

Tuesday brought the first Easterly winds of the Autumn which in turn brought the first Siberian migrants to the East coast in the form of an Eye-browed Thrush to Spurn on the mouth of the Humber.

It was obviously then a time for me to make a pilgrimage to my favourite birding spot.

Spurn has recorded the most bird species of any location in the UK, the Thrush was a new species. I am unsure of the precise figure but I know that around three years ago it was 399 with a challenge posted by the group to guess the 400th.

Arrangements were duly made with myself and Phil arriving at Karina's at 04-15 with the three hour or so drive commencing at around 04:30.

Upon arrival the rain commenced, although there were showers, they were irregular and not particularly heavy never forcing a quick dash for shelter.

The first stop was to the Crown and Anchor pub car park with surprisingly no activity occurring, Karina did hear a Yellow-browed Warbler which, unfortunately was never seen by any of us.

The next stop was to Sammy's Point which effectively forms the Northern bank of the River Humber, this was chosen due to the fact that the winds were South Easterly therefore blowing birds directly towards that area.

It became apparent that the wind was resulting in blowing many migrants towards Sammy's which included Meadow Pipits, Chiff-chaff and Willow Warblers probably along with other common migrants.

The birds were constantly arriving with it being impossible to identify or count them all.

Curlew and Whimbrel were also seen.

The next stop was to the YWT centre where we birded for a few hours. The location is at the start of what was the peninsular before the regular storms washed away the causeway which resulted in Spurn head becoming isolated and therefore an Island.

This location is similarly the North bank of the Humber therefore attracting drift migrant blown by the South Easterly winds.

Again, there was a constant arrival of birds, wave after wave with them quickly darting for cover in the thick bushes.

Along with the species noted were Chaffinch's, Reed Bunting, Robins which are species which boost the UK population escaping from the harsh Scandinavian Winters. A few Brambling were also noted as was an Great Skua menacingly flying along the coastline, followed by a Manx Shearwater shortly afterwards.

Now the tide was falling numerous waders fed along the tideline including, Knot. Black-tailed Godwit along with Dunlin and Golden Plover.

A quick walk to the North Sea side resulted in Red-throated Diver, Wheatear, Gannett, Little Gull numerous groups of Teal and Common Scoter were recorded flying South.

After a coffee at the centre we walked towards the breach noting still an almost constant wave of birds arriving.

Additionally, whilst I was looking for seabirds, I noted a Grey Seal, then just beyond the surf line I noted a triangular shape which I originally thought was a jagged triangular rock. When the shape began to move, I realised that rocks do not normally swim. It was swimming slowly parallel to the shore line with the back above the water.

My original thought was that due to the shape of the dorsal fin that it was a shark, a sight which I am not familiar with but which I have previously observed.

The probability is that it was a Common Dolphin, which I have observed on numerous occasions. However, I am not minded to decide one way or another.

I had taken my Spurn CB radio with me however, it by and large, remained silent reflecting that there were no rarities being recorded.

What is interesting is that there were four or five Yellow-browed's seen which were not considered worthy enough to warrant noting on the CB; a far cry from when I first started going around 35 years ago. They are undoubtedly on the increase in a major way.

Interestingly Phil had noted two from the Humber whilst I was watching the Red-throated Diver and ducks on the North Sea.

We had a quick parley as it was now approaching 3pm deciding to have one last look at the Crown and Anchor which provided no birds then moving on to Sammy's, which again proved fruitless. The wind was now from the South with the passage of birds now stopping. The birds we were seeing had been mainly "drift migrants" blown off course by the wind towards Spurn with the wind shifting they were probably now making land somewhere else.

Whilst we were at Sammy's a message came over the CB about some birds (we could hear clearly which species) at the gas terminal, so it was off there that we went.

Whilst at the terminal birds started to appear from the direction of the North Sea mainly warblers chiff-chaff and willow but I did hear the distinctive call of a Yellow-browed.

Phil and Karina had in the meantime gone prospecting seeing White Wagtails and Wheatear. In the meantime, I met another birder when I bemoaned the stop of the migration when she advised me that birds were still coming in off the North Sea the route to which was a short footpath. That was our obvious next and last stop.

On the path we noted a small number of warblers but many White and Pied Wagtails with the odd Wheatear which were seen flying from the direction of the North Sea then landing in the field after their perilous non-stop flight over the North Sea from Scandinavia. When we arrived at the coast we split up with me sitting on the nearest bench and the others walking North and South respectively.

Here there was a regular arrival of Thrushes which were mainly Song Thrushes with the odd Redwing and a single Mistle Thrush. On the beach amongst the rocks were numerous Meadow Pipits which again were obviously fresh arrivals.

Whilst the birds at Sammy's were mainly blown there by the wind the birds now were birds arriving despite the wind with the UK being their destination of choice.

Although whilst this spectacle was going on I do look to i.d. as many birds that I can but sometimes I just sit back and enjoy the spectacle without concerning myself too much about i.d.ing every single bird. It is not often that it is possible to witness migration on this scale on the West coast so I just sit back relax and generally enjoy life when I can witness it.

It was a long time since Phil's last visit with it being Karina's first but I do not think that it will be too long before their next.

Looking at the forecast no Easterlies are forecast in the near future but who knows this may change. Two things are sure

1 I will keep looking at the forecast

2 The next time the wind is from the East I will return.

Gofin