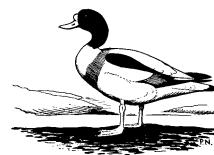


Teesmouth Bird Club Newsletter

August 2014 (No. 58)



Reg. Charity 508850

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TS7 0PT*



Dean Heward

How to stop this happening again

See page 6

MONTHLY SUMMARIES

Chris Sharp summarises what was an eventful period with two new county birds

MARCH 2014



Bittern, Saltholme

Tom Keetley

The long staying Green-winged Teal was still present on Saltholme Pool at the beginning of the month as were the two Long-tailed Ducks on the opposite side of the road. One or two Long-eared Owls were in the roost at Haverton and Bitterns were reported sporadically from the Haverton viewpoint. The wintering Spotted Redshank and Greenshank also showed well on Greenabella along with a few Black-tailed Godwits.

Both Great Northern and Black-throated Divers were off Skinningrove on 1st as was a Slavonian Grebe, the latter the only county record in the first half of the year. A Black-throated Diver was also off Saltburn along with three Long-tailed Ducks and a Velvet Scoter. A Mealy Redpoll was at Coatham Stob and good numbers of Twite were at RSPB Saltholme. Up to 67 were here until mid-April.

Four Whooper Swans were on Saltholme Marsh on 3rd with a first winter Glaucous Gull at Seaton Meadows on the same date. Sixty Whooper Swans flying north at Hartlepool on 8th made a fine sight. Seven more were at Saltholme the following day. An Egyptian Goose was here the same day and remained in the area until early April. It was often to be seen with the Barnacle Geese on Cowpen Marsh.



Egyptian Goose, Saltholme

Martyn Sidwell



Whooper Swans, Saltholme

Ian Forrest

A Shore Lark was reported between Saltburn and Skinningrove on 11th. A Black Redstart was at the former site on 12th. Two Long-tailed Ducks at Scaling Dam mid-month were in the middle of a two month stay. Ruffs were very scarce in the early part of the year but one was on Port Clarence Flood on 13th.

What was presumably last month's Glossy Ibis flew over RSPB Saltholme on 15th. The same day saw the first Sand Martin of the spring, with one at Dorman's Pool. A Glaucous Gull was at Saltburn and a Jack Snipe was on Portrack Marsh on 16th.

March has proven to be a good month for the white-winged gulls in previous years but this year they proved to be scarce. A Glaucous Gull, however, was on Seaton Common on 20th. Five Whooper Swans were at Saltholme on this date with a further 37 on the sea off Saltburn on 23rd.

The first Wheatear and Little Ringed Plovers of the spring were seen on 21st from Skinningrove and Saltholme Marsh respectively. A single Waxwing was at Skelton also. An early Willow Warbler sang at Teesside Retail Park on 26th. A Common Crane flew over Wolviston on 27th.

A Swallow was over Haverton Hole on 29th with a Scandinavian Rock Pipit at North Gare on the same day. Marsh Harriers were at Coatham Marsh on 30th and RSPB Saltholme on 31st. The first Ring Ouzel of the spring was at South Gare on 31st.

APRIL 2014



Garganey, Saltholme

Renton Charman



Scandinavian Rock Pipit, Seaton Common

Martyn Sidwell

An impressive 14 Chiffchaffs were at Hartlepool on 1st. The wintering Green Sandpiper was still at Portrack early in the month. Two Pink-footed Geese were on Seaton Common with up to six Scandinavian Rock Pipits here. A superb Lapland Bunting was also photographed here on 4th and a Jack Snipe was present on 5th.

A single Ruff was on the Fire Station Pool from 6th. The first Osprey of another good spring for this species was over Boulby on 8th. A pair of Garganey was at RSPB Saltholme on 9th. A Lapland Bunting was at Cowbar on 10th and a Great White Egret was on Dorman's Pool on this date. It was to prove an excellent spring for this species.

A Great Grey Shrike at Summerhill, Hartlepool on 11th was identified retrospectively from photographs. Five Long-tailed Ducks were off Huntcliff on 11th and 32 were nearby at Saltburn the following day. There were two Green Sandpipers at Portrack on 13th. An elusive Black-necked Grebe was on Cowpen Marsh for three days and an Osprey was over here. A Common Sandpiper was at Skelton on this date.

The first Grasshopper Warbler was reeling on 14th. Both Lesser Whitethroat and Reed Warbler were recorded the following day. The latter was



Grasshopper Warbler, Dorman's

Tom Horne



Sedge Warbler, Saltholme

Ian Forrest

at RSPB Saltholme and represents the earliest county record. Garganey numbers increased to four at RSPB Saltholme. Sedge Warbler and Cuckoo arrived on 18th with a Redstart at Lockwood Beck the following day. A Red Kite was also over Dorman's Pool on 19th.

Two Arctic Terns were off Hartlepool on 20th but much more impressive was the Franklin's Gull off Saltburn the following day. It flew south close inshore to one lucky observer and constitutes only the third county record. Three Puffins were off Hartlepool on the same date and two Black Terns were at Saltholme.

Both Common and Arctic Tern were at Saltholme on 22nd, a fine drake Scaup was here also and a Pied Flycatcher was at South Gare. This bird was part of a small fall of migrants over the next few days the highlight of which was a Wryneck at North Gare. A Brambling and a Wood Warbler were at Hartlepool along with a Tree Pipit and a few Whinchats were also seen. South Gare also held up to four Lesser Whitethroats and three Ring Ouzels. Both Black Redstart and Garden Warbler were at Hartlepool on 27th.

A showy Dotterel was on Seaton golf course on 27th. It was joined by a second bird the following



Black Tern, Saltholme

Renton Charman



Wood Warbler, Hartlepool

Martyn Sidwell



Dotterel, Seaton Golf Course

Renton Charman

day. The Wryneck was still nearby at North Gare on this date, an Osprey was over South Gare and Bittern was at RSPB Saltholme. The month ended with a Jack Snipe on Seaton Common and eight Brent Geese past Hartlepool.

MAY 2014

The 1st was a memorable day. Over 700 Barnacle Geese flew past Hartlepool. This was by far the largest spring passage count in Cleveland. In addition a Great Northern Diver and a Velvet Scoter were also seen. Two Great White Egrets were on Cowpen Marsh and a Common Crane flew over the Fire Station Pool.



Icterine Warbler, Hummersea

Martyn Sidwell



Bee-eater, South Gare

Renton Charman

A fine summer plumaged Black-necked Grebe was at Saltholme from 2nd. An adult Sabine's Gull off Skinningrove was the earliest ever recorded in Cleveland. Two Roseate Terns passed Hartlepool on 3rd and a Red Kite passing over Greenabella Marsh allowed several observers to add this species to their ever growing year list.

A Hobby was at Hummersea on 5th and three Quail were calling by the Guisborough Branch Walkway on 6th. Garganey numbers increased to five at RSPB Saltholme. Three Dotterel on Guisborough Moor on 8th must have been a fine sight and a Spoonbill at Greatham Creek on this date was the first of several records over the next ten days in this area. Probably three birds were involved.

A single Great White Egret appeared on Cowpen Marsh on 12th. It may have been one of the birds seen earlier in the month. It remained in the area for two weeks but was often elusive as it fed in the many ditches and dykes here. A Wood Sandpiper was on Port Clarence Flood on 12th with two on the Tidal Pool on 14th.

Mid-month saw a lull in proceedings but the last eleven days of the month brought some good

birds to the county. An obliging Little Stint was at Old Cemetery, Hartlepool on 20th. Eight Black Terns were at Scaling Dam on this date with two more on Saltholme Pool. Two Black-necked Grebes were at Scaling Dam the following day and an Osprey was at Lockwood Beck. Over the next three weeks up to three Ospreys were present daily here. One hopes it may not be too long before this majestic bird is added to the list of breeding birds in the county.

Up to four Little Gulls were at RSPB Saltholme at this time and a Wood Sandpiper was on Seaton Common. Hummersea attracted a singing Icterine Warbler on 24th along with a male Woodchat Shrike. The latter remained into June and was the fifth county record. Brambling, Siskin and Spotted Flycatcher were amongst the small numbers of common migrants recorded at the coast at this time.

A Curlew Sandpiper was on the Calor Gas Pool from 25th and up to four Cuckoos were regularly seen at Scaling Dam. This species continues to become rarer in the county. Highlight for most people in the month was the appearance of three Bee-eaters at South Gare on 29th. They remained in the area for three days although were occasionally elusive. The last twitchable Bee-eater was as long ago as 1987 and thus these three birds were a welcome and long overdue addition to many a Cleveland list. A Black Redstart was also at South Gare at this time.



Black Redstart, South Gare

Chris Small

Another Icterine Warbler sang at Hartlepool Headland on 30th and nearby at Hart Warren a female Red-backed Shrike was present. A male Red-backed Shrike was by the Calor Gas Pool on 31st along with two Little Stints. A Corncrake singing at Cowbar on this date remained into June.



Osprey, Lockwod Beck

Renton Charman



Swift

Renton Charman



Wheatear, South Gare

Martyn Sidwell



Yellow Wagtail, Cowpen Marsh

Tom Keetley

JUNE 2014

Often June can be quiet. June 2014 proved to be an excellent month's birding with two new birds for the county. The first scarcity of the month was a Buff-breasted Sandpiper on Cowpen Marsh on 2nd. This was only the second spring record in Cleveland for this American wader.

17 Gadwall flying south at Hartlepool on 5th was an unusually high sea watching count for this common dabbling duck. The Woodchat was last reported at Hummersea on 5th. Garganeys continued to be reported from RSPB Saltholme and successful breeding was proved later in the month.

The first highlight of the month was a Black-winged Pratincole which spent only 40 minutes on Back Saltholme on 13th. This was the first Pratincole of any species to have been seen in Cleveland. It had been present in Northumberland the previous day and reappeared at Hurworth Burn Reservoir in early July. Birders had to be quick of the mark to get this particular bird onto their county lists.

A Roseate Tern was at RSPB Saltholme on 14th with an Osprey over here the following day. A Great Northern Diver was off Saltburn.

The second rarity of the month was a Black Scoter which was found amongst a flock of 300 Common Scoter off Redcar on 16th. It remained for three days but was often distant and hard to pick up in the swell. Patience however was usually rewarded with better views. A Hobby flew over the viewing crowd on 17th.



Roseate Tern, Saltholme

Martyn Sidwell



Black Scoter, Redcar

Renton Charman



Great Crested Grebe and chick, Saltholme

L. Horsburgh



Water Rail

Tom Horne



Tawny Owl

Derick Pearson

Attention switched back to RSPB Saltholme from 21st with a Temminck's Stint on the causeway for three days. A Hobby was also seen daily here from 22nd until 26th. A Roseate Tern also showed well amongst the many Common Terns from 21st. A Quail was at Kirklevington on 24th. The same day saw a Red Kite over Wolviston and a Turtle Dove reported from a Nunthorpe garden.

An adult Mediterranean Gull was at RSPB Saltholme on 26th. It was joined by a second-summer bird on the last day of the month. The last few days of the month saw a trickle of passage waders on the North Tees Marshes including a summer-plumaged Spotted Redshank, a Ruff and several Black-tailed Godwits.

Late spring 2014 will be remembered by many for a long time with lots of observers getting three county ticks in the space of three weeks. Hopefully the autumn months will be equally as good.

COMMITTEE NEWS

*Chairman **Mike McGroary** reports recent discussions*

The Board of Trustees, more usually referred to as the 'Club Committee', meets quarterly with the most recent meeting being on 22nd April. Each meeting considers reports of the business of our three Sub-committees viz. Records, Conservation, and Marketing & Membership.

The Committee is keen to progress a decision on an appropriate project in memory of the late Ted Parker and there is ongoing discussion to clarify the feasibility and costs of some options. Members will be kept informed as things crystallise.

A request for funding support was received from the Tees Ringing Group, and after detailed consideration of the application it was agreed to be within our charitable objectives to grant £500 as a contribution towards the cost of cannon netting.

To address the matter of future storage of the ever-increasing volume of Club records, it has been decided that pre-2005 records will be deposited with Cleveland Archives for safe keeping. Various members continue to work on the computerisation of later records and these will be held in due course in the Environmental Records Information Centre for the NE (ERIC), which looks after wildlife records for NE England, including those of Durham Bird Club. Ali McLee has been liaising with ERIC to this end and safeguards will be in place to ensure that our records can only be given to third parties with our approval.

CONSERVATION SUB-COMMITTEE NEWS

ALL CHANGE FOR COWPEN MARSH



Cowpen Marsh flooded

Dean Heward

If you were a resident of Port Clarence or one of the cattle on the brine field south of Greatham Creek, a night last December will have been

memorable. The anticipated east coast tidal surge either topped or actually breached the flood defences in the estuary. Although this was deemed a one in a hundred year event, global warming and sea level rise left a deep feeling of unease. As a result money has been allocated by the Environment Agency (EA) to take preventive action.

The area at Port Clarence is to have the defences raised to the north and beside the river itself, much to the relief of the locals. To the north, along the south side of Greatham Creek, huge changes are planned. In reality a large amount of the work has already been carried out with a major strengthening and elevation of the creek wall next to the saline pools. Progress of this work has already been a feature of the website's Forum and the path, along the defences, has been open from the end of May. However, there has been no remedial work performed on the defences protecting RSPB's Cowpen Marsh itself, which was itself flooded, but drained naturally afterwards. Raising the height of the creek sea wall here is not an option for engineering reasons, and new defences are planned inland. These will run parallel and close to the road (A178), before veering west across Cowpen Marsh to join the elevated land which comprised the landfill site. Roughly the northern half of the marsh will be left vulnerable to tidal flooding and eventually become a salt marsh like Saltern on the north side of the creek (see page 9). The southern half of Cowpen will be protected and remain a fresh wetland.

Clearly this will be a major change in the habitat, and an equivalent area of wet grassland and marsh will have to be created by way of mitigation. This should be regarded as huge opportunity for habitat creation and not just for birds. Key to anything happening is for the land owner's preparedness to sell. At the moment the EA are inviting comments from interested parties as part of a scoping process, which is simply a request from knowledgeable or affected parties to list factors which will have to be taken into account before detailed planning takes place. Ecologically involved groups include INCA, Natural England, RSPB and our Club. At present only the big picture is being considered, but with time, the details will emerge as things progress. You will be kept updated on the exciting development.

For those wanting a picture of the general plan and the factors to be considered in the EA's planning process, see Stockton Planning website planning application ref. 14/ 1724/SOR.

Ali McLee

If you have trouble getting to the relevant part of the Planning website, paste this address in to your internet browser to get there directly :

<http://www.developmentmanagement.stockton.gov.uk/online-applications/simpleSearchResults.do;jsessionid=58755EDCBC0CCE96E1F2E01040ABE173?action=fir stPage>

RESTORATION OF ANCIENT SEMI-NATURAL WOODLAND IN TILERY AND BRIERLEY WOODS AT WYNARD WOODLAND PARK

Ali McLee summarises the latest developments with the woodland restoration

As described previously, Stockton Council, working in partnership with the Forestry Commission, is proposing to restore much of Tilery and Brierley Wood from conifer woodland back to deciduous woodland.

The Background

Prior to the 1960s the woods were a mix of native deciduous trees such as oak, ash, wych elm, alder and birch, to name but a few. That original woodland was called Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland (ASNW), meaning that woodland had existed here for at least 400 years and it was home to a wide variety of plants and animals.

In the 1960s, in the post war years the national policy was to ensure a sustainable supply of timber, so the native deciduous trees were removed and the Forestry Commission planted conifers in their place. The site is now classified as Plantation on an Ancient Woodland Site (PAWS). The vast majority of the conifers are Corsican Pine, Lodgepole Pine and Scots Pine, with some small blocks of Sitka Spruce and Grand Fir.

PAWS currently occupy around 200 000 ha in the UK, about 60% of which are conifers. At the present time, restoration of these sites to native woodland, with the aim of improving their biodiversity value, is an important objective of forestry policy throughout Great Britain.

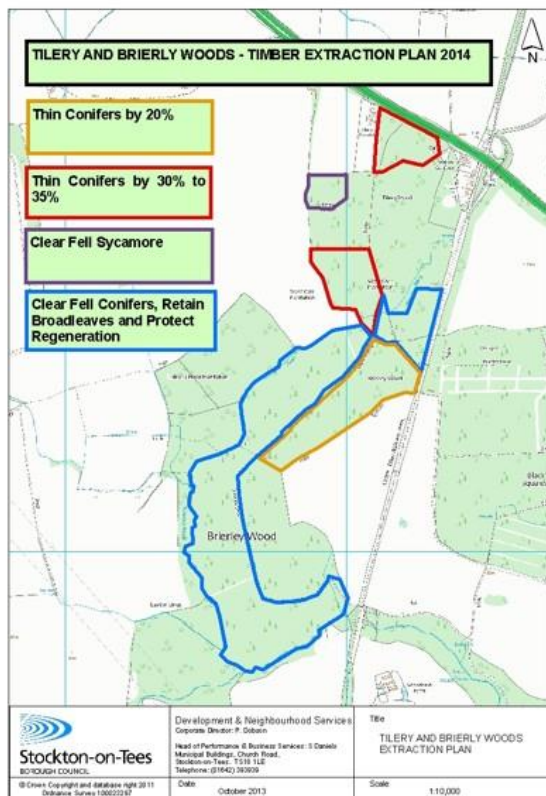
The presence of conifers has a negative impact on local plants and animals for the following reasons:

1. Our natural communities of animals and plants aren't adapted to live with them, or on them.
2. The dense nature of the canopy blocks out much of the light to the forest floor below and the acidic needles build up in a dense matt, both of which suppress the plants and flowers that would naturally have lived here.
3. The lack of light also stops the growth of young trees and shrubs, which would have provided

vertical layers within the woods and so a greater variety of niches available for wildlife.

4. Far lower numbers of creatures live on conifers than on deciduous trees due to their tough-to-digest needles and resin.

What Will Be Done



Stockton Council will, over the winter of 2014/2015, remove areas of coniferous trees by felling the Pines, Spruces and Firs. This will allow the deciduous forest comprising trees such as Oaks, Ashes, Elms and Birch to regenerate.

What will be the Impact?

The regeneration of the deciduous forest will restore the Ancient Semi-natural Woodland. It will provide an improved habitat and home for a greater number and diversity of native plants and animals.



This photograph shows what the heart of the woodland is like at the moment. The conifer trees create shade all year round, which eventually shades out the plants on the woodland floor and stops any young trees from growing. Eventually this results in very uniform vegetation with mature conifers but little else.

The Effects of Previous Conifer Removal at Wynyard Woodland Park

There has been some small scale clearance of vegetation in these woodlands in the past, particularly on the eastern side of the path from the Tilery Wood car park down past the wooden hut. Not all of the conifer trees have been removed from that area but enough have to allow light in and to give the broad leaved trees and plants on the woodland floor to thrive. A comparison with this previously thinned area with the remaining dense areas of conifers shows what should be achieved by the forestry works that are now planned for the remainder of the woodlands at Wynyard Woodland Park.

The most noticeable feature of the thinned area is that there is now a dense thicket of young trees. Most of this is birch, which sheds vast numbers of small seeds so is quick to colonise new areas but there is also a little bit of oak, ash and sycamore coming through, with willow in the damper areas. Birch is a fairly small, short-lived tree and in time the other tree species will become more prominent. This will be helped by the fact that the opening up of the canopy to more light should allow trees such as oak to set more seed. There are now abundant young trees of various heights and it has been shown that this variation in the structure of habitat is the most important factor in increasing the variety of insect species present. This forms a notable contrast with the non-thinned areas where the trees are mainly of the same height and species.

There is also a difference between the ground flora of the thinned and un-thinned areas. In the thinned areas there is a lot denser coverage of plants on the woodland floor. As yet these aren't the characteristic plants of ancient woodlands, which will still take a long time to colonise even though the habitat is now suitable for them. Mostly the plants on the woodland floor of the thinned areas are bramble but other species such as honeysuckle and some grasses are coming through. Not only are there more of these plants in the thinned areas but the extra light allows them to flower and produce fruit or seeds which in turn benefits insects, birds and various mammals as this increase in production by the plants works its way through the food chain.



Opened area of woodland

Further Information

The Forestry Commission have produced a number of publications relating to the restoration of ancient woodland from PAWS. This information can be found at :

<http://www.forestry.gov.uk/fr/INFD-5Z5GJ8>

[http://www.forestry.gov.uk/pdf/fcpg014.pdf/\\$FILE/fcpg014.pdf](http://www.forestry.gov.uk/pdf/fcpg014.pdf/$FILE/fcpg014.pdf)

[http://www.forestry.gov.uk/pdf/FR_report_2005-6_paws.pdf/\\$FILE/FR_report_2005-6_paws.pdf](http://www.forestry.gov.uk/pdf/FR_report_2005-6_paws.pdf/$FILE/FR_report_2005-6_paws.pdf)

Teesmouth Bird Club will be surveying the woodlands over the next few years to establish records of before and after bird populations. To learn more about this or to become involved please follow the link below :

<http://www.teesmouthbc.com/main.aspx>

If you have any comments or queries please contact the Countryside and Greenspace Team :

email: countrysideandgreenspace@stockton.go.uk

or in writing to :

Countryside and Greenspace Team
Kingsway House, Billingham TS23 2YS

This project is supported by :

Teesmouth Bird Club
Forestry Commission
Natural England
Tees Valley Wildlife Trust

RSPB NEWS

Dave Braithwaite describes the recent developments in the managed realignment project.

Saltern Wetlands refers to the area of land on the northern bank of Greatham Creek to the left of the A178 when heading from the road bridge to ConocoPhillips tank farm. It extends to 50ha and is a managed realignment scheme undertaken by

the Environment Agency. Managed realignment is an expression used to describe where seawalls are deliberately breached to allow new intertidal habitat to re-establish behind them. Salterns are the mounds that appear in the North Tees marshes and were created from remains of fires built up over hundreds of years during the Medieval period. These fire piles were used to heat vessels to evaporate seawater from the marsh to produce salt – which was a very valuable commodity in those times. There are several of these salterns within the site and hence the name.

The EA have been working for two years on the site to engineer the new wetlands. The breaches in the seawall were completed on Thursday 22nd May and the site is now being inundated on flood tides. The site is split into three areas: an intertidal area of about 20ha with mud, saltmarsh and saline pools; an intermediate wet grassland area with freshwater pools; and a higher area of freshwater pools and scrub. Active management will only take place in the intermediate area where there will be seasonal cattle grazing. The footpath, that used to follow the old seawall, now follows the new one which skirts around the ConocoPhillips tank farm from where there are good views of the site. We are in negotiations with EA to take a long lease on the site that will become part of the Saltholme reserve. We have no plans to construct hides or viewing screens, the site will be more of a wild, wilderness experience.

I am hopeful that the lease will be ready to sign in September this year and from then Saltern Wetlands will be formally part of the Saltholme reserve.

You can now get access to the site along the new footpath and for various reasons it is important that visitors adhere to this route. Exciting news and this will be a great addition to the Saltholme experience.



Salterns

REPORTS ON LOCAL OUTINGS

BURN WOOD AND COATHAM STOB PLANTATION

20th April 2014 Ali McLee

Five good people turned out on a bright, breezy and cool Easter Sunday to bird watch in Burn Wood and some areas of Coatham Stob itself. An earlier visit by myself a couple of days earlier had turned up displaying Lesser Redpoll, newly arrived Lesser Whitethroat, Kestrels perched outside nest boxes and a pair of displaying Oystercatchers in Elementis works. However, none of these decided to come out to play on the day. The best birds of the morning were Green Woodpecker – noisy but hidden, an out of habitat Reed Bunting, a Nuthatch and a Treecreeper which was calling regularly and enabled those not familiar with the sound to get their ear in, so to speak. The usual suspects of summer warblers were present, i.e. Willow, Chiffchaff, Blackcap but no Common Whitethroat. One Jay called as well. Pairs of Bullfinches were found throughout the site and at a density which was quite high for this most private of finches. Goldfinches were common as were Chaffinches.

Previous year's sightings of Marsh and Willow Tit could not be repeated and it is worrying if these birds had left what had been a regular location. *Someone might like to check this out at a later date this year, please.* Normally Great Spotted Woodpecker would be hard to miss but we succeeded in missing it. Whether the weather was against us, or this young site is still a mere plantation and, has yet to evolve into more biodiverse woodland, it is hard to say. Certainly large areas comprising a clone of hybrid poplar and others of exotic pine trees are sterile in terms of bird diversity. On reflection, I think next year I shall drop this venue, and re-run the walk from Weary Bank on the River Leven.

NIGHTJARS IN GUISBOROUGH FOREST

16th June 2014 Bert Mitchell

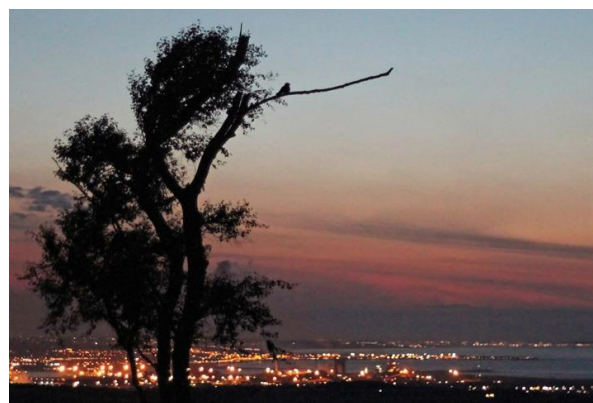
After checking the weather forecast it was decided to hold the trip to see the Nightjars in Guisborough Forest on Monday 16th June. Sorry for the short notice but the weather is a deciding factor as to whether or not the event would be successful and we had to be sure the conditions would be suitable. I hold a key for entry to Forestry Commission land on the North York Moors and this includes Guisborough Forest and permission was obtained for a number of cars to be used to ferry people to the site near

Westworth Plantation. The police were also informed of our intentions. Fortunately the weather forecast was not too far out (a wind had developed but this had the effect of keeping the midges away, which was a blessing). It was decided that I would go first and open the gates and another key holder, John Money, would bring up the rear and close the gates.

37 people were present and enough of them were prepared to use their cars to ferry the others to the site. Please note late comers could not be catered for. After a short walk to the site we were pleased to see a number of fly-pasts by roding Woodcock, and on one occasion two birds were together so more than one was involved. One species down and one to go. I advised people where to stand and fortunately the Nightjars had read the script and a male bird gave a close fly-past in broad daylight. Shortly after, birds started churring and after that birds started flying around. Everybody present had good views of the Nightjars and the volume of the churring of one bird upwind of us was remarkable. In total about five different churring males were heard and the majority did either fly around or sat on an exposed perch churring. The performance was better than could have been expected and everybody I spoke to was full of praise. We returned to the cars where two further Nightjars were churring and the lights of Teesside and the coast of Durham were on view - and it was only about 11.30. The first people back to those cars which had not been taken were then treated to the sound of a Tawny Owl calling above the cars before it was seen to fly to a tree with thick vegetation.

It's good when everything comes together, isn't it.

Encouragement for the trip was given by Chris Sharp, and much help was given by Mike McGrory and John Money.



Nightjar, Guisborough Forest

Simon Elliott

LOCAL OUTINGS AUGUST TO DECEMBER 2014

SEATON SNOOK

Saturday 8th August 2014

Meet at the end of the Zinc Works Road at 12.00. Join Graeme Joynt for this outing which has been arranged to coincide with the incoming tide. Hopefully good numbers of passage waders should be present. Whimbrel, Grey Plover, Knot, Ringed Plover and Dunlin are amongst the targets but something scarcer may be present amongst the large numbers of the smaller waders which are often present here at this time of year. The Snook should also hold several species of tern at this time.

SEA WATCHING AT HARTLEPOOL HEADLAND

Saturday 22nd August 2014

Meet at the Heugh Gun Battery from 9.00 a.m. Join Chris Sharp and Don Page for this always popular outing. If the weather conditions are favourable almost anything is possible at this time of year. It is also a chance to test your skua identification. Even if it is a westerly there still should be something of interest to see, such as Manx Shearwater and Common Scoter. If the sea watching is poor there may be something to be found in the nearby gardens.

WILDERNESS TRAIL - RSPB SALTHOLME

Sunday 14th September 2014

Join Peter Garbutt and Maurice Local for a walk around the edges of the RSPB reserve. The walk takes you around the back of Haverton. There should be a good selection of returning wildfowl to see and hopefully a chance of a few passage waders. It is also a good chance to explore the more remote areas of the reserve. Meet in reception at 10.00 a.m.

RINGING ON HARTLEPOOL HEADLAND

Saturday 11th October 2014

Join Chris Brown and his assistants for this unique opportunity to witness the trapping of migrants on Hartlepool Headland. At this time of year it is possible for almost anything to be found in the nets, but the number of birds trapped will depend on the prevailing weather conditions. Hope for easterly winds and there should be Goldcrests, winter thrushes, finches and a sprinkling of warblers. Meet from 9.00 a.m. by the bowling green.

SOUTH GARE

Saturday 8th November 2014

Join Herbert Mitchell to explore the Gare and look for late migrants in the many nooks and crannies that the area possesses. Depending on the prevailing winds, hopefully a good selection of thrushes, finches and buntings could be seen. Several species of sea duck should also be present offshore. Meet at 9.30 a.m. by the lifeboat station.

SEAL SANDS FROM THE HARTLEPOOL POWER STATION HIDE

Sunday 7th December 2014.

Join Julie Mason to look out on to Seal Sands from the hide at the Power Station. This gives better views than the public hide. A good variety of ducks, waders, grebes and divers can be expected. Meet at the Teesmouth Field Centre at 9.30 a.m.

FIFTY YEARS AGO

1964 saw the arrival of Top of the Pops, £10 banknotes, BBC2, Radio Caroline, 'Crossroads', Mods and Rockers, and Prince Edward. As John Fletcher describes, a more local arrival was an early publication by Phil Stead.

Most members will be aware of "The Birds of Tees-side 1962-67" by Phil Stead, and "The Birds of Tees-side 1968-1973" by Martin Blick, which were published by the Teesmouth Bird Club. However, many members may not be aware of the earlier paper "The Birds of Tees-side" by Phil Stead published in the Transactions of the Natural History Society of Northumberland, Durham and Newcastle upon Tyne, Vol. XV, No.1 (New Series). Stead wrote "The aim of this work is to bring up-to-date the list published by Almond, Nicholson and Robinson (1939) on the birds of the Tees Valley in so far as the estuary and coastal plain are concerned....."

He went on to write "Since 1950 there has been a considerable increase in the number and capability of observers resident in the area. Consequently, in the last decade, it has been possible to obtain a much fuller and more reliable picture of the bird life of Tees-side. Indeed some species, formerly considered to be rare visitors, are known to occur annually, whilst others have proved to be more regular than was supposed". Stead would probably have expected some growth in the number and capability of observers, but would he have expected the number of observers to grow from the 70 given in his paper to the 181 for the Cleveland Bird Report for 2012? The increase in the modern observer coverage is probably responsible for the higher incidence of

waders such as Temminck's Stint, Pectoral Sandpiper, and Broad-billed Sandpiper; but sadly, it has recorded the demise and decrease in many species. One welcome change is that, although there is no mention of Little Ringed Plover in Stead's paper covering 1962-67, the species occurs annually from 1962 onwards.

Nelson used the term "a rush" for what we now call "a fall" and this may have influenced Stead writing "On 17 Sept. 1960, during the largest rush of small migrants to occur in recent times....." Five years later there was another great "rush" on the 5th September 1965, when there were five birders on Hartlepool Headland, as recorded by Ian Lawson in Newsletter No. 19 for Spring-Summer 2001.

I have obtained a few copies of Stead's first paper which will be available, for £2.50, at the next meeting of the Club.



TIT-BITS

A collection of bits and pieces of bird related news and facts.

CAN YOU HEAR THE BIRDS?

We are all aware of the well-reported declines in bird populations over recent years, but some people have wondered how much of this is the effect of ageing surveyors missing birds by no longer being able to hear bird songs and calls. This could be a real problem. Information available for the BTO Breeding Bird Survey suggests there has been a trend over the last twenty years for the proportion of surveyors in their 20s and 30s to fall and of those in their 60s and 70s to increase.

To assess the possible scale of this problem, a recent survey asked respondents to state their age, sex and whether they could hear the song of the Goldcrest. The results, published in April in *British Birds*, are based on the data from 799 men and 257 women of a wide range of ages, though most were in their 50s and 60s. For women, 89% can hear Goldcrests but the surprise is that figure remains constant and does not fall with age. It is different for men. For younger men, 96% could hear Goldcrests but this fell to 53% for men in their 80s. The statistical analysis fixes the start of the decline at the age of 42, which to some of us seems very young. Perhaps young birdwatchers should be advised to go easy on the clubbing and other ear damaging activities.

This information looks worrying, but does not include factors such as surveyors using hearing aids, and the small number of people dropping out will

include those who realise their hearing is failing. And then there are the age-defying women, who form an increasing proportion of the surveyors.

The authors of the report admit they cannot give a definite answer to whether hearing problems are skewing the population trends, but their best guess is that the effect is relatively small. It would be even smaller with more women and young men were to take part.

HELPFUL CUCKOOS

Cuckoos are usually bad news for the hosts of their eggs, but sometimes it can work out quite differently. Investigations over sixteen years has shown that Carrion Crows are more likely to raise one or more young if there is a Great Spotted Cuckoo chick in their nest.

The apparent paradox arises from the young cuckoo's unsavoury ability to emit a foul-smelling fluid from its cloaca. This has been described as looking like something rotting, which smells disgusting and gives a burning sensation in the throat. Not unsurprisingly, tests with potential nest predators showed they would not eat food smeared with the fluid. Crows in areas with many nest predators therefore benefit from having the malodorous guest. You might wonder how the crows put up with the smell – or do they just get used to it?

All this can only happen because Great Spotted Cuckoo chicks do not push the host's eggs out of the nest. However, a cuckoo egg is still not necessarily welcomed by other potential hosts, and Magpies that have breeding experience will eject the cuckoo egg as foreign.



'Our' Great Spotted Cuckoo, Long Drag

Martyn Sidwell

SERIOUS BIRD BOXES

The custom of encouraging birds to nest by providing appropriate boxes (or even jars or baskets) has a long history and most readers will have tit boxes at least. Swifts are the latest species to benefit, with schemes to reverse their population decline by fitting nestboxes and by promoting the provision of nesting enclosures in

new buildings. In the far east, it's far more ambitious and cave swiftlets now have large concrete buildings which mimic their natural cave nesting habitat. This isn't some new ecological outlook, but the consequence of the increasing price of, in crude terms, congealed bird spit. The swiftlets' saliva nests are the basis of the famous bird's nest soup, one of the most expensive foods in the world. A bowl of soup costs up to \$100, and the nests themselves cost \$2000 per kilogram. Increasing affluence in China will doubtlessly increase demand and price.

The birds are attracted to the new structures by recordings of their calls, the same method used with our Swifts. The males then spend five weeks constructing their nests from thick saliva. The investment in constructing these buildings should deter the over-exploitation that has seen declines in the swiftlet populations.

If you want to help our Swifts, information on nestboxes is available at <http://www.swift-conservation.org/Nestboxes&Attraction.htm>.

WHEN DOING RIGHT IS WRONG

Even if you haven't heard of 'evolutionary traps', you will probably be aware of the consequences of them. They happen when rapid changes in the environment mean that a creature's natural behaviour works against it. The rapid changes are usually those caused by human beings and they can affect the whole range of species. There are reports of deluded beetles trying to mate with beer bottles that have the same colour and surface as their females. Even worse is the situation where insects lay their eggs on water. They recognise water by the polarised reflected light but dark, shiny surfaces such as solar panels and cars have similar reflections and can be preferred to the real thing.

Among birds, one obvious example is the pointless fighting against the bird's own reflection. Of more concern is the Fulmar's food searching strategy which is fooled by plastic waste. One survey showed 95% of North Sea Fulmars had bits of plastic in their stomachs, typically 44 pieces. One unfortunate bird had 1603 pieces and another had a total weight of 20.6 grams of plastic. Their larger relatives the albatrosses suffer in the same way. Items found in their stomachs include the sort of plastic toys put in breakfast cereal boxes, a toothbrush, a section of a hair comb, and a golf ball. There are laws about plastic litter, but who can enforce them?

Ironically, even we can be victims as manufacturers of junk food exploit our natural desires for sweetness, fat and salt.

BLAST FROM THE PAST

This 'Blast' is literally about a blast and it's certainly from the past, a hundred years ago in fact. It is provided posthumously by T.H.Nelson.

T.H.Nelson was a well known local ornithologist (as you will know if you've read John Fletcher's book 'Birdwatchers of Teesmouth 1600 to 1960') who provided us with a vivid description of the violent storm that hit Teesmouth a hundred years ago and was responsible for the death of hundreds of birds. This storm, which was described as the worst in living memory, occurred in July 1914 and the report was published in the next month's edition of *British Birds*.

Nelson himself did not see the event but relied on an old wildfowler of long acquaintance whom he considered a trusted eye witness. On Thursday the 2nd July, there were, as often happened, many gulls and some other birds resting on the Tees 'slems'. About noon, spectacular lightning displays gave some warning of an approaching storm and the birds became uneasy, calling loudly in alarm. The whole flock took off to move inland but were still over the sands when they were lost to view in a cyclone which had arrived with unexpected speed. After it had passed over, the sands were littered with dead gulls and many that were injured and struggling helplessly. The injured birds appeared to be suffering from shock did not, or could not, attempt to move away when the wildfowler walked past them. As well as the buffeting of the fierce winds, they had been struck by hail in the form of chunks of ice. Another observer, described as a 'resident of the breakwater' released some injured birds that had been pinned down by having had their wings driven into the sand by the ice.

Nelson with his wife and some friends visited the scene the next day. They counted 300 dead gulls in a quarter of a mile, but there many more along the side of the breakwater and some driven against a jetty where they were partly buried in sand. This was after workmen had removed a 'bogey-load' of birds. Injured birds had hidden away among the blocks of slag and some had moved down to the river channel where they were carried out by the tide or caught by local boys. As well as gulls, two or three Curlews and a duck (species not mentioned) were found on the sands, and an adult Gannet was captured in the grass on the breakwater. Nelson reckoned that doubling the count of dead birds would still be a gross underestimate of the casualties.

The commonest victims were Common Gulls, mostly immatures, and the second commonest were adult Black-headed Gulls with only a third of the Commons' number. There were also a few

Lesser Black-backed Gulls. Almost all those seen had injuries to the head and wings and this was verified when twenty or so were skinned and all were found to have serious damage to head, back or wings. One Curlew had two skull fractures, a damaged neck, a broken wing and the tail sheared off.

Nelson took three badly stunned Black-headed Gulls back to his garden in Redcar on the 3rd July. Two had flown by the following morning and the third flew off later in the day while it was being shown to visitors.

The pieces of ice were obviously substantial and Nelson managed to get one reliable measurement from a plumber who had been working in the look-out on the breakwater. He and his men saw many pieces falling including one that smashed a large sheet of glass. This was picked up and it measured over three inches long and 7/8 inch diameter. A lump of ice this size would weigh about an ounce and in combination with fierce winds would have been capable of injuring creatures far more robust than birds.

A report in the Northern Daily Mail on Friday the 3rd July gave more details of the damage inflicted by the storm. At Teesmouth two heavy cranes had been moved a considerable distance and derailed, and 100 yards of railings at the wharf had been blown away. Several buildings in Middlesbrough were struck by lightning, including two off-licences selling beer, and a fish and chip shop.

The events on Teesside were not unique and similar storms were occurring all over the country during Wednesday and Thursday, with some in France on the Thursday. They were brought on by the arrival of a shallow depression after a period of hot, dry weather, and they caused torrential rain, strong winds, lightning and hail. There were reports of flooding, damage to buildings, ruined crops and loss of farm animals. Lightning killed and injured several people.

If one ounce hailstones sound scary, bigger ones weighing 1½ ounces fell on a Gloucester village and smashed nearly all the windows on one side of the main street.

With all this mayhem an unknown number of wild birds must have been killed, but the only other report was from Barry where there was the 'quaint sight' of dozens of nests floating down the High Street. The mass death of seabirds at Teesmouth seems to have been unique.

Climate change is expected to cause more extreme weather events, so we now know what we can expect!

A BOOK WORTH READING

Eric James describes a recently published book that gives surprising insights into the world as perceived by birds.



While looking at this photograph of a Teal feeding, I have wondered what exactly it was experiencing – just tastelessness and feel of cold wet mud and nothing else? And what about waders probing mud? Do they just keep prodding until they find something? With these sorts of queries in mind, I should have welcomed the publication of Tim Birkhead's book 'Bird Sense – What It's Like to Be a Bird', especially after its good reviews and especially since I've found Birkhead's previous books to be interesting and informative. But with overloaded book shelves and thinking I had a reasonable idea of bird senses anyway, I resisted the temptation. Fortunately, following a strong recommendation from a Club member, I gave in and bought it, and was not disappointed.

There are separate chapters on each of the senses (sight, hearing, touch, taste, smell, and magnetic sense). We, of course, have five of these and a recurring theme throughout the book is the difficulty we have had in accepting that birds do have all these senses and that their perceptions can differ from ours. This problem does not apply to sight and we have no difficulty in crediting birds with having good vision. One illustration of this is the claim that the American Kestrel can see a 2mm long insect at a distance of 18 metres (try it yourself!). Birkhead also has an example from his own experience with the Guillemots he has studied on Skomer for many years. On one occasion, an incubating bird suddenly stood up and started giving greeting calls for no apparent reason. Looking out to sea, there was a distant blob approaching and this did in fact turn out to be the incubating bird's mate returning to the nest.

There also examples of how birds' vision can differ from ours. One is 'handedness'. A young domestic fowl uses its right eye for searching the ground for food and its left eye for long distance vision such as watching for predators.

We also recognise that birds have acute hearing, though not always realising quite how sensitive it can be. It stretches the imagination reading a description of how a Great Grey Owl uses its hearing to crash through snow to capture a rodent below the surface. Birkhead does make clear the importance of the owl's facial disc of feathers in focusing sound. He also undermines the idea that owls have forward facing eyes to give binocular vision to help in estimating distance. In fact an owl's ears are so large that lack of space means that the eyes are at the front of the head.

The chapter on hearing did solve one mystery for me. Rooks seen close-up in the garden have shiny ear coverts, which look rather odd. Apparently shiny coverts are normal, though less obvious on other species, and they probably smooth the air flow past them and improve hearing by filtering out wind noise.

When it comes to touch, it is difficult to believe that the hard beak of a bird can have any sensitivity, but that Teal in the photograph can, by using touch, separate potential food from grit. The abilities of waders are even more surprising. I knew waders had sensitive tips to their beaks and could detect prey by touch, but Knots can also detect vibrations reflected from hard-bodied prey such as shellfish. Waders making repeated probes could be building up a three-dimensional picture of buried prey. There's a lot more to birds than you would have thought!

With taste, it is again difficult, from our human perspective, to associate it with a hard beak and tongue. In the case of ducks, there are taste receptors in the tip of the beak, which on reflection is sensible since that is where the bird comes into contact with food. Other unexpected aspects include waders being able to taste the presence of worms in wet sand. This all seems very unfair on the creatures that are waders' prey!

As well as presenting us with masses of information, Birkhead covers the history of research into bird senses and the people involved. In the chapter on smell, we meet the delightfully named Betsy Bang. She measured the size of the part of the brain associated with smell for a range of species, and this could be related to the life style of the bird. Before this, many people refused to believe that birds had any significant sense of smell. This was largely based on a dodgy experiment by John James Audubon, the famous American bird artist. He placed rotting meat under cover and waited for vultures to find it. They didn't so therefore he assumed they could not smell it. Someone should have said

that vultures eat fresh meat from recently dead animals.

The last two chapters cover magnetic sense and emotions. Magnetic sense is now an accepted aspect of birds, but emotions are more difficult to study and there are no definite conclusions.

If a book can make you look at birds in a new light, then it's definitely worth reading. And this one is!

Have you any bird or natural history book that you think would appeal to Club members? If so, why not do a write up to recommend it. Contact details for sending in material are on the front page.

PROFILE – MIKE McGRORY

Chris Brayshay profiles our new Chairman, Mike McGrory



Club Chairman Mike McGrory, born in Dundee in 1944, arrived in Teesside in 1971 with his wife Norma and their two sons. They were not able to stay long as three years later Mike was sent out to Brazil by his employers ICI and worked there from 1974 to 1978.

The McGrorys, who had gone out to Brazil four in number, returned to the UK in 1978 as a family of six having adopted two Brazilian daughters

Mike admits: "Our house in Billingham which we returned to was now bursting at the seams with six of us." So in late 1978 there was a move to a larger house in Crathorne. Since then, three of

the children have moved away, with the sons in Edinburgh and Ramsgate, and a daughter in Ingleby Barwick. Mike and Norma now have three grandchildren.

Mike worked as a chartered accountant but says "when that got too exciting " he changed career to become a human resources manager for the last ten years before retirement in 2000.

His has also had a long life of public service, with appointments including 24 years as a magistrate in Middlesbrough and various periods on the Teesside Probation Board, the Cleveland Police Authority and the Independent Monitoring Board of the open prison at Kirkclevington, near Yarm.

Nowadays Mike freely admits to being a born again birder. He was a child, when first introduced to birding by his late father :

"My father was always interested in birds and during a prolonged spell in hospital he found a Bullfinch dead near its nest in the hospital grounds. He hand-raised the young chick left in the nest so I grew up with a pet male Bullfinch in a cage. I was heartbroken when it died."

There then followed a long hiatus in his interest in birds, spanning several decades; time he spent in hard work supporting the growing family and in serving his local community.

"It took a lot of time coming to the fore, having been lying dormant, then about ten years ago or so I started birding, with increasing fascination; buying some decent optics after I took very early retirement."

Mike's "decent optics" include a Swarovski EL 8.5 x42, and a Kowa TSN883 scope with 20-60 zoom.

It was his re-awakening interest in birds and birding that first got Mike interested in the Club which he now chairs :

"I think it was a desire to learn more about birds. What I found was a welcoming atmosphere. Members were friendly and on the local outings in particular were always happy to help me identify birds. And I have made many friends. I want it to continue being a welcoming Club."

One of his birding highlights came in May 2010, when, in the company of his daughter-in-law Caroline and a local guide, he visited the Loch of Funzie on Fetlar in search of Red-necked Phalaropes :

"The guide was not at all sure any had arrived, but while we were anxiously scanning the far end of the loch where he predicted they would likely arrive and we were becoming increasingly downhearted at seeing none, Caroline tapped me

on the shoulder and whispered 'Is that one?' And indeed it was, about ten yards behind us.

After 15 minutes viewing this stunning bird at such close quarters, it flew off into the distance, just before other birders from the same ferry crossing arrived on a similar quest.

A week later on the ferry back to Aberdeen I met one of them, up from Devon on a mission to see the phalaropes, who told me it never reappeared.

Whilst feeling disappointed for them for their abortive visit, I have to confess to a feeling of satisfaction at not being just a few minutes too late to see a target bird, the situation I regularly find myself in."

Another jaw-dropping experience came one day in June this year when he saw his first ever Golden and White-tailed Eagles on the opening day of a holiday on Mull.

Mike is proud that Teesmouth Bird Club is taken seriously by planners and is regularly consulted on planning issues which could impact on birds and their habitat; an achievement pioneered by former Club Chairman Ted Parker :

"I think we have a very strong reputation locally and are held in high respect by local authorities and other bodies. This is down to a relatively small group of very knowledgeable people – the Conservation Sub-committee and Ali McLee, its Chairman.

I feel the Club is a watchdog for the area and given that we are consulted very often by various bodies demonstrates we are prepared to stick up for birds and the retention of habitat."

On the downside Mike has two concerns :

"We can all be remiss at times when striving to see a rarity or new arrival and get close enough to a bird to disturb or harass it, but I get increasingly concerned when I see this happening so regularly by fellow enthusiasts with binoculars or cameras (or both), paying scant regard to the Birdwatchers' Code.

The Club 'Guidelines for Wildlife Photographers' is a helpful piece of advice and the principles apply equally to birders without cameras. I think people should be aware of the code and make sure – as it says in our club constitution – that we are here for the birds, not the bird watchers.

We should respect and consider the welfare of a bird, particularly if it is a migrant which has just flown hundreds of miles, before getting that definitive photograph or getting too close."

He would also like to see Teesmouth Bird Club attracting younger members :

"It is easy to observe at our monthly meetings that the average age of members is not young, but it is heartening to see the success and enthusiasm of the Next Gen' Birders and it would be good to manage to entice more to come along to Club events to learn from as well as teach some of us oldies!"

One of the pleasures he has in visiting his two sons is that one lives close to bird-rich Pegwell Bay, the other about five minutes drive from the Firth of Forth.

But the gnawing regret is not being into birding during his four years in Sao Paulo, Brazil, for ICI, in the 1970's.

As for bird watching generally :

"The more I learn the more I realise I don't know or understand."

PROGRAMME OF EVENING MEETINGS 2014 TO 2015

Monday 1st September 2014

'The Bird on the Bench' by Dr John R Mather BEM
A close look at some lesser known aspects of Bird Biology including nestling development, moult, age and sexual dimorphism, plumage aberration, skeletal structure and parasites.

Monday 6th October 2014

'Bird song - how does it go?' by Geoff Sample

Monday 3rd November 2014

'A Thai Recipe' by Brian Clasper

Monday 1st December 2014

'The Butterflies & Dragonflies of Cleveland' by Graham Megson

Monday 5th January 2015

'Galapagos' by Mike Watson

Monday 2nd February 2015

'Farne Islands Uncovered' by David Steel

Monday 2nd March 2015

'Migration and mortality: tracking the dynamics of North Sea shags' by Dr Jane Reid

Monday 13th April 2015

AGM

Talk to be announced

Julie Mason has put together this excellent series of evening meetings for the forthcoming session and we would like to thank her for this often difficult task but one around which the social element of our Club depends.

TEESMOUTH BIRD CLUB PUBLICATIONS PRICE LIST

<i>'Birdwatchers of Teesmouth 1600 to 1960'</i>	£2.00 plus £1 p.& p.
<i>Teesmouth Bird Reports 1958-1973 on a CD</i>	£5.00 plus £1 p.& p.
<i>'Birds of Tees-side 1962-67'</i> by Phil Stead	£5.00 plus £1 p.& p
<i>'Birds of Tees-side 1968-1973'</i> by Martin Blick	£5.00 plus £1 p.& p

Cleveland Bird Reports

1974 to 2009	£3.00 each where available, plus £1.00 for p.& p. per copy.
2005 Special Offer	£1.00 each , plus £1.00 for p & p.
2010	£5.00 each , plus £1.00 for p.& p. per copy.
2011	£5.00 each , plus £1.00 for p.& p. per copy.
2012	£7.50 each , plus £1.00 for p.& p. per copy.

(Out of print: 1974, 1976, 1978 to 1988 on a CD)

'Barn Owl at RSPB Saltholme' print @ **£2.00 each**.

Cheques should be made payable to '**Teesmouth Bird Club**' with orders and sent to:

John Fletcher, 43 Glaisdale Avenue, Middlesbrough, TS5 7PF.

Please pass on unwanted copies of Club publications to John, particularly those that are "Out of print", so that they can be resold to other members.

A **BIG DISCOUNT** on orders over £20

John Fletcher

j.fletcher666@btinternet.com

Tel: 01642-818825

John has a few copies of Phil Stead's first paper which will be available, for £2.50, at the next meeting of the Club (see page 11).

WETLAND BIRD SURVEY TEESMOUTH

Mike Leakey, Local Organiser of the Tees Wetland Bird Survey, summarises the Winter 2013-2014 results (which were not available for the previous Newsletter) and the Spring 2014 results.

WINTER 2013/2014 SUMMARY

Full coverage was achieved of all scheduled 135 sector counts over the five months; yet another magnificent effort by our team of volunteers.

For the second winter running, shelduck (448, February) showed a slight improvement. However, the stand-out performance of the season – if not the year – came from wigeon, whose maximum (3273, January) is an all-time record for Teesmouth, surpassing the 2922 counted in January 1995. Gadwall (554, November) also scaled new heights, though in this case the previous record had been set only two months previously! For teal (1287, December) this was our best winter count since November 1995, while there was another healthy eider peak (80, November).

In contrast, this was not a good winter for waders, bringing the poorest seasonal peaks on record for ringed plover (12, December), knot (326, February) and turnstone (92, November). Other particularly disappointing maxima came from golden plover (575, November), sanderling (117, January) and dunlin (128, March). Peaks of neither black-tailed godwit (25, December) nor bar-tailed godwit (27, January) impressed. There was one good curlew count (1258, February) but the redshank maximum (893, December) once again failed to break the thousand mark.

Following this winter's series of counts, and measuring our five-year means of annual winter peaks against the criteria for international and national importance, the Tees and Hartlepool Bay WeBS site is now of national importance for gadwall, and retains this status for sanderling.

For table of counts see page 19



Sanderlings – struggling but still of national importance

SPRING 2014 SUMMARY

The rate of coverage remained high, with 81 of 83 sector counts logged over the three months.

The sea walls of the Environment Agency's Greatham North managed realignment site were breached in May, and the June count was carried out according to the revised sectoral boundaries in this area.

Among the wildfowl there was not a great deal to cheer about apart from the now customary new seasonal record for gadwall (230, April). In contrast to the situation in winter, shelduck numbers held up quite well this spring; the 326 counted in April bears comparison with the five-year mean spring peak of 353 at the turn of the millennium. However, cormorant (52, June), tufted duck (162, June) and coot (199, April) returned their poorest spring maxima since 1989, 2005 and 1998 respectively.

While avocet (24, April) experienced a decline in numbers for the second successive breeding season, the ringed plover peak of 249 in May was very respectable by the standards of recent years. Spring lapwing numbers seem to be on a downward trajectory, only scraping into three figures (134) in June, while for sanderling (82, April) this was comfortably the worst seasonal showing on record. However, black-tailed godwit maintained an unusually strong presence into late spring (24, June).

Inexplicably, the common tern peak was a mere 78 (May), the species' worst spring performance here since 1992, but this was surely not a true reflection of the size of our breeding population.

Following this series of counts, sanderling retains its nationally important status in spring.

For table of counts see page 20

WETLAND BIRD SURVEY TEESMOUTH - WINTER 2013/2014 SUMMARY

Species	November 17	December 15	January 12	February 16	March 16
Little Grebe	24	<u>28</u>	18	7	6
Great Crested Grebe	4	20	33	27	45
Cormorant	<u>143</u>	103	48	109	58
Mute Swan	<u>59</u>	47	39	37	30
Greylag Goose	<u>307</u>	300	143	156	146
Shelduck	283	306*	372*	<u>448*</u>	380*
Wigeon	1742	2676*	<u>3273*</u>	2763*	1134
Gadwall	<u>554**</u>	287**	275**	173*	141*
Teal	1238*	<u>1287*</u>	1012	807	747
Mallard	181	232	<u>247</u>	220	136
Pintail	42	16	28	<u>47</u>	26
Shoveler	110*	87	86	83	<u>115*</u>
Pochard	48	13	37	<u>58</u>	57
Tufted Duck	97	104	98	105	<u>153</u>
Eider	<u>80</u>	18	7	1	9
Goldeneye	31	30	<u>50</u>	44	36
Red-br. Merganser	<u>46*</u>	44*	32	40	37
Coot	711	<u>771</u>	597	426	299
Oystercatcher	<u>996</u>	461	330	713	297
Ringed Plover	3	<u>12</u>	0	11	6
Golden Plover	<u>575</u>	451	34	0	0
Grey Plover	48	<u>109</u>	92	108	62
Lapwing	<u>4289*</u>	3303*	1931	2138	306
Knot	101	93	296	<u>326</u>	88
Sanderling	17	17	<u>117*</u>	2	10
Purple Sandpiper	41	39	0	<u>59</u>	43
Dunlin	113	126	18	122	<u>128</u>
Ruff	0	0	0	0	0
Snipe	8	<u>10</u>	6	6	7
Black-tailed Godwit	5	<u>25</u>	1	17	15
Bar-tailed Godwit	3	4	<u>27</u>	25	25
Curlew	572	765*	704*	<u>1258*</u>	471
Redshank	835*	<u>893*</u>	565	792*	565
Turnstone	<u>92</u>	51	91	66	60

* Indicates a count of >50% of national importance

** Indicates a count of national importance

N.B. 'Teesmouth' includes Hartlepool Bay.

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

WETLAND BIRD SURVEY TEESMOUTH SPRING 2014 SUMMARY

Species	April 13	May 11	June 8
Little Grebe	8	6	<u>15</u>
Great Crested Grebe	21	16	<u>23</u>
Cormorant	40	44	<u>52</u>
Mute Swan	38	30	<u>62</u>
Shelduck	<u>326</u> *	214	208
Gadwall	<u>230</u> *	107	160
Teal	<u>137</u>	9	19
Mallard	115	162	<u>185</u>
Shoveler	<u>43</u>	10	28
Pochard	<u>63</u>	48	61
Tufted Duck	131	128	<u>162</u>
Eider	3	3	<u>10</u>
Coot	<u>199</u>	150	152
Oystercatcher	<u>353</u>	197	215
Avocet	<u>24</u>	22	17
Ringed Plover	11	<u>249</u> *	3
Golden Plover	0	0	0
Grey Plover	0	<u>5</u>	0
Lapwing	98	96	<u>134</u>
Knot	0	0	0
Sanderling	<u>82</u>	25	0
Purple Sandpiper	<u>27</u>	0	0
Dunlin	49	<u>139</u>	3
Ruff	<u>1</u>	0	0
Snipe	<u>6</u>	0	0
Black-tailed Godwit	11	22	<u>24</u>
Bar-tailed Godwit	<u>62</u>	27	0
Curlew	<u>264</u>	86	125
Redshank	<u>387</u>	11	15
Turnstone	<u>44</u>	12	2
Sandwich Tern	5	<u>30</u>	13
Common Tern	0	<u>78</u>	66
Little Tern	0	<u>2</u>	0

Underlined counts indicate Spring 2014 maxima.

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

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

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