

More "big days".

Spring Mipit Wave 11th April 2005 (members only Watch Point)

If I could have forecast this for certain, I would have been out two hours sooner and had the whole world with me! – still, it's the uncertainty that adds to the excitement of visible-migration!!

From my first sniff of fresh air, wonderfully moist stuff, at 0755hr when stacking the car at home, moving Meadow Pipits, could be heard in the sky above (quite unusual for here!). Whilst in the car and driving to the Watch Point, Meadow Pipits (at least two parties) were noted in the sky and going north across the open moor and in-by to the east of the Dog and Gun on Trough Lane – its always a promising sign / indicator if any vis is seen from the car! Whilst opening the bottom gate to the private road, what I first considered to be a large group of about 35 were overhead and going north. Other groups were seen crossing the access road in front of the car whilst driving up and by the time I had reached the car park, it was very obvious this was no ordinary "move" with probably about 150 clocked up already – and I was kicking myself for not getting out sooner!

Once at the Watch Point, set up and with initial weather readings taken, the broad front of the wave could be appreciated. Mipits, in all directions and ranges, as far as the scope could resolve were flooding NNW. It was very obvious that the move had not just started and that many would already have been missed. Many were higher than would have been expected, also suggesting they had been going for a while? Some were cutting through the scud below the base and others were up to just below the cloud base, estimated to be locally at about 2000ft. Some of the birds out to the N and E where the base was a bit higher, were up there in sympathy, with the additional flexibility. Birds were coming through the cols to the east and west of the Watch Point as well as over the ridge from the south. In addition there was a distinct broad stream seemingly following the line of the NE flank of the watershed about 2000m out over the lower land, these were possibly going a bit more NW. All (or most) were striking out very high over the Worth basin to the NW. As yesterday a sight line back along the track of the ones on direct approach and passing overhead came from the general direction of the Emley Moor TV transmitter mast and possibly just a bit south of it, but this might just have been local orientation. Every scopefull had birds and not just a few, a scenario that those having seen the equivalent autumn waves will be very familiar with, albeit in reverse direction. The largest counted group was c95 but this is not really realistic as for some of the time at peak, the groups just merged into a continuous passage, not easily splittable, but the count scan had to stop somewhere! The major problem with situations like this is that one person just can't look everywhere – more observers were needed today, and with a full team, of pointers, shouters and writers (not to parallel with beaters, shooters and eaters), some doing scope scans, some with bins and then the ones overhead, perhaps twice as many would have been counted. It was however most surprising how quickly the move tailed off, possibly something to do with the wind picking up to F5+, but that's just a guess as some of the birds now flying lower and were more difficult to see. The other birds along with this move were also in inflated numbers but sorry, no time for descriptions now, it will have to suffice just to list on this occasion.

Meadow Pipit Counts.

Each count applies to the fifteen minutes before the stated time.

0830hr not counted properly or included in the total – but see above.

0845hr 443

0900hr 518

0915hr 213 (birds lost to time on telephone and flat battery of same)

0930hr 469

0945hr 123

1000hr 68

1015hr 25

1030hr 16

1045hr 6

1100hr 3

Total Meadow Pipits = c1902 > NNW