



National Coastwatch
EYES ALONG THE COAST

Gwennap Head NCI - Wildlife Report December 2018

There were few windows in the weather this month; rain, hail, gales or fog (sometimes the whole lot at once) gave little opportunity for wildlife watching except for a few days at the end of the month. When you could see the sea it was evident that not a lot was happening out there. Always there were the regulars – Gannets, Kittiwakes, Razorbills, Guillemots, Shags and Fulmars – these last back now and soaring about the cliff tops on windy days. Numbers of these seabirds were generally low and most were travelling rather than feeding. It was noticeable that after very strong west or south-westerly gales we would see many more Fulmars on the sea and this was particularly noticeable on 9/12 after high numbers were reported flying west along the north coast during the previous 2 days. Small parties of Razorbills and Guillemots flying west were a regular feature of most days. We would expect normally more sightings of divers since there are fairly good numbers in Mounts Bay but they must have been sitting tight for we only noted 1 Red-throated Diver on 22/12 and a diver of unknown species on 27/12. Mediterranean Gulls have been seen on several days.

We have seen little of the Choughs, just one or two occasionally flying one way or the other but 2 Choughs feeding by the lookout on Christmas day. The Choughs in Cornwall have done very well this year with 10 pairs fledging 28 young (our regular pair contributing 3 to the grand total) and a further 9 pairs were monitored. The weather doesn't deter the Jackdaws from being airborne and enjoying the high wind speeds we have been experiencing frequently. On 17/12, a young Rook had found itself on a rock here on the cliff top, looking confused - no surprise, because Rooks are unusual here being bird of fields and woodland. Jackdaws and Rooks often fly to and from their roost sites together so maybe it got caught up in our Jackdaw flock and ended up in this alien territory. A local Carrion Crow was quick to see it off.

Small birds have been scarce – the odd Meadow Pipit, a flock of around 50 Linnets and a female Black Redstart on 27/12 perched on the compass rose in the sunlight.

That day, 27/12 was a beautiful calm day for once and it was only on that day when any cetaceans were spotted. A total of 12 Harbour Porpoises were feeding in the tide race as the tide was ebbing, 7 to the southeast and five to the southwest, including an adult with a baby.

Grey Seal counts were difficult due to the weather. No seals were present on all counts apart from 1 on 26/12.

On 27/12 again, that lovely sunny day, a butterfly flew up from the track. It was most likely a Red Admiral or a Peacock.

The highlights for me during 2018 were - the phenomenal landfall of 7spot ladybirds on 4/8, the large numbers of Storm Petrels feeding in the tide race on 9/9 and, last but not least, superb views of the Dusky warbler on top of the Blackthorn bush behind the lookout on 21/10.

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