

4-Dec-11

'Bird of the day' was a pale **Yellow Wagtail** found by Phil (Abbott) this morning at Colyford WTW. I was ringing on Seaton Marshes (more on that later) so couldn't get there until early afternoon.

Phil had only had rather poor views of it, and that was what I was expecting. But a glance through the trees and fence from the footpath which runs along the northern edge of the sewage works revealed it feeding on the nearest filter bed!

It's a very interesting bird, very interesting indeed...

[photos now separated]

There's a few 'odd' things about it..... aside the fact it's in Devon in December!

Very pale under parts, no yellow on throat/breast/belly/vent area. I did think I saw a touch of yellow on the feathering at the base of the tibia though (i.e. the birds trousers).

Greyish upper parts with a slightly paler rump and subtly duller cap and nape.

Very 'leggy' appearance - also note hind claw length (though not sure how this compares with a *flavissima?*).

One feature I didn't expect to see on a **Yellow Wag** as grey as this though was the amount of pale on the base of the bill. An all black bill would have been much better!

What about the call I hear you ask? Well - we don't know! Despite this bird being watched for a good couple of hours today, and being flushed several times (not by us I must add!) it didn't call once!

I have my idea/theory/guess at what it may be - but what do you think??

= = =

Later information

The grey **Yellow Wagtail** found by Phil Abbott and Clive Williams at Colyton WTW on 4/12/10 was trapped and ringed on 14/12/10 and last seen 19/12/10.

From the catching and ringing process, a sample of feces and a couple feathers recovered from the mist net, were sent to Dr J. Martin Collinson at the University of Aberdeen for D.N.A analysis. Dr J.M. Collinson is also the chairman of the BOURC.

I am pleased to report that preliminary sequencing results show that it was a male of the eastern *tscutschensis/taivana/macronyx* group, genetically most similar to *tscutschensis*. Full results will be published in due course.

There are two other specimens being sequenced now, if neither of these match any of the eastern Yellow Wagtail-types then the Colyford bird will represent the first record for Britain.

I'd just like to thank Dr J.M. Collinson and his team for all their hard work, and for keeping me well informed throughout the process.

Steve (Waite)

YELLOW WAGTAIL *Motacilla flava*

(Possibly of an eastern race)

BIOMETRICS

Date: 14th December 2010

Hour: 08.50

Location: Colyton Waste Water Treatment Works

Grid reference: SY254932

Ring number: L360030

Age: 3

Sex: Female

Wing: 81 mm

Weight: 15.7 g

Head & Bill: 15.8 mm

Bill: 11.9 mm

Hind claw: 11 mm

Tarsus: 24.8 mm

Tail: 73 mm (Tips of feathers badly abraded)

Longest primary: 3/4

2nd longest primary: 4/5

Additional data: Several photographs showing various angles of the bird
Call taped (Whilst in holding bag)
Sample of belly feathers
Sample of faeces taken

Data sent by Steve Waite, County Recorder, to Aberdeen University for analysis at the request of the BOU.

Michael W Tyler











