



Gwennap Head NCI - Wildlife Report February 2016

The deer theme continues. Since last month, there have been reliable reports of both Roe and Red Deer in the area, and I have seen both species myself within a few miles from here over the years. Watch-keepers may have noticed deer slots in the mud outside our fence. Distinguishing between the two species is not easy, although there is a considerable size difference, the Red Deer being the larger of the two. Roe Deer may look as red as Red Deer, but generally they vary from grey to brown through to reddish brown with spots on the coats of young individuals. Roe Deer also have a more distinctive black nose and white chin, but the best way is to look at the rump (which is difficult if the deer is turned towards you!). Each species has a pale or white rump, but that of the Red Deer extends well up the sides above the tail - which itself is quite long and easily seen, whereas Roe Deer usually appear tail-less and the rump patch looks rounded. If you can make any sense of that you deserve good views of the rump of any passing deer.

On 23/2, a dolphin was seen to breach by the Runnelstone, just once. The watch-keeper then saw nothing. This can be a typical experience because dolphins can be extremely elusive as well as highly active and visible for long periods. On 27/2, a small group of Common Dolphins were seen below a large flock of feeding gannets beyond the Runnelstone. There were just a few porpoise sightings.

A white-winged gull flew past on 7/2. It was a Glaucous Gull, a winter migrant from Iceland or Arctic Russia. All gulls from Arctic regions are pale, if not completely white. This gull was in first winter plumage - a uniform milky coffee colour. Some days, there was a stream of gulls of varying species heading north along the cliffs, possibly heading for Sennen where they roost on the Cowloe at low tide. If you watch them for long enough (which you shouldn't if you are on watch), you stand a fair chance of seeing one of these white gulls, either the large Glaucous Gull or the smaller and prettier Iceland gull.

The Choughs were around until 15/2, sometimes just beneath the lookout, enabling a watch-keeper to read the rings and confirm that they were the pair that bred here last year. They haven't been seen since and, because last year they were carrying nest material by the end of February, there is a chance they have moved their nest site - not a bad thing after last years failure. Please note in the log if you see them.

On 27/2, a stunning male Black Redstart turned up which was most likely an early spring migrant.

Anyone looking skywards during a short window of time on 7/2 (which again you shouldn't be if you are on watch!) would have seen two sun-dogs - not a breed of dog, but a light and cloud effect. They are interesting and beautiful, being spots of bright light each side of the sun, equidistant and displaying a red edge towards the sun and a bluish white tail going away from it. This is caused by light being refracted through specially aligned ice crystals in thin cirrus cloud. They are not that rare, but they don't last long. It is possible also to see just one.

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