

Teesmouth Bird Club Newsletter

Issue 40 published August 2008

MONTHLY SUMMARY

Chris Sharp summarises the main events of a very eventful spring period, which produced one of the best falls of migrants for many years. Please note that this report is a diary of events and records of scarce or rare species have yet to be ratified by the Club's Records Sub Committee and BBRC. Images have been kindly supplied by Martin Blick, Malcolm Corps, Ian Forrest, Tom Francis, Steve Keightley, Renton Charman, Paul Macklin, John Money and Martyn Sidwell.

MARCH

Early March saw the Hume's Yellow-browed Warbler still at Norton Churchyard and it was last reported on 25th. The wintering juvenile Rough-legged Buzzard was regularly seen in Sleddale and the landfill sites around the Tees estuary continued to attract small numbers of Iceland and Glaucous Gulls. A small mixed flock of Redpolls at Billingham Bottoms contained 1 or 2 Mealies. Jack Snipe numbers peaked at 5 at Portrack Marsh and, nearby, the regular adult Yellow-legged Gull was faithful to its usual lamp post at the Tees Barrage. Up to 34 Twites were around Greenabella Marsh or Seaton Snook and a Long-eared Owl regularly roosted in bushes at Haverton Hole during the first half of the month but was often difficult to find.

A drake Green-winged Teal was found at Back Saltholme on 6th but only stayed for the day and was the 16th Cleveland record of this North American species. A Taiga Bean Goose was reported here the following day but again did not linger. A very early Swallow was over Marske on 9th and the wintering Black Redstart was still on the sea defences at Skinningrove at this time. A juvenile Eurasian White-fronted Goose at Scaling Dam on 11th was the first of a series of good birds this spring from this now well-watched site. A single Green Sandpiper regularly frequented the Fire Station Pool and a Long-tailed Duck showed well off the Power Station. Water Pipits increased to 18 around Haverton Hole.



ROUGH-LEGGED BUZZARD, SLEDDALE

Martyn Sidwell



MEALY REDPOLL, BILLINGHAM BOTTOMS

Ian Forrest

Sleddale was particularly attractive to birds of prey mid-month. In addition to the Rough-legged Buzzard, Hen Harrier, Peregrine, Common Buzzard and Goshawk were all seen. The first Sand Martin was reported from 16th and on the same date a Spoonbill circled over Portrack Marsh for 5 minutes. Sea-watching from Hartlepool Headland produced single Black-throated and Great Northern Divers and a Puffin. Several small flocks of Pink-footed Geese passed through the North Tees Marshes at this time.



TUNDRA BEAN GOOSE, SCALING DAM

Martin Bick



LONG-EARED OWL, HAVERTON HOLE

Ian Forrest

Five Wheatears were on Seaton Common on 17th and a Red-necked Grebe was off Hartlepool Headland, where it remained into April, attaining stunning summer plumage before its departure. A White Stork of unknown origin was seen circling over Leven Bank on 20th and a movement of Whooper Swans on the same date saw 19 at Dorman's Pool, 15 at Scaling Dam and 10 past Hartlepool. A single Manx Shearwater off Hartlepool Headland on 25th was the first of the year. Record numbers of white-winged Gulls continued to be seen at this time with a peak of 5 first-winter Glaucous Gulls at Cowpen Bewley Tip on 21st. It is thought that many more individuals were involved in the movement through the area during the month. A Great Skua and 2 Velvet Scoters were off Hartlepool Headland on 23rd and the Black-throated Diver reappeared in Jackson's Landing after an absence of a few weeks. A Spotted Redshank graced the Tidal Pool on 25th and a Tundra Bean Goose joined the White-fronted Goose at Scaling Dam, staying into May. An impressive 20 Whooper Swans arrived at the Reclamation Pond on 28th and a Scaup was also present. On the same date, 2 Little Ringed Plovers were at Scaling Dam and 40 Whooper Swans flew past Hartlepool Headland the following day.



LONG-TAILED DUCK, SEATON CHANNEL

Ian Forrest

APRIL

The month started well on 1st with 2 Avocets on Back Saltholme and an early Willow Warbler sang at Scaling Dam the same day. A female Marsh Harrier at Dorman's Pool on 2nd was the first of a series of spring records. An untagged Red Kite visited Sleddale from 3rd-4th and a Greenshank around Greatham Creek from 6th-9th was one of the few spring records this year of this species in what was generally a poor spring for passage waders. Numbers of even the commoner species were lower than previous years. Always a stunning sight, a summer-plumaged Black-necked Grebe was on Back Saltholme on 9th but only stayed for the day. An Egyptian Goose joined the Pink-feet, Bean and White-fronted Geese at Scaling Dam on 9th. Yellow Wagtails appeared on 9th and a Common Sandpiper the following day. The latter date also saw a Spoonbill on Back Saltholme, where it remained until 12th. Ring Ouzels and Tree Pipits were reported from 12th and a drake Mandarin was in Locke Park on this date.



RED-CRESTED POCHARD, BOWESFIELD MARSH
Malcolm Corps



RING OUZEL, SEATON COMMON

Ian Forrest

A pair of Garganey was on Back Saltholme and a resplendent drake Red-crested Pochard appeared on Bowesfield Marsh the same day, where it remained for several weeks. Up to 6 Avocets were around Greatham Creek at this time and it was no surprise when 3 pairs attempted to breed in the area. After several failed attempts, 2 pairs bred successfully on the island on Greatham Saline Lagoon, the first successful breeding of this species in Cleveland. With the new RSPB Saltholme reserve only a few hundred metres away one wonders how many more pairs we might have in the future. An adult Yellow-legged Gull was on Seaton Common on 14th and Whitethroat and Reed Warbler were present at Dormans Pool from 15th.



AVOCETS, SALINE LAGOON

Renton Charman



RED-NECKED GREBE, HARTLEPOOL

Ian Forrest

A pair of Mandarin was at Ward Jackson Park on 16th and added to the exotic birds in this attractive park, with the now regular Ring-necked Parakeets being very obliging at this time. A Great Grey Shrike was at Scaling Dam from 17th-21st, but was often elusive. Two Ring Ouzels on Seaton Common showed well from 19th, on which date the first Swift was seen over Saltholme Pool. The first Cuckoo was at North Gare on 22nd and, the following day, a Red-rumped Swallow flew past a single, lucky observer at Marske Headland. This was the 5th Cleveland record, all having been seen by single observers. A long-stayer would be much appreciated!

Common Terns were around Back Saltholme from 26th and 45 Black-tailed Godwits were on Port Clarence Pools on this date. Seven Barnacle Geese were around Saltholme at this time and 2 Curlew Sandpipers were present here on 27th, along with a Little Gull. A male Firecrest sang in Locke Park on this date and a Black Redstart was at North Gare. A Rough-legged Buzzard was present at Scaling Dam on 28th and 29th, and a Whinchat was on Greenabella Marsh from 30th.

MAY

A Spoonbill was at Scaling Dam on 2nd and, based on plumage characters, what was presumably the same bird appeared at Back Saltholme the following day. A small fall of migrants on 3rd included several Lesser Whitethroats and a first-year male Subalpine Warbler at Brotton showed well by the Cleveland Way; it was the 7th Cleveland record and the first since 2002. A Dark-bellied Brent Goose lingered around the Tidal Pool at this time and several Wood Sandpipers passed through Back Saltholme. A Redstart on Eston Moor on 4th was a possible breeding record of this increasingly rare species in Cleveland and Locke Park held a Scaup, a drake Garganey and 2 Common Sandpipers on the same day. The Garganey was part of a small influx into Cleveland, which included others at Bowesfield Marsh, Margrove Ponds and up to 5 at Back Saltholme.



GARGANEY, SALTHOLME

Steve Keightley



HEN HARRIER, DORMANS POOL

Ian Forrest

A ring-tailed Hen Harrier at South Gare from 2nd-4th moved to the north side of the river and was around Dormans Pool until 7th. Heavy rain on 4th saw 3 Black Terns appear on Back Saltholme. Common migrants on the coast from 4th-5th included 8 Whinchats at Boulby/Hummerssea and a Spotted Flycatcher at Cattersty Gill. A Temminck's Stint was on Seaton Common on 5th and a Black Stork flying low over the car park at Scaling Dam on 6th must have been an exhilarating sight for the lone observer. It appeared to land but despite an extensive search could not be relocated. Another Temminck's Stint was at Back Saltholme on 7th, along with 8 Little Gulls and 2 Black Terns. A Curlew Sandpiper was present here the following day and Temminck's Stints increased to 3 on Seaton Common on 9th. Small numbers of Black Terns continued to appear on Back Saltholme over the next few days and another Spoonbill was present from 9th-13th. Small numbers of migrants were reported from the coast mid-month, with the odd Spotted Flycatcher and Garden Warbler amongst the birds seen.



WHINCHAT, GREENABELLA MARSH

Ian Forrest



WOOD WARBLER, SOUTH GARE

Martyn Sidwell

A Wood Warbler sang at Hutton Gate on 14th and it is some years since this species was last recorded breeding in Cleveland. Three Marsh Harriers were around the North Tees Marshes at this time and a Greenshank was at Greatham Creek on 17th. Three Baikal Teals at Scaling Dam on 21st included a stunning male and continued the trend of exotics occurring at this site. Two White-faced Whistling Ducks were also here on 24th. A Little Stint and a summer-plumaged Spotted Redshank were on Back Saltholme on 22nd, the former remaining until 25th. An Icterine Warbler was trapped at Hartlepool Headland on 24th but was not seen after release. Both Pied and Spotted Flycatchers were also here on this date and a superb summer-plumaged Great Northern Diver was close inshore. A Bittern was seen in flight over Dormans Pool on 25th - an unusual date for Cleveland.



ICTERINE WARBLER, HARTLEPOOL

Tom Francis



RED-BREASTED FLYCATCHER, SOUTH GARE

John Money



SHORT-TOED LARK, RECLAMATION POND

Martyn Sidwell

One of the best spring falls in Cleveland in recent years occurred from 28th, when a Red-breasted Flycatcher and a Wood Warbler were found at South Gare, a male Red-backed Shrike was at Seaton Common and another Icterine Warbler was at Hartlepool Headland and, amazingly, a second Subalpine Warbler. Several Spotted Flycatchers were also seen at coastal sites, along with a few Whinchats. The 29th saw another Red-backed Shrike and a Marsh Warbler on Coatham Marsh.



RED-BACKED SHRIKE, SEATON COMMON

Ian Forrest



SUBALPINE WARBLER, HARTLEPOOL

Phil Macklin

Another Marsh Warbler was found at Hartlepool Headland and 3 Common Rosefinches singing in North Gare Bushes were the first records since 2002. Birds continued to arrive on 30th, with a summer-plumaged Red-throated Pipit being seen briefly at Dormans Pool. Astonishingly, birders trying to relocate this bird found a Short-toed Lark at the nearby Reclamation Pond. Another Common Rosefinch sang from bushes on the Long Drag, this time an adult male, and another Marsh Warbler sang at North Gare. A Hobby flew over Seaton Common on the same date. A Red-backed Shrike was at South Gare and 2 Spoonbills were on Back Saltholme. Yet another Red-backed Shrike was at Seaton Common on 31st, this time a drabber female and, frustratingly, a possible Great Snipe was flushed from here but could not be relocated. Yet another Common Rosefinch was on Coatham Marsh and an Osprey over Dormans Pool brought to an end a fabulous few days of birding in Cleveland.



COMMON ROSEFINCH, NORTH GARE BUSHES

Ian Forrest



GREENSHANK, SALINE LAGOON

Ian Forrest

JUNE

After the excesses of the previous month, June was comparatively quiet. A Long-eared Owl was at North Gare and 2 Red-backed Shrikes, a male and female, were at Cowbar on 2nd, and another male was at South Gare from 1st-3rd. Ospreys were seen over Saltholme on 4th and Wilton on 5th. A White Stork flew west over Acklam Hall on 8th, with a Marsh Harrier on Dormans Pool the same day. Nightjars returned to their regular haunt in Guisborough Forest and 2 Garganeys were at Saltholme on 9th. Several small flocks of Common Crossbills were reported mid-month and up to 9 Little Gulls frequented Back Saltholme. A Red Kite near Hart Village on 12th was possibly one of the Derwent Valley birds and was rumored to have been around Dalton Piercy for several weeks. Sea-watching at Hartlepool Headland on 12th and 13th produced good numbers of Manx Shearwaters, with 131 on the latter date. Small numbers of Puffins and Arctic Skuas were also seen and a striking summer-plumaged Black-throated Diver flew past on 12th. One or 2 Roseate Terns were on Seaton Snook on 22nd and a Spotted Redshank was seen at Greatham Creek the same day. A pair of Common Sandpipers bred at Scaling Dam and this was the first proven breeding record in Cleveland since 1996. A Quail was singing at Grinkle Park on 25th, with another near Pinchinthorpe later in the month. A Little Stint was on Back Saltholme from 26th-28th and 3 Spotted Redshanks were on Greatham Creek on 27th. A Hobby flew west along the cliffs at Skinningrove on 28th. Wader passage during the last few days of the month included up to 7 Little Ringed Plovers and 3 Common Sandpipers at Greatham Creek; hopefully a prelude to a good autumn for wader species in Cleveland.

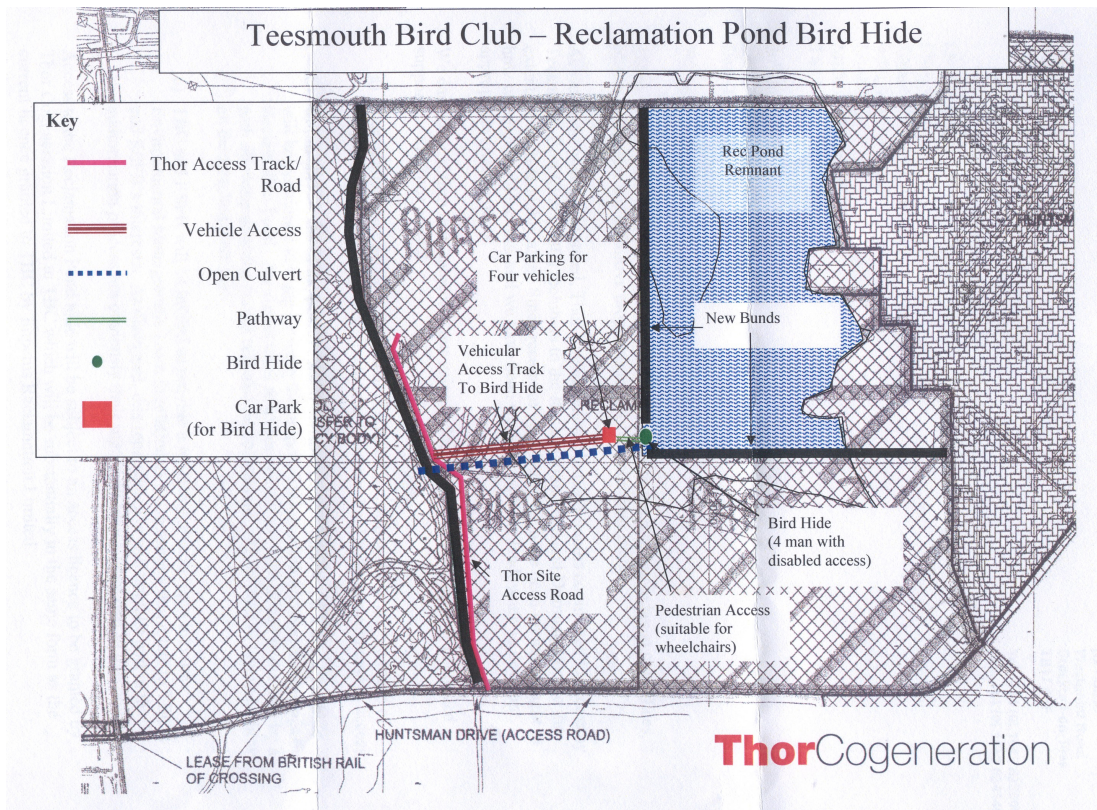
NEWS UPDATE FROM THE COMMITTEE

ACCESS TO SEATON SNOOK AND THE POWER STATION FIELD

On 5th June 2008, Club Chairman, Ted Parker, had a meeting with representatives of the Civil Nuclear Constabulary (CNC) and Harbour Police to try and resolve past and ongoing issues regarding access to the Power Station Field and Seaton Snook, which are owned by PD Teesport. PD Teesport is happy for us to go on to their land and have made this clear to the CNC. The farmer who leases the field from PD Teesport for horse grazing is also happy for us to use it. The meeting was very cordial and useful and a copy of the Minutes can viewed on the Website. Please carry a valid TBC membership card with you, as you may well be asked to produce this. We have to respect the fact that power stations are COMAH sites and the police have a statutory duty to protect them, including 'stop and question'. Please be courteous at all times and if you see the police, talk to them and tell them what birds are about. Should there be any incidents which give cause for concern, however, please contact me and I will raise them with Sgt Elliot.

RECLAMATION POND

Following 18 months of meetings and discussions, the Club has now withdrawn its objection to the Thor Cogeneration Limited development on the land between Dormans Pool and the Reclamation Pond. After raising concerns about the level of mitigation and future access, the Chairman and Vice-Chairman attended a meeting with representatives of the Department for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform on 20th June to try and resolve these outstanding issues. The meeting was also attended by the key members of Thor's project team and representatives of Natural England, Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council and RSPB.



SKETCH PLAN COURTESY OF THOR COGENERATION LIMITED

The outcome was Thor's agreement to provide a new hide at Dormans Pool, by the upper car park; to resurface the approach trackway to this from Huntsman Drive; to provide a new, four-man hide in the southeast corner of the retained part of the Reclamation Pond (with drivable track to it); and to provide funds for the future improvement of Dormans Pool. Access to both hides will be maintained for Teessmouth Bird Club members, both during and after construction of the energy plant, though when the final Phase 4 of the Reclamation Pond is infilled in approximately 8-9 years time, access will be then terminated. Improvements to the steep-sided mound bordering the eastern side of Dormans Pool are also proposed. Access to the Reclamation Pond hide will be for Teessmouth Bird Club members only and Thor will require us to enter into a Legal Access Agreement, similar to the one we now have with Impetus for Dormans Pool.

Those of us involved in this difficult project feel that the Club has achieved as much as it possibly could and we are grateful for the co-operation of Thor Cogeneration Limited and Impetus Reclamation Limited in reaching a satisfactory conclusion.

HARTLEPOOL OBSERVATORY

Work is progressing on the Feasibility Study for the new observatory. The site survey has been completed, which included a survey of the existing Coastguard building, and our architectural consultants,

Jane Darbyshire and David Kendall Limited (JDDK) have come up with some exciting initial concept designs. The scheme has not, however, proved as simple as we first thought, with uncertainties over the future of the communications mast, used by HM Coastguard, the need to avoid obstructing the light beam from the lighthouse and the possibility of utilising the old Coastguard lookout. It is hoped that these issues will be resolved with PD Teesport in the near future.

MEMBERSHIP SUBSCRIPTIONS

The collection of annual members' subscriptions to the Club is causing us problems through a significant proportion of very late payments. These make more work for our Membership Secretary, Chris Sharp, deny the Club funding to carry out its work and costs us money in sending out reminders. Members should also be aware that we are now expected to show a VALID membership card when requested by security guards at Dormans Pool, the Reclamation Pond or around the Power Station. One of the main benefits of Club membership is that, under the terms of our Legal Licence Agreement with Impetus Reclamation Limited, you have access to the former two sites but only if you are a paid-up member of the Teessmouth Bird Club. It is in all our interests, therefore, that members make early payments and we would be grateful if this could be adhered to in the future.

SHARING BIRD INFORMATION

Members are requested to put all significant sightings onto the Pager Services, as follows:

Rare Bird Alert	02070 382820
Birdnet	01623 511679

Please submit your sightings to Eric James for inclusion on the Club's Website (tel: 01642 310103; email: clevelandbirdnews@yahoo.co.uk) or enter them directly onto the Website via the 'Sightings' section.

TEESSIDE OFFSHORE WINDFARM, REDCAR

Redcar and Cleveland Council is opposed to the windfarm and has had an initial hearing at the High Court in London on 30th June and 1st July 2008. The hearing was called as a result of a High Court Judge considering that there were sufficient grounds to move to this first step in the Appeal process. Unfortunately, the outcome was that the Judge saw no reason to hold a Public Inquiry or a Judicial Review. The Council is waiting for formal written confirmation of this decision before it decides whether to appeal or not.

It now seems almost certain that the windfarm will go ahead. In view of this, the Club is going to conduct its own beached bird survey before, during and after construction to monitor its impact on collision risks to seabirds, which we consider to be a key environmental concern.

The regular counters for the national Beached Bird Survey have kindly agreed to undertake at least one visit per month to their existing designated sites, in addition to their normal counts. However, for completeness, we need all members to send in records of birds found dead on Cleveland's beaches, starting on 1st November 2008 until further notice. If you find a dead bird, please make brief details of the species (if identifiable), date, time, weather, location (as precisely as possible), state of the sea/tide and any visible signs of damage to the corpse, such as missing body parts, lacerations, etc., excluding those you think may have been caused by scavengers, such as gulls. If appropriate, photograph the corpse. A special form has been devised to help you record your sightings and this can be downloaded off the Website in the near future or obtained from Vic Fairbrother (tel 01287 633744). All records should be sent to Vic at 8 Whitby Avenue, Guisborough, TS16 7AP (or email: vic.fairbrother@ntlworld.com)

This information is vital, as monitoring of offshore windfarms is still very much in its infancy in the UK and is normally undertaken solely by consultants employed by the energy industry. The forms only take a few minutes to complete, so please send in your records.

Ted Parker

A SCOTTISH 'TWITCH' FOR DRAGONFLIES

*It is normal for birders to 'twitch' rare birds but with many of our members now becoming avid butterfly, dragonfly and damselfly watchers, extended trips to connect with uncommon species in these groups are now more frequent than ever. Here **Graham Megson** and **Mark Askew** report on a recent trip they made to the north of Scotland in July in search of both dragonflies and birds.*

Following a late evening drive to Speyside, we were up at 7am on Saturday 5th July to check the roadside pool at NH 966193 at Loch Garten, Speyside, where we found a **Large Red Damselfly** and our first target species - 2 **Northern Damselflies**. These were inactive and dew-covered, resting on rushes on the bankside vegetation. Although we did not spend long here, we noted Common Buzzard, Hooded Crows, a family of Great Spotted Woodpeckers and a Crested Tit party high up in the Caledonian scots pine canopy. We also saw the odd Crossbill flying over ... and I mean 'odd' ... because there is now much controversy over their identification. We checked Loch Vaa but for the first time ever failed to see Slavonian Grebes here, with Little Grebes being in residence instead. At this early stage of the trip, Graeme Joynt kindly phoned Mark to alert us to a Terek Sandpiper in the estuary, a Cleveland tick some 400 miles back home!

Moving quickly on to capitalise on a glorious day, we drove to Inverness, down Loch Ness and west to Loch Dubh (NH 370323), east of Cannich. After a spell of cloud, the sun came out and we located our second target dragonfly with 3 **Brilliant Emeralds**. This is a very easy loch to search and other species included 1 **Four-spot Chaser** and 4 **Common Blue** and 1 **Large Red Damselflies**.



DOWNY EMERALD

Mark Askew



GOLDEN-RINGED DRAGONFLY

Mark Askew

From here we headed further west to the Glen Affric area (NH 197234) and walked to the raised bogs and lochans. We were hoping for good views of the delightful **White-faced Darter** but, unfortunately, only saw 1 briefly in flight. This species seems particularly hard to track in flight and rather than seeing it patrolling pools, one needs to disturb it from vegetation. Away from the raised bog with its wonderful smell of bog rosemary, we made a circuit of a small loch and watched 5 **Downy Emeralds**. Bird-wise we saw Crested Tit, Osprey, Crossbill, Siskin and Raven. We also found small **Pearl-bordered Fritillary**, **Large Heath** and **Common Blue Butterflies**. Interesting plants were wild golden rod, chickweed wintergreen and masses of the bright yellow bog plant, bog asphodel. Our tally for this site was as follows: 1 **White-faced Darter**, 5 **Downy Emeralds**, 20 **Four-spot Chasers**, 2 **Golden-ringed Dragonflies**, 30 **Large Red** and 50 **Common Blue Damselflies**.

We next drove into Wester Ross and stopped at a well-known dragonfly site on Loch Maree at Bridge of Grudie. Despite a warm temperature and continuous sunshine, the pools and bogs were largely insect-free and the only **Northern Emerald** we saw was 1 briefly in flight. Brief views were also obtained of a mature male **Highland Darter** (the northern form of Common Darter and possibly a full species). Song Thrush and Spotted Flycatcher were seen here and at a number of other places on this trip. Other species recorded here were: 1 **Four-spot Chaser** and 1 **Blue**, 5 **Emerald** and 2 **Common Blue Damselflies**.

We spent late afternoon at the northwest end of Loch Maree, at Tollie Bay (NG 869781), where we searched in vain for our last target species, the **Azure Hawker**. However, despite surveying every boulder lit by sunshine we did not find one. Azure Hawkers bask on boulders but the only animals doing this here were 2 common lizards and a **Common Hawker**. A fly-by **Northern Emerald** and 2 female **Highland Darters** were logged, along with 2 **Golden-ringed Dragonflies** and my first Meadow Brown Butterflies of the year, supported by small Pearl-bordered Fritillaries. A greater butterfly orchid in full flower was rather easier to photograph than the dragonflies. Bird

interest was provided by Common Buzzard, Raven, Hooded Crow, Stonechat, Lesser Redpoll and Siskin.



BRIDGE OF GRUDIE, LOCH MAREE

Graham Megson

We ended the day on the coast opposite Gruinard Island, where White-tailed Eagle has been seen in the past, but not during our visit. A small dune system was colonised by Sand Martins and an Arctic Skua was on the sea, while fragrant orchids were flowering on the coastal turf. The day ended with prolonged views of an otter swimming, diving, eating and then coming ashore below us, as the sun set over Gruinard Bay. During the day we had seen 13 species of *odonata*, failing with just Azure Hawker, which was disappointing, as we were in the right place at the right time with the right weather. Other naturalists reported that they had not seen this species either, and as this location is its stronghold, this is a bit worrying.



NORTHERN DAMSELFY

Graham Megson



GREATER BUTTERFLY ORCHID Graham Megson

On Sunday 6th July, despite early sunshine, a thin veil of cloud soon covered the sky and a cool breeze set in. We returned to Tollie Bay but could only find **Common Blue Damselflies**. Keen to see summer-plumaged divers, we checked roadside lochs and the sea and at Gairloch found immaculate Red-throated Divers, Razorbills and a party of 4 adult Black-throated Divers close in.

Re-tracing our steps we returned to Bridge of Grudie on Loch Maree where we had the last of the warmth and weak sunshine but not enough to bring dragonflies forth. A quick search in the Scots pinewood produced a single Creeping Lady's Tresses in bud and the rare Lesser Twayblade which had just finished flowering. We scanned the mountain ridges and, in the distance, 2 majestic Golden Eagles soared in and out of view.

Further along the loch is the Beinne Eighe National Nature Reserve but by now the rain had set in and all we saw was a summer-plumaged Black-throated Diver. As we re-entered the world of telecommunication signals, news that the Terek Sandpiper was still present reached us and we calculated that if Mark drove just about non-stop through the worsening rain, fog and spray (not dissimilar to what Lewis Hamilton had driven through to win the British grand prix) we could reach Teesside before dark. This we did, spotting 2 Red Kites on the Black Isle as we sped through. At 8.30pm, we hauled 'scopes out of the boot and focussed on the Terek Sandpiper - a brilliant end to a rewarding trip.

Graham Megson and Mark Askew

THE CIVIL NUCLEAR CONSTABULARY

Following a recent meeting between the TBC and Civil Nuclear Constabulary, the CNC reviews its origins, role and functions as they affect Hartlepool and other nuclear power stations.

ORIGINS AND STRUCTURE

You may have heard of the Civil Nuclear Constabulary (CNC) or of the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority Constabulary (UKAEAAC), which it replaced, but how much do you really know about this organisation and the role that it plays in protecting the Critical National Infrastructure against terrorism?

The CNC came into being on 1st April 2005, as directed by Chapter 3 of the Energy Act 2004. The senior command team is headed by a Chief Constable, supported by a Deputy and an Assistant Chief Constables. The Constabulary is maintained by the Civil Nuclear Police Authority, an independent, executive, Non-Departmental Public Body, which operates under the strategic direction of the Department for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform (formerly the Department of Trade and Industry).

The CNC has more than 800 police officers and staff operating at 17 locations throughout the UK. Its headquarters are at Culham in Oxfordshire and its training centre is in Cumbria. (See **www.cnc.police.uk** which also provides links to related web sites). Since its inception as a stand-alone Force, the CNC has been more willing to promote the important role it performs as a specialist armed police service dedicated to the civil nuclear industry (military nuclear being the responsibility of the Ministry of Defence), namely providing protection for civil nuclear licensed sites and nuclear power stations, safeguarding nuclear materials and policing nuclear site operators and regulators.

The CNC is structured in the same way as Home Office and Scottish Executive (HO & SE) Police Forces. Ranks, departments and command structure are the same, with three Basic Command Units (BCUs) and incident command based on the principles of Gold / Silver / Bronze. It has the ability to quickly set up a gold command suite at its HQ and it has recently commissioned a well-equipped command vehicle. CNC officers have the same powers as their HO & SE police colleagues, with some geographical restrictions. Constabulary officers are trained to national standards across a wide range of nationally accredited disciplines, including firearms instructing, police search advising, dealing with Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear incidents, counter-terrorist work, emergency planning, road escort, marine escort; the list goes on.

NUCLEAR POLICING

As a consequence of 9/11 and 7/7, the Government expanded the field of operations for the CNC to encompass the protection of nuclear power stations. This led to an increase in establishment and a recruitment programme, which attracted a number of officers retiring from HO & SE police forces and some transferees, thereby providing additional, valuable, experienced resources particularly at a supervisory level. At the same time, the CNC reviewed its patrol strategy to counter the terrorist threat, taking a more proactive approach and patrolling outside the site perimeter. Integral to the CNC is a close working partnership with HO & SE police forces at each location where CNC have jurisdiction and, to that end, the Constabulary has memoranda of understanding for issues of interoperability/primacy with those host Police Forces.

Because of the nature of the work performed by the CNC, issues of civil nuclear security are taken seriously and kept under constant review. Delivering counter-terrorist operations is a key policing role and is part of the security regime at nuclear sites, not only to counter the threat from international and domestic terrorism but also from the actions of certain organisations opposed to the nuclear industry, as well as the possible threat from "insiders" who may cause damage to national interests by improper disclosure of information. To counter the threats, the CNC places a high priority on security vetting and intelligence gathering, using the UK Government Protective Marking Scheme as the standard for all forms of communication. Major exercises are also held regularly, based on counter-terrorist scenarios and involve a range of other agencies, including site operators and regional police, thereby providing opportunities to test emergency plans, disaster and crisis management. The CNC uses a range of communication methods and is a user of Airwave (TETRA radio), which enables more effective interoperability through more secure communication, with the ability to function on a national level. Because of the importance placed on interoperability, in its efforts to provide a highly trained and professional service which at least equals that of their HO & SE colleagues, the CNC sends officers on nationally accredited courses. Most recently, two officers completed the National Policing Improvement Agency newly-approved course and gained competency certification in the role of "Force Operational Airwave Tactical Advisor" (currently less than 150 police officers and staff nationally have gained such certification).

CNC officers have taken part in joint military and police bomb disposal exercises, such as Demon Beacon and Sea Stroat. Some have had secondments to HO & SE police forces in specialist units, such as National Public Order Intelligence Unit and Counter Terrorist Support Units. One officer has been seconded to the National Police Improvement Agency to provide training in the

Leadership Development Programme to the Trinidad and Tobago Police. Another has been attached to the Office of Her Majesty's Inspector of Constabulary. The BCU North Commander is currently on a direct exchange with a Superintendent from Cumbria Constabulary. The expertise of the CNC in the field of nuclear site security has attracted international interest and training has even been provided to staff from Russian nuclear sites.

From what you have read so far, if you have knowledge of policing in the UK you will have realised that CNC officers, aside from their specialist role, are not that different from other UK police officers.

Amongst the functions performed by the Constabulary Communications Centre it is the 24/7 call centre for **RADSAFE** - a consortium of organisations that have come together to offer mutual assistance in the event of a transport accident involving radioactive materials belonging to a RADSAFE member (see www.radsafe.org.uk) and **NAIR** (National Arrangements for Incidents involving Radioactivity), which is administered by the Health Protection Agency (see www.hpa.nhs.uk), both of which are on the **freephone number 0800 834153**.

REPORTS ON LOCAL OUTINGS

FLATTS LANE COUNTRY PARK, TUESDAY 29th APRIL 2008 – LED BY GEOFF MYERS

Twelve members took part in this morning walk around the paths of Flatts Lane Woods at Normanby. The weather was overcast and showers threatened. The main interest at this site in the spring is the arrival of the summer visiting warblers and Willow Warbler, Chiffchaff, Blackcap and Whitethroat were seen throughout the walk. Lesser Whitethroat was of particular interest and 3 birds were seen. For those new members not familiar with this species, it was an excellent lesson not only in identification but also in its 'easy to remember' song. Despite singing all morning the day before, the Grasshopper Warblers sadly were keeping a low profile and were not heard; similarly with Garden Warbler. Someone spotted a nest-building Whitethroat and some members enjoyed watching this. A pair of late nesting Long-tailed Tits put on an excellent display at a nest in a bramble bush, carrying in feathers, oblivious to the group standing some four or five metres away. Three Chiffchaff nests were easily seen at close quarters, all near to paths. The remnants of winter birding were still evident, with splash and pellets where a Barn Owl regularly sits, and good numbers of birds around the feeding sites, including Bullfinch, Yellowhammer and Marsh Tit. Five noisy Jays were seen in the usual spring fly past. As the cars were approached, a heavy shower brought a hurried end to the walk.

Geoff Myers

PORTRACK MARSH, SATURDAY 10th MAY 2008 – LED BY GARY SHARPLES

The period of excellent weather persisted for our morning circuit around Portrack Marsh on Saturday 10th May. A dozen of us enjoyed the hazy blue skies and welcome warmth, refreshed by a gentle easterly wind, with only a minor taint from the adjoining sewage works. After meeting at the 'Talpole Inn' car park next to the Tees Barrage, we set out along the river. A Kingfisher appeared on cue and a female Wheatear played hide and seek among the rocks on the near shore. Most of the commoner warblers were singing exuberantly, including Reed Warbler, Sedge Warbler, Willow Warbler, Blackcap, Chiffchaff and Whitethroat. A pair of Shelduck was content to linger around the main pool as Common Terns protested raucously overhead. Further round we encountered a pair of Canada Geese showing off their fresh brood of six fluffy yellow goslings (they are so cute at that age). A distant Mistle Thrush posed a brief identification puzzle - this species is not seen regularly on the marsh. A total of 41 bird species was recorded. Finally, Orange-tip and Speckled Wood Butterflies offered some alternative wildlife interest. All in all it was a very enjoyable visit - sunshine, birds and amiable company.

Gary Sharples

NIGHTJARS IN GUISBOROUGH FOREST, SATURDAY 7th JUNE 2008 – LED BY MARK ASKEW

The now annual Club walk to see the Nightjars proves ever more popular and this year a large throng of adults, children and animals gathered expectantly at Hutton Village on the evening of 7th June. We took the long but less steep and more interesting route to the clearing, with a few woodland birds, such as Goldcrest, being heard on route. At a suitable checkpoint, a head count was attempted, I made it 45, plus 3 dogs, but no doubt in true birder one-upmanship, someone will differ! The pressure was on: would the Nightjars perform?

Similar to last year, no sooner had we arrived than a sea fret began to descend, not too bad to stop us getting excellent views of roding Woodcocks, their odd calls keeping the kids entertained. At about 9:30pm, whilst still light, a Nightjar began to churr. The trees in the young plantation are now quite high so viewing distances are limited but fortunately it was soon enticed out to see what all the fuss was about. Its regular perch on dead pines was occupied all too briefly but it gave us a 360-degree fly-by, impressing both novices and old hands. Having got great views before dark we made our way back and the search is now on for a 'new' site before this one gets too mature. There seem to be several possible new cleared sites in Guisborough Forest, and, with more clear-fell areas

planned by the Forestry Commission, the future looks good for our Nightjars.

Mark Askew

LOCAL OUTINGS - AUTUMN 2008

SUNDAY 21st SEPTEMBER – RINGING AT HARTLEPOOL HEADLAND

Join Chris Brown and Mike Gee for a ringing session at Hartlepool Headland. Hopefully a good selection of autumn migrants should be trapped. Anything could be found in the nets at this time of year. A Red-flanked Bluetail, perhaps, or even a Blackbird! Meet by the Bowling Green from 8.30am. Telephone Chris on 01429 233474 for more information.

MONDAY 13th OCTOBER – SOUTH GARE

Join John Sharp to look for migrants at South Gare. Meet by the lifeboat station at 10.00am. Hopefully, winter thrushes should be present and expect the unexpected at this time of year. Ring John on 01287 633976 for further details.

SUNDAY 9th NOVEMBER – GREATHAM CREEK AND GREENABELLA MARSH

Join Chris Sharp for a walk along Greatham Creek and on to Greenabella Marsh. Good numbers of wintering wildfowl and waders should be seen, and Twite and Short-eared Owl are distinct possibilities. Meet at the Teesmouth National Nature Reserve car park just south of Greatham Creek at 10.30am. For further details ring Chris on 01429 865163

SATURDAY 13th DECEMBER – SEAL SANDS

Join Julie Mason for a trip out to the Power Station hide overlooking Seal Sands. Close views of wintering waders and sea duck should be had, along with divers, grebes and Red-breasted Mergansers. Meet at the Teesmouth Field Centre at 9.30am. For further information ring Julie on 01642 614583.

'THE BREEDING BIRDS OF CLEVELAND'

The Club's ground-breaking book, *'The Breeding Birds of Cleveland'* will be published later this year in time for the Christmas market. The sale price will be £25.00, plus post and packaging. We are offering a discounted price of £20.00, however, for all orders placed before publication. There has been a good uptake so far and if you would like to secure your pre-publication copy, please contact Ted Parker, who will put you on the list (Tel: 01642 275369 or email: ecparker@supanet.com)

Such a tome has never before been published for the Cleveland area. It covers all breeding species recorded during the period 1999-2006, as well as historical records of former breeding species. There is a comprehensive introductory section on the history and development of the landscape of Cleveland and the text is embellished throughout with superb maps, sketches and photographs. The book will be produced to the highest standard, with the cover having being designed by nationally renowned artist, Andrew Hutchinson. It is a bargain at £20.00, so don't miss your chance to secure your copy.

PROFILE – CHRIS SHARP

Ted Parker talked to our Honorary Secretary, former Chairman, Vice-Chairman and long-serving Committee member, Chris Sharp, about his birding life. Chris has made a huge contribution to the Club's activities over the years, often unnoticed behind the scenes, and chairs its Marketing and Membership Sub-Committee.

Chris was born in Hartlepool in 1959 and still lives there today with his wife, Lucia, and daughter Felicity. He is a self-employed accountant by profession, skills from which the Club has benefited greatly over the years, and works from an office in Middlesbrough. He also considers himself to be a part-time 'subscriptions collector'!

Chris has been birding for over 35 years and this is reflected in his impressive Cleveland List of 329 species, which puts him well up in the top 25 of Cleveland's leading listers. His most favoured local patch is his home area of Hartlepool, particularly the Headland, where he loves to indulge in his two favourite activities – seawatching and looking for falls of migrants

His other favourite local patch is the Tees Estuary, which he visits most days going to and from work, and at weekends, where he enjoys looking at wading birds.

Chris's optics are 10x42BA Leica binoculars and a Kowa TSN 80 'scope, with 20-60 zoom lens. When asked about his favourite bird book, Chris says he hasn't got one but he does enjoy reading 'British Birds' and 'Birding World' magazines. His other leisure interests include golf and running and he regularly takes part in half- and full marathons.

The most impressive birding site Chris has ever visited is, without doubt, Demirkazik in Turkey. Following a long, bumpy, uphill ride on a tractor-mounted trailer (along with the writer!), he found the sight of dawn breaking over the high mountains breathtaking and was astounded at the quality of the birds – Red-fronted Serin, Wallcreeper, Radde's Accentor and Crimson-winged Finch to name but a few. He also loved his annual visits to the Scillies, which he made for 15 years and hopes to go back again in the future.



CHRIS AND HIS WIFE, LUCIA, ON HOLIDAY IN NORTH YORKSHIRE

Chris can't identify a particular 'best day's birding' in Cleveland but derives great pleasure from any good seawatch or fall of migrants, of which there have been many over the years.

His best personal find was Cleveland's one and only Cliff Swallow at South Gare on 23rd October 1988, whilst his biggest birding disappointments have always been missing Cleveland 'ticks' while away on holiday, such as Red-eyed Vireo and Bee-eater. Chris's most memorable bird was a stunning male Baillon's Crake in Mowbray Park, Sunderland in May 1989 (one that many local birders will also remember well), which gave astonishing views literally down to a few inches! Although he has already seen one in Hong Kong, Chris's ambition bird is to see a Spoonbill Sandpiper on Back Saltholme – an ambition we would all echo. One of his most embarrassing moments came during a members' evening talk on 'Orcas' by Colin Bradshaw, when Chris confused Washing State in the USA with Washington Wildfowl Trust in Tyne and Wear! When asked about changes he would like to see in the birding world, Chris was emphatic that a key one was an RSPB presence on Teesside and he is delighted that this is now being achieved so many years after the closure of its Cowpen Marsh Reserve.

Chris has been a member of the Teesmouth Bird Club for 35 years and believes that it is now going from

strength to strength, due in part to a very hard working Committee. In contrast to the early 1970s, however, when as many junior as senior members were out birding, he is concerned that the Club now has no junior members, except for himself! These days, anyone under the age of 50 qualifies as a junior member!

Top of a list of changes Chris would like to see in the local environment would be less waste disposal sites, which he considers to be an unsightly, a "*blot on the landscape*" and environmentally damaging. He is also looking forward to seeing the completed reserve at RSPB Saltholme, with its new pools, and the new habitats at Port Clarence Pools and Cowpen Bewley Landfill, which are being created as compensatory sites for the loss of the Reclamation Pond by Impetus Reclamation Limited. His aspirations for the future are to see the continued success of the Club, to do more birding at home and abroad, to visit as many countries as possible and to go to Fair Isle one day. We wish him well in these.

HUNTSMAN TIOXIDE SPONSORED BIRDWATCH – SUNDAY 11th MAY 2008

Following the successful sponsored birdwatch on Greenabella Marsh on 11th May, Tony Marron reports on the origins of this event and the highlights of the day itself. In order that Tony can keep an overall checklist of the species seen on the marsh over the year, please send your records to Ted Parker (email: ecparker@supanet.com), who will then pass them on to Tony.

Sunday 11th May saw the 7th bi-annual Huntsman Tioxide 'Sponsored Bird Watch' as part of the BTO's 'Business Bird Challenge 2008'. We have used these days for two purposes over the years: to gather species numbers for the site; and to promote Tioxide in the community, while raising money for environmental charities. Before this day's earnings, we had already raised over £14,000.00, thanks to the generosity of Tioxide, and more than half of this sum has gone into the coffers of our Club! Last time round (and this time also) all of the proceeds came to us!

The day itself started and ended in thick fog, which you would expect to limit the list! We started at 08:00 hrs and planned to run until 16:00 hrs and, thanks to Ted's organisational skills, we also had a rota of times and names of members who would attend during the day. This was a first for us and it worked very well, as we had more members visit than ever before. More than 20 birders came along and I would like to thank all those who gave up their time to take part. I was amazed at how many had not been along the sea wall before to visit the Tioxide hide! Even though the door was vandalised during the theft of the opening,

commemorative brass plaque, there were still many compliments bandied about concerning the quality of the hide. Please use this facility; drop in to the gatehouse or use the phone on the main office wall to tell security you are going down and then use the path from outside of the main reception to walk down to the sea wall. On the way, you will come across ponds and reedbeds, shrubbery, a willow copse and a mixed copse, before you hit raised ground and grassland, and, finally, Seal Sands. I can virtually guarantee Stonechat all year round if you use this route and, if you park outside reception, your car is covered by CCTV. Go on, give it a try!

Back to the sponsored day and even with the fog we clocked up 50 species in the first hour, which, at £25 per species, racked up £1,250.00 and, by 1.00pm, we had reached Tioxide's ceiling of 80 species and £2,000.00 but we carried on until 4:00pm, during which time we managed just one additional species. Two late reports gave a day's total of 83 species, just three short of the site's one-day record. Highlights included a Marsh Harrier, Avocet, Grasshopper Warbler, Little Tern and Little Ringed Plover. There was probably more within reach but the fog had us foiled; all in all, however, it was a good day with Tioxide's 2008 list being boosted by 21 species, the Club benefiting by £2000.00, the BTO's records being added to and more members got to see the site and hide for the first time! I am biased, of course, because I have visited Greenabella Marsh frequently over the last 20 years since the conservation programme began by accident back in 1988, but I think this is a cracking little site that more members should visit. The impetus began when the then Works Engineer asked for volunteers to visit the marsh, shortly after the South Durham and North Yorkshire Wildfowlers were asked to stop shooting on site. Four members of the Training Department, including myself, started lunchtime walks, and we were amazed at the diversity of wildlife we were seeing and started reporting back to the site's management.

Twenty years on and Greenabella Marsh has a biodiversity database, with over a thousand species on it (including 216 species of bird). It has the first UK IBAP (Industry Biodiversity Action Plan), is a founder member of INCA (Industry and Nature Conservation Association) and has an SPA (Special Protection Area), along with a raft of SNCI's (Site of Nature Conservation Interest). Not bad for a chemical plant in the heart of 'Smoggieland'!

Do you fancy visiting? If so, all I ask is three things; let security know you are here; let me know what you have seen; and tell other members what you have seen so they will come as well! Enjoy!

Tony Marron

WETLAND BIRD SURVEY, TEESMOUTH - SPRING 2008 SUMMARY

SPECIES	April 20th	May 18th	June 15th	
Little Grebe	29	23	<u>30</u>	For the second successive year, the spring brought a new seasonal WeBS record for Mute Swan (96, June). The Oystercatcher peak (678, May) was the best seasonal total for a decade, while the 165 Ringed Plovers counted the same month represented a modest improvement on 2007, and is actually our best spring total since 2003. Conversely, for the first time ever, not a single Grey Plover was recorded by WeBS counters during the season. Once again, our Sanderling peak fell in April rather than May, and the figure of 160 was not especially noteworthy. Almost as many Purple Sandpipers (40, April) as Dunlin (45, May) were recorded by WeBS this spring, the latter statistic representing an all-time seasonal low for the species. For Redshank (369, April) this was comfortably the worst spring peak on record. However, Turnstone (219, April) enjoyed its best spring since 2000. Following this series of counts, the site supports no species of national importance in spring.
Great Crested Grebe	30	28	<u>33</u>	
Cormorant	21	49	<u>76</u>	
Mute Swan	40	71	<u>96</u>	
Shelduck	<u>358</u>	289	214	
Gadwall	92*	<u>132</u> *	113*	
Teal	<u>187</u>	4	47	
Mallard	167	201	<u>228</u>	
Shoveler	<u>52</u>	13	38	
Pochard	29	45	<u>76</u>	
Tufted Duck	185	166	<u>195</u>	
Eider	26	<u>32</u>	11	
Coot	382	280	<u>388</u>	
Oystercatcher	403	<u>678</u>	611	
Ringed Plover	26	<u>165</u> *	23	
Golden Plover	<u>101</u>	0	0	
Grey Plover	0	0	0	
Lapwing	170	174	<u>292</u>	
Knot	<u>41</u>	12	0	
Sanderling	<u>160</u> *	106	10	
Purple Sandpiper	<u>40</u>	0	0	
Dunlin	3	<u>45</u>	21	
Ruff	0	0	0	
Snipe	<u>10</u>	0	2	
Black-tailed Godwit	<u>3</u>	0	0	
Bar-tailed Godwit	<u>15</u>	7	2	
Curlew	318	86	<u>345</u>	
Redshank	<u>369</u>	33	89	
Turnstone	<u>219</u>	43	89	
Sandwich Tern	0	5	<u>108</u>	
Common Tern	0	114	<u>558</u>	
Little Tern	0	0	<u>4</u>	

Overall coverage was perfect, with all 78 sector counts undertaken.

Underlined counts indicate Spring 2008 maxima.

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

NB 'Teesmouth' includes Hartlepool Bay and the RSPB Salholme Reserve

Mike Leahey, WeBS Local Organizer
July 2008

WETLAND BIRD SURVEY, TEESMOUTH - WINTER 2007/2008 SUMMARY

SPECIES	Nov 11th	Dec 9th	Jan 20th	Feb 17th	March 16th	
Little Grebe	28	31	19	<u>38</u>	14	Coverage was excellent, with 129 out of a possible 130 sector counts undertaken over the five months.
Great Crested Grebe	12	7	<u>28</u>	19	18	
Cormorant	94	<u>138*</u>	125*	94	107	
Mute Swan	<u>73</u>	69	43	36	27	Mute Swan set a new seasonal record of 73 in November. Wigeon numbers were high, with three consecutive counts of over 2,400 birds, and the January peak of 2,483 constituting our second highest tally on record. This was also true of Pintail (62, February). A colossal 464 Gadwall were counted in November, constituting a new site record; by contrast, Teal, Mallard and Shoveler numbers were mediocre.
Greylag Goose	280	234	290	<u>312</u>	216	
Shelduck	420*	405	<u>588*</u>	400*	452*	
Wigeon	1508	2423*	<u>2483*</u>	2449*	950	Among the diving ducks, Pochard and Tufted Duck peaks remained healthy (115 and 205 respectively, both in January). Coot (1,403, December) saw a small decline relative to the previous winter, continuing the trend evident in autumn.
Gadwall	<u>464**</u>	245**	158	148	127	
Teal	810	763	<u>828</u>	535	288	
Mallard	369	293	<u>377</u>	319	190	By recent standards this was an average season for Oystercatcher (1,597, January) and Lapwing (4,820, January). Also in January, the 1,984 Golden Plover counted represents our fifth highest total on record and the 1,148 Curlew our fourth best ever figure. Other key wader species – such as Grey Plover, Knot, Sanderling and Redshank – occurred in more typical numbers.
Pintail	43	42	15	<u>62</u>	11	
Shoveler	99*	105*	61	<u>117*</u>	77*	
Pochard	45	40	<u>115</u>	100	46	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, Sanderling and Redshank.
Tufted Duck	175	172	<u>205</u>	186	162	
Eider	3	8	<u>12</u>	<u>12</u>	8	
Goldeneye	25	50	49	<u>72</u>	41	Underlined counts indicate winter 2007/2008 maxima.
Red-br. Merganser	54*	29	<u>69*</u>	28	36	
Coot	1374*	<u>1403*</u>	1274*	741	483	
Oystercatcher	1215	1393	<u>1597</u>	922	357	* indicates a count of >50% of national significance
Ringed Plover	<u>61</u>	43	58	37	58	
Golden Plover	0	835	<u>1984*</u>	406	292	
Grey Plover	141	125	185	<u>189</u>	132	** indicates a count of national significance
Lapwing	1201	2498	<u>4820</u>	1609	220	
Knot	391	800	<u>2111*</u>	911	411	
Sanderling	136*	93	145*	62	<u>193*</u>	N.B. 'Teesmouth' includes Hartlepool Bay.
Purple Sandpiper	25	<u>41</u>	31	13	33	
Dunlin	52	12	61	<u>258</u>	158	
Ruff	2	2	0	1	<u>3</u>	
Snipe	15	<u>51</u>	4	27	4	
Black-tailed Godwit	2	28	<u>33</u>	10	10	
Bar-tailed Godwit	18	24	27	<u>45</u>	26	
Curlew	162	567	<u>1148*</u>	780*	316	
Redshank	1064*	1246**	<u>1307**</u>	616	811	
Turnstone	184	204	234	98	298*	

Mike Leakey, WeBS Local Organizer
May 2008

FLATTS LANE AND ESTON MOOR

Background

The area generally referred to as Flatts Lane, Normanby, extends along the northern slope of the Eston Hills from Ormesby in the west, through Flatts Lane to Eston in the east, and on to the higher land of Eston Moor.

Deciduous woodland spreads from Ormesby to just beyond the road at Flatts Lane. This woodland is interspersed with many areas of scrub and re-generating agricultural land and is great asset for birds. Beyond this area to the east, the steeply sloping hill is bracken-covered, with some birch and gorse. Eston Moor is a wonderful piece of heathland, forming the northern extremity of the North York Moors. Much of the land belongs to Redcar and Cleveland Borough Council, with the remainder being privately owned. A network of public footpaths and bridleways affords good access to all areas. The Council have a Visitor Centre in Flatts Lane on the site of the old Normanby Brickworks. With the help of volunteers, staff here carry out conservation work to most of the woodland and scrub to the west of Flatts Lane. They entertain school parties and other groups, thereby introducing children to the countryside. The Council employ a full-time warden on Eston Moor. The moorland has not been grazed for several decades and is now suffering from encroachment by birch, gorse and, of course, bracken. Great efforts are being made to prevent the spread of these species and retain the original valued and rare heathland habitat, something to be applauded but not always popular with all who walk up there.



Throughout the site are signs of the industrial past: ironstone mining on the hills and brickworks at both Normanby and Ormesby. Some of the paths follow the old railway lines, which served these industries. Being close to urban areas, there is some vandalism in the area, mainly the starting of fires. Sadly for the birds, this is predominantly during the nesting season but a spin-off is that it helps to keep an open aspect to some of the more scrubby areas.

Access

The best point of access is the Visitor Centre at Flatts Lane, where there is a car park. The Centre is well signposted as 'Flatts Lane Woodland Country Park'. Reach it when travelling from the south by leaving the A171 Guisborough dual carriageway between the 'Cross Keys' pub and Swans Corner. The entrance is on the left as you go down the hill towards Normanby. Approaching from the north, leave the A66 at the Normanby Road roundabout (Asda roundabout) and travel south, crossing the A1085 Trunk Road at Eston Baths and then onto the B1360 at Normanby shops. Follow this over the A174 Parkway near the 'Norman Conquest' pub and the Visitor Centre entrance is several hundred metres further up on the right as you climb the hill. There is no access to Flatts Lane off the A174 Parkway.

Birds

Throughout the winter, the feeding station at the Visitor Centre attracts good numbers of birds, including Nuthatch, Jay, Great Spotted Woodpecker, Marsh Tit, probably Willow Tit and flocks of Goldfinch, Siskin and Yellowhammer. Surprisingly, there are no Tree Sparrows. For the disabled, parking is available overlooking the feeders.



Many local people put down food as they walk around the site. Follow their route and you will be rewarded with close views common birds, as they approach you expecting to be fed. The best route to follow for this is to join the footpath which heads west from Flatts Lane, some 150 metres from the bridge over the A174 Parkway. If you do walk this way, look on your left about 50 metres short of the sharp turn to the left and you may see the white splash and black pellets of a Barn Owl below its resting perch in the hedgerow. It has used this perch over the last two winters. Watch for Bullfinches, which are common throughout the winter months.

At the first sign of spring in early March, Long-tailed Tits can be seen nest-building. The song of the Chiffchaff marks the arrival of the first warblers and it is for these birds that Flatts Lane excels. All the

common warblers of woodland and scrub can be seen and heard; good numbers of Chiffchaff, seemingly diminishing numbers of Willow Warbler, many Whitethroats and Blackcaps, and occasional Garden Warblers. The sight of a Lesser Whitethroat singing amongst Blackthorn blossom in the spring sunshine is a pleasure to see.

One of the site specialities is Grasshopper Warbler and this is always present, although in small numbers now. The best areas for these are the overgrown fields between the A174 Parkway and the Flatts Lane to Ormesby Brickworks path. This year, birds were also singing near the site of the old ski slope car park to the east of Flatts Lane, past the Health Authority office building.

A typical sound of the spring is the Jay, numerous now and easily seen in small parties, calling excitedly. Drumming Great Spotted Woodpeckers are another accompaniment to any springtime visit and the yaffle of Green Woodpecker can usually be heard. To be sure of seeing the latter bird, you need to take the path which leads up to Eston Moor, where they are almost always to be seen. Roding Woodcock can be seen during dusk in the spring and I usually watch them along the path from the Flatts Lane road towards Ormesby Brickworks. During any springtime visit, watch for nesting Marsh Tits and Willow Tits. The latter can often be seen excavating its nest hole in a rotted birch or elderberry stump.



It is quite a climb to Eston Moor but well worth the effort. One word of warning here, Flatts Lane is a narrow and winding road with lots of traffic and care is required when crossing, particularly from the top left of the Visitor Centre field, where you need to walk along the road for some 150 metres before crossing. As you climb towards the moor there are panoramic views over the conurbation and the Tees Estuary.

Watch and listen for Tree Pipit, which, although no longer common, can sometimes be seen displaying.

On reaching the escarpment, as the view behind you disappears so does the noise of the traffic and you could be anywhere in the North Yorkshire Moors. Curlew and Lapwing are present in spring and probably breed. Similarly with Common Snipe, which are generally present around the marshy area to the west of Carr Pond and often come up from under your feet in the boggy areas of the moor. Skylark, Meadow Pipit, Willow Warbler, Yellowhammer and Reed Bunting also breed. In recent years, there have been increased numbers of Stonechats and pairs can be seen dotted about the moor. Although not a regular visitor now, Cuckoos can often be seen and heard. Spring, as autumn, can see good numbers of Meadow Pipits passing through on migration.

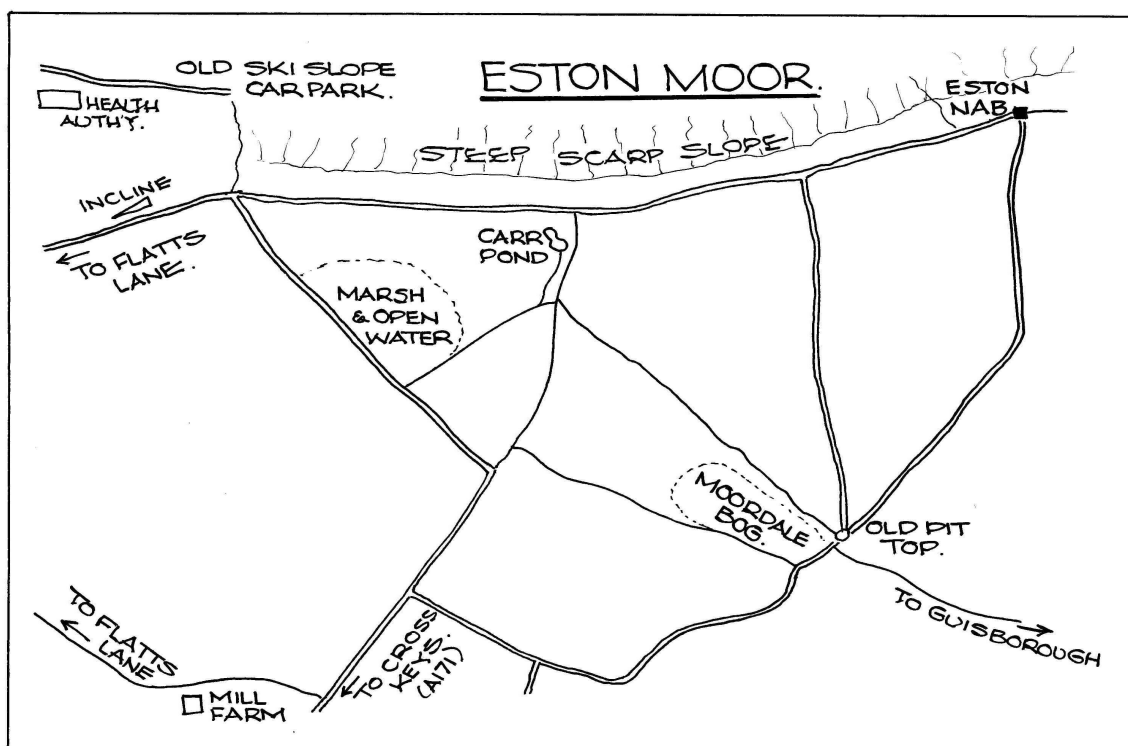
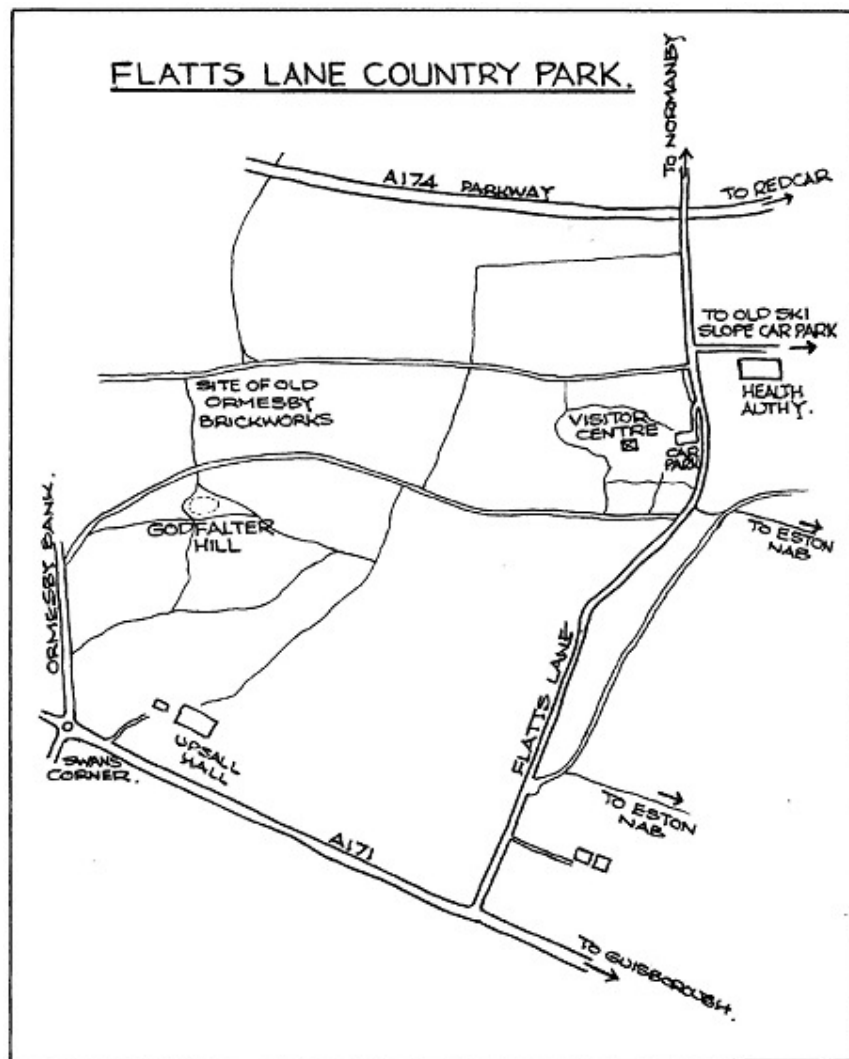
In addition to birds, there are dragonflies around the wet areas of the hills and two rare moths are present, the Forester Moth, around Moordale Bog, and the Large Red-belted Clearwing Moth, around the areas where the birch trees have been removed. The birch stumps are left quite tall to accommodate this moth.

Autumn brings in the winter thrushes. The wooded areas of Flatts Lane have large hawthorn thickets providing rich feeding for these birds, which, in those years when they put down immediately on reaching land, can be seen in large flocks. As winter approaches there is another reason to visit - a Magpie roost. This may not sound attractive to many people but to watch these birds fly in from all directions at dusk and see in excess of 100 sitting in the tops of hawthorn and blackthorn bushes is quite a spectacle. The roost moves around but over the last two winters it has been visible from Godfalter Hill, looking north northeast.

Eston Moor is generally quiet during the winter but I have seen Hen Harrier, an adult male, quartering the moorland. Not many rarities are reported: I saw a Red-backed Shrike a few years ago and Golden Oriole was well watched a few years earlier. The area is under-watched, however, and if more people visited, more exciting species may be seen. Birds coming in off the sea are likely to follow the line of the hills inland.

Flatts Lane is a bird-rich area and well worth of a visit in any season.

Geoff Myers



CLEVELAND WATER BODY SURVEY

The Cleveland Water Body Survey is to be repeated during the 2008-09 winter, starting in September 2008 and finishing in March 2009 (both months inclusive). It is intended that the counts will again supplement those undertaken for the normal monthly Wetland Bird Survey and enable comparisons to be made with the previous survey in 2006-07. A summary of the latter will appear in the 2007 'Cleveland Bird Report'.

The list of water bodies in Cleveland and their counters has been updated and amended as necessary and is included below. A simple *proforma* has been prepared for observers to complete during each visit for submission to the Count Co-ordinator, Chris Sharp, and this is included in the Newsletter. It can also be downloaded off the Club's website at www.teemouthbc.com

The survey will require you to:

- visit your allocated site once per month between September and March inclusive. The visits should ideally be timed to coincide with the official WeBS counts or, if this is not possible, one week either side of these, or, failing that, at any time during the month;
- complete the *proforma* and submit it by post or email in two stages: at the end of December 2008, to enable records to be included in the 2008 'Cleveland Bird Report' and at the end of March 2009. Forms should be sent to **Chris Sharp, 20 Auckland Way, Hartlepool, TS27 0AN** or by email to: chrisandlucia@sharp12756.freeserve.co.uk
- record all species in the following groups: swans (eg Mute Swan), ducks (such as Mallard, Tufted Duck and Pochard), rails (notably Moorhen and Coot), waders (such as Common Snipe, Redshank, Oystercatcher and Common Sandpiper), herons and Kingfisher. A full list is contained on the *proforma*.

The dates for the official WeBS wildfowl counts are as follows:

Sunday 14th September 2008
Sunday 19th October 2008
Sunday 16th November 2008
Sunday 14th December 2008
Sunday 18th January 2009
Sunday 22nd February 2009
Sunday 15th March 2009

We have assumed that counters who undertook work during the last survey are willing to do so again (please see below). Your continued support on this project is greatly appreciated. If anyone experiences any difficulties during the survey period or feels unable to help this time, please contact Chris Sharp.

SITE NAME	GRID REF	COUNTER
HART RESERVOIRS	NZ 482344	Chris Sharp
WARD JACKSON PARK	NZ 489325	Russ McAndrew
ROSSMERE PARK POND	NZ 503299	Graeme Joynt
WYNYARD INDUSTRIAL ESTATE	NZ 431268	John Grieveson
BRENDA ROAD POND (TEES BAY RETAIL PARK)	NZ 511302	Russ McAndrew
SEATON CAREW GREENSPACE	NZ 515297	Graeme Joynt
SEATON CAREW GOLF COURSE	NZ 526290	Graeme Joynt
COWPEN MARSH RESERVOIR	NZ 500240	Richard Taylor
COWPEN BEWLEY WOODLAND PARK	NZ 475255	John Crussell
BILLINGHAM BECK COUNTRY PARK PONDS AND BECK	NZ 453225	Graham Lawlor
BILLINGHAM BOTTOMS (BECK BETWEEN OLD ICI SITE AND THE TREATMENT REED BEDS)	NZ 455220-465214	Ian Lawson
NORTON BOTTOMS PONDS	NZ 454217	Ian Lawson
BELASIS HALL TECHNOLOGY PARK LAKES	NZ 475234	Colin Dodsworth
JUNCTION POND, BILLINGHAM	NZ 461232	
WOLVISTON VILLAGE POND/DUCK POND	NZ 450254	Tom Francis
TEESSIDE RETAIL PARK	NZ 565192	John Blackburn
OLD RIVER TEES	NZ 465192-458182	John Blackburn

SITE NAME	GRID REF	COUNTER
LUSTRUM BECK TRASH SCREENS POND	NZ 478203	Denise Gamesby
CHARLTON'S POND, BILLINGHAM	NZ 468232	Colin Dodsworth
PIPELINE POOLS SOUTH OF COWPEN BEWLEY	NZ 485237	Derek Clayton
STILLINGTON POND	NZ 377240	Martin Blick
ROPNER PARK	NZ 432184	Bill Irving
BOWESFIELD POND, HARTBURN	NZ 433178	Jamie Duffie
BOWESFIELD MARSH	NZ 443158	Richard Taylor
PORTRACK MARSH	NZ 463195	Gary Sharples
CARLTON PASTURES (FISH PONDS)	NZ 397217	Martin Blick
ELEMENTIS PONDS, URLAY NOOK	NZ 412156	Ali McLee
AISLABY POND	NZ 395135	Ali McLee
INGLEBY BARWICK (WEST OF RIVER)	NZ 440169	
RIVER TEES (TEES BARRAGE TO PR DIANA BRIDGE)	NZ 449192-462191	Colin Dodsworth
RIVER TEES (DIANA BRIDGE TO SURTEES BRIDGE)	NZ 462191-447178	Martin Blick
RIVER TEES (SURTEES BRIDGE TO THE HOLMES)	NZ 44178-449162	
RIVER TEES (THE HOLMES TO BASSELTON WOOD)	NZ 449162-442156	Bill Hall
RIVER TEES (BASSELTON WOOD TO PRESTON HALL)	NZ 442156-431157	Bill Hall
RIVER TEES (PRESTON HALL TO EAGLESCLIFFE)	NZ 431157-430140	Martin Blick
RIVER TEES (EAGLESCLIFFE TO RIVER LEVEN)	NZ 430140-430127	Robin Millman
RIVER TEES AROUND YARM	NZ 430127-416122	Bill Irving
RIVER TEES (YARM TO COUNTY BOUNDARY)	NZ 416122-402111	
NORTON DUCK POND (NORTON HIGH ST)	NZ 442223	Tom Francis
NORTON HALL		Keith Ryan
ALBERT PARK	NZ 499191	George Alderson
STEWART PARK LAKES, MARTON	NZ 514164	John Regan
EASTFIELDS FARM LAKE AND PONDS, NUNTHORPE	NZ 555132	Ted Parker
HEMLINGTON LAKE	NZ 490145	John Regan
POOLE HOSPITAL LAKE, NUNTHORPE	NZ 533134	Eric James
NUNTHORPE CARRS	NZ 539145	Eric James
WHINNEY BANKS POND	NZ 472187	Stewart Hinley
YARM POND	NZ 418126	Bill Irving
COULBY NEWHAM POND	NZ 501153	Martin Blick
LAZENBY RESERVOIR (A174 GREYSTONES R/BOUT)	NZ 569195	Graham Megson
LAZENBY RESERVOIR (A174 GREYSTONES R/BOUT)	NZ 570193	Graham Megson
ICI WILTON HQ LAKE	NZ 581203	Graham Megson
ICI RESERVOIRS (KIRKLEATHAM)	NZ 586204	Martin Blick
LOVELL HILL PONDS, NR GUISBOROUGH	NZ 597189	Mike Corner/Steve Norman
MARGROVE PARK PONDS	NZ 651161	Don Page
REDCAR BOATING LAKE	NZ 598254	Linda Watson
LOCKE PARK LAKE	NZ 594248	Linda Watson
NEW MARSKE RESERVOIR	NZ 613207	Graham Megson
YEARBY POND, NR DUNSDALE	NZ 599199	Ted Parker
BROTTON GOLF COURSE PONDS	NZ 690205	Norman Walker/John Money
UPLEATHAM POND	NZ 627194	Brian Hague
MOUNT PLEASANT PONDS	NZ 605175/605173	Brian Hague
TOCKETTS BRIDGE POND	NZ 619178	Brian Hague
GUISBOROUGH HALL	NZ 623164	Brian Hague
BUTT LANE, POND	NZ 620160	Vic Fairbrother
DUNSDALE PONDS, NR GUISBOROUGH	NZ 624164	Brian Hague
GUISBOROUGH BRANCH WALKWAY PONDS	NZ	John Sharp
BLUE LAKE, GUISBOROUGH	NZ 603144	Mark Askew
SKELTON POND	NZ 657196	Graham Megson
SKELTON CASTLE LAKE	NZ 657196	Damian Money
CATTERSTY POND, CARLIN HOWE	NZ 702199	Norman Walker/John Money
GRINKLE HOTEL POND	NZ 741153	Martin Blick
BOULBY POND	NZ 746195	Mark Askew
LIVERTON ROAD PONDS	NZ 716139	
RUSHPOOL HALL POND	NZ 667204	Graham Megson
RUSHPOOL HALL LAKE	NZ 666205	Graham Megson



TEESMOUTH BIRD CLUB WATER BODY SURVEY

NAME:		SITE AND GRID REF IF POSSIBLE:						
ADDRESS:								
WEATHER:		SUNNY	CLOUDY	WINDY	RAINING	WARM	COLD	ICE
LEVEL OF HUMAN DISTURBANCE:		LOW	MEDIUM	HIGH				
EMAIL ADDRESS:								

2008					2009				
DATE (INSERT DATE)	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec		Jan	Feb	Mar	
TIME									
¹ WEATHER									
¹ HUMAN DISTURBANCE									

Little Grebe								
Great Crested Grebe								
Cormorant								
Grey Heron								
Mute Swan								
Bewick's Swan								
Whooper Swan								
Bean Goose								
Pink-footed Goose								
White-fronted Goose								
Greylag Goose								
Canada Goose								
Barnacle Goose								
Brent Goose								
Shelduck								
Mandarin Duck								
Wigeon								
Gadwall								
Teal								
Mallard								
Pintail								
Garganey								
Shoveler								
Pochard								
Tufted Duck								
Scaup								
Goldeneye								
Smew								
Red-breasted Merganser								
Goosander								
Ruddy Duck								
Water rail								
Coot								
Moorhen								
Oystercatcher								
Ringed Plover								
Golden Plover								
Grey Plover								
Lapwing								
Dunlin								
Ruff								
Jack Snipe								
Common Snipe								
Woodcock								
Black-tailed Godwit								
Bar-tailed Godwit								
Whimbrel								
Curlew								
Redshank								
Greenshank								
Green Sandpiper								
Common Sandpiper								
Wood Sandpiper								
Kingfisher								
OTHERS:								

¹ PLEASE RING APPROPRIATE TERMS FROM LIST GIVEN