



Gwennap Head NCI - Wildlife Report November 2018

A Robin came fluttering at the upstairs window on 21/11. It may have been after insects, tackling its reflection - seeing itself as an intruder, or perhaps just reminding us that Christmas is not far away. Probably this is the same one that was heard giving out a little song down the cliff slope last month. It is probably not British but part of the winter influx of Robins from northern regions.

There was further evidence of migration in the early part of the month with many more Chaffinches and Skylarks coming over especially on those days with easterly winds, along with our winter thrushes – Redwing and Fieldfare. On 11/11, a day of force 5-6 south-westerly winds, it was remarkable to see small flocks of Chaffinches setting out south over what was a very rough sea and they were just skirting the waves. I wonder if they made it to wherever they were going - the migratory urge is very strong! A few Reed Buntings and Bramblings were detected by call and the occasional Pied Wagtail settled on the turf by the lookout. This was generally a good autumn for visible migration due to those easterlies. Down in the valley, a rare Pallas's Warbler (from east/northeast origin) was located skulking in the scrub causing much excitement and much standing about in the lane of local birders. A Merlin arrived this month and will have taken advantage of the prevalence of the smaller migrants. This was seen on 2/11, and almost certainly it was a Merlin that was flushed off the track very early one morning (perhaps having breakfasted on a Meadow Pipit) by a watch-keeper coming on duty.

Over at Land's End on 17/11, a Pallid Swift was seen by many birders flying around the complex. This is a very rare bird here from southern Europe: several had arrived on the east coast during the previous week thought to be a result of these high-flying migrants being caught up in a wayward jet stream on their way south. It looks very much like our Swift except - surprise, surprise - it is rather pallid with a paler throat. As far as I know it didn't come our way.

There is a large flock (roughly 250) of Golden Plover in the area, mostly seen in flight and always distantly. It's always good to see birds in these sorts of numbers, but on 19/11 a single bird came over the lookout and circled many times calling. It is a beautiful single flute-like note and quite haunting if it is a silent place which is often is up here on a calm day.

The Choughs have been seen sporadically Seabirds have not been seen in great numbers this month although a strong passage of auks and Kittiwakes heading west was noted on some days with north-westerly winds. 39 Fulmars were settled on a very rough sea on 11/11, the same sea as those aforementioned Chaffinches were negotiating. We often see Mediterranean Gulls offshore, both adults and juveniles; this being one of those species that has spread north into Britain quite recently. A late Manx Shearwater came by on 11/11, and birders reported a Balearic Shearwater and a Pomarine Skua on 3/11. We saw single Great Skuas a few times this month.

A pod of 15 plus Bottlenose Dolphins travelled east behind the Runnelstone on 2/11, a welcome sight as we generally do not see them nearly so often as Common Dolphins, although the latter were not reported this month – inclement weather, it being late in the season and perhaps less observation time are probably the reasons. We are still seeing Blue-fin Tuna but not so frequently.

The highest Grey Seal count was 16 on 26/11 and Red Admirals are still flying on warm days.