Whitehall's Weekly Wanderings – 28th Sept - 4th Oct

**Ring Ouzels seen as summer migrants leave:** With the autumn season under way the majority of summer migrants have left the Brent area although Chiffchaff, Wheatear, Swallow and House Martin are still being reported. In terms of passage birds up to four Ring Ouzels have been reported with all the records so far coming from the area between Shipley Bridge and the Dam.  At this time of the year Pied Wagtails are moving south from northern breeding grounds and two roosts have been observed, one at Beara with a maximum of 53 birds seen and the second in the village with 40+ birds roosting along the railway embankment between the PD Devices building and the village hall.

**Moorland gatherings:** On a casual observation many of the moorland squares seem devoid of bird life, however pockets of activity can still be found with small gatherings of Skylark and somewhat larger gatherings of Meadow Pipit. Within the latter there have been reports of Reed Bunting, mostly single birds although one independent group of four or five probably represented a family party. Likewise most Yellowhammer have left the moor with only one or two birds reported. Stonechats are still in evidence and a few are likely to remain throughout the winter with the bulk of the population leaving for lower ground.

**Further sightings:** A Barn Owl has been seen near Harbourneford Cross and two Goosander were observed in flight near the Avon Dam. In the village a flock of 40 Starlings has been observed, this is a species that will also form evening roosts so needs to be watched for during the next few weeks.  Meadow Pipits have been observed at lower levels in the parish with the largest flock being 50 in number.

**The Goldfinch diet:** Two observers have reported small flocks of Goldfinch in squares 1, 2 and 3 feeding on the seeds of Soft Rush. In Birds of the Western Palearctic, albeit published in 1994 and so possibly somewhat out of date, this plant was not mentioned as a food plant for this species. Just one more example of how a survey can increase our knowledge of even the more common species.

**Butterflies:** Reports of butterflies are naturally fewer but at least five species have been reported mainly on Ivy which forms an important nectar source at this time of the year.