



National Coastwatch
EYES ALONG THE COAST

Gwennap Head NCI - Wildlife Report November 2019

The single Snow Bunting remaining from the flock of five that arrived last month stayed with us until 8/11 – through all the wind and rain and even the gale of 2/11 when we experienced a gust of 112m.p.h. Perhaps to a bird of the exposed mountain tops this was no big deal. This little bird achieved celebrity status judging by the millions of photographs taken of it in various poses, but it was very tolerant. The other little visitor, the Black Redstart, first reported at the end of last month has been seen on several days since, mostly those days with light winds but I saw it one day in a gale as it jollied up from the cliff top for a second or two in a sudden updraft. It is not a brightly coloured bird but is mostly grey with a rusty tail but I would say it is handsome with a dignified air. Presumably it finds adequate shelter down among the rocks and grassy hollows of the cliff slopes. Our Robin is still down there and has chased it about a bit – maybe it's the flash of red on the redstart's tail that rouses its passion or its anger?

Generally, the weather has been in no way conducive to any late migration but on 8/11 there was a small influx of Redwing, Chaffinches, Skylarks, Starlings, Stock Doves and even 3 Goldfinches. The reason was that there was a brisk north wind - a following wind for southbound migrants and the night had been clear. Also, on that day, a juvenile male Blackbird popped up on the rocks in front, certainly an incomer and for an instant I thought it may have been a Ring Ouzel which are regular migrants here in small numbers in autumn, and indeed there was one down in the valley.

There have been several days when we have seen a strong seabird passage. On 8/11, many 100's of Kittiwakes and auks passed heading west as always, and then on 20/11, in a very strong southerly winds, large numbers of auks (Razorbills and Guillemots) came by very close in to the cliffs often in large groups of 40 or 50. They passed during the first few hours of the morning and would have numbered a few thousand if I had counted them. On 27/11, in strong westerly winds many seabirds were seen out to the northwest flying westwards back out to sea after being driven onto the north coast, and also on that day a group of 35 Fulmars were settled on the sea close inshore. Other seabirds reported this month include a dark-phased Pomarine Skua, 3 Great Skua, many Red-throated (including a group of 3 together) and several Great Northern Divers and small flocks of Common Scoter.

We saw Choughs regularly, ringed and un-ringed, and on 5/11 our local pair were on the turf feeding amicably with the Porthcurno pair - you can tell it's not the breeding season yet with this kind of peace prevailing between them.

The only cetacean we noted this month was a Harbour Porpoise feeding beneath diving Gannets.

It has to be said that the weather this month has been uncommonly awful and not very good for wildlife sightings.

Jean Lawman