

Dawlish Warren Recording Group
Wildlife Review 2020



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INTRODUCTION

A year to be remembered for all the wrong reasons, the pandemic having devastating and far-reaching impacts on society, however wildlife provided a solace to many in this strangest of years.

The Spring lockdown meant many regular species were not recorded by the group this year, however despite these restrictions 1411 species were noted with 158 species found new to the Warren. The Recording Area total now stands at an incredible 4654 species, showcasing the amazing diversity of habitats to be found on the Warren. These totals are all the more remarkable when you consider Teignbridge do not share their records with the Recording Group and have refused permission for the group to collect specimens for identification. This means many groups such as beetles, spiders, centipedes and millipedes are under-recorded.

Many thanks to all who submitted records to the Recording Group.

Birds

A total of 187 species were recorded on site this year with 35 species confirmed breeding, including **Mute Swan**, four pairs of **Stonechat**, three pairs of **Cirl Bunting** and two pairs of **Little Grebe**. However a lone male **Reed Bunting** holding territory revealed another species lost.

There were no new species recorded and the annual total was around the average for the last five years, but 2020 wasn't without its highlights with several notable sightings and five new site record counts **Cattle Egret** (44 in Oct), **Mediterranean Gull** (223 in Jul), **House Martin** (4,806 in Oct) and **Cirl Bunting** (14) & **Shelduck** (159) both in Dec.

Omissions from the year list included Black Tern, for the first time for at least 30 years, Turtle Dove, Grey Phalarope, Pochard and Puffin with now regular no shows from Black-throated Diver, Dartford Warbler and Spotted Redshank.

Rarities included a presumed **Yelkouan Shearwater**, the 5th **Baird's Sandpiper**, the 6th record (and beyond) of **Cattle Egret**, the 6th **Melodious Warbler**, the 7th **Caspian Gull** and the 10th **Richard's Pipit**.



Cirl Bunting - Lee Collins



Slavonian Grebe. Herbert spent a 14th year in residence on the estuary.

January

2020 got off to a slow start with poor visibility and a persistent drizzle on the 1st but a respectable total of 73 species were recorded. The highlights included the first **Jack Snipe** since December 2017, along with the wintering **Scandinavian Rock Pipit**, a female **Eider**, the only Devon record of the winter, and Herbert the resident **Slavonian Grebe**; once again the only one recorded during the year.

Highlights included two **Whooper Swan** north in off the sea on 5th, the first since Oct 2013 and 25 **Cattle Egret** roosting in the Railway Saltmarsh on 11th, the sixth site record. These were part of a flock that wintered on the estuary. Varying numbers were seen during the following week, with a new peak of 26 on 18th.

Very high numbers of gulls were present mid-month with c3000 **Black-headed** and 272 **Common Gull**, both the largest counts since the 1980s. **Snipe** numbers remained high with a max of 200 midmonth. Offshore **Great-crested Grebe** continued to decline, peaking at 70 with a max of just 16 **Red-throated Diver**. Late month the Exmouth **Red-necked Grebe** ventured into the Recording Area, becoming the first record since Nov 2016. The only **Black Redstart** of the winter was on Warren Point on the 24th, a bird also borrowed from Exmouth.

February

The **Whimbrel** overwintering on the estuary spent much of the month roosting at the Warren, with a **Water Pipit** also making sporadic appearances. A high count of 133 **Turnstone** early month were presumably linked to stormy weather, and the flooded conditions elsewhere no doubt accounted for the year's peak count of 472 **Dark-bellied Brent Geese**.



Grey Plover – Lee Collins. A bird ringed at Exminster Marshes by the Devon & Cornwall Wader Ringing Group

The warm winter was reflected by the discovery of an active **Collared Dove** nest on 6th, a **Firecrest** was elusive early month and eight **Tufted Duck** flew south on the 15th, one of only two records this year. Late month a few **Meadow Pipit** and the first migrant **Chiffchaff** hinted at the start of Spring.

March

The month began with a brief visit of one of Torbay's wintering **Pomarine Skua**, attracted north by trawlers and attendant gull flocks, with the year's second **Firecrest** the next day.

A **Jack Snipe** was present on the 7th when 75 **Snipe** constituted the highest March count since 1987, the next day 152 **Snipe** were present! **Black-tailed Godwit** were also present in higher than usual numbers, with a peak of 530 on 12th, the second highest ever count.



Wheatear - Alan Keatley

The long-awaited first two **Wheatear** arrived on the 16th, a day earlier than 2019. Even more tardy the year's first **Sandwich Tern** finally showed up the next day. The first minor Spring fall was on the 19th with four **Wheatear**, at least seven **Chiffchaff** and the second earliest ever **Blackcap**.

The month's highlight was a female **Kentish Plover** on 21st – 23rd, the earliest ever, just beating one on 22nd March 2001. It was the first site record since April 2016 for this once annual visitor to the Warren.

The month ended with a **Red Kite** on the 23rd, the first **Osprey** next day, a **Little Ringed Plover** on 28th and a **Coot** on 29th, the first since a one-day bird in August 2014.



Kentish Plover - Lee Collins

April

The highlight was a male **Ring Ouzel** on 4th on the Golf Course fairways and even heard sub-singing. This was the 20th individual (18 records) for the Recording Area, the earliest ever and first since 2015.

Wader migration picked up during the month the highlight of which were two **Avocet** that flew NE on 10th; the first April record since 2006 and one of only two records this year. Regular two-figure counts of **Whimbrel** from 6th with a max of c.70 (26th); a Welsh ringed bird was present at Dawlish Warren for its fourth spring visit. The first **Common Sandpiper** was on the seawall on 24th and a flock of 154 **Dunlin** on 28th were new arrivals.

Sandwich Tern passage was very light with a max of just 36 on 19th; by contrast, **Common Tern** peaked at 31 on 30th. Other terns that day included two **Roseate**, two **Arctic** and a **Little Tern**.

Offshore **Red-throated Diver** peaked at 11 on 4th and nine on 12th, but it was the first blank April since 1995 for Great Northern Diver. Three **Great** and a **Pomarine Skua** passed with a single **Arctic Skua** on 19th.

Spring migrants were in short supply with 18 **Wheatear** the worst tally since 1994. Selected maxima included 11 **Chiffchaff**, five **Whitethroat**, four **Blackcap** and two **Willow Warbler**,

although a **Redstart** on 23rd was a species not seen every Spring. Overhead, just six **Yellow Wagtail** and on the 8th a **Tree Pipit**, hirundine passage was also lighter than average with single-figures of **Sand** and **House Martin**, and a max of just 41 **Swallow**.



Osprey - Lee Collins

Other records included up to four **Raven** regularly foraging on the Golf Course, a **Mistle Thrush** doing the same on 2nd & 6th, an **Osprey** on 7th, a **Red Kite** on 11th and an unseasonal **Kingfisher** the same day, the first in April since 2003.

May

It was the sunniest and driest May in England on record and the lack of migrants, both waders and passerines, reflected the weather; some days even failing to pass 50 species, a very poor tally for site.

The month started well with a female **Snow Bunting** on the 4th, the first ever May record. The same day saw 17 **Little** and two **Arctic Tern** offshore with a **Pomarine** and three **Arctic Skua**.



Snow Bunting - Lee Collins

A **Red Kite** passed through on the 6th with the 28th Warren **Marsh Harrier** over the next day, the first in May since 2004. Six more **Red Kite** moved through on both the 12th & 21st with two **Hobby** also recorded during the month.

The pick of the migrants were limited to a **Spotted Flycatcher** on 23rd and just two **Cuckoo**, both feeding on Brown-tail caterpillars on Warren Point. Single **Mistle Thrush** and **Siskin** on the 12th were perhaps the first post breeding movements.

Wader passage although limited, included three colour-ringed '**Sanderbling**' from Greenland, Mauritania and Guinea Bissau respectively. A **Golden Plover** that arrived on 29th was just the tenth May record.

Other records included a **Gadwall** and the only 2020 **Little Gull**, a first-summer, on 7th, two **Greylag Geese** on the 9th were also the year's only record. The first **Balearic Shearwater** passed offshore in the 23rd.



Red Kite - Lee Collins

June

Following a quiet May, June was more eventful, with 71 species, the record day list for the month, noted on Midsummers Day.

Highlights included a **Red Kite** with food (probably scavenging a dead Rabbit) on Warren Point on 4th, the first ever grounded record; a female **Long-tailed Duck** on the 10th was only the third record for the month, following a summering duck in 1983 and an immature on 25th June 1989; two **Goosander** on the 21st, the first ever June record; and the first ever **Indian Peahen** (Peacock) early month.

Other records included the **Golden Plover** until the 22nd, possibly a returning bird from 2019 which had been the first June record since 2004; a late **Spotted Flycatcher** on 1st; the sixth ever June **Osprey** on 7th; two **Mistle Thrush** and a **Coal Tit** on 10th, the first of a good autumn for the latter species; a **Cuckoo** again on Warren Point on 11-12th; an unseasonal **Dark-bellied Brent Goose** on 20-21st, the only 2020 **Treecreeper** on the 22nd and a **Teal** on the Dune Pond on 28th, the fourth June record, all since 2010.

The end of the month saw passage pick up in the estuary, a Polish **Black-headed Gull** ringed in June 2012, was recorded for the fifth autumn, the first three-figure count of returning **Curlew** on the 22nd was line with the early arrival of presumed failed breeders, since 1999. The first juvenile **Sandwich Tern** and **Black-headed Gull** arrived on the 25th, along with 17 **Mediterranean Gull**, the start of a record passage.

Breeding records included three pairs of **Cirl Bunting** and, for the first time, four pairs of **Stonechat**, two pairs of **Little Grebe**, **Reed Warbler** holding territory in all four ponds, one pair of **Collared Dove**, now a regular breeder, but no confirmed Reed Bunting for the first time in many years.

The male of a pair of **Mute Swan** nesting on the Main Pond was ringed (yellow 'DDN') at Abbotsbury, Dorset as a first-summer in July 2015 and had been periodically seen at the Warren since April 2018.

July

An early summer storm on the 4th produced some excellent sea-watching, with a **Yelkouan Shearwater** amongst 132 **Balearic** and just three **Manx Shearwater**. It was also a rare four skua day with a single adult **Long-tailed**, four **Pomarine**, 17 **Arctic** and a **Great Skua**. The fourth ever July **Long-tailed Duck** also flew through, presumably the June bird that had spent some time at Christchurch Harbour, Dorset in the intervening period.

The next day saw at least six **Pomarine Skua** present, with birds having presumably roosted in the bay, but only a handful of shearwaters passed in the evening. The first four **Roseate Tern** of the autumn were in the estuary, in total at least 12 different birds were recorded this autumn, a welcome increase.

Other highlights included a flock of ten **Goosander** past the seawall on 1st with three in the estuary on 8-12th; ten **Cattle Egret** north through the estuary mouth followed soon after by an eclipse male **Tufted Duck** on the 16th; and two single **Green Sandpiper** on 18th & 31st.

Records from the estuary included the first of the autumn's record 19 **Yellow-legged Gull** on the 6th, whilst **Mediterranean Gull** numbers passed three-figures for the first time with at least 123 on 9th with a further influx reaching a new peak of 223 on 14th. Three **Little Ringed Plover** dropped in on 19th with summer-plumaged **Curlew Sandpiper** and **Little Stint** on the 31st. The last time these species were recorded here in July was 2012 & 2005, respectively; the last time both were seen together in July was 1987.

The pick of the many ringing recoveries during the month was from a metal ringed **Sandwich Tern**. This was one of only five birds ever ringed in South Africa and recovered in Britain. It was ringed as an adult on 1st December 2007. Remarkably this same bird was seen here at Dawlish Warren 18th - 22nd July 2019. It was also at Brownsea Island, Poole Harbour, Dorset on 11th May 2008 and 7th May 2011, presumably its breeding colony.



Curlew Sandpiper – Lee Collins



Redstart – Lee Collins

Passerine migrants saw the first **Willow Warbler** mid-month, a juvenile **Redstart** that remained 18th – 2nd Aug, a **Sedge Warbler** on 26th and a July record 20 **Blackcap** with a **Garden** and a second **Sedge Warbler** on 28th. The month ended with the year's only **Grasshopper Warbler** on Warren Point on 31st.

August

A quiet start to the month although the **Redstart**, **Roseate Tern** and **Curlew Sandpiper** remained on the 1st with the third **Green Sandpiper** of the year also present.



Wood Sandpiper (and Dunlin) - Lee Collins

The 8th saw the first of the six **Little Ringed Plover** recorded during the month, with the first of a good run of three **Wood Sandpiper** on the 9th; the 41st-43rd records. Much more frequent, at the Warren at least, a juvenile **Kentish Plover** was joined in the evening by a second bird on the 13th, the 102th -103rd site records.

Other notable wader records included another **Green Sandpiper** on 23rd, the first two **Ruff** of the year on 29th, six **Curlew Sandpiper** and a juvenile **Little Stint** on 30th.

The year's most popular bird was a sadly one-eyed **Melodious Warbler** found near the Main Pond on 17th. It remained until the 23rd, it was at times unusually co-operative, but could equally disappear for long periods as to be expected with this species. This was the sixth Warren record, but the first since 1983. Generally migrants were however short in

supply with single **Spotted Flycatcher** and **Yellow Wagtail**, five **Sedge** and three **Garden Warbler** during the month.

Other records included the first returning **Wigeon** on the 14th, a **Short-eared Owl** on 22nd, the earliest autumn record since July 1959 and only the second ever August record; two **Spoonbill** visited from top end of estuary on 27-28th; just one **Osprey** and following Storm Francis on the 25th, three **Storm Petrel** and a **Great Northern Diver**.



Kentish Plover - Alan Keatley



Melodious Warbler - Luke Harman

September

The year's first **Whinchat** and the month's only **Garden Warbler** were present on the 2nd. An **Osprey** was overhead on the 5th before being seen later off Powderham.

A typically elusive **Wryneck** was present around Greenland Lake on 6-7th, probably the 40th individual here. A **Nuthatch** found the same day was an even rarer visitor to the Warren with a **Hobby** and the first 13 **Pale-bellied Brent Geese** of the autumn arriving mid morning. The year's second **Whinchat** arrived on the 7th.

Mid month was quiet although the first **Dark-bellied Brent Goose** arrived on the 9th and a third **Whinchat** was present on the 14th. A change in weather saw the first **Chaffinch** and **Lesser Redpoll** of the autumn overhead on the 15th along with the only **Tree Pipit** of the month. An **Osprey** departed high to the south and three juvenile **Little Stint** appeared in the Bight.

Vis mig continued on the 19th with 109 **Siskin** overhead, with 192 passing the next day, the highest count since Oct. The 20th also saw 595+ **House Martin** pass through, the highest count here since Sep 2006 and 13 **Grey Wagtail**, the highest count since Oct 2014. Away from the skies eight **Avocet** circled the Bight, before heading back south out to sea.

Other records included just six **Yellow Wagtail** and two **Sedge Warbler**, a **Little Ringed Plover** on 26th was the latest since 1983, and the first **Snow Goose** for the Recording Area was with **Canada Geese** on 27-28th.



Sedge Warbler - Alan Keatley

October

The month started with a **Buzzard** roosting on site, just the second grounded record for the Warren. Strom Alex on the 2nd saw 46 **Pintail** in the estuary, the third highest count here in 40 years and the year's second record of **Ruff**.

The morning of the 3rd saw a spectacular and unprecedented passage of 4,806+ **House Martin** with pulses numbering hundreds at a time. Four-figure counts have only occurred at the Warren twice before, in Sep 1983 (1,000+) and Sep 2002 (1,500+). In total more House Martin passed through in five hours than in the past five years combined!

Whilst counting, the first **Merlin** of the year flew through, as did an **Osprey**, the first three **Lapwing** of the year and two **Goosander**.

An elusive **Yellow-browed Warbler** on 5-7th moved between the Main Pond and Dead Dolphin Wood, but the main feature of the month were **Cattle Egret** with a record 24 roosting in the Saltmarsh on the 11th; birds remained in varying numbers until the 27th with the record increasing three more times until a peak of 44 on the last date.



Cattle Egret - Lee Collins

More vis mig midmonth saw 19 **Crossbill** and the first **Brambling** of the year move through, along with 11 **Coal Tit** on the 15th with the next day seeing 20 **Crossbill**, two **Mistle Thrush**, the latest **Sand Martin** since 1997 and a **Yellowhammer** that remained for three days.

The year's only **Tawny Owl** was seen early morning on the 17th when 10 more **Crossbill** moved through, as well as another **Mistle Thrush** and the first **Fieldfare** of the year. The highlight though were two **Great White Egret**, which meant the first ever three-egret day on site.

A single **Great White Egret** flew over the next day, making two three-egret days in a row, three **Short-eared Owl** circled Warren Point, a pair of **Gadwall** were the only the second record of the year and a late **Reed Warbler** was at the Main Pond.

The site's 11th **Cetti's Warbler** turned up on the 25th as well as a brief **Snow Bunting**, the 20th individual since 2000. These were however bettered by the 5th ever **Baird's Sandpiper** on the 27th, the first since 2001, it unfortunately failed to linger.

Other records included the latest **Yellow Wagtail** since 1987 on 23rd, several **Little Stint** including the latest since 2003 on 29th, the same day as a late **House Martin**.

Storm Aiden on the last day of the month delivered an adult **Sabine's Gull**, the first since Sep 2011, a single **Pomarine Skua**, **Storm Petrel** and a **Sooty Shearwater**.

November

The start of the month saw a couple of **Firecrest** and a **Merlin** still on site, with a late **Wheatear** on the beach and a **Goosander** circling offshore on the 2nd.



Firecrest - Alan Keatley

The annual pigeon movement started on the 3rd with 5,980 **Woodpigeon** overhead, the same day saw the second **Yellow-browed Warbler** and **Yellowhammer** of the year and 35 **Cattle Egret** returned to the saltmarsh. The next morning saw 37,575 **Woodpigeon** overhead with three **Brambling** picked out amongst the high flying finch flocks. The highlight though was a brief **Tree Pipit**, the latest ever record beating the previous record of 25 Oct 1958. The 5th saw a third day of movement with another 9,340 **Woodpigeon**, 203 **Jackdaw**, three **Brambling** and two **Mistle Thrush**.



Caspian Gull - Lee Collins

Attention on the 6th was drawn back to the estuary with a 2nd winter **Caspian Gull** on Finger Point, the site's 7th record; all since April 2014. Back to the skies on the 7th when the tenth site **Richard's Pipit** flew through.

Last winter's colour-ringed **Scandinavian Rock Pipit** reappeared alongside a second colour-ringed bird, both from Norway. The second bird moved to Exton for several days before returning to the Warren.

A drake **Long-tailed Duck** flew over the golf course and out to sea on the 16th with 690 **Black-tailed Godwit** the next day. This was the second highest Warren count, closely matching the timing of the max count from last November.

The first **Glaucous Gull** of the year flew south past the seawall on the 18th when a very late **Wheatear** was on Warren Point. An isolated movement of 25,505 **Woodpigeon** occurred on the 19th.

The 22nd saw two record November counts from the seawall with 36 **Great-crested Grebe** and 28 **Great Northern Diver** whilst the third record of **Great White Egret** for the year flew over and the first **Siberian Chiffchaff** since Oct 2017 appeared in the Entrance Bushes.



Scandinavian Rock Pipit – Lee Collins

Langstone Rock took centre stage on the 28th with a **Velvet Scoter** and a **Purple Sandpiper** present, both the only records for the year.



Purple Sandpiper - Alan Keatley

December

The main news was the loss of access to the hide, following continued erosion of the new dune ridge. Despite several attempts to reroute the path too much material has now been lost, this came some 12 months after the geotube was first exposed, and is the first time in at least 50 years that there is no public access to this viewpoint.



This last attempt to maintain access to the hide lasted barely a week before being washed away - Ivan Lakin

The month started with a **Whooper Swan** in off the sea and north up the estuary, the 13th site record (26 birds) since 1954. Other notable records included a **Goosander** on the 4th; another **Yellowhammer** and a **Water Pipit**; a **Black-necked Grebe** offshore on the 17th and again on the 30th; a female **Scaup** from the 19 – 27th was the first since Nov 2016 and second first winter **Glaucous Gull** on the 23rd.

The year ended with a record count of 14 **Cirl Bunting** on the 31st with a couple of **Coal Tit**, a **Firecrest** and a **Siberian Chiffchaff** looking set to overwinter but wader and wildfowl numbers remained largely at a low ebb and seaduck almost non-existent.

Dawlish Warren Birds



Scaup - Alan Keatley

Mammals

There is usually little change in sightings year on year, but 2020 threw up a couple of unexpected sightings. The most surprising being the confirmed presence of **Hedgehog** on site with a report from the Buffer Zone and regular sightings from the Golf Course; the first confirmed sightings since the 1990s.



Stoat - Alan Keatley

Stoat were seen on a couple of occasions, with one enticed into the open by making a squeaking noise. No sightings or positive evidence of Weasel, Otter or fortunately Mink were found this year. At least two successful **Fox** dens were on site, but sightings were confined mainly to dawn and dusk although their tracks are always in evident along the beach and remaining Dune Ridge. Overnight on 18 Apr a **Badger** left tracks along the Dune Ridge at Warren Point, the first record for several years.

The presence of small mammals was more obvious this year, possibly taking advantage of quieter periods during Covid restrictions. Several **Wood Mouse** were seen in the open in Greenland Lake with the occasional **Common Shrew** noted running across paths. Not unusually, a dead **Water Shrew**, found near the Main Pond and a dead **Pygmy Shrew** in Skipper Meadow were the only evidence of their presence on site.

Brown Rat were only occasionally seen around the car park and Amusements, but 'Ratty' the **Water Vole** is now well established with frequent sightings or signs of their presence noted and one was even noted being predated by a Kestrel. Early mornings from the Main Pond viewing platform presents the best opportunity of seeing them.

Perhaps due to the drier Spring, fewer fresh molehills were found at **Mole**'s only location onsite, by Funder Park, indicating a probable reduction in numbers.



Rabbit - Alan Keatley

Rabbit numbers, and therefore the grazing pressure required by many of the rarer species, continue to suffer, with the ever present myxomatosis, several seen infected by this disease. This in itself may not significantly affect the numbers, the presence of two strains of viral haemorrhage disease (VHD) has a far greater affect in reducing the overall population. The only bat species confirmed this year was, not unexpectedly, **Common Pipistrelle**.

Away from the land a pod of **Bottle-nosed Dolphin** on 15 July and at least 11 on 25 December, were rare occurrences in recent years, with **Common Dolphin** noted on 15 August. **Harbour Porpoise** were noted infrequently at both ends of the year.

Grey Seal remains a common sight in the estuary or offshore, with one or two present almost throughout, often hauled out on a barge or sandbank. In contrast there were only two sightings of **Common Seal**, in Apr and Dec, the first records since the resident individual was last recorded in 2018.



Grey Seal - Alan Keatley

Dawlish Warren Mammals

Reptiles

Common and **Sand Lizard** numbers were difficult to gauge this year as the Spring emergence from hibernation was largely missed, and sightings thereafter were few. The possible presence of the introduced Sand Lizard prevented essential repairs to the 'coastal defences' in December.

Following the removal and burning of the only known site hibernaculum, there were unfortunately no Slow-worm records received this year.

Amphibians

Some lethargic and dead **Common Toad** were again found in flooded areas during early winter, the cause remains unknown. Few toadlets were seen this year but numbers were still higher than recently.

A single **Common Frog** was in Greenland Lake on 22 Jul. This species has a chequered history on site with past records possibly relating to deliberate releases instead of a natural occurrence, this was the first record for several years. No newt records were received this year.



Toad - Alan Keatley

Dawlish Warren Amphibians & Reptiles

Fish

The big surprise, in more ways than one, was a **Bluefin Tuna** entering the estuary on 16 September. This was a first for the Recording Area, with increased sightings in Lyme Bay it will probably not be the last, but the next is more likely offshore.

Fisherman report another poor year offshore, especially for **Bass**, blaming the changes on the 2018 beach recharge works. Beachcombing revealed eggcases of **Thornback Ray** and **Lesser-spotted Dogfish**.

Dragonflies & Damselflies

The season started in May with the emergence of **Blue-tailed** and **Azure Damselfly**. A **Broad-bodied Chaser** on 18 May continued the recent run of records for a species that used to breed on all the ponds in the past.

Amongst the regular breeders; **Emperor Dragonfly** frequented the ponds and meadows from 25 May to 6 September; the first **Southern Hawker** appeared on 24 June and they were seen sporadically until 26 September. First seen on 11 July, **Migrant Hawker** were numerous, frequently seen around the ponds occasionally pairing up and ovipositing, the last sighting was on 7 November.



Migrant Hawker - Alan Keatley

Never common on site there were three of sightings of **Golden-winged Dragonfly** this year, all in July. The outstanding sighting of the year was the first record of **Lesser Emperor** when a female was seen near the Main Pond on 3 August, the 26th species for the Recording Area.

Always the last species to emerge **Common Darter** were late with the first on the wing on 13 August, and they were seen in much lower numbers this year. A few pairs were still being recorded in early November and there was an exceptionally late sighting on 4 December.

Dawlish Warren Dragonflies & Damselflies



Common Darter - Alan Keatley

Hoverflies

A total of 43 species of hoverfly were recorded compared with 54 seen in 2019. Several regular species of the genus *Cheilosia* and *Platycheirus*, that are mostly prevalent in Spring, were not seen this year.

The first hoverfly of the year was a **Common Dronefly** *Eristalis tenax* in February, followed by **Tapered** and **Plain-faced Dronefly** *Eristalis pertinax* & *arbustorum*, **Marmalade Hoverfly** *Episyrphus balteatus* and **Platycheirus scutatus** by early March.

Some hoverflies are highly migratory and numbers can be noticeably boosted by influxes. On 13 June hundreds of **Marmalade Hoverfly** were on site with lesser numbers of **White-clubbed Hoverfly** *Scaeva pyrastris*. By mid August other migrant hoverflies such as **Large Tiger Hoverfly** *Helophilus trivittatus* and **Syritta pipiens** had begun to arrive, sharing Water Mint and Common Fleabane with **Batman Hoverfly** *Myathropa florea*, **Hornet Hoverfly** *Volucella zonaria* and **Giant Pied Hoverfly** *Volucella pellucens*.

Other nectaring hoverflies seen at this time included **Common Tubetail** *Sphaerophoria scripta*, **Humming Syrphus** *Syrphus ribesii*, **Tiger Hoverfly** *Helophilus pendulus* and **Stripe-faced Dronefly** *Eristalis nemorum*.



White-clubbed Hoverfly - Alan Keatley



Common Tubetail - Alan Keatley

Only one new species was recorded this year, **Rural Bulbfly** *Eumerus strigatus* on 12 September. Although there was a lack of new species, several hoverflies confirmed their continuing presence following their first occurrence in 2019.

These included **Hook-banded Wasp Hoverfly** *Chrysotoxum festum*, **Common Thistle Cheilosia** *Cheilosia proxima* and **Parsley Cheilosia** *Cheilosia pagana* in June, **Broad-banded Epistrophe** *Epistrophe grossulariae* and **Golden-tailed Hoverfly** *Xylota sylvarum* in July, **Lesser Hornet Hoverfly** *Volucella inanis* in August and **Yellow-barred Peat Hoverfly** *Sericomyia silentis* in September.

Throughout October hoverflies species started to dwindle, although **Common Dronefly** were still plentiful on bramble and ivy until the end of the month. By November hoverfly numbers had dropped off considerably with just single sightings of **Melanostoma scalare** on 19th, **Common Spotted Field Syrph** *Eupeodes luniger* and **Humming Syrphus** on 21st, and **Marmalade Hoverfly** on 26th. The last hoverfly of 2020 was a **Glass-winged Syrphus** *Syrphus vitripennis* on 19th December.

Dawlish Warren: Hoverflies



Golden-tailed Hoverfly - Alan Keatley



Marmalade Hoverfly - Alan Keatley

Other flies

Including one hoverfly, 11 fly species were added to the Warren list in 2020 bringing the overall total to 645 species.

The first new fly of the year was the crane fly ***Cylindrotoma distinctissima*** on 20 June. Less obvious, but still new for site were gall midges ***Contarinia hyperici*** (St John's-wort), ***Cystophora sonchi*** (sow-thistles), ***Jaaplella schmidtii*** (plantains) and the leaf miners ***Chromatomyia ramosa*** (Teasel), ***Aulgromyza heringii*** (Ash) and ***Phytomyza agromyzina*** (Dogwood) all given away by their larval stages on specific plants. The other new species included the smart **Looped Flutter-fly** *Palloptera muliebris* in the Cuckoo's Nest on 27 August.

Prior to this year there were only three records of the migratory **Locust Blowfly** *Stomorrhina lunata* on site, but between 1-22 October there were a further five individuals. The occurrence of this North African vagrant coincided with strong southerly winds.

A cross section of more regular species this year included **White-tipped Semaphore Fly** *Poecilobothrus nobilitatus*, **Coastal Silver Stiletto** *Acrosathe annulata*, **Marsh Snipefly** *Rhagio tringarius*, **Field Buff Snail-killer** *Tetanoceta elata*, **Slender-striped Robberfly** *Leptogaster cylindrica*, the soldierfly **Black-horned Gem** *Microchrysa polita*, **Four-banded Bee-grabber** *Conops quadrifasciatus* and the peculiar looking ladybird mimic, ***Graphomya maculata***.



Locust Blowfly - Alan Keatley



Field Buff Snail-killer - Alan Keatley

Bees

A total of 32 bee species were seen during the year, with many of the usual Spring species missed. The year started well with a winter active **Buff-tailed Bumblebee** on 1 January and a very “early” **Early Bumblebee** queen on 15 January both nectaring on Hebe.

A **Trimmer’s Mining Bee** *Andrena trimmerana* discovered on 12 March, was the first of six new bee species for the Warren in 2020.



Buff-tailed Bumblebee - Alan Keatley

Spring species that were recorded included **Bronze Furrow Bee** *Halictus tumulorum*, **Grey-patched Mining Bee** *Andrena nitida*, **Marsham’s** *Nomada marshamella*, **Painted** *N.fucata* and **Gooden’s** *N.goodeniana* **Nomad Bees**. Five further species of bumblebee were recorded; **Garden**, **Red-tailed**, **Common Carder**, **Tree** and **Heath**, the latter a welcome return after a blank in 2019.

The first **Yellow-legged Mining Bee** *Andrena flavipes* was eventually recorded on 19 May, with **Water-dropwort Mining Bee** *A. ampla* on 21 May, and **Sandpit Mining Bee** *A. barbilabris* and **Coastal Leafcutter** *Megachile maritima* on 4 June. The first of many **Silvery Leafcutter** *Megachile leachella* were on the wing from 28 May, evidence of their handiwork was evident on favoured Birch saplings and almost every Bramble flower seemed occupied.

During the Summer further species continued to emerge including **Green-eyed Flower Bee** *Anthophora bimaculata* on 13 June, **Large Sharp-tailed Bee** *Coelioxys conoidea* on

20 June, **Pantaloön Bee** *Dasypoda hirtipes* on 18 July, and **White-zoned Furrow Bee** *Lasioglossum leucozonium* on 22 August. The nationally uncommon and localised **Black Mining Bee** *A. pilipes* was found on 29th August. Initially found on meadow flowers the first male **Ivy Bee** *Colletes hederæ* were early on 1 September before moving to Ivy with the emergence of females.



Coastal Leafcutter - Alan Keatley



Large Sharp-tailed Bee - Alan Keatley

Several locally common species were first discovered on site this year, filling obvious gaps in the Warren list. With some as close as The Maer at Exmouth it wasn't a surprise that they were eventually recorded at the Warren. These include **Common Mini-miner** *Andrena minutula* on 13 June, **Common Yellow-faced Bee** *Hylaeus communis* on 20 June, and later in September, a **Bare-saddled Colletes** *Colletes similis* on 3rd, **Brown-footed Leafcutter** *Megachile versicolor* and **Common Furrow Bee** *Lasioglossum calceatum* on 10th and **Orange-legged Furrow Bee** *Halictus rubicundus* on 12th.



Common Yellow-faced Bee - Alan Keatley

Wasps

Wasps form a very large and diverse group of species. Over the years over 150 species have been recorded at Dawlish Warren, in the past many of these would have been identified by collecting specimens. Recent records are by sight alone, so only the most recognisable can be identified to species level.

This year 33 species were recorded, out of these six were new for site. The least expected newcomer was the ichneumon wasp *Callajoppa cirrogaster* seen 16 July. One of the largest and most spectacular looking British ichneumon, it is a parasitic wasp of hawk-moth caterpillars. Other ichneumon wasps found this year were *Pimpla rufipes*, *Apechthis compunctor* and *Enicospilus ramidulus*.



Callajoppa cirrogaster - Alan Keatley

The sandy habitat at the Warren supports a good number of digger wasps, and as usual a variety of species were found this year. Digger wasps appear from mid May and can be seen nectaring on flowers, especially umbellifers. The following were seen this year: **Common Spiny Digger Wasp** *Oxybelus uniglumis*, **Astata boops**, **Slender-bodied Digger Wasp** *Crabro cribrarius*, **Sand-tailed Digger Wasp** *Cerceris anenaria*, **Ornate-tailed Digger Wasp** *C. rybyensis*, **Four-banded Digger Wasp** *Gorytes quadrifasciatus*, *Ectemnius continuus*, **Bee-wolf** *Philanthus triangulum*, **Crossocerus quadrimaculatus**, *C. podagricus* and **Crossocerus megacephalus** on Warren Point. This last species however avoids sand, burrowing into soft rotting wood to store captured flies for its larvae.

A few spider-hunting wasps species can be found patrolling at ground level over open areas. Many are difficult to identify, one that can be identified is **Leaden Spider Wasp** *Pompilus cinereus*. Another easily identified species **Red-legged Spider Wasp** *Episyron rufipes*, is a frequent visitor to umbellifers, the first of the year seen on 19 May



Crossocerus megacephalus - Alan Keatley



Leaden Spider Wasp - Alan Keatley.

Other solitary and parasitic wasps recorded included ***Gasteruption jaculator***, a ruby-tailed wasp ***Chrysis ignita***, ***Ancistrocerus nigricornis*** and ***A. trifasciatus*** with the common and conspicuous **Red-banded Sand Wasp** *Ammophila sabulosa* frequent in the dunes.

The plant galls of ten gall wasp species were recorded, amongst these were two new species, both found on oak, **Striped Pea Gall Wasp** *Cynips longiventris* and ***Neuroterus saliens***.

Social wasps had a good year, both **Common** and **German Wasp** were numerous with several nests scattered around the site. Both species were active until on ivy until mid November, with a final **Common Wasp** on 19th December. A welcome record was **Hornet**, with two October records of this, less than annual, impressive social wasp.



Hornet - Alan Keatley

Butterflies

All of the regular Spring butterflies were seen, such as **Comma**, **Green-veined White**, **Holly Blue** and **Orange-tip**, the latter having a better year at least.

There were a trickle of **Wall Brown** sightings between May and September, as the species retains a tenuous hold to the Warren. Scarce on site, the only **Brimstone** was seen on 8 August. **Small Tortoiseshell** had its best year in a long time with several sightings from 25 June. **Brown Argus** were difficult to find during hot spells of weather and were only seen in ones or twos. Rarely seen on site, on 31 July there was a record of a **Silver-washed Fritillary**.



Small Tortoiseshell - Alan Keatley

Other species like **Meadow Brown**, **Common Blue** and **Small Copper** were recorded regularly in usual numbers and **Gatekeeper** were very numerous. Both **Small** and **Large Skipper** were down and only a few **Marbled White** and **Ringlet** were seen. However several **Peacock** caterpillar nests were found indicating a good breeding year and emphasising the importance of Nettle as a food plant.

The standout sighting of the year though was the second site record of the rare migrant **Long-tailed Blue** on 9 August. This mirrors other sightings along the English Channel coast at the same time.

Amongst other migrants **Painted Lady** were notably scarce with only four well spread sightings, in contrast it was an exceptional year for **Clouded Yellow** with multiple sightings from June onwards. Double figures were seen on several days, and sightings continued into October.

Red Admiral had a long season passing through in steady, but not substantial numbers until November, however both **Small** and **Large White** moved through in good numbers this year.

Dawlish Warren Butterflies



Brimstone - Alan Keatley



Clouded Yellow - Alan Keatley

Moths

No light trapping took place this year but just over 100 species were still recorded, with eight species added to the Warren list. Remarkably amongst these was the first record of the Nationally Scarce **Red-tipped Clearwing**, with one found nectaring on Water Mint on 1 August.

More expected newcomers included **Fox Moth**, **Orange-spot Piercer** *Pammene aurana*, **Oak Carl** *Tischeria ekebladella*, **Gorse Midget** *Phyllonorycter ulicicolella* and **Mottled Umber**, bringing the Dawlish Warren Recording Area total to 672 species.

The day flying migrant **Silver Y** started to appear from mid May, with steady numbers through to October; a large influx on 13 June was alongside exceptional numbers of migrant hoverflies. Smaller numbers of **Rusty-dot Pearl** and **Rush Veneer** were noted with a **Vestal** on 16 September.

[Dawlish Warren Moths](#)

[Devon Moth Group article](#)



Red-tipped Clearwing - Alan Keatley



Mottled Umber

Spiders

A total of 46 species were recorded this year including no fewer than 14 new species for the Warren.

A survey failed to find *Euophrys herbigrada*, a small jumping spider that occurs at only six other UK sites and was last recorded here in 1995. However it did reveal 10 new species to the Warren and nine not recorded for over 25 years. One of the new records was **Royal Theridion** *Kochiura aulica*, a Nationally Scarce B species associated with Gorse.

Other new species recorded during the year included the **Green Crab Spider** *Didea dorsata* and the impressive **Green-fanged Tube Spider** *Segestria florentina*.

Commoner spiders included an early **Nursery-web Spider** *Pisaura mirabilis* on 1 February and the first **Zebra Jumping Spider** *Salticus scenicus* on 2 March. Other species in evidence from mid-May included the wolf spiders *Pardosa monticola*, *nigripes* and *pullata*, the **Bleeding Heart Spider** *Nigma puella* and the crab spider *Xysticus kochi*.



Nursery-web Spider - Alan Keatley



Zebra Jumping Spider - Alan Keatley

Later in the year **Copper Sunjumper** *Heliophanus cupreus* and large numbers of the **Garden Orbweaver** *Araneus diadematus* were found.

Unfortunately after a 20 year presence there were no reports of Wasp Spider *Argiope bruennichi* this year, a spider that had become a late summer feature on site. The loss of areas of longer vegetation overwinter has impacted heavily on this species and many other invertebrates.

Another potentially lost spider is the Dune Jumper *Marpissa nivoyi*, a nationally scarce A species at its only south Devon site, the rapidly increased erosion has removed the majority of its known habitat. Both species are priorities for monitoring next year.

Harvestmen

Six species were recorded including *Dicranopalpus ramosus*, *Leiobunum rotundum*, *Phalangium opilio* and the introduced species *Opilio canestrinii*, only the fifth Devon record.



Leiobunum rotundum - Alan Keatley

Bugs

A distinct group of insects encompassing species as diverse as water boatmen, aphids and froghoppers. A total of 62 species, including 21 new for the Recording Area, were seen this year.

The new species found this year came from several different families, some such as the **Potato Leafhopper** *Eupteryx aurata* and **Birch Catkin Bug** *Kleidocerys resedae* are widespread, but others were more scarce, often restricted to certain foodplants. These included **Meadowsweet Leafhopper** *Macrosteles septemnotatus*, **Sand Sedge Planthopper** *Kelisia sabulicola*, the plant bug *Orthotylus moncreaffi* and the beet bug *Parapiesma quadratuma*, both of which feed on Sea Purslane.

The ant mimic *Pithanus maerkelii* was also a new species as were the lace bug *Physatocheila dumetorum* and Delicate Apple Capsid bug *Malacocris chlorizans*.



Capsodes sulcatus, a plant bug - Alan Keatley

A cross selection of commoner bugs included **Green Gorse, Birch and Sloe Shieldbug**, the leafhopper ***Cicadella viridis***, **Nettle Ground Bug** *Heterogaster urticae*, the 'Radio Mic' bug ***Heterotoma planicornis*** and **Common Froghopper** *Philaenus spumarius*; the 'Cuckoo spit' producing bug. **Dock Bug** *Coreus marginatus* had a good year but their large size and relatively slow movements meant they were much enjoyed by the long staying one-eyed Melodious Warbler.



Cicadella viridis, a leafhopper - Alan Keatley



Heterotoma planicornis, a plant bug - Alan Keatley

Other species recorded included **Common Dogwood-grass Aphid** *Anoecia corni*, new to site, **Giant Willow Aphid** *Tuberolachnus salignus*, **Italian Alder Aphid** *Crypturaphis grassi* and the psyllids ***Trioza alacris*** and ***centranthi***, on Bay and Red Valerian respectively.



Common Dogwood-grass Aphid - Alan Keatley

Beetles

This year a further nine new beetles were added to the list, a challenge as the Recording Group are not permitted to take specimens for identification. This brings the overall beetle species total to 245, so plenty more to be found.

Although there were just a few new species recorded there were some exceptional finds, in particular two new ladybirds recorded; **Adonis Ladybird** *Hippodamia variegata* and **Scarce 7-spotted Ladybird** *Coccinella magnifica*. These nationally scarce species were both found on 6 July on the sea wall amongst an influx of **7-spot** and **11-spot Ladybird**.

An exciting find was one of Britain's largest beetles, the **Variable Longhorn** *Stenocorus meridianus* on 11 June, by contrast one of the smallest, **Sphaeroderma testaceum**, a flea beetle, was found on 10 November, both new for site.



Scarce 7-spotted Ladybird - Steve Fuller



Adonis Ladybird - Steve Fuller



Variable Longhorn - Alan Keatley



Aphodius prodromus - Alan Keatley

The other new beetles were ***Aphodius prodromus***, a dung beetle, on 1st March, **Heather Beetle** *Lochmaea sutralis* on 1st May, **Rose Chafer** *Cetonia aurana* on 22nd July, **Lesser Stag Beetle** *Dorcus parallelipipedus* on 26th August and **Rough Strawberry Root Weevil** *Otiorhynchus rugosostriatus* on 13th September.

Plants

The traditional BSBI New Year Plant hunt saw a total of 32 species in flower including **Sweet Violet** and **Summer Snowflake**, a lower total than previous years, but recent mowing reduced the number of flowering plants available. Two species were added to the Recording Area flora during the year, with **Water-purslane** found near Funder Park and a self-seeded **Fuschia** discovered growing on the Railway Embankment.

Several plants were rediscovered on site with the Near Threatened **Common Cudweed** found growing alongside the Water-purslane, **Royal Fern** making a surprise appearance on the Golf Course, **Good King Henry** put in one of its sporadic showings and the **Altar Lily** flowered again in the Entrance Bushes. A second plant of **Creeping Willow** was also discovered, growing in the slack near the Visitor Centre.

Although not monitored, the **Sand Crocus** again had an exceptional year, with the rested fairways in particular putting on a good show. The population by the 7th fairway was however damaged by illegal metal detectorists.



Early Meadowgrass - Alan Keatley.



Sand Crocus

Another short turf specialist, **Mossy Stonecrop**, increased in the Buffer Zone, but new fencing has removed the path where this has become established, so the lack of trampling may remove its niche and encourage other species to outcompete this nationally scarce plant.

Orchids again put on a late summer display with carpets of **Southern Marsh Orchid** and **Marsh Helleborine** in wetter areas. The **Bee** and **Pyramidal Orchid** colonies again increased and the lone **Green-winged Orchid** again flowered in Greenland Lake and further plants discovered at a new location on the Golf Course. The last orchid of the year, **Autumn Ladies-tresses**, appeared early in August, once again overlapping with Marsh Helleborine, but numbers were much lower this year, often limited to wetter areas. The sea defence works aim to return Greenland Lake back to a tidal creek, with the vast majority of these will disappearing under the tide so enjoy them whilst you can.

On Warren Point the nationally rare **Sea Daffodil** was again in bloom, one of just three locations in the UK. Also present **Orange-peel Clematis** but the long established Chinese Tea Plant seems to have been lost. The accelerating erosion removed much of the Desert, an area of Warren Point that had formed since 1992, only a couple of **Sea Holly** plants remain into the New Year.

Dawlish Warren Flora



Pyramidal Orchid - Alan Keatley



Sea Holly & Sea Spurge

Mosses & Liverworts

Both **Micheli's Balloonwort** *Sphaerocarpos michelii* and **Blue Crystalwort** *Riccia crystallina* were again recorded, both also being found in new locations. The Recording Area is one of two Devon locations for these nationally rare liverworts, with the other just the mainland side of the Railway Tunnel, there the populations are however in decline.



Blue Crystalwort - Andrew Cunningham

Weedy Frillwort *Fossombronia incurva*, another nationally rare liverwort, was discovered at a new location on the Golf Course.

Lichens

A total of 17 new species were noted, the majority of which came from the previously unrecorded seawall. These included ***Caloplaca microthallina***, ***Porpidia macrocarpa***, ***Protoblastenia rupestris*** and ***Verrucaria calciseda***.

Elsewhere ***Cladonia ramulosa*** was discovered on Warren Point, where two new, but, small patches of ***Peltigera neckeri*** were also found, other colonies however were lost to the continuing erosion.



Peltigera neckeri

Fungi

It was an exceptional year for fungi, the warm and wet autumn providing ideal fruiting conditions for waxcaps in particular. In total 44 new species were recorded, taking the Recording Area tally to 675 species, but with 20,000 in the UK there are still plenty to discover!

The Golf Course semi rough held the majority of the interesting discoveries with six species of waxcap including **Snowy, Parrot & Cedarwood**, three earthtongues, all new to site, and several clubs and corals. The largest area of Earthtongues was however near the new seawall behind the Visitor Centre, with several hundred on show in late November.



Earth-tongue *Geoglossum cookeianum*

Conversely the numbers of fungi around Greenland Lake continue to decline, with very few **Parasol** or **Blackening Waxcap** and again no Winter Stalk Puffball. Has the relatively recent introduction of glyphosate to this area negatively impacted on the fungi, as it does with other soil biota?

New fungi recorded during the year included some excellently named species such as **Couscous Crust** *Aegerita candida*, **Lemon Disco** *Bisporella citrina*, **Steely Bonnet** *Mycena pseudocorticola*, **Camembert Brittle Gill** *Russula amoenolens*, **Veined Mossear** *Rimbachia bryophila* and **Redlead Roundhead** *Leratiomyces ceres*.



Plums & Custard - Alan Keatley

Another good finds included the **Bird's Nest Fungi** *Crucibulum laeve*, **Plums & Custard** *Tricholomopsis rutilans*, the first record for 33 years, several giant *Agaricus urinascens*, a rarely recorded mildew *Hypomyces papulasporae* on the abundance of earthtongues and *Xylaria cinerea*, a rare candlestick fungus.



Steely Bonnet

Grasshoppers, Crickets and allies

There were no surprises amongst the 10 grasshopper and cricket species recorded this year, although some species, like **Common Groundhopper** were first noted later than usual.

Great Green Bush-cricket appeared in good numbers around the remaining scrub with first instars from 18 May and stridulating males into October. Both **Dark & Grey Bush-cricket** are now firmly established on site, but, as usual, were not easy to find in the vegetation. The first **Oak Bush-cricket** of 2020 was found on 15th August with **Speckled Bush-cricket** more commonly encountered.

The first **Mottled Grasshopper** for several years were recorded on 26 August, but surprisingly no Common Green Grasshopper were reported. Both **Meadow Grasshopper** and **Long-winged Conehead** were seemingly late this year, first recorded on 22 July and 23 August respectively. **Short-winged Conehead** were present in the Saltmarsh from 12 July.



Great Green Bush-cricket - Alan Keatley

In related orders, **Common Earwig** were ever present, but no **Lesne's Earwig** were found around the Buffer Zone following last year's midwinter clearance. Fortunately good numbers of this nationally scarce species were discovered on the Golf Course.



Long-winged Conehead (nymph) - Alan Keatley

Lesser Cockroach were numerous amongst the dunes from early July with the scarcer **Tawny Cockroach** recorded on 22nd July.



Lesser Cockroach - Alan Keatley