

Teesmouth Bird Club Newsletter

Issue 32. Autumn 2005

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MONTHLY SUMMARY

Photographs for this Summary by Chris Sharp have been kindly provided by Chris Bell, Tom Francis, Geoff Icton, Ted Parker, Wayne Richardson and Mike Watson and are of the actual birds referred to in the text.

July 2005

Four Storm Petrels were trapped overnight at Hartlepool on 2nd. A Night Heron was a rare find on Cowpen Marsh from 4th-7th but was usually only seen in flight,

though it was occasionally seen roosting in the nearby plantation by the Tidal Pool.



*Night Heron, Cowpen Marsh
(Ted Parker)*

Several Mediterranean Gulls were seen around the North Tees Marshes and Hartlepool Headland, including splendid adults, and the drake Red-crested Pochard continued to be seen in the Dormans Pool/Saltholme area.



*Adult Mediterranean Gull, Hartlepool
(Geoff Icton)*

Wader passage was generally quiet, with just a few Spotted Redshank, Common Sandpiper, Ruff and Black-tailed Godwit on the North Tees Marshes. Quail continued to be heard, with 3 at Liverton on 11th. A Red Kite flew

over Saltburn on 12th and despite the recent re-introductions in the Tyne Valley and Yorkshire, this species remains rare in Cleveland. Seven Storm Petrels were trapped on the night of 17th and the first Balearic Shearwater of the autumn flew past Hartlepool Headland the same day.

Several flocks of Common Crossbills were seen mid-month and a Scaup was on Scaling Dam on 20th, where Little Ringed Plovers bred successfully. Sea watching on 22nd produced Storm Petrel, 102 Manx Shearwaters and 5 Bonxies. A male Scarlet Rosefinch was reported singing at North Tees Hospital but unfortunately did not linger. Two Pomarine Skuas and a Balearic Shearwater were off Hartlepool Headland on 24th and a Little Stint on Dorman's Pool next day was the first of a poor autumn for this species. An Osprey at Scaling Dam was present from 25th and remained in the area until early August. Marsh Harrier and Peregrine were also here at this time.



*Osprey, Scaling Dam
(Ted Parker)*

A Hobby flew over Seaton Carew on 28th, with another Balearic Shearwater at Hartlepool Headland the same day. A Pectoral Sandpiper was seen in flight only at Greatham Creek on 29th and a Red-necked Grebe was off Hartlepool on 30th, with a Storm Petrel off there next day.

August 2005

A Marsh Harrier was on Dorman's Pool from 1st–8th and a Temminck's Stint was there on 2nd. A strong northerly wind on 7th saw an outstanding sea watch at Hartlepool, with both Little and Great Shearwaters flying north close inshore, along with several Balearic Shearwaters and Storm Petrels. Single Storm Petrels also flew north on 8th and 9th, with 7 Sooty Shearwaters and 700 Common Scoters on the former date. A wing-tagged Marsh Harrier was at Dormans Pool from 11th–12th.

Two Storm Petrels were off South Gare on 14th and a Hobby flew over Longnewton next day. Another Osprey appeared at Scaling Dam on 17th and a possible Alpine Swift was reported there the following day. A Caspian Gull was at Seaton Snook on 21st and was again reported from there on 23rd. A Black Tern was on Saltholme Pool on 22nd and remained into September. A Black-necked Grebe was found on the Reclamation Pond the same day and this also remained into September. Wader numbers increased towards the end of the month but only 1-2 Little Stints and up to 4 Curlew Sandpipers were the maximum recorded. Several Garganeys were also on the North Tees Marshes.

A juvenile Hen Harrier on Seaton Common on 28th was wing-tagged and had been ringed at the RSPB Geltsdale Reserve in Cumbria. It showed well and remained in the area until early November. A female Mandarin was at Scaling Dam, along with a Goosander and up to 6 Little Egrets were roosting around Greatham Creek at the end

of the month (a similar number to last year).

September 2005

A Quail was seen at Coatham Marsh on 1st, along with a Garganey, Wood Sandpiper and Spotted Redshank. A Baird's Sandpiper on Back Saltholme on 2nd was only the 5th record for Cleveland and remained in the area until 8th.



Baird's Sandpiper, Saltholme (Tom Francis)

Early September saw peak numbers of Curlew Sandpipers moving through, with up to 9 on Bowesfield Marsh and 12 at Greatham Creek. Numbers of Little Stints peaked at only 5 on the North Tees Marshes, despite the attractive water levels. Other passage waders were generally fewer than in previous autumns, with even Dunlin numbers being low.



Curlew Sandpiper, Tidal Pool (Geoff Icton)

A Spotted Crake showed well on Coatham Marsh from 8th to 9th and a Honey Buzzard was over Skelton on the latter date. Sea watching on 9th produced the autumn's second Great Shearwater, 3 juvenile Sabine's Gulls and 15 Long-tailed Skuas.



Great Shearwater, Hartlepool Headland

A Wryneck on the cliffs at Saltburn the same day was the forerunner of the only fall of migrants at the coast during the month.



Greenish Warbler, South Gare (Mike Watson)

The following day saw a Greenish Warbler at South Gare, with a second bird at the Zinc Works Road, found as birders searched for an elusive Ortolan Bunting, which had only shown well to a few.



Pied Flycatcher, South Gare (Geoff Icton)

Another Greenish Warbler was at Brus Tunnel, Hartlepool on 11th and a Little Bunting was finally pinned down at Hartlepool on the

same date, having given only brief views the previous day.



Little Bunting, Hartlepool
(Chris Bell)

Small numbers of Pied and Spotted Flycatchers, Whinchats, and Redstarts were also associated with this fall.

The highlight of the month, however was undoubtedly a Little Swift, which showed briefly to one lucky observer at South Gare on 13th. A Spotted Crake showed distantly on Dorman's Pool on 16th. Another superb sea watch on 16th saw at least 1,000 Sooty Shearwaters fly north off Hartlepool Headland, along with 2 Balearic Shearwaters, 6 Sabine's Gulls, 11 Leach's Petrels, Long-tailed Skua and Red-necked Grebe.



Roseate Tern
(Chris Bell)

Another Sabine's Gull flew north the following day. A Red-backed Shrike was at Hummersea on 18th and a Slavonian Grebe was on Charlton's Pond next day, remaining for a week, when it was

unfortunately picked up dead. A Roseate Tern showed well at South Gare.

The remainder of the month was extremely quiet, with the warm, settled weather producing few birds of note.

October 2005

The month began in fine style with a Red-throated Pipit flying south over Greenabella Marsh on 1st, though a locally twitchable bird would be much appreciated, as this remains a rare species in Cleveland. A Garganey was on Saltholme Pool the same day and a late Marsh Harrier was over the Reclamation Pond. A Lapland Bunting on Seaton Common on 2nd and a Hobby at Dormans Pool on 4th preceded a good run of scarce birds. A Yellow-browed Warbler at South Gare on 5th was the first of a record autumn for this species. The next few days saw other Yellow-broweds at Hummersea and Hartlepool.

After a brief lull, a Richard's Pipit was found at Boulby on 12th, along with a Lapland Bunting. Nearby, a Yellow-browed Warbler was at Hummersea.



Yellow-browed Warbler, Hartlepool
(Wayne Richardson)

The following day, another Richard's Pipit showed well all day at Hartlepool Headland in the Borough Hall gardens. Three Yellow-browed Warblers were also on the Headland, with 2 more nearby opposite the Jewish cemetery. A Richard's Pipit was on Saltburn Cliffs in the evening and the following day yet another Richard's Pipit was at Hart Warren.



Richard's Pipit, Hartlepool
(Wayne Richardson)

During the next few days it was a case of find your own Yellow-browed Warbler, with these eastern gems occurring in record numbers at most of the likely coastal stations, with at least 6 at Hartlepool and 5-6 around Hummersea being the largest concentrations. A Black Redstart was at South Gare on 14th, with the same location holding a Barred Warbler (15th-18th), Pallas's Warbler (16th-17th), Radde's Warbler (16th) and a Marsh Warbler and a Firecrest (17th). Another Pallas's Warbler was at Saltburn from 15th to 17th and a Richard's Pipit was around Haverton Hole from 15th to 16th. Yet more Yellow-browed Warblers appeared from 19th, with 3 at Hartlepool, 2 nearby at Brus Tunnel and 2 near the Jewish Cemetery. Others were at Saltburn and Loftus and 2 were seen on the Long Drag. The total for the autumn seems certain to exceed 70 individuals, easily beating the previous record of 30 set as recently as 2003. A very elusive Dusky Warbler was trapped and ringed at Boulby during its 3-day stay from 19th to 21st. A Firecrest was at Hartlepool (21st-22nd) bringing to an end a super 10 days of birding. Ten Pomarine Skuas and 2 Long-tailed Ducks were off Hartlepool Headland on 22nd, with 7 Little Auks and a female Smew off the same location on 24th.

A Little Bunting was trapped and ringed at South Gare on 27th, with a Richard's Pipit over Boulby the same day, along with 17 Crossbill and Snow Bunting. One or two Firecrests were at Hartlepool

Headland between 28th–31st and the final Yellow-browed of the month were at South Gare (27th) and 2 at Brotton (29th).



*Whooper Swans, Saltholme
(Geoff Iceton)*

A Red-throated Pipit was reported flying over Boulby on 30th.

Several parties of Whooper Swans passed through the area late in the month, with 47 on the sea off

Redcar on 29th. Twenty-six were at Saltholme the same day and 11 were there the following day.



*Pink-footed Goose, Seaton Common
(Wayne Richardson)*

A large southerly movement of Pink-footed Geese also occurred on 29th, with over 1,500 past Hummersea.

Forty-one Twites had returned to Greenabella Marsh by the month's

end and the long-staying adult Yellow-legged Gull continued to be seen at the Tees Barrage.



*Yellow-Legged Gull, Tees Barrage
(Wayne Richardson)*

Chris Sharp

SECRETARY'S NOTES

Committee Nominations

The Club is looking for new blood for the Committee. Anyone willing to become a Committee member should contact me as soon as possible, on 01429 865163 or email chrisandlucia@sharp12756.co.uk.

Access to Crookfoot Reservoir

There is now a barrier on the gate at Crookfoot Reservoir and TBC members can only gain entry by entering an access code, which is available from Chris Sharp.

Email Addresses

In order to cut down on photocopying and postage costs I would be grateful if any members who are not on the Club's emailing list to let me have their email

addresses. Please forward these to chrisandlucia@sharp12756.co.uk

BTO Representative

Vic Fairbrother has taken over from Russell McAndrew as the BTO Cleveland Representative. Our thanks are due to Russell for his excellent work over the past 22 years. We also thank Vic for taking on this important role, in addition to his many other commitments.

Request for Historical Information

John Fletcher is attempting to put together a history of the formative years of the Club. This is an important piece of work, as we believe that it has never been done before. If anyone has any information, anecdotes, photographs, documents or recollections of the Club's early days please give John a ring on 01642 818825.

Chris Sharp

WETLAND BIRD SURVEY

Autumn 2005 Summary

	July 17	August 21	September 18	October 16
Little Grebe	15	47*	88**	66**
Great Crested Grebe	21	34	24	12
Cormorant	69*	511**	359**	246**
Grey Heron	33	50	62	44
Mute Swan	66	59	51	44
Shelduck	116	26	147	289
Wigeon	2	15	336	1204
Gadwall	6	69*	238**	332***
Teal	4	370	519	892*
Mallard	134	243	611	255
Pintail	0	0	10	47
Shoveler	8	117**	145**	120**
Pochard	56	96	27	39
Tufted Duck	94	109	107	96
Ruddy Duck	15	34	33	45
Coot	667*	841*	950*	1245**
Oystercatcher	173	1308	1707	1136
Ringed Plover	20	78	150*	50
Golden Plover	0	165	100	2136*
Grey Plover	0	16	60	41
Lapwing	331	1917	2077	3335
Knot	6	32	221	76
Sanderling	227*	235*	163*	176*
Little Stint	0	0	4	1
Curlew Sandpiper	0	1	0	0
Purple Sandpiper	0	2	3	6
Dunlin	46	223	321	160
Ruff	6	29*	2	1
Snipe	0	29	17	18
Black-tailed Godwit	0	22	32	42*
Bar-tailed Godwit	0	17	27	47

Underlined counts indicate Spring 2005 maxima.

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

** Denotes count of national significance for that species

NB 'Teessmouth' includes Hartlepool Bay

Coverage was fairly good, with 83 out of a possible 92 sector counts undertaken (a rate of 90%). However, seven sectors were not counted on the 17 July count date.

Great Crested Grebe (34, August) produced a new Tees WeBS seasonal record. It was a generally impressive autumn for ducks, with the best autumn Wigeon tally for five years (1204, October) and Teal also showing reasonably well by the standards of recent years (892, October). The spectacular Gadwall figure of 332 in October constitutes a new WeBS record, and is our first internationally-important count of the species. The

Mallard maximum (611, September) was actually our highest WeBS/BoEE total since the winter of 1989/90, and the Pintail peak (47, October) was a new seasonal WeBS record.

Plover flocks were well in evidence around Saltholme in October. Golden Plover (2136) set a new autumn WeBS record, comfortably surpassing the 1633 counted five years ago, while the Lapwing total of 3335 was our best autumn count since as long ago as September 1987. Among the smaller waders, two species stood out for the opposite reason. No more than six Purple Sandpipers were counted (October), this being the worst seasonal showing since 1989. The Dunlin peak of only 321 (September) comprises the lowest ever autumn maximum on the Tees.

It was an unremarkable season for godwits and Curlew. Redshank returned the poorest autumn peak for seven years (1554, October), yet this was still the seventh consecutive autumn that internationally important numbers of this species have been recorded.

Terns fared particularly poorly in 2005, although the figures are undoubtedly distorted by incomplete coverage in July. This was certainly the case for Common Tern; contrast the 281 counted in that month with a known Teessmouth breeding population in excess of 400 pairs. The Sandwich Tern peak (201, July) is our lowest ever autumn Teessmouth maximum.

Following this series of counts, in autumn the Tees and Hartlepool Bay WeBS Site remains of national importance for Little Grebe, Cormorant, Gadwall, Shoveler and of international importance for Redshank. Sanderling has now lost its nationally-important status.

Mike Leakey
Local Organizer
Tees Wetland Bird Survey

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Meetings

Wednesday 4th January 2006	Graham Megson "Butterflies and Dragonflies of Cleveland"
Wednesday 1st February 2006	Keith Bowey "A Kite's Tail - The Northern Kites Project"
Wednesday 1st March 2006	Mike Leakey "35 Years of Teesmouth Estuary Counts"
Wednesday 5th April 2006	Annual General Meeting followed by Kevin Bayes "RSPB Saltholme - An Update"

NEWS UPDATE FROM THE COMMITTEE

Five-Year Plan

The Five-Year Plan is progressing very well, though, with only 18 months' work completed, there is still a long way to go. The next key targets are to forge stronger links with other local and regional nature conservation bodies, societies and bird clubs; explore the possibilities for another venue for evening meetings; improve the publicity of Club 'products' (eg members' meetings and the 'Cleveland Bird Report'), seek out new sales outlets (for the annual bird report and the forthcoming *Atlas of Breeding Birds of Cleveland*); the design and distribution of a new poster to try and recruit more new members; and to produce a Bird Sites Register of less well known parts of Cleveland, which are nevertheless good for birds.

Reclamation Pond

The Chairman has discussed future plans for the Reclamation Pond with Impetus Reclamation Limited and obtained the Planning Application documents and Conditions from Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council. These were considered by the Conservation Sub Committee at its October meeting. The Council has imposed many Planning Conditions on the Planning Approval, one of which is the carrying out of monthly bird counts on the 2 compensatory sites over a 5-year period, presumably to determine whether they are acting as appropriate compensation for the loss of the Reclamation Pond. It is unclear who is going to pay for these and who is going to do them.

Infilling of the site cannot commence until the 2 compensatory sites have been completed. Impetus is

intending to start Port Clarence Pool in spring 2006. It is claimed that the combined area of the 2 sites (100 acres) will be larger than the Reclamation Pond, though there is no indication in any of the documents of who is to own and manage these.

It is clear from Impetus that the Reclamation Pond will be filled in if a suitable industrial use can be found and will occur in 3 phases from west to east. Following a long and frank discussion by the Conservation Sub Committee, it was unanimously agreed to recommend to the full Committee that the development should be opposed and that we should raise awareness of its local, regional and national importance for birds. The Committee has endorsed this stance. Sadly, the 1996 'North Tees Agreement' has effectively prevented the signatories (comprising other leading nature conservation groups in the area) from objecting or ensuring that the site is given proper statutory protection.

We have, therefore, set up a small Working Party to prepare an Action Plan. If anyone would like to join this group or has any comments to make in support (or otherwise) of our proposed stance, please contact Ted Parker on 01642 265369.

Hartlepool Observatory

We are delighted to report that since the depressing news in the Summer Newsletter, subsequent discussions and a site meeting with PD Teesport has resulted in their provisional agreement to a site within the Heugh Lighthouse compound being used as a potential location for our new observatory.



Birders seawatching at Hartlepool Headland. The proposed site for the new observatory lies immediately to the right of the white building in the centre, within the Heugh Lighthouse compound.

This is subject to our outline design proposals being acceptable to themselves and Hartlepool Borough Council, as the Heugh Lighthouse site lies within a designated Conservation Area. The offer of a site is a huge step forward, for, without this, we had no means of progressing things. The next step is to prepare a

Brief and commission experienced architectural consultants to prepare a costed Feasibility Study, with an outline design, for approval by the relevant bodies. We will keep you informed of future developments

Teesside Offshore Wind Farm, Redcar

The TBC's Windfarm Working Party met to review Entec's comments on the Club's '*Objection Statement*', in which we commented on various aspects of the developer's Ornithological Impact Assessment. The Working Party comprised Ted Parker, Russell McAndrew, Mark Stokeld (Leader of RSPB Cleveland Members' Group), Chris Sharp, Chris Bielby, Dr Alistair McLee, Julie Mason and Eric James. The main conclusions of the Working Party were, first, that the extensive TBC seabird data (based on over half a century of sea watching off Hartlepool Headland and South Gare) provided for the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) were under-utilized and, at times, misrepresented. Secondly, there were significant flaws in the EIA's Collision Risk Assessment, with many at-risk species omitted and the risks to those species, with the exception of Great Black-backed Gull, significantly underestimated. Thirdly, there was no assessment of the cumulative impact on seabirds in relation to other existing and proposed windfarms on the east coast. Fourthly, the EIA did not meet established guidelines in that it did not consider alternative locations for the windfarm, nor were other alternative options assessed. The Working Party, therefore, unanimously agreed to maintain the Teesmouth Bird Club's objection to the Teesside Offshore Windfarm. This was ratified at a meeting of the TBC Committee on 25th April 2005 and the decision made known both to EDF Energy and Entec. At the time of going to press, there has still been no decision by the DTI concerning the offshore works.

Fish Shop Trees, Hartlepool Headland

We have only just learned that the owner of Verrill's Fish Shop has requested Hartlepool Borough Council to remove the 2 large Sycamores immediately adjacent to their premises because they are causing structural damage to the building. Many will know these as the 'Fish Shop Trees' and they are nationally famous, appearing in many national site guides, for the variety of migrant birds they have attracted over the years. We have written to Hartlepool Borough Council to express our concern but, if the trees cannot be saved, we have requested that they be replaced with 6m high semi-mature Sycamores, with root barriers, as part of the Headland Town Square scheme.

Wayne Richardson

Our congratulations go to Wayne, whose superb flight shot of a Red Grouse came 3rd in the '*British Birds Bird Photograph of the Year*'. Some of Wayne's photos also

appear in the recently published '*Shorebirds of North America*'.

NEDL Overhead Cables at Dormans Pool

A site meeting was held in the summer with representatives of NEDL to discuss our concerns about bird deaths caused by these inconspicuous but deadly cables. NEDL were sympathetic but stated that it would be impossible to place more bird markers on the wires due to the depth of water at the northern end Dormans Pool. The matter has, therefore, been referred to NEDL's Diversion Team to explore the possibility of relocating the cables. English Nature has written to NEDL in support of our concerns. Since the meeting, yet another Mute Swan has been killed (a ringed adult) and Black-headed Gulls have been seen trailing severely damaged wings on several occasions. We have informed NEDL of these recent events. At present, we are awaiting a response.

Scaling Dam

Two pairs of Little Ringed Plovers successfully bred this year, again due to water level management by the Scaling Dam Wildlife Advisory Group (SDWAG). The down side is that the reduced levels resulted in no successful breeding of Great Crested Grebe and Coots also struggled to find suitable nesting sites. Clearly, there is more work to do to get the balance right. The feasibility of creating a large, new island and shoreline within the Reserve has been well advanced by Northumbrian Water/SDWAG, with help from Martin Blick and Ted Parker. The reservoir is also being entered again for the BTO Hanson Challenge in 2006, so we would be grateful if all observers who make a visit could record all their sightings in the logbook provided in the hide. The reservoir came 2nd nationally in 2004.

Martin Blick and Ted Parker

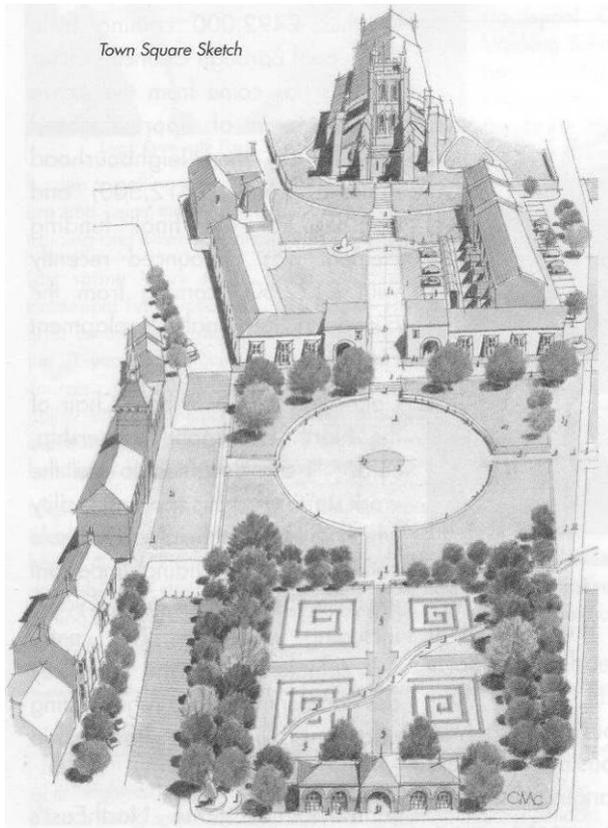
The Phil Stead Memorial Fund

Ann Stead has kindly given all the donations in lieu of flowers from Phil's funeral to the Teesmouth Bird Club. With other local contributions from TBC members who knew Phil well, the fund now stands at approximately £2,000. It is to be used in accordance with Ann's wishes for a memorial hide, which she would like to see erected at Saltholme, an area Phil knew and loved so well. We have already started preliminary discussions with the RSPB over the naming a new hide on its Saltholme Reserve in Phil's memory.

Hartlepool Headland New Town Square

Work has started on the area fronting the Borough Hall at Hartlepool Headland, with foundations being constructed for the new circular plaza. The old toilet block has been demolished and old shrubbery removed

on Northgate. It is hoped to complete all the hard works by June 2006, with the planting of 86 semi-mature trees (Sycamore species) following on later in the year. This scheme has been designed and managed by Ferguson McIlveen of Middlesbrough on behalf of Hartlepool Borough Council, and will greatly enhance the area for both people and birds. It is proposed to remove only 5 trees, which means a net gain of 81.



The illustration shows Ferguson McIlveen's outline design proposals for the area fronting the Borough Hall, which include a new, circular 'plaza'; new, raised planting areas; the planting of 86 semi-mature trees; a formal garden on the southern half of the area and new footpaths, lighting and street furniture.

Northern Gateway Terminal, Teesport

Following a full discussion by the Conservation Sub Committee, the Club forwarded its detailed comments on the Environmental Scoping Report for the proposed deepwater port development to PD Teesport, who wrote to thank us for the quality of our response. We highlighted our key concerns, suggested areas where additional/more detailed surveys are required, provided specific comments on the 4 sites adjacent to the River Tees that will be affected and identified what data the Club has to inform the EIA process. Four members of the Conservation Sub Committee (John Fletcher, Derek Clayton, Peter Smith and Graham Megson), were given a guided tour of the development by PD Teesport. John Fletcher, on the Club's behalf, attended a meeting with PD Teesport on 4th November, along with

representatives from the RSPB, to be briefed and discuss further the proposals, which we believe are to be the subject of a Planning Application early in 2006. We have made what concerns we have quite clear in our written comments and are confident that these will be addressed in the Environmental Impact Assessment.

TNNR Car Park

Following lobbying of INEOS Chlor by the TBC, English Nature and Teessmouth Field Centre, the TNNR car park near Greatham Creek was reopened on 18th July. This, should resolve the serious parking problems for birders wishing to access Cowpen Marsh, Greenabella Marsh and the Seal Sands hide.

RSPB Saltholme Update

During the last three years, the RSPB and Teesside Environmental Trust (TET) have been working to transform 1000 acres (380 hectares) of former industrial sites and rough grassland into a nature reserve for wildlife and people. The new reserve at Saltholme will be the largest wetland creation project in the north of England. A notable landmark for the project in spring, this year, was the transfer of the land from English Partnerships to TET. The total project budget is now just over £7 million and the RSPB have been working vigorously behind the scenes to secure a complete funding package to cover all the capital costs.

Work during Summer/Autumn 2005 has involved additional civil engineering and ditch work to enable the lake adjacent to the now demolished Saltholme Farm building to be filled this winter and the completion of a pipeline system to enable water to be pumped onto site from a Huntsman borehole. The water may be needed during dry springs and summers to keep grassland, reedbeds and freestanding pools wet.

Consultants Furneaux Stewart have been chosen by the RSPB to help create the interpretive vision and develop a visitor experience for the many visitors to the Reserve. An exhibition showing the proposed plans and layout for the Reserve was held in November at the Clarences Community Centre and another is to be held on 15th December from 3.00pm to 7.00pm at Stockton Parish Church in Stockton High Street. Next year should see the appointment of a site-based Site Manager for the Reserve, grazing regimes introduced with the nominated grazier, the commencement of a new access road to the site and the start of work on the new Wild Bird Discovery Centre. Plans for this work are well advanced, with a view to the Reserve opening to the public in early 2008. Jane Darbyshire and David Kendall have been chosen as the preferred architectural practice to design and develop the Wild Bird Discovery Centre. It is now possible to follow the progress of the Saltholme Reserve on the RSPB's website or through its new Newsletter.

Finally, if any members have proposals/suggestions, or criticisms, regarding Saltholme, or have any feedback on the exhibition, please feel free to contact either myself (dek.clayton@ntlworld.com) or any member of the TBC Committee. This gives the Committee an opportunity to discuss any issues that may have arisen prior to the Club's quarterly liaison meetings with the RSPB.

Derek Clayton (TBC's RSPB Saltholme Liaison Group Representative)

Sharing Bird Information

Feedback from the Members' Questionnaire Survey revealed that most of the respondents would like to be informed of uncommon or rare species which turn up in Cleveland. One way to at least partly achieve this is for important information to be put promptly on to the two main bird alert pager services, i.e.:

Birdnet: 01623 511679

Rare Bird Alert: 08707 622622

Seen any interesting birds....?

Even if you don't use pager services you can spread the news of your sightings on the TBC website. Just email details (species, numbers, location, date and time) to clevelandbirdnews@yahoo.co.uk

2005 'Cleveland Bird Report'

Please could observers send their records, photographs and sketches for the 2005 'Cleveland Bird Report' to the new **County Recorder, Richard Taylor** at the address given below (see 'New County Recorder').

New County Recorder

Following the recent resignation of Rob Little, Richard Taylor was nominated by the Records Sub Committee to replace him as County Recorder for Cleveland. This nomination has recently been unanimously endorsed by the TBC Committee and we would like to congratulate Richard on his new appointment. We are sure that he will do a great job. Richard says that one of his key aims is to try and encourage more observers to contribute records to the 'Cleveland Bird Report', so that it can be improved even further. We consider it appropriate and timely to include a profile of Richard in this Newsletter.

His home address, telephone number and email address to which records should be sent are as follows: **'Stoneybank', Dibdale Road, Neasham, DARLINGTON, Co Durham, DL2 1PF. Tel: 07813 918812. Email: rct@teesmouth.plus.com or recorder.cleveland@gmail.com**

We are indebted to the outgoing Recorder, Rob Little, who has served tirelessly on the Records Sub-Committee for an amazing 28 years without a break. During this time he has been a compiler and editor of the bird report, helped to vet literally thousands of records and introduced new methods of working to the Records Sub Committee. This is in addition to his outstanding work in setting up our nationally acclaimed Website, reviewing the status of all bird species in the Cleveland area and revisions to and formatting of the Club's Newsletter. Rob has been presented with a gift from the Committee in recognition of his long-standing contribution and we hope that he now has a well-earned rest, work and family commitments permitting!

New Members' Pack

A comprehensive New Members' Pack is now available, which contains a wealth of information about the Club, including key personnel (with addresses, telephone number and email addresses), its aims, objectives, Constitution, activities and organisational structure, a copy of the Five-Year Plan, how to submit bird records, a guide to the best birding sites in Cleveland (with maps and photographs) and a copy of the Cleveland Bird List for individual use. The pack is available to all new members free of charge and to existing members for £2.00 a copy (plus postage), which represents extremely good value for money. Anyone wishing to purchase a pack, which comes in a new, glossy corporate folder, please contact Chris Sharp or Ted Parker.

Keys for the Jeff Youngs Hide, Dormans Pool

Keys are available from Chris Sharp at a price of £3.00 (plus postage). Access to the hide, Dormans Pool and the Reclamation Pond is for paid-up Teesmouth Bird Club members only.

Purchase of Digital Projector

One of the key issues arising out of the Members' Questionnaire Survey is that members would like to see a wider range of presentations at the evening meetings using digital technology. A large proportion of photographers are now using digital cameras, rather than traditional prints and slides, and this has, for example, made it very difficult for us to present an annual review of birds in Cleveland at our most recent AGMs. Due to an extremely generous donation by one of our members, who wishes to remain anonymous, we have recently purchased a high quality digital projector and this will greatly increase the opportunities for more speakers. One person has already offered to do a talk next session now that we have this technology. Our thanks are due to Linda Watson, who researched and purchased the projector on the Club's behalf.

Deer Poaching At Greatham Creek

As the lead Wildlife Crime Officer for Cleveland Police, I have received information regarding deer poaching by a group of organised criminals in the Greatham Creek area and surrounding reserve. I understand that some TBC members have witnessed this group with dogs on the land concerned and I would please ask that any past or future sightings be sent to me at:

Rob King (Wildlife Crime Officer), Stockton Police Office, Thistle Green, STOCKTON-ON-TEES, TS18 1TZ. Tel: 01642 302267; Email: rob.king@cleveland.pnn.police.uk

Rob King (Wildlife Crime Officer – Cleveland Police)

Avian Flu

You may have heard news items on the potential threats from bird flu in the UK. There is a remote possibility that the virus could be carried by migrating wild birds. Should this occur, one possible early warning sign might be a significant number of bird deaths within a single flock. The RSPB is acting as part of an 'early warning system' by watching out for unexpected bird deaths on its reserves. Because Saltholme has yet to get its own staff, it has been identified as a potential gap in the system. Therefore, could I ask you all to help. If you are in the Saltholme area please could you keep an eye out for groups of dead birds and if you spot 10-20 or more fresh corpses in an area, please to contact me. Don't touch the corpses in case of possible contamination. Could you also please spread the word amongst other regular birders in the area and pass on my e-mail address and telephone number. There is no cause for alarm! The

chances of bird flu showing up in this way are remote and the chance of it getting from wild birds to humans is even more remote but better to be alert to the possibility.

If you are prepared to help out, please let me know by email. We are not expecting regular visits to the site but merely that you keep an eye out during your usual birding trips. An occasional response after any visits (hopefully negative) would also be useful just to give me a feel for the kind of coverage we are getting. I hope you can help out and if you would like more information on the subject get back to me.

Kevin Bayes (RSPB) Tel: 0191 233 4303; Fax: 0191 233 4322; Email: kevin.bayes@rspb.org.uk

'Corporate Responsibility'

The RSPB contacted me recently to inform me of some adverse comments concerning their new Saltholme Reserve, which had been made to the RSPB Council. The comments were stated to have come from the TBC and caused some disquiet. I have no knowledge of what the comments were or who was involved but I would like to stress that the Club management wholeheartedly support the RSPB's excellent work to create an outstanding new reserve and will continue to do so. I would be grateful if members who hold counter-views would make it clear that they are speaking as individuals and not on behalf of the TBC. If any members have complaints or concerns on any issues, then please direct these through members of the Committee and I will ensure that they are promptly dealt with, as appropriate, and a corporate response given.

Ted Parker – Chairman

CLEVELAND BREEDING BIRD SURVEY

A Project Team consisting of Graeme Joynt, Russ McAndrew, Mark Askew, Vic Fairbrother, Brian Hague and John Sharp has been formed to manage the concluding stages leading to publication of the 'Atlas of Breeding Birds of Cleveland' by the TBC. In addition to the team of volunteers that has undertaken the tetrad surveys, the Committee wishes to involve as many members as possible in the

production of this book. So far 33 members have volunteered or have been encouraged to assist with writing the various species accounts. If anyone else would like to help with writing even one species account then please contact Vic Fairbrother (01287 633744) as soon as possible. All offers are welcome. It is intended to send out guidelines concerning the topics to be included in the species accounts some time in the New Year, together with historical data, which has been collated from a variety of local publications.

Forms for any supplementary records of breeding birds will be available at the next Club meeting. These can be records from your own tetrads in previous years, or unusual records for other tetrads. There is still much to do in terms of data input and there is still a small amount of missing or incomplete data to deal with. When this is complete, maps containing details of estimated breeding populations and distribution will be sent to each species account author.

Vic Fairbrother

SURVEY OF WATER BODIES IN CLEVELAND

It has been decided to defer this until next winter. In the interim period, we are going to attempt to map the key water bodies not covered by WeBS counts (lakes, ponds, etc) that the Club is interested in and then

'assign' each of these to a member who lives nearby, subject to their agreement, of course. Graham Megson has kindly agreed to carry out the mapping of sites. If any member knows of a site near them that they consider should be included in the survey, no matter how small, then please contact Graham on 01287 622969.

Graham Megson

TBC WEBSITE

The Club Website has been listed as 'Website of the Month' in the December issue of the popular national magazine, 'Birdwatch'. It received a very good review (see opposite). The only mild criticism was the paucity of bird photographs. We would, therefore, be very grateful if birders could ensure that past and recent sightings are posted (such as Pallid Swift, Ring-necked Duck and Grey Phalarope to name but a few). The addition of more photographs will plug this shortfall in our Website and make it one of the best in the country.

Website of the month

Teesmouth Bird Club

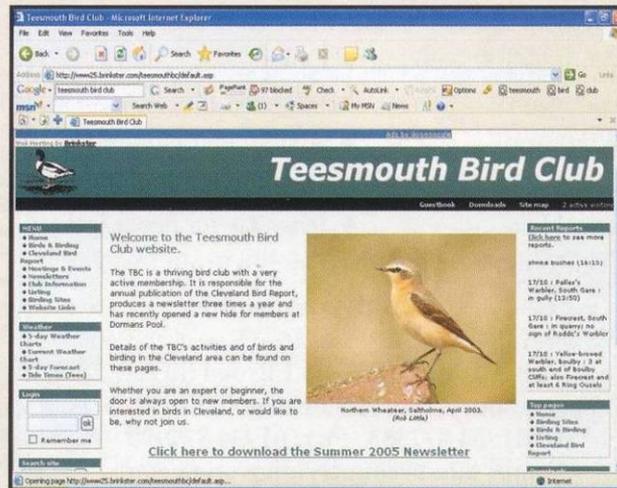
www25.brinkster.com/teesmouthbc

This thriving bird club has an equally lively website. Bright and clear, it features the very latest bird news in a scrolling box on the right, updated daily. On the left a menu offers year-by-year accounts of rare birds in Cleveland from the year 2000 up to the present date, the complete Cleveland bird list, and a detailed analysis table of all rarities seen in Cleveland. A listings page details top listers and their county lists, day lists and year lists. Full details about the records committee, information on how to submit records and photographs, and the regional bird report can be found in another section.

Information about some of Teesmouth's best birding sites, with photographs, is a great addition. A very useful box

offers a direct link to the latest weather information, including a current weather map for Europe detailing pressure, five-day forecast charts, a link to the local BBC weather page and online tide tables for Teesmouth.

For Teesmouth Bird Club members there are pages with details of meetings, events and newsletters. A guestbook offers the chance to post comments and questions. The site is attractive and accessible, and only falls short in the number of bird photographs it offers.



Extract from 'Birdwatch' magazine

PROFILE : RICHARD TAYLOR

This is the second in a series of profiles on local birders and is based on 'interviews', with set questions. Following his recent appointment as the new County Recorder, Richard Taylor talked to Ted Parker about his birding life to date.

Richard is 33 years old and was born in Darlington, where he still lives. Being a self-employed gardener keeps him both fit and busy, though he still finds plenty of time to pursue his "obsession" – birding. Richard has been interested in birds for as long as he can remember but has been "seriously birding" since 1988.

He doesn't know exactly how many species he has seen in Cleveland, though a glance at the Website shows that he is creeping up the batting order of the top 25 listers in the County, mainly due to the hours he spends in the field and his amazing skill at finding scarce and rare birds. Richard's favourite local patch is Dormans Pool, where he spends countless hours, closely followed by the Boulby/Hummersea area, where he finds the peace and solitude, coupled with a refreshing change in both scenery and birding, exhilarating.



Richard birding in Sweden – May 2005

Richard's optics are a Kowa TS823 'scope and Swarovski 10 x 42 EL binoculars. His favourite book is 'Antarctic Wildlife' by Hadoram Shirihai. Richard's other interests include dragonflies, butterflies and moths and he frequently goes out on evening/late night moth trapping sessions. The most impressive birding site he has visited is Fair Isle, closely followed by the Bolivar

Flats in Texas, where he saw a staggering array of American waders.

Richard's best day's birding was in Cleveland on 25th September 2001 – when he saw County's first Red-flanked Bluetail at Cattersty Gill. Other birds he saw that day included Dusky and Barred Warblers and no less than 5 Red-breasted Flycatchers, supported by lots of common migrants. He has no doubt that his best personal find was Britain's 2nd Short-billed Dowitcher on Greenabella Marsh on 29th September 1999 (it would have been the first had it not spent a short period in Scotland beforehand!) but his favourite was a pristine Alpine Swift over Old Cemetery, Hartlepool, on 9th June 2002, which tracked south over Seaton Carew and spent some hours around Hartlepool Power Station, allowing many to see it. His biggest birding disappointments have been missing a Pacific Swift at Cley and "many dips" for a highly mobile Elegant Tern. Richard's most memorable bird is Great Grey Owl, which he saw at close range during a birding trip to Sweden in May this year and to which feels the books do not do justice. His biggest 'ambition bird' in the UK is White-throated Needletail and in the world it is Light-mantled Sooty Albatross. His most embarrassing moments were, firstly, at Marazion Marsh in Cornwall, where he tried to persuade the birders present that a certain bird was a female American Wigeon (the one actually which had actually been seen earlier was a male!) and second, at Tophill Low Reservoir, South Yorkshire, where he confidently put the assembled birders on to a Lesser Scaup, which turned out to be a Tufted Duck! Richard made up for this some years later, when he found Cleveland's first Lesser Scaup on Saltholme Pools in June 1999, showing that he really does know what he is looking at!

Similar to Dave Simpson, who was profiled in the last Newsletter, one of the biggest changes Richard has seen over the years is the dramatic loss of habitat to industry around the Tees Estuary and he is appalled at plans to infill the Reclamation Pond - a prime birding site. He fully endorses the Club's stance to oppose this.

Regarding his hopes for the future, Richard would like to see less elitism and more respect and tolerance between all those who are interested in birds at whatever level. He draws an interesting and profound analogy – when someone seeks help or is less knowledgeable than you, treat them with respect because the next day they may turn out to be the brain surgeon who is saving your life.

Ted Parker

MEMBERS' QUESTIONNAIRE SURVEY

In this section, Linda Watson reports on the main results of the Members' Questionnaire Survey. Anyone wishing to have more detailed information please contact any member of the Committee. The results of the Questionnaire have been fed back to the Committee and Sub Committees and will be acted upon, as appropriate, to improve the Club in the future.

Response Rate

In total, 72 members completed and returned the 2005 Club questionnaire – an approximate 26% response rate. The key findings of the Survey are as follows:

Length of Club Membership

Over 44% of the respondents have been TBC members for 15 years or more, with 25% having been members for 25 years or more. New members of 5 years or less make up 29% of the respondents.

Reasons for Joining the TBC

Many reasons were given, the most common being:

- Contact with local birders, the Newsletter and the '*Cleveland Bird Report*'.
- To be part of an organisation that represents bird conservation interests locally.
- Social contact, particularly at evening meetings.
- To gain access to the Club's facilities (Jeff Youngs Hide and Dormans Pool/Reclamation Pond).
- To learn about birds of the Teesside area and meet more experienced birders.

Age Structure

The questionnaire showed that 64% of members are between the ages of 19-64 and 38% are over 65. The Club has only 4% of members under the age of 18, showing that it is 'ageing' and needs to target young people in order to encourage the next generation of birdwatchers in the local area.

Monthly Meetings

The survey revealed that 46% of respondents regularly attend the evening meetings, 28% rarely attend and 26% never attend. The main reasons given for rare/non-attendance were wrong venue (27%), wrong evening (15%), content of meetings (5%) and other reasons (53%). Members gave a number of

suggestions as to how the indoor meetings could be improved, the main ones being:

- Different venue
- A microphone/PA system/bigger screen.
- Obtaining a digital projector.
- Variation on the place where meetings held.
- Occasional quizzes.
- Better venue, with refreshments.
- Wider range of talks (not always on places visited).

In response, the Club has now purchased a digital projector to broaden the range of talks at our evening meetings.

Taking Part in Bird Surveys

The results showed that 58% of the respondents have taken part in some type of survey work and 30% have not. Of the 42% who have not done so, half expressed an interest to become involved.

Website

Over 78% of the respondents have access to the internet and the Club's website has proved to be popular, with 65% of respondents indicating that they are actively using it. They found it both interesting and useful. The Website has recently received an excellent review in the December edition of '*Birdwatch*' magazine. The main reason given for website use was to obtain information concerning local bird sightings and the main 'flaw' cited was the lack of bird photographs (a point noted by '*Birdwatch*' in its review).

Information on Scarce/Rare Birds

The respondents expressed an interest in being informed of scarce or rare birds, with 69% requesting this information.

Subscription Charges

The respondents supported an increase in subscriptions to enable the Club to do more work/activities, with 81% in favour and 10% against. Senior citizen members were asked if they would agree to pay the same rates as a full member but only 6% supported this.

Skills of Members

From the returned questionnaires, the Club now has a 'pool of skills' and a list of names of those prepared to offer their services in support of the Club (some already do so).

Unaccepted Bird Records

The respondents supported a list of unaccepted records being published anonymously in the back of the

'Cleveland Bird Report', with 61% endorsing this suggestion. Some, however, questioned the need for or the value of this.

Local Outings

The prospect of future local outings proved popular with respondents, 57% indicating that they would like to take part. Thirteen respondents (31%) offered to lead outings. There has already been a small number of outings held this year, though with varying success. Various suggestions were made for possible venues and desired times.

Club Newsletter

The respondents showed massive support for the Club's Newsletter, with 97% saying that they found it interesting and useful. Suggestions for improvements included:

- *A wider range of contributors.*
- *More images.*
- *Information on local sites.*
- *'Modernise' its format.*
- *A list of forthcoming events.*
- *More information about other activities with which the Club is involved.*

Most of these suggestions have already been taken on board and the revamped Newsletter was launched in Summer 2005.

Other Comments

The respondents were asked to list any other comments that they felt would help to improve the Club in the future. These are both too numerous and diverse to list here.

Linda Watson

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TBC Website: www.teemouthbc.freemove.co.uk

All unsolicited copy welcome, ideally as a word processed computer file, but typed and handwritten copy is equally acceptable. Any topic concerning birds or the local environment is grist to the mill.