

## The Birds

We haven't had a windy November like this for years! This is usually my favourite month weather wise, with crystal blue skies, the first frosts....not this year! Although hopefully it is just starting to change now.



Despite the wind strength, and what else has been turning up on the south coast, the sea has been very disappointing for us. The highlights have been small numbers of **Little Gulls**, mostly seen just off the yacht club. At least four different individuals have been noted, two adults a second-winter and a first-winter - such stunning birds!



The other sightings over the sea have included a couple of **Balearic Shearwaters**, and a single **Pomarine Skua** with a few more **Great Skuas**. A seabird picked up on the beach on 21<sup>st</sup> with a broken wing is believed to have been a **Little Auk**. It went into care with local vets but sadly died the following day.

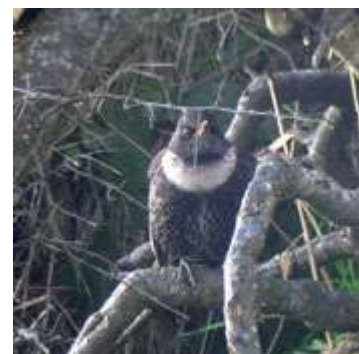
Beer Head has produced the best birds during this period though, despite the wind. Top sighting goes to a **Snow Bunting**, which was present here for nearly a week from 15<sup>th</sup> at least. It proved to be very approachable and spent most of its time along the main track that leads to the old coast guard look out. It went on the relatively calm night of 20<sup>th</sup>



Beer Head gave another surprise, with a run of late **Ring Ouzel** sightings. Two were found here on 20<sup>th</sup>, with up to four seen the next day and at least one still remains at the time of writing. It's very late for this summer migrant, they have normally left the UK by the end of October. I wonder if any will think about over-wintering here?



Plenty of wildfowl about on the estuary, and hopefully this colder weather will increase numbers some more. **Lapwing** numbers also seem to be on the rise. Rarity wise the river valley has had little new to offer, but a fine adult **Yellow-legged Gull** on 23<sup>rd</sup> was a nice treat and a drake **Gadwall** has been residing with the **Mallards** by the tram sheds. I am pleased to report that the two **Whooper Swans** remain, though they roam about a little more now and are not always in with the **Mute Swans** opposite Stedcombe House.



Two **Black Redstarts** remain on patch, a female-type near the yacht club and a male in Beer. **Water Pipits** are starting to show more often at Colyford Common, though no more than three have been seen here so far this winter.

*Photos: 'Gull trio' (second-winter Little Gull, Common Gull and Black-headed Gull) and first-winter Little Gull - Karen Woolley; Snow Bunting - Gavin Haig; Ring Ouzels and Yellow-legged Gull - Steve Waite.*

## Ringling



The 25<sup>th</sup> provided a couple of surprises. Firstly, a **Mallard** in the new Abberton Trap which made no effort to escape through the roof which was open, as it was not our intention to use the trap at this session, whereas the day before up to 100 duck surrounded the trap and made no effort to move into it! Secondly, a new bird for the Group an adult female **Water Rail** caught in the cropfield. The attached photo shows that its right leg had been damaged in the past, probably by another Water Rail. These birds can be vicious towards each other. In addition a further 25 birds were caught as follows:

Dunnock 9 (6), Reed Bunting 2 (1), Robin 2, Stonechat 1 (Juv), Blackbird 2, Song Thrush 6 (1), Wren 1, Chaffinch (1) and Greenfinch 1.

## The Trivia

Nick de Cent writes "I've been keeping an eye on the pheasant feeders in the field opposite (just above Purlbridge Farm by the Coly) and there is now an albino bird sitting in the cover there (I initially thought it was a little egret until I took a look through my bins). Also, I've subsequently seen a few more of the green pheasants plus plenty of the melanic variety.

We get a lot of pheasants from the shoot with the feeders opposite but they also come into our paddock to take advantage of our chicken feeders."

**Otters.** Our local Otters continue to be seen! David Satterly tells me there has been evidence of them at Lower Bruckland Ponds, where they have been discarding half-eaten crayfish, and they were present on Seaton Marshes on Friday 28<sup>th</sup>. Fraser Rush got close enough to identify them as probable first year adults, one male and one female. I wonder if that presages a family next year?

## Diary Dates

Thursday 3 <sup>rd</sup> December	7.30 p.m.	"What is Falconry?" Illustrated talk with perhaps a live Bird. Kilmington Village Hall. AVDCS Event with DWT. All welcome. Donations requested
Friday 4 <sup>th</sup> December	10.00 a.m.	Meet the Birds, Seaton Marshes.
Sunday 6 <sup>th</sup> December	10.00 a.m.	AVDCS Tram Trip and Lunch and Lunch Booking essential with Joan Millard, 01297 553477.£10.00 plus lunch.

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.

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