

## **Birds of Chessel Bay....an overview of observations 2012-19**

**Waders...**these species mainly seen in the winter months or dropping in on migration.

**Dunlin** occur in varying numbers with up to 300 once. They fly up river on falling tides as do **Curlew** although there is only single figures of these along the whole tidal river. **Oystercatchers** can be found all year and a couple of pairs breed near-by, usually on industrial flat roofs. **Redshanks** roost at high water off Quayside Road so are regular in numbers of up to 30 birds. Turnstones occur less regularly with 15 a good count. **Greenshank** is annual but rare.

**Black-Tailed Godwits** again visit at low tide. Small numbers occur during the winter but between the end of March and April more turn up while refuelling for migration. This varies from year to year with a maximum of 147 seen on 23/3/13. Some have carried coloured rings identifying them as Icelandic birds.

In late March/early April **Whimbrel**, a bird which migrates from Africa up to the far north to breed can be found along the shore. This is also a good time to look out for **Common** and **Green Sandpipers** moving through.

**Water birds....**this covers Divers and Ducks to Herons.

Those doing a litter pick were once treated to 2 **Great Northern Divers** calling to each other as we worked; a sound more accustomed to remote lakes in the Arctic. A **Red-Throated Diver** once stayed on the tidal river to moult after breeding and **Black-Throated Diver** has been seen once. More commonly you will find **Cormorants** diving at all states of the tide.

The usual Grebes seen are **Great Crested** and **Little Grebes** although Slavonian Grebe has occurred.

The relatively sheltered bay attracts up to 60 **Mute Swans** plus the odd **Black Swan** and **Brent Geese** come up to feed on the seaweed at low tide. Up to 5 **Shelducks** winter and at times of heavy mist or hard frost dabbling ducks such **Wigeon**, **Gadwall** and **Teal** appear. **Mallard** can reach numbers of over 100. Several **Moorhens** are resident but **Coot** is rare. **Grey Heron** is rarer than **Little Egret** with as many as 6 of the latter recorded, especially between tides when they roost at the far end of the bay. **Sandwich Terns** fish the bay in the summer.....a treat to see at any time.

The other gem to watch for is **Kingfisher** as it skims across the water between feeding perches.

**Woodland birds....**

A good range of species occur in small numbers. Apart from **Woodpigeon**, **Stock Dove** comes to feed along the shoreline. **Blue**, **Great** and **Long-Tailed Tits** are resident and **Chiffchaff** and **Blackcap** are summer visitors. **Blackbird** and **Song Thrush** are present along with **Robin**, **Wren**, **Dunnock** and Great Spotted Woodpecker. Always look out for the unexpected; **Firecrest** has been seen and in October 2012 a **Yellow-Browed Warbler** from Siberia stayed for 5 days.

**And the rest....**Chessel bay has a wide sky-scape so always look up. We have recorded **Sparrowhawk**, **Kestrel**, **Buzzard**, **Red Kite** and **Peregrine** and once an **Osprey** rested across the river when migrating south. In late Autumn winter thrushes like Fieldfare and Redwing move through as well as Skylarks and often huge numbers of Woodpigeons. The Bay is also a resting place for Gulls moving up and down the river in winter. 2500 **Black-Headed gulls** have been counted on the mud with the occasional **Mediterranean Gull**. **Great** and **Lesser Black-Backed Gulls**, **Herring**, **Common** and **Yellow-Legged Gulls** feed and bathe and once a **Bonaparte's Gull** from the USA dropped in.