

# Teesmouth Bird Club Newsletter



Editor: M.J.Gee, Technical Adviser: R.Hammond, Distributor: C. Sharp  
Address: All correspondence to 21 Gladstone Street, Hartlepool, TS24 0PE.  
Email: tbc@sarahgee.com  
Newsletter Web-site: www.teesmouthbc.freereserve.co.uk

Thanks to the contributors to this issue:- Chris Sharp; Mike Leakey; Brian Clasper.

All unsolicited copy will be most welcome, ideally sent by email, or on 3.5" computer disk, using word processing software, but typed and handwritten copy is equally acceptable. Any topic concerned with birds or the local environment is grist to the mill.

## MONTHLY SUMMARY by Chris Sharp

### April

Early April continued the dry, warm spring that had begun the previous month. The first week of the month saw few new birds appearing. Up to 12 Shore Larks remained in the Boulby/Cowbar area along with 2 Lapland Bunting. The Slavonian Grebe remained on the Reclamation Pond eventually attaining summer plumage. The Spotted Redshank remained around Saltholme Pools and the 2 Whooper Swans continued to be seen in the Cowpen area. A Great Grey Shrike was by Carlin Howe tip (9<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup>) with a Black Redstart being seen briefly there (10<sup>th</sup>). 11 Waxwings were in central Middlesbrough (11<sup>th</sup>) and small numbers continued to be reported here for the rest of the month. 2 Shore Larks were at Hartlepool Headland (12 – 13<sup>th</sup>) and the first Garganey of the spring were a pair on Saltholme Pool (12<sup>th</sup>). An early Wood Sandpiper was at Saltholme Pool (15<sup>th</sup> – 16<sup>th</sup>).

The county's earliest ever Reed Warbler was singing at Dorman's Pool (16<sup>th</sup>) along with a Whitethroat and a Marsh Harrier was at Cowpen Marsh and a Redstart at South Gare. The 17<sup>th</sup> saw a superb drake Red – crested Pochard on Saltholme Pool, which remained into May. A Black Redstart was at Margrove Ponds along with Greenshank and Common Sandpiper. A Hooded Crow at Hummersea Farm (18<sup>th</sup>) attracted plenty of attention now that it has been split. Good numbers of Ring Ouzels were also here, peaking at 13 on 24<sup>th</sup>. A Rose-coloured Starling was photographed in a Redcar garden (20<sup>th</sup>) by a non-birdwatcher. Before last year this would have been a big miss but last summer's influx in to the country saw 3 county

records of this former national rarity. A Temmincks Stint was on Saltholme Marsh (22<sup>nd</sup>) – again the earliest county record of this normally May visitor. 3 Mandarin Ducks were briefly at South Gare (23<sup>rd</sup>). A Common Swift was at Saltholme Pools (24<sup>th</sup>) and in addition to the Temminck's other passage waders here included Spotted Redshank, 3 Common Sandpiper, Greenshank and several Ruff. A Dotterel was in fields at Cowbar (24<sup>th</sup>). The 28<sup>th</sup> saw a summer plumaged Black-necked Grebe on the Reclamation Pond replacing the Slavonian which had departed earlier in the week. 2 Avocets were on Saltholme Pools on this date and both they and the Black-necked Grebe remained into May. Highlight of the month was undoubtedly the Red-rumped Swallow which was on Seaton Common on 29<sup>th</sup>. Unfortunately the bird was present for less than a minute and was part of a national influx. This represents only the second county record, the previous one being also a fly-through. The month ended with a Rough-legged Buzzard circling slowly southeast over Saltburn Cliffs (30<sup>th</sup>).

### May

The only Osprey of the spring flew over Seaton Common (1<sup>st</sup>). A Wryneck at Boulby (3<sup>rd</sup>) proved elusive. The summer plumaged Black-necked Grebe moved to Saltholme Marsh (4<sup>th</sup>). Good numbers of Dunlin and Ringed Plover were using this site at this time and it was no surprise when a Temminck's Stint appeared here (4<sup>th</sup>). The following day proved to be an excellent day on the North Tees Marshes with at least

8 Marsh Harriers passing through. A Little Egret also toured the Marshes and 2 Avocets were on Saltholme Marsh. Highlight however was the Marsh Sandpiper which appeared on Saltholme Marsh in mid-evening. It was the first county record for 40 years but flew off after less than an hour. Much to the relief of the majority of the county's birders it re-appeared next morning and stayed until the following day. A Wood Sandpiper was on Seaton Common during this time and 2 Garganey were around the Saltholme area. 2 Curlew Sandpiper were on Saltholme (7<sup>th</sup>)

The next two weeks were very quiet with few passage waders and no rarities of note. A couple of Turtle Doves including one on the outskirts of Hartlepool, 7 Barnacle Geese at South Gare (19<sup>th</sup>) and 1 or 2 Little Gulls around Saltholme were best of a poor fare. 3 Barnacle Geese appeared on Saltholme (20<sup>th</sup>) and a Little Stint was there (22<sup>nd</sup>). A Long-tailed Duck was off South Gare on this latter date. A Wood Sandpiper was on Saltholme Marsh (25<sup>th</sup>). A drake Green-winged Teal was on Dorman's Pool (26<sup>th</sup>) and remained into June. A Quail was calling near Scaling Dam (27<sup>th</sup>). A Honey Buzzard flew over Greatham Creek (29<sup>th</sup>). The same evening saw a Temminck's Stint on the Long Drag. This was possibly one of the two birds that were on Saltholme Marsh the following day. The 30<sup>th</sup> also saw a Roseate Tern at South Gare. The last day of the month produced a Hippolais Warbler at South Gare. Identified in the field as an Icterine Warbler, subsequent photographs strongly suggested the bird may have been a Melodious Warbler. At the time of writing debate as to its identity was still raging but if it does prove to be a Melodious it would represent the first county record. A Hobby flew over South Gare on the same day.

### June

A Wood Sandpiper was on Saltholme Marsh (1<sup>st</sup>). A Little Egret was on Greatham Creek on the same day and remained on the North Tees Marshes for the rest of the month. 2 drake Green-winged Teals were on Greatham Creek (3<sup>rd</sup>). The following day saw a Red-backed Shrike at South Gare. A Broad-billed Sandpiper was seen briefly on Saltholme Marsh (6<sup>th</sup>). A Hobby was briefly hawking insects at Saltburn (7<sup>th</sup>) and the following day a fly over Great White Egret at Greatham, Creek continued the frustrating time for the local birders.

An adult Rose-coloured Starling at South Gare (10<sup>th</sup>) was almost a year to the day since one had turned up at the same spot. It showed well all day. Little Gull numbers peaked at 13 in mid-month around Saltholme. The drake Green-winged Teal continued to be seen on Saltholme. The 20<sup>th</sup> saw a Pectoral

Sandpiper on Dorman's Pool, a white morph Snow Goose on Saltholme along with 2 Barnacle Geese. The following day saw a good passage of Manxies at Hartlepool with 200 per hour passing north along with a few Puffins. A first-summer Mediterranean Gull was on Hemlington Lake (27<sup>th</sup>).



Adult Mediterranean Gull and adult Black-Headed Gull  
Teesside July 2003 (Brian Clasper)

## FROM THE COMMITTEE

### TEESSIDE OFFSHORE WIND FARM

Many of you will be aware of the proposal to build a wind farm of 30 turbines off South Gare. The effect on birds is one of a number of areas being studied by Entec Ltd who have been appointed to carry out an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA). A representative of Entec has been invited to the first club meeting of the year (Wednesday September 3<sup>rd</sup>) to outline the proposals and receive questions.

The club are naturally very concerned at the proposals and to this end the committee are meeting to discuss the matter on Thursday 7<sup>th</sup> August at the Municipal Golf Club, Ladgate Lane, Middlesbrough at 7.30pm any club members who feel strongly about the issue are also invited to attend this meeting to plan the way forward.

### LOCKE PARK, REDCAR

Redcar and Cleveland Parks committee have been allocated a substantial amount of money to improve Locke Park. John Sharp has already contacted the consultant who is organising the project but would welcome any ideas for making the park more attractive for birds. His telephone number is 01287 -633976.

### MEETINGS VENUE

Several members have spoken to committee members about the Billingham Arms being no longer suitable as a venue for indoor meetings. The committee are currently considering alternative locations and would

be grateful for the thoughts of club members. If you know of any suitable venues or are happy with the Billingham Arms please contact Chris Sharp on 01429 865163.

#### “BIRDS OF TEESMOUTH”

Older members may well remember an old cine film

entitled “The Birds of Teesmouth” by Jimmy Munro, made in the early 1960’s. This has now been transferred onto DVD. Copies will cost approx. £14. Anyone interested in purchasing the DVD should contact Chris Sharp, 20 Auckland Way, Hartlepool, Tel: 01429 865 163.

### WETLAND BIRD SURVEY TEESMOUTH SPRING 2003 SUMMARY

Coverage was good, with 66 out of a potential 69 sector counts undertaken (96%).

Among the wildfowl, only Little Grebe (19, May) and Eider (29, June) returned maxima of a third or more below the seasonal mean. Conversely, Mute Swan (83), Gadwall (136), Pochard (68) and Coot (553) all yielded new Tees WeBS seasonal records in June, consistent with recent upward population trends centred in and around the North Tees Marshes.

There was also a new Tees WeBS seasonal record for Grey Plover (69, April), and Bar-tailed Godwit scored well for the second successive spring (59, April). The same month also brought a count of 1232 Redshank, our best spring figure since 1982. Ringed Plover (436, May), Dunlin (270, May) and Knot (172, April) produced their highest spring WeBS totals since 1998, 1996 and 1994 respectively. However, those characteristic rocky shore specialists - Purple Sandpiper and Turnstone – both experienced record seasonal lows, while for Oystercatcher this was the poorest spring since 1996.

July brought some excellent tern counts; the Sandwich Tern figure of 259 is the species’ best seasonal performance since 1993, while the spring Common Tern peak of 604 is only surpassed by that of 2000.

Following this series of counts, both Cormorant and Gadwall assume national importance within the Tees WeBS Site in spring. The Site remains of national importance for both Ringed Plover and Sanderling.

MIKE LEAKEY

Local Organizer

Tees and Hartlepool Bay Wetland Bird Survey

	April 13	May 18	June 15	Spring 2003 maximum count expressed as % of average peak count over previous five springs
<b>Little Grebe</b>	13	<u>19</u>	18	65%
Great Crested Grebe	16	12	<u>20</u>	143%
Cormorant	54	110*	<u>152**</u>	137%
Mute Swan	38	40	<u>83</u>	202%
Shelduck	<u>353</u>	254	314	110%
Gadwall	109**	52*	<u>136**</u>	228%
Teal	<u>236</u>	7	13	95%
Mallard	229	224	<u>271</u>	124%
Shoveler	<u>49</u>	34	37	72%
Pochard	35	23	<u>68</u>	139%
Tufted Duck	<u>145</u>	86	133	109%
Eider	21	10	<u>29</u>	57%
Coot	514	456	<u>553*</u>	188%
Oystercatcher	<u>565</u>	337	148	84%
Ringed Plover	23	<u>436**</u>	103	117%

Golden Plover	<u>4</u>	0	0	5%
Grey Plover	<u>69</u>	3	7	708%
Lapwing	109	97	<u>260</u>	120%
Knot	<u>172</u>	1	10	529%
Sanderling	96	<u>461</u> **	60	83%
Purple Sandpiper	<u>34</u>	3	0	29%
Dunlin	<u>53</u>	<u>270</u>	63	123%
Ruff	<u>7</u>	0	0	122%
Snipe	<u>13</u>	6	1	74%
Bar-tailed Godwit	<u>59</u>	14	10	259%
Curlew	<u>295</u>	93	100	114%
Redshank	<u>1232</u> **	54	74	120%
Turnstone	<u>105</u>	82	40	46%
Sandwich Tern	0	11	<u>259</u>	188%
Common Tern	0	16	<u>604</u>	152%
Little Tern	0	<u>16</u>	3	114%

Underlined counts indicate Spring 2003 maxima.

\* Denotes count of >50% of national significance for that species

\*\* Denotes count of national significance for that species

NB 'Teessmouth' includes Hartlepool Bay

### July Rarities: Adult Ring-necked Duck and 2<sup>nd</sup> Summer Laughing Gull (Photos by Brian Clasper)



## European Project on Fulmars and Marine Litter, 2002 - 2004

The Club has been asked to publicise the following.



Your assistance is sought (up to the end of 2004) in finding beach-washed bodies of Northern Fulmars (*Fulmarus glacialis*) on the North-east coast of England.

Fulmars are known to mistake marine litter for food and indigestible plastics can accumulate in the stomach. Regional differences suggest that stomach contents reflect pollution levels in the birds' foraging area. Studies have so far demonstrated that adults seem to contain less plastics than younger birds. The analysis of beach-washed Fulmar stomach contents offers a reliable monitoring instrument for changes in the abundance of marine litter. On average recent studies in the Netherlands showed that Southern North Sea Fulmars each carry about 30 pieces of plastic.

Surveys are already underway in Orkney and Shetland, Belgium, Netherlands, Germany and Denmark. Further assistance is being sought in Norway and Sweden. The research is funded by an EU-Interreg project called 'Save the North Sea', which has the Fulmar as a symbol for the campaign.

The results of the study will be published and volunteer help acknowledged.

If you think you may be able to participate in any way (perhaps regularly, or even irregularly, monitoring a stretch of coastline) and would like further information (including an Information leaflet) please contact:

NE England co-ordinator: Dan Turner, 9 Haswell Gardens, North Shields, Tyne and Wear, NE30 2DP  
Email: [Dan.M.Turner@btopenworld.com](mailto:Dan.M.Turner@btopenworld.com) Phone: 0191 2576680

The NE England co-ordinator will arrange for collection of the birds, storage and initial analysis.

The Project organiser and international co-ordinator for the study is Dr. Jan van Franeker, Alterra, Texel, The Netherlands. Dr Franeker will organise (at Alterra) the stomach analysis of the Fulmars collected. Email:

[Jan.vanFraneker@wur.nl](mailto:Jan.vanFraneker@wur.nl)



A project to reduce marine litter run by Alterra, Holland, FEE Norway, Keep Scotland Beautiful, Keep Sweden Tidy Foundation, KIMO, UK, Skagen Uddannelsescenter, Denmark, and the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency. Co-financed by EU Interreg III. [www.savethenorthsea.com](http://www.savethenorthsea.com)

### Information leaflet

## Marine Litter in stomachs of Fulmars

**Project co-ordinator:** Jan van Franeker, Alterra, Texel, The Netherlands  
**coordinator NE England:** Dan Turner, Tyne and Wear, England, UK

Fulmars, like the Albatrosses, belong to a specific group of seabirds: the tubenoses. The unique character of this oceanic group of seabird is that they possess tube(s) on top of the bill, rather than the nostril openings seen in other bird species. From this feature alone even non-experienced observers can easily identify the species. In the North Sea area, if you find a bird similar to a gull in size and colour (grey and white), but with the characteristic tube on the bill, one is certainly looking at a Fulmar. Fulmars are common throughout the North Atlantic and North Sea area and are found regularly beachwashed along our shores.



Fulmars have the unfortunate habit of eating almost anything they encounter at the surface of the sea, including marine litter like plastics. Studies in the Netherlands have shown that in the Southern North Sea almost every Fulmar (98% of the birds) has plastic in the stomach. On average these Fulmars now carry about 30 pieces or 0.6 gram of plastic (for comparison: on the scale of human body this stomach load would represent about 60 grams of plastic per individual). This figure is about double the amount found in the early 1980's, so there has been a significant increase.



*Example of extreme plastic ingestion by a single Fulmar from the Netherlands*

In March 2002, the Ministers of the North Sea countries have decided to start a system of so-called **Ecological Quality Objectives for the North Sea (EcoQO's)**. One of the EcoQO's will concern levels of marine litter as measured by the amount of plastic in stomachs of Fulmars. A pilot study in all North Sea countries will have to advise on an efficient set-up of this **Fulmar-Litter-EcoQO** by the year 2005 and on the target levels considered to represent an ecologically clean and healthy North Sea.

The pilot study for the Fulmar-Litter-EcoQO is being conducted as a part of the **Save the North Sea** project. In this project, co-financed by the EU-Interreg IIIB programme (2002-2004), a number of organisations in the North Sea countries have joined forces with the aim to reduce littering in the North Sea. This will be done by increasing awareness on the effects of marine littering. Among target groups this should lead to a positive change in peoples attitudes and behaviour. The "litter-eating" Fulmar will be used as the symbol of the Save the North Sea (SNS) project.

### Request to collect Fulmars found dead

The Save the North Sea Fulmar study is being conducted in many regions bordering the North Sea including Scotland (Shetland and Orkney), England, Belgium, the Netherlands, Germany, Denmark and Norway. In each of these regions an adequate sample of Fulmars is needed for statistically reliable analyses of stomach contents. To achieve this, local organizers need the assistance of people that can collect the corpses of Fulmars that may be found in the tidelines on beaches. Local organizers will store the corpses frozen for later dissections and stomach analyses.

The Fulmar corpses do not need to be 'fresh'. Even fairly old and decaying corpses can be used for this study as long as the body of the bird is more or less complete and contains the stomach. Scavenging animals like gulls, crows or foxes will eat from dead beachwashed birds, so if an 'intact' corpse is found, it is wise to collect it immediately. It is thus recommended to always take some plastic bags whenever one visits the beach in order to be able to collect and carry Fulmar corpses. If you have found a Fulmar, please pack and label carefully (see below) and contact your local co-ordinator immediately to arrange for frozen storage.

#### Packaging and label:

The best way to pack a Fulmar corpse is to use two plastic bags. The corpses are often wet, dirty and smelly. Use a first bag to wrap the corpse in. To avoid the sharp beak puncturing the bag(s), one may 'fold' the head under one of the wings. Please use a new bag for each bird, to avoid for example oil on the plumage of one bird transferring to another. Then, put this bag plus the label with finding details in a second (preferably transparent) plastic bag, and close properly. **The label-information is extremely important for later data-analysis, so please insert a label or written note immediately after your return from the beach.** If you do not have the standard label from this project, please supply at least:



- **Finding date** (preferably as for example 12-Mar-2003, so the month in letters)
- **Finding location** (please specify in a way also understandable to persons that do not know your area)
- **Finders name and address** (including phone and or email please)
- **Finding details** (for example if you found the bird entangled in a wire or net, whether it is oiled, or any other issues that could indicate the cause of death of the bird).

#### Your Local Co-ordinator for the Save the North Sea Fulmar project is:

##### *North-east England*

Daniel M Turner  
9, Haswell Gardens  
North Shields, Tyne and Wear, NE30 2DP England  
tel 00-44-(0)191 2576680  
Email [Dan.M.Turner@btopenworld.com](mailto:Dan.M.Turner@btopenworld.com)

If you want to know more about the Save the North Sea project against marine littering, please visit <http://www.savethenorthsea.com>