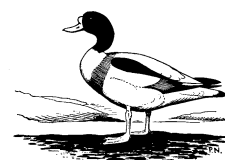


Teesmouth Bird Club Newsletter

April 2023 (No.84)



Reg.Charity No.508850

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The Newsletter is published three times a year

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Material for inclusion always welcome; email to tbc.projects@hotmail.co.uk



So Long and thanks for all the seed
The fortunes of Collared Doves

See page 6
Eric James

MONTHLY SUMMARIES

Chris Sharp reviews the birding highlights of the winter period.

. NOVEMBER

Following the two seen at Redcar in late October another Pallid Swift was at Hartlepool on 1st. Herds of Whooper Swans were seen on most days in the early part of the month with 43 past Hartlepool on 3rd the highest count. A Spoonbill was on Saltholme Pools on 2nd.



Spoonbill Saltholme

Ian Forrest

A Cattle Egret on Port Clarence Flood on 2nd was not reported again until 12th but remained on the North Tees Marshes from then until the end of the month.



Cattle Egret Saltholme

Dave Brown



Cattle Egret

'BobH'



Egyptian Geese, Holme Fleet

Ian Forrest

A Red-necked Grebe was off Marske on 3rd and the long staying six Egyptian Geese were along the Seal Sands road. Late Tern sightings off Marske saw a Sandwich on 3rd, an Arctic on 9th and a Common on 12th. A Bittern was at Haverton Hole on 4th and a Little Stint was at Dormans Pool. Both Black-throated and Great Northern Divers were off Marske on 5th.

A Hen Harrier flew through Boulby on 5th. A Raven was at Sleddale on 6th. This species is reported more often now on the moors at the southern edge of the county. A Slavonian Grebe was on Bran Sands on 6th. Both Long-eared Owl and Cetti's Warbler were present at Haverton Hole on 8th. The sea off Redcar held both Long-tailed Duck and up to seven Velvet Scoters. These remained to winter.



Velvet Scoter, Seaton

EmmaP



Long-eared Owl, Haverton Hole

Matthew Scarborough



Long-tailed Duck, Greenabella

AlfieBirder



Scaup, Saltholme

Ian Forrest

A Late Swallow was at Seaton on 11th. A Scaup was at RSPB Saltholme on 13th and a Black Guillemot was on the sea off Skinningrove. A single Waxwing at Skelton on 14th was the first of the autumn. As in recent winters it was to prove another poor year for this eruptive species. A Red-necked Grebe was off Redcar on 14th. Black Redstarts were at Redcar on 15th and Hartlepool on 16th.



White-fronted Goose, Cowpen Bewley

Ian Forrest

Favourable winds saw some interesting seabirds from 16th. Two Little Auks were off Marske on this date with a Black Guillemot and a Slavonian

Grebe at South Gare. A late Sabine's Gull showed well here the following day and 147 Little Gulls were logged off Redcar. Another late Swallow was here on 18th and four White-fronted Geese were on Port Clarence Flood. 51 Little Auks were off Hartlepool on 19th along with four Scaup and a Caspian Gull. Brief views of a "Turtle" Dove were obtained at South Gare on this date. The bird was photographed and opinions were divided as to whether it was a Turtle Dove or the much rarer Oriental Turtle Dove



Long-tailed Duck, Fish Quay

Keith Davison

A Black-throated Diver on Seal Sands on 20th lingered until 24th. Two Grey Phalaropes showed well off South Gare on 21st. Late migrants on 22nd included six Waxwings at Brotton, a Black Redstart at South Gare and a Firecrest at Skinningrove. A large Scoter flock off Redcar on 25th included 17 Velvets. A Long-tailed Duck was also here and one or two were present throughout the winter.

Highlight of the winter was the drake King Eider which was present off Redcar from 27th and remained into February. It associated with the Eider flock off here but was often tricky to see as it was usually distant and on a rough sea. A Glossy Ibis flew over the Long Drag on this date. A Black-necked Grebe was off Redcar for a few days from 29th. Unlike the King Eider it was just offshore.



Black-necked Grebe, Redcar

Brian Martin

The last two days of the month saw further herds of Whooper Swans passing through with 57 along the Seal Sands road being the largest. The six Egyptian Geese were still around Cowpen as well.

DECEMBER



Whooper Swans, Lockwood Beck

Paul Wearne Forster

Fifteen Whooper Swans were on Dorman's Pool on 1st. The King Eider made a fleeting visit to Hartlepool harbour on 2nd before returning to Redcar. Last month's Glossy Ibis was seen again at RSPB Saltholme on 3rd but was not reported subsequently. A Spoonbill remained on the North Tees Marshes throughout the month and the Cattle Egret was last reported on 19th.

Two Ruddy Shelducks were around Cowpen Marsh from 4th. Single Little Auks were off South Gare on 3rd, Hartlepool on 4th and Redcar on 6th. Up to 25 Waxwings were at Coulby Newham from 5th. A second Spoonbill was reported from Greatham Creek on 5th.

A Bonaparte's Gull flew past Hartlepool headland on 10th, only seen by one lucky observer. A Great Northern Diver and four Pale-bellied Brent Geese were on Seal Sands on 10th. A Long-tailed Duck in Hartlepool fish quay from 11th remained into February. A Jack Snipe was at South Gare on 12th with a Black Redstart at nearby Redcar.



Ruddy Shelducks, Cowpen Marsh

Ian Forrest



Waxwing, Coulby Newham

Paul Wearne Forster



Great Northern Diver, Headland

Brian Martin

A Scaup on Seal Sands 15th-16th, a Waxwing at Brotton on 15th and Great Northern Divers at Hartlepool and Seal Sands on 15th were the only new arrivals of note mid-month. As the weather turned colder four White-fronted Geese were at Cowpen Bewley on 17th. 25 Barnacle Geese on Tidal Pool on 17th might have been "wild" birds rather than the usual North Yorkshire birds. A further 15 flew past Skinningrove the following day.



Twite, Seaton Snook

Les Williams

A Hen Harrier flew through Hummersea on 20th. Good numbers of Twite were at Seaton Snook with up to 180 seen. In contrast it was a poor winter for Snow Buntings. None were present on the north side of the river and numbers at South Gare only reached 18.



Snow Bunting, South Gare

Joe Fryer



White-fronted Geese, Tank Farm

Dave Eddy

Up to 18 White-fronted Geese were around Greatham Creek from 22nd into 2023. Numbers of Pink-footed Geese in the area also increased in the latter days of the month peaking at 1,480 at Cowpen Bewley on 31st. Two Tundra Bean Geese were at Cowpen Bewley on 27th. A Water Pipit at Dorman's Pool from 29th stayed into the New Year.

JANUARY

The King Eider proved popular for year tickers at Redcar. It was accompanied by two Long-tailed Ducks and 11 Velvet Scoters.



Caspian Gull, Haverton Hill

Ian Forrest

A Caspian Gull was at Haverton Hill on 1st and was joined by a second bird the following day. The two Tundra Bean Geese were amongst the large numbers of Pink-feet present at Cowpen Bewley.

Two Whooper Swans visited Dorman's Pool on 2nd. A Greenshank joined the wintering Common and Green Sandpipers at Billingham Beck on 5th. As usual a wintering Spotted Redshank was in the Greatham Creek area. The flock of White-fronted Geese remained at Greatham Tank Farm and ten were at Scaling Dam on 5th. A Dark-bellied Brent Goose was also here on this date. A long-eared Owl was at South Gare.



King Eider, Redcar

'BobH'

A winter plumaged Black Guillemot added to the list of scarce birds off Redcar from 6th and it remained into February, occasionally in the same scope view as the King Eider. Two Ruddy Shelducks remained around Cowpen Marsh along with the wintering Spoonbill. A single Ruff toured the North Tees Marshes from 13th.

Five Whooper Swans visited Saltholme Pools on 14th. The Water Pipit continued to show well from the hide on Dorman's Pool from 12th. A Cattle Egret on Seaton Common on 17th was only seen by the initial observer. Two Ravens in Sleddale on 19th were seen again later in the month. A Hen Harrier was also seen here occasionally. A Great Northern Diver in Hartlepool harbour from 21st remained into February. A Black-throated Diver was offshore here on 20th.

A Bittern was at Haverton Hole on 21st. There was no sign of any Bearded Tits on the north side of the river this winter but two were at Coatham Marsh 22nd-23rd. Six Waxwings at Ingleby Barwick from 24th were the only birds reported in the early part of the year in another disappointing winter for this irruptive species.

The remainder of the month saw little changing with the King Eider continuing to attract a succession of visitors, the Spoonbill and Great White Egret touring the North Tees Marshes and the six Waxwings proving popular with the photographers.

FEBRUARY

Early February again saw little in the way of new arrivals to the county birding scene. Two Long-tailed Ducks flew past Hartlepool on 1st. A Great Northern Diver was off Cattersty on 4th. Only the one Long-eared Owl was to be found roosting at RSPB Saltholme this winter and even this bird was not seen every day.

The Black Guillemot was last reported off Redcar on 12th. Two Ravens were again in Sleddale on

4th and one flew through Hunley Hall the following day. Cetti's Warblers were reported from a number of locations including one at Margrove Ponds. This species continues to expand its presence in the area after a series of mild winters.

The White-fronted Geese remained around the North Tees Marshes all month. Two Bitterns were at Haverton Hole on 11th. Three Dark-bellied Brent Geese at Redcar on 14th were the first of the year. Two Jack Snipe were on Coatham Marsh on this date though presumably other sites also held a few birds.

Year listers were struggling at this time to add anything new. It was definitely a case of "as you were". The two Egyptian Geese continued to be reported around Cowpen Marsh. The first Avocet of the spring was at Saltholme Pools on 21st. An adult Mediterranean Gull was at Paddy's Pool on this date and hopefully this species will be breeding here again in 2023.



Ring-necked Parakeet, Billingham

'JamsNat'

The flock of Ring-necked Parakeets continue to thrive in Hartlepool with about 70 birds roosting. An Alexandrine Parakeet was found amongst the group late in the month. Single Manx Shearwaters were off Hartlepool on 25th and Skinningrove on 26th. Three Green Sandpipers were at Cowpen Tip on 26th. A Glaucous Gull was reported from Greatham Creek on 26th and represented the only record of the larger "white-wingers" this winter. A Greenshank was at Greatham Creek on 28th. At least three Marsh Harriers were still around the North Tees Marshes at the end of the month.

Roll on Spring!



Marsh Harrier, Cowpen Marsh

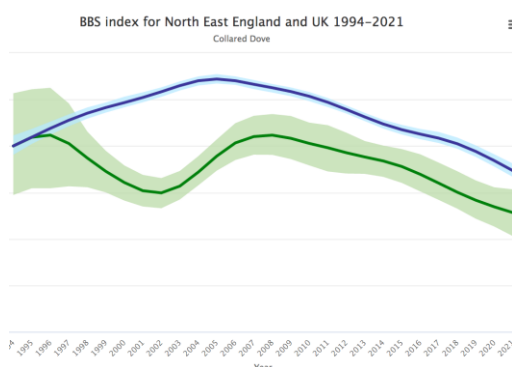
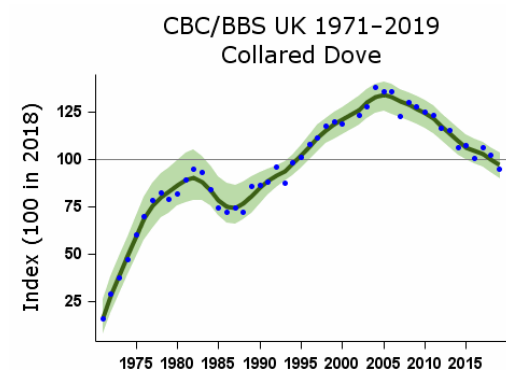
Richard Dunning

Where are the Collared Doves?



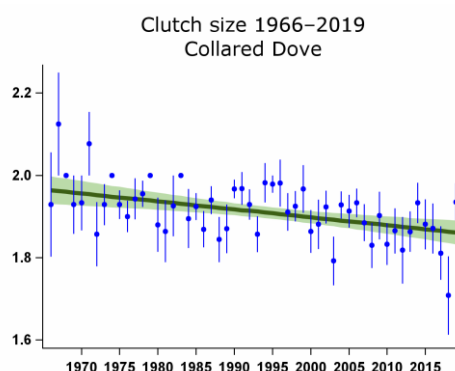
Taken for granted, until they are gone Eric James

It's unwise to make predictions as it is much easier to be wrong than right. I found this after writing the Collared Dove species account for the Cleveland Breeding Bird Atlas where I said the population would be maintained because its fecundity would be enough to withstand losses by predation by female Sparrowhawks or by control measures as it was classed as a pest species.

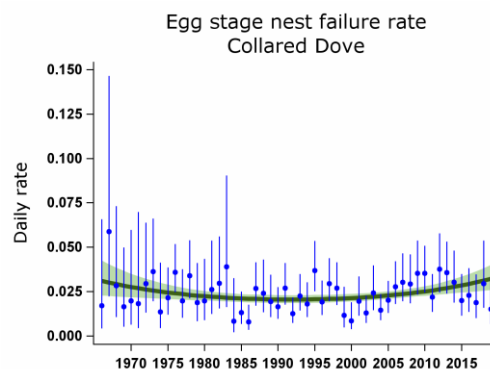


I finished writing the Collared Dove species account in 2007, where I made my rash prediction, and the atlas was published a year later; just about this time, the BTO Common Bird Census / Breeding Bird Survey showed the national species index at its maximum, after which it went into a decline. The smoothed graphs (above) show the National species trend (upper line) and the North East trend (lower line with confidence range shaded). The North East lagged, reaching the peak in 2008, while the National trend peaked in 2005. After this, the trends declined in parallel. I repeated the CBBS

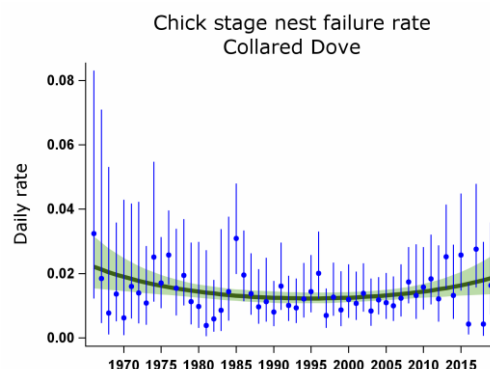
survey of tetrad 51H in 2014, when the number of Collared Doves had fallen by 42% from the original survey in 2001. This was not totally unexpected as it might be possible that it was a response to the large increases in the numbers of Woodpigeons (up 52%) and Feral Pigeons (up from two pairs to 24). However, observations in my garden give no evidence for any inter-species aggression. Woodpigeons were already present when Collared Doves moved in and there was no fighting, and Feral Pigeons arrived after the Collared Doves had departed so any interaction could not be observed. Other BTO surveys, especially the Nest Recording Scheme, show some interesting trends which might suggest some underlying causes for the population fall. One surprise was that clutch size has been falling since 1966 :



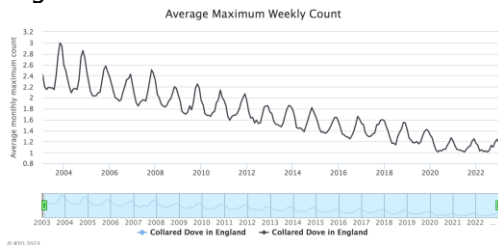
In addition, nest failure rate at the egg stage has been rising in recent years.



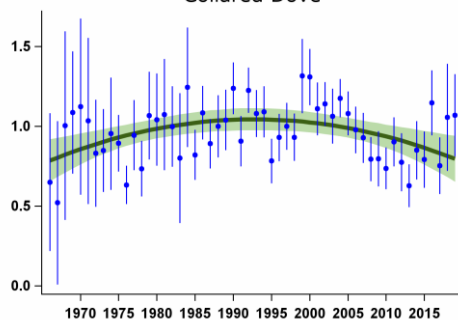
The Nest failure rate at the chick stage has also been rising in recent years :



Looking back through my garden bird records, there were oddities I had never noticed before: even when they were frequent visitors, their attendance was erratic and there were early signs of a fall in numbers by 2015; the birds also moved out of gardens during late autumn and then winter. I would have realised this if I had looked at the BTO Garden BirdWatch trends, such as the Average maximum weekly count shown below, based on observations in North East England :-



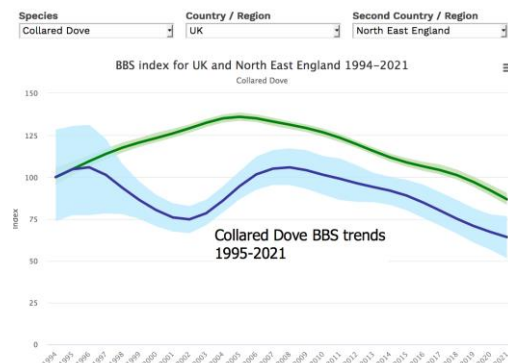
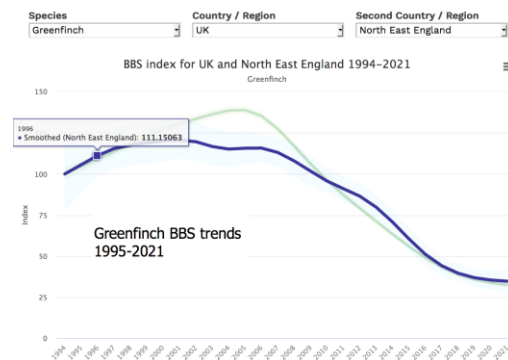
Fledglings per breeding attempt
Collared Dove



It is not surprising that the result of the problems with breeding has meant that there has been a fall in the number of fledglings per breeding attempt and this could be driving the species' decline. The failure rates throughout nesting does suggest that predation of nests might be causing the problem. The obvious culprit is the Grey squirrel whose numbers have been increasing. However, no definite proof of this connection has been found. If squirrels cannot be blamed for the Collared Dove's decline then the other possible cause could be disease. Like other members of the pigeon family (and parrots), Collared Doves suffer from the presence of the single-cell intestinal parasite *Trichomonas gallinae*, which causes trichomonosis. now notorious for fatally infecting Greenfinches and, to a lesser extent, Chaffinches.

. It is interesting to compare the timing of the decline of the Greenfinch with that of that of Collared Dove. The plots of BTO BBS indices (above right) show the declines starting at similar times for the two species. The upper lines (green) are for the UK the lower (blue) for North

East England. Apologies again for readers of the print version



BBS trends for Greenfinch and Collared Dove

The shading round some lines are confidence limits, only calculable when there are sufficient data. In both cases, the declines started in what we are now seem to be calling the mid-naughties. It is difficult to say whether this was a result of the disease becoming more virulent or the density of infected birds reaching a critical level where transmission increases rapidly. According to BTO data, disease in garden birds is prevalent in Chaffinches, Siskins, House Sparrows and Collared Doves; i.e. those that feed in flocks (why are Greenfinches not listed?). I cannot recall ever seeing a diseased Collared Dove, though I have seen diseased Woodpigeons, usually struggling to swallow food. Other finches that are regarded as susceptible include Goldfinches and Bullfinches. If the disease is extremely prevalent in an area, it can be picked up also by birds that feed on invertebrates, such as Blackbirds and Dunnocks.

So if the problem is disease, remember to clean your feeders and keep moving them around!

If that's the fall in numbers explained, why have they left my garden?

Collared Doves have not been recorded in my garden since 18th August 2016. They did not slowly decline and were in fact present every day in August 2016 until the 18th. The end was not a total surprise as there had been previous clues; if infection is the problem, then the low number of

Greenfinches in August 2016 might be significant. The erratic presence of the Doves, combined with the dip during autumn/winter led to the complete absence during some months in the winters of 2014/15 2015/16, though the situation in 2016/17 might have been even worse but was not possible to record it since there is a gap in the garden records while I was in hospital for five months following two strokes in October 2016. With the decline in Collared Doves being accompanied by increases in Woodpigeons and Feral Pigeons, it is tempting to relate these changes, but remembering the philosophical principle that correlation does not prove causation, it is better to rely on observation. As previously mentioned, Woodpigeons were already regular visitors when Collared Doves first arrived and I have no records of their fighting, though Woodpigeons are keen on fighting and chasing each other, as well as Feral Pigeons; in addition, Feral Pigeons did not arrive until after the Collared Doves had gone. It might be just the presence of large numbers of other pigeon species that deterred Collared Doves from remaining in a location and not necessarily overt aggressive behaviour. During the hot summer last year, I sat in the garden with hand-drawn maps of the immediate area and plotted the positions of singing birds. The results indicated that there were seven Woodpigeon territories in quite a small area, and these, with a flock of about twenty Feral Pigeons flying around, might be enough to deter Collared Doves from re-settling in the area.



Collared Sparrowhawk – Keep away from pigeons and don't eat them!

For pigeons, that's not the end of the story, since there is also a virus that infects them; it is difficult to put in its full scientific name but it is conveniently abbreviated to PPMV-1.

It originated in Iraq in the late 1970s and was first found in flocks of pigeons bred for meat. Since then it has spread widely and has infected raptors, pheasants, swans and cockatoos. In Australia, it has not seriously infected native birds

but mainly introduced pigeons. One native bird that has been infected is a Collared Sparrowhawk, presumed to be infected as the consequence of eating diseased prey.

With introduced pigeons so widely distributed, there is concern about the further spread of the virus to native birds in [Papua New Guinea](#), which is close to Australia and has the world's most diverse native pigeon and dove fauna – in fact, a quarter of the world total.

Below :

Some of the last Collared Doves in my garden (August 2016)



Possibly the last Collared Dove in my garden, on 16th August 2016
Eric James (obviously)

(The nearest singing bird is now 620m away)

Eric James

Tit-bits next page.....



TITBITS

A collection of
bird-related

news and facts compiled

by Eric James

Not such a good idea

If you've read my article on Collared Doves, and I hope you have because it took a long time to gather the information and write it up, I also hope you have noted the importance of hygiene in feeding birds.

When we moved into our present house, the garden was the typical barren area left by builders. While using a pick-axe to break the solid clay apart, it was a cause for celebration when an occasional worm appeared. Early on, bird feeding was just a single pole with one tube seed feeder, filled with 'Swoop' (a seed mixture sold in supermarkets at the time). Fallen seed built up and to keep infection under control, I regularly turned the soil over to bury any nasties. After several years of composting every scrap of waste vegetation, the soil was in better condition and I had the brainwave of disinfecting the soil surface with Jeyes fluid. It only took half a can of diluted fluid before dozens of worms emerged from the earth, wriggling in obvious distress. Feeling guilty, I scooped them up (52 in all) and moved them to a new spot where they were showered with clean water. It must have worked since they quickly disappeared.

I've never used Jeyes fluid again for disinfecting soil, though I could happily use it on other people's cats, or at least those that think of the garden as feline latrine

The mystery of the Guillemot's egg

The Guillemot's egg is notable for its extreme pyriform, or 'pear' shape



I cannot remember how many times I've read that the shape has evolved to avoid the egg from rolling off the nesting ledge. This explanation has never sounded realistic to me : a round egg can be easily imagined rolling over an edge, but a Guillemot egg spinning round or rolling along an arc don't seem to be any safer. A suspected reason for these ideas is that early experiments on the egg behaviour were done on empty, blown shells which would not move in the same way as a real egg. In addition, incubating Guillemots face inwards with egg between their feet with the blunt end also towards the cliff face so if it were free to move its curved path would guarantee its falling off the ledge.

Another hypothesis was based on a correlation between elliptical egg shape and flight speed, and Guillemots can certainly fly fast - at up to 50 mph., and does the asymmetric shape increase the otherwise limited volume?

Sceptics about the rolling theory, principally Guillemot specialist Tim Birkhead and his colleagues have challenged the received 'wisdom' of rolling to safety by performing experiments on eggs in breeding colony conditions. Guillemots breed of course in densely packed colonies for protection from predatory gulls and are not fussy about personal hygiene, defecating with no regard for their neighbours. Eggs can be coated with what Birkhead describes politely as 'muck', sometimes completely by the end of incubation. Considering the orientation of the egg during incubation, and then the chick hatching at the broad end of the egg, it will have a cleaner start to life. Another possibility is that pyriform eggs are stronger at the broad end and less likely to be damaged by an incoming bird crashing on top of one incubating.

Another hypothesis arises from many breeding ledges being slanted; under these conditions, the incubating bird faces up the slope and the egg, with the pointed end uppermost, will, when left, stay in place and not roll in any direction. This has been tested in real colonies with up to 30° inclination and it eliminates the need of any attempt to explain or justify the mechanics of rolling eggs.

It is informative to compare Guillemots' eggs with those of Razorbills that nest in relatively isolated pairs on clean ledges and have elliptical eggs with only a slight enlargement at one end. Experiments involving rolling eggs of the two species down ledges showed that the Guillemot eggs had little advantage over the Razorbills' (Birkhead caught any eggs that rolled off the ledge; animal experiments have to be ethical!).

Whoops! Another clanger

I've mentioned before the Radio 3 Sunday morning programme that includes the Sounds of the Earth feature, which is currently suspended while instead the presenter reads out a trailer for the next David Attenborough Wild Isles TV programme. A recent one mentioned the Bass Rock, of which the presenter had not heard as she pronounced Bass as in double or guitar, rather than Bass as in beer.

Look at what those cockatoos have done!

Sulphur-crested Cockatoos are clever birds, and perhaps too clever for Aussies living in Sydney. The birds have learnt how to open refuse bins to find food. They like bread and fruit and scatter the other contents of the bins in their search. The bin lids are heavy, but a few birds found they could pry them open at the front, grip the lid in their beak while walking around the rim towards the hinge, where they can flip the lid over. The behaviour is obviously a nuisance for residents since the birds are tossing rubbish over their gardens and streets.

The trick was seen in only three suburbs of Sydney in 2018, but a year later it had spread to 44 suburbs as cockatoos learned the trick by copying each other. As the habit spread, variations in the technique evolved so birds in different suburbs open the bins in different ways.



People, of course, fought back. Researchers observed the protection strategies being used on 3283 bins in four suburbs where bin-raiding by cockatoos had been reported and gathered responses from 1134 residents in an online survey; Some residents had started putting bricks and other items on top of their bin lids, but some of the birds worked out that they could nudge the bricks off with their heads.



A more sophisticated tactic – which hasn't yet been defeated – is to wedge a stick or a pair of trainers between the hinges and the bin to stop the lid from flipping over. "Bricks seemed to work for a while, but the cockies got too clever", one resident told the researchers. "Neighbours on [the] other side of the road suggested sticks. They work. Other defensive methods to defeat the birds include placing a rubber snake on the lid and attaching a heavy weight to the lid handles

A video of a cockatoo opening a bin by pushing a brick off is at

<https://youtu.be/IYeizMB50o48>

Other videos are available on YouTube

How to sleep through a cold night

Hummingbirds are remarkable, and none more so than the six species living at up to 4000 metres above sea level in the Peruvian Andes. Hummingbirds have large hearts (25% of their body weight) that beat rapidly to supply power for hovering flight, but energy requires the consumption of the nectar (three times their body weight) from 400 to 600 flowers each day. In the Andes, night time temperatures fall to 2 to 6°C. To find how the birds survive these temperatures, researchers have measured the internal body temperatures from evening to morning, including the coldest time of the night, by inserting tiny probes into the cloaca (those of us who have had colonoscopies will get the idea).

Most of the birds, representing all six species, entered torpor in bouts lasting from two to almost 13 hours.

Body temperatures varied, but it was the Black Metaltail species that came closest to outdoor temperatures, hitting a low of 3.26°C., below that of any non-hibernating mammal and any other

bird. In addition, during torpor, the heart rate drops to 40 beats per minute, from the daytime rate of 1,200 to 1,800 beats per minute when hovering.

At around sunrise, the birds started quivering (or should this be shivering?), increasing body temperature at a rate of more than 1°C per minute to reach the normal body temperature of 40°C. Although reheating requires a lot of energy, this is more than compensated by staying in the state of torpor. This was proved by weighing the birds and finding that those spending less time in torpor lost more weight, showing they had have to burn more fat during the night to keep warm. They only weigh 6 grams so will not be able to carry much fat to supply energy and heat.



Black Metaltails : 'No one chills more than us! (that should really be 'than we')

'No point in taking a bird to the pictures

Bird brain is usually taken to be an insult, but birds' ability to detect rapidly changing perceptions is very much better than ours. This has been proved in the case of their hearing by comparing the song mimicked by a bird with the song of the original bird. Small details of the genuine song that are inaudible to us are reproduced accurately by the mimic.

A similar thing has been found in perception of vision. If a film is projected at 20 frames a second or more (the current rate is 24), it will

appear to us as smoothly moving image; not so for a bird which will see a series of static images.

So if a pigeon had been roosting in the theatre, where in the 19th century, crowds first gasped at the Lumière Brothers' steam train looming towards them, it would have been less than impressed. Especially as early silent films were often played at only 16 frames per second.

A more modern example would be the famous scene, in *The Seven-Year Itch* (at 24 frames per second) where Marilyn Monroe's white skirts billowed over the subway ventilation grate but our hypothetical pigeon would only see something more like a slide show of the skirt inflating and deflating in frozen increments.

And that's not all, most humans see artificial lights as even sources of illumination, even if the actual source is not constant. As an example, what we now think of as old-fashioned, i.e. incandescent light bulbs actually flashed at the frequency (50 cps) of the A.C. electricity supply; this was useful when we listened to recordings by scraping a needle over a piece of plastic. It was possible to buy a turntable mat with a white central disc printed with circles of black radial lines at various spacings for different speeds which, when illuminated by an incandescent bulb acted as a stroboscope and checked the rotational speeds of the turntable. This impression of constant light while watching a film means the image moves smoothly, despite the light source flickering several times per frame. For our pigeon to experience a film properly, the flicker speed would have to be at least 90-100 cps.

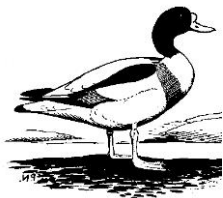
A Crow's beak makes the best tweezer

Human beings have been using tweezers for thousands of years, but Japanese researchers have made a better design based on the beak of a New Caledonian Crow, a species noted for its dexterity and intelligence.

The design was [3D-printed](#), with a flexible part connecting the two halves, and was named Kuchibashi.

To assess how easy the [tweezers](#) were to use, the team recruited volunteers who were timed transferring 3, 5, 8 and 14 mm glass beads from one bowl to another, using fingers or tweezers.

It took a similar time to complete tasks involving 3 and 5-millimetre beads with the crow-inspired tweezers and standard tweezers, but the Kuchibashi tweezers were faster to use with larger 8 and 14-millimetre beads. Most users also reported that the Kuchibashi tweezers were easier to use.



TEESMOUTH BIRD CLUB

Registered as a Charity No. 508850

ANNUAL REPORT 2022

THE CLUB COMMITTEE

(Chairman) **Steve McDonnell**
(Vice Chairman) **Mike Leakey**
(Hon Secretary) **Chris Sharp**
(Hon Treasurer) **Mark Askew**
(Ordinary Member) **Alistair McLee** (Co-opted)
(Ordinary Member) **Julie Mason** (Co-opted 2017)
(Ordinary Member) **Brian Clasper** (First Appointed 2019)
(Ordinary Member) **Barbara Crinson** (First Appointed 2022)
(Ordinary Member) **Connor Pimm** (First Appointed 2022)

RECORDS SUB-COMMITTEE

(Chairman) **Alan Crossley**
Tom Francis
Graeme Joynt
Chris Brown
Ian Kendall
Chris Bell
Stewart Hinley
Chris Sharp
Geoff Iceton
Martyn Sidwell

CONSERVATION SUB-COMMITTEE

(Chairman) **Alistair McLee**

Honorary Treasurer's Report 2022

The balance sheet was fairly routine this year, with income being primarily subscription related and the only unusual expenditure being essential maintenance of the Dorman's Pool hide. This helps make clear that our day to day expenditure is no longer covered by subscription income. While we still have healthy cash funds, they are being eroded by inflation in addition to excess expenditure over income for the last two years. In order to maintain funds for future opportunities, as well as eventual replacement of assets such as the Dorman's Pool hide, the Committee propose to raise subscription fees by a modest amount, the first rise since 2007! To simplify arrangements, we intend to have a single fee per household of £16 rather than solo or family membership. In effect this means that those with family membership will not see an increase. Junior membership remains the same at £5. We hope that members agree that this small change still represents good value.

In other developments, it was a long tedious process but by year end we had transferred our current account from HSBC to the Co-Operative bank. It is unfortunate that longstanding loyalty stands for little in the corporate world and hitting us with charges for more or less anything prompted a search, so it is fortunate that customers still have choices. Now that switch is complete, the focus is on our savings account as National Savings seem uninterested in maintaining a competitive interest rate.

Mark Askew

Report from the Chair for 2022-2023



The purpose of the annual report from the Chair is to present a summary of the Club's activities throughout the year.

Trustees' meetings continue to take place using Zoom.

Over the past year, the Trustees have met quarterly to discuss issues that enable the Club to run smoothly and continue to move forward.

Regular events for members of the club have included:

A program of eight successful indoor meetings from September 2022 to April 2023.

Local Outdoor meetings have been very well supported.

Sites visited included:

Stillington Woods

Bowesfield Marsh

Guisborough Forest - Nightjars

RSPB Saltholme – Dragonflies

Seaton Snook

Hartlepool Headland – sea watching

Hartlepool Headland – Ringing demonstration

South Gare

Hartlepool Headland

North Gare and Seaton Snook.

Three newsletters were published in September, December and April.

The 2021 Cleveland Bird Report was the forty-eighth annual Report published by the Club. This publication is very highly regarded by birdwatchers and other organisations throughout the country. Thanks are due to the County Recorder, members of the Records Sub-committee and compilers for their hard work in ensuring the continued success of this publication.

The Jeff Young's Hide received a new roof, which should now be good for another fifteen years.

As Chair, I have received correspondence from Hartlepool Power Station, the Tees Valley Nature Partnership and the Tees Nature Tourism Marketing Group.

I have attended meetings with Chris Francis, Senior Site Manager, RSPB Saltholme

Ed Pritchard, Warden, RSPB Saltholme

We sadly said goodbye to Brian Clasper who came to the end of his time as a Trustee. First appointed in 2014, we thank Brian for his many years of input and support and for his time served as Chair, Vice Chair and Trustee.

I continue to be amazed at the continuing hard work of the club's Officers, Trustees and Committees, that enable the Club to operate with seamless ease. My thanks go to all the long serving officers of the club who continue to do an unenviable job.

I owe a big thank you to my fellow Trustees who have supported and guided me through my two years of office. It has been a pleasure to serve as Chair for Teesmouth Bird Club over the past two years.

May I wish Mike Leakey well in the post of Chair from April 2023

Best Wishes to all members

Steve McDonnell (Chair)

CLUB MEMBERSHIP

	Total	Full	Family	Junior	S/C	Life	Hon
2005	287	134	95	-	39	14	5
2006	317	157	89	-	52	14	5
2007	346	156	119	-	51	14	6
2008	421	176	170	-	55	14	6
2009	487	203	190	1	73	14	6
2010	521	209	209	2	78	13	5
2011	538	225	214	2	79	13	5
2012	548	312	217	1		13	5
2013	509	286	200	2		14	7
2014	488	261	207	2		12	6
2015	476	266	189	2		13	6
2016	480	268	192	1		13	6
2017	470	267	182	1		14	6
2018	453	266	166	1		14	6
2019	465	269	176	-		14	6
2020	451	270	162			14	5
2021	459	271	169			14	5
2022	469	276	175			13	5

It is pleasing to note that the Club membership has remained fairly static in recent years despite the restrictions imposed on our activities by the Coronavirus pandemic. Despite the fact that the junior membership rate was reduced to only £5 at the AGM in April 2016 the Club continues to thrive without any members in this category.

As in previous years the many hours of free time given by certain members is worthy of mention. Special thanks go to Eric James who continues to edit the newsletter as well as providing much of the material for publication.

Jamie Duffie also doubles as our website manager and handles all the PayPal receipts for membership fees. This latter method is becoming an increasingly popular way for members to pay their subscriptions. The website continues to gain praise from everyone who logs on. The site is well used and with the ever increasing use of twitter as a means of reporting sightings and publishing photographs represents the best way of visitors to the area to keep up with what's around. The Club has updated and modernised the website in recent years and it is better than ever and more user friendly.

Since retiring as Treasurer in 2000 Don Page has continued to calculate and submit the Club's annual Gift Aid application. 2022 will be the last time Don undertakes this task on behalf of the Club. This is a significant source of income each year and Don can't be thanked enough for his efforts over the years.

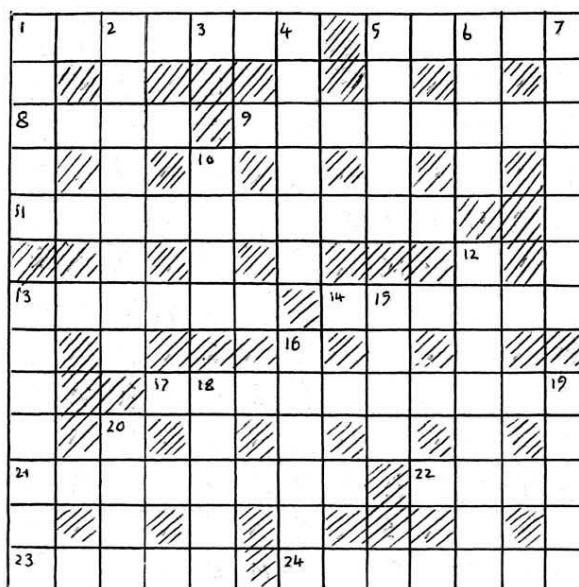
The annual bird report is also a publication the Club can be rightly proud of. As a current member of the Records Sub-committee I know the amount of time that is spent collating the records and writing and checking the report. Our recorder Alan Crossley, the Records Sub-committee and the compilers must be thanked for their efforts. Special thanks must go to Chris Brown who both edited and formatted the report. Although Tom Francis stepped down as recorder at the end of 2018, he and Graeme Joynt continue to assist Alan in his duties as recorder to ensure a smooth transition .

Another member whose efforts for the Club go unrewarded is John Fletcher. John has been our sales officer for many years and he religiously is at the back of each indoor meeting selling old bird reports and books donated by members. Thanks must also be given to Julie Mason who organises the indoor programme each session. It is never easy trying to arrange speakers but invariably a varying programme each year is testament to Julie's endeavours.

			TEESMOUTH BIRD CLUB			
			Statement of Income & Expenditure for 2022			
			(with 2021 for comparison)			
			2022		2021	
			Income	Payment	Income	Payment
			4833.48		4153.42	
			823.15		796.17	
			52.20		5.78	
				459.27		167.88
				250.00		40.00
			168.97		239.76	
				3180.00		4651.00
				466.36		180.00
				917.19		368.23
				50.50		50.50
				157.00		157.00
			0.00	0.00	0	0.00
				395.94		900.00
			0.00	0.00	620.00	500.00
				943.72		463.65
				1704.00		40.00
			0.00		0.00	
				113.20		5.40
			5877.80	8637.18	5821.13	7523.66
		Excess Income		-2759.38		-1702.53
			5877.80	5877.80	5821.13	5821.13
		Balance B/F 2021	59054.13	Balance B/F 2020	60756.66	
		Excess Income	-2759.38		-1702.53	
		Balance 31.12.2022	56294.75	Balance 31.12.21	59054.13	
		Cash In Hand	0.00		0.00	
		Bank Current Acc	279.69		1591.07	
		Deposit A/C 'PSMF'	0.00		0.20	
		NSB Investment Acc	56015.06		57462.86	
			56294.75		59054.13	

Crossword No.11

By Bill Irving



ACROSS

1. Dog will when pleased to get bird (7)
5. Rebel bowman hides joint (5)
8. To get duck I'm between 2 points (4)
9. Mammal sounds it could consume your relative (8)
11. Dan's dance with most of Vermont gets migrant (4, 6)
13. Antelope ailing badly (6)
14. Talk is where toad loses Jack (6)
17. Seaside frolics for winter visitors (5, 5)
21. Giving expression to something (8)
22. Yearn for conifer (4)
23. Comical raptor? (5)
24. Came into view (7)

DOWN

1. Used to be post script for stingers (5)
2. Gullible insect? (8)
4. Cosmetic ships? (6)
5. Abele mistaken when hiding resin (5)
6. Night fliers at Lord's? (4)
7. Singer from Dartford? (7)
10. Maybe item made her hide (4)
12. Common bird sees rodents return to heather (8)
13. Bat has count wrong by the French (7)
15. Unite in local lyceum (4)
16. Fruit upset onager (6)
18. Runner kicks up shore (5)
19. Rapidity (5)
20. Deer party? (5)

Solution on page19

WETLAND BIRD SURVEY TEESMOUTH - WINTER 2022/2023 SUMMARY

	November 06	December 04	January 15	February 19	March 19
Little Grebe	<u>41</u>	27	21	12	15
Great Crested Grebe	1	0	0	<u>24</u>	20
Cormorant	<u>161</u>	104	30	52	54
Mute Swan	<u>28</u>	27	23	14	15
Greylag Goose	<u>292</u>	149	116	121	66
Shelduck	180	286*	393*	<u>579**</u>	346*
Wigeon	2629*	3707*	<u>4550**</u>	3920*	3416*
Gadwall	149	182*	<u>186*</u>	<u>233*</u>	136
Teal	<u>1282</u>	866	986	720	737
Mallard	<u>347</u>	221	143	183	181
Pintail	38	18	<u>47</u>	35	22
Shoveler	148*	198**	171*	<u>217**</u>	117*
Pochard	63	44	62	<u>69</u>	52
Tufted Duck	53	50	53	85	<u>110</u>
Eider	16	53	19	3	<u>118</u>
Goldeneye	10	34	<u>47</u>	42	43
Red-br. Merganser	<u>73*</u>	36	13	72*	63*
Coot	390	426	359	<u>485</u>	365
Oystercatcher	701	920	320	<u>965</u>	262
Ringed Plover	<u>109</u>	22	38	76	40
Golden Plover	803	<u>1694</u>	1356	66	0
Grey Plover	83	<u>141</u>	43	115	26
Lapwing	3261*	3751*	<u>4823*</u>	2577	373
Knot	63	201	17	<u>244</u>	0
Sanderling	195*	114*	<u>212**</u>	0	95
Purple Sandpiper	9	9	3	<u>11</u>	2
Dunlin	231	373	230	<u>560</u>	169
Ruff	<u>3</u>	0	1	1	0
Snipe	3	8	6	<u>18</u>	13
Black-tailed Godwit	71	25	70	<u>84</u>	71
Bar-tailed Godwit	18	46	2	<u>51</u>	1
Curlew	672*	512	<u>1413**</u>	659*	475
Redshank	<u>860*</u>	821*	609*	380	514*
Turnstone	<u>162</u>	63	91	92	81

* Indicates a count of >50% of national importance

** Indicates a count of national importance

N.B. 'Teesmouth' includes Hartlepool Bay.

All WeBS data are collected on behalf of the WeBS Partnership, which retains exclusive rights to the sale or supply of these data for commercial purposes.

WETLAND BIRD SURVEY TEESMOUTH - WINTER 2022/2023 SUMMARY

A good level of cover was achieved with 204 of the 210 scheduled sector counts completed over the five months.

Over this series of counts the Tees Estuary and Hartlepool Bay recording area was nationally important for Shelduck (579, February), Shoveler (217, February), Wigeon (4550, January), Sanderling (212, January) and Curlew (1413, January).

The Wigeon peak count (4550, January) was also the highest on record in the estuary. Eider (118, March) also set a record winter peak count; however this figure doesn't include the stretch of coast between Redcar and Marske which played host to a greater number of birds as well as a King Eider.

Two wader species which logged new winter maxima records were Avocet (108, March) and Ringed Plover (109, November). However, Knot (244, February) had their second lowest peak winter count on record.

The peak count of Canada Geese (864, November) fell below 1000 birds for the first time in seven years, Mute Swan (28, November) numbers were also below the five-year average, both species suffered casualties from avian influenza during the winter.

Other interesting records during the winter included 20 European White-Fronted Geese (Tank Farm, January), 6 Egyptian Geese (Cowpen Marsh, November), 1 Black-Throated Diver (Peninsula East, November and Bran Sands South, December), 1 Slavonian Grebe (Bran Sands North, November), 2 Great White Egret (Square Pool, February) and 1 Spoonbill (multiple locations, bird overwintered).

Adam Jones

WeBS Local Organiser

March 2023

BTO News Spring 2023, by Mike Leakey, BTO Regional Representative for Cleveland

Breeding Birds Survey and Waterways Breeding Birds Survey

At the time of writing 88% of BBS sites and 100% of WBBS sites in the Cleveland BTO area have been allocated for the forthcoming season. This represents an excellent rate of coverage, and my thanks go to all existing and newly recruited volunteers. If you have requested paper forms and instructions, you ought to receive these by post in early to mid-April, in time for your early season visit.

The following squares are still available to allocate for 2023:

NZ3012	Hurworth Moor, Darlington
NZ6819	Brotton
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.

Heronries Census

The Heronries Census Annual Summary for 2022 has recently been published on the BTO website

(https://www.bto.org/sites/default/files/bto_heronries_census_annual_summary_2022.pdf).

For Grey Heron, The UK population estimate for 2022 is 9,509 apparently occupied nests, up from the revised total of 9,341 nests in 2021. Despite the very slight recovery over the last two years, the population still remains well below the levels seen at the peak in the early 2000s, when there were around 13,000 nests in the UK. It is unclear why Grey Heron numbers have failed to recover. One possibility is that the absence of any recovery could relate to increased instances of severe weather caused by climate change. Cold snaps such as the 'Beast from the East' in 2018 might have increased mortality and spring gales during breeding might affect Grey Heron productivity.

Although Nest Record Scheme data show a linear decline in both clutch size and brood size since the late 1960s, this finding is based on a small sample and there is no significant trend in the number of fledglings produced per breeding attempt. Ringing data do not suggest a decline in survival for adult birds, but severe weather outside the breeding season could affect survival of young birds and, consequently, recruitment into the breeding population. Another possibility is that the success of other similar colonial waterbird species could be causing some interspecific density-dependent effects, but this is speculative and there is no scientific evidence for it. In fact, of the colonising species, only Little Egret is widespread enough to potentially have a population level effect on Grey Heron. If there were any competition for resources between these two species, then it would be more likely to affect Little Egret as it is the smaller and less dominant species. We lack evidence of other potential drivers of decline, such as changes in habitat at the sites, disturbance, or the impact of pesticides or other pollutants on herons or their prey.

In the UK, a total of 1,205 apparently occupied Little Egret nests (AONs) were counted in 2022, a slight decrease from the 1,256 nests in 2021.

Woodcock Survey 2023

It's been fantastic to see so much interest in the Woodcock Survey. Nationally, the number of priority survey squares requested stood at 1,088 in late February, which is over 57% of the 1,901 currently available. Coverage of the 1,102 high priority squares (needed to measure change since 2013) is already at an impressive 73%, and I'm pleased to report that in the Cleveland BTO area this figure is 100%.

News about Training courses and Swift nests next page

SOLUTION to Crossword No.11

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

BTO identification by sound courses, and Swift nests in Great Ayton

Training courses

Nationally, BTO are running online training courses this May on the identification of songs and calls of passerines, as follows

- • Tuesdays 9, 16 and 23 May, 7pm
- □ Wednesdays 10, 17 and 24 May, 10am
- • Wednesdays 10, 17 and 24 May, 7pm
- For a comprehensive list of the species covered, please email training@bto.org.
- They are badged as a 'more advanced', and include songs and calls of warblers, pipits, buntings, etc., as well as advice on creating and 'reading' spectrograms. Three sessions cost £36 for three time slot. All BTO courses come with the statement "If cost is a barrier, please contact us".

Swift Action



Let's have lots more of these

Local BTO member Caryn Loftus has asked me to publicise a new project, run by Great Ayton Discovery Centre in conjunction with the Brighten Up Great Ayton group and Climate Action Stokesley and Villages, to encourage more Swifts to nest in the village. Local company [Habibat](#), which designs and manufactures a range of bird and bat boxes, has kindly offered to donate ten Swift boxes for the village to help the existing Swift colony. Swift boxes can also be purchased by those who don't live in Great Ayton.

If you are interested in the project, then call in to The Discovery Centre in Great Ayton or email gadc-library@outlook.com

Mike Leakey, BTO Regional Representative for Cleveland