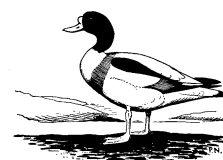


Teesmouth Bird Club Newsletter

August 2023 (No.85)



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MONTHLY SUMMARIES

Chris Sharp reviews the main birding highlights of the spring and early summer periods, which did not live up to the standard set by last year but was nevertheless interesting.

MARCH

The drake King Eider remained off Redcar until the end of the month along with up to 13 Velvet Scoters. The long staying Long-tailed Duck was

also in Hartlepool harbour at the beginning of the month.

The roosting flock of Ring-necked Parakeets at Hartlepool totalled 69 on 1st and were joined by an Alexandrine Parakeet early in the month. Both Common and Green Sandpipers were at Billingham Beck. Snow Buntings were scarce this winter so a flock of 23 at Steetley on 2nd was most welcome. Up to 20 were also present at South Gare at this time. Both Great White Egret and Spoonbill were on the North Tees Marshes early in the month, the latter still being present until late May.

The first adult Mediterranean Gulls returned to RSPB Saltholme on 4th. Six pairs were present this year following last year's first successful breeding attempt. A Slavonian Grebe was off Redcar on 5th and a Great Northern Diver was in Hartlepool harbour on 6th.



Mediterranean Gulls , Saltholme

Ian Forrest

A Bittern was at Haverton Hole on 7th. Sadly few subsequent reports were received and it would appear that last year's successful breeding was a "one off".

Two Mandarins were at Lockwood Beck on 8th. Two drakes also returned to the Cowpen Bewley area for a second year and a pair was presuming to be breeding south of the river. Two Waxwings in Guisborough on 10th were one of only a handful of records of this eruptive species this winter.

Two Egyptian Geese in the Cowpen Marsh area from 12th remained throughout the spring and became a new breeding species for Cleveland when five goslings appeared in early June.

An Arctic Redpoll at Dormans Pool was present from 13th-16th and showed well at times amongst a small flock of Lesser Redpoll. A White-fronted Goose was at Cowpen Bewley on 16th. The 17th saw a Raven at Boulby and 33Whooper Swans over Guisborough.



Arctic Redpoll, Dormans Pool

Martyn Sidwell

The 18th produced the first Wheatears and Sand Martin of the year. An Iceland Gull was at Cattersty Gill and Hooded Crows were at Skinningrove and North Gare.

Peak Whooper Swan numbers were recorded passing north on 19th with 50 at North Gare, 28 at Cowpen Marsh and 13 at Scaling. The first Little Ringed Plover was at South Gare on 19th and what was presumably the same Iceland Gull was at Brotton on this date. It was a very poor winter for the "white-wingers".

Early Swallows were at Middlesbrough and Hartlepool on 22nd. Two Spoonbills were on Cowpen Marsh 23rd-24th. A Brent Goose was at South Gare on 23rd. Again it had been a very poor winter for this species at Teesmouth. Two Common Cranes were over Redcar on 24th and a female Scaup was on the River Tees from South Gare on 25th.

The last few days of the month were fairly quiet. An Iceland Gull was at Margrove Pond on 26th, a Ruff on Saltholme Marsh on 27th and a Hooded Crow at Marske on 28th. A Common Sandpiper was present at Scaling from 28th. Two Great White Egrets were on Cowpen Marsh on 30th with

a Red Kite over the Phil Stead Hide on the same day.

The first Willow Warbler was at Guisborough on 31st. South Gare was the place to be on this date with Firecrest and Black Redstart showing well along with a Glaucous Gull.

APRIL

The South Gare Firecrest was joined by a second bird on 2nd and one was at Hartlepool on this date. A Black Redstart was at Skinningrove on 2nd with a second bird the following day and a Common Scoter on Saltholme Pools was an unusual inland sighting. Great White Egrets increased to three on Cowpen Marsh on 3rd and a Little Gull was at Saltholme Pools.



Firecrest, Hartlepool

Martyn Sidwell

Two drake Mandarins returned to Cowpen Bewley on 5th and remained into June. A Red Kite was over Greenabella Marsh on 6th. The first Garganey of the spring was on Cowpen Marsh and the first Reed Warbler at Dormans Pool. Three Bearded Tits were at Dormans Pool on 7th though they were elusive this spring in contrast to 2022. Another inland Common Scoter was found on 8th, this time at Bowesfield. The same day saw the first Yellow Wagtail and Grasshopper Warbler.



White Stork, Saltholme

Ian Forrest

Another Red Kite was over Margrove Pond on 10th. Whatever its origin a White Stork in the Back Saltholme/Port Clarence Flood area was well received as it was present for much of the morning on 12th. The following day saw one of the highlights of the spring in the form of an Alpine Swift which gave fabulous views at RSPB Saltholme. It was the eighth Cleveland record and came at the end of a record number of this species in Britain this spring. Seven Ring Ouzels were at Roseberry Topping on this date.



Alpine Swift, Saltholme

Martyn Sidwell

The first Sedge Warbler was on 14th and both Cuckoo and Redstart were recorded on 16th. Also on this day another Alpine Swift was over Saltburn. An Arctic Tern was at Scaling on 18th and the first Lesser Whitethroat was on 19th. Redstarts and Tree Pipits were back on their breeding site at Newton Woods by 21st. An Osprey was at Scaling on 22nd and a Pied Flycatcher was at Hunley Hall the same day. This latter species has become increasingly rare in Cleveland in spring. Yet another inland Common Scoter was at Ward Jackson Park on 23rd.

An early Swift was at Dormans Pool on 24th with a Whinchat at RSPB Saltholme the same day. The White-fronted Goose remained around Saltholme Pools and eight Whooper Swans were here on 26th. Cetti's Warblers have increased in numbers in recent years but 2023 saw even more birds. At least six birds were present a RSPB Saltholme with a similar number at Bowesfield.

A Hen Harrier was in Sleddale on 27th. The 28th saw the first Garden Warbler of the year. South Gare saw a small fall of migrants on this day with Pied Flycatcher, Whinchat and Lesser Whitethroat present. A Yellow-browed Warbler and a Black Redstart were here the following day and Hartlepool held five Lesser Whitethroats, Brambling and Ring Ouzel.

Wood Warbler is no longer annual in Cleveland, so one singing at RSPB Saltholme on 30th was well watched. Two Ring Ouzels were also present here. Boulby also saw nine Tree Pipits and eight Yellow Wagtails on this day. Four Wood Sandpipers were on Cowpen Marsh and the first Little Tern of the year was at Seaton Carew.

MAY

The Yellow-browed Warbler remained at South Gare on 1st along with a Garden Warbler. Both Common and Arctic Terns were at RSPB Saltholme. A fine summer plumaged Spotted Redshank was at Cowpen Marsh along with the Wood Sandpipers, six Ruff and a drake Garganey. A Hooded Crow flew through Scaling Dam on 3rd.

At least 47 Ruff were on the North Tees Marshes on 4th and these had increased to 58 the following day and represented the largest spring

counts for many years. Two Wood Sandpipers were at Scaling on 6th. A small influx of Garganey included three on Cowpen Marsh and two on Seaton Common. A Bittern was at RSPB Saltholme on 8th along with a single Little Gull. Greenshanks were scarce this spring but singles were on Cowpen Marsh and Tidal Pool on 9th.

The flood on Cowpen Marsh by the Seal Sands road proved attractive for waders with two Wood Sandpiper and Curlew Sandpiper present on 13th. Five of the former were at Scaling on 13th along with a Green Sandpiper.

South Gare was the place to be on 14th with both Hoopoe and Red backed Shrike present. Another Red backed Shrike was at Hummersea on this date. A Temminck's Stint at Saltholme Pools on 14th was possibly one of the two at Cowpen Marsh the following day. Two Garganey were at Saltholme Pools with another on Cowpen Marsh. A Wood Sandpiper was on Seaton Common on 15th.

Two very late Whooper Swans were at Bran Sands on 18th. A Little Gull was at Saltholme Pools on 19th. This species was formerly present on the North Tees Marshes in small numbers throughout the summer months but is much scarcer now. Temminck's Stints increased to four at Saltholme Pools on 20th with one remaining until 25th.

A Ruddy Shelduck was at Saltholme Marsh on 24th and a Hobby was at Carter Moor Ponds on this date. A female Grey-headed Wagtail was a brief visitor to South Gare on 25th.

The last few days of the month were quiet though another Red-backed Shrike was at South Gare on 27th and a Black Tern was at Saltholme on 31st.

JUNE

June proved to be a cracking month with no fewer than five "BB" rarities seen. The first was a Whiskered Tern at Longnewton Reservoir on 1st. Sadly this is a private site with no access. Two Greenshank were at Scaling on 1st with one at Saltholme on 3rd. A Hobby was at Hummersea on this date.

A Great Reed Warbler sang at RSPB Saltholme from 5th. It stayed until 22nd but proved difficult to see with most observers having to be content with hearing its loud song. An Eastern Subalpine Warbler was a good find at Boulby on 6th. It was tricky to see in contrast to the nearby Marsh Warbler which was found on the same day. The latter lingered until 10th. A Quail was at Grinkle on 6th.



Subalpine Warbler, Boulby

Martyn Sidwell

Two Little Stints were on Cowpen Marsh on 7th. These increased to four the following day; an excellent count in spring for this species. A Curlew Sandpiper was here on 8th and what may have been the same bird at Greatham Creek the following day.

A Caspian Tern commuted between Seal Sands and Saltholme Pools 11th-12th. This was the third year in succession this species has occurred in Cleveland. A Hobby showed well at RSPB Saltholme on 14th to observers listening to the Great Reed Warbler. Two Wood Sandpipers were here on this day with two more nearby at Cowpen Marsh.

Two juvenile Bearded Tits at Dormans Pool on 16th meant this species had bred successfully here for the second consecutive year. Ospreys were at Guisborough on 17th and Skelton on 18th. A Red Kite was at Kirklevington on 17th.

A Marsh Warbler sang at Saltholme Pools from 18th. Its chosen spot, right next to the A178 meant its song was often drowned out by the many cars passing. It remained until 23rd. The following day saw a Savi's Warbler near Haverton Hole. The third scarce warbler at RSPB Saltholme it remained until 24th.



Savi's Warbler, Haverton

Martyn Sidwell

A Little Stint was at Scaling on 21st. In what was a good spring for Wood Sandpipers another was at Saltholme Pool on 23rd. A splendid summer plumaged White-winged Black Tern flew around the main lake at RSPPB Saltholme on 26th. The following day saw an adult Roseate Tern here and this bird remained into July. An Osprey was over the reserve on 28th and the month ended with two Great White Egrets on the reserve along with a Spoonbill.



White-winged Black Tern, Saltholme

Martyn Sidwell

OBITUARY

ERIC THOMAS JAMES (1946 – 2023)

Teesmouth Bird Club is sad to announce the death of Eric in July, following a second stroke. He suffered his first in 2016, which immobilised his left side. Eric was not a man to permit that detail to hinder his editing, compilation and layout of the club's newsletter on his trusty Apple computer. This task started in 2010 and continued until 2023.

He personally contributed many articles and succinct birding snippets over the years. His wry sense of humour, meticulous use of language and passion to educate readers with topics not generally published in the birding magazines, stamped his personality on the publication. His dedication was formally recognised by the club when he received the Ted Parker Award in 2018.

Eric's attention to detail was reflected in his meticulous field recording. Prior to the creation of RSPB Saltholme, he single-handedly counted birds in his WeBS sector of East and West Saltholme – no mean task. Other BTO survey studies in which he participated were the BBS (Breeding Bird Survey), Garden Birds Surveys and individual species recording. He continued, until this June, as my co-recorder during our vehicular WeBS counts on the Brine Fields. It is a strange coincidence that one of the species contributions in the "The Breeding Birds of Cleveland" (2008) was Collared Dove, which also featured in his last newsletter article – a garden-based study, performed from home.

Eric was in essence a Hartlepudlian lad who married Pat Nossiter in 1972. He had graduated in chemical engineering from Leeds University then worked in the "shape - shifting" structure of British Steel in Teesside. As well as his birding friends, he had old mates from school, university and work with whom he remained firmly in touch. He had a further group of friends from the Hartlepool Museum for whom he and Pat provided a voluntary, weekly stint of cataloguing and digitising records over the years.

Eric will be remembered fondly by many.

Ali McLee (July 2023)

INDOOR MEETINGS PROGRAMME 2023/24

Meetings are held at Stockton Library. Meetings starts at 7.30pm with tea and coffee served from 7.00pm

2023

Mon 4th Sept - Laurence Rose - Birds on the Brink

Mon 2nd Oct - Graeme Joynt - Independent Oman

Mon 6th Nov - Richard Baines - Turtle Doves from North Yorkshire to Senegal - Conservation in Action

Mon 4th Dec - Ian Hillary - Peru – The Spatuletail Tour

2024

Mon 8th Jan - Chris Sharp – The ups and downs of 50 Years of Cleveland Birding

Mon 5th Feb - Ross Ahmed - Birding in Northumberland

Mon 4th Mar - Stewart Hinley - Resplendent Costa Rica

Mon 8th April- Annual General Meeting and RSPB Saltholme update

FROM THE CHAIR

The Club's AGM took place on 3 April. Our thanks are due to retiring Chair Steve McDonnell. Long-time Trustee Brian Clasper has left the group, while we welcome new member Debbie Lawson.

As most members will be aware, Club stalwart Eric James died in hospital on 10 July. His wife Pat was there with him. Many of you will know that Eric suffered a stroke 7 years ago. In June he had a second severe stroke. Eric's contribution to Teesmouth Bird Club has been immense, not least as editor and compiler of this newsletter.

The Trustees have held meetings on 2 May and 25 July. Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council have at last responded to our repeated enquiries regarding access to the Long Drag; unfortunately, it seems that such access is now rendered impossible because of health and safety concerns.

For some time, Trustees have been exploring the potential for a Motus tracking station in or around the Tees Estuary. Motus – or the Motus Wildlife Tracking System to give it its full title – is a Canadian-based international collaborative research network that uses coordinated radio telemetry to track animals and birds. Our efforts are now focused on RSPB Saltholme as a potential host location.

Ali McLee of the Club's Conservation Committee has successfully secured the installation of swift nestboxes in the refurbished Yarm Town Hall and is progressing a Peregrine nestbox project at Holy Trinity Church, North Ormesby. A site visit to Greenabella and Greatham Creek was held on 7 April with the Environment Agency to discuss managed realignment proposals and is reported elsewhere in this Newsletter.

Local outings were held at Margrove Ponds (21 April), Scaling Dam (15 May), Saltholme for damselflies and dragonflies (3 June), Guisborough Forest for Nightjars (7 July) and "Wild Saltholme" (8 August). As always, many thanks to the leaders of these outings.

Mike Leakey, Chairman

GREATHAM CREEK FLOOD ALLEVIATION - SITE VISIT WITH ENVIRONMENT AGENCY

This brief report is a summary of a site visit with Chris Hood of the Environmental Agency. On the 15th May, Mike Leakey and I accompanied Chris on a tour of the flood protection wall on the north side of Greatham Creek and that on Greenabella Marsh adjacent to Seal Sands.

In an earlier newsletter (Number 79; Sept 2021), the general concept of creating two separate habitats on Greenabella Marsh was outlined. The areas will be separated by a newly created sea wall. The existing sea wall adjacent to Greatham Creek will be retained / improved and will incorporate a regulated tidal exchange system comprising a sluice which will enable estuarine waters to ebb and flow with the tidal cycle. However, this cycle will be out of phase with the main tidal cycle because of the constricted nature

of the conduit. At present the flow into the lagoons area is virtually non-existent, presumably because of a defective sluice and/or pipe. The objective is to provide improved intertidal feeding opportunities for birds, similar to the Tidal Pool on the south side of the Creek.

The second sector (covering the portion of Greenabella Marsh fronting the Venator plant) will be bunded to protect the industrial site, and the existing sea wall will be breached in two places to allow the natural tidal cycle to operate freely – rather like the recently saltmarshes created to the North and South, upstream of Greatham Bridge. However, since the level of Greenabella Marsh is significantly lower than that of the Salterns, it is anticipated that most of the new area will develop as mudflat rather saltmarsh.

By breaching the seawall in two locations, a long linear island will result. This, in conjunction with reprofiling the sea wall, will create an opportunity for a high tide roosting site to develop, and with the addition of appropriate substrates, tern breeding could be encouraged too.

Detailed design of this project has started and by autumn, all going well, capital sanction will be given. Spring 2024 should see works commence.

BTO NEWS SUMMER 2023

Breeding Birds Survey and Waterways Breeding Birds Survey

The latest BBS Annual Report (covering 2022) was published at the end of May. It was another excellent year of coverage for BBS and WBBS. For the sixth year in a row, there was record breaking coverage in Scotland, Wales saw a welcome resurgence and there was another year of record participation on the Isle of Man.

The report gives a full suite of trends for the UK, England, Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland and English Regions. Data from the Channel Islands and Isle of Man feed into the UK trends. It presents trends for 118 bird and nine mammal species from BBS data, and trends for 28 bird

species from WBBS data. The Report can be viewed at <http://www.bto.org/bbs-report>

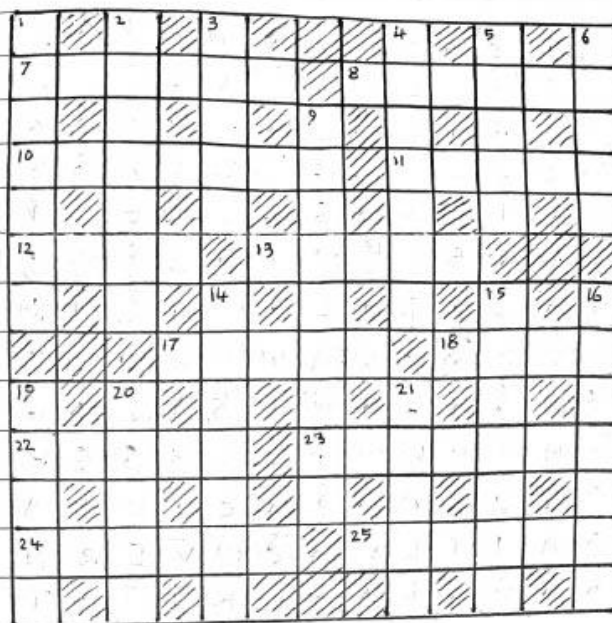
Whilst the BBS data presents a familiar story with respect to farmland birds, particularly with ongoing declines in Turtle Dove, Yellowhammer and others, there are signs of hope for two species in England; Skylark and Corn Bunting, which have shown recent increases. Other features include Blackbird (down in England, especially London; up in Northern Ireland), Rook (with notable declines in Wales leading to its recent Red-listing there) and Buzzard in Scotland (suffering a 22% decrease in a single year, perhaps caused by HPAI).

BBS Trends in North East England over the period 1995-2021 yield several eye-catching statistics. Notable declines include Swift (-78%), Swallow (-38%), House Martin (-44%), Starling (-56%) and Greenfinch (-68%). Species increases include Buzzard (+6154%), Great Spotted Woodpecker (+110%), Chiffchaff (+391%), Blackcap (+96%) and Goldfinch (+165%).

The publication serves to show just how important citizen science and the work of volunteers – both in collecting field data, but also managing and administering their efforts – is to the BTO's wider conservation efforts and having influence where it matters. The report is as much a testament to your work as it is to anyone else's.

The 2023 BBS recording season has now closed, so if you have any outstanding data to input, please do so as soon as possible.

Mike Leakey, BTO Regional Representative for Cleveland



No. 13

ACROSS

DOWN

- | | |
|--|---|
| <p>7 Go to Rio let's look for
colourful bird (6)</p> <p>8 One for sorrow? (6)</p> <p>10 Russian faction of thrush
family? (7)</p> <p>11 Top of a roof (5)</p> <p>12 Nose out of joint for ages (4)</p> <p>13 Bad mannered dog? (5)</p> <p>17 Loose pallet hid part of flower (5)</p> <p>18 Nocturnal New Zealander (4)</p> <p>22 Got rid of some of fifth rewrite (5)</p> <p>23 U.S. songbird will go brown with
misplaced rage (7)</p> <p>24 Shake plant (6)</p> <p>25 A number about right for
river (6)</p> | <p>1. Rare bird seen at Aintree? (7)</p> <p>2. Our hobby (7)</p> <p>3. Level tract of country (5)</p> <p>4. Standard decays cagebirds (7)</p> <p>5. Card in the garden? (5)</p> <p>6. Nothing more than lakes (5)</p> <p>9 Aubergines (9)</p> <p>14 Breakwater (3, 4)</p> <p>15 Monarch allowed small bird (7)</p> <p>16 E.g. warbler for motorway
allowance (7)</p> <p>19 Large bird in the fridge? (5)</p> <p>20 Beast upset some of the
butter (5)</p> <p>21 Mountains upset Danes (5)</p> |
|--|---|

P.T.O

WETLAND BIRD SURVEY TEESMOUTH SPRING 2023 SUMMARY

	April 16	May 14	June 11
Little Grebe	<u>19</u>	9	12
Great Crested Grebe	<u>22</u>	21	21
Cormorant	29	48	<u>71</u>
Mute Swan	19	41	<u>56</u>
Shelduck	<u>355*</u>	255*	270*
Gadwall	167*	131	<u>357**</u>
Teal	<u>478</u>	11	20
Mallard	150	184	<u>223</u>
Shoveler	<u>140*</u>	48	67
Pochard	72	58	<u>92</u>
Tufted Duck	111	<u>132</u>	104
Eider	<u>93</u>	19	12
Coot	221	154	<u>260</u>
Oystercatcher	532	389	<u>542</u>
Avocet	<u>147**</u>	120**	72*
Little Ringed Plover	7	9	<u>13</u>
Ringed Plover	27	<u>141</u>	48
Golden Plover	0	0	0
Grey Plover	<u>32</u>	3	1
Lapwing	213	201	<u>301</u>
Knot	2	<u>6</u>	1
Sanderling	<u>60</u>	0	0
Purple Sandpiper	0	0	0
Dunlin	164	<u>281</u>	5
Ruff	0	<u>2</u>	0
Snipe	0	0	<u>1</u>
Black-tailed Godwit	<u>70</u>	42	18
Bar-tailed Godwit	<u>38</u>	4	0
Curlew	<u>511</u>	111	105
Redshank	<u>477*</u>	19	20
Turnstone	19	<u>29</u>	1
Sandwich Tern	13	7	<u>72</u>
Common Tern	0	105	<u>117</u>
Little Tern	0	<u>35</u>	15

Underlined counts indicate Spring 2023 maxima.

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

** Denotes count of national importance for that species

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 SPRING 2023 SUMMARY

Coverage was excellent with 125 of the scheduled 126 sector counts completed over the three months.

Over this series of counts the Tees Estuary and Hartlepool Bay recording area was nationally important for Gadwall (357, June) and Avocet (147, April). Unlike last year the peak total for Shelduck was not nationally significant this spring.

New record peak spring counts were noted for Greylag (537, June), Shoveler (140, April), Avocet (147, April) and Black-Headed Gull (3670, April). In contrast the peak counts for Snipe (1, June) and Great Black-Backed Gull (7, June) were record lows.

Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) struck numerous breeding seabird colonies around the UK last spring resulting in significant losses of birds at some locations, it was interesting to note that the peak count of Common Tern (117, June) this spring was significantly down on the ten-year average of 331 birds. This year HPAI hit breeding Black-Headed Gull and Common Tern across the Tees Estuary with the number of casualties peaking in late May, it will be interesting to see what impact this will have on the peak count for the two species next spring.

Other interesting records during the spring included 2 Egyptian Geese (Cowpen Marsh, April), 4 Garganey (2 Cowpen Marsh and 2 Big & Old Field, May), 2 Velvet Scoter (Redcar and Coatham Sands South, April), 1 Great White Egret (Haverton Hole Pool, June), 1 Spoonbill (Greatham Creek, May), 1 Curlew Sandpiper (Cowpen Marsh, June), 1 Temminck's Stint (Saltholme Pools Scrape, May), 2 Little Stint (Cowpen Marsh, June), 1 Little Gull (Saltholme Pools Scrape, June) and 1 Caspian Tern (Back Saltholme, June).

Adam Jones

Local Organiser, Tees Estuary WeBS

June 2023

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