



Gwennap Head NCI - Wildlife Report April 2018

We were eased gently into spring with the flush of white Blackthorn flower and our first Swallows coming in on 8/4 (3). At first, we saw very small numbers of Swallows, House and Sand Martins - a reflection of weather conditions rather than declining numbers although we know this is happening - and then a more sizable influx right at the end of the month along with the arrival of the first Swifts. Migrants were generally late and thin on the ground. 21/4 was memorable for the fine sunny weather, calm seas and light southerly winds and the virtually still air was frequently interspersed with the tinkling calls of Linnets and Goldfinches, a definite immigration of these tiny finches and with them came the soft 'chucc-chucking' of a Redpoll, a closely related species seldom heard here in the far West in spring. The next day our breeding Whitethroats arrived, singing and displaying by the gate.

Birders looked hard for rarities and one little bird saved the day - an elusive Subalpine Warbler (breeds in southern continental Europe) popped up out of the Blackthorn by the gate on 18/4 for enough seconds to be identified, putting a smile on many faces.

Life on the sea was dominated by 1000's of Manx Shearwaters flying west. On 10/4 an exceptionally long swell ran over a smooth and brightly opaque sea - the birds were a visual delight sweeping over the gentle undulations in droves on long jet black wings; their wing tips, they say, just tickle the water - something I have never been able to see. There was a hint of the spring northbound skua migration on 21/4 with a Great Skua followed by a splendid dark phase Arctic Skua. Small numbers of Sandwich Terns were seen and, on 16/4 of them 3 landed on the base of the Runnelstone buoy and made short forays out from there. It was a rough day, maybe they needed a rest. 2 Comic (Arctic or Common Terns) were also noted. The Whimbrel migration got underway and we saw the first on 21/4 followed by small numbers on subsequent days. We are still seeing small numbers of Red-throated and Great Northern Divers on their northward passage. A sub-adult Glaucous Gull was by the lookout on 28/4.

We are uncertain what is happening with the Choughs. There are still 2, possibly 3, here but there has been a change and we are not sure exactly who they are. Colour ring reading will be much appreciated.

Cetaceans were few and far between, but a watch-keeper reported a pod of Bottlenose Dolphins travelling east on 14/4, and this was particularly interesting because they (it must have been the same pod) were reported off Pendeen going west earlier in the day - nine including 2 juveniles. Porpoises were apparent as usual in small numbers but with a larger group seen on 23/4.

A Painted Lady and a Small White butterfly were flying about the cliff top on 21/4. A Small Tortoiseshell was released from the building on 10/4.

It is lovely to see Bluebell on the banks again, but not so lovely to see the masses of Three-cornered Leek which is gradually taking over. A nice clump of Sea Campion is in flower outside the door.

The highest Grey Seal count this month was 8

Jean Lawman