



WILDLIFE ON THE MOVE IN AUGUST & SEPTEMBER 2020 ON ASHDOWN FOREST

ROE DEER became more bold on the West Chase, showing themselves during early morning, the does staring for some moments at you before bounding off and the bucks even more relaxed, watching curiously, invariably from the cover of luxuriant bracken, until you moved on.



Roe Deer by Clive Poole

Several **SLOW WORMS** were almost trodden on, basking on sandy or stony footpaths on the heath while a blanket of Calluna heather on the North Chase harboured a healthy population of Adders.



Slow Worm by Clive Poole

Occasionally **black** (melanistic) **ADDERS** can be found on the Forest.



Adders at Blackhill by Jane Preston



STONECHATS had raised second broods and as the breeding season ended, they were the only birds still relatively prominent and vocal on the gorse and bracken. They kept in family groups of parents and juveniles, contact-calling to each other. Some folk have likened this call to pebbles being knocked together.



Stonechat Male by Clive Poole

Listening carefully (get a birdcall app!) one could still notice the harsh call of **DARTFORD WARBLERS** from inside gorse and atop heather but you would be lucky this late in the season to get more than a fleeting glimpse of a “little black job” with a silly long tail. These warblers do not migrate and have two or three broods annually as an insurance against deaths in a hard winter ahead.

An obliging male **REDSTART** perched on a berry-bearing rowan on the edge of his summer breeding territory, a mixture of mature Scots Pines and Birches. He was moulting his summer plumage for new feathers to assist him in his imminent migration journey back to tropical Africa.



Redstart Male by Clive Poole

A regular feature of late summer /early autumn on the West Chase has been the visits of a small wader, the **GREEN SANDPIPER**. These intriguing little birds appear to take a direct overland migration route to their wintering grounds further south, flying straight across the Forest, rather than hugging the coast like most wading birds.



The attraction of a large shallow pond on the West Chase with muddy edges and lots of insects has been a “magnet” they could not resist in this warm weather, stopping over to feed before moving on.



Green Sandpiper

One of the very few birds still singing on the edges of the heaths has been the **WILLOW WARBLER**, a few males still rendering their sweet song from birch and willow scrub. Many are starting to migrate back to tropical West Africa to spend the winter in warmer climes. I would love to follow them, but circumstances do not permit this year!!



Willow Warbler by Clive Poole

Around bird 60 species have been present this summer on the West Chase heaths, compared with only half that number in the woodland areas. Food for thought.

CLIVE POOLE, VOLUNTARY RANGER. 26/8/2020