

**This 120<sup>th</sup> edition marks the 5<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Newsletter, which continues thanks to Steve Waite and Mike Tyler and all of you who send in your photos and snippets. Thanks.**

### The Birds

The weather has been a right mixed bag in this period, and to finish it off we've just experienced the most severe gales for several years. There's more just around the corner too apparently! I don't really know where to start, there's been quite a bit to talk about! I'll start with the most popular birds...

On 7<sup>th</sup> two adult **Whooper Swans** were discovered with **Mute Swans** just north of Axmouth. They are still present at time of writing and are very easy to find opposite Stedcombe Manor. Whenever the patch is graced with these impressive long distance migrants I feel ever so humbled and lucky!



Another big and white duet were two immature **Spoonbills** which spent only a few minutes on the estuary on 14<sup>th</sup>, before flying off west mid afternoon.

With the strong winds I've already mentioned, the sea has had a fair bit of attention. During the really rough winds there was very little, but sightings prior to this included five **Eider** west on 11<sup>th</sup> and 12 **Brent Geese** and a **Red-breasted Merganser** past the next day. The weather was certainly the reason an adult **Little Gull** was on Colyford Marsh on 14<sup>th</sup>.

Waders in this period included a very late **Wood Sandpiper** on Blackhole Marsh on 31<sup>st</sup>, with up to three **Green Sandpipers** on Colyford Common throughout. There are now 20 **Black-tailed Godwits** on the estuary, along with singles of **Bar-tailed Godwit** and **Knot** on 11<sup>th</sup>. **Wigeon** now number over 400, and a nice treat from 3<sup>rd</sup> were a flock of 13 **Pintail** on the estuary.

Despite the mostly unfavourable visible migration conditions, **Wood Pigeons** were on the move in impressive numbers with large flocks seen flying west over the patch. On 5<sup>th</sup>, in three hours 14,570 were counted, with 10,000 counted in a couple of hours the next morning. It really is a spectacle, and attached to this email from David should be a couple of photos showing some of the flocks. They need to be in full size to appreciate them.



Other sightings during overhead migration watches include 547 **Chaffinches**, five **Brambling** and a **Crossbill** west on 6<sup>th</sup>.

Other passerine highlights include good numbers of **Redwings** and **Fieldfares** and two **Water Pipits** back on Colyford Marsh. The 3<sup>rd</sup> was a good day for **Black Redstarts**, with a total of ten. Four were at Axmouth Yacht Club, three at Durley Road and three scattered throughout Beer. A **Firecrest** has been loitering in Shute, and has been trapped twice. It was ringed first on 6<sup>th</sup> and then re-trapped on 11<sup>th</sup>.



The two **Otters** remain in the area, with both watched running across Colyford Marsh on 13<sup>th</sup>.

*Photos: Whooper Swans, Spoonbills, Black Redstart, Firecrest and attached Wood Pigeons - Steve Waite; Otters - Ian McLean.*

**Ringing** Another good bag on 11<sup>th</sup> November in the crop field and adjoining hedgerows. 71 birds including only six retraps as follows: Reed Bunting 18 (total now of 40 in two sessions), Chaffinch 3, Song Thrush 5, Dunnock 12 (4), Robin 5 (2), Blue Tit 5, Wren 1, Chiffchaff 2, Cetti's Warbler 1, Goldfinch 1 and a remarkable catch of a flock of 18 Long-tailed Tits. This brings the total for the last two sessions to 141 birds, including only eight retraps.

**Cleanliness.** As the weather gets colder, larger numbers of birds visit gardens for our food supplies and fresh, unfrozen water, making it easier for disease to spread. The RSPB says that choosing feeders and water baths that can be thoroughly cleaned in the first instance is vital. They suggest regular cleaning of feeders to avoid build up of stale food, or food spoiled by droppings, and regular cleaning and re-filling of birdbaths.

### **The 2008 Bird Report**

I am happy to report that the 2008 Axe Estuary and Seaton Bay Bird Report is now available – and very fine it is too! Not only does it have a complete Species Account of all the birds seen in the area in 2008, but also features a Review of the Year, Maps and Local Nature Reserves news and a report on the activities of the Axe Estuary Ringing Group. It is available from Archway Books in Axminster and The Axminster and Seaton Tourist Information Centers at £8.00 or by post from EDDC Countryside Service, Knowle, Sidmouth, Devon EX10 8HL at £8.00 plus £1.00 postage.

### **The Trivia**

Geoff Charman writes “We were thrilled to see a female Redstart drinking from our bird bath on Monday 2nd November 2009 about 9:30am on the eastern side of Harepath Road, Seaton.” – and we too had one in our garden in Colyford taking a luxurious bath. So these, added to Steve’s listed above, make for a fair few in the area

Peter Vernon sent a wonderful selection of pictures of Fungi from Holyford Woods – here are just a few of them.



**Diary Dates**

Friday 27<sup>th</sup> November  
Common

10.00 a.m. onwards Meet the Birds at Colyford

Friday 4<sup>th</sup> December 10.00 a.m. onwards Meet the Birds, Seaton Marshes

For more information, ring EDDC on 01395 517557.

This twice-monthly email newsletter is freely available to anyone who would like it, as is a periodic one about the activities of the East Devon Local Group of the Devon Wildlife Trust. Just send me an email with Axe Estuary Birds and/or East Devon DWT in the subject line. Also, for those without a computer, I will send a copy by post if you would like to send me some stamps.

Thanks to those who keep us informed – please continue to tell us of any unusual, interesting or amusing sightings, and what is about locally, and send any photos you would like to share.

Steve Mike and David,

[davidwalters@eclipse.co.uk](mailto:davidwalters@eclipse.co.uk).