

Teesmouth Bird Club Newsletter

Issue 33. Winter 2006

IN THIS ISSUE:

MONTHLY SUMMARY	1
SECRETARY'S NOTES	4
WETLAND BIRD SURVEY	5
NEWS UPDATE FROM THE COMMITTEE	6
ANCIENT HEDGEROWS OF STOCKTON	9
PROFILE : DON PAGE	11

MONTHLY SUMMARY

Photographs for this Summary by Chris Sharp have been kindly provided by Chris Bell, Ian Boustead, David Brown, Geoff Iceton, Steve Keightley and Mike Watson are of the birds referred to in the text.

November 2005

The long staying ringtail Hen Harrier was still present around the North Tees Marshes early in the month and the County's second twitchable Pallid Swift showed superbly at South Gare on 2nd.



PALLID SWIFT, SOUTH GARE
(Ian Boustead)

It spent all day flying around the end of the Gare and over the beach, giving stunning views.



CETTI'S WARBLER, DORMANS POOL
(Steve Keightley)

More elusive and even rarer in Cleveland was a Cetti's Warbler, which was found at Dorman's Pool the same day. It was usually only to be heard calling, or occasionally glimpsed, but was trapped on 9th and confirmed as the first County record. It remained throughout the winter. Two Little Auks were on the sea off South Gare on 3rd.

Over 1400 Pink-footed Geese flew inland at Hummersea on 5th and 7 Whooper Swans were on Scaling Dam the same day. Three Taiga Bean Geese were at Haverton Hole from 13th-14th and a Grey Phalarope showed extremely well in the bay at South Gare during the same period.



GREY PHALAROPE, SOUTH GARE
(Chris Bell)



GREY PHALAROPE, SOUTH GARE
(Mike Watson)

A Bittern appeared at Coatham Marsh on 14th and a late Whinchat was at the Zinc Works Road from 13th-15th. Birders looking for the Bittern at Coatham Marsh on 15th found a Red-necked Grebe and 2 female Ring-necked Ducks appeared there next day.



RING-NECKED DUCK, COATHAM MARSH
(David Brown)

Both birds remained until the end of the winter but were often elusive, as they kept to the edge of the reeds. Another Grey Phalarope flew past South Gare on 16th.

Water Pipits were regular at Haverton Hole, with up to 11 present. An influx of Great Northern Divers from mid-month included 2 at South Gare and 2 different birds on Seal Sands.



GREAT NORTHERN DIVER,
HARTLEPOOL
(Steve Keightley)

Another was in Hartlepool Fish Quay until early December. Sea watching on 26th off Hartlepool Headland produced 6 Little Auks, 2 Pomarine and 3 Arctic Skuas and a Storm Petrel. A Long-tailed Skua was present at dusk on Dorman's Pool the same day and a skua seen there the next morning was presumably the same bird. A first-winter male Desert Wheatear at South Gare on 29th was only the second County record.



DESERT WHEATEAR, SOUTH GARE
(Chris Bell)

It showed well on the rocks at the end of the access road but, unfortunately, was present for less than two hours. Towards the end of the month, Stonechats began to appear in good numbers at their usual coastal localities.



STONECHAT, SEATON COMMON
(Geoff Iceton)

December 2005

Waxwings began to build up from early December, with a small flock in roadside bushes by the Calor Gas Depot at Port Clarence increasing to 105 by the 13th.



WAXWING, SOUTH BANK
(Geoff Iceton)

Another 50 were at South Bank, with other smaller flocks reported from a number of localities. A Red-necked Grebe was off Hartlepool on 5th, whilst another on Reclamation Pool on 7th remained into 2006. A Great Northern Diver was in Greatham Creek from 11th-19th and a Slavonian Grebe regularly commuted between the Reclamation Pond and Seal Sands. A ringtail Hen Harrier, now quite a rare sight in our County, was at Scaling Dam on 11th.



EIDER, HARTLEPOOL
(Mike Watson)

Good numbers of sea duck were off Hartlepool Headland during the month, with regularly 7 Velvet Scoters, 300 Common Scoters and up to 230 Eiders, and a few Shags could also be seen off Parton Rocks.



SHAG, HARTLEPOOL
(Geoff Iceton)

Small numbers of Scaup were seen on 14th, comprising 5 at Hartlepool, 5 on Seal Sands and 2 at Saltholme Pools. A Caspian Gull was present briefly at the Reclamation Pond on 17th before flying north.



TWITE, SEATON SNOOK
(Geoff Iceton)

Twite were present on Greenabella Marsh on Seaton Snook, with up to 85 being counted. The Christmas period was generally quiet. Six Scaup were in Hartlepool Fish Quay on 28th and the same day saw the first Smew of the winter - a redhead on Saltholme Pools.



SMEW, SALTHOLME POOLS
(Geoff Iceton)

A Jack Snipe was here on 30th, with another on Portrack Marsh and a Whooper Swan arrived off the sea at Seaton Carew on 30th. The month ended with 2 Bearded Tits on Coatham Marsh on 31st.

January 2006

Year-listers were out in force in the early in the month. Few new arrivals were on offer but the long staying Ring-necked Ducks, Red-necked Grebes, Slavonian Grebe and Yellow-legged Gull meant there was still plenty to go at. Hawfinch is a tricky bird to catch up with in Cleveland, with the only regular site at Hutton Village, but, as usual, they proved elusive this winter and several visits were often required to connect with this species. Several Mealy Redpolls were present at Cowpen Bewley Pond, along with a Red-necked Grebe and up to 10 Goosanders. Small numbers of Ring-necked Parakeets were seen at a variety of locations in Hartlepool but more reliable were 2 at Acklam Hall Park, Middlesbrough. This species seems set to become a regular in Cleveland, with numbers increasing in the country.

A first-winter Glaucous Gull was at Scaling Dam on 5th, with another at the Reclamation Pond on 11th. A Black-throated Diver was at South Gare on 7th and, the same day, 4 Common Cranes were tracked northwards in the County, over over Redcar, the North Tees Marshes and Hart Warren.



FEM LESSER SCAUP, DORMANS POOL
(Chris Bell)

A female Lesser Scaup was found the same day on the Reclamation Pond. Only the second county record, it remained here and on Dormans Pool until 15th. Several Mediterranean Gulls were present at this time, with adults at Hartlepool, Seaton Carew, Hemlington Lake and Saltburn. Both Great Northern and Black-throated Divers were in the Tees mouth mid-month and South Gare held a regular Long-tailed Duck and up to 30 Snow Buntings.



SNOW BUNTING, SOUTH GARE
(Mike Watson)

Smeew increased mid-month on the North Tees Marshes, with a maximum of 6, including 2 fine drakes.



1st-WINTER ICELAND GULL, SALTHOLME
(Chris Bell)

First-winter Iceland Gulls were off South Gare on 21st, Hartlepool on 22nd and North Tees Marshes from 19th – 29th, the latter bird being unfortunately found dead.



ICELAND GULL, HARTLEPOOL
(Chris Bell)

Two Bearded Tits were on the Long Drag on 22nd. The first-winter Glaucous Gull re-appeared at Scaling Dam on 22nd and 23rd and 7 Taiga Bean Geese at Saltholme on 28th moved to the Haverton area, remaining for a couple of days in what was a poor winter for the rarer goose species in Cleveland.



TAIGA BEAN GEESE, NEAR SALTHOLME
(Geoff Iceton)

Wild swans were also noticeable by their absence, with even Whoopers failing to put in an appearance in the first two months of the year. At least 2 Little Egrets were wintering in the area, with birds occasionally seen around Greatham Creek and also roosting in Rossmere Park.

February 2006



BLACK-TAILED GODWIT, GREATHAM CREEK
(Geoff Iceton)

Despite the cold weather for much of the month the birding in February was fairly quiet, with few birds of note appearing. Several Ruffs were on the North Tees Marshes and up to 30 Black-tailed Godwits were wintering mainly in the Greatham Creek area.

A Lapland Bunting was at Cowbar on 4th – this species continues to get even rarer in Cleveland. Up to 11 Water Pipits were regular at Haverton Hole, up to 5 Slavonian Grebe were on Seal Sands and the long staying Red-necked Grebes were at Cowpen Bewley and Reclamation Pond, with another off Hartlepool Headland reported sporadically.



POCHARD, BILLINGHAM POND
(Geoff Iceton)

A Red Kite just north of Hartlepool

(from 14th) was wing-tagged and had apparently been in the area all winter. It was apparently from the Gateshead re-introduction scheme. Several small flocks of Waxwing were reported mid-month from a variety of locations. The only Little Auk of the winter flew past Hartlepool on 22nd, along with a Little Gull. A flock of 100 Bramblings was at Upleatham on 25th and a Raven in Sleddale on 27th was a rare County visitor. It was seen again next day but not subsequently. A first-winter Glaucous Gull was at Saltburn on 28th and a Little Gull was at South Gare the same day.

Chris Sharp

Note: Apologies for misleading readers of the last Newsletter. The Great Shearwater featured was clearly not either of the 2 birds seen off Hartlepool Headland.

SECRETARY'S NOTES

EMAIL ADDRESSES

In order to cut down on photocopying and postage costs I would be grateful if any members who are not on the Club's emailing list to let me have their email address. Please forward this to chrisandlucia@sharp12756.co.uk

Chris Sharp

LOCAL OUTINGS

The following Local Outings have been arranged for members :-

Friday 28th April	Leven Valley. Meet at Kirkelvington Village Hall on Forest Lane at 8.00am. For further details please contact Alistair McLee (Tel: 01642 787305). Duration 2-3 hours.
Wednesday 17th May	North Tees Marshes, Teesmouth. Meet at the Dormans Pool car park at 10.00am. For further details please contact John Grievson (Tel: 650569). Duration 2-3 hours.
Wednesday 14th June	Nightjar Evening in Guisborough Forest. Meet at Hutton Village at 8.00pm. For further details please contact Chris Sharp (Tel 01642 865163). This visit will be weather-dependent and those intending to go should contact Chris near the date to make sure it is still on. Duration 2-3 hours.

WETLAND BIRD SURVEY

TEESMOUTH WINTER 2005/2006 SUMMARY

	Nov 13	Dec 11	Jan 8	Feb 12	Mar 12	Winter 05/06 maximum as % of average peak count over previous five winters
Little Grebe	<u>42*</u>	11	4	6	7	368%
Great Crested Grebe	<u>30</u>	4	6	1	4	85%
Cormorant	<u>155*</u>	113	47	95	45	81%
Mute Swan	27	29	<u>37</u>	29	<u>37</u>	98%
Greylag Goose	211	<u>239</u>	100	9	68	80%
Shelduck	399*	443*	508*	<u>575*</u>	531*	89%
Wigeon	1073	1606	1639	<u>1506</u>	<u>1765</u>	98%
Gadwall	<u>315**</u>	125*	78	66	83	180%
Teal	471	582	518	<u>937</u>	289	116%
Mallard	283	333	<u>393</u>	312	175	120%
Pintail	<u>48</u>	15	21	35	7	113%
Shoveler	<u>124*</u>	31	38	29	26	86%
Pochard	22	22	<u>64</u>	47	47	72%
Tufted Duck	<u>135</u>	59	83	64	75	115%
Eider	4	21	4	12	<u>27</u>	70%
Goldeneye	18	57	<u>78</u>	73	55	94%
Red-br. Merganser	47	17	24	<u>50*</u>	49*	88%
Coot	1044*	1368*	<u>1632*</u>	837	540	145%
Oystercatcher	<u>1625*</u>	1029	896	1256	788	93%
Ringed Plover	44	<u>46</u>	34	12	43	83%
Golden Plover	549	1110	<u>2433*</u>	2120*	274	248%
Grey Plover	17	33	94	<u>194</u>	159	123%
Lapwing	3970	<u>5334</u>	3782	4176	440	103%
Knot	102	523	<u>2144*</u>	1332	1292	79%
Sanderling	<u>253**</u>	38	<u>129*</u>	89	91	94%
Purple Sandpiper	20	14	8	<u>22</u>	1	23%
Dunlin	77	55	106	53	<u>164</u>	45%
Ruff	3	0	1	<u>4</u>	0	56%
Snipe	18	4	4	<u>40</u>	12	147%
Black-tailed Godwit	<u>36</u>	16	15	11	6	175%
Bar-tailed Godwit	57	49	69	65	<u>82</u>	66%
Curlew	695	<u>715</u>	445	514	293	62%
Redshank	<u>1569***</u>	857*	955*	1393***	1168*	107%
Turnstone	<u>318*</u>	131	189	264*	215	127%

Underlined counts indicate winter 2005/2006 maxima.

* indicates a count of >50% of national significance

** indicates a count of national significance

*** indicates a count of international significance

N.B. 'Teesmouth' includes Hartlepool Bay.

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

Coverage was good, with 112 out of a possible 115 sector counts undertaken over the five months.

The winter was generally average, with most species' peaks not deviating significantly from established norms. However, coot set a new all-time Tees WeBS record (1632, January), which was rather unexpected in midwinter. More predictable new seasonal records came from little grebe (42, November) and gadwall (315, November). Unusually, numbers of shelduck, wigeon and teal all peaked in late winter, perhaps reflecting the relatively cold weather conditions.

As far as the waders were concerned, golden plover provided the highlight, with the 2433 counted in January comprising a new all-time Tees WeBS record. The grey plover peak (194, February) was our best for seven years. Once again, purple sandpipers plumbed new depths, with a maximum of only 22 (February); as recently as 1998/1999 in excess of 200 wintered here! This was also another poor winter for dunlin (164, March).

Black-tailed godwit appears in the summary table for the first time, with a peak of 36 (November). Regular wintering by this species is in fact a surprisingly recent phenomenon; for example, not a single individual was recorded by WeBS in either of the two winters 1998/1999 or 1999/2000. In contrast, maxima of bar-tailed godwit and curlew were down by about a third on the norm; for curlew this was the worst performance for nine years. However, redshank continued to occur in good numbers, the 1569 counted in November constituting our third highest seasonal total on record.

Following this winter's series of counts, and measuring our five-year means of annual winter peaks against the recently-revised criteria for international and national importance, the Tees and Hartlepool Bay WeBS site is of national importance for gadwall and sanderling, and of international importance for redshank. Elevated thresholds mean that cormorant and shoveler both lose their nationally-important status here.

Mike Leahey
WeBS Local Organizer
March 2006

NEWS UPDATE FROM THE COMMITTEE

FIVE-YEAR PLAN

The Five-Year Plan continues to progress well and we are well on course to achieve two of our main targets by 2009: 350 members (we currently stand at nearly 300) and to increase attendance at evening meetings to 70 (2 recent meetings alone achieved 67). Current work includes a new Application Form and a new Club poster, both intended to boost Club membership.

RECLAMATION POND

The Reclamation Pond Working Party has recently met and decided on a plan of action for the immediate future. The main aim of this group is to raise awareness of the major ornithological importance of this site through the collection and presentation of factual evidence; to review the proposals for the compensatory sites; and to do whatever we can to preserve the Reclamation Pond for the immediate future, including getting it designated. We have written to Impetus Reclamation Limited to request an update on the current position and requested further information from Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council, including a copy of the Environmental Statement and plans of the 2 compensatory sites at Cowpen Bewley and Port Clarence Pool, on which TBC has not previously been consulted.

HARTLEPOOL OBSERVATORY

A draft Brief has been circulated for comment. Once approved and amended as necessary, this will be issued to consultants to produce a costed Feasibility Study to realise our ambition for a new bird observatory on the Heugh Lighthouse site. The Study will be used to lever funds from appropriate sources. We will keep you informed of further developments.



HEUGH LIGHTHOUSE, HARTLEPOOL HEADLAND: The proposed location for the new observatory building is on the seaward side of the disused Coastguard Lookout (centre), by kind agreement with PD Teesport.

(Ted Parker)



HEUGH BATTERY – SITE OF THE OLD HARTLEPOOL OBSERVATORY: The old First World War Lookout (right) was used by the Club from 1960 until our eviction in 2004. It became known as 'Hartlepool Observatory' and was soon nationally famous for the range and numbers of seabirds recorded here. It provided important data for the 'Cleveland Bird Report'

TEESSIDE OFFSHORE WIND FARM, REDCAR

Alistair McLee, on behalf of the TBC, met Keith Welford of the DTI on site on 16th December 2005 to outline the Club's concerns over the collision risks to seabirds posed by this development. South Gare was visited and Alistair then attended a de-briefing session with Keith Welford and members of the highly active and professional Redcar group, Save Our Shoreline, Redcar MP, Vera Baird and other representatives from the local community, including several Redcar and Cleveland councillors. To date, the DTI has still not made a decision. Recent new evidence from Germany and other parts of Europe has demonstrated how lethal windfarms can be with regard to collision deaths, with White-tailed Eagles, Red Kites and other raptors being particularly badly affected. We have passed this information on to the DTI.

FISH SHOP TREES, HARTLEPOOL HEADLAND

Hartlepool Borough Council has confirmed that the 2 trees are to be removed at the request of Verrill's Fish Shop. They will, however, be replaced with 6m high semi-mature Sycamores, with root barriers, as part of the Headland Town Square scheme and we consider this to be an acceptable compromise.

NORTHERN GATEWAY TERMINAL, TEESPORT

John Fletcher and Ted Parker attended a presentation on 8th March by environmental consultants, Royal Haskoning, at PD Teesport's offices. The consultants outlined the main conclusions of their Environmental Statement, which is due to be published in the near future. We were pleased to note that TBC's key concerns appear to have been addressed, particularly regarding the disposal of dredged waste. It now appears that this will be disposed of at sea in existing licensed areas off the Tees Mouth, rather than on sensitive terrestrial areas, such as Bran Sands Lagoon. The next stage is for the TBC to scrutinise and comment on the Environmental Statement.

HARTLEPOOL HEADLAND NEW TOWN SQUARE

Work is moving forward on the new Town Square on Hartlepool Headland though progress was halted for some weeks because of an important archaeological find. The fabric of the 'hard' landscaping is now evident and is due to be completed by the summer, following which the tree and shrub planting will be carried out in the winter of 2006-07.



IMAGES OF THE HEADLAND TOWN SQUARE SCHEME, BOROUGH HALL GARDENS
(Images courtesy of Ferguson McIlveen LLP)

NEDL OVERHEAD CABLES AT DORMANS POOL

As nothing appears to have happened since the site meeting last summer, the Club and English Nature have written to NEDL to enquire about the current situation. At the time of going to press, we are still awaiting a reply. We hope that these cables, so lethal to flying birds (particularly swans and gulls), can be re-routed.

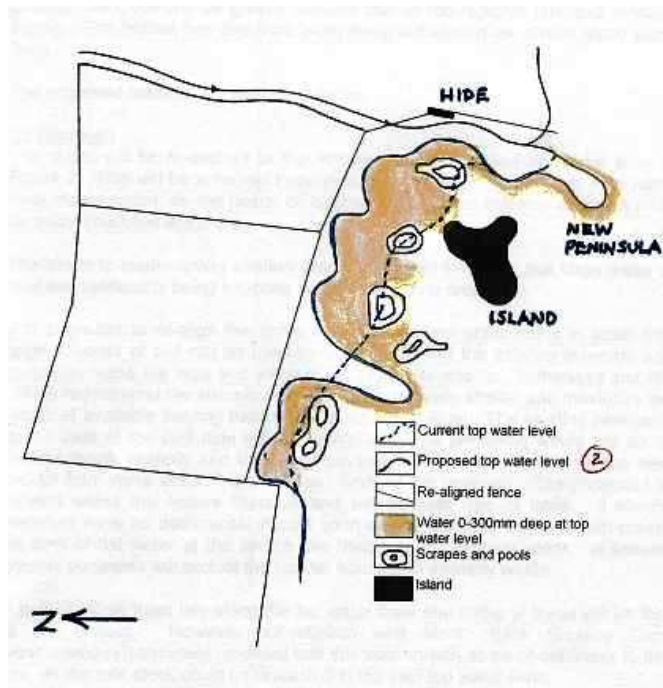
CHANGES TO THE TBC WEBSITE

Jamie Duffie has kindly offered to help with the Club Website and has already started work on some extremely beneficial changes, including a new Photo Gallery, past and present. We have decided to purchase a website at low cost and this has not only allowed us to change the name to a more easily remembered title: www.teesmouthbc.com but also to get rid of the unnecessary adverts. It has created a huge amount of space for bird photographs, the lack of which was the only criticism by 'Birdwatch' magazine's review last year. The changeover may have caused some inconvenience to members, for which we apologise, but the improvements will be of major benefit in the long term. Eric James will continue to update the announcements and bird sightings sections. We would like to thank Jaimie and Eric for their recent work and Rob Little, who was responsible for initially setting up and managing this excellent site.

2005 'CLEVELAND BIRD REPORT'

Please could observers send any photographs or sketches for the 2005 'Cleveland Bird Report' as a matter of urgency to the County Recorder, **Richard Taylor** at 'Stoneybank', Dibdale Road, Neasham, DARLINGTON, Co Durham, DL2 1PF. Tel: 07813 918812. Email: rct@teesmouth.plus.com or recorder.cleveland@gmail.com

SCALING DAM



SCALING DAM HABITAT IMPROVEMENT PROPOSALS
(Image courtesy of Northumbrian Water/Barratt Environmental)

An ambitious scheme to enlarge the shoreline within the Scaling Dam Reserve and create a new 'peninsula', large island, scrapes and pools has been advanced by Northumbrian Water through the preparation of a Feasibility Report by environmental consultants, Barratt Environmental. The Club commented on the proposals and it is hoped that they will go ahead as they will create extensive new habitat for waders and wildfowl. We stressed, however, that the new scheme must go hand-in-hand with continued water level management, which has been so important in recent years to the breeding success of vulnerable species such as Little Ringed Plover.

The reservoir has been entered for the Hanson Bird Challenge 2006, so please record all your bird sightings in the logbook provided in the hide.

Martin Blick and Ted Parker

GUISBOROUGH FOREST MOUNTAIN BIKE CENTRE

Consultants commissioned by Redcar & Cleveland Borough Council held an exhibition in Guisborough on 22nd March to present the results of their Feasibility Study. They conclude that it may be possible to develop an 18-20km sustainable mountain bike route at a low level in the forest, segregated from footpaths and bridleways, with a new centre based at Pinchinthorpe. The latter could include a café, showering facilities and a larger car

park than at the present Visitor Centre. We have sent our initial written comments to the consultants and whilst we have no major concerns at this stage, we have drawn attention to the presence of Nightjars, a Schedule 1 species, in the area. The next stage is for the consultants to prepare outline plans, with routes indicated, for further consultation and seeking out funding.

GUISBOROUGH FOREST - 'FOREST DESIGN PLAN'

It has also been brought to our attention that the Forestry Commission is currently preparing a 'Forest Design Plan' for Guisborough Forest, which is due to be completed in December 2007. It is important that the TBC has an input to this and we have made contact with the Forestry Commission to request that we be consulted.

RSPB SALTHOLME UPDATE

RSPB is still experiencing problems with the grazier and this is clearly an issue that needs to be urgently dealt with, bearing in mind the havoc wreaked by grazing cattle in sensitive reed-bed habitat last year. It is proposed to start construction of the Visitor Centre in October 2006, with its opening planned for spring 2008. The reed beds planted on the new Reserve have taken and, during 2006, work will commence on the paths, hides and new access road. The RSPB hasn't yet managed to secure the Reserve extension site (the saltmarsh at Greatham Creek, extending to the Greatham Tank Farm). Surveys will be undertaken on Water Voles and breeding birds and it is hoped to gather more information on breeding waders. Work will also ensue on a flood evacuation procedure. When the Reserve opens, car parking and access will be free to RSPB members.

Derek Clayton/John Sharp

POACHING

Since Rob King's announcement in the last Newsletter, further incidents have taken place at Saltholme and Scaling Dam, both of which have been reported to the Police and action taken. On behalf of the Club, I have been liaising with Rob King (Cleveland Police) and Jo Faye of North Yorkshire Police to develop guidelines for people when they witness suspicious incidents. It is hoped to publish these in the next Newsletter, add them to our Website and place notices in hides.

For future reference, Rob King's details are: Wildlife Crime Officer, Stockton Police Office, Thistle Green,

STOCKTON-ON-TEES, TS18 1TZ. Tel: 01642 302267; Email: rob.king@cleveland.pnn.police.uk

SHARING BIRD INFORMATION

The Pager numbers to register your bird sightings are as follows:

Birdnet: 01623 511679
Rare Bird Alert: 08707 622622

Please also send your sightings promptly by email or telephone to Eric James, so that these may be put on the Website. Eric's details are tel: 01642 310103; email: clevelandbirdnews@yahoo.co.uk

COPIES OF OLD 'CLEVELAND BIRD REPORTS'

John Fletcher, our new Sales and Publicity Officer, is currently preparing an inventory of Club publications, including back copies of the *'Cleveland Bird Report'*. These are often needed by new members who wish to purchase complete sets of reports or those who wish to purchase specific back copies. If anyone has any old reports that they no longer want, please could these be passed to John Fletcher at one of the evening meetings for possible re-sale.

COMMITTEE FOR RADIOACTIVE WASTE MANAGEMENT (CoRWM) WORKSHOP

At the invitation of CoRWM, John Fletcher and Ted Parker, on behalf of the Club, attended a workshop in Hartlepool on 9th February. CoRWM was set up by the Government to look at the issues surrounding the generation, temporary storage and ultimate disposal of various grades of radioactive waste with key stakeholders around the country, including the nuclear industry. The workshop looked at potential storage and disposal methods and made assessments of the likely impacts of each on humans and the environment through a scoring system. The end result of identified which methods were the more acceptable in the short-, medium- and long-term. The Club received a fee for attending this Workshop from the Environment Council.

ANCIENT HEDGEROWS OF STOCKTON

During 2005, the Wildflower Ark, with the help of a team of volunteers, carried out a study of ancient hedgerows (i.e. over 300 years old) in the borough of Stockton-on-Tees. The importance of hedgerows in the Lower Tees Valley has been recognised by the local Biodiversity Action Plan and this project was intended to help towards increasing our

understanding of their heritage and biodiversity and so contribute towards their conservation.

Research into historical documentation revealed that, during Medieval times, the area had few hedgerows or trees, the landscape being very open. Each village had three or four huge arable fields surrounding it that were collectively farmed by all the villagers. As land ownership and farming practices changed, the huge medieval fields were split up into small fields, a process known as *'Enclosure'*. Throughout the borough of Stockton-on-Tees, this occurred during the 17th century and the majority of hedgerows in the area date from this time. The hedgerow plants needed would have been ordered from nurseries in much the same way as today, although there are some documents relating to other parts of England that suggest seedlings were gathered from local woods or common land.



HEDGE DATING FROM THE ENCLOSURE MOVEMENT, AISLABY

During the study, 505 hedgerows were surveyed and, of these, 389 were considered ancient or partly ancient. Any hedgerows containing established shrubs of Field Maple, Hazel, Dogwood or Guelder Rose were considered ancient. These four species are all poor colonisers of new hedges and so are almost exclusively found in ancient hedgerows. Ancient hedgerows could be distinguished from more recently planted ones within the Stockton area by having four or more shrub or tree species present throughout the hedge, particularly Hawthorn, Blackthorn, Wild Rose and Ash, but also with other species of which Elm (211 hedgerows) and Crab Apple (136) were among the most common. A hedgebank (cam) or half hedgebank was present in most ancient hedgerows, as was a ditch. Sometimes there were recently planted sections within an ancient hedgerow, where a pipeline had been buried or where hedges had been gapped up. The ancient hedgerows surveyed were evenly distributed throughout the Borough, with the exception of the far north where the old field system was changed as part of the creation of Wynyard Park and in urban areas where hedgerows have been removed as part of the urban development. The survey did not cover all the ancient hedgerows in the Borough.

The project also aimed at increasing awareness and understanding of ancient hedgerows locally. An exhibition was placed in libraries and museums in Stockton throughout the autumn of 2005. A leaflet was produced detailing a 2½-mile walk, illustrating various aspects of the ancient and more modern hedgerows near Longnewton, including their previous management. The leaflet is available from libraries and countryside centres in Stockton and can be downloaded from our website www.wildflowerark.org.uk as can a copy of the survey report.



ANCIENT HEDGEROW, BACK LANE, LONGNEWTON

The project was made possible through a grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund, with additional support from Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council and Tees Archaeology. Local farmers kindly gave permission for the hedgerows on their land to be surveyed. The Wildflower Ark has once again been awarded a grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund, this time to survey the hedgerows in the Borough of Redcar and Cleveland. Anyone interested in helping out do please get in touch by giving us a ring on 01642 576611 or e-mail wildflowerark@hotmail.com

Martin Allen and Helen Herring

PROFILE : DON PAGE

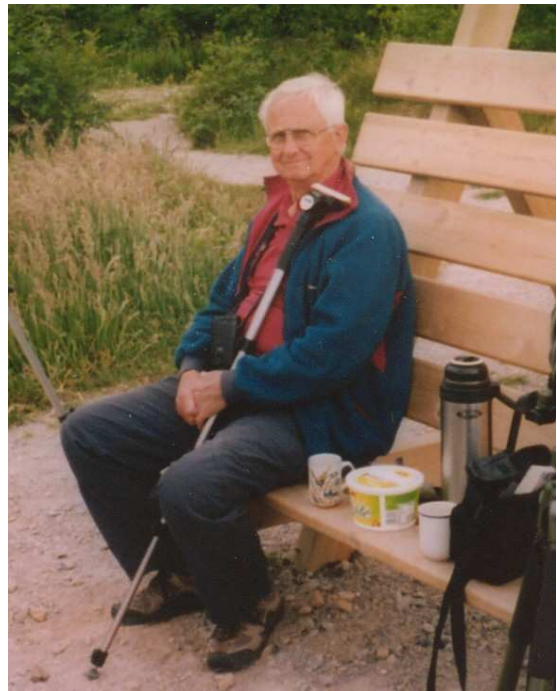
This is the third in a series of profiles on local birders and is based on 'interviews', with set questions. Ted Parker talked to his best friend, long-standing TBC member and former Club Treasurer, Don Page, about his birding life.

Don was born in Whitby in 1934, the youngest of 7 children (3 brothers and 3 sisters) and lived there for 39 years until moving to Guisborough to take up a position as Branch Manager with the TSB in the town, where he still lives. During his early years, he was a keen footballer, playing for 2 local Whitby teams and he also rowed for the Fishermen's Rowing Club.

Don has been birding for as long as he can remember and started, like many of us in our early years, by egg collecting! He is in the top 10 of Cleveland Listers and has seen 327 species in the County, the most recent being Great Shearwater at Hartlepool Headland, Cetti's Warbler at Dormans Pool and Yellow-legged Gull, courtesy of a recent 'split' by the BOU. His local patch is Scaling Dam, which he visits on a regular basis, and his favourite alternative site is Hummersea, which has a tendency to turn up scarce or rare species with amazing regularity. He is a typical Yorkshireman and is not impressed by status but respects achievement and expertise. He is warm and generous and is always a good bet for a cup of coffee or two from his bottomless flask!

Don's optics are a Swarovski ATD80 'scope with 30x extra wide-angle lens and Leica 8 x 32 binoculars, both of which he has used for many years. When asked what is his favourite bird book, Don had no hesitation in saying the Collins 'Bird Guide', which he particularly likes because of the quality of the illustrations and the precise but succinct text. His associated interest is butterflies. Don said that the most impressive birding site he has visited is Dermirkazik in Turkey first, because of the spectacular mountain scenery in the dawn sunlight and, secondly, because all of his target birds were seen here with relative ease – Caspian Snowcock, Radde's Accentor, Crimson-winged Finch and Wallcreeper. His best birding day in Cleveland was many years ago during a spectacular 'fall' of migrants, when he saw 24 species of bird in the Fish Shop Trees at Hartlepool Headland, including all 3 flycatchers in a single tree. His best personal find was an impressive 5 Rough-legged Buzzards at Baysdale in 1973, with 4

lingering for some weeks in nearby Bransdale, allowing many birders to enjoy this rare sight in the UK.



DON AT WYKEHAM FOREST RAPTOR VIEWPOINT

When asked about his biggest birding disappointment, Don was prophetic: "I'm a pessimist, so I'm never disappointed!" but then went on to say that it was probably two gruelling, failed trips for Britain's first Ancient Murrelet at Lundy Island, Devon in ?????? Without doubt, the most memorable bird he has ever seen is Lanceolated Warbler, down to a couple of feet at Beidaihe, China in May 2000, during a trip he made with other Teesside birders. Don's ambition bird is Gyr Falcon. When asked about his most embarrassing moment, he was again prophetic: "I've had loads of them and can't pin one down!"

The biggest changes Don has seen in our area have been habitat destruction around the Tees Estuary. His aspirations for the future include seeing more young people coming in to birding, though he acknowledges the difficulties of achieving this in an age of computers, which doesn't encourage youngsters to leave their homes! He would also like to see the RSPB take over and manage Dormans Pool as part of their new Saltholme Reserve and see a continually strengthening relationship between the Club and the RSPB – a view that many of us would echo.

Editor: Ted Parker, Technical Advisers: Rob Little/Jamie Duffie, Distributor: Chris Sharp
Address: All correspondence to 9 Morton Carr Lane, Nunthorpe, Middlesbrough, TS7 0JU.

Email: ecparker@supanet.com

TBC Website: www.teesmouthbc.com

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