Teesmouth Bird Club Newsletter

December 2021 (No.80)

Reg.Charity No.508850

CONTENTS

Was this person trying to get a TV signal while the Bilsdale transmitter was out of service? See page 10

MONTHLY SUMMARIES

Chris Sharp *reviews the birding highlights of the autumn period.*

JULY

The month got off to a flying start with a Pterodroma Petrel, flying north past Cowbar on 1st. It was tracked up the east coast from Flamborough to Northumberland and identified from photos as a Soft Plumaged Petrel. If accepted it would represent a new bird for Britain.

A Long-tailed Duck was present in the West Harbour at Hartlepool 2nd and 3rd. Bearded Tits bred at Dorman's Pool for the second consecutive year with young birds present early in the month.

A Great White Egret was at Haverton Hole on 4th. Return wader passage was underway with 63 Black-tailed Godwits on Saltholme Marsh on 5th and a Wood Sandpiper there the following day.

A Spoonbill was at Scaling Dam on 6th with another on the North Tees Marshes 11th to 13th.A Hobby was over Marske on 9th with a Red Kite over Nunthorpe on 11th.

Mandarins Ian Forrest

The first Pomarine Skuas of the autumn were off Old Nab on 13th with two birds involved along with a single Bonxie. 15 Little Terns at RSPB Saltholme on 16th were unusual this far inland. Black-tailed Godwits increased to 103 at Saltholme on 18th. A pair of Mandarin was at Cowpen Bewley WP from 19th. A Great White

Egret was at Scaling Dam on 20th and a single Black Tern was off Marske on 21st.

Caspian Tern, Saltholme Ian Forrest

A Caspian Tern at Saltholme Marsh from 23rd-25th was the second year running this species was recorded in Cleveland. Six Ruddy Shelducks appeared here on the latter date. This species may well be admitted to the British list in the near future.

Mediterranean Hull and chick, Saltholme Ian Forrest

Mediterranean Gull bred in Cleveland for the first time with a pair raising two chicks amongst the ever increasing Black-headed Gull colony at RSPB Salthome. A Yellow-legged Gull was at Hartlepool on 27th. Odd Roseate Terns began appearing at South Gare late in the month. Sea watching off Hartlepool on 31st saw two Long-tailed Skuas, and a single Sooty, and two Balearic Shearwaters.

AUGUST

The sea watching theme continued with a Cory's Shearwater at Cowbar on 1st and a Pomarine Skua off Marske with two off Hartlepool on 2nd. A Wood Sandpiper was at Greatham Saline Lagoon. Large numbers of Gannets were offshore at this time, presumably attracted by an ample supply of fish.

A Pectoral Sandpiper at Cowpen Marsh on 4th was relocated at Saltholme on 6th and remained until the following day. Two Wood Sandpipers and a Little Stint were also here at this time along with two Great White Egrets.

Small numbers of Arctic Skuas were regular at Seaton Snook along with one or two Roseate Terns. Two Hen Harriers were at Sleddale on 10th with another at South Gare on 12th. Another Pectoral Sandpiper and a Spotted Redshank were also at South Gare on this date.

Mid month was rather quiet but a Red Kite was in Sleddale on 15th, Great White Egrets increased to three around Saltholme and two Little Gulls were here on 16th.

The latter half of the month was dominated by a northerly airstream. Consequently sea watching proved attractive. Incredibly three Fea's type Petrels were seen with singles off Cowbar on 27th, Cowbar and Hartlepool on 30th and again off Hartlepool on 1st Sept. To put these records into some perspective there are only c80 previous records for Britain. Cory's Shearwaters were off Hartlepool on 18th and 20th; about ten Balearic Shearwaters were seen along with a few Sooty Shearwaters. Sabine's Gulls were off Hartlepool on 22nd and 25th, Cowbar on 26th and one lingered off Marske on 31st. One or two Long-tailed Skuas were also off the coastal watch points at this time.

Elsewhere two Ruddy Shelduck were around RSPB Saltholme, a Spoonbill lingered on the North Tees Marshes with another at Scaling Dam on 25th along with an Osprey. A Black Tern was at RSPB Saltholme 30th-31st and both Curlew Sandpiper and Little Stint were present here at this time.

SEPTEMBER

Sea watching was still to the fore for the first two days of the month. Cowbar saw a Storm Petrel on 1st along with three Sabine's Gulls and another Sabine's on 2nd Hartlepool saw a Balearic Shearwater, 3 Pomarine and two Long-tailed Skuas on 1st.

The month was noticeable for the lack of migrant passerines. Both Spotted and Pied Flycatchers were at Hartlepool on 1st and again on 5th along with a single Redstart and Whinchat but this was as good as it got.

Small numbers of Little Stint and Curlew Sandpiper were recorded early in the month mainly from Seaton Snook and Saltholme Pools. Two Garganey were on Cowpen Marsh on 3rd. Black Terns were also scarce with single birds at Seaton Snook, Bowesfield and RSPB Saltholme.

A Great White Egret was around the North Tees Marshes for much of the month and a Spoonbill was also present here for the first half of the month. Up to four Ruddy Shelduck were also around Saltholme at this time.

Two Hobbies were at Kirklevington on 6th and a Goshawk was here on 9th. Large numbers of Auks gathered in the Tees bay mid month with up to 3,000 present. These were mainly Guillemots but smaller numbers of Razorbill were also present.

Passage waders mid-month included a Wood Sandpiper on Greatham Saline Lagoon and ten Greenshank at Saltholme Marsh. Ospreys were over Seaton Snook on 18th and Scaling on 19th. The latter site saw a Red Kite and two Mandarins on 21st.

Bitterns were at Haverton Hole from 21st with up to three birds reported. Pink footed Geese passed south through Cleveland from 23rd with some large skeins seen mainly at the coast. The first Whooper Swans of the autumn were over Seaton Common on 25th with twelve birds being seen.

A Glossy Ibis flew south at Hartlepool on 26th. It called in briefly at Seaton Common before relocating to RSPB Saltholme where it was still present the following day. A Slavonian Grebe was at Bran Sands from 26th. A Red Kite was over Haverton Hole on 28th and a Cetti's Warbler was here also.

OCTOBER

Another or the same Spoonbill was present around the North Tees Marshes early in the month along with two Great White Egrets. The elusive Glossy Ibis also re appeared here on 3rd. It was finally seen flying over Seaton Snook the following day.

A Barred Warbler was at Hartlepool 5th and 6th and the autumn's only rare passerine was here on the latter date in the shape of an Arctic Warbler. It was the fifth county record. It remained elusive for two weeks but eventually performed well from 20th. Yellow-browed Warblers were much scarcer this autumn with only about six birds seen from 6th. Common migrants were equally as rare this autumn with the likes of Goldcrest and Blackcap being almost nonexistent.

A Lapland Bunting was at South Gare on 5th and a Ring Ouzel at Brotton on 6th. A late Wood Sandpiper was at Greatham Saline Lagoon from 7th and was joined by a Little Stint.

A probable American Golden Plover visited Saltholme briefly on 12th. The Barnacle Goose flock here reached 336 on 13th. A Slavonian Grebe was off North Gare. Whooper Swans continued to pass through the county mid month. A Black-throated Diver showed well in Jacksons Landing from 17th. Juvenile Common Terns were still at Saltholme until 18th, an exceptionally late date.

Sea watching on 21st saw a White billed Diver off Hartlepool and a Great Shearwater off Old Nab. A Slavonian Grebe was off Hartlepool on 22nd with presumably the same bird flying north the following day.

38 Little Gulls were off Marske on 25th. A Long-tailed Duck at Seal sands stayed into November. A Shore Lark at Marske from 28th stayed until the month end. A late Swallow was here on 31st.

Autumn 2021 will be remembered for the complete lack of fall conditions and the subsequent dearth of even common migrants. Only the sea watching salvaged something from what is normally the best period for scarce birds in Cleveland.

Herring Gulls don't just eat fish and chips

Mussels, Yum-yum Wikipedia

Despite what non-birdwatchers might think, breeding Herring Gull numbers are declining at many formerly important sites and the species has been on the Birds of Conservation Concern Red List since 2009. BTO has used GPS tracking to investigate the movements of Herring Gulls breeding at South Walney, Cumbria. Declines at this well-studied colony give breeding numbers that are currently approximately a tenth of those counted in the late 1980s, when the colony peaked at approximately 11,000 apparently occupied nests. Previous studies of Herring Gulls breeding at South Walney had shown the importance of landfill as a food source, but local tips have since closed, the most likely cause of the reduction in the colony's size.

75% of fixes from the GPS tags attached to the 24 individuals tracked came from intertidal and near-shore habitats, and in particular Mussel

beds, and when birds were away from the breeding colony, it is likely that birds were visiting these areas to feed, with none of the tracked birds foraged in urban habitats, so were not likely to come into conflict with humans in this environment, where they can be perceived as a pest.

The birds' specialisation on Mussel beds shows that managing shellfisheries in a way that meets the needs of both humans and Herring Gulls might not only mitigate further declines at this colony, but also avoid any nuisance to people.

Eric James

TITBITS

A selection of bird related news and facts, assembled by Eric James

Oddities in the Amazon

Climate change has altered conditions in the Amazon, or what's left of it, and has caused physical changes in resident birds. Compared with 1966, temperatures in the wet season are 2 °C higher, and in the dry season 1.65 °C higher; in addition, on average, rainfall in the wet season has increased by 1.3% and by 2.5% in the dry season. Birds lost body mass after the more extreme wet or dry seasons, which could be explained by the lower availability of insect prey. More difficult to explain is the observation that the wings have become longer, wingspan in a third of bird species having significantly increased in the last 40 years. Since body mass is a measure of the condition of a bird, it would be expected to fall when food is scarcer, but how do they grow longer wings? The other question is why would longer wings benefit them, since such wings are associated with migratory species, and birds in dense forest need shorter wings for increased manoeuvrability.

Oh No! four more Chaffinch species

The taxonomic splitters continue to forge ahead with their genome sequencing, creating new species as they go. But don't worry, it doesn't affect our Chaffinch, only those on the Atlantic islands. Analysis of genetic changes suggest that North African Chaffinches colonised the islands from via a strange route, starting with the Azores, then Madeira, and finally the Canaries. Each of these locations now has its own species : *Fringilla spodiogenys/Africana* in Africa, then *F. c. moreletti* in the Azores, then *F. maderensis* , and *F. canariensis.*

They could have gone further, but stopped with splitting *F. canariensis* into subspecies on various islands :*F.c. canariensis* on Tenerife and La Gomera, *F.c. palmae* on La Palma, *F. c. ambrosia* on El Hierro and *F.c. bakeri* on Gran Canaria. Personally, I was more than pleased to just find Blue Chaffinches on Tenerife.

Chaffinch speciation is not totally surprising. Isolated populations anywhere can diverge by evolving local dialects. There is one area between Oakdale Reservoirs and Osmotherley where the males have a variation on the huit call and a obviously different song from the normal one, a result of young birds learning their father's song and passing on any changes. On separate islands, gradual genetic drift could easily occur.

For world listers, these changes might mean a few 'armchair' ticks or else several more trips to the islands. There is one consolation : they can scrub any attempt of trying to get Ivory-billed Woodpecker as it has now been declared extinct.

Why are our Barn Owls so white?

Genetic analysis does more than just alter the world list of bird species, it can give surprising answers to some questions. Barn Owls are a widespread species with many forms. In Europe, they follow a general pattern: southern areas are occupied by pale owls while darker birds dominate in the north. However, Barn Owls in the UK and Ireland are particularly white, and a recent genetic analysis explains why.

The researchers analysed DNA from 147 Barn Owls across six European populations. They concentrated on a gene called MC1R, which influences feather pigmentation in the owls, along with 22 other genes that have been linked to feather colour.

They were expecting to find evidence that owls from Ireland and the UK had dark-feathered ancestors and then underwent some strong selection for pale feathers to adapt to local conditions. One adaptation is that British birds hunt during the day, unlike Continental birds.

The genetics showed that the British owls are closely related to those in Portugal. This means there must have been a land corridor round the Bay of Biscay and across to England. This contradicts the current theory that says most animals reached Britain after the Ice Age by crossing from Belgium to southern England via Doggerland, a marshy land bridge now submerged below the North Sea.

Lesser Black-backed Gulls and wind farms

Lesser Black-backed Gulls, Bowesfield – no wind turbines here
Eric James

In the previous Newsletter, I described potential problems from wind farms for Shelducks as they migrate across the North Sea to their moulting grounds. Now GPS trackers are showing that Lesser Black-backed Gulls might be at risk throughout the entire year.

Wind turbines both on and offshore are becoming increasingly numerous as governments around the world try to reduce carbon emissions.

BTO researchers fitted state-of-the-art GPS tags to gulls breeding at three of the larger UK colonies in order to track their movements during the annual cycle. By combining the data on flight speed and height from the tags with information on wind turbine locations they were able to establish how vulnerable this species might be to collisions. The results showed that Lesser Black-backed Gulls are vulnerable during the breeding season, when birds are limited to feeding in areas close to their colonies, many of which are also in the vicinity of wind farms. Their problems don't end there, as they were also found to be at risk once the breeding season is over and they disperse south towards their wintering areas off Spain, Portugal and north Africa. Galicia in northern Spain is where the birds on migration are in serious danger of collision since this region contains a high density of wind turbines, and is an important stop over point for the Lesser Black-backed Gulls as well as many other migratory species.

Further south, many Lesser Black-backed Gulls that winter by Lisbon and Malaga are at risk since this region contains a high density of wind turbines, making the gulls and other migratory species vulnerable to collisions.

No doubt many mother ducks with broods of ducklings will not be upset by fewer Lesser Black-back Gulls

So that's why Blue Tits can defeat Willow Tits

If you read my piece on Willow Tits in the previous Newsletter, I hope you might remember that I wondered how Blue Tits could evict Willow Tits from the nest hole they had excavated. The answer, ironically, was in the same edition's Tit-bits which described the amount of food Blue Tits obtained from garden feeders. At the end of winter, bolder species that entered gardens to feed were fitter and in better condition at the start of the breeding season than timid species that have had to depend on finding any natural food. This was reported on the R4 programme 'Gardeners' Question Time' when Willow Tits were named specifically as an example of a species that loses out.

All this demonstrates the tangled web of ecology, where such an innocent activity as putting out food for birds can have unexpected consequences in completely different areas.

Blue Tit building up its strength, Scaling Dam Eric James

Unexpected feeding activities in the Atlantic

As mentioned in a previous Tit-bit, Kittiwakes spend the winter in the Atlantic. While there, they descend on any convenient iceberg, not just for a rest but also in the hope that part of the iceberg might fall off and cause churning of the sea, and consequently bringing up planktonic food

Storm Petrels also have an ingenious method of opportunistic feeding. They keep downwind of killer whales to feed on any fatty material associated with the blow.

Homes for Swifts

An email from Alistair McLee had the following attachment wgich describes the problems with the lack of nest sites experienced by Swifts and how they might be solved :-

SWIFT BREEDING LOCATIONS IN BOROUGH OF HARTLEPOOL

The swift has recently achieved the dubious status of graduating from the Orange Category of Species of Concern to that of Red – in short, the rate of decline in the breeding population has become even more severe. One of the prime reasons for this is the loss of breeding cavities in buildings. There are 3 main causes for this – demolition of the structures themselves; repair and modern improvement to existing nesting sites and the techniques and materials used in new buildings.

The organisation Swift Conservation, champions the cause of this iconic species throughout the UK and lobbies for the installation of nest boxes where appropriate. A particularly enduring, inconspicuous and easily installed nest cavity is a specially designed "swift brick" which can be installed during the construction process. Part of the process of developers' planning application is to provide biodiversity mitigation and enhancement measures, and it is here that the Hartlepool Planning Office and club members can play a role.

The Swift is notoriously conservative about its choice of nest hole and prefers to breed in colonies, and so the likelihood of a new nest site being adopted is greatly improved by its proximity to an active colony. The ideal location is a new housing or commercial development proposed near an existing colony.

It is here members can be important by applying their field skills and local knowledge to find suitable areas. The best clues to finding such "sweet spots" are parties for birds flying close together, screaming excitedly, as they fly parallel to buildings and sometimes dart up to a tiny cavity and brush it with a wingtip and call. These are nonbreeding birds inspecting nest holes for occupying pairs and checking for vacant cavities. (Established breeding pairs are very inconspicuous and get on with the business in the short summer window available). Sometimes there are clues when flocks merely circle over buildings before winding themselves up for another screaming session.

The club is keen to hear of such locations. You may already be aware of them, but if not, keep eyes and ears open in the calm mornings and evenings of summer. If you know of any in the borough, let me know and I shall liaise with the H B C Ecology Officer to ensure that future building developments in that proximity are modified with swift bricks as part of the planning permission.

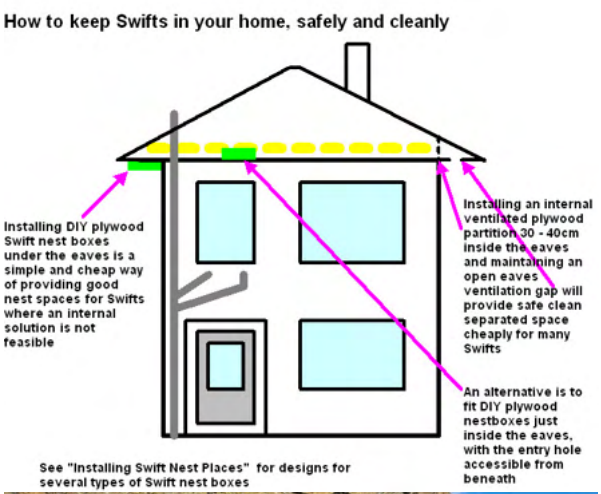
Further reading

" swift-conservation.org/news.htm

Ali McLee tel 01642 787305

If you use the link above, there is a website that has advice and information on Swifts and nest boxes. I was pleased to see that several of the recommended books are already on my shelves. Nest boxes include these below

There is also advice on allowing Swifts to breed in houses



Nest bricks in a wall

Breeding pair in brick nest

Swift leaving brick nest

BTO award for local ornithologists

In Britain, there has been a long tradition of people concentrating their efforts on a single species or location.

The earliest and probably the most famous was Gilbert White, Curate of the parish of Selborne who studied in great depth all the aspects of Natural History in his parish and two neighbouring parishes. Rather later were the Alexander brothers, Wilfred and Horace, who, each June, when egg collectors were engaged in their nefarious activities, investigated birds' breeding territories. David Lack studied the Robin and the Swift, and more recently, Tim Birkhead made a long-term study of the Guillemots on Skomer Island, as well as the intricacies of avian reproduction (there's a lot more to the birds and the bees than you might imagine!). James Alder compiled a great deal of data on Dippers (and gave a presentation at a Club evening meeting), but it is unfortunate that he never kept his promise to his publisher to write up his findings in a book; a book on the Dipper has later written by Stephanie Tyler and Steve Ormerod. And of course, we mustn't forget Denis Summers-Smith and his life-time study of sparrows and his several books on the subject

Following this tradition, Vic Fairbrother and Ken Hutchinson have investigated the Ring Ouzels in Rosedale for over twenty years, publishing a book on their findings earlier this year. Their efforts have been rewarded with the presentation of the BTO Marsh award; the BTO press release was as follows:-

Two Yorkshire birdwatchers have been honoured at the British Trust for Ornithology's (BTO) annual awards ceremony and received the prestigious Marsh Award for Local Ornithology at a glittering event held at the Mall Gallery in London.

Ken Hutchinson and Vic Fairbrother were given the award in recognition of their twenty-plus year study of Ring Ouzels on the North York Moors. During this time Ken and Vic have amassed a huge dataset on this red-listed bird of conservation concern and the rigour of their fieldwork and record-keeping was deemed to be of sufficiently high calibre to be used as a reference data-set for the last national Ring Ouzel Survey in 2012.

Their long-term study site at Rosedale in Yorkshire has yielded fascinating insights into the lives of Ring Ouzels, furthering our understanding of a previously little-studied species. In 2020 Vic and Ken published a book 'The Ring Ouzel: A view from the North York Moors', which showcased their incredible field skills and observations, and is now a new touchstone for Ring Ouzel conservation in the UK.

James Anderson, nominating Ken and Vic for the award, said, "I believe that the Marsh Award for Local Ornithology is a fitting tribute to the authors' exemplary work and it would also inspire other fieldworkers to adopt this

sort of approach; our knowledge for whichever chosen species would be so much richer for it."

Ken and Vic receiving the award, said, "We have been delighted by the response to The Ring Ouzel: A View from the North York Moors but feel extremely humble to receive this prestigious Marsh Award for Local Ornithology The success of our study would not have been possible without the support and encouragement of many people, in particular Chris Rollie, Innes Sim and all the members of the UK Ring Ouzel Study Group.

The natural world around us is under ever increasing pressure and we would like to dedicate this award to the many other people engaged in fieldwork to promote greater understanding and protection of the life-enhancing wildlife around us. We hope that the publication of our study inspires other people to embark on a single species study. We cannot recommend it highly enough and only wish that we had started sooner."

The Marsh Award for Local Ornithology is awarded to a bird club or group that publishes a book, completes a study or conducts any other exceptional activity in the preceding calendar year that advances knowledge about birds.

The award was presented by Professor Juliet Vickery, CEO of the BTO, and Charles Micklewright, Marsh Christian Trust Trustee, at the Society of Wildlife Artists (SWLA) Natural Eye exhibition in the Mall Galleries, London.

The Marsh Awards are supported by the Marsh Christian Trust and presented by the BTO

Clever and cheating birds

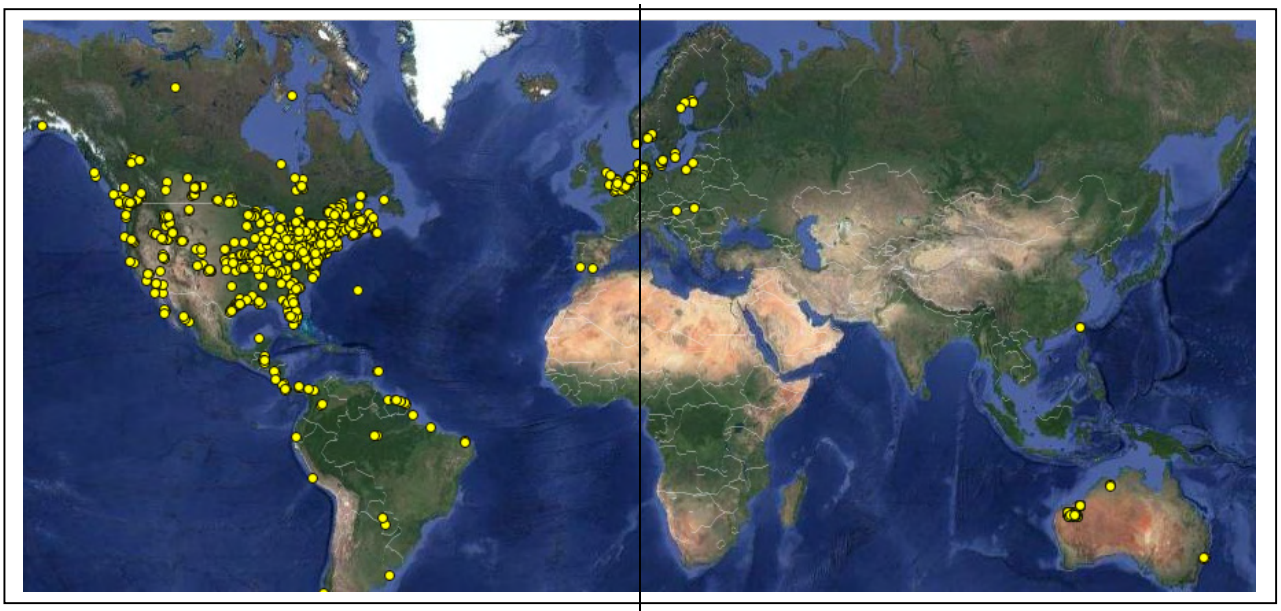
Birds have remarkable hearing, not necessarily in sensitivity to very quiet sounds but in discerning small details in the structure of a sound, which are, completely beyond the capacity of our sluggishly responding ears.

The obvious mimics are Corvids and parrots, both of which are noted for intelligence, though with different personalities, Corvids being wary of novelty while parrots eagerly embrace it. This is noticed by researchers investigating bird behaviour : a Raven will be nervous if a new person arrives while a Kea (New Zealand parrot) will stop what it's doing and come over to play. Two Swedish investigators testing Raven abilities were surprised by one bird they had befriended. Having set up an experimental device, the bird would fly down, casually perform the test perfectly and fly off. One of the investigators said, "In the ethics section of grant applications, it's hard to explain."

Accurate mimicry is highly developed in drongos (tropical passerines found in Africa and Australia) who can have repertoires of unto 45 alarm calls of other species. Fork-tailed Drongos in the Kalahari desert use these alarm calls, to make the victim panic and leave any food it was eating, which is then taken by the drongo. Some of the birds obtain nearly a quarter of their daily calorie intake from this trick. Species that are victims include pied babblers and meercats. In tests, if the victim did not respond to mimicked false alarm call, the drongo would switch to another species to whose calls the victim responds .

Drongo

Another sly behaviour is to follow groups of babblers and give genuine alarm calls when a predator is present and build up their trust.

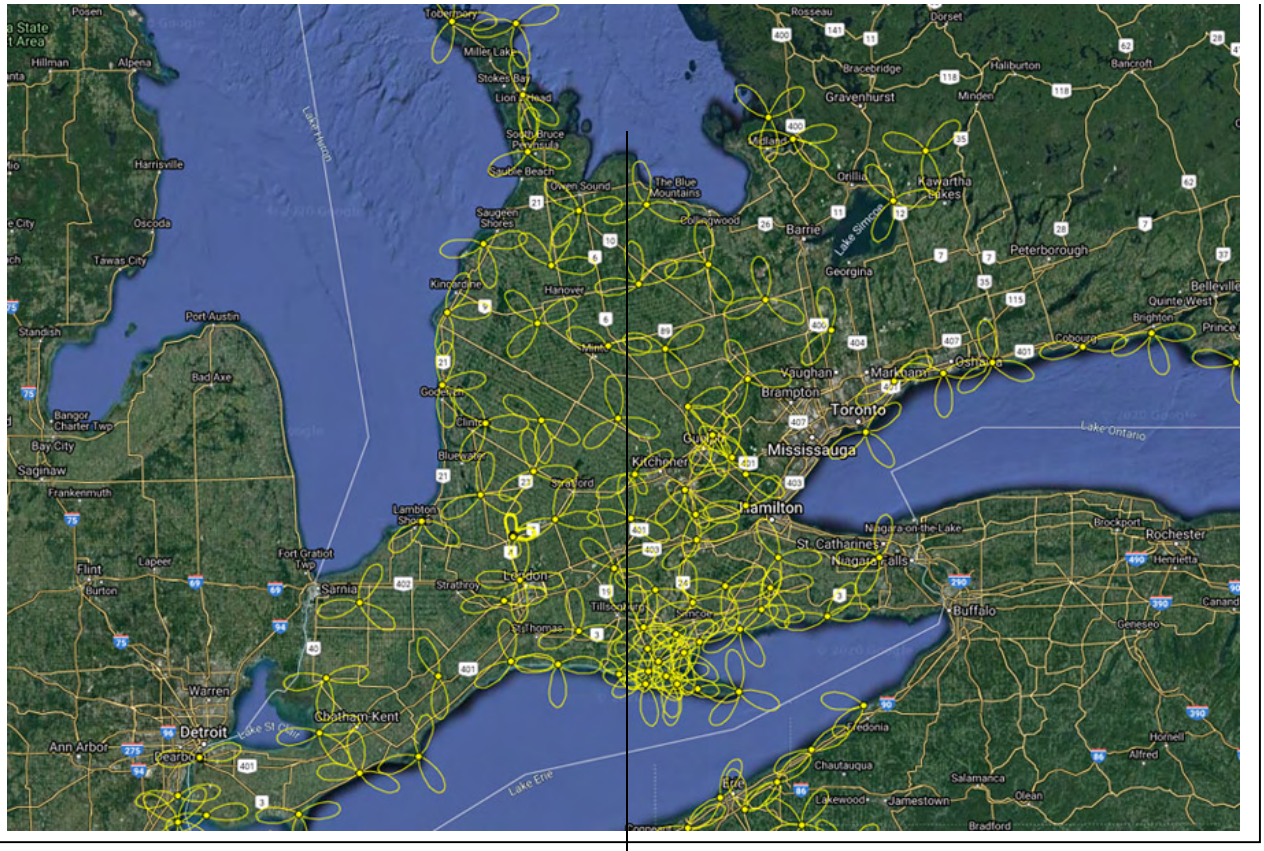


The The Motus scheme continues to expand

The Motus tracking scheme is expanding, though there is still a concentration in eastern North America. Looking at Northwest Europe shows how far we are behind

The Netherlands and Denmark have good coverage on the North Sea coast, but there is little corresponding coverage in England except for the clump in East Anglia. Even after much Googling, I cannot get a list of English sites, though the site on the Humber is presumably Spurn. Google searches list sites that refer to organisations investigating the movements of Yellow-browed Warblers. As mentioned previously, it is not just the larger animals – birds and bats – that are tracked, But also smaller creatures :-

For use with such small animals, geolocators must be very light and the the smallest and lightest available weigh only 0.03g. Although small and made up of very simple technology, they manage to comprise a battery, light sensor, clock and a memory chip. They record light levels every few minutes and by plotting these against time, gives the times of local dawn and dusk, and hence the day length which is related to latitude. The midpoint between dawn and dusk gives solar midday, which gives the longitude since it changes by an hour for every 15 degrees. Combining the longitude and latitude, provides an estimate of its location. Although accuracy is dependent on the extent to which shading by foliage, clouds and, in the case of birds, feathers can affect the tag light records; if these are accounted for, errors rarely exceed 150 km. These tags have uncovered the migrations of long-distance migrants such as Swifts. For birds



starting off on a long journey it might be possible to derive the exact day of departure. Geolocators can also give unexpected benefits. If tagged birds experience sudden large fluctuations in light and dark during the day, it might indicate an activity such as incubation, since whenever the female leaves the nest, she is suddenly exposed to a spike in light which is logged on the tag. In one case, tags on waders caught by researchers in Australia have showed that details of breeding can be inferred in those birds which breed in the most remote areas of the world, all by the changing patterns of light and dark. The smallest devices can only download the stored data when the animal is recaptured. But bigger devices on larger animals can provide rapid positioning by using GPS, and immediate access to data by having it sent via communication or mobile phone satellites.

There is the potential of obtaining enormous insight into migration, especially if Europe could match North America in detector installation. The above map shows the concentration in the southern part of Ontario and Great Lakes. Clearly, no tagged bird will pass Point Pelee without being logged, probably several times, and possibly whenjust moving between trees. The detector stations have aerials, typically two or three as shown by the detection areas on the Ontario map. So how about a few more along the Northeast coast north of Spurn?

Setting up a Motus station. Photo by: Tianna Burke.

So that's what was happening on the front page

Woke warriors turn on ornithology

First it was statues, now it is bird names, at least those that commemorate white men, which most do, and especially those with opinions that were current at the time but have since been judged as undesirable. This mostly affects north America where there are 142 species with honorary names. All this could be embarrassing for the conservation organisation, The Audubon Society, since John James Audubon who, although being the illegitimate son of a slave, was also a slave owner and resisted British efforts to abolish slavery in the West Indies. If this wasn't bad enough, he fraudulently claimed a new eagle species in his book, *The Birds of America.*

Over here, we can be excused for feeling smug. The Society for the Protection of Birds was founded by women and initially had only women members. It was a combination of The Plumage League' founded by Emily Williamson at her house in Didsbury, Manchester, as a protest group campaigning against the use of Great Crested Grebe and Kittiwake skins and feathers in so-called fur clothing. The SPB was founded in 1891 when The Plumage League amalgamated with the group with the twee name of 'The Fur, Fin and Feather Folk', founded in Croydon by Eliza Phillips, Etta Lemon, Catherine Hall, Hannah Poland and others.

A statue of Emily Williamson is due to be erected in Didsbury to celebrate the centenary of the passing of the Plumage Act which stopped the import of the plumage of exotic species.

Our birds with names include Eleanor and her falcon. She was Eleanor of Arborea, Queen or Lady-Judge and national heroine of Sardinia, who in 1392, became an early proponent of bird conservation, specifically for a law to protect hawk and falcon nests from illegal hunters.

In addition, we have Lady Amherst and her pheasant. Since she was married to William Pitt , 1st Earl Amherst, her title should really be Countess, but Countess Amherst's Pheasant is a bit of a mouthful.

She was a naturalist and botanist who lived in India, where the Earl was Governor-General. She identified several species which were named after her, including of course the pheasant and also a tree, (Amherstia nobilis), known as the Pride of Burma, a member of the pea family with large, showy flowers. We should be safe with the Countess unless the extreme woke wing discover her husband's role in colonialism.

Peter Simon Pallas, not everyone's image of an intrepid explorer

We are definitely safe with Peter Simon Pallas. He was born in Germany, but was invited by Catherine II of Russia to become a professor at the St Petersburg Academy of Sciences, and made extensive expeditions in the Russian Empire, collecting specimens of new species for the Academy, and reaching as far east as Lake Baikal. All very far from black slaves. His name appears in the common names of many creatures, those of interest to us being leaf warbler, cormorant, fish-eagle, gull, sandgrouse, rosefinch, and grasshopper warbler; but also viper, squirrel, cat, and long-tongued and tube-nosed bats. If that's not enough, he was shown a 680-kg lump of

metal that had been found near Krasnoyarsk. Pallas arranged for it to be transported to St Petersburg. where subsequent analysis of the metal showed it to be a new type of stony-iron meteorite which was given the name pallasite.

A statue in Bad Windsheim (his home town) commemorating Georg Wilhelm Steller Lisa-Maria Bornemann

Georg Wilhelm Steller also explored the cold far eastern areas of the Russian Empire. He was on only one expedition, in two ships led by Captain Bering, to see if it were possible to reach America from Siberia, which is perfectly obvious to us now, but it wasn't then. Steller took the opportunity to explore the Kamchatka Peninsula, where he organised a school and was sympathetic to the Kamchatkans, resulting in later accusations of fomenting rebellion.

The voyage across to Alaska was not a great success. Bering wasted time by insisting on first sailing east, while Steller, studying the sea currents and flotsam, said they should go northeast. They landed on Kayak Island where Steller was allowed only ten hours to study the island. On the return journey, with many of the crew ill with scurvy, there were only 12 fit men remaining to sail the ship, they were wrecked on what was later named Bering Island. Steller and his assistant had collected berries and leaves that would have treated scurvy, but the crew and especially the officers refused them. The survivors camped on the island and hunted mammals and the unlucky local cormorant for food. It was fortunate that Steller had discovered a jay which he realised was related to the Blue Jay (it is in fact a subspecies), and hence showed that Alaska was in deed part of North America. Steller's name was part of the common names of the species he had discovered, consisting of :

Eider
Jay
Sea eagle
Cormorant
Short-tailed albatross
Sea cow
Sea lion
Sculpin (it's a fish)
Secondary School in Anchorage, Alaska

Having Steller's in the name of a species is not a good sign, more a kiss of death. The sea cow was hunted to extinction 27 years after its discovery. The cormorant was large, weighing 12–14lb, and almost flightless, becoming easy prey for the ship-wrecked sailors, one bird being enough for three starving men. It survived for just over a hundred years before extinction. The eider and sea-eagle are currently vulnerable; the sea lion endangered.

His name also appears the specific names of a mollusc, a plant and one plant genus which contains a single species, *Stellera chamaejasme*

Gumboot chiton (*Cryptochiton stelleri*)

No, it's not a giant Yorkshire Pudding, it's the underside of the molusc, Gumboot Chiton Professor Douglas Eernisse

Hoary mugwort (*Artemisia stelleriana*)

Hoary mugwort J.C.Schou

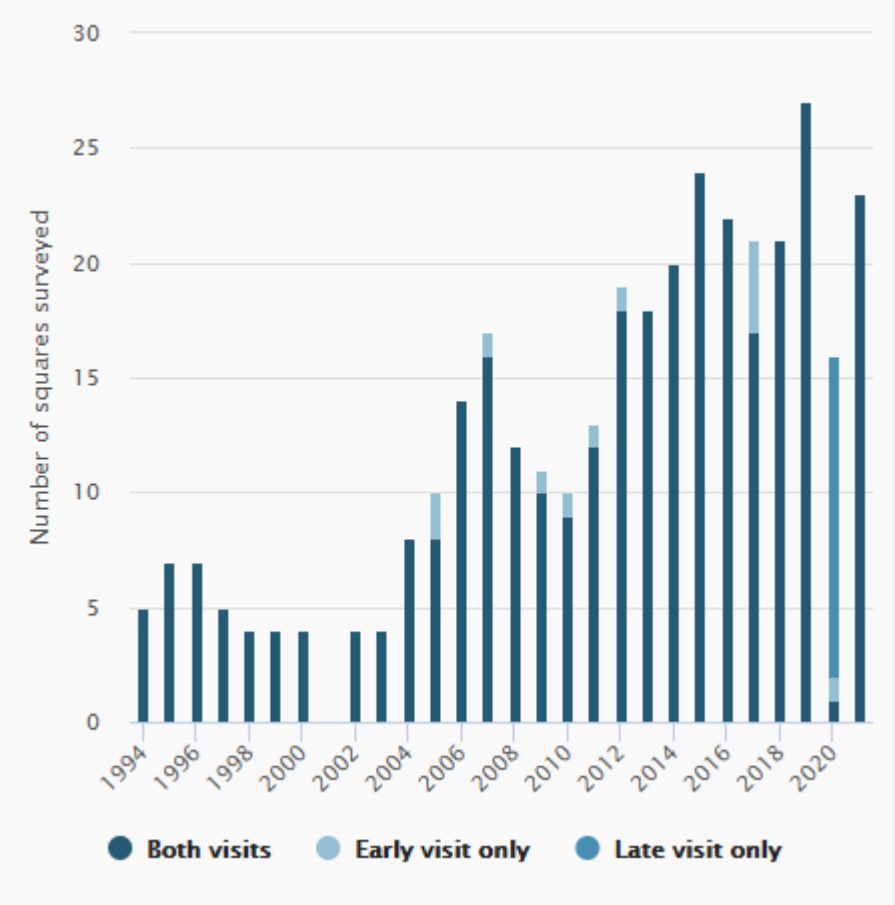
Stellera chamaejasme S.Mukherjee

Eric James

BTO News November 2021

Breeding Birds Survey and Waterways Breeding Birds Survey

In total, 97% of both early and late season BBS visits were successfully undertaken and results submitted, along with 100% of early and late season WBBS visits. The graph below shows how this level of coverage within the Cleveland BTO area compares with recent years. While this season was an improvement on the pandemic-affected previous one, coverage fell slightly short of that achieved in 2019. As always, many thanks to all those who participated in this vital long-running project.



The following table lists the most numerous species recorded by BBS in Cleveland in 2021:

Species	Individuals	Squares	Percentage of all squares surveyed
Woodpigeon	770	23	100%
Starling	422	18	78%
House Sparrow	344	17	74%
Blackbird	311	21	91%
Jackdaw	259	17	74%
Carrion Crow	184	23	100%
Chaffinch	175	22	96%
Fieldfare	166	2	9%
Wren	163	21	91%
Goldfinch	151	20	87%

The most widespread species recorded by BBS in Cleveland during 2021 were as follows:

Species	Squares	Percentage of all squares surveyed	Individuals
Woodpigeon	23	100%	770
Carrion Crow	23	100%	184
Chaffinch	22	96%	175
Robin	22	96%	118
Blackbird	21	91%	311
Wren	21	91%	163
Blue Tit	21	91%	114
Song Thrush	21	91%	74
Goldfinch	20	87%	151
Skylark	20	87%	83

Scarcer species recorded included Barn Owl, Green Woodpecker, Spotted Flycatcher, Yellow Wagtail and Lesser Redpoll, each of which were found in single squares.
Please do consider taking part in the Breeding Bird Survey. Most long-term volunteers find getting to know the breeding bird communities of a single 1km square a fascinating and rewarding experience. Only two sessions per 1km square are required (plus an additional short reconnaissance visit to record habitat) each taking no more than two hours. The following squares are currently available to allocate for 2022.

NZ3114	Lingfield, Darlington
NZ3717	Longnewton
NZ6321	New Marske
NZ6811	Moorsholm Moor
NZ7016	Liverton
NZ7017	Liverton Mines

All BBS squares are valuable to the survey and it would be great to have full coverage. Full details are on the BTO website https://www.bto.org/our-science/projects/bbs where you can register. Please contact me on 07510 996977 or mikelaquila@hotmail.com if you think you can help.

Breeding Waders of Wet Meadows (BWWM) Survey 2021

Nationally, 2238 individual sites were covered, consisting of 518 sites with Lapwing Plots, 471 with agri-environment management, and a further 1249 BWWM sites which had been covered in 1982 and/or 2002. Here in Cleveland 92% of sites were covered, which compares favourably with the national coverage rate of 55%. Analysis is now underway and summary results are anticipated later in the winter.

Mike Leakey, BTO Regional Representative for Cleveland

WETLAND BIRD SURVEY TEESMOUTH AUTUMN 2021 SUMMARY

	July 18	August 22	September 19	October 17
Little Grebe	12	52	56	46
Great Crested Grebe	32	24	19	12
Cormorant	136	201*	260*	330*
Little Egret	59**	35*	60**	28*
Grey Heron	61	54	44	37
Mute Swan	70	67	57	64
Greylag Goose	189	754	675	423
Shelduck	192	75	77	205
Wigeon	13	65	991	1901
Gadwall	202	523**	421**	379**
Teal	38	696	1437*	1399*
Mallard	279	411	436	280
Pintail	0	1	11	37
Shoveler	8	115*	209**	158*
Pochard	44	26	11	37
Tufted Duck	121	131	68	59
Coot	460	578	469	522
Oystercatcher	237	801	900	304
Avocet	42*	12	6	2
Ringed Plover	31	274*	67	0
Golden Plover	1	4	126	481
Grey Plover	16	16	22	77
Lapwing	821	1139	2003	2297
Knot	18	38	38	82
Sanderling	65	208**	20	165**
Little Stint	0	0	1	0
Curlew Sandpiper	0	0	0	0
Purple Sandpiper	0	0	0	0
Dunlin	223	610	678	394
Ruff	2	20**	6*	3
Snipe	1	50	31	42
Black-tailed Godwit	238*	56	29	52
Bar-tailed Godwit	7	19	49	157
Whimbrel	9	4	2	1
Curlew	613	530	498	392
Spotted Redshank	0	4	1	2
Redshank	262	402	609*	756*
Greenshank	3*	20**	7**	4*
Green Sandpiper	0	3	1	1
Common Sandpiper	5	5	0	0
Turnstone	118	17	47	64
Sandwich Tern	525	318	161	0
Common Tern	518	523	73	3
Arctic Tern	0	0	0	0
Little Tern	176	9	0	0

Underlined counts indicate Autumn 2021 maxima

* Denotes count of >50% of national importance

** Denotes count of national importance

*** Denotes count of international importance

N.B. 'Teesmouth' includes Hartlepool Bay & the whole of the RSPB Saltholme Reserve.

WETLAND BIRD SURVEY - AUTUMN 2021 SUMMARY

A good level of cover was achieved with 156 of the scheduled 172 sector counts completed over the four months.

Over this series of counts the Tees Estuary and Hartlepool Bay recording area was nationally important for Little Egret (60, September), Gadwall (523, August), Shoveler (209, September), Sanderling (208, August), Ruff (20, August) and Greenshank (20, August).

Black-tailed Godwit (238, July) and Little Tern (176, July) both set new autumn maxima records utilising WeBS data which goes back to 1988. Wigeon (1901, October) and Teal (1437, September) recorded their second highest autumn maxima totals.

Other interesting records during the autumn included, 53 Whooper Swan (across Tees Estuary, October), 350 Pink-footed Geese (across Tees Estuary, October), 11 Pale-bellied Brent Geese (Peninsula West, September), 1 Bittern (Haverton Hole, October), 2 Great White Egret (1 Haverton Hole and 1 Cowpen Marsh, October), 1 Spoonbill (Saltholme West, August and Saltern Wetlands, September) and 1 Black Tern (North Gare Sands, September).

Adam Jones
WeBS Local Organizer
November 2021

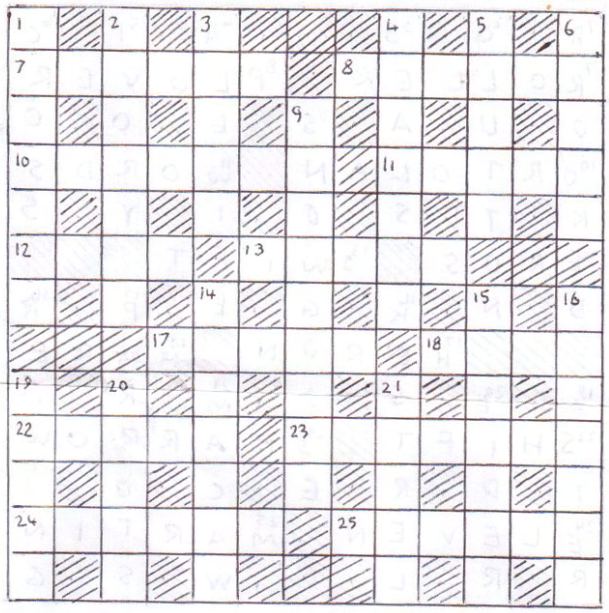
CROSSWORDS BY BILL IRVING

SOLUTION TO NO.5

SOLUTION No 5

1P	O	2L	E	C	A	3T	■	4T	R	5E	E	6S
A	■	O	■	■	■	A	■	W	■	G	■	E
7T	I	C	K	■	8S	P	R	I	N	G	E	R
C	■	H	■	9P	■	I	■	T	■	S	■	I
10H	E	N	H	A	R	R	I	E	R	■	■	E
■	■	E	■	R	■	S	■	■	■	11C	■	M
12D	E	S	E	R	T	■	13I	14G	U	A	N	A
E	■	S	■	■	■	15S	■	A	■	C	■	■
A	■	■	16F	17L	Y	C	A	T	C	H	E	18R
D	■	19E	■	I	■	E	■	E	■	A	■	O
20S	T	A	R	L	I	N	G	■	21A	L	S	O
E	■	S	■	A	■	I	■	■	■	O	■	S
22A	N	T	I	C	■	23C	O	A	L	T	I	T

BILL IRVING 01642-898607



N°6

CLUES ACROSS

7 Bird that could help maintaining lawn in good condition? (6)
8 Lapwing showing passion in public relations (6)
10 Bunting seen in moor to land safely (7)
11 There are 25 in this puzzle (5)
12 God seen in Kielder osprey hunt (4)
13 Little one seen in 2018? (5)
17 Large bird sees role model on the point (5)
18 See Rhea panic for mammal (4)
22 Move your spell of work? (5)
23 Small bird sees pig take in salmon (7)
24 Number in kestrel evening flight (6)
25 Summer visitor will spoil metal (6)

CLUES DOWN

1 Put up with running water? (7)
2 Greedy wolverine? (7)
3 Amphibeans have a number in oceans (5)
4 Fish sees beer for your better half (7)
5 Gull is colour of tusk? (5)
6 Upset about beak on finch? (5)
9 So we goons scatter for rare wildfowl (4,5)
14 It's often seen hovering about (7)
15 Birds or parts ruffled (7)
16 We'd gone wrong in ring for thrush (7)
19 Plant rates badly (5)
20 Duck found in reed I disturb (5)
21 Parrot hid in tarmac away cross town (5)

TEESMOUTH BIRD CLUB

Subscriptions for 2022 are due 1 January 2022. **You can now pay your subscription by PayPal via the club website.**

Subscription rates for 2022 are:

Full	£12.00
Family	£16.00
Junior	£5.00
Senior Citizen	£12.00

Please forward your cheque made payable to Teesmouth Bird Club to Chris Sharp, 6 Maritime Avenue, Hartlepool, TS24 0XF

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