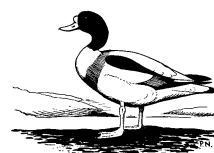


# ***Teesmouth Bird Club Newsletter***

December 2014 (No. 59)



Reg. Charity 508850

## **CONTENTS**

|                                  |    |
|----------------------------------|----|
| Monthly Summaries                | 1  |
| Committee news                   | 6  |
| Conservation Sub-committee news  | 6  |
| BTO Report                       | 7  |
| Inca, 25th anniversary           | 8  |
| Requests for volunteers          | 9  |
| Reports on local outings         | 9  |
| Local outings, December to April | 10 |
| Writing bird records             | 11 |
| Titbits                          | 14 |
| Blast from the Past              | 15 |
| Book worth reading               | 16 |
| Profile – George Rutherford      | 17 |
| TBC Publications                 | 19 |
| Wetland Bird Survey, Autumn 2014 | 19 |

*The TBC Newsletter is published three times a year.  
Compilation and layout Eric James, distribution Chris Sharp,  
web download Jamie Duffie.*

*Any material for inclusion in the Newsletter is welcome.  
Please send contributions to [tbc.projects@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:tbc.projects@hotmail.co.uk) or by  
post to Eric James, 7 Hilderthorpe, Nunthorpe, Middlesbrough  
TS7 0PT*

*Don't forget the annual  
subscription is due on  
1st January.*

*Pay at Club meeting or by post  
using form on page 21.*

## **MONTHLY SUMMARIES**

**Chris Sharp** summarises an average autumn which had good ending.

### **JULY 2014**



White-winged Black Tern, Saltholme

Renton Charman

The first few days of the month were quiet with just a trickle of passage waders. A Green Sandpiper was on Dorman's Pool on 3rd, a Spotted Redshank was on Seal Sands on 7th and two Common Sandpipers were nearby at Greatham Creek on this date. Roseate Terns were on Seaton Snook on 4th and at RSPB Saltholme on 6th. This latter bird was present intermittently for the next few days.

A Hobby was over RSPB Saltholme on 7th and two Velvet Scoter were off Marske on 8th. Two Spoonbills were on Seal Sands on 9th. July proved a quiet month for sea-watching. Sixty-three Manx Shearwaters were off Saltburn on 10th with about 150 off Hartlepool the following day.

A White-winged Black Tern was at Saltholme Pool on 12th. This species has now occurred for three years running on the North Tees Marshes. A

Wood Sandpiper was on Greenabella Marsh on this date.

Highlight of the month was the Bridled Tern which flew past Hartlepool on 13th and was then seen off Seaton Carew. Unfortunately it didn't linger and was seen by only five observers. After last year's 45 minute appearance at RSPB Saltholme it is to be hoped that if the bird returns in summer 2015 it may linger a little longer in Cleveland.



Mediterranean Gull, Newburn

Renton Charman



Storm Petrel, Marske

Damian Money

The adult Mediterranean Gull had returned to Newburn by 14th. Mid month saw one or two Roseate Terns at South Gare and two flew past Hartlepool on 16th. A family party of Kingfishers delighted observers in the unusual location of Ward Jackson Park. Presumably they had bred nearby.

Three Storm Petrels were ringed at Marske on 20th with a further two on 24th. A Black Tern was at Saltholme Pools on 21st. A Ruddy Shelduck around Greatham Creek from 23rd showed well. This species is still regarded as an escape from captivity.

Another White-winged Black Tern appeared at RSPB Saltholme on 26th and remained for three days. The continuing increase in Little Egret numbers in the county was illustrated by the numbers roosting at Haverton Hole in late summer. A maximum count of 116 was obtained.



Black Tern, Saltholme

Renton Charman



Little Egret roost. Haverton Hole

Ian Forrest

Surely it is only a matter of time before this species is found breeding locally.

Two Red Kites were at Liverton Moor on 28th. The end of the month saw an increase in passage waders on the North Tees Marshes. Chief among these were Black-tailed Godwits with up to 130 on Dorman's Pool. Thirty Whimbrel were over South Gare on 28th and small numbers of Ruff were reported.



Snipe, Seaton Common

Renton Charman

## AUGUST 2014

One or two Marsh Harriers were on the North Tees Marshes throughout the month. At least one pair of Garganey bred at RSPB Saltholme and this species were regularly present from the Phil Stead hide during the month.

A Wood Sandpiper was on Dormans Pool on 6th and a Little Stint was present here the following day. The water levels at Dorman's Pool were particularly attractive for waders this autumn but unfortunately nothing rare appeared. Good numbers of Dunlin and Ringed Plover passing though meant there was always plenty to check.

Three adult Curlew Sandpipers were at Greatham Creek on 9th. A Scaup was on Cowpen Marsh on 11th. The usual late summer gathering of terns and waders on Seaton Snook never materialised this year. Hopefully it will prove just to be a one-off. The rocks at South Gare did attract a few terns with two Black Terns and a single Roseate present on 11th. In addition, only small numbers of Little Gulls were summering on the North Tees Marshes this year with rarely more than three present.



Glossy Ibis, Saltholme

Tom Horne

A Glossy Ibis was present on the marshes from 19th. It usually preferred Fire Station Pool or Dorman's Pool but visited Bowesfield during its stay.

Sea-watching was very poor during August though a Balearic Shearwater passed Hartlepool on 19th with a single Sooty Shearwater the following day. Two hundred and fifty Manxies were off Saltburn on this date. The 26th proved the best day of the month with a Cory's Shearwater, three Long-tailed Skuas and a single Pomarine Skua off Hartlepool.

A Black-necked Grebe was on Seal Sands on 23rd. The month also proved disappointing for passerine migrants. Pied Flycatchers were at Hummersea and Hartlepool on 27th and a Barred Warbler was at South Gare on 28th.

A Hobby showed well at Haverton Hole 28th-29th. A Spoonbill was at Dorman's Pool at this time. A Hen Harrier was reported at Wynyard on 31st. Wader numbers increased at the month's end with four Spotted Redshanks on Dorman's Pool and up to five Curlew Sandpipers on the North Tees Marshes.



Green Sandpiper, Scaling Dam

Eric James



Great Crested Grebes, Saltholme

Ray Scott

## SEPTEMBER 2014

A Glossy Ibis on the Fire Station Pool from 1st was a good find but observers are now getting a little blasé about this species. It remained in the area until 17th. Little Stints peaked at nine on Dorman's Pool early in the month. Up to four Marsh Harriers were on the North Tees Marshes at this time. A female Red-crested Pochard paid a brief visit to Saltholme Pools on 5th. A Spoonbill on Dorman's Pool was more obliging remaining until the following day.

A small fall of migrants on 6th included a Barred Warbler trapped at Hartlepool and a Wryneck at Zinc Works Road. A Redstart was at South Gare the following day and three Pale-bellied Brent Geese passing Hartlepool were a sure sign that autumn had arrived.

Another Barred Warbler was at Brotton on 7th and a Black Redstart was at Huntcliff. A Pectoral Sandpiper was on Cowpen Marsh on 8th. A drake Mandarin at Scaling Dam the following day was of doubtful origin. A Sabine's Gull off Hartlepool on 9th was the first of a good autumn for this species.

Six Curlew Sandpipers were at South Gare on 10th and the first Pink-feet of the autumn flew south here on 12th. Two Black Terns were off Hartlepool on 13th along with 30 Little Gulls. A Great White Egret found on Dorman's Pool on 14th remained on the North Tees Marshes until early October, often giving stunning views especially on the Greatham Saline Lagoon which it frequently visited.



Great White & Little Egrets, Saline Lagoon

'DaveG'



Spotted Flycatcher, Hartlepool Headland

Tom Horne



Redstart, Hartlepool headland

Renton Charman



Sparrowhawk in garden

Mick & Sylvia Brennan

The second Cory's Shearwater of the autumn was seen off Hartlepool on 14th. The first Yellow-browed Warblers of the autumn were also seen on this date. It was to prove another good autumn for this species. The first Sooty of the year was off Hartlepool on 15th along with six Pomarine and a single Long-tailed Skua. A Hen Harrier was seen briefly at South Gare and migrants at Hartlepool included both Pied and Spotted Flycatchers and Redstart. A Hobby was also seen here with another the following day at Cowpen Bewley WP.

The following few days saw small numbers of migrants reported from the coastal stations. Hartlepool held up to four Yellow-browed Warblers and South Gare two. Two Red-breasted Flycatchers were also at Hartlepool along with a few Brambling and Siskin. Fifteen Sooty Shearwaters off Hartlepool on 17th were to prove the highest count of the autumn. Two Long-tailed Skuas also were recorded on this date.

A Hobby was over Seaton Common on 18th and two Roseate Terns were at South Gare. A Turtle Dove at Hummersea on 19th was being chased by two Peregrines.

Undoubtedly the highlight of the month was the Fea's type petrel seen off Cowbar on 21st. This bird was tracked flying north from various Yorkshire watch points and just three fortunate observers saw the bird off Cowbar. The expectant crowd at Hartlepool were to be disappointed. Even more galling was when it was later recorded from Whitburn and several other coastal watch points north of there.

Several flocks of Barnacle Geese flew through the county on 22nd. A Sabine's Gull was off Hartlepool and a Long-tailed Skua was off Saltburn. A Pectoral Sandpiper on Saltholme Marsh on 22nd remained for a week. Another Sabine's Gull was off Saltburn on 24th with another at Hartlepool along with four Sooties and five Poms. Good numbers of Little Gulls were offshore late in the month and this trend

continued into October with over 400 being seen off Saltburn on 27th.

Another Red-breasted Flycatcher was at Hartlepool on the 30th. September 2014 would not be remembered as a classic.

## OCTOBER 2014

Two Little Stints remained on Dorman's Pool early in the month. A pair of Scaup was on Cowpen Marsh on 2nd and three Black Terns were on Seal Sands on 4th. Two Pomarine Skuas were off Cowbar on this date and a Great Northern Diver was at Hartlepool the following day. The 6th saw a Sabine's Gull off Hartlepool and an impressive 166 Dark-bellied Brent Geese flying over South Gare into the estuary.



Yellow-browed Warbler, Hartlepool Headland Renton Charman



Red-breasted Flycatcher, Headland

Renton Charman

An adult Long-tailed Skua was off Hartlepool on 7th along with nine Bonxies and 600 Teal. An amazing nine Yellow-browed Warblers were logged at Hartlepool the following day despite the winds being from the west. Few other migrants were noted though a long staying Red-breasted Flycatcher was still present.

Pectoral Sandpiper was at Saltholme Pools from 10th. The first Whooper Swans of the autumn were on 11th when four flew past Hummersea and three were on Dormans Pool. It was to prove a good autumn for this species with herds recorded on many dates during the rest of the month. The following day saw a large movement of Pink-footed Geese through the county with 757 counted past Huntcliff, though the total numbers passing through the county probably exceeded 2000. Two Black-throated Divers were at Saltburn and a Lapland Bunting was at Brotton on this day.



Firecrest, South Gare

Renton Charman



Goldcrest, South Gare

Renton Charman

Sea-watching highlights on 13th included two Sabine's Gulls and a Leach's Petrel off Hartlepool and six Pomarine and 98 Great Skuas off Cowbar. Both Leach's and Storm Petrels passed Hartlepool the following day along with 15 Velvet Scoter. A Great Grey Shrike, a Red-breasted Flycatcher and a Firecrest were at South Gare and another Red-breasted Flycatcher was at Old Cemetery,

Hartlepool. Yellow-browed Warblers continued to be recorded in small numbers from many of the coastal stations.

A Jack Snipe was at Cowbar on 18th and a Slavonian Grebe was on Seaton Snook. Up to 70 Twite had returned to this latter site by this time.

RSPB Saltholme was the place to be on 20th with two Bitterns, a Spoonbill and a flyover Rough-legged Buzzard all recorded. A Grey Phalarope was in Coatham Bay on 21st and nearby a ringtail Hen Harrier came in off the sea at Redcar. Lapland Buntings were at Seaton Snook and Coatham on 22nd. Great Northern Divers flew past Hartlepool on this and the following day.

Rough-legged Buzzards were appearing all along the east coast at this time and it was no surprise when one appeared in Sleddale on 24th. They were then recorded daily at this site with a maximum of four birds recorded. Both Great Northern and Black-throated Divers were off Saltburn on 26th.

The highlight of the month was undoubtedly the Eastern Crowned Warbler found at Brotton on 30th. It was only the third record for Britain, the first being as recent as 2009 at South Shields. Although often elusive a little patience would be rewarded with excellent views of this Asian gem. A fine end to a somewhat below average autumn for scarce birds in Cleveland.



Eastern Crowned Warbler, Brotton

Martyn Sidwell



Red-throated Diver, Marina

Ian Forrest

## COMMITTEE NEWS

*Chairman **Mike McGroary** reports on recent discussions.*

The Board of Trustees ('Main Committee') met at the end of July and in early November. The main points of interest are as follows :

To mark the great contribution the late Ted Parker made to our Club, the Committee has decided, after considering various options, to further investigate the erection of a viewing platform at the south end of Dorman's Pool. This will be on the footpath that is now closed to vehicles and will overlook the reedbed and give views of the length of the Pool. We already have agreement in principle from RSPB Saltholme and Dave Nelson will take the lead for us at this stage in clarifying the feasibility and costs of such a project. Various permissions and approvals will be required before any construction can take place but the hope would be to progress the project avoiding any unnecessary delays.

As well as being Vice-chairman of the Club, Dave has agreed to be the Club's liaison point with RSPB Saltholme, a role which sits neatly alongside his Hide Guide duties. He is keen to be kept aware of any issues or problems that Club members have and will pursue them with the appropriate person to ensure a timely resolution.

The Committee felt that previous exercises to set longer term goals for the Club had been successful and had enabled the Club to grow and strengthen significantly. Along with our three Sub-Committees, we are seeking to identify any areas where further attention may be required in order to maintain and build upon that progress.

In October, I had a meeting with Bob Pailor, Director of the Industry Nature Conservation Association (INCA) of which TBC is a member. Bob sees TBC and INCA as two like-minded organisations with similar objectives. Some of our members already have close links with INCA and Bob is keen to continue to work with the TBC to further the interests of nature conservation and especially of birds in our area. We agreed that he would keep our members informed of INCA projects through contributions to our Newsletter. It is envisaged that our members may have increasing opportunities to become involved in some such projects of relevance to us.

## CONSERVATION SUB-COMMITTEE NEWS

### COWPEN MARSH SEA WALL RE-ALIGNMENT

The Club, and indeed other stakeholders, have yet to have the first meeting with the Environment Agency (EA) on this important

project. I suspect their attention is presently focused on their planning application for defences along the Tees to protect the Haverton area. We have certainly not forgotten the importance in early involvement of this project which will profoundly affect the birds of Cowpen.

### **SALTERNS**

The Club's recording system has adopted this new location, and records should be submitted relevant to the three areas now designated for WeBS counts. By doing this we should be able to follow the development of bird usage of this new habitat over the years – so records please!

### **COATHAM STOB COMMUNITY FOREST**

The Forestry Commission have sent the Club a general plan and policy for the management of the site now that the tree cover has become developed. It was encouraging that they had an awareness of the current importance in woodland management for two hugely declining woodland species, Lesser Spotted Woodpecker and Willow Tit. The Sub-committee remarked on the need to diversify the present area of monoculture hybrid poplars and Scots Pine, which needs opening up and a general encouraging towards a varied woodland containing damaged trees. This already was to be a feature of their five-year plan – which is excellent news.

### **PLANNING MATTERS**

Two huge adjacent areas of housing on the west side of Hartlepool have now reached the stage of formal planning applications. The Sub-committee had commented on these at an earlier stage, several years ago. I was pleased to see many of the developers' mitigation measures embraced the suggestions made all those years ago. The Club and the consultant's ecology report acknowledged that certain species would be lost as a result of loss of habitat and disturbance e.g. Grey Partridge, Yellowhammer, Linnet, Corn Bunting and Tree Sparrow. Some garden bird species would colonise the housing area if the density of dwellings was not too great and the gardens were large enough. We proposed that if the biodiversity was to be compensated and even enhanced, perhaps species dependent of a built landscape could be encouraged by building-in nest cavities during construction. Swifts, Starlings and House Sparrows would be beneficial candidates. Whether this suggestion is made a consent requirement of the borough's planners, we must wait and see.

Planning approval is being sought for the erection of three huge (off-shore sized) wind turbines along the Brenda road / Greatham area. These

pose a hazard of bird strikes. The ecologist's conclusions, based on brief and simplistic assessment of bird movements, were that there would be no serious problems. We objected to the proposals on the basis that the field studies were totally inadequate and took no considerations of a variety of factors affecting local and migratory bird movements. Our friends in the north, the Durham Bird Club, are of a similar view and objected also. Decisions are awaited.

### **BRIERY WOOD CLEAR FELLING**

I mentioned this as a forthcoming event in the website forum some time ago. The car park area should be completed by now, timber extraction routes built and the first felling may even now be taking place. Work is scheduled for completion by March. We had asked that, if possible, the now relict drainage ditches, installed when the wood was first planted some 50 years ago, should be further damaged to encourage the development of natural regeneration towards wet woodland - a scarce habitat.

**Ali McLee**

## **BTO REPORT**

### **Breeding Bird Survey 2014.**

Thank you to everyone who took part in the annual breeding bird survey, you should all by now have received your copy of the 2013 BTO Report. Twenty 1km squares were covered in Cleveland this year plus two waterways surveys for which I am most grateful but there are still vacant squares available and more volunteers are needed to improve our coverage.

### **International Swan Census 17–18 January 2015.**

The International Swan Census is a survey designed to monitor the size and distribution of the Icelandic Whooper Swan and Northwest European Bewick's Swan populations. This census is undertaken every five years and consists of coordinated site based surveys. The next census is due to take place on the weekend of January 17-18th and is timed to coincide with the WeBS Core Count, since this gives good general coverage in the UK. Counts of swans away from core areas, for example in fields, are needed and volunteers can help by submitting records of Whooper and Bewick's Swan to BirdTrack during the survey weekend.

### **House Martin Survey 2015.**

There will be a UK House Martin Survey in 2015. There has been no previous national House Martin

Survey and previous population estimates have been derived from statistical methods applied to census information. We do know that House Martins are in decline: long-term monitoring reveals a 65% population decline between 1966 and 2012, with a rapid decline noted since the early 1980s. Information from Bird Atlas 2007–11 and the Breeding Bird Survey show interesting geographical patterns with declines in abundance in the southern half of Britain, yet increases in the north.

The aim of this survey is to produce a UK population estimate. The survey will be based on a stratified random sample and it is hoped that between 2000–3000 1km squares will be covered by volunteers. The survey will probably involve two visits to the square to look for complete and active nests between early June and mid July, with a preparatory visit in late May to look for suitable habitat and identify potential nesting areas.

Most of you will remember that Eric James organised a local House Martin survey for the Club in 2012 in order to compare the results with our Cleveland Breeding Bird Survey.

The results showed an overall decline but the exceptionally poor weather in 2012 clouded the issue if you will forgive the pun. There were some increases and some decreases and a number of interesting geographical variations so it will be useful to see what the national survey reveals. Details of random squares in Cleveland are to follow.

### **Colonial Birds Recording Scheme 2015.**

The BTO hopes to have a 'Colonial Birds Recording Scheme' online in time for the breeding season in spring 2015. In the first instance, this will allow volunteers taking part in the Heronries Census to enter their counts online for the first time, including counts for other nesting herons and egrets. It will also provide a mechanism for future expansion for the collection of data for other colonial nesting species such as Rook and Sand Martin, and potential longer-term monitoring of House Martins.

### **Possible Chat Survey 2015**

There is a possibility that the Stonechat, Whinchat and Wheatear Survey, which operated in Wales in 2012–13, may be run in England, Scotland and Northern Ireland in 2015. There is no funding for this survey yet, though the online component already exists and would only require minor modifications. A final decision depends on an examination of costs.

**Vic Fairbrother.**

## **INDUSTRY NATURE CONSERVATION ASSOCIATION (INCA) CELEBRATES ITS 25th YEAR**

In the late 1980s there was realisation that things must change to improve the quality of the environment for people and wildlife on Teesside. Since then we have made massive strides. In the 1980s the estuary which was virtually dead and only capable of supporting pollution tolerant species. Since then industry has invested significantly in process management and abatement, and ecological benefits have been realised.

These improvements in water and air quality, and habitats and species, have resulted from a team effort between industry, regulators and organisations such as INCA and the Teessmouth Bird Club. The doubters who felt we had a choice between having either industry or a good environment have thankfully been proved wrong.

INCA, who were formed in 1989, can point to a number of successes. It has helped create habitats including reed beds, saline lagoons and mudflats. Working with its industrial partners, it has helped conserve rare habitats and created nesting areas including the island in the Greatham Creek saline lagoon which attracted in 2008 the first nesting Avocet, as well as Little Ringed Plover.

Also worth mentioning is the work INCA does with developers minimising the environmental impact and building environmental gains into development proposals.

So what does the future hold? Whilst we have cause to celebrate our success we mustn't be complacent. Challenges include attracting new investment to Teesside whilst continuing to maintain and improve our local environment; preventing incidents setting back hard gained improvements; and attracting more visitors to enjoy their local environment but ensuring they behave responsibly.

**Bob Pailor** (*Director INCA*)



The Sabic No.4 Brinefield Saline Lagoon which is used by breeding Avocets, Lapwings and Little Ringed Plovers

## REQUESTS FOR VOLUNTEERS

### Marine mammal sightings

**Vicky Rae**, currently working for INCA, would like your records of marine mammals.



One of the main reasons why protection of our marine environment lags behind terrestrial nature conservation is because it remains mostly hidden. I have been informed that members of the Teesmouth Bird Club regularly record marine mammals. It would be helpful to me if I could use your sightings to help promote marine wildlife on the Teesmouth and Cleveland Coast website ([www.teescoast.co.uk](http://www.teescoast.co.uk)). This could be either from your twitter posts or you could contact me directly at [vicky.rae@inca.uk.com](mailto:vicky.rae@inca.uk.com) with the species (excluding seals), number(s), location, date and time seen. I am hoping with your help I can promote the amazing wildlife found in Teesmouth and Cleveland inshore waters and encourage a greater respect for the protection of our local marine environment.

### TVWT River Tees Reserves

**Amy Carrick** of the Tees Valley Wildlife Trust is asking for volunteers for these Reserves

If you enjoy walking around our River Tees Reserves, live locally and want to get involved with practical conservation, then why not join our new River Tees Reserve Team? The team will be dedicated to caring for our five reserves on the River Tees, and along with a variety of practical tasks, there will be ample opportunities to carry out survey work and take part in our exciting events.

Reserve days will be every Wednesdays from 10am-2pm.

Pick ups can be arranged. Spaces limited.

Special activities can also be arranged for TBC members including survey days and improving habitat through watercourse restoration, creating gravel nesting areas and new viewing points.

If you are interested, or want more details, please contact Amy from Tees Valley Wildlife Trust.

Email [acarrick@teeswildlife.org](mailto:acarrick@teeswildlife.org)

Tel. 01287636382

## REPORTS ON LOCAL OUTINGS

### HARTLEPOOL HEADLAND

**23rd August 2014 Chris Sharp and Don Page**

About 25 members attended the now annual sea watch. Unfortunately a calm sea and a light south-westerly wind were not what the doctor ordered. Consequently the sea-watching was quiet. The highlights were three distant Manx Shearwaters, a couple of Arctic Skuas and small numbers of Common Scoter and Teal. After three and a half hours, a lot of pleasant banter and a few cups of coffee, an end was drawn and members wandered down to the North Tees Marshes in search of a Glossy Ibis and a bit more excitement.

**Chris Sharp**

### WILDERNESS TRAIL – RSPB SALTHOLME

**14th September 2014 Peter Garbutt and Maurice Local**

The walk on the wilderness trail went very well. A group of 14 people met inside the Visitor Centre to be briefed on what birds we might expect. We went via the Watchpoint seeing various wildfowl and common birds, and passing the Jubilee Mound where several harvest mouse nests have been found. Following yellow marker posts the trail took us in view of three ponds, which we scanned and saw several Black-tailed Godwits and a good number of Wigeons, and also heard a Water Rail calling. A large flock of Goldfinches entertained us feeding on thistles, and Blackcap, Chiffchaff and Long-tailed Tits were seen on our way to Haverton Hole. Once we assembled there, I said we might get a Marsh Harrier and, if we are lucky, we might see a Bittern, and within five minutes both birds showed. The former gave prolonged views for people to photograph and the latter was seen dropping into the reeds. This lifted everybody's spirits and so we walked back via Paddy's where we saw a Common Sandpiper. The walk took three hours at a leisurely stroll, stopping and looking birds and I got a lot of pleasure from seeing the smiles on people's faces, which made this worthwhile. Many thanks to the people who supported this event.

*P.S. an old school pal attended this walk and wants to join the TBC!*

**Peter Garbutt**



## **SOUTH GARE**

***8th November 2014 Herbert Mitchell***

Despite reports of rain from the weathermen the morning of the 8th November proved to be ideal conditions for the trip to South Gare and 30 people turned up. The previous week had been good at the Gare and we first visited the beach where one of the Grey Phalaropes remained close to the shore. Although the police helicopter flew low over the bay just before we set out, most of the flushed birds returned and a good collection of waders was seen. A late Curlew Sandpiper was seen amongst a flock of Dunlin and also close by we saw a Bar-tailed Godwit, Redshank, Grey Plover, Turnstone, Oystercatcher and Sanderling. On the sea three Red-breasted Mergansers were present. The usual gulls and Starlings were present as we made our way back to the road and continued our way to the Gare end. The tide was quite low and the Shags and Cormorants were resting on rocks way out in the bay with only Cormorants swimming near to the Gare. Also on the sea at each side of the Gare was a pair of Red-throated Divers but one of the two on the seaward side proved to be most popular as it still had a patch of red on its throat. A Guillemot was swimming close by the Gare side and had to be checked and at the Gare end three Purple Sandpipers were sitting on the concrete blocks while Rock Pipits were flying past feeding. Two Common Eiders were also seen offshore. A Curlew flew past calling as we made our way back towards the pilot station. A number of people then returned to their cars but I was explaining the layout of the Gare to a number of people and we walked to Paddy's Hole and, in the estuary, saw three Common Scoters and two Great Crested Grebes. We were fortunate that a number of interesting birds were present and all who attended were pleased with what they saw, many of them seeing some of the species for the first time.

The rain then started and Middlesbrough failed to win at home and go top of the table to spoil what could have been a perfect day.

## **LOCAL OUTINGS DECEMBER 2014 TO APRIL 2015**

### **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.

## **HARTLEPOOL HEADLAND**

***Saturday 10th January 2015***

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 along with divers and grebes. There is also a chance of a Mediterranean or Glaucous Gull. Meet at 9.30 a.m. by Heugh Gun Battery car park.

Leader: **Chris Sharp** Tel: 01429 865163

## **NORTH GARE AND SEATON SNOOK**

***Sunday 22nd February 2015***

Join Julie Mason and Chris Sharp for a walk to these two coastal localities. A good variety of sea duck including Red-breasted Merganser and Eider should be seen. Hopefully the bay should also hold grebes and divers. The Snook is a regular wintering spot for Twite and small numbers of Snow Buntings have been present in recent winters. Meet at 9.30 a.m at the North Gare car park

Leaders: **Julie Mason** Tel: 01642 614583 and **Chris Sharp**

## **SALTERN WETLANDS**

***Saturday 14th March 2015***

A chance to look around this newly created habitat. Also see where Greatham Tank Farm and Saltern Borrow Pits are. A good variety of ducks and waders should be seen. Please note this outing will involve about a 4 mile walk. Meet at the Teesmouth NNR car park by Greatham Creek at 9.30 a.m.

Leader: **Chris Sharp** Tel: 01429 865163

## **COWPEN BEWLEY WOODLAND PARK**

***Tuesday 28th April 2015***



Join Dave Nelson to explore this local nature reserve. A good selection of common woodland species should be seen and early summer migrants such as Willow Warbler, Chiffchaff and Blackcap should be well established. Meet at the nature reserve car park at 9.30 a.m.

Leader: **Dave Nelson** Tel: 01642 824755

## WRITING BIRD RECORDS

*To get the record of rare bird accepted you have to provide a credible description. Mark Rowbottom gave some useful advice in a previous edition of this Newsletter : this is reproduced here together with some sample descriptions to show what is required.*

Mark's original article described the workings of the TBC Records Sub-committee (TBCRSC) and also the important factors in submitting a TBC Rarity Description Form. The section on the all-important description of the bird was as follows :

**"Description:** remember to include the circumstances of how you found the bird and details of its behaviour and 'jizz'. Ensure you describe all the plumage characters you saw which are relevant to the identification and include details of the bare parts and any song/calls heard.

I always think that the circumstances in which you see the bird are particularly important and this is where you can describe how you came across the bird, what it was doing, how long you saw it for and whether or not it was in continuous view. Provision of this information may seem a bit tedious but it's very much about putting the observation into context and will help the Records Committee accurately assess your record.

Now for the description! It obviously helps if you know the key features to look for but it may be a species you are unfamiliar with so my advice is to just describe what you see as honestly as possible and resist the temptation to look at the books until you've noted down what you've seen. In the past you used to see people taking notes all the time but these days it seems to be a rare event, which is unfortunate as even a quick sketch noting the key features is invaluable.

The other advice I would give is *"think common"* first and by this I mean mentally eliminate the commoner species first before jumping to the conclusion that you've got something more unusual; always try and either photograph the bird or get someone else to see it and accept that on occasions you just don't see enough and it becomes just *"another one that got away!"*

An example of an accepted TBC record is shown on page 12.

For national rarities, a description has to be submitted to the British Birds Rarities Committee. The BBRC also has a standard form which covers the same aspects as the TBC form. The BBRC form should be sent first to the TBCRSC who will decide whether to support the submission.

Some figures published a while ago listed the counties with more than 1% of the national rarity records in the order of acceptance rates. Cleveland was top of the table with the highest rate, a situation we would no doubt like to maintain.

An example of an accepted BBRC record is shown on pages 13 and 14.

Mark's advice to "just describe what you see as honestly as possible" is good guidance. There should be enough observations to identify the bird, but too much fine detail can raise suspicions. Records have been rejected because observers have claimed to see things which would simply not have been visible under the viewing conditions they have described.

Nowadays, many sightings are verified by photographs. The TBCRSC is happy to accept photographic evidence as well as, or instead of, a written description. The BBRC still requests a written description but welcomes supporting photographic material.

The pinnacle of rarity finding is a "first for Britain" and these records are very closely assessed by the BBRC, and even more so if there is only a single observer. The finder of the first Bay-breasted Warbler managed to video the bird, which avoided any doubts about identification. The Committee, however, had the tape examined for signs of tampering, and then sent it to a botanist who identified two of the plants seen with the bird and judged them to be consistent with the claimed location (Cornwall), and unlikely to be found in the warbler's habitat in the USA. They really do their best!

At the other extreme, the first Ring-necked Duck got no description at all : "On the afternoon of 12th March 1955, while sitting in the studio of my house at the Wildfowl Trust, Slimbridge, I saw an adult male Ring-necked Duck (*Aythya collaris*) settle on the pond about 15 yards from the window. On the following afternoon the bird reappeared and was watched by my husband".

This wouldn't happen now, but in those days, no one argued about ducks with Peter Scott!

For a more humorous approach to identification and records, try Bill Oddie's Little Black Bird Book. The chapter on identification does give some advice, but it ends rather wickedly with how to pass off a Skylark as a Richard's Pipit, and then as a Pectoral Sandpiper. (*don't try this at home!*)

# Record Description Form

Species **Barred Warbler**  
Date **20<sup>th</sup> Sept 2015**



|                                             |                                                                        |
|---------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Number and age of bird(s)                   | First-winter                                                           |
| Locality:                                   | South Gare                                                             |
| Observers name:                             | J.Smith                                                                |
| Address and Phone No:                       | 50 Smith Crescent, Billingham, TS80 6SD, 077987654321                  |
| Other observers:                            | Possibly others during the day.                                        |
| Who found the bird:                         | J.Smith                                                                |
| Who first identified it:                    | J.Smith                                                                |
| Optical aids used:                          | 8*32 Swarovski Bins                                                    |
| Was the bird photographed and by whom:      | No                                                                     |
| Where can photos be viewed (Web site etc):  | N/A                                                                    |
| Species present for comparison:             | Not directly but Garden Warbler and Blackcap seen during the day       |
| Distance from bird:                         | Initially flushed at c 3m then at about 10m distance perched           |
| Weather (light conditions, visibility etc): | Overcast but okay light                                                |
| Experience of this and similar species:     | Barred Warbler seen most years and one at same location in late Aug 12 |

**Description** (Remember to include the circumstances of how you found the bird and details of its behaviour and 'jizz'. Ensure you describe all the plumage characters you saw which are relevant to the identification, and include details of the bare parts and any song/calls heard:

Returned to South Gare on the 20<sup>th</sup> Sept to try and find the Little Gull seen the previous day. Lots of migrants still around.

Whilst walking in to (from below) the low vegetation behind the Pilot's Station I flushed a hefty longish-tailed grey/brown warbler from about 3 m in front of me. As it flew it clearly showed pale wing bars and pale scaling on upper-tail. Even on this brief views the chunky nature and pale patterned upperparts had me thinking Barred Warbler.

It had flown a short distance in to the bottom of the small bush alongside the wall by the corner of the Pilot's Station. I waited for about 5 mins and it then reappeared at one side of the bush. It showed briefly but well and I could confirm that it was indeed a Barred Warbler

Large hefty looking Sylvia, greyish upperparts with just the hint of a pale supercilium. Two pale narrow wing bars (tips to median and greater coverts), pale edges to tertials and possibly very indistinct pale tips to primaries. When facing away from me it looked fairly long tailed and you could see buff fringes on uppertail coverts. Below it was dirty white with obvious buff tips to undertail coverts. Legs dark and largish bill, which was dark tipped. Eye dark.

I attempted to get a little close but it flew over my head and in to a patch of brambles behind me on the beach. I left it along and went on with my Little Bunting hunt!

100% confident that this was a first-winter Barred Warbler.

ACCEPTED 10-0

Example of record description submitted to TBC Records Sub-committee

Right : Barred Warbler (not the same bird described in the record)





## British Birds Rarities Committee

Rarity Form

Email to: [secretary@bbrc.org.uk](mailto:secretary@bbrc.org.uk)

This form has been designed to be used electronically. Your submission will be processed far more quickly and accurately if it is typed rather than handwritten.

To move to the next field simply press 'Tab' then 'End' and start typing.

**Note: If attaching images please send them as separate files and not within this Word document.**

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |                                                                   |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Species: <b>Broad-billed Sandpiper</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |                                                                   |
| Date first seen: 20 Sept. 2015                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | Date last seen: 20 Sept. 2015                                     |
| No. of Birds: 1                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | Age/Sex: juvenile                                                 |
| County: Cleveland                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | Location: Seaton Snook                                            |
| <b>Please fill in your email address to ensure that you get an acknowledgement</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |                                                                   |
| Finder: J.Smith                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | Email: <a href="mailto:jsmith@hotmail.com">jsmith@hotmail.com</a> |
| Identifier (if different):                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | Email:                                                            |
| Submitter (if different):                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | Email:                                                            |
| Other observers: Many (50+)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |                                                                   |
| Any who disagrees with identification? No                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |                                                                   |
| Optical aids: Kowa TSN824 with 20-60 zoom                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |                                                                   |
| Distance from bird: 100 yards at closest                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |                                                                   |
| Have you enclosed photographs? Yes                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |                                                                   |
| Was the bird videoed? Not sure                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |                                                                   |
| If photos are available on public websites ( <i>BirdGuides</i> & <i>Surfbirds</i> etc) then please give www address:<br><a href="http://www.teemouthbc.com/forumtbc/index.php?topic=4929.0">http://www.teemouthbc.com/forumtbc/index.php?topic=4929.0</a><br><a href="http://www.teemouthbc.com/forumtbc/index.php?topic=4921.0">http://www.teemouthbc.com/forumtbc/index.php?topic=4921.0</a> |                                                                   |
| Have the photographs been published in magazines? If so, where: Don't think so                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |                                                                   |
| Species present for comparison: Dunlin, Ringed Plover                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |                                                                   |
| Which species were alongside the bird: Both                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |                                                                   |
| Observer(s) experience of the species: Seen a few in Cleveland before                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |                                                                   |
| Observer(s) experience of similar species on the same day or previously: N/A                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |                                                                   |
| Weather (general description): Pleasant                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |                                                                   |
| Wind direction and Force: Light sw                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |                                                                   |
| Light conditions (good, dull, etc & sun behind, side etc): Behind me                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |                                                                   |
| Visibility (distance): Excellent                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |                                                                   |
| Rain, mist, etc: None                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |                                                                   |
| Cloud cover: Light                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |                                                                   |
| Address of submitter: 12 Smith Close, <u>Noton</u> TS20 3LM                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |                                                                   |
| Phone NO 0771356789                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |                                                                   |
| <b>And finally, is the record 100% certain? Yes</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |                                                                   |

Example of record description for British Birds Rarities Committee (page 1)

- Please try to cover*
1. *Circumstances of finding the bird (if applicable) but keep it brief*
  2. *Plumage, bare parts etc and call (if possible)*
  3. *Jizz (that 'indefinable something' about the way it behaved)*

**Description:** Found asleep by me on Seaton Snook at 7.40pm amongst roosting Dunlin and Ringed Plover. My partner Jo told me the flock wasn't worth checking as through her binoculars they were clearly 'all the same'. I set the scope up to show her why they weren't all the same, but was pleasantly surprised to see that the third or fourth bird in was a Broad-billed Sandpiper!

I put the news out straight away and it was twitched by at least 20 birders before dark. It was still there the next day but it flew off high south at 7pm and was not seen again.

Even roosting it was obvious what it was, with the smaller size (cf Dunlin) and striped head pattern distinctive. The underparts were white, with a salmon wash to the breast sides similar in colour to a juv Curlew Sand. The upperparts were rather dark, with neat fringes to all feathers confirming it as a juvenile. The dark wing coverts were edged white, but the scapulars were much richer with a rufous edge to many of them. The tertials also had rufous fringes. The two white 'tramlines' on the mantle/scapulars are well shown on the attached photographs.

The head pattern was typically striking, with a white supercilium contrasting with the dark lores and ear coverts. An obvious white sub-coronal stripe completed the 'double-striped' head pattern, with the crown appearing dark and heavily streaked. The nape was pale.

The bill was mid-length, stout at the base and with a droop-tipped effect. The legs were rather short and black. In flight a narrow white wingbar was noted and a dark central rump was evident. No calls were heard.

J.SMITH

ACCEPTED BY BBRC

Example of record description for British Birds Rarities Committee (page 2)



## TIT-BITS

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

### ANOTHER HUNDREDTH ANNIVERSARY

The less widely known hundredth anniversary is the death, in Cincinnati Zoo on 1st September 1914, of the last Passenger Pigeon. Everything about Passenger Pigeons is mind-boggling : the sheer numbers of them, the size of their flocks, the area of their breeding colonies ..... and the rapidity of their final decline into extinction.

The birds fed mainly on the seeds of deciduous trees, mainly beech, oak and chestnut. They travelled in flocks in search of food, these flocks being up to three to four miles wide and as much as 300 miles long. They roosted in trees at such a density that the trees could collapse under their weight. The nesting colonies were long like the flocks in flight, three or four miles wide and up to 40 miles long, with sometimes as many as a hundred nests in a tree.

The Indians had always taken insignificant numbers of pigeons, but hunting became serious as the population of colonists increased. Many techniques were used but baited traps were the most effective. The professional trappers made a lucrative living even with a price of 1 cent per bird. By the 1880s, bird numbers were falling and laws to protect them were passed (and ignored). One of the last nesting colonies was in Michigan in 1878 and it covered 100 square miles. Twenty-two years later the last wild bird was shot by a boy with an airgun.

It's thought the main reason for the extinction was loss of habitat. So some things don't change.

### CLEVER BIRDS

New Caledonian Crows are famous for using tools, but there is an example of tool making in the parrots. A Goffin Cockatoo bit off a large splinter from a block of wood and used it to reach a food item. Other cockatoos watched and copied the first bird.

The cockatoos could be taught how to undo complicated locking devices to open a door with

food behind it. This involved unscrewing a nut and bolt, removing a bar and turning a knob. One bird, however, managed to learn to do the whole thing by itself. It used its beak and a foot to unscrew the nut off the bolt.

There's a video of the birds using splinters at :

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YH1yqFSs9NA>

And another video of the lock pickers at :

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zCXLfWF0s64>

## FEED THE BIRDS

All sorts of reasons have been put forward to explain the decline in House Sparrow numbers, including lack of nesting sites, fewer insects, predation and even electro-magnetic radiation from phone aeriels. The true explanation might involve a combination of factors, but a shortage of suitable invertebrate prey during the breeding season seems to be important. An adult sparrow collecting aphids doesn't look like an effective way of feeding a hungry brood!

Some recent research showed what happens to sparrow breeding success if a good supply of protein-rich food is provided. Early in the breeding season, nest boxes where nesting had begun were located and a mealworm feeder was erected not too far from each one. Mealworms were supplied until early August. The number of fledglings from these boxes was then compared with that from other boxes.

The results were striking. In gardens with the extra food, the females were well fed and the subsequent clutches they laid were bigger. As well as this, chick survival was up by nearly 60%, and the number of fledglings was up 55%.

So the solution is mealworms, or an invertebrate-friendly garden.

## JUST BY COUNTING GARDEN BIRDS....

The British Trust for Ornithology started the Garden BirdWatch project in 1995. The basic idea is that contributors provide a weekly record of the maximum number of each species seen in their gardens. These figures are then uploaded to the BTO database directly from a computer, or by paper sheets that can be scanned by the GBW staff.

The project has expanded from its early limited form and it now includes the options of recording other garden wildlife and also any signs of disease in birds.

The BTO use the data in research work. The latest example is to see how well, or otherwise,

House Sparrows are breeding (measured by the number of fledglings raised by each adult bird). Unlike schemes that examine individual nests, doing it this way gives results for large areas. These results suggest that even having just slightly fewer fledglings can be enough to push the sparrow population downwards.

There don't appear to be many Garden BirdWatchers in the Cleveland area. If you are interested, try

[www.bto.org/volunteer-surveys/gbw/taking-part](http://www.bto.org/volunteer-surveys/gbw/taking-part)

## BLAST FROM THE PAST

*This is another hundred year old 'Blast', this time from Western Front soldiers.*

War has been described as long periods of boredom punctuated by moments of terror, and this definitely applied to the First World War. It might sound surprising, but it did give the opportunity for some birdwatching to those at the front. Some letters from these observers were published in 'British Birds'.

At the time, it was thought that birds would leave the war-stricken zone but the writers to BB were quick to emphasise the resilience of the birds in the face of all that was going on.

P.A. Chubb reported seeing birds flying about in front of the guns during artillery duels with the enemy. These included House Sparrow, Swallow, House Martin, Chaffinch, Yellowhammer, Skylark, Willow-wren (i.e. Willow Warbler), Magpie, Kestrel and Woodpigeon. One Magpie seemed to fly over the guns each morning at nine o'clock, while the singing Skylarks caused confusion by being mistaken for aeroplanes.

In a deserted village three-quarters of a mile behind the trenches, House Sparrows continued to perch on house tops and House Martins to build nests even though shells continually knocked holes in the roofs.

The only concession the birds made was to take shelter low down when shells were flying about.

J.K. Stanford reported a similar situation in Ypres. While town was being heavily shelled, sparrows, Greenfinches and Turtle Doves in trees on the ramparts seemed quite undisturbed. House Martins nested on the Cloth Hall and Swifts nested in ruined towers. In the wet meadows round Ypres, there seemed to be a constant chorus of Corncrakes at night. Stanford also mentions a regular dawn chorus from one wood even when there was rifle fire on three sides, and how Sedge and Willow Warblers sang during artillery duels. Even more surprising was a pair of

Tree Sparrows nesting in a shell-torn tree between the front lines. Birds seen just flying between the front lines included Starlings, which ran the risk of being used for target practice by bored snipers.

An especially moving comment was his hearing the calls of Curlew, Whimbrel, Green Sandpiper and Dunlin flying over the trenches during August nights.

Lt.Col. E.F. Delaforce's description of the nest of a pair of Song Thrushes showed what birds could put up with. A tree branch had been cut and rested against the steel shield of an 18 pounder gun to conceal it from view. The birds built the nest in the branch and three eggs were laid even though the gun was sometimes fired. It was only when there was constant firing throughout a day that the birds gave up and moved to somewhere quieter.

A later correspondent was the magnificently named Captain Arthur de Carle Sowerby F.Z.S., F.R.G.S. He was the son of a Christian missionary in China and became a naturalist and explorer. He came back to Britain during the war and joined up, but found himself posted to the Chinese Labour Corps because he could speak the language. His work during eight months from near the end of the war took him over almost all of the battlefields of northern France, presumably while supervising the Chinese who were clearing away the debris of war. He found the most obvious species in the devastated areas were Hooded Crow and Magpie. The Carrion Crow, whose name suggests that it should favour battlefields, was more common in the undamaged farmland. Other common species in these areas were Yellow Bunting (the former name of the Yellowhammer), Crested Lark, and especially Skylark. Perhaps the abundance of Skylarks is not surprising as even the fighting hadn't stopped them. In the whole of the battle zone, Grey Partridges had become abundant. He describes standing on the parapets of the trenches and hearing their calls in all directions.

And the recovery of nature after the war was best summarised by his statement, "Already ducks, Moorhens, Coots and Dabchicks are to be found frequenting the marshes of the Somme".



## A BOOK WORTH READING

**John Fletcher** describes Ian Newton's recent book in the *New Naturalist* series which covers birds' remarkable migration abilities.

Birding trips abroad bring an appreciation of the range of climates and habitats which give rise to the nine to ten thousand species of birds across the world. Back home in the UK, the more restricted range of habitats leads to a modest number of resident species. Fortunately, the Cleveland birder can look forward to migrants to considerably extend the range of species to be seen in the area, particularly on the coast. Ian Newton's book "Bird Migration" may be about avian migration but it is really paying homage to the amazing abilities of birds to perform their annual peregrinations.

In earlier times the collection of skins was the main source of information on the distribution of birds, especially of their wintering areas. The beginning of the twentieth century saw the start of ringing studies, which has largely been the source of data on migration. Also, from about the 1920s onwards, studies of captive birds gave other insights into bird behaviour especially with respect to migration. At migration seasons captive birds suddenly begin to eat more, with various waders consuming six to ten times the normal base rate. Fattening captive birds would also face towards the direction of migration. Also for navigational studies wild birds were caught and displaced. A Manx Shearwater was taken across the Atlantic and released near Boston; it was found back at its burrow on Skokholm twelve and a half days later, ten hours ahead of the letter arriving giving its release details. It was generally thought that the released shearwaters took a direct route back, rather than a searching pattern, and that they only navigated effectively by day when the sun was out, as cloudy weather slowed their return. Studies also showed that birds can use the sun, stars, and the earth's magnetism, with experienced adults sensing a virtual grid system.

Since a gram of fat yields eight to nine times the energy of a gram of protein or carbohydrate, it is not surprising that long distance migrants such as Bar-tailed Godwits store lots of fat. But the composition of body weight will depend on food availability and need, so for example, for European Golden Plovers the weight gain in autumn is nearly all fat but of protein in spring. Sedge Warblers put on a lot of fat in southern England and northern France to make a single direct long flight over 3000km to south of the Sahara. By contrast Reed Warblers eat a wider range of insects and migrate in shorter stages,

fattening up in North Africa before crossing the desert. Birds are also able to fly without fatigue partly because of their efficient respiratory system with air sacs connected to the lungs to help to extract oxygen more effectively than with lungs alone; long-distance migrants have these in a more highly developed form than resident bird species.

The amazing non-stop flight of Bar-tailed Godwits from Alaska to New Zealand is widely known; less well-known are the bodily changes the godwits go through to achieve that journey. Before departure the godwits gradually enlarge organs such as pectoral muscle and heart, and later shrink the stomach, intestines and liver to reduce the weight of the unnecessary digestive system. They set off with a body mass of about 55% fat and lose about half their body weight in the flight. After the flight a good sleep will be the first priority, with their digestive organs fully restored about a week later.

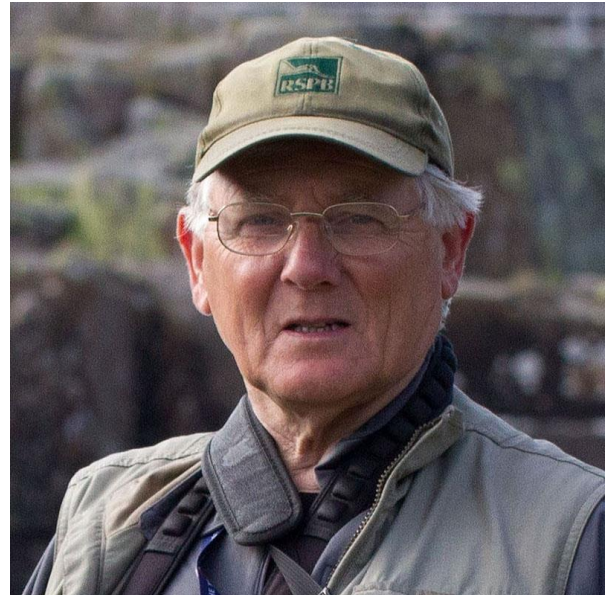
With 542 pages of text the book is stuffed with data, answering all those questions you've asked yourself, such as how does a Willow Warbler cross the Sahara without food or water? It has facts such as : there are 16 million migrants to Britain and Ireland, the peak migration times at Dungeness, the longest non-stop flights, 5 billion annual crossings of the Sahara, the sad decline in migrants, Bergman's Rule..... We all know birds flying in formation save energy, but how much? In V-formation they can save 12 to 20%. What about bounding flight? Answer, 10 to 15% compared to flapping flight. And soaring flight takes only 5 to 25% of continuous flight; a Common Buzzard in a glide loses one metre height per 15 metres of forward flight, so it needs to get up to 1000m to cross the Straits of Gibraltar. My favourite wader is Purple Sandpiper so I was pleased to read that they often return to the same wintering sites year after year, in fact they are the most site-faithful shorebird.

It has to be said that the book is heavy going, but it does have an extensive summary at the end of each chapter. So it is perhaps a book to dip into to discover the amazing things that birds do, including vagrancy in the largest chapter.

The book was published in 2010 but evidently is a briefer version of Newton's 2008 book, 'The Migration Ecology of Birds', but updates it with new findings. The 38 pages of references may lead to other books and papers to read.

## PROFILE – GEORGE RUTHERFORD

**Chris Brayshay** profiles well-known local photographer George Rutherford



It can truly be said that George Rutherford plumbed the depths before becoming a respected amateur bird photographer.

The 72-year-old has dived across the globe, from the Sound of Mull and Scapa Flow to the Red Sea and the Mediterranean. His passion for wildlife and knowledge led him to take up scuba diving and he rose from a raw novice to a qualified diving instructor.

"When you look at the sea it just looks like a dull sheet of water, but as soon as you go under water it's a whole new world," explained George. "There is more life in one small area under water, than in one square mile above the surface."

He trained with the Professional Association of Diving Instructors and was a member of Peterlee Scuba Diving Club in County Durham.

"It was the best time of my life," said the divorced father of two sons, whose sights these days are firmly fixed above the waves. George and his hallmark black Suzuki motorbike have become familiar sights at bird haunts all over Teesside over the last five years since his passion for bird photography first took off.

Innovative George, from Blackhall, Co. Durham, began with "a general interest in landscape photography", fixing his camera to the front of his motorbike – he has had three bikes in the last 10 years – to shoot his own travelogue.

"Driving through the Lake District I got a complete picture," the retired carpenter said.

"Still striving for perfection," George uses a Canon

7D digital camera with a 100-400 mm lens to get his best bird close ups. The highpoint of his birding came when he photographed a Bee-eater at Seaburn, a couple of years ago.

Other favourite subjects include the Nightingale which seems to annually visit Billingham, a Lesser Grey Shrike, in Northumberland, the Woodchat Shrike which turned up on Teesside, the Thrush Nightingale which came down on Hartlepool Headland and more recently the Yellow-rumped Warbler at Shincliffe.

Despite visits to Scotland – he plans a trip to Mull – Leighton Moss and Blacktoft Sands, for George there is no place quite like home.

"You can't beat our Cleveland birds – Hartlepool Headland and Saltholme and the birds that turn up here! One of my best birds was the Hen Harrier at Wynyard," he added.

His infectious enthusiasm once got the better of him. "On one of the first days I came to Saltholme I thought I saw a Little Egret and told those around me. But it turned out to be an Asda plastic bag!"

He has taken tens of thousands of photographs and has more than 2,000 on his smart phone at any one time.

"I am always striving for the best quality picture I can get," said George whose favourite reference book is the Collins field guide. He likes it because the colour plates show the birds in summer and winter plumage.

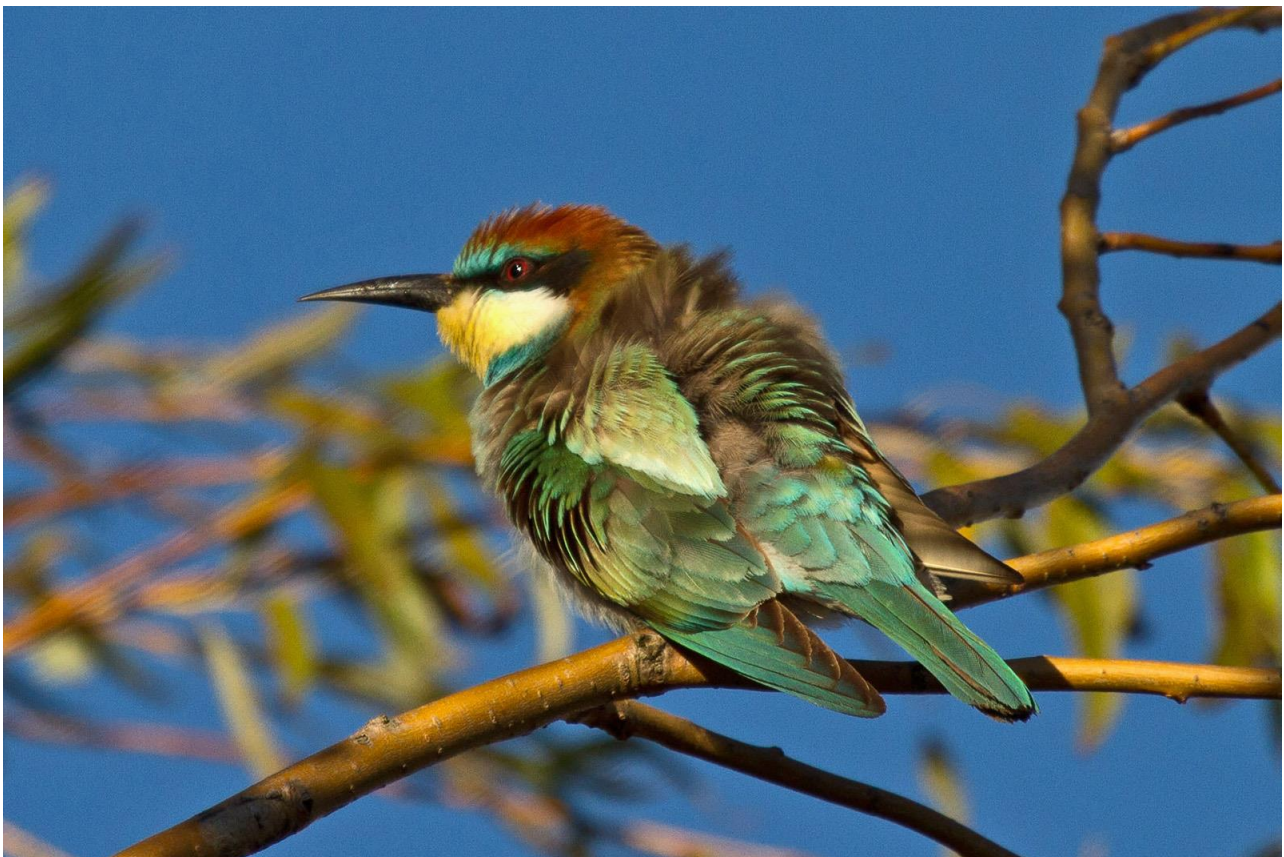
When asked if he is a birder or bird photographer George answers: "I am a photographer interested in birds. If I get a decent picture of a bird, so much the better. It's a nice walk and you learn something along the way".

"I concentrate on what is in our area and what is in the North-East. You learn the habitats of a bird and how close you can get without disturbing them. Some birds are more tolerant than others," George added.

"I am pleased with my own achievement so far. I am getting better all the time – I hope!"

George will spend all day out in the field with the evenings spent downloading the shots he has taken on to his computer, editing, selecting and clearing for the following day's encounters.

A final word about his 80 miles to the gallon motorbike; "The advantage of a motorbike is if you suddenly see something you can stop by the side of a road, where you can't if you are in a car. And you get to places on a motorbike you cannot get to in a car," said George.



Bee-eater, Seaburn

George Rutherford

## TEESMOUTH BIRD CLUB PUBLICATIONS PRICE LIST

*'Birdwatchers of Teesmouth 1600 to 1960'* **£2.00** plus £1 p.& p.

*Teesmouth Bird Reports 1958-1973 on a CD* **£5.00** plus £1 p.& p.

*'Birds of Tees-side 1962-67'* by Phil Stead **£5.00** plus £1 p.& p

*'Birds of Tees-side 1968-1973'* 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](mailto: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 - AUTUMN 2014 SUMMARY

Coverage was very good, with 110 out of 112 potential sector counts achieved.

The little egret peak (75, September) set another new Tees WeBS record.

October brought the best seasonal count of Wigeon for 20 years (1618), but disappointing peaks for both shelduck (195) and pintail (10); for the former the third lowest autumn peak on record and for the latter the worst showing since 2001. Tufted duck (156, July) and coot (669 September) also yielded their poorest seasonal figures for 9 and 13 years respectively.

Among the waders it is true to say that there were no eye-catching performances. Several species returned maxima that were well below par, for example oystercatcher (763, September), grey plover (4, August and October), sanderling (73, October), bar-tailed godwit (10, September) and curlew (530, September). For grey plover, sanderling and bar-tailed godwit this proved to be our worst autumn ever.

The redshank peak (764, August) was barely an improvement on last autumn, and it is now four years since our last count of a thousand or more.

For common tern (234, July) this was the poorest performance for 22 years.

Following this series of counts, in autumn the Tees and Hartlepool Bay WeBS Site remains of national importance for gadwall and shoveler.

**Mike Leakey**

WeBS Local Organizer

November 2014

**For table of counts see page 20**

# WETLAND BIRD SURVEY TEESMOUTH AUTUMN 2014 SUMMARY

| Species             | July 13    | August 10   | September 07 | October 19  |
|---------------------|------------|-------------|--------------|-------------|
| Little Grebe        | 34         | 54          | <u>60</u>    | 25          |
| Great Crested Grebe | <u>35</u>  | 21          | 12           | 2           |
| Cormorant           | 69         | 188         | <u>252</u>   | 73          |
| Little Egret        | 34*        | 48**        | <u>75**</u>  | 32*         |
| Grey Heron          | 34         | 27          | 33           | 23          |
| Mute Swan           | 63         | 49          | <u>86</u>    | 39          |
| Greylag Goose       | 193        | 314         | 175          | <u>892*</u> |
| Shelduck            | 128        | 124         | 144          | <u>195</u>  |
| Wigeon              | 7          | 8           | 190          | <u>1618</u> |
| Gadwall             | 200*       | 354**       | <u>480**</u> | 374**       |
| Teal                | 57         | 185         | <u>958</u>   | 766         |
| Mallard             | 249        | <u>286</u>  | 188          | 178         |
| Pintail             | 0          | 2           | 6            | <u>10</u>   |
| Shoveler            | 10         | 99*         | <u>208**</u> | 124*        |
| Pochard             | <u>91</u>  | 75          | 12           | 8           |
| Tufted Duck         | <u>156</u> | 133         | 113          | 59          |
| Coot                | 411        | 613         | <u>669</u>   | 504         |
| Oystercatcher       | 271        | 424         | <u>763</u>   | 438         |
| Avocet              | <u>18</u>  | 10          | 3            | 0           |
| Ringed Plover       | 11         | 105         | <u>195*</u>  | 59          |
| Golden Plover       | 2          | 14          | 27           | <u>235</u>  |
| Grey Plover         | 2          | <u>4</u>    | 1            | <u>4</u>    |
| Lapwing             | 754        | 126         | <u>1540</u>  | 668         |
| Knot                | 0          | 3           | <u>52</u>    | 3           |
| Sanderling          | 1          | 40          | 59           | <u>73</u>   |
| Little Stint        | 0          | 0           | 4            | 0           |
| Curlew Sandpiper    | 0          | 0           | 3            | 0           |
| Purple Sandpiper    | 0          | 0           | 0            | 0           |
| Dunlin              | 159        | <u>661</u>  | 314          | 252         |
| Ruff                | 1          | 9           | <u>21</u>    | 1           |
| Snipe               | 17         | <u>61</u>   | 22           | 14          |
| Black-tailed Godwit | 26         | <u>61</u>   | 27           | 29          |
| Bar-tailed Godwit   | 9          | 1           | <u>10</u>    | 1           |
| Whimbrel            | 6          | <u>17</u>   | 0            | 0           |
| Curlew              | 363        | 521         | <u>530</u>   | 305         |
| Spotted Redshank    | 0          | <u>5</u>    | 4            | 0           |
| Redshank            | 61         | <u>764*</u> | 561          | 669*        |
| Greenshank          | 2          | <u>7</u>    | 6            | 1           |
| Green Sandpiper     | 4          | <u>9</u>    | 1            | 0           |
| Common Sandpiper    | 5          | <u>8</u>    | 2            | 0           |
| Turnstone           | 7          | 55          | 41           | <u>99</u>   |
| Sandwich Tern       | 100        | <u>140</u>  | 42           | 1           |
| Common Tern         | <u>234</u> | 162         | 26           | 0           |
| Arctic Tern         | <u>1</u>   | 0           | 0            | 0           |
| Little Tern         | 0          | <u>4</u>    | 0            | 0           |

Underlined counts indicate Autumn 2014 maxima.

\* Denotes count of >50% of national importance

\*\* Denotes count of national importance

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

# TEESMOUTH BIRD CLUB

## PAYMENT OF SUBSCRIPTIONS

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

|                            |        |
|----------------------------|--------|
| <b>Standard/Individual</b> | £12.00 |
| <b>Family</b>              | £16.00 |
| <b>Junior</b>              | £10.00 |



Reg. Charity No.508850

Please forward your cheque made payable to 'Teesmouth Bird Club' to Chris Sharp, 45 Endeavour Close, Seaton Carew, Hartlepool, TS25 1EY. If you prefer, you can set up a Standing Order.

I enclose my subscription of £ .....for the year.....

Name.....

Address.....

..... Post Code..... Email address.....

Cut here -----

### STANDING ORDER MANDATE – TO BE SENT TO YOUR BANK

To : The Manager.....Bank

Bank address.....

I, ....., the undersigned, of Bank Sort Code.....

and Bank Account Number.....agree to pay a yearly Standing Order of £.....

to TEESMOUTH BIRD CLUB, Sort Code 40-22-27 and Bank Account Number 90799599 to commence on

.....and to continue until further notice.

SIGNED..... Date.....

Cut here -----

### TEESMOUTH BIRD CLUB GIFT AID DECLARATION

Surname..... Forename(s).....

Address.....

..... Post Code.....

I want the **TEESMOUTH BIRD CLUB** to treat all subscriptions/donations I have made since the date of this declaration, until I notify you otherwise, as Gift Aid donations

SIGNED..... Date.....

*To qualify as a Gift Aid donor you must be a taxpayer and have paid or will pay an amount of tax equal to the tax we reclaim on your subscriptions/donations.*

*Should you cease to be a taxpayer, please notify the Club so that further claims under this declaration may be cancelled.*

IF YOU ARE ELIGIBLE, PLEASE SIGN THE GIFT AID DECLARATION IF YOU HAVEN'T PREVIOUSLY DONE SO. IT COSTS YOU NOTHING BUT ENABLES THE CLUB TO RECOVER THE TAX ON YOUR SUBSCRIPTIONS/DONATIONS.