House (the isolated property almost opposite the west end of Daw Lane) and the Coastal path.

[Tue 22 Mar](#)

Nesting Lapwing, underwater Grass Snake, and 'Baby Gean'

This afternoon I visited the Staunton Country Park for a look at the **Lapwing** that should be nesting on the 'Gipsies Plain' grassland south of Havant Thicket woodland and saw 8 birds but only one appeared to be sitting. Overhead a **Skylark** was in full song but there was little else in the way of bird life other than a few **Starlings** and **Pied Wagtails** feeding on insects around the pony droppings - no sign of the **Stonechat pair** that usually nest here.

Before reaching the plain I had walked through the Hammonds Land wood where there was a moderately good display of **Wood Anemones**, and before that I came through the Leigh Park gardens where I had a distant glimpse of what I think was a **Comma butterfly** but the high spot was the **stunning scent from shrubs** planted at the entrance to what they are now calling the 'Redwood Drive' which takes you

from the gardens down the hill into Hammondsland wood. I have no idea what the shrub is called but I took a photo of the flowers to remind me to try to find out.

Unknown strongly scented ornamental shrub planted in Leigh Park Gardens After crossing the Gipsies Plain I walked up the 'Long Avenue' to its north end where it meets Havant Thicket. Here there is a small neglected lake on the western side of which I hoped to find **Wood Sorrel** in flower - I was too early for those flowers but enjoyed the lovely fresh green of masses of Shamrock-like leaves and at the edge of the lake I was attracted by **a splash which I thought might be caused by a Frog**. I went to investigate and saw something long and thin moving in the shallow water which turned out to be a baby **Grass Snake** when its head emerged briefly from the water just long enough to take breath before totally vanishing.

Just before this I had been enticed off the Long Avenue by some **white flowers on a 'sapling' of a tree** (you may have difficulty in spotting its 'trunk' in the overview photo below but the few bunches of flowers were easy enough to see, each measuring 3cm across and having notched, pure white petals. Back at home my conclusion was that this must have been a very young specimen of **Wild Cherry or Gean (Prunus avium)** so when selecting a title for the photo of the tree as a whole I decided that 'Baby Jean' would best remind me of it! In the search for its identity I learnt something that I did not previously know about the **Wild Cherry** - the leaves can be distinguished by having **small red glands on the leaf pedicel** just below the blade of the leaf and these were said by Wikipedia (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prunus_avium) to be '**extrafloral nectaries**', and a further Google search took me to <http://www.jstor.org/pss/2259060> in which it is said that **they are a diversionary tactic employed by some plants to prevent damage to the flowers by e.g. ants** (the flowers are intended to be pollinated by other insects and this can fail to happen if the nectar in the flowers is consumed by ants swarming over the tree before the proper insects get a chance to visit the flowers, so the plant distracts the ants with nectar sources well away from the flowers!)

Mon 21 Mar

Bee Fly, Butterflies and Flowers on Portsdown

Parking at the Portsdown Viewpoint carpark I walked downhill through the fenceline and came face to face with a **female Brimstone** which was later to be followed by at least **ten males**, a couple of **Commas** and maybe two **Small White** (seen distantly but all white and smaller, faster flying than the **Brimstones** though **one male Brimstone was deperately pursuing the second of these 'whites' as if it were a female of his species**). Also seen on the south face of the hill were **two Bee-flies**, one of which gave me a photo.

My primary target today was **Hairy Violets** and there was no shortage of these wherever I went - I even came on **a large patch of pure white flowered**

specimens. While on the south face of the hill below Fort Widley I was accompanied by **Chiffchaff song** and saw a **male Kestrel**.

Crossing the road to the entrance to the carpark west of Fort Widley I made my way east towards the Fort and on the south facing bank around the second group of parking spaces I came on a massive show of **Slender Speedwell** flowers. While photographing these I realised that I also had another example of the **Pepperwort** plant which I had found at Prinsted last Saturday and which I believe to be **Field Pepperwort**. On this occasion I managed to get one very poor photo of a seed pod.

On my way home I stopped briefly at Fort Purbrook where many more **Hairy Violets** were flowering

WILDLIFE DIARY AND NEWS FOR MAR 14 - 20 (WEEK 11 OF 2011)

Highlights

Bird News highlights

New Summer birds during the week - **House Martin** in north Hampshire on Mar 13, **Willow Warblers** in Kent and Dorset (singing at Portland) from Mar 13, and a **Yellow Wagtail** at Christchurch Harbour on Mar 15. Hampshire had its first three **Willow Warblers** on Mar 20 (one of them near Fareham)

First two **Osprey** over Cornwall on Mar 18

Garganey fly past Dungeness on Mar 12 (first report from Netherlands on Mar 8)

Early Common Tern at Ouse Washes in East Anglia after one in Cornwall on Mar 9

First **passage Whimbrel** at Seaford on Mar 12 and first substantial arrival of 14 at the Hayling Oysterbeds on Mar 20

130 Sandwich Terns back at Rye Harbour by Mar 19

First **Mute Swan on nest** at Hayling Island Lakeside by Mar 17

Little Egrets now showing breeding plumage and night roost count at Langstone pond of 42 birds

Most **Brent** have now left us but still 400 at Lymington on Mar 19

Smew still at Thorney Island and Rye Harbour on Mar 19

Hoopoes at Portland and in Cornwall during the week with widespread reports of **Sand Martins** and **Swallows** plus a lone **House Martin** over Fleet Pond on Mar 13. One **Swallow** flew over the Hayling Oysterbeds on Mar 20

Many **Meadow Pipits** now streaming north - first song heard in north Kent on Mar 13

No **Waxwing** reports from Hampshire since Mar 18 (Winchester) or from Sussex since Mar 17 (Bexhill)

A **Lapland Bunting was singing** at Thorney Island on Mar 15 and a **Cirl Bunting was heard** in Devon on Mar 17

The Three Amigos website reported a **Cayuga duck** at Titchfield Haven on Mar 17 but as this is a commonly kept domestic species in Britain I doubt it is a trans-Atlantic vagrant

Insect News highlights

Large Tortoiseshell reported on Isle of Wight on Mar 14

Of the many **Brimstone** seen this week one pair were joined in mating at Ropley near Alton from Mar 15 to the morning of Mar 17

First **Large White** of the year at Southampton on Mar 11 and a **Small White** at Winchester on Mar 12 was only the second of the year after one found inside a house on Mar 7

Orange Underwing day flying moths seen in Birch woodland in both Hants and Kent this week among a total of six new moth species seen this week

The **Early Mining Bee (*Andrena haemorrhoa*)** was seen digging near Henfield in the Adur valley on Mar 15 (introducing me to a new species)

Plant News highlights

First flowerings this week of Wood Anemones, Alpine Squill, Thale Cress, Barren Strawberry, Hedge Mustard, Three Cornered Leek, Field Pepperwort, wild Cowslips (at Durlston), Lesser Chickweed (Durlston), Blackthorn, Wild Currant, Flowering Currant, Small Nettle, Wood Spurge, Ground Ivy, 'Garden' Forget-me-not,

What these notes have until now wrongly called **Intermediate Periwinkle** is really **Greater Periwinkle var *Oxyloba***

Other Wildlife highlights

First '**Mad March Hares**' in north Hampshire on Mar 17

First report of **7 Pilot Whales** and **3 Common Dolphins** from the South Foreland in Kent on Mar 13

First report of a **Roe buck with its antlers ready for use** (cleaned of 'velvet') from Durlston on Mar 17

Many **Grey Mullet** in Slipper Millpond at Emsworth on Mar 15

BIRDS

[\(Skip to Insects\)](#)

Divers: All three common species are still present along the south coast with totals of **30+ Red-throated** off the South Foreland in Kent on Mar 13 and **21 Great Northern** in St Austell Bay (Cornwall) that day. Three **Black-throated** seen at Splash Point near Beachy Head on Mar 12 were probably on their way north. A **White-billed Diver** was off County Durham in northern England on Mar 12 and the long staying **Pacific Diver** was still off Penzance in Cornwall on Mar 14

Great Crested Grebe: A raft of 40 was off Peacehaven near Brighton on Mar 13 with 20 more off the South Foreland in Kent that day

Slavonian Grebe: On Mar 12 one was in Hayling Bay and more than 4 were off Pagham Harbour. Three were off Climping (mouth of R Arun) on Mar 16 but the only reports since then come from Devon and Cornwall on Mar 17

Black-necked Grebe: Two were still at the Blashford Lakes (Ringwood) on Mar 19 with one there on Mar 20 but the only reports from anywhere else were on Mar 13, when more than 8 were at Studland in Dorset (three of them in full summer plumage), and Mar 15 when one flew past Dungeness

Fea's Petrel: This species is also known as the Cape Verde Petrel and if you want to see pictures of them taken at Cape Verde visit the Three Amigos website (<http://www.surfbirds.com/blog/amigo>) where Steve Copsey's pictures record the

many birds seen during his trip on HMS York from Faslane in Scotland to Benghazi in Libya, back to Gibraltar and now nearing the Equator after passing the Canary Islands

Bittern: Fewer reports this week, probably the result of the birds at last starting to leave their winter sites. Last week we heard of one at Ivy Lake in Chichester on Mar 12 and that bird was seen again on Mar 13 but the only Sussex report since then is of one at Rye Harbour on Mar 15. The only reports since then were all on Mar 17 from three sites in Devon and Cornwall.

Little Egret: By Mar 14 the number seen in the Langstone area was up to 19 and on Mar 17 a dusk count of birds coming to roost at Langstone Pond recorded 42. Also on Mar 17 a report from the Oare Marshes in north Kent mentioned seeing the 'purple lores which are a feature of their breeding plumage' (by 'the lores' is meant the area of bare skin around the base of the bill)

Spoonbill: These continue to be restless and to turn up at new sites. In addition to 9 on the west shore of Poole Harbour on Mar 13 and 3 at Wadebridge in Cornwall on Mar 18 there have been birds at the Exe estuary, Shoreham beach, Abbotsbury Swannery, Selsey west fields and Pagham Harbour this week

Mute Swan: The first Swan to settle on its nest was seen on Mar 17 at the Hayling Island Lakeside holiday camp by George Spraggs. Back on Mar 14 I watched the pair intending to nest at the Budds Farm pools in Havant chasing off a pair of intruders but there was no sign that they had started nest building, nor have the Langstone Mill Pond pair

Brent Geese: These started to leave us in substantial numbers on Jan 31 when 175 flew east past Dungeness and more than 1000 were seen passing there on Feb 7. By this week the majority of them seem to have left (at dusk on Mar 17 I watched a flock flying east high over north Hayling, jostling for good positions as they formed into arrowhead formations to reduce the effort required for their overnight long distance flight). Small numbers will decide to stay here over the summer and are now dissociating themselves from the other birds - a lone bird feeding in the grass field south of the Little Deeps at Thorney Island was an example of this seen by myself on Mar 19. Also on Mar 19 a flock of 400 Brent was at Lymington (probably birds which had been wintering further west pausing on their journey to feed and rest) and we may well see migrants still passing in early April.

Shelduck: Although some will stay and breed along the south coast the majority of those that have been in our harbours for the winter will soon leave to breed elsewhere and these are now gathering into flocks for company when they decide to fly. This is reflected by a count of 84 at Newtown Harbour (IoW) on Mar 17 and another of around 70 at the Thorney Great Deeps on Mar 19.

Garganey: I have not yet heard of any at southern coastal sites but they are arriving in Britain - the first was reported in the Netherlands on Mar 8 and on Mar 11 the RBA website reported the first of the year 'somewhere in Britain', then on Mar 12 a pair were seen flying past Dungeness.

Smew: One redhead was still at the Little Deeps on Thorney Island on Mar 19 when another was at Rye Harbour but it seems that the majority of those wintering here has already left

Red Kite: Numbers being seen locally around Havant are increasing and on Mar 14 one flew north over the entrance to Chichester and may be the same bird later flew over Emsworth while on Mar 19 three (maybe four) were over the garden centre close to where the railway line leaves Havant on its way to Rowlands Castle

White-tailed Eagle: RBA were still reporting the bird at Blacklands Farm (east of Basingstoke) on Mar 19

Osprey: The first arrivals were two seen passing over Mevagissey in Cornwall on Mar 18

Avocet: As these birds move back to their breeding sites the number at Rye Harbour was up to 13 by Mar 15 and there were 17 at Titchfield Haven on Mar 16

Golden Plover: These are now moving north bringing large flocks for one night stands at sites in southern England. On Mar 12 there were 150 at Lymington, 150 at Rye Harbour and 3962 at a Netherlands site

Black-tailed Godwit: There have been several flocks of up to 100 in the Langstone area this week but on Mar 16 Brian Fellows found 288 in 'Texaco Bay' (between the Texaco garage at the southern end of Langstone Bridge and the embankment of the old railway line)

Whimbrel: The first party of 6 passage birds reached the Sussex coast at Seaford on Mar 12 and these were followed by two more reports of seemingly new birds - one at the Taw estuary (north coast of Devon) on Mar 13 and one at the Oare Marshes in north Kent on Mar 15. On Mar 20 there was a more substantial arrival of 14 at the Hayling Oysterbeds

Spotted Redshank: The Emsworth bird was still at Nore Barn on Mar 19 and at the Lymington shore the number reported on Mar 12 was 7 with 6 there on Mar 20

Little Gull: Numbers along the south coast may soon increase after a report from Dungeness of 26 on Mar 12. The number at Chichester's Ivy Lake increased from one on Mar 12 and 13 to two on Mar 15

Common Gull: Numbers at southern sites were well down this week as the wintering birds moved east and north to breeding sites

Iceland Gull: Single adults seen at Dungeness on Mar 12 and in Cornwall on Mar 17

Glaucous Gull: A juvenile flew into Chichester Harbour on Mar 14 and the long staying first winter bird was still at Dungeness on Mar 15 but has not been reported since.

Sandwich Tern: By Mar 19 the number back at the Rye Harbour breeding site was over 130. The first newcomer to join the wintering birds at Sandy Point on Hayling was seen on Mar 15

Common Tern: One had been seen in Cornwall on Mar 9 and another arrived early at the Ouse Marshes in Cambridgeshire on Mar 14

Hoopoe: At least one was in Cornwall this week and one was still at Portland on Mar 16 after arriving on Mar 12

Sand Martin: Plenty of these now in southern England with more than 60 in Cornwall on Mar 13 among a list of 25 reports during the week

Swallow: Widespread in small numbers by the end of the week with one over the Hayling Oysterbeds on Mar 20

House Martin: The only definite report so far is of one over Fleet Pond in north Hampshire on Mar 13

Meadow Pipit: Many now passing north daily. On Mar 15 Portland reported more than 200 going over each hour.

Yellow Wagtail: Christchurch had the first British sighting of one on Mar 15.

White Wagtail: Now being seen daily along the south coast - south Hayling had at least one on Mar 14 and another on Mar 15

Waxwing: Reports seem to be diminishing at last but there were still 17 in the Winchester area on Mar 18 and just 4 at Bexhill on Mar 17

Wheatear: Small numbers all along the coast throughout the week - max count of 20 at Portland on Mar 14 and only two reports of singles from Hayling so far

Fieldfare: An impressive flock of 560 at South Boarhunt (west end of Portsdown) on Mar 20

Blackcap: Summer birds are definitely now arriving - one singing in Havant on Mar 15 was my first

Chiffchaff: Now to be heard singing everywhere by the end of this week

Willow Warbler: First arrivals at Portland and Kent on Mar 13 with the first at Durlston on Mar 14 and at Christchurch Harbour on Mar 16. Mar 20 brought reports from three Hampshire sites

Great Grey Shrike: Still at least one in the New Forest on Mar 20

Chaffinch: Lots of these on the move early in the week when 132 flew south at Sandwich Bay on Mar 13 after a massive count of 16,528 at a Belgian site on Mar 12 (I imagine these were heading north but do not know)

Linnet: It seems these are only now returning to breeding sites in southern England and a party of five moving along the shore at Langstone were the first I have seen this year

Lapland Bunting: Just three reports of singles this week but one of them was heard singing in the Pilsey area (southern tip of Thorney Island) on Mar 15

Cirl Bunting: First song on Mar 17 from one of these in a group of 11 near Berry Head on the Devon coast

Cayuga Duck: One seen at Titchfield Haven on Mar 17 was reported as if it might be a trans-Atlantic vagrant but these are widely kept as domestic duck and I am pretty sure this was a local escapee

INSECTS

Butterflies

Brimstone: 25 reports this week with a max of 30 seen on Fritham Plain in the New Forest on Mar 15. Singles were in my Havant garden on Mar 14 and 15. In Ropley near Alton a pair which began mating on Mar 15 were still joined on the morning of Mar 17

Large White: First and so far only report is of one at West End in Southampton on Mar 11

Small White: Following the one which had pupated in a house and had to be let out of the kitchen window when it emerged on Mar 7 the first 'outdoor' emergence was in the Winchester area on Mar 12

Red Admiral: Just two reports this week

Small Tortoiseshell: Another eight reports this week brings the total of the reports for the year to 27 (referring to 47 individuals) so it looks as if the species is making a recovery.

Large Tortoiseshell: A confident report of one from the Isle of Wight said to have been seen well, first on Ivy and then in flight on Mar 14

Peacock: Four reports this week with one of six individuals seen in the Alver Valley at Gosport on Mar 15

Comma: Ten reports including one of 15 individuals in the Sholing area of Southampton on Mar 15

Moths

March Tubic (*Diurnea fagella*): First of year in the Fareham area on Mar 15

***Depressaria daucella*:** Another year first from Fareham on Mar 11

***Agonopterix subpropinquella*:** A first at Thanet in Kent on Mar 14

Orange Underwing: First reports of this day-flying moth which lives in Birch woodland come from the Eastbourne area on Mar 11 and from Warren Heath in north Hampshire on Mar 14

Red Chestnut: First taken in Thanet on Mar 14

Twin-spotted Quaker: Another Thanet first on Mar 12

Other Insects

Early Mining Bee (*Andrena haemorrhoa*): Apparently quite a common species but new to me and my reference books these bees were digging their tunnels in the Henfield area of West Sussex on Mar 15. For more information see http://www.gardensafari.net/en_picpages/andrena_haemorrhoa.htm

PLANTS

Marsh Marigold: On Mar 14 I found just seven plants flowering on the South Moors at Langstone where I can recall more than 600 plants flowering before the Penner Road industrial estate was built. Photos can be seen on my Diary page

Wood Anemones: I came on the first flowering plants which I know of in the Sussex section of the Hollybank Woods north of Emsworth on Mar 16. Photos and more info on my Diary page

Blue Anemones: Plants in full flower at the Havant cemetery on Mar 19 after starting to open their flowers on Mar 10

Charlock: First flowering plant seen on the Langstone South Moors on Mar 14

Hedge Mustard: First flowers of the spring at a sheltered site in Emsworth on Mar 19

Thale Cress: First flowering plants in the Havant Pallant carpark on Mar 16 - again see Diary for photo

Field Pepperwort: A surprise find flowering in an apparently abandoned 'market garden plot' at Prinsted on Mar 19

Lesser Chickweed: Reported flowering at Durlston on Mar 16

Blackthorn: Starting to flower on Mar 14

Barren Strawberry: First flowers seen at Emsworth on Mar 19

Red Currant: Wild plants flowering in the Hollybank Woods at Emsworth on Mar 15

Small Nettle: First plants just starting to flower at Prinsted on Mar 19

Wood Spurge: First flowers opening in the Hollybank Woods on Mar 16

Sun Spurge: Flowering plants starting to appear in Havant from Mar 14

Intermediate Periwinkle: See my Diary page for Mar 19 in which I admit that I have been naming what is actually **Greater Periwinkle var *Oxyloba*** as **Intermediate Periwinkle** for several years and have never knowingly seen the Intermediate species. My apologies to all who have been misled by my mistake

Ground Ivy: Just one flower seen in Mill Lane at Langstone on Mar 14 - again photo on Diary page

'Garden' Forget-me-not: These garden escapes of the cultivated form of the **Wood Forget-me-not** are common everywhere and they started to flower this week

Alpine Squill: Ten of these garden plants were flowering in a remote part of the Hollybank Woods on Mar 16. They have been appearing here for many years but I cannot find out how they got there. Almost certainly they were deliberately planted but when, by who and why remains a mystery. Photos again on the Diary page

OTHER WILDLIFE

Pilot Whale: What was probably a family group of seven seen off the South Foreland in Kent on Mar 13 were the first I have heard of this year. Checking on the species I see they inhabit the cooler water in the northern hemisphere and British Marine Life Study Society web site (www.glaucus.org.uk) says of them .. "The **Long-finned Pilot Whale (*Globicephala melas*)** is a social species of whale living in family groups that on occasions may number between 100 and 200 animals.

Pilot Whales migrate north at the end of each year as they follow the **squid** which form the main part of their diet. Although this species has been killed for many years by the Faroese in a traditional fishery, the **Pilot Whale** is one of the few species of cetacean that appears to have increased in numbers"

Roe Deer: On Mar 17 a buck at Durlston had already cleaned the velvet from its antlers.

Hare: The first report of 'Mad March Hares' for the year comes from Ashley Warren Farm near Whitchurch in north Hampshire where a total of 11 were chasing each other

Grey Mullet: We are now in the spawning season for these fish which brings them inshore in large numbers and the high tides this week had brought many into the Slipper Mill Pond at Emsworth on Mar 15

WILDLIFE DIARY AND NEWS FOR MAR 14 - 20 (WEEK 11 OF 2011)

Sat 19 Mar

Smew still at Thorney Little Deeps and more new flowers

This afternoon I cycled east as far as Prinsted looking for newly flowering plants, the first of which was **Barren Strawberry** seen as I approached Nore Barn along the 'Selangor Avenue' footpath running down the east side of the Warblington Farm fields. Next came **Three-cornered Leek** - two examples which are really garden flowers growing 'wild' under the roadside hedges of a couple of houses in Warblington Road leading into Emsworth from Nore Barn. These look very like the **Summer Snowflake** plants I have already seen elsewhere but have thin green lines running along the white petals where the Snowflake has bolder green on the tips of its petals.

Barren Strawberry starting to flower by the Selangor Avenue footpath near Nore Barn

Making my way through Emsworth I added another plant to my year list with the bright yellow of **Hedge Mustard** flowers on a plant which had found a sheltered suntrap site to grow against a house in Nile Street, leading from the Town Millpond to the town centre.

Reaching the Little Deeps on Thorney Island I could hear **Chiffchaff** and **Cetti's Warbler songs** as I stopped to scan the water on which it seemed that a few **Tufted Ducks** were the only birds left but as I did so the very different look of a **redhead Smew** swam into my field of view giving me a prolonged view before it vanished into the reeds. This brings my personal bird list to 102 species before the summer migrants start to swell the list (so far I have only **Chiffchaff** and **Blackcap**).

At the Great Deeps there were around **60 Shelduck** but little else of interest other than a couple of pairs of **Teal** and two pairs of **Great Blackback Gulls** so I headed

back to the Little Deeps where, to my surprise, **the Smew favoured me with a second view** of its relatively long, low-lying grey body delimited by the white of its stern and the very distinctive head with the 'red' cap on its head above the white face and throat.

Continuing east down Thornham Lane I found the **Alexanders Plants** outside the sewage works were starting to flower before I reached Prinsted to have a look at the 'market garden plot' which has produced some interesting 'weeds' and it did not let me down today although it looks as if it has been abandoned and will soon cease to have interest.

Alexanders starting to flower beside Thornham Lane

Today it gave me **Field Pennycress** flowers and my first **Small Nettle** in flower plus a plant which I could not instantly name so I brought a small specimen home and found that it must be **Field Pepperwort (Lepidium campestre)**.

Reaching Emsworth on my way home I diverted through Brook Meadow and took some photos of the **male Butterbur flowers** to contrast with the females I have already found by the Langbrook stream at Langstone.

Male Butterbur flowers by the River Ems in Brook Meadow

Female Butterbur flower by the Langbrook stream at Langstone

Continuing along Victoria Road I had a look at the **rookery** behind a block of council flats just before Victoria Road becomes Selangor Avenue - from the garage area behind the flats I counted **22 nests**, I think all active.

Back at home an email from Brian Fellows helped me **solve an ongoing mystery about the identification of Intermediate Periwinkle** and I have to confess that I have wrongly told people for several years that the plants which look similar to **Greater Periwinkle** (but which have distinctive dark blue flowers with petals which are well separated from each other and have a slight curve making them look a bit like aeroplane propellers) are **Intermediate Periwinkle**. Now Brian has checked the hairiness of their leaves and calyces which (using Stace's key) must make them **Greater Periwinkle** and Wikipedia has shown me pictures similar to what I have been calling **Intermediate Periwinkle** which it calls **Greater Periwinkle subspecies 'hirsuta'** but which Stace denies to be a subspecies and calls the plant a **variety which he names as Oxyloba**.

[Thu 17 Mar](#)

[\(Link to previous day's entry\)](#)

42 Egrets roosting at Langstone Pond

After a busy day at home I had a chance to get out after 5pm and with sunset at 6:12 pm with the tide still low and the weather pleasant I headed for Langstone Pond to make my first attempt of the year at counting the **Egrets** coming to roost.

When I arrived just before 6pm I found **17 Egrets** already present and when I left at 6:30 my count was up to **42** and could well have been higher had I stayed till it was fully dark.

While at the pond I heard my first **singing Chiffchaff** and watched **two flocks of Brent flying east** over north Hayling, jostling for position as they formed into huge 'V' shapes to reduce the effort required for their long distance overnight flight. When it was becoming dark I heard the noise of a large animal moving through the dry reeds around the pond close to me and shortly after watched a **Fox** emerge into the Wade Court pony field to start its nightly hunt after sniffing something on the ground and giving me a long, hard stare as if to say I had no right to be there at that time.

Wed 16 Mar

[\(Link to previous day's entry\)](#)

Wood Anemones and Alpine Squill in flower

On my way to buy fresh bread this raw and sunless morning I made a diversion around the periphery of the Pallant carpark and, along the walls of '**The Gazebo**' (see <http://www.havant.gov.uk/havant-9404> for information about this building, dating from 1779 and recently restored by the **Bosmere 100 Society**), I found **Thale Cress** in flower to add to my year list plus a good showing of the leaves of the uncommon **Rue-leaved Saxifrage** which thrives on and around the old walls in this part of Havant. Although Stace's national flora says the plant is relatively common but widely scattered throughout the British Isles the Hampshire Flora says that many of its habitats (mainly ancient walls) are now destroyed and it is 'very uncommon'. I personally have not come across it anywhere else and am grateful to the Bosmere 100 Society for preserving it here.

Thale Cress and the 'three fingered' leaves of Rue-leaved Saxifrage

Rue-leaved Saxifrage leaves in paving around The Gazebo

The sun came out later in the day and I headed for the Hollybank Woods north of Emsworth in the hope of seeing **Wood Anemones** and **Alpine Squill** in flower and I was not disappointed - while there I also saw my first **Common Dog Violets** and found **Red Currant** in flower as well the **leaf rosettes of Early Purple Orchids** (it looks as if there will be a good showing of these and the sheaths of the flower spikes are already visible) as well as many flowers that I have already seen elsewhere - in particular **Primroses** and **Early Dog Violets**.



Wood Anemone and Primrose flowers in Hollybank woods

Early Purple orchid leaves and sheath of incipient flower spike

Cluster of ten Alpine Squill plants seen from a distance

Closer views of Alpine Squills

Common Dog Violet flower and part of the patch of these flowers

Poor photos of Wood Spurge and Butcher's Broom flowers

Red Currant flowers in Hollybank Woods

The origin of the **Alpine Squill** flowers is unknown. They grow easily in gardens and readily survive when planted elsewhere but someone must have gone to some trouble to plant them here (SU 725082) at the very furthest point of the woods (625 metres as the crow flies) from the Emsworth Common Road (nearly 1 km as the human walks through the woods). Monks Farm at Westbourne is only about 200 metres away but anyone coming from there would have to negotiate wire fences and there is no obvious path. Adding to the mystery when I was there today someone had been clearing undergrowth from part of this excellent wildflower site

so it seems there is a secret society of people who want to care for this lovely site but I have no idea who they are.

The orchid site, where all but the **Red Currant** flowers were seen, is at the eastern end of the woods and to reach it you have to cross the stream marking the Sussex county boundary. In past years it has been relatively easy to do this using a section of a large tree trunk which had been placed in the stream to act as a stepping stone between the Hampshire and Sussex parts of the main path. The 'stepping stone' is still there but the gap between it and the Hampshire bank has increased by water erosion and it is no longer possible for any but the young, fit, and brave to leap the gap, especially as the bank is made of slippery clay which will result in anyone who falls short in their jump ending up slipping well over a metre down the bank and into the water (from where it is very difficult to climb back up the very slippery bank!)

Mon 14 Mar

[\(Link to previous day's entry\)](#)

Marsh Marigolds, Ground Ivy and Blackthorn new in flower with a growing number of Egrets

This afternoon I walked to the South Moors and found **Marsh Marigolds in full flower** at the north end of the 'Orchid Field' - sadly only seven plants seen in an area where I recall counting 600 before the Penner Road industrial estate was built. There were still the regular two **Snipe** in this damp ground despite the recent surge of **Snipe** moving north which gave a count of four here on Feb 28.

First sight of the Marsh Marigolds at the South Moors plus a closer view of the best of seven plants

Before reaching the Moors I had made a diversion from the Langbrook streamside path into the east end of Penner Lane and here I found bushes already covered with **Blackthorn flowers** which normally do not flourish until the mass of **Cherry Plum** is over so I was able to take photos contrasting the two which can be confusing. With or without flowers **Cherry Plum** can always be distinguished by the green colour of its new growth where **Blackthorn** wood is always dark in colour and at this time of year **Cherry Plum** is even greener as its fresh leaves come out with the flowers where the **Blackthorn** flowers have no leaves until after the flowering is mainly over. More subtle differences can be seen by measuring the flowers - **Blackthorn** petals are 5-8mm long while **Cherry Plum** are 7-11mm - and **Blackthorn** flowers grow in tight clusters, not well spaced from each other.

Blackthorn bushes in flower and closer view of the flowers

Cherry Plum trees flowering at south end of Southmoor Lane

Cherry Plum flowers with their green leaves on the trees shown above
Back by the stream I had a look at the two **unusual Butterbur species** and found the **female Butterbur** were giving a great display and the **Giant Butterbur** was as good as it gets (I have never found plants with their flowers untouched by frost).

General view of female Butterbur flowers by Langbrook stream

Close view of female Butterbur plus Giant Butterbur plants at same site

After visiting the **Marsh Marigolds** I had a look at Budds Farm where I watched a **lengthy dispute between the pair of Swans that 'own' the nest site and an intruding pair**. Both the residents were fighting for their rights - Cob chasing Cob and Pen chasing Pen independently around the pools though not resorting to the 'hand to hand' fighting that sometimes occurs and can leave the loser with serious injuries. Also on and around the pools were seven **Shelduck**, six of them in pairs and one loner which may also have had an unseen mate - the pairs were keeping their distance from one another but showing no aggression. At least two pairs of **Teal** looked as if they might try breeding here but the three female **Gadwall** (which I would expect to nest here) had no visible mates. Also present were three **Canada Geese** and the **Cetti's Warbler** which sang once briefly.

Along the shore with the tide nearly high there were more **Brent** than expected - at least 500 in the Broadmarsh area and another 200 along the South Moors shore. When I reached the Langbrook stream mouth there were some **60 Wigeon** and more than **ten Gadwall**. The shingle beach here gave me my first **Linnet** of the year - just five of them and probably not intending to stay here.

Inland on the Moors I looked for, but did not see, the pair of **Stonechats** reported there on Mar 12 nor any of the **Meadow Pipits** which began to move north over the south coast last week as passage migrants began to arrive. I did however see six **Little Egrets** and at Langstone Pond there were 12 with another three in the Wade Court pony fields - a total of 19 compared with the maximum of 7 here over the past couple of months, the first sign of what I expect to be a rapid increase in numbers as the breeding season approaches.

Heading down Mill Lane into Langstone village I was delighted to see a single flowering plant of **Ground Ivy** on the south facing section of the north side of the lane opposite the streamside field on the south side - it won't be long before Cowslips also appear here. I also found that the single '**Glory of the Snow**' flower near the West Mill had become three and just after crossing the cycleway I was able to take a photo of an unopen flower on the **Snakeshead Fritillary** plants which appeared there (no doubt by human intervention) several years ago.

First Ground Ivy of the year and first Snakes Head Fritillary flower (planted outside garden but not yet open)

The saltings off Langstone village had a tight huddle of some **100 Black-tailed Godwit** and **50 Teal** were still present. From the grounds of Wade Court I heard **Stock Dove song** and then saw a **Stock Dove making a display flight** over the adjacent fields, reminding me that while I am sometimes uncertain if the song is coming from a **Stock Dove or a Feral Pigeon (Rock Dove)** their display flights are very different. **Feral pigeons** fly high with wings held above them in a V shape, **Stock Doves** hold their wings stiffly but never lift them above their bodies and tend to maintain a level flight.

One other note for the day was my first sight of a **Brimstone butterfly** in my garden, and when at my computer I saw that the first **House Martin** had been seen yesterday (Mar 13) at Fleet Pond in north Hampshire

Highlights

Bird News highlights

First Common Tern in Cornwall on Mar 9

Chiffchaffs arriving in numbers from Mar 9

Little Ringed Plovers started to arrive on Mar 10

Second Stone Curlew of the year on Mar 11

First Garganey somewhere in Britain on Mar 11

First Whimbrel migrants at Seaford on Mar 12

50 Sand Martins at the Blashford Lakes and first Swallows seen 'somewhere in Britain' (outside Cornwall)

A general return of Stonechats to breeding areas this week

First Firecrest song heard on Mar 9

Four reports of Hoopoes in Cornwall and at Portland

Late news of a female Red Flanked Bluetail in West Sussex on Mar 4

Meadow Pipits starting to move north and first reports of White Wagtails on the south coast

Stejneger's Scoter - new for Britain

A Long-eared Owl seen on a road sign near Lewes reminds me of the recent discovery of this species breeding on the Sussex Downs and the possibility of them breeding on Portsdown

Bewick's Swans have left southern England

600 Black Kites seen by a Portsmouth area birder this week (but not in Britain!)

Insect News highlights

First Small White butterfly and a very early Speckled Wood

First report of Yellow Dung flies

New to me are a common early spring Hoverfly (*Cheilosia grossa*) and a Spider species (*Phrurolithus festivus*)

Plant News highlights

Common Dog and Hairy Violets now flowering

Alexanders flowering on Portsdown and Lesser Periwinkle in the Havant area

Early Forget-me-not flowering on south Hayling and Slender Speedwell in Havant

Leaves of several orchid species seen this week

Other Wildlife highlights

Distinguishing Polecats from Ferrets

BIRDS

Red-throated Divers: In mid-week these were heading north in large numbers with 107 passing Folkestone on Mar 8 and 160 past Dungeness that day followed by 704 along the French coast on Mar 9. Hardly any other divers reported - max of 3 **Black-throated** at Seaford on Mar 12 and 2 **Great Northern** in Cornwall that day. Last report of the **Pacific Diver** at Penzance was dated Mar 6

Great Crested Grebe: These are mostly back at breeding sites by now and could be seen in courtship display at Ivy Lake in Chichester on Mar 11 (first report of display came from Eastleigh Lakeside on Feb 11)

Red-necked Grebe: On Mar 6 a group of 3 were seen in the Netherlands (where there had been 11 on the previous day) but one was still to be seen in Hayling Bay on Mar 8

Slavonian Grebe: Numbers now rapidly diminishing - there had been 14 off Pagham Harbour on Mar 5 then 3 at Studland and 3 in Hayling Bay on Mar 8 with 4 at Lymington on Mar 9. On Mar 11 three were seen at Selsey Bill, two at Dungeness and one at Lymington. Latest sighting was of one in Hayling Bay on Mar 12

Black-necked Grebe: Last double-digit count was 15 at Studland on Mar 8 when 5 were at Torbay and 4 in Hayling Bay. On Mar 11 there were still 3 at the Blashford Lakes and latest reports on Mar 12 were of 1 in Hayling Bay and 3 off Folkestone

Bittern: The week brought reports of one on the Isle of Wight, three in Poole Harbour (Hatch Pond), one in Havant (in an unspecified garden in old Bedhampton where it had been resident for at least a week), one at the Blashford Lakes, two at Rye Harbour, one at Eastbourne (West Rise Lake), and (on Mar 12) one at Chichester Ivy Lake plus other singles in Cornwall and at Lymington.

Little Egret: Photos seen this week show that these birds are acquiring their breeding plumage but there are still few to be seen along the coast though numbers are increasing at the Rye Harbour roost (roost counts of 32 on Mar 3 up to 37 on Mar 8)

Spoonbill: These seem to be on the move - 13 turned up at a Belgian site on Mar 7 and here in England a Spanish ringed bird turned up on the Exe estuary after moving from another site in Devon. On Mar 6 one arrived at Slimbridge and on Mar 10 there was a newcomer at Rye Harbour while Portland reported one flying south over Portland Harbour on Mar 9. On Mar 8 Lodmoor (Weymouth) had its first for the year, joined by a second on Mar 10

Bewick's Swan: No reports from Sussex sites since Mar 5 and counts at Slimbridge show that their winter visitors have left during the week (there were still around 80 there on Mar 6 decreasing to 41 on Mar 8, 21 on Mar 10, 5 on Mar 11 and just 3 on Mar 12). A report of 61 flying east past Folkestone may have marked the exodus of birds from south coast sites including the 9 last seen at Ibsley (Ringwood) on Mar 5 when there were also 14 still in the Adur valley north of Henfield.

Brent Goose: The last reports of Brent in Hampshire that I have seen were of 410 at Tichfield Haven and of 94 at Nore Barn (Emsworth), both on Mar 11, while Sussex had 342 passing Seaford on Mar 12 when 518 went past Dungeness.

Wigeon: None reported in the Havant area this week during which I have only noted two reports of the species - 230 at Hook/Warsash on Mar 7 before they flew north and 80 at Bradig Marshes (IoW) on Mar 12

Gadwall: I think all our wintering birds have now left but each year more of them stay to breed here and I suspect that around 10 which were on Aldsworth Pond (north of Emsworth) on Mar 7 were in this category.

Pintail: No reports seen since Mar 9 when 9 were at Christchurch Harbour and a few still on the Adur near Henfield in Sussex.

Garganey: RBA reported the arrival of one 'somewhere in Britain' on Mar 11 after one had been seen in the Netherlands on Mar 8

Scaup: 19 were still at Abbotsbury in Dorset on Mar 8 but the only report since then is of 2 still on Widewater at Worthing on Mar 11

Eider: 24 were off Titchfield Haven where there has been no mention of the species since Jan 29

Long-tailed Duck: One was still in the Torbay area on Mar 11

Velvet Scoter: The only south coast reports this week were of one at Hurst Castle off Lymington on Mar 6 and another off the Penzance area in Cornwall on Mar 12. For those interested in unusual birds seen in far-off places the RBA service report for Mar 12 started with .. "The adult drake **Stejneger's Scoter** continued its stay in the bay at Rossbeigh in County Kerry, much to the delight of all those that made the journey across to see it" If, like me, you have never heard of a **Stejneger's Scoter** have a look at what Lee Evans had to say about the discovery of the current bird at <http://uk400clubrarebirdalert.blogspot.com/2011/03/mega-stejnegers-scooter-off-west-ireland.html> (the mention of Richard Bonser's name in this report may revive memories of when Richard was student at Southampton University and had a leucistic Herring Gull unofficially named after him as *Larus argentatus bonserii*). To see how the current bird relates to other Velvet Scoters see what Andy Musgrove has to say about it at <http://www.bubo.org/Forum/Britain-Ireland-and-Isle-of-Man/641-Stejneger-s-/-White-winged-Scoter-in-Ireland.html>

Smew: One of the two Blashford birds was still there on Mar 13 and there were birds at three other sites on Mar 11 (Exe estuary, Longham Lakes at Poole and Dungeness RSPB site)

Goosander: It would seem that our winter visitors have now left though a few continue to be seen (probably intending to breed in the Avon valley or nearby Dorset)

Black Kite: A report of an estimated 600 Black Kites seen within a ten minute period may sound out of place among reports of birds in southern England but the connection lies in the birder who saw them and placed photos on one of my favourite websites (Three Amigos). The birder in this case was Steve Copsey serving on board the Royal Navy's latest acquisition - HMS York - which was heading for Gibraltar after involvement in the Libyan troubles when Steve saw the Kites. If you visit <http://www.surfbirds.com/blog/amigo> the entry for Mar 13 will show you pictures of a Swallow heading north across the Mediterranean (and then perching on the ship), followed by pictures of the **Oriental Turtle Dove** at Chipping Norton taken by Tony Tindale (another of the Amigos) on Mar 12, before we reach Steve's encounter with the **Black Kites** and then, ashore in Gibraltar, with a **Hoopoe**, **Bonelli's** and **Sardinian Warblers** and **Pallid Swifts** as well as a **Willow Warbler**.

White-tailed Sea Eagle: Still in the Blackland's Farm area east of Basingstoke on Mar 12

Buzzard: The large number of these which abandoned the furthest northern parts of Europe during the depths of winter (and which gave us a peak count of 1075 seen heading south on Oct 16) are now starting to return north. On Mar 12 a German site reported 225 heading north.

Common Crane: This week may have seen the peak numbers of these returning to northern Europe with one Belgian site reporting 6340 birds on Mar 7 and another in the Netherlands having 6217 on Mar 8. Here in England we continue to see some birds that have overshot their destination (e.g. two in Kent on Mar 9) but I see that the pair which arrived at Wiston village (north of the downs at Worthing) on Mar 5 were still in that area on Mar 8

Oystercatcher: Although we do not think of these as migrants since many that have spent the winter here stay to breed the number to be seen on southern shores does noticeably diminish at the end of the winter (the 2009 Hampshire Bird Report tells us that the Langstone Harbour population which was up to 1500-2000 in winter dropped to below 500 in April, May, and June) so it is not surprising that Peter Millinets-Raby, who lives 3 miles from the coast in Bedhampton (Havant area), has heard Oystercatchers flying north over his house after dark on at least two nights this week

Avocet: On Feb 28, when many of the birds set off from their winter quarters in the west country (Poole Harbour and the Exe estuary) for their breeding sites, Titchfield Haven reported the presence of 21 - for the majority this was just a one day feeding stop and on Mar 2 only 3 could be seen but on Mar 9 the number was up to 8 and there were still 8 there on Mar 12 - maybe those will be joined by others that will stay to breed there.

Stone Curlew: An early bird was at Martin Down (south of Salisbury) on Feb 21 and this week there is a second report of one heard calling as it flew north over the Hardham area near Pulborough at 4:30 am on Mar 11

Little Ringed Plover: The first arrivals were seen this week at Pulborough Brooks on Mar 9, at Pagham Harbour on Mar 10 and at Christchurch Harbour on Mar 11

Curlew Sandpiper: The first to be reported anywhere this year was at a French site on Mar 11 (two birds)

Whimbrel: I dismissed a couple of reports of single Whimbrel seen recently at Kent sites as being wintering birds but then read of six being seen at Seaford (between Brighton and Beachy Head) on Mar 12 and claimed as the first migrants on the south coast

Spotted Redshank: The Nore Barn bird at Emsworth was still there on Mar 11 (last year it was last seen on Mar 24). Others were seen this week at Lymington, Christchurch Harbour and at Mill Rytte on Hayling.

Green Sandpiper: Two were seen on the Langstone South Moors on Mar 12

Med Gull: The number at the Hayling Oysterbeds shot up from 30 on Mar 1 to 131 on Mar 12

Little Gull: One seen at Chichester Ivy Lake on Mar 11 and another at Christchurch Harbour on Mar 12 were probably stragglers from a wave heading up Channel towards breeding areas to the east and north (on Mar 9 a total of 566 were seen on the French coast - the first report of more than 7 birds anywhere in northern Europe this year). Checking the BirdLife fact sheet on the species I read .. "The Little Gull can be found breeding in northern Scandinavia, the Baltic republics and western Russia to western Siberia, in eastern Siberia, and in the Great Lakes of North America. Its distribution expands in winter to include most of the Mediterranean, Black Sea and Caspian Sea coastlines, as well as the Atlantic coast of Europe and the north-west coast of the USA"

Common Tern: First of the year in Britain was one at Pendeen in Cornwall on Mar 9

Little Owl: Of local interest one seen sitting on a tree at Warblington Farm on Sat Mar 5 and was still showing openly on the same branch of the same tree on Mar 12 - almost certainly a male sitting right outside a nest hole where the female was already sitting (this tree has been used for nesting in at least one recent year

Long-eared Owl: Since 2009 Dave and Penny Green of the Sussex Wildlife Trust have been studying these birds and have found a small colony nesting on the Downs north of Brighton though naturally full details have not been published. In March of 2009 I saw a report which said that one had been seen .. "seen perched and hunting for 1 hr+ in semi-rural area nr Brighton - unphased by traffic pedestrians or a fox" That report could of course have been of a wintering bird about to depart but now that we know some do breed in that area a further report of a sighting on Mar 10 this year of one seen by night perched on a roadside signpost near Lewes may indicate that the birds are established in a larger area than just around Brighton. It also reminds me that quite a few years back there were reports of young birds making their 'rusty bicycle' sounds in the Red Barn estate on the slopes of Portsdown above Portchester and a report of a Long-eared corpse being found on the A27 where it runs below the site so there could still be a possibility of finding these elusive birds on Portsdown....

Hoopoe: Up to **four Hoopoes** were seen in Britain this week (first reports for the year). The first was near Stithians Lake in Cornwall (well inland from Falmouth) on Mar 6, the second was at Hayle on the north coast of the county next day and the third report came from The Lizard on the south coast on Mar 12. These three could all be sightings of the same bird but the fourth sighting at Portland Bill on Mar 12 must have been a different bird

Shorelark: The three birds on the north Kent coast were still being seen on Mar 12 though the arrival of heavy machinery on the beach in that area may well persuade them to leave in the near future!

Sand Martin: Twelve new reports this week include a sighting of 50 birds over the Blashford Lakes at Ringwood on Mar 10

Swallow: Reports of them somewhere in Britain on Mar 9 and Mar 11 were on the RBA website (presumably not in southern England as I have not seen them mentioned elsewhere). On the near continent one was in Belgium on Mar 10

Meadow Pipit: Reports of birds flying north after arriving from the sea at Durlston (10 on Mar 8) and Christchurch Harbour (46 on Mar 7) show that the huge northward stream of these birds has now started.

White Wagtail: These too have started to arrive at coastal sites - seven reports this week starting with 'several' at Thurlestone Bay in Devon on Mar 7 followed by reports of singles at Sandwich Bay on Mar 8 and Portland on Mar 10

Waxwing: At least 25 reports this week shows that we are not yet seeing the end of these birds in southern England. On Mar 9 there were around 85 in Poole and other sightings came from Hampshire and Sussex

Red-flanked Bluetail: Late news of a female seen in Houghton Woods on Mar 4 by an inexperienced birder whose clear description could only be of this species. Houghton Woods are on high ground west of the River Arun in the Amberley area

Stonechat: At last these are starting to re-appear at many southern breeding sites including Sinah Common on Hayling, Hook/Warsash, Ibsley Common near Ringwood and Lymington Marshes. On Mar 12 a pair were on the Langstone South Moors and one seen at Amberley Wild Brooks that day may have been an eastern race (maura) bird. Song was heard at Durlston on Mar 8

Wheatear: After a few isolated reports in Jan and Feb they have been pouring in this week with a peak count of 10 at Portland on Mar 9 and a total of 21 reports. The first in Hampshire was at Lymington on Mar 9 and Sussex had one that day in the Ouse valley south of Lewes but Kent and the Isle of Wight seemingly did not have any until Mar 12

Chiffchaff: Although the first migrant was claimed at Climping on the West Sussex coast on Feb 25 it was not until Mar 9 that definite migrants were reported from Titchfield Haven and north Kent and subsequently all along the south coast. On Mar 12 they started to appear inland at Eastleigh, Fleet Pond and Andover

Goldcrest: An impressive flock of 50 birds were at Bolderwood in the New Forest on Mar 12

Firecrest: Song heard in the New Forest on Mar 9 and at Beachy Head on Mar 11

Raven: A pair at Gore Cliff (St Catherine's Point on the IoW) were gathering nest material on Mar 5 and a pair were courting at Arlington (nr Beachy Head) on Mar 8

Lapland Bunting: Flocks of up to 150 were being seen in Cornwall up to Mar 6 - since then the only reports I have seen were of one on Pilsey Island (south of Thorney Island) on Mar 8 and just 2 left in Cornwall on Mar 9

Snow Bunting: One was on the causeway from Sandy Point to Black Point on Hayling on the evening of Mar 5 but left early on Mar 6. The 3 long staying birds at Reculver on the north Kent coast were last seen together on Mar 5 although a single was seen on Mar 12

Yellowhammer: First reported song at Durlston on Mar 8 when Hampshire had a flock of 45 at Over Wallop near Andover

INSECTS

Butterflies

Brimstone: Ten reports this week, all on Mar 7 and 8. I seem to have had the highest count with four seen on Portsdown on Mar 8

Small White: One seen in the kitchen of a house in south-east Hampshire on Mar 7 seemed to be a very early 'first sighting' but the latest Hampshire Butterfly Report gives the earliest date for the species in 2009 as Mar 1 while 2008 had the first sighting on Feb 8

Red Admiral: Eight reports this week

Small Tortoiseshell: I get the feeling that this species is making a comeback with 19 reports so far this year including ten this week. At least two reports are of courting pairs.

Peacock: Eight reports this week including a sighting of one on Brook Meadow at Emsworth on Mar 11

Comma: Nine reports this week

Speckled Wood: First for the year seen in Southampton on Mar 4 (Earliest in both 2009 and 2008 were seen on Mar 21)

Moths

The only item of moth news this week is a find of a **Large Yellow Underwing caterpillar** munching away in a Fareham garden on Mar 7 - for photos taken by Tony Tindale see

<http://www.surfbirds.com/blog/amigo/18788/Probable+Large+Yellow+Underwing+caterpillar+in+Fareham+garden.html>

Other Insects

Cheilosia grossa Hoverfly: Although there is no mention of the species in the Insect books by Michael Chinery which I rely on this is apparently quite a common spring hoverfly which I was made aware of by an entry on the RX website about one at Rye Harbour on Mar 8. To see what it looks like go to [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Cheilosia_grossa_\(male\).jpg](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Cheilosia_grossa_(male).jpg)

Yellow Dung-fly: First mention of these also comes from Rye Harbour on Mar 8

Red Mason Bee (*Osmia rufa*): While I was on Portsdown on Mar 8 I had a close look at an orange-striped bee nectaring on Gorse flowers and think it may have been a male of this species (it did not have the curved horns which a female would have)

Lesser Bloody-nosed Beetle: One seen by me on Portsdown on Mar 8 and Durlston reported a pair mating on Mar 10

Nursery Tent Spider (*Pisaura mirabilis*): First report for the year from Rye Harbour on Mar 8. This is one of several ground hunting spiders given the general name of '**Wolf Spiders**' though I associate that name with the smaller, faster, all black spiders which are very common on dry ground and which I found in fair numbers on Portsdown on Mar 8 (I think they belong to the *Pardosa* genus but am not sure). Unlike the long-legged *Pisaura* females which carry their egg sacs around under the body the small black ones attach their egg sacs to the rear of their bodies.

Phrurolithus festivus spider: The RX website also introduced me to this species this week. To learn more about it go to

PLANTS

Blue Anemone: Although normally a garden flower this readily escapes and persists as it seems to have done in a corner of the Havant Eastern Road cemetery. See my Diary page entry for Mar 10 to see pictures I took there.

Yellow Corydalis: Although this was flowering in January I have seen none for over a month until new flowers appeared in my garden on Mar 8

Common Dog Violet: First mention of these flowers comes from Durlston on Mar 12

Hairy Violet: Although I feel sure I saw this species starting to flower on Portsdown on Mar 8 the distinctive leaves had not developed and I could not be sure of separating the flowers I saw from the very variable Sweet Violets that were also flowering there but Durlston confidently reported **Hairy Violets** flowering on Mar 10

Western Balsam-poplar: Flowering at Brook Meadow in Emsworth on Mar 9

Alexanders: Flowering on Portsdown on Mar 8 - twenty plants in flower at the entrance to the Cliffdale Caravan Park on the London Road

Lesser Periwinkle: Flowering on an 'ancient hedge bank' at the Locks Farm road junction of Southleigh Road in Havant Denvilles area on Mar 7 (75 flowers counted there with another 19 in Pitts Copse close the Stansted Forest 'Groves')

Ivy-leaved Toadflax: Just one flower open in Havant on Mar 12 after watching buds 'about to open' for some two weeks!

Slender Speedwell: On Mar 8 I found flowers in St Faith's churchyard and put photos comparing this plant with Common Field Speedwell on my Diary page (the church yard has since been close mown)

'Garden Forget-me-not': This abundant garden escape already had many flower buds in Havant on Mar 12

Early Forget-me-not: I found the first tiny flowers of this in the grass of the roundabout at the Ferry Inn end of Ferry Road on south Hayling on Mar 11 and have put photos on my Diary page

White Comfrey: First flowers on plants beside the Hayling Billy trail between the Langstone main road and the end of Langstone Avenue seen on Mar 9

Cleavers (Goosegrass): Abnormally large flowers seen on one clump of plants close to the Petersfield Road/Elmleigh Road roundabout in Havant on Mar 10 (photos again on my Diary page) - I suspect these plants had suffered from the volume of car exhaust fumes they experience there and am not expecting normal plants to flower yet.

Garden Grape Hyacinth: The multitude of garden escapes had started to flower in Havant on Mar 10

Green-winged Orchid: Many leaves could be seen on Mar 11 at the south Hayling Gunner Point site where thousands will start to flower in a few more weeks

Early Purple Orchid: First report of leaves somewhere in Sussex on Mar 5

Lizard Orchid: Leaf rosettes seen in the Thanet/Sandwich Bay area of Kent on Mar 11

OTHER WILDLIFE

Polecat Ferret: No location was given for the report of the stinking corpse of a Polecat Ferret found dead on a road somewhere in Sussex on Mar 5. I suspect it had had a human owner but the report reminded me of a 'hot topic' in these notes some years back. The topic had two themes - one was **the spread of genuine wild Polecats from Wales into most of southern England**, the other was the question of **how to distinguish a Polecat from a Ferret**. On the first subject I recall a report of another road casualty found in the Hampshire Test valley which was definitely a Polecat and was also a lactating female showing that they were breeding in the county, the other came from a cyclist on a north Hampshire country lane who had to give way to a hunting pack of a dozen or more supposed Polecats which (the cyclist feared) threatened his life! As to identification their overall colour is black except for the face which has a white edging to the small ears and a whitish muzzle but always has a dark mask covering both eyes and running down the 'cheeks' - this mask is set off by whitish areas around it and is the main feature distinguishing them from Ferrets which are slightly smaller and have many variations in the colour of their fur (many are white overall). The tail of a Polecat is more bushy than that of a Ferret. A good source of information is <http://www.wessexferretclub.co.uk/polecats.htm> - follow up all three of the links provided on that page

Water Voles: With a rise in temperatures these should now become more active and two sightings at Brook Meadow in Emsworth this week shows that this is starting to happen

Hare: We are now well into March but this week has brought just one report of several seen on the Sussex Down south of Pulborough but none of them were 'boxing'

WILDLIFE DIARY AND NEWS FOR MAR 7 - 13 (WEEK 10 OF 2011)

Fri 11 Mar

Early Forget-me-not at the Ferry Inn on Hayling

With yesterday's news of spring migrant birds arriving I set off to cycle to south Hayling this morning but found little in the way of birds - there were **130**

Black-tailed Godwits in 'Texaco Bay' as I reached Hayling and there were **Brent** strung out all along the shoreline from Hayling Bridge to the Kench but the nearest I got to a spring bird was a **Skylark** in full song over the West Lane fields.

Another target species was **Early Forget-me-not** and this I did find though the plants were so small that I had difficulty in spotting them even though I knew where they should be - in the centre of the small roundabout where you enter the carpark south of the Ferry Inn. I have included a 20p piece in the photos below to indicate

how small the first flowers are - they will grow a little (though they never become easy to spot) and I did find one plant that was a little larger at the foot of the wooden post immediately to the right of the new sign board as you approach from the Kench.

'Difficult to spot' first flowers of Early Forget-me-not plus a closer view

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A more developed plant of Early Forget-me-not showing bigger flower-heads (cymes)

In the sand dunes I stopped to take a photo of a large example of **Common Whitlowgrass** - the photo manages to capture both the flowers and first seeds as well as the basal rosette of leaves and tall thin stem holding up the flowers.

">

A plant of Common Whitlowgrass in the Gunner Point sand dunes Further along the grass south of the golf course quite a few leaves of the **Green-winged Orchids** that may well start to flower before this month is out but there was nothing else worthy of note until just past the pillbox at the junction of the coastal path and the footpath to the West Lane bends - here, below the last vegetation on the seaward side of the coastal path, was a good show of **Coltsfoot** flowers, and after crossing Langstone Bridge I found more **Coltsfoot** behind the Langstone main road houses on the new section of the cycle path.

[Thu 10 Mar](#)

[\(Link to previous day's entry\)](#)

Wheatears, Sand Martins and Chiffchaffs reach Hampshire and the first Speckled Wood and Small White butterflies emerge

Scanning the internet today I see that numerous **Wheatears**, many **Chiffchaffs** plus one party of **Sand Martins** and a single **Lesser Ringed Plover** have all arrived locally.

Ignoring reports of **Wheatear** in Sussex in January and Cornwall in February the first wave of migrants reached southern England on Mar 8 when Portland reported a party of 8 and one was reported from the Bedhampton Water Works here in Havant. On Mar 9 two more reached Portland, one was at Lymington and another by the Sussex Ouse while Mar 10 gave Durlston its first.

Sussex claimed the first migrant **Chiffchaff** on Feb 25 when one was singing in coastal Tamarisks near Worthing where there had been no previous reports of wintering birds but the first wave arrived on Mar 9 when 12 were singing by the Canal Path at Titchfield and one was singing at Church Norton but if there could be doubt about these a report of 100 arriving at Dungeness that day was conclusive.

Early **Sand Martins** had been seen in Devon on Feb 11 and 23 while Christchurch Harbour had one on Feb 25 but a party of 9 over the Blashford Lakes at Ringwood on Mar 9 marked Hampshire's first arrivals.

Other early migrants on Mar 10 were a **Lesser Ringed Plover** at Pagham Ferry Pool and, over in Belgium, Anderstadt had a **Swallow** and a **Blue-headed Wagtail**.

Butterfly reports include a very early **Small White** somewhere in south east Hants on Mar 7 and an even earlier **Speckled Wood** in Southampton on Mar 4. These two species do not hibernate as adults and the first seen each year have just emerged from their chrysalis - as the **Small White** was found indoors it probably pupated in the house and so is not a typical 'natural emergence'. Other butterflies now on the wing are all species which hibernate and thus do not have to complete a metamorphosis but can appear at any time if roused by a sunny day (or disturbed) - the species seen so far are **Red Admiral, Brimstone, Comma, Peacock** and **Small Tortoiseshell** plus a single **Painted Lady**.

Another insect which I found on Portsdown on Mar 8, **Lesser Bloody-nose Beetle**, was also seen today at Durlston where two of the three seen there were mating.

Flowers newly out in Havant today

A cycle ride around Havant today produced the first flowers on **Blue Anemone** in Havant cemetery and on **Cleavers** (or **Goosegrass**) by the Petersfield Road though the latter were probably mutations caused by car-exhaust gases from vehicles waiting at the roundabout just north of the railway bridge. I also took photos of the **Early Dog Violets** in the Eastern Road cemetery and the **Danish Scurvygrass** alongside the Petersfield Road.

Patch of Blue Anmones starting to flower in Havant cemetery



Flowers of the Blue Anemones

Early Dog Violets now flowering in Havant cemetery

More Early Dog Violets flowering in Havant cemetery

Danish Scurvygrass by edge of Petersfield Road

Abnormal Cleavers flowers by Petersfield Road/Elmleigh Road roundabout

Tue 8 Mar

[\(Link to previous day's entry\)](#)

Brimstones on Portsdown, Slender Speedwell in Havant, and Fieldfare at Warblington

This morning I drove to Portsdown to look for **Hairy Violets** but cannot claim to have found any though at the time I thought I had seen some - before considering the evidence on that there were other excellent positives to the trip. Best was my sighting of at least **four Brimstone butterfly males**, though a close contender was an impressive view of a **female Sparrowhawk** hardly moving its wings as it glided out from over Fort Widley and passed right over my head before gently turning about to vanish behind the fort. Less impressive, but a little surprising, was a close view of a **Lesser Bloody-nosed Beetle** at my feet as it lumbered across the path I was on. Also seen were both **two and seven spot Ladybirds** and numbers of **Wolf Spiders** (this name is applied to several different spider species but I reserve it for the small blackish spiders which are quite fast runners and hunt their prey on the ground in dry places - I think they belong to the **genus Pardosa** but am not sure).

Returning to the **Violets** I thought I had found quite a few **Hairy Violets** when I came across several small clusters of pale blue/violet flowers at a very young stage - the flowers were held up above the very short grass and were only just opening while the leaves were at a very early stage of development and were hard perceptible in the grass. Later I came on what were almost certainly **Sweet Violets** with deeper coloured flowers and well developed leaves that were not of the Hairy Violet shape though in this exposed situation and on poor soil they were much smaller than those which are now flourishing in better soil (e.g. in Havant St Faith's Church yard and at Nore Barn). Both **Sweet** and **Hairy Violets** share many characteristics but I could not find any evidence of the **three things that distinguish Hairy** - first is their **longer, thinner and pointed leaves**, second is the presence of **long spreading hairs** and the third is the **absence of 'runners'** by which the Sweet Violets spread into extensive 'mats'. To be sure of **Hairy Violets** I will have to wait until their leaves have grown.

From the open face of Portsdown I headed downhill to come out on London Road. I then walked uphill on the roadside pavement until I came to the entrance to the Cliffdale Caravan Park where at least 20 plants of **Alexanders** were starting to

flower - a definite first for my flower list. Behind the caravans **Rooks** were back at their nests in a **small Rookery**. A little further uphill was another umbellifer at an earlier stage of growth though its basal leaves and the look of the umbel of white unopen flowers (no Bracts or Bracteoles) suggested **Burnet Saxifrage**. Near it, nectaring on **Gorse flowers** was a **smallish Bee with an orange banded abdomen** which may have been a male **Osmia rufa**.

In the afternoon I collected a specimen of the **Sweet Violets** that grow at St Faith's church in Havant to try to help me decide what I had seen on Portsdown and while there I was surprised and pleased to find quite a few plants of **Slender Speedwell** had come into flower along the Homewell Road edge of the churchyard. The photos below contrast its flowers and leaves with **Common Field Speedwell**. Another new flower today was the **Yellow Corydalis** in my own garden.

Comparison of Common Field Speedwell flower (on left) with Slender Speedwell

Comparison of leaves (Slender Speedwell above)

At tea time I spoke to Tony Gutteridge on the phone and he told me he had been at Warblington today and had seen a few **Fieldfare** (still not on my year list!) as well as **Redwings** and three **Snipe** in the SSSI Marsh.

Last Sunday Brian Fellows put a photo on his website showing damage to the trunk of a Rowan tree at Brook Meadow and he suggested that it might be the work of Squirrels which strip the bark off trees at this time of year to use as material for building the Dreys in which they will give birth to their young (often killing the trees in the process by 'ring barking' which prevents sap rising up the tree). **Squirrels** are not regularly seen at Brook Meadow and the damage was at the base of the tree trunk (Squirrels would usually take it from higher up near the proposed site for the Drey) and looked as if someone had been hacking at the tree with an axe on one side, not neatly peeling off the bark around the tree so I suggested that this might be the work of a **Roe Buck** 'fraying' the tree to clean the 'velvet' off its antlers - it could also have been vandalism by a youth with a small axe!

I know that **Roe** are not normally seen on or near Brook Meadow, though I seem to remember there was an unconfirmed report of one seen there last year and I know that Roe are increasing in numbers locally and spreading to new sites (I have seen at least ten on Southleigh Farm fields on the northern border of Emsworth over recent years) so this evening I had look on the internet to see if (a) this was the right time of year for **Roe** to be fraying trees and (b) if I could find pictures of trees that had been frayed by **Roe** to compare with Brian's photo.

I had no trouble in confirming that this is the right time for Roe to be cleaning the Velvet from their antlers (I also learnt that when they do so the bone of the antlers looks white but becomes the brown colour which we see as the tree sap and tannin 'dies' the bone brown). See

http://www.countrysportsandcountrylife.com/sections/stalking/Roe_Deer.htm

(fourth section of the text headed Antler Development). I also learnt from this that there are two different periods at which Roe damage trees - after the '**fraying**' in March against tree trunks to rub off the Velvet there is a period of '**thrashing**' to sharpen the antlers during the Rut from May onward - at this time it is the thin branches of e.g. young Birch which are the target of the attack.

Another web page (http://www.bds.org.uk/deer_in_your_garden.html) was the only one that I saw which described the damage caused by 'fraying' - in the text

alongside the photo it says "Fraying to young trees is performed by males (bucks) and is evident as bark rubbed from the main stem and left hanging in tatters" which is what I saw in Brian's photo.

[Mon 7 Mar](#)

[\(Link to previous day's entry\)](#)

Lesser Periwinkle in flower and an interesting family of Flies

This afternoon I drove to the road running north through Stansted Forest and parked near its southern end where a broad bridleway runs east along the south of the Stansted estate to Racton Folly (the lane is marked on the map as Park Lane but some call it Monument Lane). My first objective was Pitts Copse, only about 200 metres from the start of the lane and on its southern side, where the ground is densely covered with the leaves of **Lesser Periwinkle** which I was expecting to find in flower as I had seen some flowering by the roadside near Locks Farm in Denvilles as I drove by. Unlike the roadside site the ground in the copse does not get much sunlight so I had to walk a long way into the copse to find a less shaded area where a few flowers (no more than 20) were out.

I then walked halfway back to the road to where a footpath goes north through the woodland know as The Groves and here I found a few **wild Primroses** in flower and **heard the 'pit-chou' call of a Marsh Tit** (also getting a brief glimpse of it) and so added one to my bird year list bringing my score to 99!

From the north end of The Groves (close to the Stansted Garden Centre) I took a path back across grassland to Park Lane - while crossing the open grassland I saw a copse of trees to the east of Stansted House with several trees bearing **Mistletoe** high in their branches and at the edge of Park Lane I passed a sizeable clump of **Sweet Violets (all of them with pure white flowers)**.

Near the end of the track coming north from Sindles Farm a dozen or so pairs of **Rooks were at their nests** just inside Stansted East Park and from the foot of one of these trees a **Mistle Thrush** flew up. Heading south down the track past the farm there was little of interest (just one **Two Spot Ladybird!**) but as I neared its southern end I could see a few more Rooks at nests near Aldsworth House on the hill.

Aldsworth Pond had four or five pairs of **Canada Goose** and a similar number of pairs of **Gadwall** but no Swans or Tufted Duck that I could see. The majority of the birds here were **Coot**, at least 30 and maybe more than 40.

On my way home I stopped at the junction of Eastleigh and Southleigh Roads to have a look at the **Lesser Periwinkles** I had seen on the way out. I counted 75 flowers including unopen buds and also noted **Ivy-leaved Speedwell** in flower. In previous years I have found very early **Greater Stitchwort** (Mar 23 in 2009) and **Crosswort** flowers (Mar 23 in 2008!) here but there was no sign of them yet.

Back at home I **was introduced to a type of small fly that I was not previously aware of by a photo on John Goodspeed's website**. The picture is of a **Coltsfoot** with a minute black dot on its yellow flower and clicking on the picture to enlarge it you find that the black dot is a tiny black fly distinguished by having a single black spot near the tip of its otherwise translucent wings. John suggests is probably *Sepsis fulgens*, a species illustrated in Michael Chinery's Collins Guide to Insects of Britain and about which the book says ..

"One of several very similar species which **wave their wings as they scuttle over the vegetation**. Often forms **dense swarms in autumn** with hundreds if

thousands of flies scurrying about on a small patch of plants. **Hibernate as adults. Breed in dung.**"

Another book by Michael Chinery (the Field Guide to Insects of Britain) says of the **Sepsidae** .. "They are small, dark, antlike flies - the resemblance being due to the constriction of the abdomen at the waist. The head is more or less spherical. There is often a dark spot towards the tip of the wing and wing waving is common in this family. The adults often occur in vast swarms running about over the vegetation - the writer has counted more than 50 on a single bramble leaf and this sort of density was maintained over several square yards. The larvae live in decaying matter and the swarm mentioned was near a farmyard manure heap. There are 23 British species."

Wikipedia calls this family **Black Scavenger Flies** or **Ensign Flies** and names **Sepsis fulgens** as the **Lesser Dung Fly**. These flies are an important element in the work of decomposing dung by laying their eggs in it and leaving their larvae to eat it

Three videos of these insects can be found on Youtube. To see the spherical shape of the head and the circular eyes set on the sides see <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qLp3QdYPLI0> To see their frenetic movement and wing waving see <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BlE5IB9ZQLE> and to get an impression of how they form swarms see http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DNFJKMw_aKY&feature=related

WILDLIFE DIARY AND NEWS FOR FEB 21 - 27 (WEEK 08 OF 2011)

Highlights

See relevant entries in the full text below for each of these highlights

Bird News highlights

Latest Summer Migrant arrivals include a Stone Curlew seen in the Martin Down area on Feb 21 (provoking news that in the autumn around 100 can gather in East Anglia and remain there until December, though they do not overwinter) Hampshire earliest ever arrival was 5 Feb 2006 when one was seen on the north Hayling fields, staying there until Feb 10

Other new arrivals this week were **Sandwich Terns** at Dungeness on Feb 20, at Durlston on Feb 24 and Rye Harbour on Feb 25. Note that Portland had reported the 'first migrant' on Feb 16 and that others were seen this week in both Poole and Christchurch Harbours

What may well have been the **first migrant Chiffchaff was singing** on Feb 25 in shoreline Tamarisks at Climping (Worthing area) where they had been no winter sightings and a second **Wheatear** (after the first in Cornwall on Feb 15) was at Portland on Feb 23. After the 'probables' in Devon on Feb 11 the first definite **Sand Martin** reports came from the Exeter area (one bird on Feb 23 and two on Feb 24) followed by one at Christchurch Harbour on Feb 25 (the earliest ever previous record there was 5 Mar in both 1997 and 2008). On Feb 22 Cornwall reported its **fourth Swallow of the year** (after birds reported on Jan 10, 23 and Feb 16)

White-tailed Eagle now at Basingstoke - my guess in last week's summary that the bird from Downton (Lymington/New Milton area) had left England and was the bird seen in the Netherlands on Feb 19 was wrong as the bird turned up on Feb 23 in the farmland around Blacklands Farm by the River Loddon just east of Basingstoke and was still being seen there on Feb 27

Golden Eagles have three reports in this weeks news. On the weekend of Feb 19/20 Falconers were flying them in the Ewhurst area north west of Basingstoke, on Feb 21 one was seen in the Windmill Hill village area near Hurstmonceaux north east of Eastbourne and on Feb 24 one was seen in the Danehill area (on the A275 north east of Haywards Heath).

Spring Gull passage was noted in the English Channel on Feb 24 when Christchurch Harbour reported 430 Herring Gull, 275 Black-headed Gull, 65 Lesser Black-backed Gull, 49 Mediterranean Gull including a single flock of 43, and 21 Common Gull all heading east. On Feb 26 a total of 1300 Great Blackbacks were in the Cuckmere Haven area east of Beachy Head

Bird Song news this week included a report of **full song from a Redwing** in the Bishopstoke (Eastleigh) area on Feb 23 - others there were in their pre-migration sub song. Loud **Blackbird song** was heard at both dawn and dusk this week and the first full **Brambling song** was heard in Chandlers Ford (Eastleigh) on Feb 26 (Blackcaps have been singing in various places since the end of January). On Feb 25 the Devon Birding website had a photo of a **Dartford Warbler in full song** (I think others elsewhere will have been singing occasionally during the winter).

Insect News highlights

Brimstones emerged in force on Feb 24 in response to warm sunshine with 28 reports for that day including one report from Stansted Forest of 5 males and 1 female. Although one Brimstone had been seen in the Meon Valley as early as Jan 15 I only have 12 reports prior to Feb 24

A single **Humming Bird Hawkmoth** was seen at Stokes Bay (Gosport), also on Feb 24, hovering over nettles. A few of these moths are known to hibernate in southern England and I assume this one had done so but I hope it found some better source of nectar for its 'breakfast' than nettles.

The **Longhorn Beetle Rhagium mordax** was the most intriguing species reported this week. The news, from Michael Prior (Head Forester of Stansted Forest), reached me at second hand so I had no chance to query two aspects of the report which puzzled me. The first was the English Name used for members of the Rhagium genus - they are called **Pliers Support beetles** - and at first I could make no sense of the name but my current guess is that the shape of these beetles antennae (which I am accustomed to call 'Longhorns') has been associated with the shape of a Blacksmiths tool having a similar shape. So far I have established that Blacksmiths tools for handling hot metal do include both Tongs and Pliers and it makes sense that the hot tools would require some device to 'support' them while still hot but not in use - these supports may well have a shape similar to the beetle's antennae but so far I have not discovered a picture of one of a Pliers Support among the websites devoted to selling Blacksmiths tools.

An even more puzzling aspect of the report was its date - the news from Michael Prior said that three of these beetles had been seen 'recently' (i.e. Jan or Feb) which seemed to contradict the statement that the adult beetles are only seen between April/May and July when they emerge from the trees in which they have developed as grubs and divide their time between sex and eating flower pollen. Luckily Philip Butcher has explained to me that the grubs in the trees actually turn into mature adult beetles in the autumn but remain within their wooden tunnels throughout the winter, only emerging in April or May. Thus if you chop down a tree in the winter you may well find an adult 'Black-spotted Pliers Beetle' within it.

Going back to Butterflies I was interested to read that Patrick Fleet (warden of the Magdalen Hill Down butterfly reserve near Winchester) had, during the mass emergence of butterflies on Feb 24, confirmed his hunch that **Peacocks use Rabbit burrows as hibernating sites** when he saw one Peacock emerging from a burrow and a second sunning itself just outside another burrow.

Plant News highlights

Most interesting to me this week was the discovery of the male flower buds of a **Dawn Redwood (Metasequoia glyptostroboides)** tree in Havant Park. I had previously been aware of this tree species as one which was common in the prehistoric record but thought to be extinct in the modern era until it was discovered growing in China as recently as the 1940s. Since then it has been widely planted throughout the world but because it was a relatively new species in England in 1972 when Alan Mitchell wrote the Collins Field Guide to the Trees of Britain which I rely on as my authority that book has little to say about the Dawn Redwood flowers other than to suggest that, in Britain, they only appear infrequently in extra-hot summers (he probably got this impression as the trees which he was able to study where not yet mature).

See my diary entry for Feb 24 for a picture of the male flower buds I found on a tree in Havant Park and one link to a website describing the tree but since then Philip Butcher has given me a better link which is to http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Metasequoia_glyptostroboides - scroll down through a selection of pictures (or use the 'contents' link to 'Flowers and Cones') to find pictures of the flowers (click to enlarge them)

Several other plants started to flower this week including **Cherry Plum, Wych Elm, Grey Poplar, Early (or Wood) Dog Violet**, and (at Durlston) **Herb Robert**. Also now coming into full flower here in Havant is **Common Whitlowgrass**

Other News highlights

Not wildlife, but maybe of interest, is a photo appearing above the Feb 26 entry on the Portland website of the space shuttle about to dock with the International Space Station. See http://www.portlandbirdobs.org.uk/aa_latestnews.htm

BIRDS

Divers: 81 Red-throated were seen at Dungeness on Feb 20 and **66 Black-throated** in the Gerrans Bay area of Cornwall on Feb 22. The single **Pacific Diver** was still off Marazion on Feb 26

Great Crested Grebe: Most of the large rafts on the sea have now dispersed but 92 were off Peacehaven (Brighton) on Feb 20

Black-necked Grebe: 58 were still at Studland Bay on Feb 19 and 11 were off the Hayling Oysterbeds on Feb 20 with 4 more off south Hayling but this week's reports had a max of 15 in Portland Harbour on Feb 24 with six at Studland on Feb 21 and two still at Blashford on Feb 23

Manx Shearwater: Last week Portland reported the first for this year and this week there were 8 off the Cornish coast on Feb 24

Bittern: Still quite a few with reports from nine sites and a max count of 4 at Hatch Pond (Poole Harbour) on Feb 21 with 3 still there on Feb 26

Cattle Egret: The two birds on the Hants/Dorset border close to Fordingbridge which arrived there on Feb 17 have not been reported since Feb 21

Great White Egret: The group of six that have been at Shapwick Heath (Somerset Levels) since Jan 17 were still there on Feb 24 but the only other report this week is of the Sandwich Bay area bird seen on Feb 22

Flamingo: With Morocco in the news this week I see that **147 Flamingos** were seen there on Feb 23 (also **174 Avocet**)

Bewick's Swan: Slimbridge announced the departure for Russia of more than 200 on the evening of Feb 26 - maybe including the 4 birds fitted with GPS devices (back on Jan 22) to track if the birds would be endangered by a proposal for a windfarm off the Norfolk coast

Whooper Swan: The family of five on the Barnham Levels near Arundel were still there on Feb 24

Whitefront Goose: The group of 14 were still at Farlington Marshes on Feb 24 and some (probably all) were still there on Feb 26

Brent Goose: Another 140 flew east past Dungeness on Feb 26 but there are still plenty in Langstone and Chichester Harbours though I think numbers here are starting to drop off. On Feb 22 I noticed that all the trees and bushes along the seaward end of the old IBM playing fields at the Langstone South Moors had been removed and maybe this had encouraged some 50 Brent and 6 Canada Geese to fly in and graze.

Red-breasted Goose: The ringed bird on the Lymington marshes was still present on Feb 24

Wigeon: Numbers in Langstone and Chichester Harbours have noticeably diminished, as have those of **Gadwall**

Teal: Still 100 on the flooded meadow south of Wade Court at Langstone on Feb 26

Scaup: Surprisingly (in view of the diminished numbers of most duck species) there were still 28 Scaup at Abbotsbury in Dorset on Feb 26 (with three at Titchfield Haven on Feb 24)

Smew: The regular two were still at the Blashford Lakes on Feb 26 but the redhead which has been at the Thorney Island Deeps up to Feb 22 seems to have moved to the Farlington Marshes Deeps where one was seen on Feb 24

White-tailed Sea Eagle: See highlights above

Hen Harrier: A ring-tail was seen hunting the Thornham Marshes (by Thorney Great Deeps) at dusk on Feb 20 and maybe the same bird was over the adjacent Cobnor peninsula on Feb 25. During the New Forest survey over the weekend Feb 19/20 seven birds were seen at six sites

Sparrowhawk: These are now more visible as they start to patrol and display over their breeding territories (as do **Goshawks**, where they occur).

Buzzard: Last weekend's New Forest survey found 36 at 16 sites

Kestrel: The New Forest survey only found one Kestrel, confirming previous evidence of a marked decline in the species

Coot: The large number in Emsworth harbour this winter has not yet dispersed and around 100 were seen as late as Feb 24

Common Crane: 80 were seen at a German site on Feb 21 and 12 in the Netherlands on Feb 22 but thereafter daily numbers on the continent were just ones and twos. On Feb 22 an off course single bird was over the Horsham area

Stone Curlew: The first bird to be reported in Britain this year was at Martin (near Fordingbridge) on Feb 21

Lapwing: These are now returning to breeding territories in large numbers (some 20,000 were on the move in the Netherlands on Feb 26) but some are already back - I saw at least 5 pairs on the Gipsies Plain grassland immediately south of Havant Thicket on Feb 24

Knot: An estimated 2000 were in Chichester Harbour seen from Cobnor Point on Feb 25

Purple Sandpiper: 16 were at Southsea Castle on Feb 26 and larger than usual numbers were at several south coast sites as the departing winter birds move east

Long-billed Dowitcher: The Dorset bird has been oscillating between Radipole and Lodmoor this week - still present on Feb 26

Woodcock: Two at Dungeness on Feb 24 suggests return passage to the continent

Spotted Redshank: The Nore Barn (Emsworth) bird was still present on Feb 22

Common Sandpiper: Wintering birds were still at Broadmarsh on Feb 22 and on the Itchen in Southampton on Feb 24 with two at Exeter on Feb 23 but a count of five feeding together at Prawle on the Devon coast suggests possible early migrants though they do not normally arrive until April

Med Gull: These are now well established in the Havant area and I heard them over my garden on Feb 23 and saw several on the Gipsies Plain fields at Havant Thicket on Feb 24

Common Gull: A report of an estimated 4000 seen off Chidham Point (south of Prinsted) in Chichester Harbour on Feb 25 was surprising. I assume these were partly birds returning from inland fields to roost in the harbour at night and partly birds on passage joining them.

Great Blackback Gull: Another large count this week was of 1300 of these at Cuckmere Haven near Beachy Head on Feb 26

Sandwich Tern: As migrant birds start to arrive they are appearing for the first time at places where they have not wintered - Dungeness on Feb 20, Durlston on Feb 24 and three at Rye Harbour on Feb 25

Black Guillemot: First I have heard of this year was at St Just in Cornwall on Feb 25

Puffin: Two were off Pendeen in Cornwall on Feb 24 and the first to be seen at Portland was settled on the sea there on Feb 25

Short-eared Owl: The number at the east end of the Thorney Great Deeps rose to 5 on Feb 24

Sand Martin: One was at Exeter (Double Locks) on Feb 23 with two there the next day and Christchurch Harbour had its earliest ever on Feb 25 (previous earliest was Mar 5)

Swallow: Another report from Cornwall of one at Veryan on Feb 22

Meadow Pipit: First report of parachuting song flights comes from Reculver on the north Kent coast where ten were seen on Feb 25

Scandinavian Rock Pipit: It is now possible to pick these out as they acquire summer plumage and singles were seen at Reculver on the north Kent coast on Feb 26 and 27

Waxwing: Another 21 reports from Dorset, Hants and Sussex this week shows they are still with us. A new site was Knowle village just north of Fareham (28 seen on Feb 26) and in Havant 20 were seen on Feb 23 by the Petersfield Road in Leigh Park (just south of the Crossland Road junction)

Stonechat: Still very scarce in southern England but a few sites are reporting returning birds (e.g. a male near the Thorney Little Deeps on Feb 24)

Wheatear: Portland had its first arrival on Feb 23

Blackbird: By Feb 26 at least six birds were heard singing in Havant as I cycled home at dusk and on Feb 27 I heard one early in the morning from my garden

Redwing: On Feb 20 a flock of 100 was in chattering pre-migration subsong at Farnborough and on Feb 23 another chattering flock at Bishopstoke (Eastleigh) had one bird giving its full territorial song

Chiffchaff: A bird singing from coastal Tamarisks at Climping near the mouth of the R Arun was considered to be the first migrant arrival as there had been no wintering birds in the area

Tree Creeper: Three were singing at Burton Pond near Pulborough on Feb 25 (and one was seen in Stansted Forest by the Havant Wildlife Group on Feb 26)

Rook: Portland reported its first spring passage bird on Feb 25

Hooded Crow: One still at Reculver on the north Kent coast on Feb 25

Brambling: First report of full song from a Chandlers Ford garden on Feb 26

Siskin: Song heard from a flock of 30 birds in the Milford (New Milton) area on Feb 21

Lesser Redpoll: Around 70 birds were moving through the Romsey area on Feb 24

Snow Bunting: Three seen on the north Kent coast on Feb 26 when 300 were seen over in the Netherlands

INSECTS

Butterflies

Brimstone: Warm sunshine of Feb 24 saw a mass emergence of around 70 butterflies at sites across Hants and Sussex

Red Admiral: Just five sighting this week

Small Tortoiseshell: One seen at Gosport on Feb 17 and another near Exeter on Feb 26

Peacock: 7 individuals seen, all on Feb 24. Two of them were seen to have been hibernating in Rabbit burrows

Comma: Just one seen in the Titchfield area on Feb 24

Moths

March Moth: First of year at Pulborough Brooks on Feb 25

Oak Beauty: Several at Pulborough Brooks on Feb 25 (first of year)

Hummingbird Hawkmoth: One seen hovering over nettles in the Gosport area on Feb 24 had presumably hibernated there

Small Quaker: Several at Pulborough Brooks on Feb 25 were first of year

Common Quaker: First for year in Thanet on Feb 23

Clouded Drab: First for year in Thanet on Feb 25

Grey Shoulder-knot: First for year in Thanet on Feb 26

The Satellite: First for year at Portland on Feb 23

Other Insects

Honey Bee: First out nectaring on Croci on Feb 24

Bombus pratorum: The first report of this Bumblebee from Northiam near Rye on Feb 26

Black-spotted Pliers Support Beetle (Rhagium mordax): See highlights above

PLANTS

Dawn Redwood tree: Male flower buds found in Havant Park. See highlights above

Common Whitlowgrass: Now in full flower along the north side of Waterloo Road in Havant - well worth seeing

Early (or Wood) Dog Violet: Flowering started in Havant on Feb 26 (see photos on my Diary pages)

Sweet Violet: Although these have been out since Jan 10 a general emergence of flowers at all sites started on Feb 22

Sticky Mouse-ear: Flower buds first noted on Jan 22

Cherry Plum: First flowers open in Wade Lane at Langstone (and no doubt elsewhere) on Feb 26

Cherry Laurel: The upright white candles of flower buds first noted on Feb 22

Wych Elm: First flowers seen on Southsea Common on Feb 25

Grey Poplar: A single old tree in Wade Court Road (Havant) which always flowers early was covered in catkins on Feb 26

Cow Parsley: General flowering seems to have started in Havant on Feb 26

Butterbur: The first male flower spikes were out unusually early at Brook Meadow in Emsworth on Feb 21 - the plants had been 'forced' to develop early by being submerged under the waters of the River Ems (I have seen this in previous years at the Racton site where some plants grow immersed in water filled ditches)

OTHER WILDLIFE

Common Seal: On Feb 24 several were "splashing, porpoising and playing chase" in Langstone Harbour seen from Farlington Marshes

Frogspawn: Lots in Forest track ruts at Stansted Forest on Feb 21

Adder: Warm sun on Feb 24 brought six out to bask at Durlston and several more at Pulborough Brooks

Medicinal Leech: These were starting to become active in ditches on Walland Marsh east of Rye on Feb 25, reminding Brian Banks of how they manage to survive summer drought, being able to revive even when 'dried to a crisp'.

WILDLIFE DIARY AND NEWS FOR FEB 21 - 27 (WEEK 08 OF 2011)

Sat 26 Feb

New flowers on Early Dog Violet, Cherry Plum and Grey Poplar

This morning the patch of **Early or Wood Dog Violets (*Viola reichenbachiana*)** in my garden had 25 flowers open for the first time (pictures below are of this patch) so I got on my bike to confirm that the flowers in the Havant cemetery were also open, which they were.

As I was out I thought I would carry on and look for other early flowers and in Wade Court Road I found the tall old **Grey Poplar** which grows opposite North Close was **covered with fluffy catkins** (and many of them were lying on the road below) - this tree always flowers much earlier than any others of its species that I know of.

Heading down the road towards Langstone I found another plant of **Cow Parsley** in flower before reaching my target at the southern end of Wade Lane where the first

few flowers were now open on the **Cherry Plum trees** which will soon turn the lane into a white walled and roofed tunnel when all the flowers are out.

Having stopped here I scanned the still partly flooded pony field south of Wade Court and found a **hundred Teal** with **five Little Egrets** and **one Grey Heron** in addition to the ever present **Moorhens**. On the harbour there were at least a **hundred Brent** and on the mud I counted **48 Shelduck** but little else.

Just one more new observation coming back up the Hayling Billy trail - on its west side north of the footbridge and south of the A27 tunnel a mass of flowers were out for the first time on the two large patches of **Sweet Violet** - maybe they have also started to flower at Nore Barn?

[Thu 24 Feb](#)

Dawn Redwood tree in Havant Park and Lapwings back at Havant Thicket

A walk around Havant this morning gave me my first sight of a **Sparrowhawk** for the year as what I guess was a female patrolled its territory to the north of my home. I only had a distant view of the bird flying away from me in straight and level flight with leisurely wing-beats (had it been a male I would have expected the Wood Pigeon like switchback flight - curving up then gliding down before climbing again). After that I went along the east side of Havant Park where, close to the Tennis courts entrance gates, a **Dawn Redwood tree** has been planted and has already grown to a respectable height. I have seen this tree several times recently from the footbridge over the rail tracks at Havant Station and been puzzled by what appear to be 15cm long 'catkins' hanging from the tips of all its branches. Although this tree, like the **Larches**, is a deciduous conifer I am pretty sure it does not have Hazel-like catkins for its male flowers so I took this opportunity of going to its base and retrieving one of these 'catkins' which I took home and photographed (note that the picture below shows the 'catkin' in the horizontal position whereas on the tree it would hang vertically down).

Dawn Redwood 'catkin' from Havant Park

I have searched Google to find out what the 'buds' are which stick out in pairs from the 'catkin' but I cannot be sure I have the answer - the nearest I can get is a picture on the webpage

<http://www.monumentaltrees.com/en/trees/dawnredwood/dawnredwood/> - if you scroll to the bottom of this page you will see two pictures contrasting **Dawn Redwood leaves** with those of a **Bald Cypress** and this does show the 'buds' at the base of each leaf pair. Reading the text on this webpage you will learn that while this species was prolific in pre-history it was not discovered as still existing until the 1940s when it was found in China and so my most authoritative tree book (Alan Mitchell's Field Guide to the Trees of Britain and Northern Europe, published in 1974) says of its male flowers that they had not yet (in 1972) been seen in Britain and that the female cones had only been seen in the hot summers of 1955 and 1959. My guess is that these 'buds' are the male flowers and the absence of female flowers or old cones is in line with the statement that female flowers only appear in a few hot summers.

Green Field Speedwell flower from St Faith's churchyard

The other photograph shown here is the flower of **Green Field Speedwell** which I found yesterday in St Faith's churchyard in Havant. Also yesterday, when in my garden, I heard the catlike calls of **Med Gulls** flying over for the first time this year and this afternoon I heard them again from the mass of **Black-headed** and **Common Gulls**, **Rooks** and **Jackdaws**, **Starlings** and **Pied Wagtails** all gathered on the wet fields of the Gipsies Plain when I visited Havant Thicket. The target of this visit was to see if the **Lapwings** which have bred on these fields in recent years have returned to set up territory and I was pleased to find at least 15 birds there with five or more pairs on the ground where they intend to nest. **Finally my apologies for implying in my previous entry for Feb 22 that John Goodspeed had made a change to his website requiring all visitors to it to set up a username and password before they could do so.** That was not the case and the fact that at the time I came to upload my webpage on Tuesday evening and found that I could not access his pages without setting up a user id seems to have been a brief aberration somewhere in the cyber world (John tells me he had done nothing to cause the problem). Both before and after that time there has been no repeat of that restriction on accessing his pages and if you want to look at the message from Michael Prior to which I referred you can do so at http://www.havantnature.net/wildlife_news.html

Tue 22 Feb

More Cow Parsley in flower and evening Blackbird song plus an oddly names Beetle

A short walk around Havant this morning gave me more **Common Whitlowgrass** in the forecourt of the Havant Arts Centre and then gave me my first sight of the vertical white candles that will soon open as flowers on **Cherry Laurel** bushes. Reaching Park Road South which brings cars from the A27 Langstone roundabout into Havant I took advantage of a short gap in the traffic flow to walk out to the central reservation and confirm that **Danish Scurvygrass** had started to flower there, and when another gap in the traffic allowed me back to the eastern pavement just south of the Solent Road junction, I made the best find of the morning - three plants of **Cow Parsley in full flower** a few yards south of the bus stop. I had already claimed to have found the first **Cow Parsley** of the year back on Feb 8 in Wade Lane in Langstone, but while the single plant I saw there was topped with a white froth of flowers I could not find a trace of them next time I passed that place. Today's flowers were on taller plants with distinct flower stems bearing the white umbels above the leaves and I am pretty sure they will not vanish.

Back at St Faith's church in the town centre I not only admired the massive display of **Sweet Violet** flowers under and around the old **Yew** in the north west corner of the church yard but found two new plants starting to flower - one was my first **Sticky Mouse-ear**, the other a new showing of **Grey Field Speedwell** which I had recorded elsewhere in January. Finally, on my way home, I noted one fully flowering **Goat Willow 'Pussy Paw' catkin** on a tree leaning over the cul de sac (for cars) called The Twitten.

Late in the afternoon I got out my bike and headed to Budds Farm where the midday high tide should be dropping. I went via the Brockhampton Stream which runs down the west side of Budds Farm and when I reached the old 'Corn Wharf' I saw a **Kingfisher** flying down stream ahead of me (I had an even better view of it when I reached the second bridge over the stream where **Kingfishers** have a

favourite perch on the massive circular metal sluice gate used as an emergency escape valve for storm water (and sewage) from Budds Farm. Also in this stream **two Egrets** were fishing.

Reaching the Hermitage Stream opposite the Broadmarsh slipway there was no sign of the **Common Sandpiper** that had been seen there a couple of days ago and, other than a mass of gulls returning to the harbour for their night roost, the only birds here were a few **Redshank** and **Oystercatcher**, one pair of **Gadwall** and around 10 **Wigeon** with a single **Goldeneye** and two **Red-breasted Mergansers**. Reaching **Budds Mound** I delayed a look at the pools until I had gone to the top of the mound to see what had brought a lot of machinery and a huge pile of topsoil here last week - it turned out that they had been laying a broad tarmac road from the end of the existing road (which brings you up to to viewing point overlooking the pools) out to a point from which you can view Langstone Harbour, and there they have used the topsoil to create a massive flowerbed (no plants so far!) in the centre of a roundabout. Ten years or so ago it was possible to drive up here and it made a superb viewing point for the aged or disabled to see birds in the harbour - then the 'Travellers' moved in and the battle between their wish to turn our countryside into a rubbish tip and the councils determination to stop them caused the innocent public to lose their right to vehicle access to the Mound. Now that parking is permitted at the foot of the mound it would seem it will soon be permitted again on its top.

On the pools today were **5+ Gadwall**, **10+ Tufted Duck**, a few **Pochard** but **apparently no Teal**. Continuing east along the sea wall I found that the Wildlife Trust volunteers who had been working on the South Moors last time I was there had removed all the brambles and small trees from the southern edge of the old IBM playing fields and maybe this had brought in the mixed flock of **6 Canada** and **50 Brent Geese** that were grazing there this evening. Along the shore of the genuine moors I passed a couple of **Meadow Pipits** (perhaps their long drawn out passage northwards has already begun?) and a single **Skylark**, but by now dusk had fallen and my only other note was of passing at least **half a dozen Blackbirds singing** from gardens alongside the Hayling Billy Trail as I rode up it just before 6pm.

One other thing worth a mention is my introduction to a 'new to me' **Longhorn Beetle species** via an email from Michael Prior (head forester of Stansted) which appeared on John Goodspeed's website yesterday (I had put a link to it but today I find casual viewers can no longer visit it without registering a user name and password). As well as mentioning further sightings of **Ravens** and masses of **Frogspawn** Michael says .. "We have recently found three specimens in two locations of the amazingly named **Black-spotted Pliers Support beetle, Rhagium mordax**." Putting **Rhagium mordax** into Google I found several pictures and information about this beetle and I found that it is widely distributed across Europe and not a rarity but I could not find answers to two questions that came to my mind. First was concerned with the timing of the report in mid-February as Google tells me that the adults of this beetle appear in May and are not seen after July so how did Michael see them 'recently'. The second is how on earth did the species get its English Name, especially the '**Pliers Support**' part of it which seems to be applied to several if not all the various Rhagium species. A good photo of this beetle can be seen at

<http://homepage.ntlworld.com/keith.balmer/BNHS/focuson/longhorns/html/gallery>.

[htm](#) and this brings out two points - one is that the antennae (the 'long horns') of this species are shorter than those of most other related species and the second is that the insect is photographed on fresh flowers - as the adult beetle only eats pollen this is the most likely place to see one during the brief few months of its adult life (R. mordax is said to favour **Hawthorn** and umbellifers like **Hogweed**)

WILDLIFE DIARY AND NEWS FOR FEB 14 - 20 (WEEK 07 OF 2011)

Highlights

See relevant entries in the full text below for each of these headlines

Bird News:

Wheatear: First migrant (ignoring the odd report of one in Sussex on Jan 10) was at St Mawes in Cornwall on Feb 15

Sand Martin: In Devon several hirundines (most likely Sand Martins) were reported on Feb 11 - three seen at Totnes and others reported by Radio Devon

Swallow: One seen at Camelford in Cornwall on Feb 16 was a more likely new arrival than the two previous reports from that county on Jan 10 and 23.

Sandwich Tern: The Portland Observatory reported one seen in Portland Harbour on Feb 16 as the first 'proper migrant'

White-tailed Sea Eagle: The bird that was seen almost daily near New Milton in south west Hampshire throughout January seemed to depart on Feb 3 when it was seen flying east (at least as far as Southampton Water). Since then there have been two unconfirmed reports of sightings back in the Lymington/New Milton area on Feb 9 and 12 but this week has maybe brought evidence that it has left England in a sighting of one over the Netherlands on Feb 19

Storks and Cranes returning to the near continent: Last week we reported the first sighting of **White Storks** back in Belgium on Feb 6 and this week there have been more reports of them in the low countries on five days. **Cranes** have also started to appear (mainly in Germany) since Feb 12 - they have now been reported on five days in increasing numbers (max 127 on Feb 17)

Oriental Turtle Dove: I was made aware of this species this week by reports of one in gardens at Chipping Norton though I missed news of it in the same area in mid-December. See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oriental_Turtle_Dove for pictures and information - it seems that the current bird is effectively a first for Britain as I read elsewhere that the only previous record was of a dead specimen. Another bird initially reported as a **possible Oriental Turtle Dove** has been seen in Folkestone recently (see <http://www.freewebs.com/folkestonebirds/index.htm> which has a photo) but that is now thought to be a young bird of our normal migrant species which does occasionally attempt to winter in Britain

Oddities: On Feb 14 a **Tufted Duck** was seen to catch and eat a 6 inch long fish in the Fort Brockhurst moat in Gosport and on Feb 16 **several Brent** in a flock of 203 on the sea off the North Devon coast **were described as "turning somersaults, end over end on the water"**. On Feb 15 a flock of **28 Marsh Tits** was seen at South Chailey (on the A275 north of Lewes) and on Feb 19 male **Bramblings** visiting a Chandlers Ford garden (near Eastleigh) were in **subsong**.

Insect News

Painted Lady: One seen near Titchfield on Feb 14 had probably managed to over winter here like a Red Admiral

Hebrew Character: These moths normally do not fly until March but one was found in Kent on Feb 17

Plant News

Other News

Humpback Whale: One reported off the Netherlands coast on Feb 16

Common Lizard: First report for the year is of one seen in the bill of a Great Grey Shrike on Feb 12 at a Devon site where the heathland had been burnt. The Lizard had presumably escaped death in the fire by hiding in some underground cavity but on emerging above ground there was no cover to hide it from the eyes of the Shrike

BIRDS

Great Crested Grebe: Most of the large flocks on the sea have now broken up but Dungeness reported 1710+ on the sea there on Feb 12 - probably a remnant of the 3000+ in Rye Bay on Jan 3

Slavonian Grebe: Still to be seen in small numbers along the south coast - locally one was at the entrance to Langstone Harbour on Feb 18 and then seen in Hayling Bay on Feb 19

Black-necked Grebe: On Feb 14 five were off the Hayling Oysterbeds and seven were in Portland Harbour but the only large count this week was of 32 still in the Carrick Roads at Fowey in Cornwall on Feb 13. At least one was still at the Blashford Lakes at Ringwood on Feb 17. Latest news is of nine in Langstone Harbour seen from Budds Mound on Feb 20 - these were in two groups (five and four) and there may be a connection with a group of four seen in Hayling Bay (due south of the Inn on the Beach) that day

Manx Shearwater: First report from the English Channel was of one off Portland on Feb 17

Balearic Shearwater: Another first report for the year was of 20 off the Spanish Coast on Feb 12

Storm Petrel: Yet another first report was of **8 Storm Petrels** seen close to the shore at Durlston on Feb 13

Bittern: Latest reports came from Brownwich Pond near Titchfield and from the Blashford Lakes at Ringwood, both on Feb 19 when another was seen near Fowey in Cornwall. On Feb 18 two were in Poole Harbour (Hatch Pond) and one was at the North Walls in Pagham Harbour. On Feb 17 one was seen at Burton Pond near Pulborough and back on Feb 12 one was seen at Ivy Lake (Chichester)

Cattle Egret: These were absent from south coast sites during January and the first report which I recorded was of one near the Fowey estuary on Feb 6. That particular bird was still present on Feb 19 and on Feb 17 two more turned up on the Dorset/Hampshire border beside the Ashford stream less than a mile west of Fordingbridge and they were still there on Feb 20. (My Feb 17 Diary entry gave the wrong location for these as Ashford near Kingsclere in the north of Hampshire)

Bewick's Swan: Feb 16 brought the highest count so far (278) at Slimbridge

Brent Goose: Feb 9 saw 918 more fly east past Dungeness with similar large counts of birds going east at Portland and Selsey, Worthing and Seaford. There is as yet no shortage of Brent in our local harbours (e.g. 520 at Emsworth on Feb 14) but a further 350 going east at Dungeness on Feb 18 suggests that there will be few left in a month's time

Red-breasted Goose: The bird which was to be seen in the Hook/Warsash area from Feb 4 to 6 may have flown to the Isle of Wight where one was seen at the Bembridge Marshes on Feb 11 (though that may have been a local escape from the same source - Flamingo Park - as the two seen there on Feb 3). As there was no mention of the Hook bird (or the bird in the Titchfield area during January) being ringed we must assume that the one which appeared in the Pennington (Lymington) area on Feb 14, and which had a red ring on its right leg (as did the bird seen in the Pilsey area of Chichester Harbour from Oct 1 to 4) was different to the others reported this year though it may have been the ringed bird seen near the Exe estuary in December. This ringed bird in the Lymington area was last reported on Feb 19. The difficulty in following these birds as they move from site to site is compounded when we read the list of 13 individual birds in the UK provided by Lee Evans on Jan 31 (that included a family of 5 birds in Suffolk)

Ruddy Shelduck: Another unsolved problem of identity relates to a bird originally reported as a Ruddy Shelduck at Lymington on Feb 16 but subsequently thought to be a bird of mixed parentage including genes of **Australian Shelduck** in its inheritance. That story is also complicated by distant flight sightings of a '**Ruddy Shelduck**' at the mouth of Chichester Harbour on Feb 12.... was this the same bird that was later seen at Lymington?

Scaup: With most of our wildfowl now on the move it is good to see that a male Scaup has been on the Thorney Island Little Deeps for over a week (from Feb 12 to 19 at least)

Velvet Scoter: A flock of 12 has been a regular sight on the sea off Seaton in Devon from Feb 12 to 19 at least and another group estimated as 12 birds was in Rye Bay on Feb 13

Smew: It would seem that several of our winter visitors have now left us but two were still being reported at the Blashford Lakes on Feb 20 and (on Feb 18) one was still at the Exe estuary in Devon

Goosander: 155 of these were still roosting at the Blashford Lakes (Ringwood) on Feb 14 and a pair was still in the Cuckmere valley on Feb 13

White-tailed Sea Eagle: A report of one in the Netherlands on Feb 19 could be a final sighting of the bird that was in the New Milton area of south west Hampshire from Jan 1 to Feb 3 after being seen in the Pulborough area on Dec 11 and then flying west to Titchfield Haven on Dec 12 before disappearing until Jan 1. Since the bird was seen to head east from its winter site on Feb 3 there have been two puzzling reports of it back in Hampshire but I will be very surprised if I see any more reports of it in England.

Buzzard: Although sightings of these are now commonplace throughout southern England (especially at this time of year when they are soaring and diving over their chosen nest sites) my eye was caught on Feb 17 by news of one bird being hit by a van on the road passing the sawmill at Stansted Forest - both its wings were broken and it had to be destroyed.

Grey Partridge: Five reports this week are of pairs seen on their own in unusual locations - I suspect these are not genuine wild birds (which would probably know where to find nest sites and to get to them without attracting attention from bird watchers) but are lucky survivors of the hundreds of reared birds released last autumn and now searching for nest sites without the knowledge they would have acquired had they been hatched in wild nests.

Golden Pheasant: Older birders in the Havant area still remember finding these colourful birds at Kingley Vale (where one could still be seen in 2003) and earlier in the QE Country Park area (where they disappeared in the late 1990s). These memories were roused by reading of three birds seen this week on Brownsea Island in Poole Harbour where they survive (along with **Red Squirrels**)

Coot: A large flock (estimated as 130 birds on Feb 19) has been in Emsworth Harbour since mid-December (150 on Dec 14 and 186 there on Jan 8). In previous years these birds used to fill the nearby Little Deeps but were not normally seen in the open water of Chichester Harbour - now the situation is reversed but I have no idea of what has brought about the change.

Common Crane: The first to return to the near Continent were two birds in Belgium on Feb 12 with 70 seen on Feb 13. Since then the birds have continued to arrive and latest news is of 127 in Germany on Feb 17

Great Bustard: The two birds which had been near The Fleet (Weymouth) from Jan 20 to Feb 8 become just one seen on Feb 10 and 12 but not reported since - probably now back on Salisbury Plain.

Golden Plover: Feb 14 seems to have seen a surge of birds heading north after wintering south of the English Channel - 1700 were seen on the Isle of Sheppey and another report of an estimated 1200 came from the Oare Marshes near Faversham (possibly the same birds heading for Sheppey and then further north). Smaller flocks have been reported at other sites along the south coast this week (including, on Feb 12, two birds seen on the mud of Chichester Harbour off the west end of the Thorney Great Deeps)

Lapwing: These are also heading back to breeding areas with reports of around 4000 in Belgium on Feb 12 and over 5000 in the Netherlands on Feb 13

Long Billed Dowitcher: The bird that was at Lodmoor (Weymouth) from Jan 3 to 20, and then at Poole Park from Jan 31 to Feb 14, arrived back at Lodmoor on Feb 18. It may be the same bird that turned up at Colliford Lake in Cornwall on Sept 30 but the continuous record of its sightings began at Lodmoor on Nov 8 and includes excursions to Devon in November, then to The Fleet in Dorset in December before going to Poole Harbour in February - after each trip it returns to Lodmoor.

Whimbrel: There seem to have been fewer reports of wintering birds than usual this year but when the Scillies Birding site was updated this week I was surprised to see that 8 birds were present there on Feb 12. One local wintering bird was still in Fishbourne Creek near Chichester on Feb 20

Common Sandpiper: The elusive wintering bird occasionally seen at the mouth of the Hermitage Stream where it reaches Langstone Harbour with the Broadmarsh Slipway on the west and Budds Farm shore on the east was seen again on Jan 20. As far as I know this is the first sighting of it since I saw it there on Dec 11

Med Gull: Feb 14 saw the very first of these back at breeding sites - 7 at the Hayling Oysterbeds and 'several' at Rye Harbour. By Feb 19 the number at the Oysterbeds had risen to at least 12

Leucistic ('white') Gulls: Reports of a genuine **Glaucous Gull** at Gunner Point on Hayling (east side of Langstone Harbour entrance) this week have been complicated by sightings in the same area of a **Leucistic Herring Gull** which could easily be mistaken for either an **Iceland** or **Glaucous Gull**. What was probably the same **leucistic Herring Gull** has also been seen at Weston Shore near the mouth of Southampton Water where there has also been a **leucistic Black-headed Gull**

Caspian Gull: A birder at Pegwell Bay near Ramsgate in Kent reported the presence of **six different Caspian Gulls** on Feb 18

Slaty-backed Gull: The elusive bird of the Thames estuary rubbish tips which was a first for Britain when it was identified at Rainham on Jan 14 was seen back at Rainham on Feb 16

Sandwich Tern: One seen in Portland Harbour on Feb 16 was described on the Portland website as the '**first proper migrant**' to reach Britain this year (as distinct from the various wintering birds that have stayed along the south coast)

Guillemot: A count of 332 seen on the Durlston cliff breeding ledges on Feb 17 was said to be 110 more than bred there in 1994

Razorbill: Also reported in the Durlston news for Feb 17 was a small group of **10 Razorbills on the sea 'touching beaks and cooing'**.

Turtle Dove: Very few of these stay in this country over winter but it seems a single juvenile has done so in the Folkestone area this winter, being seen in December and again on Feb 16

Oriental Turtle Dove: See the entry in the Highlights section of this summary for news of what seems to be the first live example of this species to have been on view in this country

Sand Martin: Although not definitely identified as **Sand Martins** several '**Martins**' were seen in Devon on Feb 11

Swallow: One seen at Camelford in Cornwall on Feb 16 could well have been the precursor of our summer birds (whereas the previous sightings in the county on Jan 10 and 23 must be regarded as isolated oddities)

Waxwing: This winter's invasion of **Waxwings** is not yet over - this week has brought another 20 reports with five on Feb 18 (including a flock of 97 at the Yateley gravel pits on the Hants/Berks border)

Wheatear: First for the year was a female at St Mawes in Cornwall on Feb 15

Marsh Tit: Among five reports of the species this week one count of 6 birds in the New Forest Fritham area on Feb 11 is not surprising but a Sussex report of 28 at South Chailey on Feb 15 is unusual if the birds were in a flock as the report seemed to imply

Penduline Tit: One at Dungeness on Feb 18 - two more had been seen at Rainham in Essex on Feb 7

Raven: Further indications of **Ravens** settling in Hampshire come in reports of a pair seen mating on Hurst Beach at Lymington on Feb 12 and of a pair displaying over Chilling Barn in the Warsash area on Feb 17. Locally two were seen flying west over The Kench (south Hayling) on Feb 19 while a sighting of **ten Ravens heading north over Portland Bill** on Feb 12 may suggest that the recent spread of these birds over southern England may be fuelled by immigrants from the south rather than expansion of our own west country population.

Starling: By Feb 15 the massive nightly roost at Thurlestone (south west Devon coast), which had peaked at more than 200,000 birds as recently as Jan 30, had dwindled to a very few birds

Chaffinch: These can now be heard singing almost everywhere as our winter resident population is swollen by birds returning from abroad. On Feb 18 a small influx of 120 arrived off the sea at Sandwich Bay and on Feb 19 the report of the WeBS count at West Wittering in Chichester Harbour included more than 150 Chaffinches.

Brambling: A birder living in Chandlers Ford near Eastleigh reported that several male **Brambling** coming regularly to his garden feeder were already in sub-song with full song expected from them before they leave in March

Siskin: Large numbers are now heading north through southern England. On Feb 16 an estimated 1400 were in the Low Countries and on Feb 18 650 were seen on the Hants/Berks border near Fleet. Locally Kevin Stouse was pleased to find a flock of 25 (plus **6 Redpolls**) in Havant Thicket this week

Bullfinch: These lovely birds are pretty to look at but do not have an equally lovely song - I think their mournful piping calls are better to listen to than the rather chaotic jumble of scratchy notes which serves them for a song but nevertheless hearing the song has some interest for a birder as it is not often heard so a report of a pair seen at the Blackwater Arboretum in the New Forest on Feb 16 with the male singing for a whole 20 minutes is of some interest

Rustic Bunting: On Feb 18 Lee Evans visited Biggleswade in Bedfordshire and had a good view of one which he describes in his blog at <http://rarebirdsainbritain.blogspot.com/> - interestingly he says that while in that area he saw some **500 Corn Buntings**

INSECTS

Butterflies

Brimstone: Late news of one at Pulborough on Feb 8 has been followed by sightings of singles at Andover and Stockbridge on Feb 12, then at Lovedean (Waterlooville) and Washington (north of Worthing) on Feb 17

Red Admiral: Just one sighting near Crowborough on Feb 17

Painted Lady: One nectaring on Winter Heliotrope near Titchfield on Feb 14 is unlikely to have been a migrant (no other coastal sightings) and was I suspect an insect that had managed to overwinter here in the same way that many Red Admirals do

Peacock: Just one seen this week at Steyning in the Worthing area on Feb 17

Moths

Brown-spot Flat-body (*Agonopterix alstroemeriana*): First for the year in the Thanet area of Kent on Feb 12

Hebrew Character: A very early specimen in Thanet on Feb 17 - the species is normally on the wing in March and April

Other Insects

Blow Fly: A large shiny black fly was sunning itself on a Laurel leaf in my Havant garden on Feb 20. I have not been able to identify it and at first thought it was a large Hover Fly similar to *Volucella pellucens* or *Leucozona lucorum* but it lacked the broad white 'waist band' which both of these wear so my searches turned to the Blow Flies such as the 'Blue bottles'. Any suggestions welcome

PLANTS

Common Yew: Males started to shed their pollen in Warblington church yard on Feb 14

Common Whitlowgrass: The three early flowering specimens at Waterloo Road in Havant suddenly become 60+ on Feb 17

Danish Scurvygrass: Plants lining the Petersfield Road in Havant where it runs past the Havant College site had started to flower on Feb 17

Abraham Isaac Joseph (*Trachystemon orientalis*): John Goodspeed found this flowering in his Portsdown Hill garden on Feb 17 making me wonder if it can still be found growing 'wild' on Catherington Lith where refugees from the bombing of Portsmouth established makeshift homes and gardens during the war.

Smooth Hawksbeard: This was still flowering in my garden on Jan 9 but had not been seen anywhere by me until a single flower re-appeared in my garden on Feb 18

OTHER WILDLIFE

Fox: These are normally noisy during their mating season in January but maybe that season is later than usual this year as the only report I have seen is of one barking in a Brighton garden at 4:15am on Feb 16

Common Porpoise: Two were seen off the south Devon coast on Feb 16 and on Feb 19 the corpse of one was found further west along the same coast with its head missing (possibly decapitated by the propeller of a large ship?)

Humpback Whale: One seen off the Netherlands on Feb 16

Fallow Deer: A white buck with an impressive head of antlers was seen somewhere east of the river Arun upstream of Arundel and south of the Downs

Water Vole: The weather is not yet warm enough to bring Water Voles out except for essential food gathering but one was seen at Brook Meadow in Emsworth on Feb 15. This is the second sighting for the year at this site - for more info about the site and the species go to

<http://www.brook-meadow.hampshire.org.uk/bm-water-voles.html>

Frog: New reports of **Frogspawn** this week come from the Cowplain area of Waterlooville on Feb 15, the Ferring Rife area of Worthing on Feb 16 and John Goodspeed's Portsdown Hill garden in Feb 20 (first report for the year was on Feb 5)

Adder: Three reports so far of Adders coming out of hibernation to bask in sunshine at Durlston on Feb 14, at Pulborough Brooks on Feb 15 and at the nearby Burton Mill Pond on Feb 17

Common Lizard: First report for the year is of one seen in the bill of a Great Grey Shrike on Feb 12 at a Devon site where the heathland had been burnt. The Lizard had presumably escaped death in the fire by hiding in some underground cavity but on emerging above ground there was no cover to hide it from the eyes of the Shrike

Grey Mullet: A group of five fish seen in the Emsworth Marina water on Feb 12 were thought to be this species. Checking on the season when these fish are likely to be seen I found

<http://www.fishing-guernsey.co.uk/Species/species.asp?SpeciesType=Grey%20Mullet> which says (from the fisherman's point of view) .. "The main season for all of these fish would be between May and February - the larger fish seem to show more in the colder winter months." Another source tells me that their spawning season is from January through to April so these fish may now be coming inshore to breed

WILDLIFE DIARY AND NEWS FOR FEB 14 - 20 (WEEK 07 OF 2011)

Thu 17 Feb

Danish Scurvygrass flowering in Havant and a Swallow in Cornwall

Today's sunshine saw me on my bike in Havant for a short ride around the town with the best bit being when I got off it to walk along the pavement where the Havant College site borders the Petersfield road. Here the grass between the pavement and the road gets a liberal dose of salt washed onto it by cars during the winter cold weather, providing an ideal soil for the growth of seashore plants, in particular **Danish Scurvygrass** which grows in an unbroken strip for three or four hundred yards. Although not yet obvious to passing motorists my walk revealed that **the majority of these plants already had small white flowers** - in a week or so they will be unmissable by motorists, even at the permitted 40 mph

Back in the saddle, riding past the southern side of the Havant Health Centre, I saw no sign of the **Intermediate Periwinkle flowers** that will soon add bright blue to the hedgerow but once again dismounting and walking close to the hedge revealed two very fresh flowers.

Back at home I added a new sound to my garden list when a **Great Spotted Woodpecker** started **drumming** in a nearby garden to add to the bird song which now includes at least two **Chaffinches** in full song as well as the **Song Thrushes, Dunnocks, Robins** and occasional **Greenfinch**.

Indoors at my computer I read of another **Swallow** seen yesterday at Camelford in Cornwall while in Devon I read of a puzzling observation described in these words .. "**203 Dark-bellied Brent** just off Penhill. **Some of the Brent were turning somersaults, end over end on the water.**"

Another odd sighting came from Folkestone where a **Turtle Dove** was reported yesterday (presumably it has been wintering there rather than being a new arrival). In Oxfordshire an **Oriental (or Rufous) Turtle Dove** was also seen yesterday at Chipping Norton for the fifth consecutive day (almost certainly the same bird seen half a mile away in mid-December). Portland reported the **first Manx Shearwater of the year** today and off the Netherlands a **Humpback Whale** was seen.

Locally the first **Adder** was seen today at Fishbourne near Chichester and Michael Prior witnessed a **Buzzard** being hit by a vehicle passing the Stansted Sawmill - with both its wings broken and no doubt other injuries he was compelled to kill it. At Gunner Point on Hayling an adult **Glaucous Gull** was seen (there is also a 'white' Herring Gull around south Hayling) and further afield near Ashord Hanger in north Hampshire today brought a **Cattle Egret**

[Wed 16 Feb](#)

Wheatear in Cornwall, Sand Martins in Devon and Adders in Dorset

My own outing today took me to the Hayling Oysterbeds where, as hoped for, I heard the cat like calls of **Med Gulls** from a pair in Stoke Bay and went on to see at least another five (possibly seven) silent birds in the Oysterbeds lagoon.

I saw little else of great interest but counted **127 Teal** on the Wade Court south meadow and **5 Egrets** on the north meadow (recently there have only been 3 there so just possibly new birds are arriving in the area and the Langstone roost count will start to rise from its nadir of 7). Another unexpected note was of a **singing Skylark** somewhere high over Langstone High Street.

Checking the internet today I read of the first **Wheatear** (unusually a female) seen yesterday at St Mawes in Cornwall while the Devon website had news of 3 hirundines (almost certainly **Sand Martins**) seen by a birder at Totnes on Feb 11 plus second hand news from non-birders (some of it via Radio Devon) of more hirundines seen that day elsewhere in the county. Another spring first came from Durlston where **Adders** were out and sunning themselves for the first time on Feb 14 (others were out at Pulborough Brooks on Feb 15). The **Wheatear** may not have been the very first to arrive as there was an isolated sighting of one on the Sussex Downs on Jan 10 but as that one was never seen again I am discounting it.

[Tue 15 Feb](#)

Two more signs of spring

Yesterday's sunshine brought news from the Hayling Oysterbeds that **the first Med Gulls had returned to Langstone Harbour** and that the evocative calls of seven of them had been heard marking a stage along our journey into spring at least as significant as the sighting of the first **Wheatear** or the call of the first **Cuckoo**.

This morning's dismal rain and wind could not prevent my enjoyment of another milepost event as I walked along Waterloo Road here in Havant and found that the three flowering plants of **Common Whitlowgrass**, which were first seen three weeks ago on Jan 26, had suddenly become 60 or more.

Had it been sunny this morning I would have extended my walk to the shops to take in the Havant cemetery where, at dusk last Saturday, I think I detected the first flower buds on the **Early Dog Violets** which must open soon. Without going out of my way to look for them I did enjoy the bright yellow 'cigar shaped' flower buds on more **Daffodils** in the grounds of Fairfield School.

WILDLIFE DIARY AND NEWS FOR FEB 7 - 13 (WEEK 06 OF 2011)

Highlights

See relevant entries in the full text below for each of these headlines

Bird News:

White Stork: The first to return to Belgium remind us that other spring migrants will soon be here

Brent Goose: Dungeness reports the first major departure of these winter birds on Feb 7

Ruddy Shelduck: One seen at Chichester Harbour entrance on Feb 12 was the first to get into the news this year (as on Feb 5 was a **Surf Scoter** at Dawlish Warren in Devon which has been lurking there since Nov 27)

Other new(ish) birds in the news this week are the **Iceland race of Redwing, Snowy Owl, Northern Harrier, Azorean Yellow-legged Gull, White-billed Diver** and **Penduline Tit**

White-tailed Eagle: Another unconfirmed report of it over the Lymington marshes on Feb 12

Buzzard: Nine were seen '**Sky dancing and Talon grappling**' on Feb 6

Black-tailed Godwits may be moving into the Avon valley (but the Nore Barn **Spotted Redshank** is still at Emsworth)

The 'new to Britain' **Slaty-backed Gull** in Essex has been refound for the second time

New(ish) **bird song** this week comes from **Rock Pipit, Grey Wagtail, Blackbird, Chaffinch, Redwing** (subsong), **Goldcrest** and **Lesser Redpoll Tree Sparrows** may be under a new threat from 'firewood pirates'.

Insect News

Both **Brimstone** and **Peacock butterflies** came out of hibernation on Feb 8
The first two species of **cross-channel migrant moths** have been found at Portland

Wasps and **Ladybirds** have been brought out of hibernation this week. A **Western Conifer Seed Bug** was found in the bath of a Portsdown Hill house and was difficult to identify as it does not yet appear in English Field Guides since it only arrived in Europe in 1999 (in Italy with timber from America) and was not seen in England until 2007. It is now widespread in southern England and has started to breed here. More info about the species is on the Natural History Museum website at

<http://www.nhm.ac.uk/nature-online/species-of-the-day/biodiversity/alien-species/leptoglossus-occidentalis/index.html>

Plant News

Goat Willow and **Cow Parsley** were both in flower this week

A couple of new local sites for **Mistletoe** have come to my attention

Other Wildlife

Frogspawn started to appear this week as **Great Crested Newts** and **Toads** returned to the water where they will breed (**Toads** suffering the usual road casualties)

News story of the week is the account of how **Alpacas staunchly defend their young against predators** and how they are trained by sheep farmers in America to protect the Lambs from Foxes. This story emerged from a **vivid account of watching Alpacas at Prinsted driving a Stoat away from a Rabbit to which it had already given a fatal bite before the Alpacas became aware of it.** Read the story for yourself on Brian Fellows website at <http://www.emsworthwildlife.hampshire.org.uk/0-0-0-wildlife-diary.htm> The story begins in his diary entry for Feb 9 with a supplementary entry on Feb 12

BIRDS

Red-throated Diver: On Feb 6 and 7 Hampshire birders in the Lymington/Hurst area had a taste of the large flocks of Divers that have been seen elsewhere on the south coast recently. A count of 146 was reported on Feb 6 increasing to 218 next day

White-billed Diver: A bird of this uncommon species was seen on Feb 7 in Shetland. The long staying **Pacific Diver** was still off Penzance on Feb 7

Red-necked Grebe: On Feb 6 one flew west past Selsey and was then seen off the south shore of Hayling

Slavonian Grebe: One was reported off the Hayling Oysterbeds on Feb 12 and nine were reported at Studland Bay in Dorset on Feb 7

Black-necked Grebe: Three were seen at the Hayling Oysterbeds on Feb 12 but the big numbers remain in Dorset with 70 at Studland Bay on Feb 7 and 56 there on Feb 10. In Cornwall there were 36 at Feock (Falmouth) on Feb 7 and 20+ there on Feb 11

Cormorant: The large flock which has been in Poole Bay (off Bournemouth) for the previous ten days or so seems to have peaked on Feb 8 with a count of 540. A separate count of 270 off Worthing on Feb 9 was probably an indication that the flock of 420 seen off Pagham Harbour on Feb 1 is still in that general area.

Bittern: Reports from nine sites this week show that these birds are still to be found all along the south coast from Kent to Cornwall. Counts of 3 birds came from Poole Harbour (Hatch Pond), Testwood Lakes (Southampton), and Castle Water at Rye Harbour

Cattle Egret: Very few of these around this winter so the arrival of one at Fowey in Cornwall on Feb 6 was welcome - still there on Feb 11

White Stork: The first two reports of returning migrants came from Belgium on Feb 6 and 7 (25 seen on Feb 6 but only a couple on Feb 7)

Brent Goose: Some are reported heading east along our south coast almost daily this week but the movement stepped up a gear on Feb 7 when more than 1000 went east off Dungeness (described on the observatory website as the first major movement of the spring). On Feb 9 the count of Brent flying east at Splash Point, Seaford, was 837 and on Feb 6 a Netherlands site reported 1737 Brent (probably birds from western France rather than England)

Red-breasted Goose: The bird seen along the Solent shore between Titchfield and Warsash since Jan 20 has not been seen anywhere since its last appearance on Feb 6

Ruddy Shelduck: The first to appear on the south coast this year was seen on Feb 12 over the Sussex side of Chichester Harbour entrance by Andy Johnson looking from Sandy Point on Hayling

Gadwall: On Feb 3 a record number of Gadwall were seen on the Budds Farm Pools at Havant but on Feb 8 there were none to be seen there and this pattern recurred at several sites including Emsworth Harbour. Later this week some were back in the area (I watched 10 fly in to the Thorney Little Deeps on Feb 12). Presumably these fluctuations in numbers are a reflection of the wintering population moving east in waves.

Scaup: On Feb 10 there were still 33 at Abbotsbury in Dorset and the single male that had appeared on the Thorney Little Deeps on Feb 8 was still there on Feb 12

Eider: The flock off East Head in Chichester Harbour which numbered 37 on Jan 31 had increased to 40 on Feb 1 and had 52 birds on Feb 8

Surf Scoter: An adult female has been wintering at Dawlish Warren in Devon since Nov 27 and was still there to be ticked on Feb 5 by Lee Evans on his tour of west country birding sites last weekend (as was the **Hooded Merganser** at Radipole)

Smew: The Thorney Deeps bird has not been seen since Feb 8 and one of the two birds that were at the Blashford Lakes on Feb 1 has disappeared but several of the other wintering birds may still be with us. On Feb 8 the Dungeness RSPB site was still reporting 8 birds and the Longham Lakes at Bournemouth still had 3 while on Feb 11 singles were still at the Blashford Lakes and West Bexington in Dorset

Red Breasted Merganser: As usual as the birds start to move east we see big 'flotillas' along the south coast and this week brought a report of 100+ off East Head in Chichester Harbour on Feb 8. On Feb 5 there were 84 in Portland Harbour and on Feb 8 I saw 16 at the mouth of the Langbrook Stream at Langstone.

Goosander: There were still 155 at the Blashford Lakes on Feb 9.

White-tailed Eagle: Regular sightings in the Downton area near New Milton ceased after Feb 2 and there was no confirmation of a claimed sighting over New Milton on Feb 9 though there has been a further claimed sighting over the Lymington marshes at midday on Feb 12 when three observers visiting from Reading saw what they thought was the Eagle - I would be happier to hear a report from locals who have seen the bird before.

Buzzard: On Feb 6 a group of 9 over the Amberley Wild Brooks area near Pulborough were watched '**sky dancing and talon grappling**' in the spring sunshine of that day

Great Bustard: The two birds spending a winter holiday by The Fleet in Dorset from their enforced stay on Salisbury Plain were both seen in the Moonfleet area on Feb 8 but only one was there on Feb 10

Avocet: Lee Evans visited Arne at the start of his west country tour on Feb 5 and 'click counted' 818 Avocets there. There were probably around 500 in the Exe estuary this week (count for Feb 3) and at least another 100 in north Kent (103 were there on Feb 11)

Purple Sandpiper: Another good count of 14 was made at Southsea Castle on Feb 12 (16 were there on Jan 15) but highest count this week was of 42 at Penzance on Feb 6

Black-tailed Godwit: A count of 61 at the Blashford Lakes in the Avon Valley on Feb 12 suggests that these birds have started moving into the Avon Valley as they normally do at this time of year

Spotted Redshank: The Nore Barn bird at Emsworth should stay there until well into March but it had not been reported since Jan 30 so I was pleased to see it on Feb 12

Med Gull: Two further small hints that these birds are starting to leave their coastal winter sites and return to the inland areas where they will be seen as they pair and feed prior to nesting came this week. At Pagham on Feb 9 half a dozen of the gulls were in roadside fields on the way to Church Norton and on Feb 12 four birds were on public grassland at Southsea

Slaty-backed Gull: The bird which was a first for Britain when it was found at the Rainham Marshes (east London) on Jan 14 remains very difficult to find but has been reliably reported on Feb 3 at Pitsea Landfill site in Essex and now has been seen again on Feb 6 at Hanningfield Reservoir (still in Essex)

Yellow-legged Gull: I was puzzled by news that on Feb 9 an **Azorean Yellow-legged Gull** had been found near St Just in Cornwall but a little research seems to tell me that this is a sub-species (**Larus michahellis atlantis**) of the normal **Yellow-legged Gull** more regularly seen along our south coast.

Sandwich Tern: The first migrant arrivals should be with us soon but it is always difficult to distinguish them from birds that have been wintering here (though the migrants do have two distinctive habits - one is that they stick to the coast (not

entering harbours) and the other is that they keep moving, hopefully leaving a trail of sightings along the coast. This week brought the first report that might have been of migrants - two were seen off Splash Point at Seaford on Feb 9. No wintering birds have been reported east of Brighton this winter but two birds seen at Selsey Bill on Feb 6 and assumed to be birds wintering in Chichester Harbour could (despite wintering here) have felt the call of spring and set off eastward.

Snowy Owl: First to appear in the UK this winter turned up on the Isle of Lewis on Feb 8. With it was another long distance traveller, a **Northern Harrier (Circus cyaneus hudsonius)**.

Little Owl: There is a good chance of seeing these owls in our area either at Hook (Warsash) or at the West Dean Woods (north of Chichester) but for locals in the Havant area it would be good to have the re-assurance that the birds based at Warblington Farm are still there so I was pleased, when walking south down Church Lane on Feb 11 and passing the old Black Barn at the farmyard, to hear a brief burst of loud calls coming from inside the barn as if something had briefly disturbed a Little Owl sleeping there.

Long-eared Owl: Birders normally have little friendship for dog walkers but there is an exception to every rule and an entry on the Oare Marshes website for Feb 8 describes an afternoon visit to the Oare reserve (on the north Kent coast near Faversham) which would have had little bird interest had it not been for dogs. The entry says .. "A male Marsh Harrier hunted over the west side of the reserve, but there was not much else until a pack of beagles started hunting the area west of the Ferry Inn on Sheppey. They flushed a Long-eared Owl roost, and there were 5 or 6 Long-eared Owls flying in all directions. Then they disturbed a Short-eared Owl on the foreshore which flew around for quite a while"

Short-eared Owl: One was still to be seen in bushes near the eastern security gate giving access to the military part of Thorney Island on Feb 9 and another was seen at Bransbury Common near Andover on Feb 8 - both these sites have been good for seeing the species in past years and I suspect there will be more sightings at both before the owls finally head north

Kingfisher: Of local interest on Feb 8 I disturbed a Kingfisher from a perch over the Langbrook Stream where it runs past the Langbrook Close houses not far south of the Langstone Technology Park approach road.

Rock Pipit: These seem to have started singing this week with reports from the Portsmouth Dockyard on Feb 7 and from Durlston on Feb 10. Those birds may well be intending to stay and breed here but others that have wintered here are probably already on return passage - at least that was what I thought on Feb 8 when walking along the South Moors shore at Langstone seeing (in addition to a close view of what I assumed was the regular winter bird still there) three more newcomers to the site which I assume were just passing through.

Grey Wagtail: Another report from Portsmouth Dockyard on Feb 7 is of the first **Grey Wagtail song** of the year (two birds were seen so maybe they will nest there). On Feb 8 a smart female was seen on the Lymbourne stream here in Havant

Waxwing: I think the number of sightings is at last starting to diminish though looking just at today's (Feb 13) Hampshire sightings I see there were 40 in Farnborough, 15 in Totton and 25 at New Milton

Blackbird: I am aware of three early reports of song on Jan 14 in Hollybank Woods, Jan 18 at Brighton and on Jan 24 in the Cosham area of Portsmouth but I think the season for general singing started on Feb 10 with a report from Devon followed by hearing the birds myself here in Havant on Feb 11 and 12

Redwing: One of the sure signs that Redwing are about to leave us is when they gather in trees and all burst into their Starling like communal sub-song - this was heard on Feb 6 from a flock of some 50 birds in the Rackham woods near Pulborough. An unconnected piece of information came on Feb 10 when a message on Hoslist made me aware that there is a distinctive Iceland subspecies of Redwing (*Turdus iliacus coburni*) - Wikipedia tells me that .. "The Redwing has two subspecies:

T. i. *iliacus*, the nominate subspecies described by Linnaeus, which breeds in mainland Eurasia.

T. i. *coburni* described by Richard Bowdler Sharpe in 1901, which breeds in Iceland and the Faroe Islands and winters from western Scotland and Ireland south to northern Spain. It is darker overall, and marginally larger than the nominate form."

Goldcrest: The first report of song that I have seen came from Durlston on Feb 8 followed by one from Lavington Common near Pulborough on Feb 10 and this is supported by Tony Gutteridge who this week told me he had heard their song 'recently'.

Penduline Tit: Two of these (first I know of for the year) were at the Rainham Marshes in east London on Feb 7

Tree Sparrow: The Ash Tree in which the last pair to be seen at Warblington Farm nested some 20 years ago is still standing and I am pretty sure that lack of nest sites is not the only or major cause of this species vanishing from southern England but nevertheless it is worrying to hear from Sean McMinn on the RX (Rye Bay) website that while driving around the lanes on the Walland Marsh (east of Rye) he has noticed recently an increasing number of roadside piles of sawdust which he believes to be the result of an increased demand for fire wood as fuel prices escalate and certain people are finding it profitable to collect 'free' wood from the countryside and sell it on. On these marshes, where Tree Sparrows still breed, there are few trees and if this practice continues it could well drive the Sparrows away for lack of nest sites.

Chaffinch song: The first I know of was heard at Durlston on Feb 3 with Brian Fellows hearing one in Emsworth on Feb 6. I think I heard one distantly on Feb 7 but definitely found one in full song at Warblington on Feb 11

Lesser Redpoll: Another 'first song' report is for Redpoll in the Pulborough area on Feb 8

INSECTS

Butterflies

Sunshine and warmth on Feb 8 brought out the first real wave of spring butterflies

Brimstone: Five sightings on Feb 8 including a female at Cove (Fleet) and males at Kingley Vale near Chichester, Rockford Common near Ringwood, Leigh Park in Havant and Bexhill near Hastings

Red Admiral: Another five reports for dates from Feb 3 at Lee on the Solent to Havant on Feb 9

Small Tortoiseshell: One at Durlston on Feb 8 but as this one was found in a house it could have been roused by factors other than the external temperature

Peacock: Two genuine outdoor sightings, both on Feb 8, at Kingley Vale and Ventnor on the IoW

Moths

Portland reports the **first two species of cross Channel migrants**

White-shouldered House Moth: In a Thanet (Kent) house on Jan 30

Winter Shade: First of year near Haywards Heath on Feb 8

Rush Veneer: One of the two migrant species in the Portland trap on Feb 12

Brown Plume (*Emmelina monodactyla*): First report from Thanet on Feb 7

Mottled Grey: First report from Portland on Feb 8

Spring Usher: First was at Fareham on Feb 9 with one in Thanet of Feb 10

Dark Sword-grass: First migrant of the year at Portland on Feb 10

Dark Chestnut: First of year in Thanet on Feb 10

Other Insects

Common Wasp: Several Queens seen in the Chailey Common area near Haywards Heath on Feb 8 along with several unspecified Bumblebees

Buff-tailed Bumblebee (*Bombus terrestris*): I saw what I think was this species flying at Langstone on Feb 8

7-spot Ladybird: I saw one in a Langstone High Street garden on Feb 8 when several Ladybirds were out at Chailey Common

Western Conifer Seed Bug: One found in John Goodspeed's bath at his Portsdown Hill home on Feb 9 - see more info in Highlights section above

PLANTS

Winter Aconite: Flowers seen in the 'Woodland Burial' area of the Warblington cemetery extension on Feb 11 may not have been wild but were nevertheless welcome

Sweet Violet: By no means the first of the year but the first general outburst of fresh flowers was seen in St Faith's churchyard on Feb 11

Yellow-flowered Strawberry: A single flower seen in Juniper Square on Feb 8 was the first I have seen this year (though it could not be re-found later in the week)

Mistletoe: I learnt of two new sites for this during this week - one was in a Bridge Road garden in Emsworth where the plant was in flower, the other was in the old cemetery at Warblington where it was potentially under threat from tree management/hedge cutting currently taking place there

Goat Willow: The very first tree to put out golden anthers on its 'Pussy Paw' catkins was seen at Southmoor Lane in Havant on Feb 8

Cow Parsley: Also seen on Feb 8 a single plant was flowering in Wade Lane at Langstone

Green Field Speedwell: The first flowers I have seen this year were growing as weeds in a Langstone High Street garden on Feb 8 - I saw another plant flowering in Pook Lane at Warblington on Feb 11

Elder: Leaves were well developed in hedgerow trees at Warblington on Feb 11

Daffodil: First flowers on cultivated plants had been seen in Emsworth on Jan 31 but I did not see any for myself until Feb 12

OTHER WILDLIFE

Stoat: See the headline item above about **Alpacas defending a rabbit from a Stoat**

Sika Deer: 24 (including 4 males) feeding on Poole Harbour saltings at Arne on Feb 5

Frogspawn: The first of four reports I have seen this week came from Northiam (north of Hastings) on Feb 5. Next was from Fareham on Feb 8, then Devon on Feb 10 and finally north Kent on Feb 11

Toads heading for breeding ponds: Also in the Northiam area Brian Banks found the first six road casualties on Feb 10 after Toads had started to cross roads on their way to breeding ponds

Great Crested Newts: Common Newts had started to re-appear in garden ponds in the Rye area on Jan 12 but the first **Great Crested Newts** were not seen in Walland Marsh ditches until Feb 7 and had probably only been there for a couple of days

Fungi: Nothing much to report though I did find **Black Bulgar** in the Nore Barn woodland at Emsworth on Feb 12

WILDLIFE DIARY AND NEWS FOR FEB 7 - 13 (WEEK 06 OF 2011)

Thu 10 Feb

News round-up

With rain discouraging out door activity but with interesting news coming in from the internet I thought others who may not have seen it would be interested in a summary of some things that have interested me.

First Frog-spawn: The first report of **Frog Spawn** this year comes from Fareham where it appeared in Tony Tindale's garden on Feb 8. Tony is one of the 'Three Amigos' whose blog (under that name) is among my favourites, which reminds me that **I have just updated the Links page of my website to include, amongst other changes, a link to the Three Amigos** - if you check it out you can see a photo of the Frogspawn and if you scroll down you will also find one of the Three Amigos (following pictures of a couple of pretenders - including the BBC Top Gear trio).

The blog entry preceding that reporting the Frogspawn has news of another first for the year - a **Spring Usher moth** in Tony Tindale's trap.

Under-water moths: Another item of moth news extended my knowledge of moths, namely that some moth species have larvae that develop under water and that requires the females which lay the eggs to do so underwater. In some species the females lay the eggs close to the water surface but in other species the adult females swim down under water to deposit their eggs (these females are wingless like other moth species which lay their eggs on the leaves and fruit of trees).

Two species of moth that can be found in Hampshire and which have aquatic larvae are the **Ringed China-mark** and the **Brown China-mark**.

I learnt this from the Hampshire Biodiversity Centre newsletter which has just been published online and which you can read as a pdf by going to http://www3.hants.gov.uk/biodiversity/hbic/hbic-news_events/hbic-news-newsletter.htm which lists the current and all previous newsletters available for anyone to download. The Open University ISpot website tells me that this underwater lifestyle is adopted by several hundred species worldwide and that the females of at least one species never emerge from the water (though they do come to the surface to mate with winged males) - see <http://www.ispot.org.uk/node/98451>

Spring butterflies: Some hibernating butterflies inevitably get disturbed during the winter and are seen long before they should emerge - **Red Admirals** are among the most frequently seen but any species can appear as witnessed by the Durlston Ranger who in the Durlston daily report for Feb 9 tells of a **Small Tortoiseshell** seen in her kitchen (presumably on Feb 8) suggesting that it had been aroused by heat in the house, though the air temperature on Feb 8 was sufficient to bring out a number of butterflies, among them **Brimstones** in Havant and at Rockford Common (Ringwood), plus one at Bexhill in Sussex, and a **Peacock** at Blackgang Chine on the Isle of Wight.

Miscellaneous wildflower news: Not strictly wild flower news, but nevertheless very satisfying to me, was **my discovery of the name of a shrub whose dark evergreen leaves and impressively long catkins I had seen in a Langstone garden on Feb 8**. It is not an uncommon species and I have seen it in previous years in several places but never before been able to give it a name. Now, thanks to Google, I know it to be called **Garrya elliptica (Coast Silk-tassel)**, a species which has several cultivars which may look different but share the features I mentioned above and whose catkins are just starting to open in Hampshire. A good **photo and background info** can be found at the Royal Horticultural Society website page

<http://www.rhs.org.uk/Gardens/Rosemoor/About-Rosemoor/Plant-of-the-month/January/Garrya-elliptica--James-Roof->

Two other snippets that interested me were found in the HBIC newsletter mentioned above. The first was that **Wild Clary**, which is rare in Hampshire but which was discovered by Brian Fellows in 2010 growing on an Emsworth roadside (north end of Christopher Way), was also to be seen that year at Fort Cumberland in Southsea (not sure if the site was accessible to the public). Even rarer was a find of **Great Lettuce** close to the Fawley Oil Refinery - The Hants Flora lists only three sites in the county for this species - two are in the Aldershot/Farnborough area and this Fawley site is the third and the species was recorded there from 1974 to 1993 by Paul Bowman (one of the three authors of the Hants Flora). Paul sadly died of a heart attack while swimming in Southampton Water close to this site so it is good news that 'his plant' lives on.

More Brent leaving and the return of the Eagle?: Brent Geese have probably been leaving for their breeding areas since Jan 10 when three flew east past Seaford but the first significant report of passage came on Jan 29 when 175 flew east past Dungeness. Feb 6 brought news of 110 going east at Selsey Bill and another 144 passing Dungeness but the first major movement was on Feb 7 when Dungeness reported 1000+ going east. Across the Channel the Trektellen website noted a count of 1737 Brent at a Netherlands coastal site as 'Remarkable' on Feb 6 so maybe some birds from the French coast were also on the move.

On the subject of the possible return of the **White-tailed Sea Eagle** to Hampshire after it was seen to fly east from the New Milton area on Feb 3 (and known to have got as far as Hythe on Southampton Water by mid-day) I see that there has been one report of it over a New Milton garden on Feb 9 but that is unsupported by any other reports and, while I have no information about its interaction with Crows on previous occasions, I wonder if the comment with this new report (that the Eagle as "Ducking and diving chased by corvids ") is not more indicative of Crows chasing a Buzzard rather than an Eagle?

Raccoon loose in Hampshire?: For an 'and finally' item I see that the HBIC Newsletter mentions that it has heard of a Raccoon visiting a Ringwood garden

Stoat deprive of its dinner by Alpacas: After writing 'and finally' above I had a look at Brian Fellows' web diary entry for yesterday (Feb 9 though when I looked it was dated Feb 8 and the Feb 8 entry was dated Feb 7!) and was gripped by the account (supplied by Caroline French) of **how the small flock of 8 Alpacas that are well known long term residents at Thornham Farm** (on the single track private road joining Thornham Lane on Thorney Island to Prinsted village seafront) **had successfully prevented a Stoat from carrying off a Rabbit which it had mortally wounded.**

Do read the story for yourself (at <http://www.emsworthwildlife.hampshire.org.uk/0-0-0-wildlife-diary.htm>). I did not think anything would deter a Stoat from taking home its rightful dinner but it seems I was wrong despite having in the past **watched a Stoat carry (or rather drag) the corpse of a Rabbit**, probably weighing two or three times its own weight, **for hundreds of yards through woodland where fallen trees blocked the direct**

route. I have also seen, even longer ago when the verges of the Billy Trail in Havant were cut by a man with a scythe, **the corpse of a Stoat (its mouth still open in a scowl of defiance) which had refused to give way to the scyther and had died in the attempt to stop him clearing the grass which the Stoat claimed as its territory.**

Tue 8 Feb

First Cow Parsley and Goat Willow flowers

A lovely spring day saw me walking down the Langbrook Stream (where I saw an unexpected **Kingfisher**) to the South Moors (where **a pair of Buzzards** were also unexpected - I have several times seen a single bird crossing the moors on the way to and from Budds Farm but this is the first time I have seen two together here). Before going out onto the moors I checked the **Giant Butterbur** plants and found them thriving (usually the outer leaves are eaten by **Rabbits** as soon as they appear but today several plants were untouched (but their flowers not yet open) Also on the Moors today was a big turn out of Hampshire Wildlife Trust volunteers, some replacing a fence, others with hoe like tools maybe digging out thistles from the old IBM playing fields (or maybe removing plants left over from the unsuccessful bird seen plantation which is now being turned back to grass) while a third team were clearing brambles from the southern end of that field. At the exit gate from the Moors onto Southmoor Lane the **Goat Willow was now in flower** (a good dozen of the catkins had turned golden)

On Budds Mound some other large scale activity was being undertaken (presumably by Havant Borough) which seemed to involve the introduction of large amounts of topsoil. On the pools the **Swan pair were now back**, a **Little Grebe was trilling** and there were good numbers of **Teal, Pochard** and **Tufted Duck** but seemingly **no Gadwall** (after last week's report of more than 50 there) Heading back along the seawall I had a good view of a **Rock Pipit** and at the mouth of the Langbrook I was surprised to see **two or three more**. Out on the harbour water at least **16 Mergansers** and a similar number of **Wigeon** (but again **no Gadwall**) were present

Back at Langstone village the high water had around **300 Brent** and a good show of **Teal** and more than **20 Shelduck** as well as plenty of **Black-headed Gulls** with a few **Herring** and **Common**. In the air a flock of around **100 Lapwing** flew over the Northney area. On the Millpond **three Little Egrets** were sitting out the tide (with four seen earlier on the South Moors this total of seven birds probably represented the current local population) and one of the resident **Swans** was on the Pond with its mate nearby on the sea. The single female **Tufted Duck** was still present.

Heading up Wade Lane I counted just over **50 Teal** on the flooded field south of Wade Court. Also in the field I was pleased to see a single motionless **Mistle Thrush** (maybe 'sunbathing'!) but I was even more pleased, when passing the entrance gate into this field, to see **a single plant of Cow Parsley in flower** (the first I know of this year)

Other miscellaneous sightings omitted from the above account of my walk included the first flower on the **Yellow Flowered Strawberries** in Juniper Square, the first **Green Field Speedwell** flowers growing as weeds in a Langstone village garden and a sighting of a **female Grey Wagtail** still on the Lymbourne stream. Also seen in Langstone gardens were a **Seven Spot Ladybird** and a **Bumble Bee** in flight (I

think **Bombus terrestris**). On the South Moors orchid field I again put up **two Snipe** and I am pretty sure I heard but did not see the **Green Sandpiper**.

WILDLIFE DIARY AND NEWS FOR JAN 31 - FEB 6 (WEEK 05 OF 2011)

Highlights

See relevant entries in the full text below for each of these headlines

Vagrants - Killdeer on Islay, **Black Kite** in Devon and Cornwall, and the **Slaty-backed Gull** re-located at a Thames rubbish tip but the Hampshire **White-tailed Eagle has gone**

West Sussex has its first Hooded Crow since 1986

Havant local news - **Bittern at Bedhampton** (with **Common Sandpiper**) and **Egyptian Goose** new to Sinah Gravel Pit

78 Black-necked Grebe at Falmouth and **35+ Slavonians** off Pagham

700 Red-throated Divers leave the English Channel

Where have all the Little Egrets gone?

Whitefront geese join the spring exodus from southern England

Black-tailed Godwits return to the Exe estuary, **Med Gulls** to Portsmouth area and **Woodlarks** to Stansted Forest

Fresh bird song - Blackcap song in Hastings, **Mistle Thrush** in Havant and **Marsh Tit** at West Dean Woods plus **Chaffinch** at Durlston (and **more Chiffchaffs** plus a **second Woodlark singing** - first was heard on Jan 26)

Raven and **Long Tailed Tit nest building** as Dorset has a record count of **181 Ravens in a night roost** (and Devon **Starling roost tops 200,000**)

More than **200 House Sparrows** in a small Sussex town (after 185 in Romsey)

First **Daffodil** and **Three-cornered Leek flowers** among many **Celandines**, **Snowdrops** and **Croci**

BIRDS

Divers: Large numbers of **Red-throated** reported during the past week especially around Kent. 225 headed east along the north Kent coast on Jan 29, 407 were off Reculver on Jan 30 and 516 were seen there on Jan 31 when Dungeness had the peak count of 700 heading east. Only 6 reports of **Black-throated** (with a max count of just three in south Devon) and only two reports of **Great Northern** (one off south Devon on Jan 31 and one in Poole Bay on Feb 5). The **Pacific Diver** was still in the Penzance area on Feb 3

Great Crested Grebe: Winter flocks on the sea may now be dispersing as only one substantial raft was reported this week (off Bournemouth with counts of 430 on Jan 31 and 424 on Feb 2)

Red-necked Grebe: One was seen in Hayling Bay (southern shore of the island) on Feb 1 and 3, a different bird was off Dungeness on Feb 1 and across the Channel at Sangatte (Calais) on Feb 3. What was probably a third bird was around Portland on Jan 29, off Bournemouth on Jan 31 and Feb 5 while a fourth bird was in Torbay (Devon) on Feb 2

Slavonian Grebe: Seen in small numbers along the south coast from Dungeness to Portland during the week with 7 at Studland Bay (Dorset) on Feb 1 but with a winter peak of 35+ off Pagham Harbour on Jan 31 (where 13 had been seen from Selsey on Jan 29)

Black-necked Grebe: 76 were still in Studland Bay on Feb 1 (80 had been there on Jan 25) but this week a new flock of 78 was reported from the Falmouth area in Cornwall (off Feock at the head of Carrick Roads) where 40+ had been seen on Dec 7. In Langstone Harbour 13 were off the Oysterbeds on Jan 30 and 7 were reported there on Feb 1. I had my first there on Feb 3, probably driven closer to me on the shore by the activity of two Oyster dredgers in the Langstone Channel

Sooty Shearwater: One unseasonal bird had been seen off Portland on Jan 26 (and another off Flamborough Head in Yorkshire on Jan 27) before two were seen off Portland on Feb 5 this week

Gannet: I have not detected any concerted movement in the many reports of large numbers of Gannets in the Channel but on Feb 2 Portland reported the 'start of spring passage'

Bittern: Still numerous with 17 reports this week from 12 different sites. Peak count was 6 at Rye Harbour Castle Farm and of local interest was a sighting of one flying over the A27 in Havant where it crosses the Hermitage Stream - I think it was flying north and landed somewhere in the Bedhampton Mill area though there is no reed bed there

Little Egret: Numbers to be seen along the coast are always at their lowest at this time of year - many of them probably do fly south across the channel and the few which remain are more likely to be seen inland searching streams and wet meadows for food but the species never deserts us in the way that summer migrants do. The best way to monitor their presence is to check their night roosts at dusk and dawn as there is no certain way of predicting where they may be seen by day as they tend to roam from place to place and spend little time at any one place. Although the number roosting at Langstone Mill Pond during the winter may now be less than a dozen it will soon start to increase again and I see that 20 came out of the Rye Harbour roost on Feb 3. By day there is often one or two to be seen in the pony fields north of Wade Court at Langstone and this week Brian Fellows' garden in Emsworth was twice visited by an Egret hoping for fish in the small Westbrook stream which borders that garden.

Great White Egret: The colour ringed bird was seen at the Blashford Lakes near Ringwood on Feb 1 but I believe that a second, unringed, bird is also present there though I don't know how obvious the rings are (Tony Wootton took a picture of one there on Feb 2 which can be seen on Brian Fellows website and that seems to show something around the 'knee area' of the right leg - is that the 'ringed' bird?).

The Sandwich Bay bird is also still around as are the flock of five or six birds on the Somerset Levels.

Bewick's Swan: 16 were still at Harbidge near Ringwood on Feb 4 and 40 were on the Arun near Arundel on Feb 5 when 10 were seen at Pulborough Brooks

Whitefront Geese: 227 of the 557 birds that were at Slimbridge on Jan 30 left that night and on Jan 31 Rye Harbour reported 85 flying over. Also on Jan 30 Dorset reported 46 flying over Weymouth Bay and another group of 5 over the Poole area. On Feb 3 there were still around 70 at Cuckmere Haven and on Feb 4 Farlington Marshes had 14

Brent Goose: More of these have been heading east this week. 175 flew past Dungeness on Jan 29 and 25 flew east at Splash Point (Seaford) on Jan 30. On Jan 31 Dungeness again reported 175 going east and on Feb 5 60 flew east off Ventnor (IoW) and 34 were seen passing Selsey. Those which have not yet set out on their spring journey are feeding up (for the first time this winter I found some 600 in the Warblington field adjacent to Pook Lane on Jan 31) and when the local flocks get airborne (even if not going anywhere distant) they chatter excitedly among themselves in a way that you do not hear earlier in the winter.

Black Brant: In addition to the regular couple in the Weymouth area one was at Farlington Marshes on Feb 3 when another was still at Fishbourne Chanel near Chichester

Red-breasted Goose: The presumed wild bird which has been on the shore west of Titchfield Haven since Jan 20 was not reported after Jan 30 and was thought to have moved on but it re-appeared on Feb 4 a little further west in the Hook/Warsash area and was still there on Feb 5. Also reported this week (on Feb 3) were two of these birds in the north east of the Isle of Wight near the Flamingo Park wildfowl collection from which they almost certainly came (though I have not heard of this species there previously). On Jan 31 Lee Evans listed some 18 birds of this species that he knows of currently 'loose' in Britain (including a pair with 3 juveniles in Suffolk)

Egyptian Goose: This week's reports are of 4 at Farlington Marshes on Feb 1, 2 at Benbow Pond near Midhurst on Feb 3 and 2 at Tundry Pond near Fleet on Feb 2 but of local interest one was seen on Feb 3 at Sinah Gravel Pit (south Hayling) - maybe a first for that site.

Shelduck: A report of the 'first back' at a north Hampshire site (Welshman's Pool) on Feb 6 indicates that some Shelduck are returning to breeding grounds well away from the coast

Gadwall: A count of more than 50 on the Budds Farm pools in Havant on Feb 3 was probably a site record as was a count of 140 on newly flooded fields by the River Rother north of Hastings that day

Pintail: Still plenty around. On Feb 1 there were 110 on the River Ouse at Piddinghoe (south of Lewes) and on Feb 3 the Fishbourne Channel at Chichester had 74

Eider: 16 had been recorded on Jan 22 at the mouth of Chichester Harbour, 37 were thereabouts on Jan 31 and 40 off East Head on Feb 1

Smew: One was still on the Test at Romsey on Jan 31, one was at Abbotsbury in Dorset in Jan 31 and it was probably seen again off West Bexington on Feb 2 and 3, a redhead was still at Topsham (Exe estuary) on Feb 2, one was still at the Blashford Lakes on Feb 1, several were still at the Dungeness RSPB site on Feb 4 and 4 were at the Longham Lakes (Bournemouth) on Feb 5 when 5 were seen in Belgium

Red Breasted Merganser: A count of 120 on the sea off Bognor on Feb 2 is a good hint that their spring passage has started

Goosander: 200 were still at the Blashford Lakes (Ringwood) on Feb 1 but the unexpected sight of one on the sea off Worthing on Jan 29 is also an indication of spring movement

Black Kite: On Feb 1 one was seen over Slapton in Devon and on Feb 3 one was flying west over St Austell in Cornwall

White Tailed Eagle: The bird which has been in the extreme south west of Hampshire from Jan 1 to Feb 3 seems to have left the area that day, flying east over Lymington and being seen over Hythe on Southampton Water at noon but not reported since

Grey Partridge: The Havant Wildlife Group found 5 in field on the Chidham/Cobnor peninsula (east of Emsworth) on Jan 29

Great Bustard: The two escapees from Salisbury Plain which have been in the Moonfleet Area north of Weymouth since Jan 22 were still there on Feb 4

Avocet: The Poole Harbour winter flock now has 1200 birds which were seen off Arne on Feb 2. The Exe estuary flock of 500 were seen at Topsham on Feb 3

Ringed Plover: Two isolated birds which I saw on Feb 3 on the south Hayling shingle near Gunner Point may have already been on their intended breeding territory

Killdeer Plover: A lone bird which turned up on Islay in the Scottish western isles on Jan 31 become the 246th species to have been seen in the British Isles so far this year according to Lee Evans - it did not stay.

Little Stint: One was seen at the Hayling Oysterbeds on Feb 3 and the regular bird in the Fishbourne Channel area was again there on Feb 5

Long-billed Dowitcher: The bird which was at Lodmoor (Weymouth) from Nov 8 last year to Jan 20 this year moved to Poole Park on Jan 31 and has stayed there until Feb 5 at least

Black-tailed Godwit: The birds which were absent from the Exe estuary in Devon last week were back this week (300 there on Feb). Pulborough had 100 or more throughout the week and Poole Harbour had 1500 on Feb 2

Whimbrel: The wintering bird at the north end of Southampton Water was seen again at Eling Great Marsh on Feb 5

Common Sandpiper: The bird wintering in the Hermitage stream where it reaches Langstone Harbour at Broadmarsh was seen again on Jan 31

Mediterranean Gull: Still no sign of a major return to breeding areas though one was seen over Ports Creek (northern boundary of Portsea island) on Feb 2 and at least one was in the Gosport area on Feb 5

Ring-billed Gull: The Gosport bird was seen at the Cackle Pond on Feb 4 and 5, another was at Radipole (Weymouth) on those two days and a first winter bird was at Poole Park on Feb 5 while Cornwall had one at Par (St Austell Bay) on Jan 30

Slaty-backed Gull: The bird seen at Rainham Marshes on Jan 13 to become a 'first for Britain' was still there on Jan 14 but disappointed some 1400 Twitchers who arrived there on Jan 15 (Saturday). On Feb 3 it was refound at the Pitsea Landfill site on the Essex marshes but is still frustrating the twitchers as there is no public access to this busy and dangerous site

Sandwich Tern: Sightings at the entrance to Chichester Harbour on Jan 31 (one bird) and Feb 1 (two birds) were almost certainly of wintering birds but one seen at Christchurch Harbour on Feb 5 raised the possibility that it was an early migrant (though singles were seen in nearby Poole Harbour on Jan 1, at Studland on Jan 14 and again in Poole Harbour on Jan 16)

Auks: Many remain at various places along the south coast including 5000+ feeding on Sprats in Poole Bay (off Bournemouth) on Jan 31 and still there on Feb 5. Dungeness reported 4000 on Feb 1

Guillemot: More than 300 summer plumaged birds were on the breeding ledges at Durlston on Jan 31

Razorbill: Also at Durlston on Jan 31 were 16 Razorbills cooing, necking and making their 'butterfly' display flights. Not yet in breeding mood some **11,200 Razorbills** were seen off Durlston on Feb 1

Little Auk: The single bird seen off Flamborough Head in Yorkshire on Jan 27 was in Scarborough Harbour on Jan 30 and 31

Barn Owl: A couple of weeks ago we reported several cases of **Kestrels** attacking **Barn Owls** that were hunting by day and stealing their prey and Jan 30 there was a similar case observed at Brading Marsh on the IoW

Tawny Owl: Someone on night shift at Ashurst (between Southampton and Lyndhurst) heard six different Tawnies calling around 3am on Feb 6

Long-eared Owl: On Feb 1 one was found injured on the road between Newhaven and Lewes and a rescue attempt resulted in the rescuer having a finger pierced by the bird's talons before it was secured and taken to St Tiggywinkles hospital in Buckinghamshire

Short-eared Owl: Two which were seen in bushes at the east end of the Thorney Great Deeps on Jan 22 became three on Jan 25 but only two were to be seen there on Feb 5. Others, also presumably on their way north after wintering across the Channel, were seen at Beeding on the River Adur on Jan 30 and at Arne in Dorset on Feb 3

Kingfisher: Local sightings this week have been at the Leigh Park Gardens lake in the Staunton Country Park north Havant on Feb 3 and at the mouth of the Hermitage Stream at Broadmarsh (Jan 31)

Woodlark: Three were back in the Stansted Forest East Park on Jan 31 and one was singing at a New Forest site on Feb 3 when another was heard calling over Ambersham Common near Midhurst

Shorelark: Three were still on the north Kent coast at Reculver on Feb 4 and another two were at Sandwich Bay on Feb 3

Rock Pipit: A flock of 15 were by the Fishbourne Channel at Chichester on Feb 3 (probably having got together for company on their spring passage)

Waxwing: 19 reports this week with a peak count of 190 in the Waitrose carpark at Yateley in north Hampshire on Feb 1

Stonechat: Five reports this week indicate some birds are returning to their regular haunts

Blackbird: Isolated reports of song on Jan 14 and 17 have not yet turned into the start of spring song but at midday on Feb 6 I thought I heard another attempt at song somewhere not too far from my Havant garden (the strong wind in the trees made it impossible to be sure)

Mistle Thrush: First song was heard from the Staunton Country Park on Feb 3 and a single bird was in one of the Warblington Farm fields adjacent to Pook Lane on Jan 31 (hopefully a sighting of a flock of 11 at Sandwich Bay that day was not a sign that the few we have in southern England this winter are about to re-cross the Channel and leave us)

Blackcap: First two reports of full song come from Hastings on Jan 30 and the Cuckmere valley on Jan 31

Chiffchaff: After the first two reports of song on Jan 25 another bird was heard singing at Coldwaltham (Pulborough) on Feb 3

Long-tailed Tit: A pair were seen carrying nest material in the Chandlers Ford area near Eastleigh on Feb 4. Over in Kent 7 of the white headed northern species were still present on Feb 2 (5 at Dymchurch and 2 at Sittingbourne)

Marsh Tit: First song heard in the West Dean Woods north of Chichester on Feb 5

Willow Tit: Although near extinction in Hampshire I see that two birds were seen at Bodmin Moor in Cornwall on Jan 30

Corvids: When I was young the rule of thumb for distinguishing **Rooks** from **Crows** was that if there were many seen together they must be **Rooks** and if there

was only one or two they were **Crows** but the situation has radically changed with the **long term decline in Rook numbers** and the **unstoppable increase in Crows**. This is emphasised this week by a count of **300 Crows** together at the Weston Shore on Southampton Water (and smaller flocks on shores around our Solent Harbours) and the **absence of Rooks** from many areas (I did not get the species onto my year list until Jan 21). However Valentine's Day is getting near and that is when it is said that the **Rooks start their nesting** and so become noisy and numerous around the Rookeries which they still use (unlike many others which they have abandoned). On Jan 29 the Havant Wildlife Group were visiting the Chidham area east of Emsworth and had a welcome surprise when they found **more than 200 Rooks** there which may have come from one or both of two surviving large Rookeries - one in Oldpark Wood on the Bosham side of the Fishbourne Channel about 3 km to the south west of Chidham, the other around Hambrook House which is about the same distance north of Chidham.

Hooded Crow: One or two have been present on the north Kent coast through the winter since Oct 21 but this week has brought news of one seen on Feb 5 in West Sussex (where the species is very uncommon) on Highdown Hill just north of Worthing and west of Durrington. This seems to be the first seen in Sussex since 1986 and only about the 20th record in the county since 1900

Raven: These are now settling in southern England in large numbers. On Feb 3 the winter night roost in Dorset (in woods close to Minterne Magna which is a few miles north of Cerne Abbas which in turn is halfway between Dorchester and Sherborne) had a record of 181 birds. Further west in Devon on Jan 31 a pair were carrying nest material to the sea cliffs near Budleigh Salterton (east of the Exe estuary). Locally on Jan 27 four birds flew over Stansted Forest (near which a pair is known to have nested a few years ago)

Starling: The night roost numbers on the southwest coast of Devon at Thurlestone peaked on Jan 30 with an estimated 200,000 birds

House Sparrow: After last week's report of 185 in a small area of Romsey on Jan 26 the small town of Camber near Rye in East Sussex has staked its claim to be our 'Sparrow Town' with a count of 200+ on Feb 1

Chaffinch: These normally start to sing before the end of January but this year the only report of song which I have seen so far comes from Durlston on Feb 3

Corn Bunting: Just two reports of singles in Hampshire this week - one at Cheesefoot Head near Winchester on Jan 30 and one at Teglease Down near Old Winchester Hill on Jan 29

INSECTS

Just **two reports of Red Admirals** make up the whole of this week's insect news - one was seen somewhere in Sussex on Jan 30 and the other in Emsworth on Feb 3

PLANTS

A report of the first flowers on **Three-cornered Leek** at Durlston on Feb 3 is the only news of 'wild' plants but here in the Havant area the week brought the first **cultivated Daffodil flowers** and good displays of **Snowdrops** and **Croci**

OTHER WILDLIFE

Seals: Seven Common Seals were seen in Langstone Harbour from the Portsmouth side (Great Salterns) on Jan 31 and a Grey Seal was reported in Newtown Harbour (IoW) on Feb 1. Over in the Thanet area of Kent 11 Common and 3 Grey were seen on Jan 31

Grey Squirrel: My garden has almost daily visits from a single Grey Squirrel but on Feb 2 four came together with much chasing about the lawn - may be a sign of activity increasing with spring?

WILDLIFE DIARY AND NEWS FOR JAN 31 - FEB 6 (WEEK 05 OF 2011)

Sun 6 Feb

Summary of past week's news

Thu 3 Feb

A cycle ride to Hayling adds 3 birds to my year list

With sunshine and little wind this morning I set off to cycle down the west side of Hayling to Gunner Point and back, starting down Wade Lane where the **Teal** (80+ of them) were back on the flooded meadow south of Wade Court and a single **female Tufted Duck** was on Langstone Pond. The tide was high and the water had many **Brent** on it off Langstone and good numbers of waders at the Hayling end of the Wadeway including some **50 Black-tailed Godwit** and many **Lapwing**.

The first birds seen at the Oysterbeds were a pair of **Gadwall** on the harbour water just off the bund wall. With the tide high there was the usual massive roost of **Dunlin, Oystercatcher, Grey Plover**, etc with a single **Turnstone** and around **20 Shelduck**. South of Stoke Bay I stopped to look at a couple of Oyster Dredgers (thankfully an endangered species nowadays compared to the days when the start of the season on Nov 1st brought as many of 70 of these boats out, crowded together like bumper cars on a fairground). While watching these boats I also spotted my first **Black-necked Grebe** of the year which had probably been driven out of the Langstone Channel, and closer to me on the shore, by the trawlers. Further south, near the path leading to the West Lane bends, a couple of small birds perched on a bramble bush for long enough to confirm by sight what my ears had told me - these were my first **Linnets** of the year.

Continuing south I encountered several **Greenfinch** but **no Med Gulls** (none of the West Lane fields have been ploughed - the first of these gulls to return here are usually attracted to newly turned earth and always search for food on land, not in the harbour waters)

Nothing special on the south Hayling roadsides or on the Gravel Pit but a stop at the roundabout near the Ferry Inn did show me some very healthy **Pot Marigold** plants in full flower.

On the shingle east of Gunner Point, where there is sometimes a high tide wader roost containing **Sanderling**, I found just **two Ringed Plover** (third new bird for my

year list, bringing it to 94 species) that I suspect were intending to nest here. Further east on Sinah Common a **Kestrel** was hunting. Heading home the trees immediately north of the West Town station area had a flock of 60 or more **Redwing** but **no Fieldfare**. At the north end of Langstone Bridge on the way home I found **Blue Fleabane** still flowering.

WILDLIFE DIARY AND NEWS FOR JAN 17 - 23 (WEEK 03 OF 2011)

Highlights

New Dorset record for Black-necked Grebe: On Jan 18 the count of **Black-necked Grebe** at Studland Bay in Dorset shot up to 74 (with 11 **Slavonian** also there) to set a new county record thus stealing the title of '**preferred wintering site for Black-necks**' from Hampshire. Birds of Hampshire (published in 1992) begins its account of the species by saying .. "The main locality for **Black-necked Grebes** is Langstone Harbour. This site regularly holds at least 30% of the British wintering population (which is estimated at 120 birds based on the 1981 Winter Atlas). The highest count was 58 on 17 Nov 1957 ..." My own recollection is that at the start of the 1990s we expected the peak count for Langstone Harbour to be around 40 each winter but I see that by 1995 the highest count was only 30 and by 2000 it had fallen to 16. The 2009 Hampshire Bird Report shows the high count then was 18 so this years peak of 23 on Jan 2 was better than average but that is probably a reflection of an increase in the total number wintering in Britain (though BTO Bird Facts still quotes the 1981 figure of 120 birds) rather than a preference for Langstone Harbour by the birds (in any case the count of 23 was a 'one off' resulting from unexplained movements between south coast sites)

Judging sizes: See my entry for 'Odd Geese' in the Bird section below to try your skill at judging the relative sizes of three different geese in a photo on Brian Fellows website diary entry for Jan 22. You can see the photo directly at <http://www.emsworthwildlife.hampshire.org.uk/0-0-479-white-goose-fm-CV-22.01.11.jpg> The relative sizes are, I think, an important factor in identifying the species concerned

Do Brent Geese have emotions? The following observation was sent to HOSLIST on Jan 21 by Dave Ryves after he had visited the Meon Shore (sea front just off Titchfield Haven). In Dave's own words ...

"At Meon Shore this morning I was returning to my car after walking along the cliffs when I watched a group of Brents flying close to the shore on the rising tide. When they reached the Beach huts, where some fishermen were, they flew right in to the lines entangling 2 birds which were brought crashing into the water. At this point some of the remaining birds turned round and returned to their trapped companions. 1 bird freed itself fairly quickly and flew off with some of the others but the other was quite distressed as the fisherman tried to reel it in. In the mean time a group of 5 birds landed nearby concerned at the distressed birds predicament. Eventually it freed itself but at first appeared injured and not able to fly but did manage to join the others who were swimming nearby. After about 5 minutes it had

recovered enough and the whole group took off and continued on their way. Although it is possible that they were family groups,(at the time I was more concerned at rescue than checking whether they were adult or juvenile) I was most surprised at their obvious concern over their injured companion and at how they remained with it until it had recovered enough to continue."

Is the Red-breasted Goose currently on the Solent shore wild? It's a great sight and a good tick but its difficult to decide if the bird in the Warsash-Titchfield area this week is a genuine wild migrant that has been faithfully returning to the south coast for each of the last four winters or not - some of the facts are given in the main Summary below

Bird song: **Song Thrushes** can now be heard daily and the single **Blackbird** heard in the Emsworth area on Jan 14 was matched by one in Brighton on Jan 18. Another addition to the list of songsters was a single **Black Redstart** heard at St Ives in Cornwall on Jan 16

BIRDS

Divers: Although 28 **Red-throated Divers** moved west past Selsey Bill on Jan 15 I think a few of these birds are starting to think of heading back to their breeding grounds (Portland reported parties of 16, 18, and 21 heading east up Channel on Jan 17, 18 and 20). Up to 4 **Black-throated** were off Selsey during the week and one was inside Chichester Harbour (seen from Black Point) from Jan 15 to 18 at least). Few **Great Northern** were reported (max 2 off Selsey on Jan 15 and one off Puckpool (IoW) on Jan 17).

Grebes: On Jan 19 a raft of 170 **Great Crested** were on the sea at Bexhill and on Jan 22 more than 400 were reported to be moving rapidly west off Worthing. Reports of **Red-necked Grebe** were more numerous than usual - of the eight reports I picked up all were of single birds. One was seen around Sandy Point on Hayling on Jan 17 and 18 and maybe the same bird was seen from Selsey on Jan 15 and 16. Another was in the Weymouth area (Portland Harbour and The Fleet, both on Jan 16) and Dorset had another on Jan 22 (near Arne in Poole Harbour). Cornwall has its own bird resident in Carbis Bay (Hayle Estuary area St Ives on the north coast).

A single **Slavonian Grebe** was seen in Chichester Harbour off the west end of the Thorney Great Deeps by Barry Collins and others on Jan 21 and was still there on Jan 22. On Jan 16 up to **25 Slavonians** were seen from Selsey Bill, up to 16 of these were inside Chichester Harbour on Jan 17 (with 2 others across the water at Puckpool Point (IoW), and on Jan 18 more than 13 were still to be seen in Chichester Harbour. Elsewhere 6 were off Lymington on Jan 16 and 11 were in the Studland Bay area on Jan 18. Also on Jan 18 Studland Bay set a new Dorset record with a count of **74 Black-necked Grebe**. Langstone Harbour also seems to have had a small influx of these birds this week giving a count of 10 off the Oysterbeds on Jan 22.

Fulmar: More signs of these birds getting into the mood for breeding came this week when a dozen pairs were seen demonstrating their attachment to each other in the Brighton area on Jan 19

Great Shearwater: One seen at Flamborough Head (Yorkshire) on Jan 21 was unexpected at this time of year

Bittern: These remain more numerous than usual this week with sightings reported at 13 sites, 3 of them having 3 birds each (Blashford Lakes and Testwood Lakes in Hampshire and Hatch Pond in Poole Harbour)

Great White Egret: For some time (based on numbers regularly reported in the Low Countries) I have been expecting a mass invasion of southern England by Great Whites similar to the invasion by Little Egrets in 1989 and maybe we have a sign of that invasion starting this week with a report of **5 arriving together at Ham Wall in Somerset on Jan 17** and increasing to 6 there on Jan 21. This flock may be the result of several birds already in Britain all coming together at one site (the long term resident in the Folkestone area has not been reported since Jan 16 but the Sandwich Bay bird was still there on Jan 22) One bird which made a one off appearance at Burgate on the Hampshire Avon just north of Fordingbridge on Jan 17 hasn't been reported again and may have gone to Ham Wall (which is about 4 miles east of Glastonbury).

Bewicks Swan: The number at Slimbridge has now passed the 300 mark with 337 there on Jan 17. Plenty of other sites still have **Bewicks** including one described in the SOS News as 'Betley Bridge' which does not appear in their Gazetteer - I believe it to be the bridge over the R Arun some 1500 metres north of Henfield along the disused rail line and close to Great Betly Farm

Black Swan: On Jan 20 one appeared with Mutes on the River Arun south of Arundel (not far from Ford prison).

'Odd Geese': Brian Fellows website at <http://www.emsworthwildlife.hampshire.org.uk/0-0-0-wildlife-diary.htm> on Jan 22 carries a report from Colin Vanner with a photo of a couple of 'odd geese' which he saw at Farlington Marshes. Brian is hoping to get an expert identification of them from Jason Crook but it is worth having a look at the photo as an exercise in judging the sizes of birds. If you assume that the bird in the forefront of the picture is a **Canada Goose** with an unusual facial plumage then the white goose close to it (and clearly bigger than it) cannot be a **Snow Goose** (which would be noticeably smaller than a **Canada**) but if you look at the **Canadas** in the background the unusual one in the foreground is clearly smaller than they are (making it possible for the **white goose** to be a **Snow Goose** - well maybe!). Having made my own guess at the relative sizes of the birds my inexpert guess is that the **funny faced Canada is a Barnacle with some Canada parentage** but retaining the size of a Barnacle while the **white goose is a leucistic Greylag**.

Snow Goose: The RBA (Rare Bird Alert) website on Jan 20 mentioned that a **'Lesser Snow Goose'** had turned up in Somerset and I was intrigued as to what a **Lesser Snow Goose** might be. I have come across **Greater Snow Goose** before and it turns out that some people refer to what I call a **Snow Goose** as a **Lesser** to distinguish it from the **Greater**. To add to the confusion I also discovered that there are two forms of the scientific name for the **Snow Goose**. My Collins Bird Guide gives it as **Anser caerulescens** but Wikipedia gives it as **Chen caerulescens**. Another thing that I learnt from Wikipedia is that, as well as being a common

escape from Wildfowl collections, with the birds appearing in ones and twos anywhere in Britain, there is now an established feral colony of them in Scotland

Red-breasted Goose: Each winter since 2006-7 a **Red-breasted Goose** has arrived somewhere on the south coast west of Hampshire in the late autumn, joined a Brent flock (not necessarily arriving with them) and after Christmas it has gradually moved east along the coast to end up near the entrance to Chichester Harbour from where it has disappeared at the time that the Brent are leaving. Although there is no absolute proof I am convinced that the bird currently in the Warsash-Titchfield Haven area is a wild bird repeating the behaviour pattern of previous winters but this winter birders in Devon (where what I believe to be this bird arrived in early October, was seen to be unringed, and settled with Brent at Topsham on the Exe estuary) were persuaded by the arrival of a second, ringed, bird in the same area that both were local escapes and hence they have not reported its presence there - had they done so, and indicated when it left the area, it would have been easier to judge whether the unringed bird which has appeared this week on the north east Solent shore (between Warsash and Titchfield Haven) might be the one from Topsham. (Note that the urge to compile New Year's Day lists did elicit news that one was still in the Exe estuary area on Jan 1) We can still keep an eye on the current bird and see if it follows tradition by moving to the Hayling/Wittering area in February and then flying off towards Siberia from there in early March. To add to the confusion this year a ringed bird was seen in Chichester Harbour from Oct 1 to 4, another (I think unringed) was at Pett Level (Rye Bay) from Dec 26 to 31, other singles were at Dungeness on Dec 2 and at Lodmoor (Weymouth) on Dec 5 and at Shinewater Lake at Eastbourne on Jan 16.

Gadwall: The unusually large number of **Gadwall** along the south coast this winter brought a record count of 72 to Emsworth Harbour on Jan 16 and 99 (not necessarily a record) to Thorney Island for the Jan 21 WeBS count

Scaup: A flock of 20 were in Poole Harbour on Jan 1 but seem to have moved to Abbotsbury by Jan 7, increasing to 23 on Jan 11. They were still at Abbotsbury on Jan 17 but on Jan 18 a flock of 18 turned up at the entrance to Chichester Harbour after which they seem to have split up. On Jan 19 two were seen off Worthing and on Jan 21 one was in Chichester Harbour (included in the Thorney Island WeBS count) and on Jan 22 nine were back in Dorset near Arne in Poole Harbour

Eider: On Jan 18 a flock of **16 Eider** were in the mouth of Chichester Harbour (probably from the flock of 20 to 30 seen off Pagham Harbour on Jan 4 and 8) and they were still in the harbour on Jan 22 when 16 were seen from West Wittering during the WeBS count

Smew: In last week's Summary I conjectured that the **Smew** which had appeared in the Thorney Great Deeps west area on Jan 10 might have come from Romsey as the long staying bird there had not been reported since Jan 9 when I came to write last week's Summary on Jan 16. Since then reports of the Romsey bird have continued (last sighting was on Jan 22), as have reports of the Thorney Island bird which seems to be wide ranging. It has been seen at Thorney on Jan 16 and on Jan 20, 21 and 22 but also on Jan 22 what I assume was the same bird was seen off the Hayling Oysterbeds (does that mean it has left Thorney?). Also on Jan 22 Smew

were still being reported at the Longham Lakes (Bournemouth) - where up to five have been seen together, Blashford Lakes (Ringwood) and Romsey. One was also seen at the Chichester Drayton Lake on Jan 20

Red-breasted Merganser: As spring approaches the number in our harbours increases and the Jan 22 WeBS count found 44 off Pilsey to the south of Thorney Island

White-tailed Sea Eagle: I have seen no reports of the Lymington area bird since Jan 19 when the bird briefly crossed into Dorset to be seen in the Highcliffe area - maybe that was a sign that it is becoming restless and has moved elsewhere?

Marsh Harrier: The young male at the Thorney Little Deeps was still being seen up to Jan 22 when what may have been a second bird for the site flew north over the southern tip of Thorney Island. Over in Kent the night roost in the Stour Valley reeds east of Canterbury had **23 Marsh Harriers** emerging from it on the morning of Jan 15 and here in Hampshire single birds have been seen at Titchfield Haven and Lymington this week

Hen Harrier: A ringtail was hunting over Thornham Marshes (Thorney Island) on Jan 20. Others seen that day were a ringtail at Kingley Vale (north of Chichester), a male at Pulborough Brooks and a female going to roost in reeds at Alresford Pond near Winchester

Kestrel: With an increase in daylight hunting by **Barn Owls** (feeding up for breeding?) comes a report of **a Kestrel tailing an Owl and stealing its prey as soon as the owl rose from the ground carrying its vole**. I have seen this behaviour at Amberley Wild Brooks many years ago and on Jan 19 the SOS Mid-week Walk party at Beeding Brooks on the River Adur also saw a successful 'pirating' of a **Barn Owl's prey** by a **Kestrel** and later in the same walk they saw a different **Barn Owl** hunting with an attendant **Kestrel** perched on a nearby hedgerow and keeping a close eye on the owl

Red-legged Partridge: A recent increase in sightings of both **Red-legged** and **Grey Partridge** seems to be the result of the Partridges spreading out over the countryside and searching for nest sites. A good example of this came on Jan 22 when a dog walker on the embankment footpath beside the River Arun in or near the Pulborough Brooks reserve flushed a pair of **Red-legs** which would not have been there when part of a winter flock

Grey Partridge: Recent sightings on Thorney Island (5+ near the Little Deeps on Jan 10 and a flock of 10 near Thornham Point on Jan 20, plus reports from both north and south Kent this week) are also probably the result of the birds moving from winter quarters to potential breeding areas.

Great Bustard: Two of the wing-tagged birds from Salisbury Plain have been seen in the Moonfleet area of 'The Fleet' north of Weymouth on Jan 20 and 22

Golden Plover: A flock of 350 was seen in the Pilsey area of Thorney Island on Jan 15 and the Jan 22 WeBS counts there and at West Wittering produced counts of 279 and 205 birds respectively (not sure if these were two separate flocks or different views of the same birds)

Knot: The Jan 22 WeBS count at the Pilsey Sands (south of Thorney Island) recorded **2500 Knot** where there had been 4000 on Jan 15. On Jan 18 I was somewhat surprised to see a small flock of 15 fly low over my head when I was on the Thorney seawall near the Little Deeps and to note that the birds appeared to land on the flooded field near the Thorney Main Road. Not long afterwards Caroline French saw the **Marsh Harrier** through her telescope flying low over the same area carrying prey (a moderately long-billed wader) in its talons and we guessed that it had taken one of the **Knot**.

Little Stint: One remains by the Fishbourne Channel near Chichester - last seen on Jan 22. (Over in north Kent two were seen at the Oare Marshes on Jan 21)

Ruff: The Jan 16 WeBS count at Christchurch Harbour recorded **12 Ruff**. In Hampshire there is just one on the Lymington Marshes this week

Long-billed Dowitcher: The Lodmoor (Weymouth) bird was still present on Jan 20

Black-tailed Godwit: No recent reports from the fields north of Pagham Harbour this week (760 there on Jan 10) but there was a high count of 235 in Christchurch Harbour on Jan 15 (maybe associated with birds feeding in the Avon floodplain south of Ringwood?) and on Jan 20 there were 163 at Yarmouth on the loW. On Jan 22 the flock in the Fishbourne Channel (Chichester) area was estimated to be between 300 and 400 birds

Bar-tailed Godwit: On Jan 15 there were 1100 on the Pilsey Sands south of Thorney Island and the Jan 22 WeBS count found 800 there (on both occasions one bird was in full summer plumage)

Whimbrel: One wintering bird was in the Fishbourne Channel near Chichester on Jan 20 and 22 but none were recorded in the Thorney WeBS count this week

Spotted Redshank: On Jan 22 the usual bird was at Nore Barn west of Emsworth, another was in the Fishbourne Channel and two were seen at West Wittering

Greenshank: The Jan 21 WeBS count on Thorney Island found 19

Pomarine Skua: One was off Portland on Jan 16 - there were also four reports of **Great Skua** at various sites during the week

Med Gull: There were 295 in the Weymouth area on Jan 22 (no other substantial counts anywhere recently)

Lesser Blackback Gull: An unusual count of 205 at Christchurch Harbour on Jan 22

Kittiwake: Large numbers have been moving west down the English Channel this week. 520 went past the South Foreland and 145 were seen off Christchurch Harbour, both on Jan 15 when Selsey Bill reported 203. On Jan 18 more than 500 went west off Dungeness and on Jan 21 Durlston reported 720

Sandwich Tern: On Jan 15 one was seen at Bembridge Foreland, on Jan 16 one was in Poole Harbour and on Jan 17 three were seen from Black Point on Hayling

Auks: 15,000 went east off Portland in just 45 minutes at dawn on Jan 20

Barn Owl: Seen by day at seven sites this week (including Beeding Brooks where one had its vole stolen by a **Kestrel** - see above). On Jan 19 a **pair were seen together entering a barn** in the Kingsclere area north west of Basingstoke. At Hook (Warsash) a regular **pair of Little Owls** were also seen together on Jan 19.

Short-eared Owl: On Jan 22 two were seen on Thornham Marshes near the east end of the Thorney Great Deeps and a third bird flew in from the south to be seen over the Pilsey area. Three others were seen by the River Adur during the Jan 19 walk around Beeding Brooks

Woodlark: Two seen at Coates Common (near Pulborough) on Jan 17 suggest that these birds are starting to return from coastal winter sites and we may soon hear their lovely song over breeding territories

Scandinavian Rock Pipit: As they develop the plumage which helps to identify them the first report of one this year comes from Christchurch Harbour on Jan 21

Water Pipit: A flock of 31 were in the Kent Stour valley on Jan 15

Waxwing: Plenty still around with a top count of 122 in the Chineham area of Basingstoke on Jan 17. Fareham had 60 at Whiteley on Jan 20 while Southampton, Totton, Micheldever (Winchester) and Broadstone (Poole) all recorded between 50 and 55

Black-throated Thrush: The RBA website has a late report of one at Woking in Surrey on Jan 9

Brambling: On Jan 15 there was a report of 1000 Brambling in the QE Country Park near Petersfield and on Jan 17 there were 600 on nearby Butser Hill. Another good flock was of 70 birds in Nigel Jones' garden beside the 'Straight Mile' of the Romsey to Winchester road on Jan 21

Linnet: A flock of 225 was reported at Wootton St Lawrence near Basingstoke on Jan 22 and a single **Twite** was in the Thanet area of Kent on Jan 19

Snow Bunting: Last report of the pair near Prinsted on the Chichester Harbour shore was dated Jan 18

INSECTS

[\(Skip to Plants\)](#)

Butterflies

Brimstone: One seen on the ground (but alive) by the River Meon at Soberton on Jan 15 was thought to have been blown out of its hibernation site (perhaps in Ivy) by the strong winds

Red Admiral: Four sightings this week at Brighton, Gosport, Southampton and Portsdown Hill

Peacock: One seen in the Rye area on Jan 16 was thought to have been disturbed from hibernation

Moths

Winter Moth: One seen in Stoke Village on Hayling Island on Jan 14 and some 20 seen along roads in the Horsham area on Jan 16

Mottled Umber: A couple of these also seen in the Horsham area on Jan 16

Early Moth: The first seen this year was in the Thanet area of Kent on Jan 19 (found on a doorstep)

Other Insects

Drone Fly: What was reported as the first Hoverfly of the year, seen in Rowland Wood near Eastbourne on Jan 16, was probably this species which does hibernate and is usually the first to be seen

Buff-tailed Bumblebee: An over-wintering queen was seen at Gosport on Jan 21 (and an unidentified Bumble Bee was flying with the above Drone Fly)

Seven spot Ladybird: Two were seen in the compost heap of a Rye area garden on Jan 16 (probably aroused from hibernation when dumped there with garden rubbish after a first attempt at cleaning up the garden)

PLANTS

[\(Skip to Other Wildlife\)](#)

The only significant item of plant news this week has been the find of a single open **Lesser Celandine** flower in Havant on Jan 20. On Jan 15 came the first sighting of **female flowers on Hazel** (seen in the Chichester area) and on Jan 17 male catkins were open on a **Grey Alder** in a Havant carpark

OTHER WILDLIFE

Nothing exciting this week. A couple of **Porpoises** were seen off the South Foreland on Jan 16 and two **Seals** were off the Hayling Oysterbeds on Jan 19 (reported as **Grey Seals** but much more likely to be the **Common Seals** that are based in Chichester Harbour and regularly seen in Langstone Harbour). One **Red Squirrel** was seen in Binstead (IoW) on Jan 19 and on the mainland I noticed a couple of very common **Fungi (Deceiver and Coral Spot)**

WILDLIFE DIARY AND NEWS FOR JAN 17 - 23 (WEEK 03 OF 2011)

[\(Skip to previous week\)](#)

Sun 23 Jan

[\(Link to previous day's entry\)](#)

Summary of past week's news

My latest weekly summary of reports is now available by clicking [Weekly Summary](#) here

Fri 21 Jan

[\(Link to previous day's entry\)](#)

Three more birds for my year list

This afternoon I walked round the Forestside section of Stansted Forest on the east of the road through the Forest and as soon as I got out of the car opposite Forestside church I heard the **Rooks** which will soon be nesting here but which I have not come across so far this year. I then heard **Stock Dove song** and before I had gone more than a couple of hundred metres I spotted some **Siskin** with **Goldfinch** on the **Larch** trees above my head. I might have turned round and gone home as these were the only new birds (except for the **Goldfinch**) that I was to see

but I am glad that I pressed on as I was soon to spot a lovely **red female flower on a Hazel** and from the far (eastern) side of this part of the Forest I am pretty sure that I heard the '**prk, prk, prk**' call of a **Raven** though I could not record it as I never saw the bird and could not be sure of the identity of the bird making this call.

[Thu 20 Jan](#)

[\(Link to previous day's entry\)](#)

First Lesser Celandine of the year

I checked the **Celandine** plants by the Lymbourne Stream again this morning and found that the single bud seen yesterday was not yet open but was showing a little more yellow - hardly worth a mention here but going home by a route through Juniper Square I jammed on my brakes and walked back to where I thought I had seen a hint of yellow to find **one Lesser Celandine flower out** among a bank covered with the leaves of Celandine plants which have never before produced early flowers!

[Wed 19 Jan](#)

[\(Link to previous day's entry\)](#)

One more bird for the Year List and soon we'll have a new flower

More sunshine this afternoon (after a sharp overnight frost) took me on a trip around north Hayling but before I got to Langstone bridge I was cheered by the sight of the **first single flower bud** (not open) among the leaves of the **Lesser Celandines** lining a short stretch of the Lymbourne Stream. In recent years the **Celandines** here have started to flower sometime in December:- in 2006 the first flower opened here on Dec 30, in 2007 one flower was open on Nov 30, in 2008 a flower was out by the Lymbourne on Dec 10 (but one was open in south Hayling on Dec 7), and in 2009 the first Lymbourne flower was open on Dec 26. With these records in mind I have been checking the Lymbourne stream site since mid December - hence my delight that it looks as if a flower will be open before the end of this week (assuming we get more sunshine this week).

From Langstone bridge the exposed mud at low tide was almost bereft of waders and wildfowl giving the impression that winter was over, and I had the same impression at the Oysterbeds and off North Common (though I did see one flock of perhaps **1000 Dunlin** flying over Langstone Harbour and came on some **300+ Brent** in the meadow immediately east of the entrance to the North Common open space).

The Oysterbeds lagoon gave the same impression of having been deserted - just one **Redshank**, one **Little Grebe**, no gulls and **an out of place party of 15 Brent**, these suggesting to me that they were strangers to the area (i.e. migrants on passage which had only just flown in to Langstone) and had not yet found out that the pool has no weed in it and has nothing to offer Brent. **Song Thrushes** were singing at perhaps half a dozen different places en route but the only real bird interest for me came at the North Common site where **I added an 84th species to my personal year list with a 'wheezing' Greenfinch** seen perched atop an oak tree. Also seen at North Common were just two **Sweet Violet flowers**.

Later, passing Langstone Mill pond, I was using my binoculars to scan the **Common Alders** to see if any more of their catkins were open (having seen just one catkin open here on Jan 13) when I found myself looking at a male **Blackbird** perched in one of the trees - nothing odd in that but on the next branch was **what**

must have been a first winter female Blackbird facing away from me but its plumage made me pause and check it out as it seemed to have distinctly darker brown upper plumage compared to the underside plumage. As I was watching it turned to face me and revealed a neat pale crescent at the top of its breast - could this be a female **Ring Ouzel**? The answer was an immediate 'No' - if it had been the crescent would have been wider, the rest of the plumage a more even dark colour (except for the pale edges to the wing feathers), and it would not have been here at this time of year in this habitat and perched alongside at male **Blackbird**

[Tue 18 Jan](#)

[\(Link to previous day's entry\)](#)

Marsh Harrier still at Thorney and Snow Buntings at Prinsted

This morning's sunshine got me out on my bike and heading for Thorney Island where the Little Deeps were well populated with **Tufted Ducks, Teal** and **Gadwall** but no Marsh Harrier to be seen - usual story that it had been seen shortly before. I headed on down to the Great Deeps, hearing my **first Skylark song** as I did so. With the tide still high there were plenty of roosting birds but nearly all of them seen at a distance near the main road south of the guard post so while I could pick out a mass of **Lapwings** and **Shelduck** plus the **Canada Geese** I could not be sure of the identity of many others. Much further away I could see **three Buzzards** **soaring in the sky** and on the way back to the Little Deeps I encountered several **Reed Buntings** and at these Deeps I met Caroline French with whom I had a long chat and watched a small flock of around **15 Knot** fly over our heads to land on the flooded fields between the reeds and the road - with nothing else seeming likely to happen here I eventually cycled on.

Before I had gone 100 yards I heard a shout from Caroline so went back to discover what she had seen and thus had my first ever sighting of a **Marsh Harrier** flying low over the reed bed. Through her scope Caroline could see that **the Harrier had a wader (probably one of the Knot and seemingly still alive and struggling) in its talons**. The **Harrier** went on flying for some time (I guess that it knew that if it landed while the **Knot** was still alive the **Knot** had a good chance of getting away as the **Harrier** shifted its grip) but did eventually go to ground and out of sight.

I now went east along Thornham Lane, partly to check on the growth of the **Alexanders plants** (no hint of flowering yet) and partly in search of more birds (a family of **Long-tailed Tits** was the only addition to my list) so I continued towards Prinsted past the field with **8 Alpacas** and then along the seawall to the **Snow Buntings** which were still posing for close-up photos. Having come this far I continued to Nutbourne but saw **neither Redwings, Fieldfares nor Avocet** (have the latter left the area on their way back to nest sites?) The reduced number of **Wigeon** and the apparent **absence of Pintail** suggested that they too might have thought that winter was over.

Heading homeward along the main road the only addition to my list was a single **singing Song Thrush** until I reached Nore Barn where the **Spotted Redshank** was still faithful to the stream that runs out of the Maisemore Gardens area. Just two notes from yesterday are worth a mention - first was **my first sight of a flowering Crocus** and second was my first sight of a **Grey Alder tree with many catkins open** in the carpark at the north end of Prince George Street which you pass if driving to the Havant Waitrose underground carpark.

WILDLIFE DIARY AND NEWS FOR JAN 10 - 16 (WEEK 02 OF 2011)

Highlights

Signs of Spring: On Jan 10 a **Wheatear** was seen on the Sussex Downs and on that same day what may have been the first three **Brent Geese** to start their journey back to breeding grounds were seen flying east along the Sussex coast. On Jan 11 a **Pipistrelle bat** was flying at Durlston, on Jan 12 **Newts started to arrive back in breeding ponds** and on Jan 13 a **Water Vole** came out of its burrow in the bank of the River Ems to gather new supplies of food

That Eagle again: This week's new twist to the story involves the BBC, Lee Evans, a friendly gamekeeper who shoots rabbits, foxes and woodpigeons and my own guesswork. I may be wrong!!

Slaty-backed Gull (*Larus schistisagus*): It's not every week that a new species is added to the British List - this one turned up at Rainham Marshes in London on Jan 14

Year listing in Hampshire: Keen birders who have recently been out trying to get a good start to their 'Year Lists' will be interested to see what they are up against this year in the unofficial competition to achieve the longest Year List for birds seen exclusively in Hampshire. The 2010 winner of this competition was Andy Johnson (the freelance ecologist who lives near Sandy Point on Hayling Island) with a score of 225 species. He was closely followed by Dan Hoare with 224

Sustainable Living: On Saturday night, Jan 15, a BBC Nature Film about the South Pacific shown on BBC 4 (part 1 of 6 called 'Ocean of Islands') made me aware of something that I did not previously know by contrasting the attitude of humans to their environment on two different islands. Most of us will be aware of how the inhabitants of Easter Island caused their own extinction by cutting down all the trees on the island (mainly for use as 'rollers' to move the giant statues - to whose creation they accorded the highest priority - from quarry to display site) and by exterminating the seabirds that were their main source of food.

What I did not know is that the human population of one much smaller island (totally isolated from all other humans so having to survive without any external supplies) has managed to survive by (a) self discipline to ensure they maintain the populations of birds and other food sources on which they rely and (b) human ingenuity and adaptability. As an example of the latter we saw them catching fish without hooks or nets - they use small pieces of Octopus meat as bait to get the fish to swim close enough to be caught with their bare hands, kill the fish with their teeth before putting it in a bag and freeing their hands to catch another fish.

That population problem: I have for long believed that all attempts to 'save the planet' (while we must make them if only to prolong our own survival and enjoyment of the natural world) are doomed to failure in the face of our inbuilt instinct to breed and, aided by technology that allows us to live longer, multiply exponentially. Two things this week have caused me to think that our imminent doom is not certain. One was the survival of the Pacific Island population quoted above (maybe we can

find ways to control our sex drive and to live according to what our brains tell us is necessary for the survival of our species). The other was a 'population expert' saying on the radio that population growth will bring its own solution - that out of famine and war a 'new and rational' human species will evolve - I am probably misquoting this 'expert' but maybe the idea of setting up 'seed banks' and preserving the DNA of animals so that they can be used by the 'new rational humans' to restore the natural world is not an impossible dream (in fact I think it is much more possible than the idea of humans ever 'translocating themselves' to other planets)

BIRDS

Divers: The Dungeness Observatory website was not updated from the New Year until this week but it now shows that the huge movements of Divers along our south coast in the first few days of 2011 were seen there as an eastward movement (more than **2,600 Red-throats** went east on Jan 2 followed by 2,000+ on Jan 3 when more than 500 went east past Bockhill at the South Foreland). I interpret this to show that the huge numbers of birds which fled west from the North Sea during the cold weather of December found themselves overcrowded and underfed in the English Channel and were only too glad to move back into the North Sea.

Pacific Diver: The lone bird was still being seen off Marazion (near Penzance) on Jan 13

Black-necked Grebe: The report of 23 off the Hayling Oysterbeds on Jan 2 has not been repeated but 6 were still there on Jan 11. Studland Bay in Dorset has been the site with the biggest flock this winter and reported more than 60 on Jan 9 which I thought might be the peak number but looking back I see there were 65 there on Dec 6 and 59 on Dec 10

Fulmar: So far this year these birds have been back at breeding cliffs at three Sussex sites (Seaford, Newhaven and Cliff End at Hastings) and at Durlston in Dorset. Three were seen at Freshwater (IoW) on Dec 24

Sooty Shearwater: Not normally seen along our south coast at this time of year but two were seen off south Devon on Jan 1 and again on Jan 10

Cormorant: I think a southward movement from the North Sea past the Thanet area of Kent was unusual. On Jan 10 a total of 76 come over from the North East and 169 moved south on Jan 13

Bittern: New sites at which Bitterns were seen this week are the Testwood Lakes near Southampton, Filsham Reed Beds between Hastings and Bexhill and Shinewater Lake at Eastbourne. The number at Burton Mill Pond near Pulborough was thought to be up to 5 on Jan 11 and Rye Harbour had 4 on Jan 13

Glossy Ibis: No reports of the Berkshire bird since Jan 9 but a new one appeared at Dungeness on Jan 10 and was still there on Jan 13

Brent Goose: Until the last couple of years winter resident **Brent Geese** in Sussex have been restricted to the Chichester and Pagham Harbour areas but this winter sightings in East Sussex appear to have increased. However I do not recall seeing

reports of them resident anywhere in the stretch from Brighton to Eastbourne and so a report of three flying east past Splash Point at Seaford on Jan 10 could indicate that Brent are beginning to feel the call of spring and to move east. (Last winter passage started on Jan 21 with 400 flying east past Dungeness and the 2009 Sussex Bird Report quotes 30 Brent flying east past Seaford on 30 Jan 2009 as being the first sign of migration for that year)

Wigeon: Another possible sign that winter wildfowl are starting to leave is a report of 320 Wigeon flying east past Dungeness on Jan 8 and this gets very faint backing from my own observation of a drop in numbers at the mouth of the Langbrook Stream (Langstone South Moors) on Jan 13 (only 6 there whereas there had always been at least 20 since Oct 16)

Gadwall: On Jan 15 a flock of 72 Gadwall set a new record for Emsworth Harbour and on that same day Heather Mills, reporting for a Havant Wildlife Group party visiting the Chichester Lakes, spoke of 'the most Gadwall I have ever seen anywhere'

Mallard: On Jan 13 Brian Fellows' website carried an observation of a group of 4 Mallards in the Emsworth Town Millpond repetitively diving as part of a grooming (wash and brush up) process. I know that **Mallard ducklings**, when they are too small to reach down to feed on weed below them using the normal adult 'dabbling' process, will dive freely and deeply to get at the weed for themselves but it is uncommon for adults to do so and I wonder if these birds had picked up some parasites which they could not rid themselves of by the normal grooming process on the surface?

Pintail: Good numbers of these around at the moment (e.g. 150 at Pulborough Brooks on Jan 13) giving us a chance to enjoy the complex plumage of the males. If you want to admire this in close up have a look at <http://www.rxwildlife.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2011/01/pintail-closeup.jpg>

Smew: In most recent winters **Smew** are only to be seen in southern England in Kent and East Sussex but this winter they have been reported in every southern county from Cornwall to Kent. This week on Jan 10 one was seen at the Thorney Deeps (possibly the long staying bird on the Test at Romsey which was last reported there on Jan 9). We have also had good numbers peaking with 14 at the Dungeness RSPB reserve on Jan 5 but we are unlikely to beat the count of 425 at a Netherlands site on Jan 11

Red Kite: On Jan 8 Keith Betton led a group to the winter roost site for this species near Ashley Warren (only a few kilometres east of the A34 and just over ten kilometres due west of Basingstoke). They saw **60 Kites** there. On the same day one was seen over Westbourne village just north of Emsworth and five were seen at Singleton to the north of Chichester and not far from the West Dean Woods where another three were seen

White-tailed Sea Eagle: This continues to be seen daily in the neighbourhood of Downton village near the coast in the extreme south west of Hampshire and it has not been deterred by Pheasant shooting in its chosen area It has also been welcomed by the local gamekeepers and land owners, as have the many 'twitchers'

who could easily have aroused animosity from the locals by driving along the narrow roads seeking somewhere to park. On Jan 9 Lee Evans made the trip from his home in Amersham (Buckinghamshire) and describes his experience in a HOSLIST message.

He says that after several hours of failing to spot the bird he .. "rechecked a number of salient watchpoints but after drawing a blank we extended our search. As luck would have it, we were flagged down by a gamekeeper who was well versed with its behaviour and we accompanied him on a walk across a muddy field.....

He took us to Ashley Clinton (big country house with farm) and an unmarked track heading NW from SZ 259 939 in Angel Lane. We had only been walking a few minutes when the huge bird appeared from the south and drifted towards us before dropping down behind a belt of trees just west of Sansomes Cottage. Over a period of ten minutes (1132-1142 hours), the eagle appeared three times - briefly alighting in a tall Oak tree SSE of Ashley Manor Farm. We were treated with some fabulous flight views as the bird wheeled around and kept fairly low to the ground - always keeping an eye on our position. It had favoured this area the day before and had been **feeding on dead Rabbits, Red Foxes and Woodpigeons**. The day's shoot had seen the bird on at least five occasions during the day, the gamekeeper said. It eventually drifted out of sight behind the belt of trees and could not be relocated. The tail was quite seriously abraded (presumably from feeding on the ground) and the flight feathers were also slightly broken and twisted in the secondaries and inner primaries. Otherwise, the bird was very dark brown, particularly about the head, with a dark tail (with some white linings apparent on the upper feathers) and a pale bill."

I was particularly interested in the bird's diet as described by the gamekeeper. I assume that the **Foxes and Woodpigeons were all corpses which had been shot** and if these are being left out for the Eagle this would account for it's continued stay there. It also helps to answer another question - Brian Fellows tells me that the **BBC (South Today on Friday 14 Jan) showed a photo (sent in by a viewer) of the bird on a garden lawn surrounded by the feathers of its prey** and without seeing the picture my first assumption was that someone unfamiliar with birds had sent in a picture of a **Sparrowhawk** plucking a pigeon in a small suburban garden. **If the picture was in fact of the Eagle on the no doubt spacious lawn of Ashley Clinton House and the feathers in question came from a recently shot Woodpigeon which had been left out for the Eagle then the story makes a lot more sense.**

Buzzard: Of local interest only I was at the Budds Farm Pools here in Havant on Jan 10 when a **Buzzard** flew in low from the east and perched on a lamp-post on the north side of the pools where I have seen one in the past devouring some corpse on the ground.

Grey Partridge: It is some time since I have seen a report of **Grey Partridge** on Thorney Island but on Jan 10 Martin Hampton from Havant was lucky enough to see five or more close to the main Thorney Road where it passes the Little Deeps (in addition to seeing the **Smew** on the Great Deeps, a **Barn Owl** hunting over the

Eames Farm field north of the Deeps, a **Peregrine** overhead, **Whitefront Geese** on the ground and hearing the calls of **Bearded Tits** and **Water Rails**)

Coot: In past winters the Little Deeps on Thorney Island would be regularly crowded with Coot but for some reason they have kept away from this site this winter and have chosen to stay on the sea water in Emsworth Harbour. On Jan 8 Brian Fellows made a record count of 186 in the Harbour.

Ringed Plover: These have been in short supply this winter and I still do not have one on my year list - it seems I was unlucky not to visit the Langbrook stream mouth on Jan 11 when Tony Wooton from Emsworth went there and photographed 15 Ringed Plover coming in to land on the shingle which they occasionally use as a high tide roost. Tony also got a photo of the **Rock Pipit** which has been resident here since Oct 28 but which I have also failed to see (though I have heard it) this year

Little Stint: The Fishbourne Channel (Chichester) bird was still there on Jan 11

Purple Sandpiper: 15 were seen at Southsea Castle back on Nov 9 but the first sighting of them there for this year was of 16 on Jan 14

Long-billed Dowitcher: The long staying bird at Lodmoor (Weymouth) was still there on Jan 15

Woodcock: An unusual report from somewhere in Sussex on Jan 11 is of one which had become trapped in the 'chicken wire' of an abandoned Pheasant pen in woodland

Green Sandpiper: This species has been seen at the Langstone South Moors site since Sep 11 but until Jan 10 I did not know there were two birds present at this site. On that day I thought I had seen two birds there and this was later confirmed by Martin Hampton who told me he had seen two there sometime between Christmas Day and the New Year

Slaty-backed Gull (*Larus schistisagus*): On Jan 14 the identity of a bird at the Rainham Marshes in London was confirmed as being this species making it a 'first for Britain'. The species only breeds on the west coast of Alaska but does wander widely during the non-breeding season. As it looks very like the **Great Blackback** it may well have visited Britain before but not been identified as a stranger - I think you have to see the underside of the wing to confirm its true identity.

Barn Owl: This is one of two times of year when Barn Owls can often be seen hunting during daylight hours - at present the main reason for being out by day is a combination of weather restricting the times at which hunting is possible, the difficulty of finding prey when snow is on the ground, and sheer hunger plus the need to build up strength for the coming breeding season. The other season is in mid-summer when the hours of darkness are reduced and growing young require much more food to be brought back to the nest. Whether my reasoning is right or not there have been four reports of daytime hunting that I have seen this week. On Jan 9 two owls were hunting in the Amberley/Houghton area south of Pulborough Brooks; on Jan 10 owls were hunting near Sparsholt in the Winchester area and on

the Eames Farm fields north of the Thorney Island Great Deepes, while on Jan 11 one was hunting around Fort Nelson at the west end of Portsdown.

Little Owl: These too are now becoming more visible as they enter their mating season. On Jan 11 I was lucky enough to hear two calling to each other in trees east of the north end of the Hayling Coastal Path (just north of the Oyster Beds) and on Jan 9 one was heard in the Reculver area of the north Kent coast. Also this week another sighting of the owls at Staple Ash Farm on the edge of the West Dean Woods near Chichester was reported

Tawny Owl: Also becoming vocal as they establish and defend territories I am hoping to hear one soon in the area north of the Havant bypass (A27) between Wade Court Road and the Hayling Billy Trail where Martin Hampton tells me he has already heard them this year.

Kingfisher: Of local interest I have just been told of a sighting of one on Jan 4 on the posts lining the outflow of the Lymbourne stream between Langstone Mill and the Royal Oak pub

Skylark: The only report of Skylark song that I have seen this year comes from the Scotney Court area on the east shore of Rye Bay on Jan 9

Swallow: An 'interesting' report for Jan 10 on the Cornwall Birding website is of a single **Swallow** being seen by a driver on the A390 road some 6 miles north east of Truro - note that this is the same day when a Wheatear was seen on the Sussex Downs

Waxwing: Before anyone screams at the thought of yet another long list of reports of these birds I will limit myself to two unusual reports this week. On Jan 9 John Clark tells us that a 'new technique' was employed (no detail given - maybe some military secret way of analysing aerial photos?) to give a count of 778 birds at the army's Aldershort North Camp where traditional methods of counting the birds in a photograph gave a maximum of only 703. The other report comes from Nigel Jones in Romsey who obtained details of the progress of a single ringed bird he saw there. It was ringed in Aberdeen on Oct 31, flew 480 km SSW to be seen in Oswestry (Shropshire) on Dec 1. It then flew 234 km SSE to appear in Romsey on Dec 17 before heading 100 km NE to be seen in Brentford (London) on Jan 12. They don't half get around!

Wheatear: The 'white arse' of one was clearly seen typically moving just ahead of a walker on Newmarket Hill above Woodingdean (Brighton) on Jan 10. Was it a first migrant or a wintering bird (both possible but both unlikely - earliest ever arrival date in the latest Sussex Bird Report is Feb 13 while Hampshire had one on Feb 6 in 1989)

Blackbird: **First local report of song** for the year comes from the Hollybank Woods at Emsworth where Brian Fellows heard one on Jan 14. There had been one earlier report from Durlston in Dorset on Jan 3 where the ranger's daily diary mentioned '**numerous Blackbirds singing in the half-light before sunrise**' but I could not make up my mind at the time whether this was full song or something akin to the subsong that flocks of **Redwings** make just prior to departure at the end of

winter (or even the various noises which **Blackbirds** tend to make as they go to roost at night). From past experience I would not expect widespread general **Blackbird** song to start until we are in February though there may be more isolated songsters before then.

Song Thrush: General and widespread song has been heard more or less daily in the Havant area since Jan 11 though I see one bird in the Rye town area was in full song at dawn and dusk on Jan 9 and partial song was reported at Durlston on Jan 2. In recent years I have usually heard **Song Thrushes** singing regularly before Christmas and I am told that at least one bird has been heard singing for some weeks in the Langstone area

Mistle Thrush: With the increasing rarity of this species it was good to see one on Jan 11 in the meadow south of Wade Court at Langstone. Hopefully a pair will breed there in the coming year as they have in most recent years

Jackdaw: Around 1800 were seen on the evening of Jan 9 flying east over the Eastleigh area, presumably heading for the presumed large corvid roost in the Gosport area though there have been fewer reports indicating such a roost this winter (On Oct 20 294 Jackdaws went over the Milton area of Portsmouth and on Oct 25 another report from Milton was of 724 birds, then on Nov 30 some 250 went over the Hill Head area near Titchfield Haven)

Crow: Further evidence that this species finds the seashore is the best feeding ground come from Swalecliffe on the north Kent coast - a flock of 118 were on the beach there on Jan 10. Whenever I visit the shores of Langstone or Chichester Harbour one of the regular sights (except at high tide) is of one or more Crows flying up into the air and dropping shellfish in the hope of breaking the shells on shingle.

Hooded Crow: A single bird turned up at Dungeness on Oct 21 last year then moved to Bockhill (South Foreland) on Oct 24 before settling down on the north Kent coast at Reculver from Oct 28 until now (last report on Jan 14)

Raven: Reports of these birds, which are now becoming commonplace all along the south coast, get closer to my garden air space each week. On Jan 15 what may have been the same bird passed over Mike Collins house on the northern fringe of Leigh Park here in Havant and was seen 15 minutes later over the Nore Barn woodland on the west fringe of Emsworth, probably heading on to Thorney Island (if it followed a direct line through the two points where it was seen that would take it down the Emsworth Channel and over Marker Point, the south west tip of Thorney).

Starling: Recent estimates of roost sites include 53,000 in Poole on Jan 2, then 5,000 at Eastbourne Pier on Jan 12, and finally 110,000 at Thurlestone Marsh on the southwest coast of Devon (some 7 miles north west of Prawle Point, the southern tip of Devon)

Brambling: So far this winter there have been few reports of large flocks of **Brambling** - between Nov 29 and Dec 12 there were sightings of around 500 in the QE Country Park near Petersfield, then 200 in the Burley area of the New Forest,

322 in the Romsey area and 700+ at the RSPB Powderham reserve on the Exe estuary in Devon but these all seemed to disperse rapidly with no reports of more than 40 in the second half of December. This week, however, has brought news of more flocks - on Jan 7 there were estimated to be some 500 Brambling in a 1000 strong finch flock at Petworth in Sussex and on Jan 15 Cliff Dean came on an isolated tree containing an estimated 400 Brambling on the North Downs above Ashford in Kent. Best count in Hampshire was of 50 Brambling in the Ashley Warren Kite roost area near the A34 in the extreme north of the county on Jan 8

Snow Bunting: Also on Jan 8 but in the south west of Hampshire at Keyhaven near Lymington there was an exceptional report of 50 Snow Buntings though it did include some **Lapland Buntings**. Other than a flock of 90 on the Suffolk coast on Dec 12 the only other report of more than 25 seen together was the flock of 28 which flew over the Chichester Lakes area on Dec 18

Corn Bunting: At least one was present on Thorney Island on Jan 9 when it was photographed at the southern tip of the island. Back on Jan 5 there had been a flock of around 60 in Pagham Harbour and on Jan 4 a flock of 73 was seen by the R Ouse south of Lewes

INSECTS

Three butterfly species were seen this week with **Red Admirals** flying at Fareham, Emsworth (Nore Barn wood), and Eastbourne on Jan 9 and at Milford near Lymington on Jan 11.

A **Peacock** also appeared at Cuckmere Haven on Jan 9 and a **Small Tortoiseshell made an involuntary appearance** in Sussex on Jan 8 when it was found on the underside of a sofa being moved downstairs.

One new moth for the year appeared during the week - a single example of **The Chestnut** found in a Kent Thanet area trap on Jan 8

Nothing to do with British Insects was something that I learnt from the BBC TV film about Pacific Islands shown on BBC 4 on Jan 15. We all know from the Galapagos Islands how evolution can lead to strange developments in isolated communities but I had never before seen pictures of the **carnivorous caterpillars** which have evolved on one South Pacific island. These disguise themselves among the foliage of plants and wait for an insect to land close enough to be caught by a sudden twist of the caterpillars body and a lunge with its feet which evolution has equipped with the equivalent of daggers that grip and kill the insect.

PLANTS

I found 26 plant species in flower this week including **Blue Fleabane** on the Langstone Bridge roadside and just one **Alder catkin** to join the **Hazel catkins** that are now covering some trees with male catkins (I am wondering if these early flowering trees are brought on by having street lights shining on them through the night). At the Chichester Lakes the Havant Wildlife Group also found the **tiny red female Hazel flowers** open on Jan 15

OTHER WILDLIFE

Water Vole: Although Water Voles do not hibernate they are rarely seen during the winter months so the first sighting of one in the River Ems at Emsworth on Jan 13, gathering food to replenish the stocks in its burrow, was a welcome indication that at least one has survived the winter.

Grey Squirrel: Another sign of spring came in Havant on Jan 10 with two of these Squirrels chasing each other up the trunk of a mature Scots Pine

Pipistrelle Bat: First report of one on the wing this year came from Durlston in Dorset on the night of Jan 10 to 11

Newts: Brian Banks keeps a close eye on activity in his East Sussex garden pond (Rye area) in which a single **Common Newt** has been present since Nov 14. A slight rise in temperature and humidity on Jan 12 suggested that it was worth checking the pond for the arrival of other Newts and a nocturnal inspection of the water revealed the presence of **three more Common** and **one Palmate Newt**. Tiny air bubbles still adhering to their bodies showed that they had only been back in the water for a few hours (these bubbles soon vanish after a short period of underwater life)

Fungi: The first report of **Yellow Brain Fungus** came from Durlston on Jan 13. **Jew's Ear** was also seen there and in Havant (along with a good show of 'Turkey tail') this week

WILDLIFE DIARY AND NEWS FOR JAN 10 - 16 (WEEK 02 OF 2011)

Thu 13 Jan

More Song Thrushes now singing

The weather is pretty depressing for us humans this week but subtle signals that we may not pick up tell other species that spring is on its way - day length, temperature and humidity all act as triggers to change in the natural world. One such change is the onset of territorial song among **Song Thrushes** - I know that some (such as the one which John Gowen reports has been singing for some weeks near the Langstone Technology Park here in Havant) will have started earlier than others but the fact that both I and Brian Fellows heard birds start singing in both Havant and Emsworth last Tuesday and that they have continued to do so in both areas indicates a widespread reaction by **Thrushes** rather than the occasional individual. Brian heard his Brook Meadow songster again on Wednesday and my walk to Langstone and back today gave me **two new singing Thrushes** (one by the Billy Trail opposite the end of Langstone Avenue and the other on the Wade Lane side of Wade Court).

Other changes are taking place without most of us realising what's happening. Most of us only realise that the **Brent Geese** have felt the urge to fly east when, sometime in March or April, there are none to be seen in our harbours whereas the movement will have started long before (in January) and some of the birds which are seen in the harbours are already passage birds as early as February. In 2010 Dungeness reported **400 Brent flying east as early as Jan 21** with another 60 passing on Jan 24. This year has not yet bought such obvious signs of movement but **on Jan 10 three Brent were seen flying east past Splash Point** at Seaford near Beachy Head - as Brent are not winter residents in that area the suggestion that these were first migrants is not unreasonable (and the sighting of a **Wheatear**

on Newmarket Hill above Woodingdean at Brighton, also on Jan 10, is an equally tenuous indication of the arrival of our spring migrants). I have checked both species on Trektellen and there are so far no reports of these species at any of their many European reporting sites but that does not preclude the possibility that both reports I have quoted were of genuine migrants.

Another change which I noticed today was of a different nature. In recent winters there has been a substantial flock of 40 or 50 **Wigeon** at the mouth of the Langbrook Stream at the Langstone South Moors and in the last year or two there have often been up to half a dozen **Gadwall** with them. Today I found only **6 Wigeon** there but with them were **27 Gadwall** - another manifestation of the growth of the Gadwall population (though not of a decline in the Wigeon numbers which have been huge everywhere this winter) The drop in **Wigeon** numbers was probably weather related, but it could equally be **a sign that Wigeon are already on the move to their breeding places.**

Coming back via Langstone Pond I noted just one **Alder catkin** had opened and earlier in the walk I had found new flowers on the garden escape **Honeysuckle** beside the Hayling Billy trail (just north of where the footpath from the Royal Oak pub to St Faith's Church crosses the old railway)

Tue 11 Jan

Little Owls at the Hayling Oyster Beds

Cycling to the Havant Health Centre this morning I heard **my first Song Thrush in full throated song** (looking back to 2008 one was singing in my garden on Nov 13 with regular reports from many sites from then on - at the Health Centre I mentioned the song to John Gowen and his response was that they have been singing in his part of Langstone for some time - the absence of song elsewhere may be the result of a cold December but I think there has also been a shortage of **Song Thrushes** in the Havant area this winter)

I did not get out again until after lunch when I walked to the Oysterbeds, starting with a belated addition to my year list as I came out of my front door - a **Great Spotted Woodpecker** calling from a neighbour's garden. My next note came soon after as I joined the Billy Trail near the Arts Centre - here **a Robin was singing its spring song**, much more animated than the winter territorial song. This is the first I have heard this year, maybe from a bird intending to breed here and wanting to be rid of the numerous winter visitors that could be heard every few yards down the old rail track in this area. At Langstone Pond I mentioned this 'first' song to a birder with whom I had a chat and he said he too had heard his first **full Robin song** in the Hedge End area near Southampton only yesterday.

At the entrance to Wade Court the **Winter Heliotrope** was responding to the warmer air by putting out the first **strong scent** that I have noticed and nearby a fallen branch was covered with fresh **Jew's Ear fungi**. A little further on I was pleased to see a **Mistle Thrush** on the ground in the south meadow (the species has become a rarity but a pair have bred at Wade Court in most recent years - hopefully they will again and I will soon hear their song). Also in this partly flooded meadow there were **144 Teal**, the highest count I have made here this winter.

Passing the Langstone Sailing Club as I crossed the bridge I noticed a large patch of **Blue Fleabane** - many plants covered with their prominent seeds and on close scrutiny I found at least one plant still in flower. Also here and in many other places in the last few days **Chickweed** was in flower.

On the Oysterbeds pools there were five of the omnipresent **Gadwall** and on the lagoon **one male among ten Mergansers was displaying** to the females near a group of **5 Goldeneye** which also had a male among them though not displaying at that time.

Before reaching the pools, and with dusk approaching, I met with Jason Crook as I turned south onto the old rail track and asked him if he had come across the **Little Owls** recently to which he said 'not for about a month'. I thought my chances of adding this species to my year list were slender but within three minutes after leaving Jason I **heard both their rather monotonous 'contact call' and the louder, more aggressive, call from which I concluded that I had heard two birds**. Later I met with Jason again and he confirmed that he too had heard them - he also told me that he had just seen a single **Purple Sandpiper** with **Dunlin** - an unusual species to be seen in the north of the harbour though two had been at Farlington Marshes on Sep 25 last year.

On my way home I could see at least **six Egrets** settled in the trees at Langstone Pond, and on the way out I had met with a local acquaintance who said that on Jan 4 he had seen a **Kingfisher** fishing in the usual place on the Lymbourne stream outfall at Langstone Mill (only the second sighting I am aware of there this winter) **Great Spotted Woodpecker** and **Little Owl** bring my year list to 82

[Mon 10 Jan](#)

Three more birds added to my year list

A walk to Budds Farm and back added **Snipe**, **Grey Wagtail** and **Goldcrest** to my year list but before seeing any of these birds I had found **Grey Field Speedwell** flowering in Juniper Square and had seen **two Squirrels having a spring chase** up a big pine tree.

The single **Snipe** got up from the South Moors 'orchid field' and **I think there were two Green Sandpipers** at the Tamarisk Pool (I saw one clearly in flight and dropping into a hidden gully, then immediately after saw one fly from a different direction to drop into the same gully - though I can't be sure it was not the first bird having got to where I saw the 'second' without my being aware of it).

At the mouth of the Langbrook stream **two wild rose buds** were still to be seen, and nearby I heard what I am pretty sure was the resident **Rock Pipit** though I was not sufficiently sure enough to put it on the year list.

At Budds pools there were plenty of duck but no **Fudge Duck** (and despite a mass of **Pochard** I did not see a single **Tufted Duck**). While scanning the duck a **Buzzard** flew in from the east and perched for some time on a lamp post on the north side of the pools.

Going home via the Brockhampton Stream on the west side of Budds Farm I added **Grey Wagtail** to my year list and in trees near the roundabout at the west end of Solent Road I found my first **Goldcrest** of the year among a Long Tailed Tit flock. Among flowers seen on this walk were **Oxford Ragwort** and **Sweet Violet**. An **alder tree** in Solent Road seemed close to opening its catkins, but not sufficiently so to be recorded as my first of the year.

WILDLIFE DIARY AND NEWS FOR JAN 3 - 9 (WEEK 01 OF 2011)

Highlights

New Year Bird 'races'

The highest scoring teams that I am aware of are

Simon Ingram (Hampshire) 117

Nigel Jones (Hampshire) 115

Richard Ives (Sussex) 113

Steve Piggott (Hampshire) 113

Barry Collins (Thorney Island) 101

Rob King (Sussex) 100

Owen Mitchell (Sussex) 95

John Norton (Hampshire) 95

Derek Hale (Isle of Wight) 91

Unusual numbers of Divers, Swans and Geese

A total of around 2000 Red-throated Divers were in Rye Bay on Jan 3

Re-appearance of White-tailed Sea Eagle

The bird which disappeared on Dec 12 near Titchfield Haven has re-appeared on the west Hampshire coast near a village called Downton (not the village of the same name on the River Avon in Wiltshire)

Winter wild flowers

Hazel catkins are starting to open and the first Snowdrops have been seen

Winter Butterflies and Moths

The first butterfly (a Peacock) has been seen

Bird Song

Robin, Wood Pigeon, Collared Dove, Goldfinch and several **Tits (Blue, Great and Coal)** have been singing for some time with **Wren** heard occasionally. An indication of others joining them soon came from a dawn walk around at Durlston on Jan 3 when '**numerous Blackbirds**' and (on Jan 2) one or two **Song Thrushes** were heard. **Great Spotted Woodpeckers** have been drumming since Dec 14 and **Cetti's Warblers** have uttered occasional bursts of song since Dec 27 while **Starlings** are regularly heard

BIRDS

Divers: Exceptional numbers of **Red-throated** were seen in Kent and Sussex on Jan 2 and 3. Counts at Bockhill (South Foreland) were given as 363 and 500+ on those days and a total of around 2000 were estimated to have been moving through Rye Bay on Jan 3. There was no equivalent increase in numbers of **Great Northern** or **Black-throated**. The single **Pacific Diver** was still off Marazion (Penzance) in Cornwall throughout the week

Great Crested Grebe: The number in Rye Bay on Jan 3 was estimated as 3100, exceeding the highest count from the continent (2286 off the Netherlands on Jan 2). The Hampshire raft off the Titchfield area was reported as 143 on Jan 3, Sussex had 150+ off Bexhill that day and there were more than 1300 in Rye Bay while Dorset had 205 seen from Christchurch Harbour on Jan 2. There were a couple of reports of mutual displays between birds on the sea during the week.

Red-necked Grebe: Singles were seen on the sea off Hampshire (Milford), Sussex, Dorset, Devon and Cornwall during the week.

Slavonian Grebe: 23 were reported off Pagham Harbour on Jan 2 and there was a dubious report of 16 in Portland Harbour (though most of those were identified as Black-necked by other observers)

Black-necked Grebe: The highest count reported off the Hayling Oysterbeds in the autumn was 13 on Nov 22 but on Jan 2 that shot up to 23 and became the biggest flock reported on the south coast this week (no report from the Studland area of Dorset so far this year - 38 were there on Dec 31)

Bittern: These remain unusually numerous with reports totalling 21 birds at 11 sites during the week

Great White Egret: On Jan 1 RBA reported a national total of 6 birds maybe not including the 'resident' colour ringed bird at the Blashford Lakes which was only reported once (on Nov 8) after it ceased to be a regular sight on Oct 20 until it re-appeared on Jan 7

Glossy Ibis: The bird which was first seen at Hungerford in Berks on Dec 9 was still there on Jan 7 but there have been no reports from Devon so far this year

Mute Swan: I am not sure how many Swans have been in the Emsworth area this winter (pretty sure the total will have increased since the count of 23 in November) but this week there are three less after a dog owner was seen to be urging his dog on in a fight in which one Swan was seen to be killed (and another two corpses seen in the Town Millpond this week may well have been killed in the same way)

Bewick's Swan: Last week we mentioned the flight of around 100 Bewick's seen on Dec 31 at several places across West and East Sussex. From the reports then available it seemed that the birds had mysteriously appeared in the Worthing area and equally mysteriously disappeared in the Rye Bay area. Since then a significant increase in the number grazing the Walland Marshes east of Rye by day and roosting at the Dungeness RSPB reserve by night seems to confirm that the mass flight did settle on the Walland Marshes but we still have two possibilities as to their origin. The first theory is that they arrived from the continent in the Worthing area but that is not consistent with new evidence that they were seen very early in the

morning heading west in the Rother valley area north of Hastings and suggesting that they came from the Walland Marshes and were out on a long distance circular day trip. My own guess (partly based on the wide variation in numbers reported at different places along their route and a new report of some seen to come in off the sea as well as the Rother Valley sighting) is that something caused many Bewick's Swans to get 'itchy feet' that day and that while the majority probably did make the complete round trip they also picked up (and maybe dropped off) a number of birds en route (some of them happening to be from the continent) with the result that the party which arrived back was larger than that which set out.

Black Swan: The first mention of this species for the year came on Jan 2 when one was seen on the Blashford Lakes

Pinkfoot Goose: The singleton which was on Farlington Marshes on Jan 1 flew east to Thorney Island on Jan 2 along with 30 Whitefronts and it was still in a field south of the Thorney Great Deeps on Jan 5. Pinkfoot is a hard-weather rarity in Hampshire though large numbers occur each winter in Norfolk and more northerly counties (e.g. 230 at a Nottinghamshire site on Jan 2)

White-front Goose: Reported from nine southern sites this week with a peak count of 135 in the Kent Stour Valley and 115 at Amberley Wild Brooks. Four were at the Blashford Lakes on Jan 4 but no flock has settled in the Ringwood area as it used to do each winter up to the 1990s

Snow Goose: Three appeared at the Blashford Lakes on Jan 5 - probably escapees

'Swan Goose': One hybrid between a Swan and a Goose (probably a Greylag) was with 37 Greylags at the Lewes Brooks on Jan 2

Canada Goose species: Two 'small' Canada geese were at the Pennington Marshes (Lymington) on Jan 3

Barnacle Goose: On Jan 3 there were 80 at Rodden Hive on the Fleet near Weymouth, 60 at Pennington (Lymington marshes), around 80 at Cuckmere Haven near Beachy Head, 110 at Scotney Court (Rye Harbour) and 130 at Pett Level on Rye Bay plus no doubt many others that did not get a mention on the internet that day so there were probably well over 500 in southern England during the past week. It is very unlikely that these were all local escapees and I feel sure that most if not all were wild birds

Brant: Just two birds were reported this week, one at Pagham Harbour (north fields) and the other at Pett Level

Red Breasted Goose: The Exminster Marshes bird in Devon (believed by Devon birders to be an escapee) was seen on Jan 1 but I haven't seen a mention of the Pett Level bird since Dec 31

Mandarin Duck: Eyeworth Pond near Fritham in the New Forest was in past years the place to find a good number of these colourful birds but the place to see them nowadays is Passfield Pond on the northern fringe of Woolmer Forest in east Hampshire - around 50 were present on Jan 4 when Eyeworth had just 2.

Ruddy Duck: On Jan 3 I saw a pair of these (and was told that another two were also present on the same lake) so the shooters have not yet succeeded in eliminating these birds.

White-tailed Sea Eagle: Last week I reported that the bird which appeared at Amberley Wild Brooks on Dec 11 and disappeared somewhere not far west of Titchfield Haven on Dec 12 had re-appeared near the coastal village of Downton west of Lymington on Jan 6 and it has since been seen daily in that area up to Jan 9 at least. For pictures (including one flying close to a Buzzard for size comparison) see <http://www.surfbirds.com/blog/amigo/18179/White-tailed+Eagle+in+Hampshire.html>

Avocet: 35 were seen at Farlington Marshes on Jan 6 when 22 were still present at Nutbourne (east of Thorney Island)

Knot: On Jan 2 more than 500 were present at Pilsey (south of Thorney Island)

Little Stint: One was at the Fishbourne Channel near Chichester on Jan 6 (and another was in the Seasalter area of the north Kent coast on Jan 4)

Long-billed Dowitcher: The bird which was first seen at Lodmoor (Weymouth) on Nov 8 was still there on Jan 7

Spotted Redshank: I did not get this species onto my year list until Jan 4 at the Emsworth Nore Barn site but when I did I got two for the price of one and the second bird has been seen there each day since though the original resident bird is not entirely happy with the second bird intruding on its feeding area - at first it chased the intruder off but seems to be more tolerant of its presence as time goes by

Ring-billed Gull: The regular bird was still at the Gosport 'Cockle Pond' on Jan 6

Iceland Gull: One of just seven in the UK was at the Blashford Lakes on Jan 1 and 2

Wood Lark: At least one of the 8 **Woodlarks** seen in a ploughed field near Apuldram church by the Fishbourne Channel at Chichester on Dec 26 was still in that area on Jan 2

Waxwing: Still plenty to be seen with Beverley Gardens in Romsey having around 260 on Jan 7 (a county record flock size of 382 was set in Southampton during the 2004/5 influx). In the Havant area the flock near Waitrose in Waterlooville which had 49 birds on Jan 2 was down to just 20 on Jan 7 and another flock of 40 birds was seen at Lulworth Close on Hayling Island (at its junction with Church Road just north of St Mary's Church) on Jan 3 only. A flock of 68 birds has been in Bournemouth this week and Alton has had 49 birds.

Twite: One in an Ashurst garden (by the road from Southampton to Lyndhurst) on Jan 8 was unusual

Crossbill: Also unusual for the location at this date was a Crossbill at Christchurch Harbour on Jan 2

Snow Bunting: A pair which were first seen on Dec 31 on the seawall between Prinsted and Nutbourne (just east of Emsworth) was still there and showing well on Jan 7 at least

Cirl Bunting: By Jan 6 a pair had crossed the River Exe from the area of Devon where the population has been increasing to an area near Budleigh Salterton where they are 'new'

Escapes: On Jan 2 two **Australian Shelduck** and one **Paradise Shelduck** were seen on Petworth Park Lake in the Pulborough area and on Jan 3 a **Yellow-crowned Amazon (Amazona ochrocephala)** was seen at Preston Park in Brighton

INSECTS

One **butterfly** (a **Peacock**) was seen in a New Forest (Cadnam) garden to become the first to be seen free flying this year - sadly that honour almost certainly carries a death penalty. Presumably the butterfly was disturbed from its hibernation site and did not emerge voluntarily.

Three **moths** which came to a light in a Thanet garden on Jan 2 were **December Moth, Winter Moth** and **Pale Brindled Beauty**. On Jan 4 a **Mottled Umber** was in a Fareham garden - see <http://www.surfbirds.com/blog/amigo/18154/Mottled+Umber+-+first+moth+of+2011.html> for a photo

The first report of a **Bumblebee** for the year comes from Nik Knight who saw it in Warblington cemetery on Jan 2 though not closely enough to identify the species. Another insect on the wing this week in swarms at my head height and getting into my open mouth and eyes while cycling on a couple of occasions seem to be species of a group called **Trichoceridae** (variously called **Winter Crane Flies, Winter Gnats** or **Winter Midges**)

Also seen on the Rye Bay website on Jan 7 and 'news' to me was an account of the significant damage being done to insect populations by the use of **Neonicotinoid pesticides** Find out more about this problem (which is thought to be the major cause of the disastrous crash in numbers of Honey Bees) by visiting <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Neonicotinoid> and read about proposals for a ban on these pesticides (which the British government deny to be responsible for the decline in Honey Bees) at <http://www.i-sis.org.uk/honeybeePesticideBan.php> This is obviously a complex and politically charged subject but one to be aware of If you want to sign the petition to ban these chemicals go to https://secure.avaaz.org/en/save_the_bees/?cl=895562980&v=8114

PLANTS

With warming temperatures plants are already starting to flower **Hazel catkins are opening** on the tree above the bus shelter in the layby on the main road to Hayling at the end of Mill Lane in Havant and on a tree in the Lymbourne Triangle 'wild flower garden' in Havant where the path from Grove Road crosses the Billy Trail on its way to Lymbourne Road.

Snowdrops were seen flowering in Warblington cemetery on Jan 2 by Nik Knight. The leaves of the **Lesser Celandines** under the bank of the Lymbourne Stream just south of the A27 Havant bypass are growing fast but no flower buds are visible yet.

Seen in my garden on Jan 9 with just one flower was **Smooth Hawksbeard**. Another bit of botanic news comes from the Durlston website and reports that the progress of '**Sudden Oak Death**' (the work of the fungus **Phytophthora ramorum**) is speeding up. To find out more visit the Forestry Commission website at <http://www.forestry.gov.uk/pramorun>

OTHER WILDLIFE

Otter: One seen with prey in Christchurch Harbour on Jan 5 was an unexpected observation

Porpoise: Several sightings of small groups (up to 4) off the south Devon coast. Single **Dolphins** have been seen with them on some occasions but no hint of the Dolphins attacking the Porpoises

Muntjac: A single report of one being seen on Jan 2 in the area between Fareham and Titchfield does not name the observer or give any further detail. While I am sure there are **Muntjac** in our local area they are very rarely seen (more likely to be heard barking) and it is possible for an observer who has not seen this species before to mis-identify a small **Roe deer** as a **Muntjac**. Even if seen at a distance when the difference in facial markings, tusks and antlers cannot be seen **Muntjac** can be distinguished from **Roe** by their 'hunchback' stance (the back of a **Roe** is straight and level where the **Muntjac** back is curved, being higher towards the rear of the body than it is over either front or rear legs). There is also a 20cm difference in height at the shoulders - **Roe** height ranges from 65 to 75 cm, **Muntjac** is 48 to 50 cm high. If you can find footprints the 'slots' of a **Roe** are just over 10cm long where those of a **Muntjac** do not exceed 3cm. The Forestry Commission website has an excellent PDF for identification of all deer species at [http://www.forestry.gov.uk/pdf/fcpcn6.pdf/\\$FILE/fcpcn6.pdf](http://www.forestry.gov.uk/pdf/fcpcn6.pdf/$FILE/fcpcn6.pdf)

Squirrels: Despite the cold weather both **Grey** and **Red Squirrels** were seen this week (Red at Shanklin on the IoW)

WILDLIFE DIARY AND NEWS FOR JAN 3 - 9 (WEEK 01 OF 2011)

Tue 4 Jan

Spotted Redshank, Knot and several wild flowers

There was a high tide at 11 o'clock this morning so I thought it worth a visit to Nore Barn after lunch (around 14:30) in the hope of adding **Spotted Redshank** and **Knot** to my year list and I was successful with both - I found **two Spotted Redshank** together in the stream (the resident bird in very smart plumage with beautifully speckled wings as it starts to acquire breeding plumage - though no hint as yet of the overall black colouration - the second bird with plain brown wings that could be on a **Common Redshank** until the bird flew and revealed the broad white stripe along its back) and near them **two Knot** (where recently there had been a flock of 80) that

immediately stood out from the **Dunlin** by their larger size and overall greyish plumage with none of the two tone brown on top and white below of a **Dunlin**. Before leaving home I was tempted to add **Fieldfare** to my year list (but did not) when half a dozen birds flew high and silently over my garden. They were almost certainly **Thrushes** and their relatively slow, jerky flight (bursts of flapping interspersed with 'glides') was strongly suggestive of **Fieldfare** - both **Redwing** and **Song Thrush** are rapid, non-stop fliers.

I did increase my wild flower list today with **Spotted Medick** still flowering near the Langstone roundabout and both **Grey** and **Common Field Speedwell** in Juniper Square plus one new cluster of **Honeysuckle** flowers on the garden escape bush beside the Hayling Billy trail (if you come north across 'Russell's Field' from the Royal Oak at Langstone, then turn north for no more than ten yards and look on the north/west side of the track you will find this plant entangled among other vegetation). Going back down the Billy Trail to the main road at Langstone and looking across it to the bus stop in the lay by south of the end of Mill Lane I could see (with my binoculars) that two of the **Hazel catkins** on the tree over the bus stop had started to come into flower.

While in the Nore Barn area I found flowers on the **Butchers Broom** bush at the kissing gate leading from Nore Barn woodland into the Warblington fields, and in the old part of Warblington Cemetery flowers were out on one of the old **ornamental Cherry Trees** but I could not find the **Snowdrops** which Nik Knight had seen last Sunday (somewhere not far south of the Church Path leading to Emsworth where it passes the entrance to the new cemetery extension). To make up for that I did find a couple of the fresh young **Dog's Mercury** plants in Pook Lane which had started to flower on Nov 22 had survived the frost and were still holding up their 'catkins'.

[Mon 3 Jan](#)

Chichester Lakes

This morning I drove to Chichester and had a look at the birds on the gravel pit lakes, starting with Ivy Lake. As I got out of my car a birder beckoned me over to see what he thought was a young or **immature Scaup** but it was some distance from us and only coming up for a quick breath at long intervals so there was little time to get the scope on it when it did surface before it dived again. The absence of a clear division between the streaky pale flanks and the mantle certainly suggested **Scaup**, and the absence of a broad white band at the base of the bill is to be expected in a first winter bird but I did not get a good enough look to be confident. I have however added **Scaup** to my year list as, at the very end of scanning all the lakes, I met a birder who told me of a **Scaup** on the small pool nearest the Bognor Road roundabout and this one had all the features of an adult male. If you are not familiar with this pool have a look at

<http://www.southeastbirdnews.co.uk/Maps.html> and click the Chichester map to see a larger image which gives the names of the major lakes which I passed before coming to this final un-named lake. Starting with Ivy Lake and the Trout Lakes I continued past New, Runcton and Vinnetrow Lakes on my right before reaching the entrance road to the Caravan Park on my left - after crossing the road I ignored the lake on my right but took the inconspicuous path on my left (along the boundary of the Caravan Park) which gives views of the small lake on which the **Scaup** was seen. My informant told me it had been there in previous winters.

I failed to find, or hear of anyone else finding, either **Smew** or **Bittern** which are both probably present but I did add the following to my year list:- **Great Blackback Gull, Greylag Goose, Jay** (just one flying over) plus a couple of the species to mention whose name could result in their death (I was told that four were present and I saw a male and female pair).

Yesterday I added my garden **House Sparrows** and **Jackdaws** to my year list so it now stands at 71 species.