



Gwennap Head NCI - Wildlife Report November 2017

Visible migration continued into November with lesser numbers of finches, pigeons, thrushes etc. These are common migrants but on 17/11, a magical day of sunshine and absolute calm with not a hint of a swell, the kind of day we dream of in summer but seldom get!, we had a visit from a little sparrow size bird, one which wouldn't impress many people if they saw it, and I didn't! There was a profound silence that day which we seldom experience here, no wind, crashing waves, people talking, gulls crying, dogs barking etc. just a few notes from this bird as it flew over - a nasal 'chuk' followed by a short 'prrrt' - with a bit of a roll on the rr's, not much to go on but enough to identify it as a Lapland Bunting - not rare here but certainly uncommon, coming all the way from Lapland or maybe even Russia. It was close and its call clear and isolated in the rare silence – but I still couldn't see it!

On 16/11, there was a large influx of Redwing and Fieldfare which had flown south during the night, navigating by the stars, magnetism and probably other ways we don't know about yet. They take advantage of clear nights and light following winds. There were many grounded in the early morning in the far fields and on the moor, mostly Redwings flashing fire red feathers beneath the wing.

On 8/11, a watch-keeper was fairly certain she saw 3 Swallows. This would be a late record but she was probably right because there were other reports at that time.

We saw Choughs (2 or 4) frequently during the month, and a watch-keeper reported some provocation by a Raven but nothing came of it – it was probably a territorial reminder to his smaller cousin of who is in charge round here.

On the sea, a late Sooty Shearwater (from southern Atlantic islands) was lingering offshore on 15/11 and there were several reports of Common Scoter with 40 on 15/11 and 27 on 17/11. Great Northern and Red-throated Divers were seen flying past and a large plain brown duck, probably a female Eider, flew north on 26/11. Fulmars returned to cruise around the cliff-tops when the wind allowed, otherwise they sat around in groups on the sea. They need winds of force 4-5 for efficient, energy saving flight (little flapping and much gliding). Recent research with hi-tech monitoring gadgets has shown that in flight they expend the same energy as when they are sitting on a nest and sometimes in strong winds even less. That's quite hard to imagine.

A group of 8-10 Common Dolphins travelled west behind the Runnelstone on 15/11 and were likely to be the same group seen an hour and a half later by an off duty watch-keeper strolling on the beach at Sennen (the watch-keeper not the dolphins). On 22/11, in a rough sea (force 8 wind), porpoises were located feeding off the seal haul-out under diving gannets - just an odd glimpse of a tiny dark body surging through the white foam.

Apart from Grey Seals (maximum count 10) and a few bumblebees, we haven't spotted much else. A local birder reported a Painted Lady butterfly hereabouts late in the month.

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