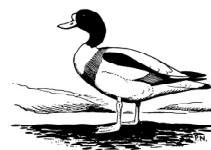


Teesmouth Bird Club Newsletter

December 2008 (No.41)



Reg. Charity No. 508850

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MONTHLY SUMMARY

Chris Sharp summarises what was undoubtedly an outstanding and probably unsurpassed autumn period, noted particularly for its 'falls' of scarce migrants and raptor passage. Sea watching proved to be relatively quiet this year compared to the excellent season in 2007. Images have been kindly supplied by Ian Boustead, Mick & Sylvia Brennan, Jamie Duffie, Ian Forrest, Geoff Iceton, Steve Keightley, John Money and Martyn Sidwell.

JULY

A female Montagu's Harrier, a rare bird in Cleveland, was at Scaling Dam on 1st, along with family parties of Common Sandpiper and Little Ringed Plover. The two families of Avocets at Greatham Creek showed well to many admiring visitors and the adult Mediterranean Gull returned to Newburn Bridge on 3rd. A Hobby was seen near Wynyard on 4th. One of the highlights of the summer was a Terek Sandpiper, which was found on the Calor Gas Pool on 5th; it was the first Cleveland record since 1979 and remained until

13th. Other waders at this site included Wood and Common Sandpipers, Greenshank and up to 12 Black-tailed Godwits. A Temminck's Stint was on Black Saltholme on 6th, along with two adult Roseate Terns and 2 Roseate Terns at South Gare on 8th may have been the same birds.



Terek Sandpiper, Calor Gas Pool

Ian Forrest



Wood Sandpiper, Calor Gas Pool

Ian Forrest

A Hobby was seen over Back Saltholme on 9th, while sea-watching at Hartlepool Headland produced a Balearic Shearwater and 30 Manx Shearwaters, with a single Storm Petrel the following day. Up to 15 Little Gulls were on the North Tees Marshes mid-month and good numbers of Black-tailed Godwits were passing through at this time, with 74 on Back Saltholme on 6th. Large numbers of Dunlin were also present, with 909 on Seal Sands. A Pectoral Sandpiper was seen briefly at Back Saltholme on the latter date. The adult Yellow-Legged Gull was back at the Tees Barrage on 18th after a five-month absence. On 19th, what was probably the same Montagu's Harrier was seen at Scaling Dam and another Hobby was at Marske. On 20th, Hartlepool Headland produced 49 Manx and 1 Sooty Shearwaters and 1 Pomarine and 2 Great Skuas, while 58 Manx Shearwaters

and 4 Storm Petrels were seen there the following day. A summer-plumaged Curlew Sandpiper on Port Clarence Flood on 21st remained until 24th, while passage waders at Scaling Dam included 9 Common and 4 Green Sandpipers, and a Knot. Pectoral Sandpiper and Temminck's Stint were also seen here on 27th. Storm Petrel ringing at Hartlepool headland produced a good haul of 14 birds. A good variety of waders was on the North Tees Marshes late in the month, with 2 Little Stints, 2 Curlew Sandpipers, 2 Wood Sandpipers and a Spotted Redshank. Water levels at Port Clarence flood and the Calor Gas Pool were particularly favourable at this time. Unfortunately, these levels were not to last, as a very wet August weather meant a scarcity of suitable habitat and consequently few waders during the remainder of the autumn.

AUGUST

Small numbers of passage waders continued to be reported early in the month. Two adult Mediterranean Gulls were at Newburn Bridge on 3rd and 3 Marsh Harriers were at Scaling Dam the following day. In what was an excellent autumn for this species, yet another Hobby was at Saltholme Pools on 5th. Sea-watching was generally quiet during the month, with few favourable winds. However, adult Sabine's Gulls flew past Hartlepool Headland on 6th and 8th, with small numbers of Arctic and Great Skuas and a summer-plumaged Great Northern Diver on the latter date. In a very poor autumn for this popular species, only a single Sooty Shearwater flew past on 9th. Little Egrets became more visible in the first half of the month, with up to 12 on Back Saltholme. Several Green Sandpipers passed through at this time, along with small numbers of Greenshank, Spotted Redshank, Ruff and Wood Sandpiper. A Marsh Harrier was at Dorman's Pool on 10th and another Hobby was over Saltholme on 11th.



Wheatear, Seaton Snook

Ian Forrest

A Scaup was at Scaling Dam on 15th, along with a Common Buzzard, Greenshank and Green Sandpiper. Little Gull numbers increased to 18 on the North Tees Marshes and 2 Marsh Harriers were around Saltholme, along with a Merlin. On 17th, there was a small fall of migrants at South Gare, which included a Wryneck, Redstart and Wheatear. A juvenile Red-necked Phalarope was briefly on the sea off Hartlepool Headland and there was a fly-past Red-necked Grebe. Tern numbers began to build up on Seaton Snook during the second half of the month, but there were fewer birds than in recent years. Only 1-2 Roseate Terns and a single Black Tern were reported. More unusually, a juvenile Honey Buzzard showed well over Summerhill 19th, perhaps being a forerunner of what was to come the following month. Up to 6 Spotted Redshanks and 2 Little Stints were on the North Tees Marshes, and a Black Tern was around Saltholme from 22nd. An adult Sabine's Gull was off Hartlepool Headland briefly on 23rd. A winter-plumaged Black-necked Grebe was at Scaling Dam on 25th and remained into September. A juvenile Montagu's Harrier flew over Crookfoot on 25th but the remainder of the month was quiet, apart from a few reports of small parties of Common Crossbills and a Wryneck at Warsett Hill, Saltburn on 31st.



Short-eared Owl, Seaton Common Ian Forrest

SEPTEMBER

This proved to be an outstanding month's birding in Cleveland, which will linger long in the memory of many local birders. It started with a Great White Egret, which flew over Scaling Dam on 1st. Ten Common Sandpipers were at Greatham Creek on 4th but things really got going on 6th, with the arrival of perfect fall conditions.

The Cleveland coast saw many common migrants, with Redstarts and Pied Flycatchers (rare in recent autumns) being the most noticeable of the commoner birds, along with good numbers of Garden Warblers, Whinchats and Willow Warblers and smaller numbers of Spotted Flycatchers, Whitethroats and Lesser Whitethroats. Not surprisingly many scarcities were found among this fall: South Gare held an Icterine Warbler, 2 Wrynecks, 4 Wood Warblers and 3 Red-breasted Flycatchers, the latter including a stunning male.



Common Redstart, Hartlepool

Steve Keightley



Wryneck, South Gare

Ian Boustead



Icterine Warbler, South Gare

John Money

An Icterine Warbler was at the Jewish Cemetery, Hartlepool, and Wrynecks were seen at Hartlepool, Zinc Works Road and Brotton (2 birds). Early morning seawatching was also rewarding at Hartlepool Headland, with 2 Sabine's Gulls, 12 Sooty and 2 Balearic Shearwaters, 1 Long-tailed and 8 Pomarine Skuas, and 4 Pale-bellied Brent Geese. Huge numbers of Manx Shearwaters passed Cowbar, along with a Leach's Petrel. The following day, more scarcities were found: an Icterine Warbler and Long-eared Owl were at Boulby, 2 new Wrynecks were at Warsett Hill, a Greenish Warbler was in West View Cemetery, Hartlepool, 2 Icterine Warblers were at Hartlepool

Headland, 2 Wrynecks were at North Gare, and 3 were at South Gare, along with a Red-backed Shrike. One of the highlights of the month, if not the year, however, was the finding of a Great Snipe at South Gare. This proved very elusive but showed well in flight on 3 or 4 occasions and was the first Cleveland record since 1976. It found its way onto many long-standing local birders' lists. Common migrants continued to be seen in good numbers over the next few days, along with 1 or 2 additional Wrynecks and an Icterine Warbler at Hartlepool. The 13th proved to be a remarkable day and this time it was birds of prey which predominated, especially Honey Buzzards. A record influx took place on this date involving 20 to 30 birds, with at least 14 passing through the North Tees Marshes alone. In addition, an Osprey was perched on a pylon near Saltholme Pools, with others over the North Tees Marshes and Wilton.



Re-breasted Flycatcher, South Gare

Ian Boustead



Osprey, Dorman's pool

Mick & Sylvia Brennan



Red-backed Shrike, Long Drag Chris Bell

One or 2 Hobbies were around Greatham Creek and several Marsh Harriers also passed through. An immature Red-Backed Shrike was on the Long Drag, another Wryneck was at North Gare and a Long-tailed Skua and a Sabine's Gull were seen off Skinningrove. During the following days, more Honey Buzzards continued to be reported and the final total was probably around 50. To put this figure into some perspective, only about 40 Honey Buzzards had ever been previously seen in Cleveland. A Red-backed Shrike was at Hartlepool on 14th and an Icterine Warbler was in Locke Park, Redcar on 14th. Several Hobbies were also seen during this period, including 3 at Saltburn Cliffs on 14th, and Ospreys were over Lovell Hill on 14th and Saltburn next day.



Woodchat Shrike, Greatham Creek Martyn Sidwell

An immature Woodchat Strike was found at Greatham Creek on 18th and gave stunning views. This was only the 3rd Cleveland record and with a Red-backed Strike still on the Long Drag, it was possible to compare the features of these two similar species. The following day, a Pectoral Sandpiper was on Greenabella Marsh and then moved to Greatham Creek. Five Curlew Sandpipers were also here. Honey Buzzards were still passing through and 3 Common Buzzards were over Greatham Creek. An immature Hobby showed well at Cowpen Bewley Woodland Park and stayed for a week, often coming very close. A ring-tailed Hen Harrier was at Warsett Hill on 21st. Sea-watchers off Hartlepool on 22nd logged 1 Great Northern Diver, 1 Storm Petrel, 34 Sooty Shearwaters, 200 Great Skuas, 1 Little Auk and a good duck passage, including 1,179 Wigeon. A Leach's Petrel passed here on 24th, along with a

Black-throated Diver. This date also saw another small fall of migrants, which included a Yellow-browed Warbler at Hartlepool. Several more Yellow-broweds were seen over the next couple of days, including 2 at the Jewish Cemetery, Hartlepool, and Locke Park, Redcar, with another at the Zinc Works Bushes. A Red-breasted Flycatcher and a Bluethroat were at Hartlepool Headland on 25th and 3 Yellow-Browed Warblers were at Hartlepool on 27th, with a Wryneck at Boulby. The 28th saw a huge movement of Pink-footed Geese through Cleveland, with 2,506 being counted over Skelton alone and many flocks passed over the North Tees Marshes during the day. Another Yellow-browed Warbler was found on Greenabella Marsh during the BTO-Hanson Bird Challenge organised birdwatch at Huntsman Tioxide



Bluethroat, Hartlepool

Geoff Icteton



Hobby, Cowpen Bewley

Ian Forrest



Yellow-browed Warbler, Hartlepool

Martyn Sidwell

OCTOBER

In contrast to the previous month, October was relatively quiet apart from one or two notable exceptions. With few onshore winds, there were no fall conditions and sea watching was quiet until the month's end. Raptors continued to be seen, with a Common Buzzard over Cowpen Bewley Woodland Park on 1st. Twelve Pale-bellied Brent Geese were on Seal Sands early in the month. Sea watching at Hartlepool on 3rd produced a single Sooty Shearwater, 9 Barnacle Geese and 4 Pale-bellied Brent Geese. Hobby, Peregrine and Merlin were all to be seen over RSPB Saltholme on 4th and another Hobby in a record-breaking year for this species was over Margrove Ponds on 5th, on which date a Bittern was at Coatham Marsh. Four Whooper Swans near Haverton Hole from 5th moved to nearby Saltholme Pools later in the month. Two incredibly fortunate observers witnessed a White's Thrush fly in off the sea at Hartlepool Headland on 8th but, unfortunately, it could not be refound. It was the first record for Cleveland of this much sought-after Asiatic species and certainly brightened up an otherwise dull sea watch! A Slavonian Grebe was on the sea off North Sands at this time and it remained for several days. Up to 33 Black-tailed Godwits were on Seaton Common.



Black-tailed Godwit, Seaton Common

Ian Forrest

An adult Yellow-legged Gull at Dorman's Pool on 11th was presumably a different bird from the Tees Barrage long-stayer, and the final Hobby of the year flew over Dorman's Pool on 12th. The following day, a Lesser Yellowlegs was found near the Calor Gas Pool. It was still present early the next morning but was not seen subsequently. It was the 3rd Cleveland record, with the previous 2 both occurring in 2003. Up to 5 Spotted Redshanks were around Saltholme Pool at this time. Large numbers of winter thrushes passed through our area on 17th, with 1,500 Fieldfares and 250 Redwings at Sleddale. Several flocks of Pink-footed Geese were still moving south and up to 12 Barnacle Geese were on Back Saltholme. Three Black-throated Divers were on the sea off Skinningrove on 22nd and 11 Whooper Swans and a Long-tailed Duck were on the sea off South Gare on the same day. Eight Whooper Swans were on Dorman's Pool on 23rd, with 2 nearby on Saltholme Pools. Three Mediterranean Gulls were at Saltburn on 23rd and the usual adults were also present at Newburn Bridge and Hartlepool Headland. Eleven more Whooper Swans flew in off the sea at Skinningrove on 24th and up to 6 were on Dorman's Pool on 26th and 10 at Scaling Dam next day. Up to 21 Pale-bellied Brent Geese were on Seal Sands late in the month and the wintering flock of Twite returned to Greenabella Marsh, with up to 51 birds present. Two Green Sandpipers were on the Reclamation Pond on 27th and a Waxwing flew over Saltholme Pools on 28th. The wind at last went around to the northeast on 30th, no doubt responsible for producing a Grey Phalarope off South Gare. What might have been the same bird was off Saltburn the following day. On 31st, a Yellow-browed Warbler was at Skelton and a Long-eared Owl was at Hunt Cliff. Sea watching was particularly rewarding, with a good duck passage on both days, including 11 Long-tailed Ducks and 23 Velvet Scoters on 31st, 80 Pale-bellied Brent Geese, 3 Great Northern Divers, 3 Little Auks, a Black Guillemot and a Slavonian Grebe. Four Short-eared Owls were observed coming in off the sea.



Lesser Yellowlegs (right), Saltholme

Martyn Sidwell

NEWS FROM THE COMMITTEE

PROGRESS ON THE FIVE-YEAR PLAN

The Committee recently reviewed the Five-Year Plan, which was launched at our April 2004 AGM. As 2008 draws to a close, the efforts of many people in the Club have ensured that most of our 12 targets have already been achieved. The Chairman will inform members at the 2009 AGM of the achievements.

The Committee has already begun to discuss what should be our key initiatives over the next five years, as it is important that we don't lose the impetus gained as a result of the implementation of the current Plan. We will, therefore, be launching a new initiative in 2009 under the guidance of our new Chairman, Ali McLee.

RECLAMATION POND

Following our meeting with the Department for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform (DBERR) on 20th June, we received notification from the Secretary of State on 28th August 2008 that Thor Cogeneration Limited's energy plant on the land between the Reclamation Pond and Dorman's Pool has been approved. The consent is subject to 40 Conditions, a number of which make specific reference to TBC, including continued access to the two sites for TBC members, the provision of new bird hides, ongoing liaison with TBC on key environmental issues and a hydrological survey of the two water bodies (at the request of TBC). Thor Cogeneration Limited has appointed a hydrological consultant, who commenced survey work and research in October 2008. The results will be fed back to TBC for incorporation into our 'Dorman's Pool Habitat Management Plan', which is currently being prepared.

One issue that still needs to be resolved is the question of access to the new Port Clarence Pools, which are not visible from the adjacent A178 Tees Road. The pools were constructed as part compensation for the loss of the Reclamation Pond and, as we have always had access to the latter site, we assume that we will also have access to the compensatory site. We will report on our discussions with the interested parties involved in this new site in due course.

HARTLEPOOL OBSERVATORY

Discussions are continuing with our architectural consultants, Jane Darbyshire and David Kendall Limited, PD Ports and HM Coastguard concerning our proposed plans for a new observatory at

Heugh Lighthouse. We hope to resolve the issues surrounding the communications mast and light beam from the lighthouse in the near future and have a costed outline scheme in place early in the New Year.

MEMBERSHIP SUBSCRIPTIONS

With 2009 membership subscriptions becoming due on 1st January we would be grateful if members could ensure prompt payment. We are now expected to show a VALID membership card when requested when visiting Dorman's Pool, the Reclamation Pond and the area around the Power Station and security guards are still making periodic checks here. One of the 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. Early payment of subscriptions also means that the Club has funds in place to conduct its normal business. **A subscription form is on page 21.**

CLEVELAND WATER BODY SURVEY 2008-09

We would be grateful if those taking part in this survey could send their first 4 months' counts for September to December 2008 inclusive as soon as they are completed to Chris Sharp, as they are needed for inclusion in the 2007 'Cleveland Bird Report'. Chris's contact details are:

Address: 20 Auckland Way, Hartlepool, TS26 0AN

Email: chrisandlucia@ntlworld.com

Tel: 01429 865163

Thank you.

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.

CHANGE OF NEWSLETTER STAFF

Since the Club's Newsletter was revamped and re-launched in 2004, it has continued to improve, with a wider range of features, profiles of local birders, site guides, news updates on the Club's activities and members' articles on places of interest and trips they have made. Photographs and maps have been added in a 'newspaper format' to make it a more interesting and relaxed read. *(continued overleaf)*

This could not have been achieved without the technical support of Jamie Duffie, who has been almost solely responsible for formatting the new Newsletter since it was originally launched. We often receive very positive feedback from members, who enjoy the new style and content. The August 2008 edition (Issue 40) was, sadly, Jamie's last due to other commitments and the Committee would like to extend their thanks to him for the many hours he has devoted to its

continual improvement, while at the same time managing our very successful Website.

Eric James has kindly agreed to take over responsibility for formatting the Newsletter and the quality of his work is displayed in this latest edition for all to see.

Ted Parker

TBC BESPOKE CLOTHING

Members are reminded of the clothing offers available to TBC members through our arrangements with Arco of Stockton. We offer fleeces, polo shirts and hats incorporating the TBC logo at very reasonable prices and these will make good Christmas presents. The product range available and prices are as follows:

Item Description	Size	Arco Code	Quantity	Unit Price
	<u>S, M, L, XL, XXL, XXXL</u>			
KII Crew Neck Sweatshirt Navy Blue		2606200		£14.95
KII Crew Neck Sweatshirt Bottle Green		2606300		£14.95
KII Crew Neck Sweatshirt Black		2606600		£14.95
	<u>S, M, L, XL, XXL</u>			
Trojan Mens Polo Shirt Navy Blue		2600600		£12.95
Trojan Mens Polo Shirt Bottle Green		26T1000		£12.95
Trojan Mens Polo Shirt Black		26T1100		£12.95
	<u>Sizes 8 to 26</u>			
Trojan Ladies Polo Shirt Navy Blue		2680600		£12.95
Trojan Ladies Polo Shirt Bottle Green		2681000		£12.95
Trojan Ladies Polo Shirt Black		2681100		£12.95
	<u>S, M, L, XL, XXL, XXXL</u>			
EII Glacier Fleece Unisex Navy Blue		10E1200		£21.95
EII Glacier Fleece Unisex Bottle Green		10E1400		£21.95
EII Glacier Fleece Unisex Black		10E1300		£21.95
	<u>One Size Fits All</u>			
Acrylic Watch Cap Navy Blue		2631100		£6.95
Acrylic Watch Cap Black		2631300		£6.95
Price Inclusive of VAT & Includes Embroidery of Club Badge to Left Breast (Or Centre of Cap)				

Sizing Guide	
Size	Chest
S	34-36"
M	38-40"
L	42-44"
XL	46-48"
XXL	50-52"
XXXL	54-56"

Orders can be placed with Julie Mason at:

Address: 11 Redmire Road, Stockton
TS18 4JR

Email: juliemason@redmire1.freeserve.co.uk

Tel: 01642 614583

Please state the product required, quantity, size(s) and colour, along with your name, address and telephone number.

RSPB SALTHOLME RESERVE TO OPEN IN THE NEW YEAR

Thanks to all of the TBC members for their patience in waiting for the RSPB Saltholme reserve to come on-line. The waiting is nearly over; our doors (and gates) will be open on 21st January 2009. The rather stunning centre and its appealing first floor cafe will be open, as will our three hides, but not all of the reserve will be finished by then. Chris Beardshaw's walled wildlife garden will still very much be under development, as will the playscape and schools discovery zone. The cycleway across to the Clarendons will still be closed, as will the track to the Haverton viewpoint, as some ground works will still be continuing. Obviously many of the recently constructed pools and reedbeds are still developing and it will be some years before they are fully mature but come and see what we have been up to all these years. Looking forward to welcoming TBC members to Saltholme in the New Year.

Dave Braithwaite Site Manager

'THE BREEDING BIRDS OF CLEVELAND'

Members will be interested to know that *The Breeding Birds of Cleveland* is now complete and is currently being bound. We anticipate copies being available from early to mid-November. The book is the culmination of a monumental effort by a large number of people over the past 10 years and is undoubtedly the biggest and most ambitious project ever undertaken by the Club. It is a unique publication and covers all 127 species that bred in Cleveland during the survey period (1999-2006 inclusive), along with those that have bred in the past or may breed in the future. The species accounts, written by a diverse team of authors, are beautifully embellished with full colour distribution maps and monochrome sketches. There is an informative introductory section, which traces the history and development of Cleveland's landscape since the last Ice Age, and the book is liberally illustrated with high quality photographs. Adverts have appeared in the national magazines, 'Birdwatch' and 'British Birds' and we are going to issue press releases in November. Five thousand specially designed fliers have been produced and are currently being circulated: one has been included with your Newsletter. We are hoping to have a BBC TV slot to promote the book, courtesy of Adrian Pitches, at the end of November.

The special offer price of £20 (plus £5 postage and packaging for those who can't collect their copies) has been extended to 31st December 2008. The price thereafter will be £25 (plus £5

postage and packaging). Anyone who would like to order a discounted copy, please contact our Sales Officer, John Fletcher (details below).

Once we have taken delivery of the book, John will distribute these at 'launch venues', at which copies can also be purchased to avoid the need for postage and packaging costs. The current planned venue dates are as follows:

22nd November: 9.30am-12.30pm Dorman's Pool TBC lower car park and 1.00-4.00pm, Hartlepool Headland at the Heugh Battery car park.

23rd November: 10.00am-1.00pm, Scaling Dam, Sailing Club car park (west end).

24th November: Cleveland Naturalists' Field Club, Nature's World, Ladgate Lane, at 7.00pm.

1st December: Stockton Library: 6.30pm-9.20pm at the TBC members' meeting.

9th December: 7.00 for 7.30pm, Summerhill Bird Club. Summerhill is signposted off Catcote Road, Hartlepool.

11th December: 7.00 for 7.30pm, Northumberland and Tyneside Bird Club, Room A002, Ellison Building, University of Northumbria.

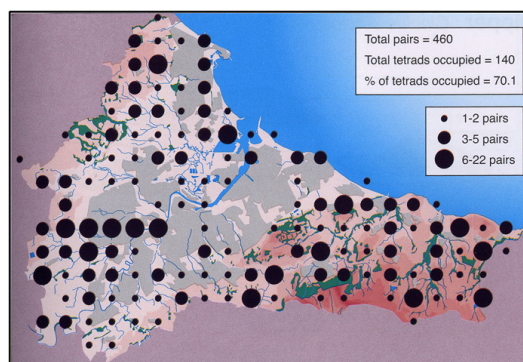
13th December: Teesmouth Field Centre: 9.30am-12.30pm.

Individual local arrangements can also be made for delivery of 5 copies or more if you contact John Fletcher at :

43 Glaisdale Avenue
Middlesbrough TS5 7PF
Tel: 01642 818825
Email: jnofletcher@lineone.net

At the time of going to press, 250 copies of the book are already committed so don't miss the opportunity to secure your own copy of this ground-breaking work - it will make an excellent, good-value Christmas present for yourself or someone you know.

John Fletcher



Distribution map for Pied Wagtails

REPORTS ON LOCAL OUTINGS

WADERS ON THE NORTH TEES MARSHES, SATURDAY 2ND AUGUST 2008

When I went for a look around immediately before the outing I was quite hopeful, as the day before I had seen a Little Ringed Plover, 2 Wood Sandpipers, 4 Greenshanks, several Ruffs, 2 Common Sandpipers, a Little Stint, 68 Dunlins and 102 Knots. The latter were on Back Saltholme and one colour-ringed bird later proved that the birds had probably all come from Ellesmere Island in the Canadian Arctic. However, having failed to see most of these birds before meeting the participants, I was more than a little worried to find the Dorman's Pool car park full, with 23 members present – a very good turnout.

We started at Saltholme Pools and found an early returning Golden Plover, Common Sandpiper and 6 Ruffs, including one male already in winter plumage, whilst others were in their attractive summer dress. At Greatham Creek we saw a Little Egret and, perhaps the best birds of the outing, summer-plumaged Grey Plovers and Turnstones just across the Creek. The Tidal Pool let us down, with only a Common Sandpiper and 32 Dunlins (the Avocets had left two days earlier). We finished our morning visit at Seal Sands, where we saw Black- and Bar-tailed Godwits, 2 Knots, 6 Grey Plovers and a rather early female Goldeneye.

John Grieson

RSPB SALTHOLME, SUNDAY 17TH AUGUST 2008

We had another fantastic turn out from TBC members on the 17th August, when a group of over 60 visited the RSPB Saltholme reserve. The weather was by no means tropical, but clement enough to spend a few hours happily on site. For some, this was a return visit and a chance to see how the project had progressed since the previous tour back in January. For others, it was a chance to take a first glimpse at the developing reserve.

Once gathered in the car park we followed the track up towards the Visitor Centre. Construction was in full swing on the building itself and the floors were being installed at the time of the visit, which limited our access. However, it was still possible to get a flavour of what the finished Centre will look like, including features such as the "rammed earth" wall, viewing area, seating balcony and classrooms. From the Centre we moved on to the main reserve, where we were able to partake in a spot of birdwatching from the

new Saltholme Pools hide, in addition to taking a look at the Paddy's Pool hide, where building work was underway. Birds spotted on the day included Little Egret, Ringed Plover, Green Sandpiper, Common Tern, Great Crested Grebe, Little Grebe, Greenshank and Yellow Wagtail.

There was a real sense of interest in the project and non-stop discussion and questions about all aspects of the reserve continued throughout the visit, with several members staying behind after the tour to enquire about volunteering and membership. Apologies to anyone at the back of the group who may have had difficulty hearing me at times, with such a great turn out we will be sure to have extra staff on hand for the next TBC visit. The Centre is now very close to completion and we eagerly anticipate the opportunity to finally show the full potential of what has proven to be an exciting project. The builders will soon be leaving us to get on with our final preparations for the reserve opening to the public in January 2009. We hope to see you all there.

Emma Birnie

Saltholme Estate Warden

RINGING AT HARTLEPOOL HEADLAND, SUNDAY 21ST SEPTEMBER 2008

The day dawned bright and sunny with southwesterly winds. Approximately 10–12 people turned up on Hartlepool Headland to see a ringing demonstration by Mike Gee and myself. Unfortunately we failed to catch a single bird all morning, which was exactly what we were expecting, with the weather being more suitable for day-trippers than for birding. However, we did show people the methods and equipment that we use to catch birds and we also had a pleasant walk round the Headland, birding along the way. Most seemed to enjoy themselves despite the lack of birds and needless to say the following day we caught Redstart, Garden Warbler, Chiffchaff and Goldcrest – that's the way it goes!

Chris Brown

SOUTH GARE, MONDAY 13TH OCTOBER 2008

About 20 members assembled at the Pilot Station for this outing on a fine, slightly overcast morning. The stiff breeze from the west meant that migrants were going to be thin on the ground and binoculars and telescopes not easy to keep steady. We first gathered around the Bomb Hole area where the few Redwings, unused to such a large audience, rapidly left, unlike a rather showy Reed Bunting. We then scanned the reef offshore and beyond to try and locate feeding birds. Out

at sea, a few Gannets were foraging, with Cormorants, Shags, Eiders and Red-breasted Mergansers feeding closer in. Other ducks resting before moving on were Wigeon, Teal and Pintail. The wet sand at the water's edge held Bar-tailed Godwits and other common waders, while lots of Starlings and Turnstones probed for food in the decaying seaweed left at the high water mark.



The Bomb Hole, South Gare

John Sharp

An attractive, winter-plumaged Mediterranean Gull then settled close by, with some Black-headed Gulls to facilitate comparison of the two species. Near the end of the outing, a fly-by Great Northern Diver and a Merlin raised the total number of species identified to 37.

John Sharp

GREATHAM CREEK AND GREENABELLA MARSH, SUNDAY 9TH NOVEMBER 2008

Eleven members braved extremely windy conditions on this Sunday morning to explore the birds around Greatham Creek. We walked up the east and west sides of the Creek, to the north of the road bridge, taking in Greenabella Marsh. Good numbers of Wigeon and Teal were present, along with a single Grey Plover, Little Egret and 7 Red-breasted Mergansers. The strong winds meant that looking for passerines was very difficult and there was no sign of the recently reported Twite flock.

We then followed the public footpath to the west of the A178 as far as the old tip, where good panoramic views were possible. Again, the blustery conditions hampered viewing but more Wigeon and Teal were found, along with roosting Redshank and 3 more Grey Plovers.

Despite the conditions, members were introduced to areas not visited regularly and all agreed they would return when the weather was a little kinder.

Chris Sharp

LOCAL OUTINGS 2009

The following local outings have been arranged for members during the early part of 2009 and include a variety of different venues and habitats. The Committee would like to thank all those leaders who continue to run these outings for the benefit of our members.

SUMMERHILL LOCAL NATURE RESERVE AND WARD JACKSON PARK

Saturday 10th January 2009

Join John Fletcher on a walk around one of Hartlepool's lesser-known birding spots, Summerhill LNR. A good selection of passerines should be seen. The feeding station regularly attracts Willow Tits and Tree Sparrows. Up to 12 Ring-necked Parakeets have been seen around Ward Jackson Park in recent months. Meet at 10.00am in the car park at Summerhill. For further details ring John on 01642 818825.

BOWESFIELD MARSH

Sunday 22nd February 2009

Join Eric James for a walk around this under-watched but rapidly developing area. A large flock of Golden Plover has wintered here in recent years and a good variety of wildfowl should be present. Meet at 9.30am next to Archer's Law offices. For further details ring Eric on 01642 310103.



HARTLEPOOL HEADLAND

Sunday 8th March 2009

Join Chris Sharp and look for sea ducks and wintering gulls around the headland. Waders, such as Purple Sandpiper, Turnstone and Knot should also be seen and there is always a chance of a Mediterranean or Glaucous Gull. Meet at 9.30am by Heugh Gun Battery car park. For further details ring Chris on 01429 865163.

NORTH TEES MARSHES

Monday 6th April 2009

Join John Grieveson for a look around the North Tees Marshes. Expect a few early summer migrants and a good variety of wildfowl and waders, such as Black-tailed Godwit, Spotted Redshank and Ruff. Meet at 9.30am at Dorman's Pool car park. For further details ring John on 01642 650569.

TBC DAY TRIPS

Due to the success of our programme of Local Outings in 2008, we have decided to reintroduce day trips for members on a trial basis to see what the demand for these is. Julie Mason and John Todd have kindly agreed to organise these. Day trips to locations such as North Northumberland, Caerlaverock and Hornsea Mere were popular during the early years of the Club in the 1960s and 1970s but were eventually terminated due to lack of demand. A show of hands at our September members' evening meeting suggested that there is renewed interest in day trips and so we are planning to run our first on 15th February 2009 to North Northumberland, with the focus on Lindisfarne. The trip will be led by Chris Bielby and members can expect to see a good range of wildfowl, grebes, divers and other birds. Lindisfarne has a healthy population of Pale-bellied Brent Geese, with Whooper Swan, Long-tailed Duck and Red-necked and Slavonian Grebes all being possible. There is always a good chance of raptors, such as a Peregrine, Merlin or even a Hen Harrier and the whole day should be enjoyable and bird-filled. We are proposing three pick-up points : at Middlesbrough (Dorman Museum), Stockton (outside the Swallow Hotel) and Hartlepool (Marks an Spencer's car park). The times are to be confirmed but it is likely that first pick-up will be at Middlesbrough at 08.00 hrs. We are planning a 49-seater coach, depending upon demand, and all those who wish to join the trip should fill in the booking form and send this, with a £5.00 non-refundable deposit, to the trip organiser:

Julie Mason

11 Redmire Road, Stockton, TS18 4JR

Tel: 01642 614583

Email: juliemason@redmire1.freemove.co.uk

Note : the booking form is on page 22

FURTHER SUPPORT BY HUNTSMAN TIOXIDE

Huntsman Tioxide is donating £450 to Teesmouth Bird Club for the purchase of mist nets for ringing birds on their Greenabella Marsh site. The nets will be used by local ringer, Derek Clayton, and arrangements are to be made by Huntsman for them to be stored on site, to obviate the need to carry them around. This follows the catching and ringing of a Yellow-browed Warbler in scrub on the northern part of the marsh during the second sponsored birdwatch on 28th September, this being, perhaps, just a taster of what other birds might be lurking in this area. During the summer, Whitethroat, Whinchat, Stonechat and Reed Bunting are known to breed and other species regularly seen include Blackbird, Song Thrush, Great and Blue Tits, Wren and Dunnock. It is

likely that migrants also pass through this area and mist-netting will add to our knowledge of this important site.

We are very grateful to Huntsman Tioxide yet again for their continued support of our Club.

TBC BEACHED BIRD SURVEY

*It now looks almost certain that the Teesside Offshore Windfarm will be built off Redcar, despite significant opposition by the Club, 'Save Our Shoreline' and other concerned groups. In view of this, we have decided to carry out our own beached bird monitoring survey to assess the impact of the development, particularly on collision risks to birds. **Ted Parker** outlines below how you can help.*

At an initial hearing at the High Court in London on 30th June and 1st July 2008 to consider the Teesside Offshore Windfarm, a High Court Judge refused Redcar and Cleveland Borough Council a Judicial Review or a Public Inquiry. It is now almost certain that the windfarm will go ahead and a testing rig is already in place in Tees Bay. In view of this, the Club is going to conduct a beached bird survey before, during and after construction to monitor its impacts on collision risks to seabirds, which we consider to be one of the key environmental concerns.

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 is included with this Newsletter (**see page 23**). The form can also be downloaded off the Website or obtained from **Vic Fairbrother** (tel: 01287 633744). All records should be sent to Vic at :

8 Whitby Avenue, Guisborough, TS16 7AP

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

HABITAT IMPROVEMENTS AT SCALING DAM

***Ted Parker** looks back at the habitat improvements implemented at Scaling Dam earlier this year and expresses a personal opinion on their effectiveness.*

In the March 2008 edition (Issue 39) of the Newsletter, I reported on the habitat improvements being carried out by Northumbrian Water at Scaling Dam, under the guidance of the Scaling Dam Wildlife Advisory Committee (SDWAC). As a regular visitor to this site, I was keen to see how effective the improvements would be over the ensuing breeding and migration periods.

Immediately after completion, the works appeared a little 'rough', with rather steep sides to the islands, and they certainly weren't on as grand a scale as anticipated. Nevertheless, they did open up the whole shoreline in front of the hide and removed those irritating bushes that blocked views out across the reserve to the south shore. The improvements were largely aimed at creating additional foreshore habitat, breeding areas for Little Ringed Plovers, a shallow feeding scrape for passage waders and 'loafing' islands for wildfowl.

The first birds to appear on the new scrape were perhaps anticipated – Mallard, Moorhen, Black-headed Gull and Pied Wagtail, quickly followed by Greylag Goose. On 25th March, the new habitat attracted its first scarce bird in the form of a Tundra Bean Goose, which was accompanied by several Pink-footed and 10 Canada Geese; all this was in the space of less than a few weeks since completion. The arrival of Little Ringed Plovers in late March posed an interesting question: would they take to the new habitat? Early indications were not good, as they tended to stick to the more rocky south shore, where they have bred in

the recent past. Other species quick to use the new habitat included Tufted Duck, Redshank, a stunning male Wood Duck and a White Wagtail. On 2nd May, I saw my first Common Sandpiper right in front of the hide and I felt that the improvements were beginning to pay dividends, a view that was reinforced when a pair of Oystercatchers displayed on the new scrape. Just over a month later saw a pair of Little Ringed Plovers displaying on the new spit on 10th June. On 21st June, one was seen making a nest scrape in the same area and on 11th July an adult was sitting on 4 eggs on the new spit in torrential rain and, despite the weather conditions and one egg being taken by a Carrion Crow, the other 3 hatched on 25th July and the young survived. Other birds that gave spectacular views on the new scrape included Green and Wood Sandpipers, Dunlin, Ringed Plover, Greenshank and even Red-legged Partridge, which walked along the shoreline to get to the feeding station! The raptor post to the right of the hide has held Kestrel, Sparrowhawk, Cuckoo and Mistle Thrush this year but we are still waiting for the first Ospreys to use the tower specially erected for them!

This year has been the best ever in terms of the number of birds seen at Scaling Dam during the 2008 Hanson Bird Challenge, with 158 species having been recorded up to the time of going to press. Twenty-two species of wader alone have been recorded during the year, no doubt boosted by repair work to the dam wall, which necessitated very low water levels for a substantial period during the autumn. A feature on Scaling Dam's birding highlights of 2008, which included many scarce and rare species, such as Black Stork, Montagu's Harrier and Wood Warbler, will appear in the next Newsletter.

Ted Parker



Martin Blick

Panoramic view of the habitat improvements

A REVIEW OF CLEVELAND'S SITES OF NATURE CONSERVATION IMPORTANCE (SNCIs) FOR BIRDS

*Tees Valley Wildlife Trust is currently undertaking a review of all existing SNCIs across Cleveland on behalf of the four Borough Councils as a result of new Government guidelines. In this feature, **Graham Megson** outlines the nature of the review, the criteria being used to assess sites and the role of the TBC in the process.*

There is a number of nature conservation designations for wildlife sites in the country, with the top tier being Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs). These are statutory sites designated by law. Each local authority has a second tier of wildlife sites that have no statutory protection but which are contained in the Local Plans or the new 'Local Development Frameworks' of local authorities and are considered during planning applications and therefore get some protection. These go by different names in different areas but in Cleveland they are called 'Sites of Nature Conservation Importance' (SNCI), although recent government guidance from Defra has recommended that, for consistency, they should all be referred to as 'Local Wildlife Sites' (LWS). They were originally set up under the lead of Cleveland (now Tees Valley) Wildlife Trust (TVWT) based on surveys of the best sites to emerge from a Cleveland-wide 'Phase 1 Habitat Survey' carried out in the early 1980s.

Although broadly classified as wildlife sites, the primary survey was botanical and the sites are biased towards their plant diversity. Other wildlife groups were noted but once the site had hit the criteria for plants, other groups were largely ignored. Criteria were agreed by a steering group and included guidelines for plants, birds, reptiles and amphibians.

Following Defra guidance in 2007, the whole system is now being updated and existing SNCIs re-surveyed to see whether they still qualify. Defra has set targets for getting these sites into good wildlife management, as many are deteriorating. Local authorities are taking the lead and will have to report progress annually from 2009.

TVWT has approached the Club's Conservation Sub-committee to ask for ornithological advice on the SNCI review. This will involve five pieces of work and for some of these your help is requested, viz:

1. A review of the four existing bird guidelines to advise on whether they can be improved in order to best assess the

value of sites in 'Cleveland' for birds. Then:

2. To re-assess the bird interest of SNCIs that qualified purely on their bird interest to determine whether they still pass the threshold for qualification.
3. To assess the bird interest of SNCIs that no longer qualify for their plant interest, but may qualify for their birds.
4. To recommend 'new' SNCIs, which qualify solely on their bird interest.
5. To provide bird data for SNCIs that qualify for their plant biology but where TBC considers that they also qualify for birds (thus, when they are being checked for planning issues their bird as well as their plant interest will be taken into account).

The current ornithological criteria established by TVWT are:

1. **Wintering populations:** all sites regularly holding greater than 0.5% of the national population of any wintering or passage species or sites regularly holding more than 2,000 birds.
2. **Breeding populations:** all sites regularly holding greater than 0.5% of the Tees Valley breeding population of a species.
3. **Bird assemblages:** all sites regularly holding exceptionally good breeding bird species assemblages for that particular habitat.
4. **Unusual features:** all sites regularly holding significantly high numbers of a key breeding or wintering species or unique features of a species or assemblage.

As you will note, these guidelines need baseline data and a degree of subjective analysis. Definition of words such as 'regularly' is also required. They also need to be set at a lower threshold than the ones used for the designation of bird SSSIs – it must be remembered that these are 'second tier' sites.

The TBC's Conservation Sub-committee will be making recommendations on the guidelines and your thoughts are welcome. Clearly, the value of our new atlas, *'The Breeding Birds of Cleveland'*, will come into its own here and we can also use our huge database of records, Wetland Bird Survey (WeBS) information and Cleveland Water Bodies Survey data.

To start the process, the table below lists the first tranche of SNCIs that we wish to review for their bird importance. I would, therefore, be grateful for initial thoughts on the bird interest of these from those who visit them regularly and the names of other regular watchers who I can contact.



BOULBY CLIFFS : Large seabird assemblages (Criteria 2 and 3)

Photographs by Steve Keightley

Examples of the type of sites that may qualify as 'Local Wildlife Sites' on ornithological grounds are shown in these two photographs.

Graham Megson



SALTERGILL, YARM : Rare breeding species – Lesser Spotted Woodpecker (Criteria 2 and 4)

STOCKTON ON TEES	REDCAR AND CLEVELAND/CONT'D
	The following currently fail on botanical grounds and are flagged for de-designation/cont'd
Portrack Marsh, NZ 465195	Kilton Thorpe Railway (disused), NZ 691173
Billingham Beck Mouth, NZ 476203	Langbaugh Quarry [geological SSSI], NZ 557122
Wynyard Lake, NZ 420255	Layland Beck Wood [also known as North Skelton Plantation], NZ 675189
Reclamation Pond, NZ 520233	Locke Park, NZ 594-248
Charlton's Pond, NZ 469232	Meadow Hall Wood, NZ 628163
Black Bobbies' Field, NZ 447166	Ormesby Hall Woodlands, NZ 525-160, NZ 532160 & NZ 521168
Bowesfield Reserve, NZ 446164	Skelton Warren, NZ 658155
Carlton Pasture Fish Ponds, NZ 397217	Slapewath Quarry, NZ 641160
Brinefields/ Long Drag, NZ 513240	Grove Hill Wood, NZ 590152
Longnewton Reservoir, NZ 364167	Upsall Carr Planatation, NZ 551147
REDCAR AND CLEVELAND	Warren House Plantation (nr Grinkle), NZ 735161
The following are currently designated for birds but need re-assessing:	Guisborough Branch walkway, NZ 556147 to NZ 596147
Margrove Ponds, NZ 652622	Fox Covert, NZ 630230
Redcar to Saltburn Foreshore, NZ 62-24 to NZ 676216	HARTLEPOOL
Saltburn to Boulby Coast, NZ 676216 to NZ 783190	Not yet received. Hartlepool Borough Council's Ecologist, Ian Bond, is currently reviewing sites in this area.
Airy Hill Woodland, NZ 647164	MIDDLESBROUGH
Butt Lane Cutting, NZ 624155	Hemlington Lake, NZ 490146
Crow Wood, NZ 635162	
Dabholme, location not noted	
Errington Wood, NZ 629204	
Fish Pond Plantation, NZ 618159	
Grove Hill Wood, NZ590152	
Langbaugh Quarry (geological SSSI), NZ 557122	
Flatts Lane complex, NZ 550165	

A BOOST FOR PONDS IN THE TEES VALLEY

*In this feature, **Sue Antrobus** introduces a new initiative in the Tees Valley to restore ponds to their rightful place in the ecological landscape – the Tees Valley Pondscape Project.*

Introduction

A new initiative to redress the on-going loss of ponds and their associated wildlife across the Tees Valley has just been launched by the Tees Valley Biodiversity Partnership. The Tees Valley Pondscape Project will map and monitor ponds, create new ones and restore some of our best ponds for aquatic wildlife. The three-year, £200,000 project, has secured 50% funding from Natural England's Countdown 2010 fund.

Treasure Troves for Wildlife

Ponds are a familiar and much loved feature of the English landscape. They are part of our natural and cultural heritage, reflecting past agricultural and industrial practices. Those remaining are like strings of pearls dotting our landscape with charm and tranquility. They are literally natural treasure troves, brimming with aquatic life. Ponds provide rich and complex habitats for wildlife, supporting a vast array of freshwater plants and animals. Collectively, our ponds are home to a third of our native plants and over 1,200 species of invertebrates, such as mayflies, pond skaters, bugs and snails. All our amphibian species (frogs, toads and newts) depend on ponds in which to breed. For many species of birds, ponds provide food, shelter and nesting sites.

Vanishing Ponds

Some three-quarters (more than a million) of Britain's ponds have been lost over the last 100 years. Changes in farming practices have made some ponds redundant, others have been filled in to make way for housing and industrial developments and many sites are affected either by pollution, overstocking with fish, or choked with invasive, non-native plant species. Naturally, ponds are temporary habitats and over time are colonised by reeds and rushes, and later water-tolerant trees and shrubs, such as alder and willow, before drying out. All these stages of natural succession are ecologically valuable but without the creation of new ponds or sensitive ecological management the number and quality of ponds in a landscape will continue to diminish.

Value of Ponds Recognised

Due to their small size and familiarity, ponds are consistently undervalued as freshwater habitats.

Ecological surveys and research by the Pond Conservation Trust has gone a long way to raising the profile of ponds amongst conservationists and land managers. Ponds were upgraded to a national biodiversity priority habitat in 2007. A national action plan of pond research, creation and restoration is now underway. The increasing popularity of garden ponds has also contributed a valuable habitat refuge, especially for the once common frog and newt.

Ponds in the Tees Valley

Tees Valley Biodiversity Partnership has produced an action plan for ponds. The Tees Valley Pondscape Project was developed to deliver this plan. The project has five aims:

- (i) To quantify and qualify the ecological pond resource in the Tees Valley and identify ponds that meet the criteria for classification as a national priority pond under the new national Pond Habitat Action Plan.
- (ii) To strategically create new high quality ponds using the Tees Valley Pondscape data.
- (iii) To restore the ecological condition of priority ponds so that they provide a high quality habitat for associated species.
- (iv) To enhance the status and protection of ponds by communication and disseminating information, advice and guidance.
- (v) To provide pond habitats for BAP species, focusing on water vole and great crested newt.

Off to a Good Start

The Tees Valley Wildlife Trust is recruiting a Pondscape Officer to deliver the project. In the meantime, the Wildflower Ark and staff from the Trust are already working on designing database and GIS systems for collecting, displaying and interpreting forthcoming ecological survey work. By collating existing records we already have skeleton data on the locations of over 500 ponds in the Tees Valley and have started a programme of field inventories.

Bird Data

The bird survey of water bodies carried out by the Teesmouth Bird Club during the winter of 2006/7 and the planned repeat surveys this winter will be valuable information for the Pondscape project. It will enable us to evaluate and conserve ponds by having bird data in addition to the information on aquatic invertebrate, plants and amphibians.

Find Out More

For more information on this project, visit the www.teesvalleybiodiversity.org.uk news feed on

the front page. As the project progresses, there will be regular pages and project updates on the website. If you have information about Tees Valley ponds which you think would be useful or if you want to be on the email newsletter list contact Sue Antrobus santrobus@teeswildlife.org or telephone 01287 636382.

Sue Antrobus

LOVELL HILL PONDS, GUISBOROUGH

Steve Norman describes this largely under-watched, private site near Guisborough, which is tucked away in the undulating rural landscape of East Cleveland. He has visited it regularly over many years, both as a ringer and a birder, and probably knows it better than anyone. All photographs have been kindly provided by the author.

Background

Lovell Hill Pond itself (the present area is named after it) was situated about 500 metres to the north of the two large pools visible from Wilton Lane. It was a large body of water, probably about the size of a small lake, but, unfortunately, a small child drowned here in the 1940s and it was subsequently drained. This area is now covered in Pine trees.



The present site is set within an undulating, well-wooded agricultural landscape and is situated on the east side of Wilton Back Lane between Wilton and Guisborough. It is the result of flooded mine workings and consists of two main pools with small islands, ideal for breeding waterfowl. These pools are situated at the northern end and are edged with great reed mace, sedge and rushes. The main scrubby vegetation consists of damp willow carr, hawthorn and blackthorn, with occasional silver birch, ash, sycamore and oak trees.

Unfortunately, the main area is on private land owned, I believe, by ICI but leased to a local

farmer. The area is fenced off and isolated from the agricultural fields surrounding it and is now a Site of Special Scientific Interest under the auspices of Natural England. Its SSSI citation in 1999 was based on the outstanding assemblage of dragonflies and damselflies it contains. The range of habitats is ideal for flying insects in general and *Odonata* dragonflies and damselflies, in particular. The following species are known to breed at the site: Azure Damselfly, Variable Damselfly (nationally scarce and on the northeastern edge of its range here), Common Blue Damselfly, Large Red Damselfly, Blue-tailed Damselfly, Emerald Damselfly, Southern Hawker, Common Hawker, Four-spotted Chaser, Ruddy Darter and Common Darter. The pools and surrounding habitats also support populations of both Great Crested and Smooth Newts.

Access

As the site is privately owned, access is restricted and safe parking is non-existent unless key access is obtained. The area is patrolled by a gamekeeper of the local shooting syndicate and, during the late autumn/winter, regular shoots are undertaken, with as many as 20 guns present, so if you are visiting the farm pond during this period take care.

The site can be viewed from a small, unofficial pull-in off Wilton Lane, which is accessed off Bolckow Street, Guisborough, just before the former Maternity Hospital. If approaching from the north, off the A174, follow the signs to Wilton (near the former ICI Wilton Works main entrance) and drive southwards down Wilton Lane to view the ponds on your left.

There are no well-worn tracks through the area but viewing of the main ponds from the central track (an old railway line), which bisects the 2 northern ponds is an ideal location. However, as mentioned, this would entail walking across private agricultural land to gain access.



Birds

The present site is the main breeding area for Sedge and Grasshopper Warblers and Reed Bunting, and the prime area for all waterside birds recorded at Lovell Hill. Moving south through the area are ditches and small ponds, now sadly overgrown with mainly blackthorn and hawthorn bushes. The south end is more open, an area I try to keep free of incursions by hawthorn and blackthorn and, of course, bramble. There are two medium-sized ponds edged with reed mace, sedges, rushes and the main body of horsetails present on the marsh. This area is also good for Sedge and Grasshopper Warblers and is ideal for breeding Willow Warbler, Blackcap, Garden Warbler, Whitethroat and Lesser Whitethroat. Another large pond (known as the 'Farm Pond') is situated behind what used to be Dunsdale Farm (demolished in the 1970s), now replaced with cow sheds, and is accessible as a right of way runs from Wilton Lane, opposite Court Green Farm entrance, to Dunsdale. Parking is still difficult, however, though good views of the pond are possible from this track. Little Grebe (occasionally) and Tufted Duck (regularly) breed here and a pair of Ruddy Ducks were present for 4 weeks in 2007.

Natural History studies commenced in 1970 and bird ringing from 1972 onwards, and is still ongoing. Over the years, 152 bird species have been recorded, with 3 new ones added this year alone: Marsh Harrier (2), Red Kite and Yellow-browed Warbler (2). Sixty-one species have bred, 34 on a more or less regular basis and 14 irregularly, the best of the latter probably being Water Rail, Shoveler, Garganey and Little Grebe. Fifteen species of warbler have been recorded, of which 8 usually breed annually.



From 1970 to 1986, dragonflies and damselflies were studied and identified; however, the person with expertise in this field moved out of the area in 1987 and the total of 18 species could well be increased if a similar expert could be found to

investigate them further. In a good year, butterflies include Green-veined White, Common Blue, Orange-Tip and, in the last few years, Speckled Wood, Comma, Ringlet and Clouded Yellow.

Being an isolated site makes it ideal for bird studies and over the years around 18 papers have been published on different aspects of the biological lives of principally the warbler species. Some studies are still ongoing for future publication.

Steve Norman

BIRDWATCHING AND CLUB HISTORY

A TEESMOUTH EPIPHANY

*In a remarkable and nostalgic feature, written in 1997, **John Nicholson** recalls the early days of birding on Teesside in an age devoid of pagers, advance identification guides, mobile 'phones, and, in many cases, even telephones and cars. It will bring back fond (or otherwise!) memories for some of our older members, at a time when one really had to work hard to see even local birds.*

In 1949, a nine-year-old John Nicholson got off a train at South Bank with his father and Alan Baldrige. They walked to the Transporter Bridge, met a teenage Philip Stead, crossed the Tees and walked to Cowpen Marsh. The landscape of Cowpen came as a revelation to John, which he describes in his inimitable style. This reminiscence recalls his early struggles over bird identification and his delight in birds. His fond memories of birdwatchers (largely youthful) from that period into the 1960s is a unique record of the time. Whether it is sea-watching at Hartlepool with draw-telescopes or getting around by bicycle, he gives a vivid account of birdwatching of the period. Since this was written in 1997, he muses on the changes on the Tees Marshes, the advent of the County of Cleveland and the superiority of County Durham compared with Yorkshire.

The full account is on the Teesmouth Bird Club Website, via Forum and Articles. Those without access to a computer and wish to have a copy should contact Chris Sharp (Tel: 01429 865163), so that one can be included with your next Newsletter.

FORMATION OF TEESMOUTH BIRD CLUB IN 1960

John Fletcher is researching the formation of the Teesmouth Bird Club in 1960. It is definitely known that a meeting was held at the Dorman Museum, in the Nelson Room, on a date in

November 1960 to discuss the formation of a club. The precise date is not yet known.

The following were present at the meeting: Philip Stead, Ann Tiffen (later Mrs Stead), Angela Cooper, Denis Summers-Smith, Margaret Summers-Smith, Robert (Julius) Lightfoot, Russell McAndrew, Graham Bell, Ian Stewart, Tony Vittery, Alan Vittery, Peter Hogg, Chris Bielby, Denis Seaward, Ken Smith, Ken Baldrige, Jim Henderson, Brian Coates, Dave Laing, Ian McKinley, Richard McKinley, Pete Reid, Geoff Proctor, Peter Evans, Brian Unwin, Jack Bailey, Peter Harland, Vic Brown, Martin Sidgwick, Peter Dent and J.S. McIntyre.

If anyone has information on the precise date of the meeting, or of other persons who were present would they please contact John at 43 Glaisdale Avenue, Middlesbrough, TS5 7PF or on 01642-818825 or jnofletcher@lineone.net.

TBC FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION 2010

In November 2010, the Club will be fifty years old and the Committee has decided that such a prestigious event must be celebrated in some way. It may seem rather early to be thinking about the arrangements but two years will pass very quickly and we have to consider booking a venue early and organising some sort of enjoyable entertainment in good time.

The provisional date for an evening celebration is Saturday 27th November 2010 and our current thinking is that the event should be simple, informal and fun. A possible format may include the following:

- Welcome complimentary drinks
- Opening welcome and remarks by the Chairman
- Guest speakers
- Complimentary buffet (with drinks purchased from the bar)
- Performance by Vin Garbutt
- Closing remarks by the Chairman

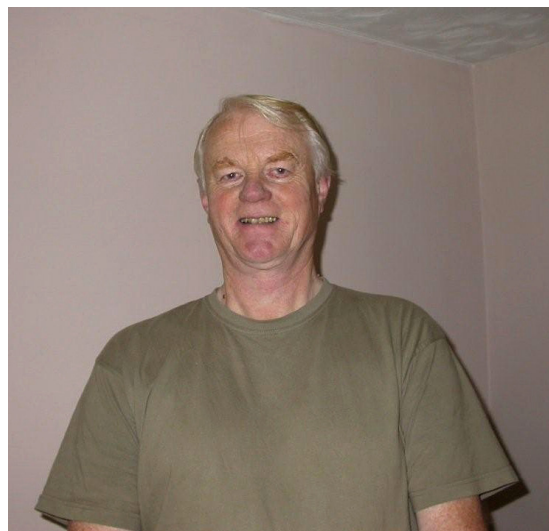
Vin Garbutt is a well-known, international folk singer and comedian, who was born and bred in the Cleveland area and still lives in an idyllic cottage at Hummersea, near Loftus. His performance will have a strong local flavour and he is an excellent raconteur and comic. We are hoping that the two or three guest speakers will give both humorous and serious perspectives on the history and development of the Club since its inception in 1960. The whole event will be enjoyable and light-hearted and in no way 'collar-and-tie'. We intend to invite guests from other

organisations with whom we have strong links or who have supported us over the years and the event will be open to any TBC member. We will keep the cost as low as possible and our current thinking is that tickets will be around £15 each. We are hoping to attract at least 100 members and it would be very useful to know how many members would be interested in attending the event, so that we can determine what size venue we will require. Expressing an interest now will not bind you in any way to attending the event but will give us an indication of the level of interest and help us enormously with planning. Please let Chris Sharp know if you would be interested in attending.

Ted Parker (Chairman)

PROFILE – ALISTAIR McLEE

*As Ali McLee is soon to become the new Chairman of Teesmouth Bird Club in April 2009, it was considered an appropriate time to talk to him to find out more about the man behind the face. In this feature, **Ted Parker** reviews some of the birding highlights of Ali's life, his aspirations for the future and his views on the Club he is to 'inherit'.*



Ali was born in Peebles on 15th July 1943, where he lived until going on to study Biochemistry at Edinburgh University. Here he undertook a first degree and a doctorate, following which he went to Toronto in Canada to undertake a two-year post-doctorate study in Microbiology. On his return to Britain, Ali moved to Kirkcaldy on Teesside, where he still lives today with his wife, Carol. He formerly worked for BSC and then joined ICI, where he remained until his 'official' retirement in 1993, although he has had two further 'retirements' since then! Ali's past professional work includes a research

microbiologist, a purchasing manager (for ICI) Auditor and Consultant both at home and in the Middle East.

Ali has been birding for over 45 years and has seen a very creditable 310 species in Cleveland, although he is keen to point out that he is not a "numbers person". His local patch is Kirklevington and the Leven Valley, where he loves to bird in typical English woodlands. His visits to this area have added significantly to our local knowledge of scarce and rare breeding species, such as Goosander and Lesser Spotted Woodpecker. When not in the Leven Valley, Ali's other favoured haunt is Hartlepool Headland, both for its seabird passage and 'falls' of migrants and "where you never know what will turn up". The optics he uses are 10 x 42 EL Swarovski binoculars and a Leica APU Televid 77 'scope.

Among Ali's favourite books is his collection of IPC magazines from the 1970s, which comprised 9 volumes of 'Birds of the World'. These were groundbreaking at that time and opened his eyes to the order of birds, their evolution and the parallels and differences evident in other countries.

His other interests include wildlife generally, trout fishing, "pottering about in the garden" and "grandparenthood". The most impressive site Ali has visited is the Pivot Fields in Dubai, UAE, where the short turf, camel fodder hay fields and sewage pools are a magnet for migrant birds. Species he has seen here include Spotted Eagle, Caspian and White-tailed Plovers, Little Crane, pratincoles and numerous waders. The variety and closeness of the birds is particularly impressive.

Ali can't single out his best day's birding in Cleveland but feels that "any good 'fall' day at Hartlepool" is outstanding. His best personal finds have been the first and second confirmed Cleveland breeding records of Goosanders on his local patch on the River Leven while undertaking survey work for the Club's new atlas, 'The Breeding Birds of Cleveland'. His biggest birding disappointment was the largely bird-bare forests of New Zealand, which were devoid of native passerines due to too many introduced species, such as rats, possums and stoats, which are taking out the local birds. A trip to the Sani Pass in Lesotho, South Africa, produced Ali's most memorable bird – close views of a majestic Lammergeier, which is a species he has always longed to see. When asked about his ambition bird, Ali said that this was to see and hear the display of the Lyrebird in Australia, which mimics a wide range of noises, including a chainsaw and camera shutters! Ali says that he has had many embarrassing moments but one that particularly

and a Quality Assurance and Environmental sticks in his mind is not calling out a Caspian Tern that passed Hartlepool several years ago, due to a degree of uncertainty. Ironically, one turned up the next morning at Big Waters and Ali is now philosophical: "Don't be too shy to call something".

Among the changes that Ali would like to see is more money filtering down to local, indigenous people from organised birding trips abroad, particularly to poor countries. More locally, he feels that the Teesmouth Bird Club, of which he will soon become Chairman, is an excellent model for a small, friendly bird society. The Club is now consulted on local issues and he views the forthcoming atlas as a major achievement. The Website is "brilliant", promoting both the Club and the local area. On the negative site, he feels that not enough people are putting "added value" into their birding by assisting with things such as survey work and records submission, which tend to be done by the same group of people time and time again. Ali also feels that not enough businesses contribute to environmental projects generally and fail to grasp the value of the benefits of doing so to the community, their shareholders and their perceived image. There are exceptions to this, however, such as Huntsman Tioxide and PD Ports, which are much more environmentally supportive. The changes he would like to see in the local environment in the future include a healthy raptor population commensurate with our area, including Red Kites and a good population of raptors on the North York Moors. Among Ali's aspirations for the future are, as the Bee-Gees might say, "Stayin' Alive", and doing more birding trips abroad. He would particularly like to see the Danube Delta, migration through the Bosphorous and the Polish forests, the last truly wild deciduous woodlands left in Europe. We hope that he achieves these, particularly the "Stayin' Alive"!

Ted Parker

Did you know.....

The word 'Scoter' was originally a Yorkshire term for *Melanitta fusca*. However, the word itself is thought to be a printing error, the original form being 'Sooter', a reference to the male's black plumage.

(Source : W.B. Lockwood, The Oxford Book of British Bird Names)

WETLAND BIRD SURVEY TEESMOUTH, AUTUMN 2008 SUMMARY

SPECIES	July 13	Aug 17	Sept 14	Oct 12
Little Grebe	23	48*	69*	<u>82</u> **
Great Crested Grebe	24	<u>35</u>	27	24
Cormorant	153*	<u>306</u> **	237**	190*
Grey Heron	47	53	<u>56</u>	47
Mute Swan	84	<u>92</u>	90	88
Shelduck	127	68	<u>359</u>	351
Wigeon	1	33	655	<u>901</u>
Gadwall	20	113*	<u>318</u> **	<u>342</u> **
Teal	12	<u>570</u>	553	550
Mallard	139	<u>372</u>	214	185
Pintail	0	0	<u>38</u>	19
Shoveler	17	128*	<u>225</u> **	114*
Pochard	65	70	74	<u>81</u>
Tufted Duck	223	<u>266</u>	257	213
Ruddy Duck	6	9	17	<u>36</u>
Coot	620	763	<u>972</u> *	861
Oystercatcher	323	416	780	<u>875</u>
Ringed Plover	14	<u>283</u> *	92	68
Golden Plover	0	2	35	<u>700</u>
Grey Plover	8	19	2	<u>67</u>
Lapwing	437	1037	<u>2031</u>	1543
Knot	14	<u>102</u>	36	63
Sanderling	15	<u>116</u> *	106*	9
Little Stint	0	0	<u>2</u>	0
Curlew Sandpiper	0	0	<u>1</u>	0
Purple Sandpiper	0	0	0	0
Dunlin	44	<u>209</u>	178	107
Ruff	4	13	<u>19</u>	1
Snipe	4	10	<u>26</u>	6
Black-tailed Godwit	2	9	36	<u>47</u>
Bar-tailed Godwit	2	4	<u>30</u>	25
Whimbrel	<u>23</u>	7	3	0
Curlew	559	<u>875</u> *	859*	569
Spotted Redshank	0	1	5	2
Redshank	588	1093*	<u>1471</u> **	771*
Greenshank	4	9	<u>13</u>	1
Green Sandpiper	0	<u>3</u>	2	0
Common Sandpiper	9	23	0	0
Turnstone	36	<u>123</u>	114	84
Sandwich Tern	81	<u>92</u>	6	0
Common Tern	<u>290</u>	225	0	0
Arctic Tern	0	0	0	0
Little Tern	1	<u>7</u>	0	0

Coverage was perfect, with 104 potential sector counts being successfully made over the four months.

The autumn brought a new all-time Tees WeBS seasonal record for great crested grebe (35 August), along with the second-highest seasonal peaks for the usual suspects of gadwall (342, October) and tufted duck (266, August). Cormorant numbers continued to level off, with the 306 counted in August constituting our poorest autumn maximum since 1993. Our ruddy duck population (36 October) seems to have more than doubled in size since autumn 2007. This was the first autumn since 2001 in which the coot peak (972, September) failed to reach four figures, perhaps a reflection of disturbance at Reclamation Pond.

This was an average autumn for many waders, among them curlew and redshank (although both were unaccountably scarce in October). Common sandpiper set a new all-time WeBS record (23, August), but for oystercatcher (875, October) this was the worst showing since 2001. The dunlin peak (209, August) reached yet another seasonal nadir, the third in the last four autumns. While this species seems notoriously difficult to count at high tide on the Tees, and hence WeBS may exaggerate its scarcity, the downward trend would appear to be real. Similarly, for the second successive autumn no purple sandpipers were recorded by WeBS, while turnstones - their usual rocky shore foraging partners - also experienced their worst autumn ever (123, August).

In a generally very poor season for terns, our Sandwich tern peak (92, August) was the lowest ever recorded on the Tees.

Following this series of counts, in autumn the Tees and Hartlepool Bay WeBS Site remains of national importance for cormorant, gadwall, shoveler and redshank, but our little grebe autumn average has dipped marginally below the nationally important threshold (78).

Underlined counts indicate Autumn 2008 maxima.

* Denotes count of >50% of national importance

** Denotes count of national importance

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

MIKE LEAKEY (WeBS Local Organiser)

November 2008

TEESMOUTH BIRD CLUB

PAYMENT OF SUBSCRIPTIONS

Subscriptions are due on 1st January and the current rates are :

Full	£12.00
Family	£16.00
Junior/Senior Citizen	£10.00



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BOOKING FORM FOR TBC DAY TRIP TO NORTHUMBERLAND (SUNDAY 15/2/2009)

If you wish to join the trip, fill in the booking form below and send this, with a £5.00 non-refundable deposit, to the trip organiser: **Julie Mason, 11 Redmire Road, Stockton, TS18 4JR** (Tel: 01642 614583; email: juliemason@redmire1.freemove.co.uk)

TBC DAY TRIP TO NORTH NORTHUMBERLAND ON SUNDAY 15th FEBRUARY 2009- BOOKING FORM	
NAME	
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SIGNED:	DATE:

Please cut out and return the form to the trip organiser with your deposit, or use a photocopy if you also need use the Subscription form as well.

TEESMOUTH BIRD CLUB – BEACHED BIRD SURVEY RECORD FORM

OBSERVER : **DATE**.....

Please tick the beach(es) surveyed, or enter the name and location for any unlisted beaches.

South Gare – Coatham Creek (NZ557277 – 567267)		Fox Covert, Marske – Saltburn Sands (NZ631233 – 663219)	
Coatham Creek – Coatham Redcar (NZ567267 – 593252)		Saltburn Sands – Saltburn Scar (NZ663219 – 680218)	
Coatham Redcar – Fox Covert, Marske (NZ593252 – 631233)		Cattersty Sands – Skinningrove (NZ701213 – 718202)	
Other beach/location			
Other beach/location			
Other beach/location			
Other beach/location			

SPECIES	CLEAN	OILED	DAMAGE (PLEASE DESCRIBE)

OTHER COMMENTS (INCLUDING ANY COMMENTS ON LIVE INJURED BIRDS)

Please return forms to :
 J.V.Fairbrother, 8, Whitby Avenue, Guisborough, TS14 7AP.
vic.fairbrother@ntlworld.com
 Tel : 01287 633744

Forms for each full year should be returned on 30th June and 31st December until further notice, though should there be any significant events, please let Vic know immediately.