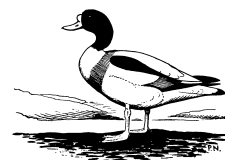


Teesmouth Bird Club Newsletter

April 2018 (No.69)



Reg.Charity No.508850

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The TBC Newsletter is published three times a year.
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Any material for inclusion in the Newsletter is welcome. Please
send contributions to tbc.projects@hotmail.co.uk or by post to
Eric James, 7 Hilderthorpe, Nunthorpe, Middlesbrough TS7
OPT

Volunteer wanted

Chris Sharp has been compiling the seasonal summaries for a very long time, but would now like the opportunity to pass the job on to someone else. Apart from this, Chris spends a great deal of time and effort towards the smooth running of the Club, so it is not unreasonable that he would like to offload this aspect of his work. If you are prepared to help, contact Chris on 01429 65163

MONTHLY SUMMARIES

Chris Sharp reviews the birding highlights of the winter period

NOVEMBER 2017

Last month's Slavonian Grebe remained on Bran Sands on 1st. At least two Cetti's Warblers were at RSPB Saltholme. Two Scaup remained on the sea off Redcar. Four Hawfinches were at Skelton on 1st. This winter was to prove to be the time to catch up with this species in Cleveland as the county received its share of birds in a national invasion.



Water Pipit, Saltholme

Ian Forrest

A Water Pipit was at RSPB Saltholme and up to 76 Twite were at Seaton Snook along with four Brent Geese. Small numbers of Chiffchaff were reported from the coast on 5th. Two Marsh Harriers were on the North Tees Marshes and they remained to winter. Two Whooper Swans were at Bowesfield on 5th.



Pied Wheatear, Redcar

Martyn Sidwell

The highlight of a poor autumn for migrant passerines was a Pied Wheatear which was photographed at Skinningrove on 6th. Sadly it was only seen by the photographer and it came hot on the heels of last year's bird at Redcar.



Grey Phalarope, South Gare

Rob Young



Shore Lark, Seaton Snook

Ian Watson

A Great White Egret was on the North Tees Marshes at this time but proved somewhat elusive at times. A Grey Phalarope showed well at South Gare from 8th to 11th. Up to four Shore Larks were in the Seaton Snook/North Gare area and they remained into December. Two Hawfinches were at Upleatham on 11th.



Hawfinch, Hutton Lowcross

Neil Simms

A Little Auk was at South Gare on 12th and a late Sabine's Gull was in the river mouth here on this date. Hawfinches increased to eight at Skelton.

The Twite flock remained around Seaton Snook though only a handful of Snow Buntings were reported.

A Green sandpiper showed well at RSPB Saltholme and the usual wintering birds were also present at Portrack and Teesside Park. A Long-eared Owl was at the usual RSPB roost. A Glossy Ibis was reported fling over Greatham Creek on 18th but was not subsequently relocated. Eight Whooper Swans were at RSPB Saltholme on 18th.



Spotted Redshank, Salterns

Ian Forrest

Greenshank and Spotted Redshank were wintering around Greenabella/ Salterns. Seven Shore Larks were counted at North Gare on 24th. Twite numbers at Seaton Snook increased to 120. A Slavonian Grebe was off South Gare on 25th.

Strong northerly winds on the last two days of the month saw single figure counts of Little Auks off Hartlepool along with a Black-throated Diver and a Petrel sp. A Glaucous Gull was at South Gare on 30th.

DECEMBER 2017

The strong northerly winds continued to blow on 1st and produced two Little auks, two Great Skuas, three Long-tailed Ducks and a Great Northern Diver at Hartlepool.



Snow Bunting, Seaton Snook

Ian Forrest

With up to 60 Twite and 20 Snow Buntings Seaton Snook proved attractive and nearby the four Shore Larks at North Gare saw a steady stream of photographers. Two Willow Tits also performed well on the feeders at Cowpen Bewley WP and two Long-tailed Ducks were on the newly created pools nearby.

A Water Pipit was at RSPB Saltholme . It showed well in front of Phil Stead hide along with a Green Sandpiper. Seven Whooper Swans were at Scaling on 4th.

Four Brent Geese were on Seaton Common on 10th. A Lapland Bunting was near Newburn on 15th. It remained faithful to this area until the end of February as it fed along with a flock of Linnets.

Mid month was fairly quiet with the weather remaining mild and little in the way of cold weather movement. Bitterns were on Long Drag and Coatham Marsh on 18th. Up to four Water Pipits were on Dormans Pool and three Chiffchaffs were at Zinc Works Road.

Two Egyptian Geese were at RSPB Saltholme on 23rd and remained into 2018. Two Cetti's Warblers were also still present here and two Bitterns were seen at Haverton Hole on 26th and again on 28th. Fifteen Red-breasted Mergansers were at Jackson's Landing on 29th but for the second successive winter no Divers were seen here. Increased disturbance has affected this site which in previous winters produced either or both Black-throated and Great Northern Divers.

The returning drake Green-winged Teal was at RSPB Saltholme from 29th and remained until the end of February but could often go missing for days at a time. A single Hawfinch was at Wynyard on 30th.

JANUARY 2018

As usual year lists were out in force on 1st but it was to prove a quiet day. No scarce Grebes or Divers were to be seen and the rarer Geese in contrast to last winter were almost completely absent.

Three Ruff were at Scaling Dam along with a Whooper Swan. Another Ruff was at RSPB Saltholme where the Green-winged Teal was also on show. The Lapland Bunting continued to show well at Newburn and for the first time in many years a Marsh Harrier remained around the North Tees Marshes into the New Year.

A decent sea watch on 6th saw two Sooty Shearwaters and single Little Auk and Great Skua off Old Nab and a Great Northern Diver off

Hartlepool. Up to eight Goosanders were at Billingham Pond. A Whooper Swan was in fields at Marske and stayed for two weeks.

A single Waxwing was in Redcar on 8th. It was a poor winter for this eruptive species. Hawfinches continued to be seen at Skelton with up to six reported. Glaucous Gulls were at Newburn on 9th and Saltholme Pools on 13th. A Hen Harrier was seen over Liverton Moor on 13th. Another Waxwing was at Skelton on 14th.

An influx of European White-fronted Geese took place from 16th when 14 were on Seaton Common. Another four were at RSPB Saltholme the following day and a single was on Seaton Common on 20th. A second winter Mediterranean Gull was at Marske on 19th. The usual adult Mediterranean Gull was also at Newburn.



Black Redstart, Hartlepool docks

Peter Garbutt

A Black Redstart in Hartlepool docks from 21st remained into February but was often elusive as access to the area was restricted. The Twite flock from Seaton Snook often commuted to South Gare and over 100 birds were occasionally counted here. Odd Waxwings continued to be seen with two in Stockton on 21st and one in Skelton the following day.

With none of the local tips now in operation Gulls were attracted to the waste recycling plant at Windermere Road in Hartlepool. An Iceland Gull was present here from 24th into February and a first winter Glaucous Gull was also seen occasionally. A Grey Phalarope was off South Gare 24th and 25th.

Ring-necked Parakeets peaked at 63 at Hartlepool on 27th. Two drake Scaup on the river at Bowesfield from 28th stayed until the end of February

FEBRUARY 2018

Hutton Lowcross was a traditional old site for Hawfinch in the county. Up to seven birds were present here during the month. A Black-necked Grebe at Scaling on 1st was the only scarce Grebe to be seen in the first two months of the year.

A Glaucous Gull was at Portrack on 2nd. The Green-winged Teal continued to be seen sporadically at Saltholme. Two Jack Snipe were at Portrack Marsh on 3rd. Up to five White-fronted Geese were at Lockwood Beck early in the month and they were accompanied by a Dark-bellied Brent Goose. A single White-front was at Haverton on 4th. Two Long-eared Owls continued to attract a steady stream of admirers here.



Long-eared Owl, Saltholme

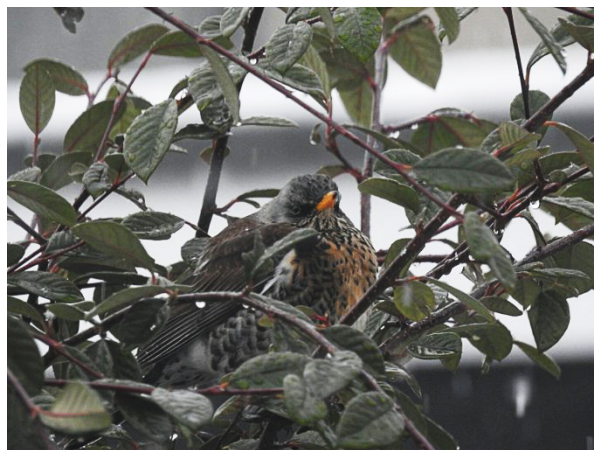
Paul Cave

Very little changed over the next few weeks and it was a case of seeing the same old birds. The Lapland Bunting remained at Newburn, the two Scaup at Bowesfield and varying numbers of Twite and Snow Buntings were at either Seaton Snook or South Gare. Two Green Sandpipers were at Portrack and two Greenshanks and the Spotted Redshank were around Greatham Creek. The Black Redstart continued to be reported from Hartlepool docks.

Two Waxwing were in Skelton on 9th, a Water Pipit was at Saltholme mid-month and Two Whooper Swans were briefly at Cowpen Marsh on 17th. A northerly movement of Pink-footed Geese was observed on 18th with over 500 at Redcar and 40 at Warsett Hill. Five Whooper Swans went past Marske on 20th with another at Scaling. A Red-throated Diver was an unusual visitor to RSPB Saltholme on 21st.

The first Avocet of the spring was on Port Clarence Flood on 22nd. Five were on Seal Sands

on 24th. A Red Kite was over Guisborough on 24th.



Fieldfare in garden

Dave Brown



Redwing in garden

Peter Garbutt



Smew, Wynyrd

Lee Harris

Just as thoughts were turning to Spring a bitterly cold easterly air stream late in the month saw temperatures plummet. Again little of note appeared but an influx of Fieldfares, Redwings and even a Woodcock were recorded in birders' back gardens.

Teesmouth Bird Club

Annual report 2017

Club Committees and memberships

THE CLUB COMMITTEE

(Chairman) **Brian Clasper**

(Vice Chairman) **Barbara Crinson**

(Hon Secretary) **Chris Sharp**

(Hon Treasurer) **Mark Askew**

(Ordinary Member) **Alistair McLee** (First Appointed 2013)

(Ordinary Member) **Dave Nelson** (First Appointed 2015)

(Ordinary Member) **Dan McKie** (First Appointed 2016)

(Ordinary Member) **Julie Mason** (First Appointed 2017)

(Ordinary Member) **Mike McGrory** (First Appointed 2017)

RECORDS SUB-COMMITTEE

(Chairman) **Tom Francis**

Chris Brown

Graeme Joynt

Graham Megson

Mark Rowbottom

Ian Kendall

Chris Bell

Mark Askew

Geoff Iceton

Ian Foster

MARKETING & MEMBERSHIP SUB-COMMITTEE

(Chairman) **Chris Sharp**

John Fletcher

Eric James

Julie Mason

Brian Clasper

CONSERVATION SUB-COMMITTEE

(Chairman) **Alistair McLee**

Graham Megson

Vic Fairbrother

Alan Snape

Barbara Crinson

Honorary Treasurer's Report 2017.

Income was substantially boosted this year by a kind bequest from the estate of David Simpson and proceeds from the sale of books generously donated by Dennis Summers Smith. Overall excess income of around £3800 was flattered by lower than normal postage costs although some of this is due to later printing and hence posting of the bird report. Increased expenditure on feeding station provision was as planned.

Appropriate expenditure of some of our funds is regularly considered by the trustees; it can be a challenge to find projects that meet the aims of the Club and provide a long term benefit for birds and members.

Meanwhile, the healthy state of finances mean that membership fees can be held at their current rate, a standard phrase for many years now!

Mark Askew

TEESMOUTH BIRD CLUB						
Statement of Income & Expenditure for 2017						
(with 2016 for comparison)						
		2017		2016		
		Income	Payment	Income	Payment	
Subscriptions		4506.00		4645.00		
Gift Aid		970.81		940.79		
Interest		265.71		336.46		
Meetings			381.60		451.60	
Lecture Fees			331.00		235.00	
TBC Gen Publications		247.42		444.88		
Bird Report			2400.00		2300.00	
Printing & Stationery			347.00		492.30	
Postage			290.42		1128.16	
Subs to other Societies			49.50		49.50	
TBC Merchandise		190.00	158.28	0.00		
Insurance			264.00		262.80	
Sundries			0.00		0.00	
Website			140.06		248.32	
Donations		3328.90		0.00		
Feeding stations			1088.84		516.34	
Hide repairs			65.00		0.00	
Report editor's computer			0.00		195.10	
Biodiversity event			0.00		400.20	
Ted Parker memorial			857.35		50.00	
Dormans platform plan			0.00		218.50	
Uncashed cheques from 2016		669.24				
		10178.08	6373.05	6367.13	6547.82	
Excess Income			3805.03		-180.69	
		10178.08	10178.08	6367.13	6367.13	
	Balance B/F 2016		60103.00	Balance B/F 2015		60283.69
	Excess Income		3805.03			-180.69
	Balance 31.12.2017		63908.03			60103.00
	Cash In Hand		0.00			0.00
	Bank Current Acc		6661.53			3122.21
	P Stead Mem Fund		644.49			644.26
	NSB Investment Acc		56602.01			56336.53
			63908.03			60103.00

Hon.Secretary's report

As can be seen from the table below, the Club membership fell slightly in 2017 but the overall total still compares favourably to the numbers 10 years ago.

At £12 the membership fee still remains excellent value. Despite the fact that the junior membership rate was reduced to only £5 at the AGM in April 2016 the virtual non existence of juniors is perhaps a worry for the future. The Club's subscription rate compares favourably with other county bird watching societies. As in previous years the many hours of free time given by certain members is worthy of mention. Both Dave Nelson and John Fletcher have shown many new members the main bird watching sites in Cleveland and I am sure their efforts are much appreciated. Special thanks go to Eric James, our newsletter editor. Although taken ill in late 2016 Eric has continued to edit the Newsletter with the help of Sophie Horne and Jamie Duffie.

	Total	Full	Family	Junior	S/C	Life	Hon
2005	287	134	95	-	39	14	5
2006	317	157	89	-	52	14	5
2007	346	156	119	-	51	14	6
2008	421	176	170	-	55	14	6
2009	487	203	190	1	73	14	6
2010	521	209	209	2	78	13	5
2011	538	225	214	2	79	13	5
2012	548	312	217	1		13	5
2013	509	286	200	2		14	7
2014	488	261	207	2		12	6
2015	476	266	189	2		13	6
2016	480	268	192	1		13	6
2017	470	267	182	1		14	6

Our website manager Jamie Duffie continues to oversee a website that gains praise from everyone who logs on. Despite the odd teething problem over the past year the site is well used and with the ever increasing use of Twitter as a means of reporting sightings and publishing photographs represents the best way of visitors to the area to keep up with what's around. The Club is in the process of updating the website and hopefully it will be better than ever!

The annual bird report is also a publication the Club can be rightly proud of. As a past member of the records sub-committee I know the amount of time that is spent collating the records and writing and checking the report. The recorder Tom Francis, the editor Graeme Joynt and the rest of the compilers must be thanked for their efforts. The 2016 bird report is bigger and better than ever. Thanks must also go to Chris Brown who formats the report before publication.



As thanks for his work as The BTO regional representative for the past 13 years, Vic Fairbrother will be given the "Ted Parker award" at the AGM. This award was introduced in memory of Ted and is given to members who have contributed significantly to the Club and its aims.. Vic follows on from Don Page, Russell McAndrew, Jamie Duffie and Tom Francis, the previous recipients of the award

Left : Vic Fairbrother

Chris Sharp

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT FOR 2017

The 1970s was the first time I visited Teesside from Sunny Sunderland, to see a White-fronted Goose and a Barnacle Goose via Brian Unwin's Morris Minor traveller. We met a large group of knowledgeable birders who belonged to the Teemouth Bird Club! In such a great birding area!

I would never have thought that I would have the privilege in becoming Chairman of such a large bird Club. As I retire from my two years as TBC chairman I didn't realise how much work is needed to sustain the high-level standards of the Club by a great deal of people.

As a Club we are asked for opinions by the Councils, Development organisations, the various Tees trusts and of course the RSPB. The latter supporting two hides we own on their reserve at Saltholme which we aid maintained.

There is a backbone of members who erect nest boxes, have built three new feeding stations locally from scratch (one in a school), reclaiming gift aid, BTO links, getting involved with surveys, organising superb evening meetings that are well attended where we sell publications, books and clothing, and of course our local outings.

The Records committee have worked extremely hard to produce our magnificent annual reports, the envy of many around the UK. The Newsletter continues to be very informative and an active up to date Website in conjunction with Cleveland birds keeps members up to date with the latest local sightings. Please members keep submitting records to Records committee and with the aid of Cleveland birds on our website you can update us in the field of new sightings. Thank you also to all our photographers capturing images in the field for us to enjoy under the National photography guidelines.

Our membership remains high and stable with quite a few new members joining our ranks who we welcome with open arms. We are still open to viable suggestions to finance worthwhile Bird projects in our area, so please contact us.

I would like to take the opportunity to thank my fellow trustees, their support guidance and encouragement kept my enthusiasm going for the past two years

PROFILE : BARBARA CRINSON



Fascination with wildlife has been part of my psyche for as long as I can remember. My mother used to recount how, as a baby, I would lean out of my pushchair, pick up poor unsuspecting spiders and proceed to eat them! Fortunately, I only rescue spiders from the bath now but the quest for knowledge of the natural world has never abated. At home, my mother successfully reared a couple of Blackbirds during my childhood and Theo was a characterful Song Thrush who used to come and tap on the kitchen window every day demanding cheese – it had to be Cheshire, not Cheddar.

My first school was Marsden County, situated near the old Whitburn pit and, of course, the nearby cliffs with all their breeding seabird colonies, were an endless source of interest throughout those formative years. At! Another lasting memory etched in my brain at the age of eight was linked to an unplanned week, spent at a farm in Teesdale, without my family. There, with oversized wellies (often sucked into cowpats minus my feet!!) and borrowed clothes, I found myself in a heavenly, magical world. At "Fairy Dell", a Tawny Owl knew and trusted the farmer and would comfortably allow him access to its nest. To cup my hands and receive into them a small bundle of helpless fluff, sporting enormous appealing eyes, was undoubtedly an inspirational moment and a great privilege for any child. The parent bird in the branches above me seemed to peer down in approval.

Moving forward in life, further education took me to Ryhope Grammar School and eventually on to Dundee University, from where I qualified as a dentist. Apart from my sorties into the countryside, sport, music and dance also played a big part during this era. I was part of the school athletics team and madrigal group and later, a member of the university netball and Scottish country dance teams. Also on the sporting front, during my six years in the armed forces, dentistry was combined with being a member of a successful army ski team and at that time, to experience flight for myself, I learned to parachute!

On leaving the army, years were again spent working in general practice and later I developed clinical expertise focusing on patients with complex medical needs. During this intense time, I also brought up my son single-handedly. At least, living here in Richmond, we were blessed with easy access to the most exquisite countryside, packed with wildlife, and many happy hours were spent together by the river. Bed-time reading would find me immersed in scientific studies about birds and books focused on the environment.

Apart from the odd trip abroad, I remain very content to take myself off to birding hotspots in the UK and also adore being out on my bike with binoculars round my neck. I have a favourite patch I cycle in the Lake District, near my static van, and this ride takes me through a variety of habitats. Magical moments regularly occur round every corner and it can be the most utterly rewarding way of closely observing bird behaviour – my passion. A great friend has accompanied me to Arran and Mull and our walking pals have nicknamed us "Birds on Bikes". An extract of an article I wrote up after our last trip to Arran follows this account and I hope it will inspire others to ditch the car on the odd occasion!

Closer to home, the advent of Saltholme was the initial magnet, drawing me eastwards again. Joining Teesmouth Bird Club was inevitable, following which there has been significant encouragement from members of this first class organisation, to explore and familiarise myself with the countless nooks and crannies in Cleveland. 10x40 Swarovski binoculars, plus 60x80 straight through scope, accompany me on my travels.

Numerous folk will know of my involvement as a hide guide at Saltholme and also the fact that since 2015, under the umbrella of TBC, I have been part of a small group developing projects with schools, a community group and a couple of nature reserves. Throughout my forthcoming stint as Chairman, I hope the team can maintain this enthusiasm and that more members will feel inclined to offer any sort of help to the hard working committees and keep this Club vibrant, effective and something of which to feel very proud.

Extract from "**Birds on Bikes**" – a May trip to Arran

"A good move was to start out before the first ferry of the day arrived, when quiet roads made for relaxing riding and, above all, allowed us to see and hear the birds much more clearly.

Our route on the first day led north from Brodick. The initial five miles took us two and a half hours to complete, so wondrous were the close-up views of the shorebirds, with their breeding plumage bathed in glorious morning sunlight. Among them was the Whimbrel and Ros was fascinated to hear the story of this adventurous wader. The bird, as you know, sets out in spring from West Africa, waiting for the light of a full moon, because at such times hordes of fiddler crabs emerge to search for mates, and the birds gorge themselves on these delicacies to build up the necessary strength and reserves of fat for migration. We were also enthralled to watch the courting displays of Common Sandpipers and their eventual attempts to mate; they seemed to be hampered by their long legs – and too much flirting! This was a bird we would see often, with its bow-winged flight over the water, hugging the shore-line and, of course, that intriguing bobbing bottom. The sound of birdsong from the fine gardens and woodlands of Brodick Castle added to the pleasure of this stretch of the ride, particularly the frequent bursts of fruity tones from newly arrived Blackcaps.

After passing Sannox the road climbs steeply before descending to the old herring port of Lochranza. The ruined medieval castle at the entrance to the loch and its wall formed a welcome backrest for lunch in the sun. We then followed the northern coast of the island and it was between here and Pirnmill on the west coast that we saw the three handsome diver species – Great Northern (in its stunning breeding plumage), Black-throated and Red-throated. At one point we observed seven of the last type and could hear them calling to each other – such a spine tingling experience.

Late in the afternoon, as we slogged our way up a long climb to a pass called “The String”, I jokingly said to Ros, “I bet there’s an Eagle watching us, thinking that what we need is a pair of wings like his!” Very soon afterwards we came upon a female Hen Harrier quartering low over the fellside. Great news, as this was another target bird we had been hoping to see on Arran. Ros said, “Only a Golden Eagle needed now, Barbara”, to which I replied, “Don’t get greedy!”

Ah, but the Arran gods were looking after us! Within ten minutes, almost at the summit of the pass, we heard the unmistakable call of this magnificent creature. Two bikes were thrown to the ground, both riders went down on the deck, and what we witnessed neither of us will ever forget. For fifteen to twenty minutes we watched the courtship display of a pair of Golden Eagles right above our heads. They mirrored one another’s movements in complete harmony – strong, slow wing beats followed by effortless gliding, then powering upwards before pitching headlong into a stoop. At one point the female was on the ground about forty yards from us while the male was circling majestically above to impress her. What an awesome spectacle, and what a finale to an amazing day

We spent further days of “biking and birding” in the south of the island, where we had incredible views of Cuckoos, shared more intimate moments with shorebirds and waders, and had stunning encounters with Warblers, Wheatears, Whinchats and White Wagtails! We worked very hard, covering at least 45 miles a day and doing some serious climbing, but the rewards were truly thrilling and unforgettable.”

Ros and I have also biked virtually every road and track on Mull and a return trip is planned for this coming May, when we hope to catch up again with the White-tailed Sea Eagles, the Corncrakes on Iona and enjoy our special close encounters with a whole host of other returning spring migrants.

I Hope Barbara’s trip report will encourage others to do something similar

A BLAST FROM THE PAST

This might be something for long-standing members to reminisce about. See below



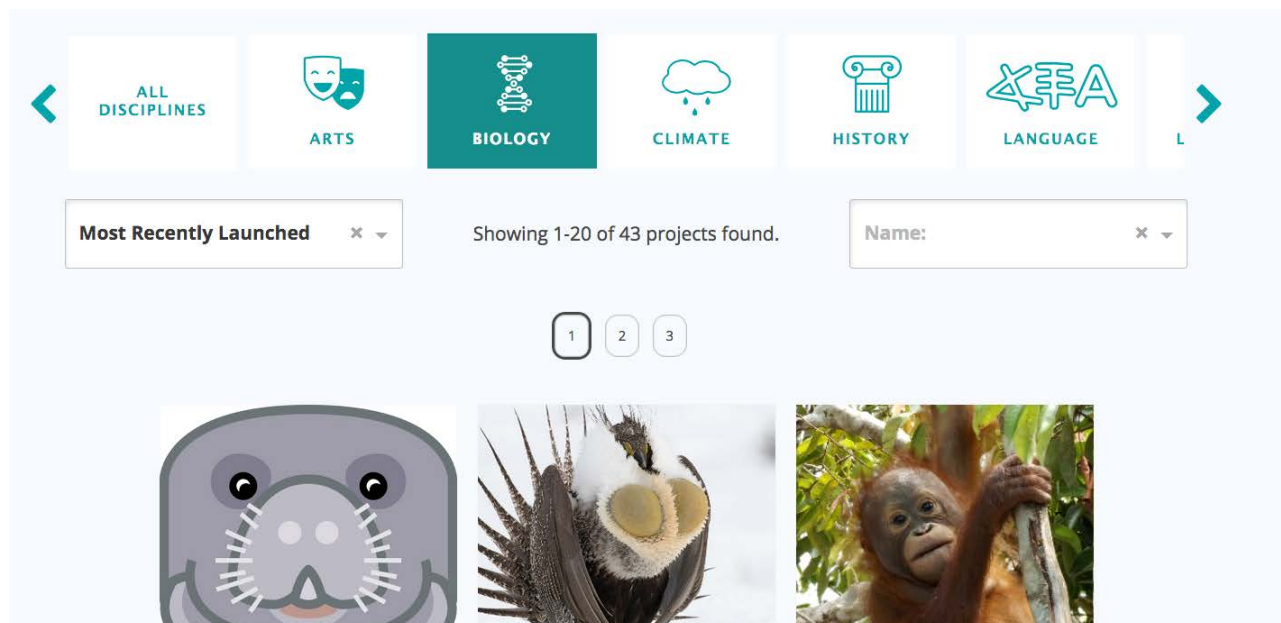
Colin Abbott

Graham Megson, while looking at a website of South Gare photographs, was surprised to see this picture of a decrepit building with a sign on the door, reading ‘South Gare Bird Observatory’. The Club had a lease on it from 1968 until its condition was considered unsafe. It would be interesting to read anyone’s memories of the place..

WELCOME TO THE ZOONIVERSE

Citizen Science or Armchair Birding

If you have a computer and some spare time, you can play Patience or, more usefully, help with some Citizen Science. Further down this page, Alistair McLee describes the Zooniverse.org website which links researchers with masses of data to people who are prepared to help with its analysis.



Start page of Zooniverse

If the carpeted hides at Saltholme are a tad too rugged and cold, here is something to do from your own home, and at the same time add your contribution to science.

There is a web site called www.zooniverse.org which hosts a huge array of projects in a multitude of scientific disciplines – biology, climate, nature, physics, space - to name but a few. (There are also projects in language, arts, history etc - I should add - for our more cultured members).

Some of the specific topics in the nature category include kelp floating forests; identify New Zealand animals; Weddell Seal counts; Steller Sea Lions watch; Californian Condor watch and Seabird watch.

The latter project is one I participate in presently. It simply involves counting numbers of Kittiwakes and Guillemots in a series of fixed location photographs taken over a period of time throughout the year at their breeding cliffs. The sites are in various locations in the NE Atlantic – three in Svalbard, one in Iceland, three in the UK and one in Eire.

The process is simple and explained to you. It involves clicking on a bird and moving the cursor around, magnifying if necessary. When done with that picture, you sign off and another is offered to you. If do not want to count another at that time, can simply log out the website.

Simples!

There are many participants already, but similarly, there are thousands of pictures to be studied. The data in Seabird Watch, gathered over several years, are used to monitor the fortunes of the populations of these two indicator species across their breeding range.

Ali McLee

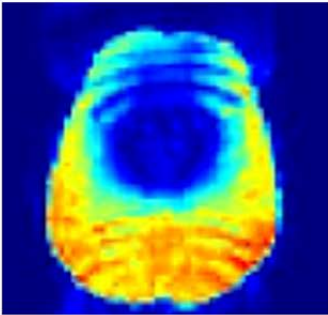
Below : Some of the Nature projects

Most Recently Launched
Showing 21-40 of 51 projects found.
Name:

1
2
3



SEABIRDWATCH



BRAIN MATCH



WEATHER RESCUE BEN NEVIS



LEAF TARGETING



WILDWATCH KENYA



WEDDELL SEAL COUNT



TIT-BITS

If you thought that slugs killing nestlings was a bit creepy, what about a crab that can kill and eat a gannet

COCONUT CRABS AND RED-FOOTED BOOBIES

Coconut, or Robber, crabs live on coral atolls in the Indian Ocean. After a larval stage at sea, They come ashore and live, like their hermit crab relatives, in empty gastropod Shells . When fully grown, they have a span between claws of over a metre. With a weight of 4kg, they are the biggest invertebrates, and arthropods, in the world. Their claws can exert the same force as a lion's bite.

Red-footed Boobies are tropical relatives of the Gannet, though they are now on the British list after a second calendar year bird was found on a Sussex beach



A researcher, studying the crabs on the Chagos Archipelago found a corpse of a Booby in a crab's underground lair, and later filmed an attack of a crab on a Booby. The bird was sleeping on a fairly low branch and a crab slowly climbed up to it. It broke one wing, presumably by crushing the humerus, and the bird fell to the ground. The crab came down and broke the bird's other wing. The bird fought back, but the crab held it with its claws while kicking it with its legs. Within 20 minutes, five other

crabs arrived, attracted by the scent of blood. During a fight lasting several hours, the bird was pulled to pieces and eaten

The two species tend to avoid each other because of being potential prey. The young crabs, will not settle on an island with many birds as they will be eaten, and any sensible bird will avoid islands colonised by the crabs.

RAPTORS AND FIRE

Australia is prone to bushfires, but this has been the case for long enough (61 million years) for the vegetation to adapt to it

Raptors benefit from fires as they flush out potential prey which is easier to catch in the open. They benefit to such an extent that they will deliberately spread the fire. If the progress of a fire is halted by a firebreak or river, Black Kites will carry burning pieces of wood across the obstruction and drop them on flammable vegetation, and then wait for potential prey to be forced out

SALTHOLME :PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE

John Fletcher, the Club Publications Officer and Archivist describes the early history of Saltholme.

Saltholme and Salterns



1576 map showing the area simply as Holme

Next year, 2019, will see the tenth anniversary of the opening of the RSPB/Teesside Environmental Trust Reserve at Saltholme. The RSPB refers to the site as a former brown field site, but clearly way back it was a green field site.

The history of the area goes back to the building of a church at Billingham by Ecgrid, Bishop of Lindisfarne by 845 A.D. together with the founding of a village to support it. Billingham was given to the Companions of St. Cuthbert. After the strife with the Northumbrians and the Vikings over the next two hundred years, William the Conqueror in 1083 confirmed the former grant and gave the manor together with Cowpen, Wolviston, Beaulieu, and Belasis, to the monks of Durham. Their land included at least three miles of riverbank and foreshore. Thus the south-east corner of County Durham was under the control of the Prior and monks of Durham until the Dissolution when control passed to the Bishop of Durham in 1540. Prior Whitehead became the first Dean of the Cathedral and twelve of the monks became the first prebendaries. The church continued to control the area down to modern times.

The Saltholme area was first referred to as "Holme" or "le Holme", deriving from the Viking word "holmr", `a piece of flat low-lying ground by a river or stream, submerged or surrounded in times of flood`. The area was certainly marshy in the coastal areas and to the north towards Greatham Creek. The importance of le Holme as the Prior`s main sheep farm can be seen from the number of ewes recorded about 1310 with 1021 at Holme out a total of 1696 for all the Prior`s manors. Even Beaulieu`s contribution of 235 ewes was significant (Beaulieu was situated just over one kilometre eastwards of Cowpen Bewley, later becoming Low Grange Farm before succumbing to suburbia.) Beaulieu was very important as a centre for arable farming, whereas the villagers of Cowpen Bewley were the salt makers.

All the early references to Holme come from the far-from-complete records kept by the Prior and monks, and later by the Dean and Chapter of Durham. The writing requires expertise to decipher, the easier-to-read copperplate not coming into use until the early 17th century. Then having deciphered the text the next hurdle is to translate the results from Latin. So my thanks to the transcribers who have brought historic records into the light of day.

The earliest mention of Holme is in 1276 in a charter Prior Richard made with a Walter Holme. Then in 1296 we have a William of Holme having custody of a flock of sheep with 1086 ewes and 445 wethers(rams). (Following the national trend the flock declined to 331 sheep under the care of Radulphus Holtby by 1464.) Also in 1296 at the Billingham manor court (probably held in the Prior`s manor house at Beaulieu) we have mention of an Isabella of Holme. Other mentions of Holme are Emma del Holm in 1370 and Richard of Holm in 1377. In 1627 Salt Holm is mentioned in the records of the Deanery.

In the parish register for Billingham, there is a baptism in 1625 of a Thomas Liddle, son of John of The Houme. The "John Liddle of Salt Holme" who is buried in 1658, is another early reference to Saltholme. A settlement at Holme is marked on the 1576 map by Christopher Saxton but the Lordship of Acklam map of 1714 shows a "Saltholme Point" (on the North bank of the Tees roughly opposite where the Riverside Stadium is now, and where the shore then turned northwards towards Seaton.) The next Saltholme entry in the register is to the marriage of a Miss Kinderley of Salt Holme who married Robert Turner of Stockton in 1743. She surely must be related to Mr. Kenderley who embanked land at Saltholme in 1740 reaching up to about four miles in length by 1808. Opposite the RSPB Visitor Centre this embankment ran about 330 yards east of the main road, an obvious remnant being the track at Holme Fleet where the tern rafts are located in summer. At this time the "mouth" of Greatham Creek would have been just upstream of the A178 road to Seaton.

The 1841 Census has 15 people living at Saltholme headed by a John Nightingale; in the 1851 Census there are 12 people there headed by a John Nightingale but the labourers and servants are different from those in 1841. With no wife or children present there is no sense of a family there in contrast to "Saltholme Ballast Wharf", which was downstream from where the Transporter now is and where salt was loaded as ballast, and which in 1851 has the families of a Ballast Man, a Pilot, a Master of a Steam Tug, a Mariner, and a Seaman.

The creation of the Saltern Wetlands was completed in the summer of 2014 with the breaching of the sea wall. The newly-created salt-marsh took its name from the large mounds, called salterns, left behind in the marsh area from salt-making in the medieval period. When salt was much dearer than it is now sea-water used to be concentrated in salterns. There were salterns all round the coast between Lincolnshire and Cornwall, with the East Coast, especially Lincolnshire, providing considerable exports of salt. In the medieval period salt was very important for the preservation of meat and especially for fish, so salterns are often found near major fishing ports such as Hartlepool. Because sea-water is so low in salt, salterns were often located near small inlets and tidal marshes which were subject to natural evaporation, and were only operated at certain times of the year. In Lincolnshire salt-caked sand was taken from the spring tide line and placed in a trench along with sea water. The resulting solution was then tapped and stored, whilst the de-salted sand was thrown away and the trench refilled. The salterns on the Salterns Wetland consist of alternate thin bands of cinder and thick deposits of silt. The presence of silt suggests a salt-making process similar to that in Lincolnshire. The cinder was probably due to the use of sea-coal as fuel in the final step of evaporation in pans. With evaporation occurring at the surface, the crystals grew there, allowing the salt to be skimmed off.



The Salterns

The villagers of Cowpen Bewley appear to be the salt-makers with the records mentioning “salt-pits” with an early reference in 1296. Whatever the role was of a “salt-pit” –although from the above it seems likely to have been the steeping trench - it came at an annual rent typically of 28lbs of salt. The next 150 years saw enormous economic and social changes leading to the end of feudal bondage and the desertion of villages. In 1438 it is recorded that sixteen tenants paid £7 3s. 4d. rather than supplying nearly half a ton of salt, with a similar rate still applying in 1536.

Saltholme finally lived up to its name in 1874 when the salt bed below it was proved, but salt production had to wait for suitable hydraulic technology until 26 June 1889 when salt was first successfully produced there.

Dave Braithwaite describes the recent developments at the Reserve

Update from RSPB Saltholme

Saltern Wetlands

Very shortly I expect that the RSPB and the Environment Agency will be signing a long lease so that Saltern Wetlands, 50ha of intertidal and freshwater habitats north of Greatham Creek and running west towards Greatham village, will become part of Saltholme nature reserve.

Since the breach of the old seawall in 2014 there has been considerable recolonising of the saltmarsh and this and the areas of mud are now supporting lots of birds. All that from what were sheep fields. Excellent that this area has at long last been returned to the estuary.

Greatham South Flood Alleviation Scheme

The scheme that will create a further 30ha of intertidal habitat south of Greatham Creek, west of the Teesmouth National Nature Reserve car park, will be completed this September. The scheme will enlarge the car park by a further seven spaces and create a birdwatching shelter on the new seawall by the car park. The old seal viewpoint shelter will be replaced with a structure designed by Masters students from the School of Architecture at Leeds Beckett University.

The realigned area already falls within Cowpen Marsh that is subject to a management agreement between Inovyn, the landowner, and RSPB and is therefore part of the Saltholme nature reserve.

During this realignment works the management of the freshwater areas of Cowpen Marsh have been further enhanced and the marsh that was in `unfavourable condition` when it came to RSPB, is now very productive with excellent habitat conditions for wetland birds year round. It has been one of the unsung success stories of the work of Saltholme.

The Environment Agency intend to create a further 5ha of realignment work to the west of Saltern Wetlands and will bring the total area returned to the estuary to about 55ha. This will all be within the management of Saltholme in due course. Although on a national scale 55ha is small, in the context of the Tees Estuary this is significant.

England Coast Path

The project is a Natural England initiative but Stockton Borough Council are looking after the development of the section from Seaton Common to the Tees river crossing at Newport Bridge.

Work has progressed well and the section south of Huntsman Drive is now complete save for a bridge section that has to go in after the bird breeding season.

I remain hopeful that SBC will obtain the funding for the section across Saltholme East that will form a causeway below the road verge. This work is also scheduled for after the bird breeding season this year. When the scheduled works for this year are completed this autumn, there will be a footpath that will run the full length, north to south, of the Saltholme reserve i.e. from Saltern wetlands down to the River Tees. For the first time birders will be able to get off the road verge and view birds using places like the Calor Gas pools and across to Port Clarence Pools. This will be of huge benefit to local birders and give much more opportunity than the current `drive through` birding experience!

It has taken many years to get this footpath organised and a lot of collaboration and cooperation between parties including ourselves, Hartlepool and Stockton councils, River Tees Rediscovered landscape partnership and industry (particularly SABIC and Sembcorp Utilities). When fully in place the footpath will be a tremendous asset.

Cowpen Bewley Landfill Site

The landfill site occupies something like 300ha and will be worked out over the next 15 years. The wetlands are of particular interest and I have been involved with Natural England in helping shape the management plan for the development of the site into the future.

This will be another `slow burn` project as there are still many years while the site is being commercially tipped. It is noticeable that there are fewer gulls using the site these days and this is because household waste, and the food remains it contains, are no longer being tipped. Waste is now restricted to soils and other organic compostable materials, hence the decline in gull numbers.

South Gare

RSPB have land rights with the Crown Estate over 65ha of intertidal habitats at Bran Sands which is adjacent to South Gare. The South Tees Development Corporation, The Combined Authority, Redcar Council and the local MP [Anna Turley] have all expressed interest in developing a large nature reserve based around the already designated areas at South Gare (SPA and SSSI). It therefore seems like there is at last the political will to make this happen.

If this goes through, and it looks increasingly as if it will, it will add significantly to the nature conservation areas around the estuary.

February 2018

Dave Braithwaite is leaving the building!



I have been at Saltholme for over 12 years. I first came here as a teenager with the York Ornithological Club when Edgar Gatenby used to act as our guide. I remember seeing Dave Britton one autumn day sitting by a fairly small Saltholme pool with a very large telescope rested on one knee scanning through a mob of Ruff. Little did I know then that I would have the privilege to be the first Site Manager for RSPB Saltholme.

The relationship between the TBC and Saltholme has always been good. I remember having early discussions with Ted Parker about forging a good partnership, a partnership that led to the initiative to install the Phil Stead hide. A succession of Chairs after Ted have also always given their warm support for our work here.

It hasn't all been plain sailing and some stuff has been challenging; like the Ruddy Duck episode ("Don't mention the Ruddy Duck," a little voice whispers in my ear!) but the relationship has always been mature enough to withstand some of the harder issues and long may that continue.

During my time at Saltholme some of the most important things have been the doubling of the land area under RSPB control, now 650ha; the rewetting of Cowpen Marsh; the establishing of the wet grassland and generally better management of these important habitats. Wet grassland is ever rarer in the UK and from my knowledge of the Lower Derwent Valley where I once coordinated the WeBS counts, I learned that Wigeon are an indicator species of good management. Wigeon numbers at Saltholme have doubled in ten years and peaks of 5000 are now in reach.

There is still masses for my successor to get his or her teeth into. The biggest challenge being to connect up ever larger areas of land managed primarily for nature conservation.

The Teesmouth Bird Club has been known to me through the early encounters with Edgar, for many years. It is a Club with a huge reputation and deservedly so. I hope it continues to go from strength to strength. I also hope that the relationship between TBC and RSPB remains strong and of course many are members of both organisations. Your support for the new Saltholme Site Manager will, I know, be very much appreciated.

Dave is leaving with the Reserve at a high point, it having received the following award :

'Saltholme Nature Reserve is awarded the VisitEngland Gold Accolade for 2017, awarded to attractions that demonstrate excellence across all areas.

Teesmouth Bird Club Clothing

Teesmouth Bird Club clothing merchandise with professionally embroidered emblem ,various colours, any size. Produced locally



ITEM DESCRIPTION	SIZE	QUANTITY	UNIT PRICE
	S, M , L, XL,XXL,XXXL		
FRUIT OF THE LOOM POLO SHIRT NAVY BLUE			£16.00
FRUIT OF THE LOOM POLO SHIRT BOTTLE GREEN			£16.00
FRUIT OF THE LOOM POLO SHIRT BLACK			£16.00
REGATTA FLEECE , ZIPPED FRONT, NAVY BLUE			£22.00
REGATTA FLEECE , ZIPPED FRONT,BOTTLE GREEN			£22.00
REGATTA FLEECE , ZIPPED FRONT, BLACK			£22.00
ACRYLIC BEANIE HAT , BOTTLE GREEN			£8.00
ACRYLIC BEANIE HAT , NAVY BLUE			£8.00
BASEBALL CAP NAVY BLUE			£9.00

SIZE	CHEST		
S	34-36"		
M	38-40"	NAME	
L	42-44"	TEL. NUMBER	
XL	46-48"	ADDRESS	
XXL	50-52"		
XXXL	54-56"		
			
		POST CODE	

Return to Brian Clasper,1 Queens Drive, Sedgfield, Co.Durham TS21 2JJ
(email: brianclasper@aol.com). Cheques made payable to `Teesmouth Bird Club`.

LOCAL OUTINGS APRIL 2018 TO AUGUST 2018

COWPEN BEWLEY WOODLAND PARK

Tuesday 17th April 2018

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 10.00 a.m.

Leader: Dave Nelson Tel: 01642 824755

SUMMER MIGRANTS AT FLATTS LANE COUNTRY PARK MIDDLESBROUGH

Tuesday 8th May 2018

Meet in the car park at 9.15 a.m. at Flatts Lane Visitors Centre for a walk in search of summer migrants and other resident birds with Geoff Myers, who knows this area very well. Hopefully summer visitors should include the usual warblers including Lesser Whitethroat, Blackcap and possibly Garden Warbler and Grasshopper Warbler. Many other resident woodland species should also be present.

Leader: Geoff Myers Tel: 01642 461850

NIGHTJARS

June 2018

It is hoped that the Nightjars will be back at Guisborough Forest this spring. If they are, it is intended to visit here on a June night. Seeing and hearing them is very much influenced by the weather. It is therefore the plan to advertise this walk at a later date on the website whenever the weather conditions look favourable.

RSPB SALTHOLME WILDERNESS WALK

Saturday 21st July 2018

Meet in RSPB reception at 10.00 a.m. and join Chris Sharp for a walk around the perimeter of the Reserve. A good selection of summer visitors should be present. Sedge, Reed and Grasshopper Warblers are almost guaranteed. The first returning waders should also be passing through.

Leader: Chris Sharp

SEATON SNOOK

Saturday 18th August 2018

Meet at the end of the Zinc Works Road at 9.00. 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.

Leader: Graeme Joynt

TEESMOUTH BIRD CLUB – Publications

PRICES SLASHED!!!!

Birdwatchers of Teesmouth 1600 to 1960 £1 +£1 p.&p.

Teesmouth Bird Reports 1958-1973 on a CD £2.50

Birds of Tees-side 1962-67 by Phil Stead £2.50

Birds of Tees-side 1968-1973 by Martin Blick £2.50

Birds of Tees-side (1964) by Phil Stead £2.50 (published in NHS Transactions).

Cleveland Bird Reports:-

Complete Set £40 One left, otherwise completed with CD
(Postage extra if not collected-10kg).

1974 to 2014 £2.00 each where available. (Out of print 1974, 1976, 1978 to 1988 on a CD)
Plus £1.00 for p.& p. per copy.

2015 £7.50 each (£5.00 for TBC Members) Plus £1.50 for p.&p. per copy

Barn Owl at RSPB Saltholme: Print @ £2 each (Postcards 5p)

Car Stickers: £1.00

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.

J.Fletcher j.fletcher666@btinternet.com 01642-818825

2nd November 2017

BTO News

The BTO/JNCC/RSPB Breeding Bird Survey (BBS) is the main scheme for monitoring the population changes of the UK's common breeding birds. Wild bird populations are an important indicator of the health of the countryside, and knowing to what extent bird populations are increasing or decreasing is fundamental to bird conservation. Data from 22 1 km squares in Cleveland have been submitted by local volunteers in 2016 which is much appreciated. The following additional Cleveland Region squares are available to allocate . Only three visits during the breeding season are required, the first to record the habitat and two more to record the birds along two 1km transects so please consider surveying one of these squares. Please contact the BTO Regional Representative, Mike Leahey (Mikeaquila@hotmail.com)

NZ3019 Ketton Hall area.

NZ3114 Lingfield , Darlington area.

NZ4037 Tilery Farm area.

NZ4438 Hesleden area.

NZ6913 Cow Close Lane area.

NZ6914 Moorsholm area.

NZ6916 Buck Rush Farm area.

A BOOK WORTH READING

Bird Brain. An exploration into bird intelligence, Nathan Emery(Ivy Press)

Bird brain is usually used as an insult, and several bird names imply stupidity. Gull can mean an easily fooled person as well as the well known chip thief. Birds that are tame and provide no challenge to the hunter are especially victim to insulting names. 'dodo' comes from the Portugese for simpleton. The confiding Dotterel is rewarded with an English name which means Dotard, or senile. The taxonomists are no better, giving it the name *Charadrius morinellus*, the specific name being derived from the ancient Greek *moros*, meaning silly or foolish.

Even when studying the brain structure, the assumption of stupidity is still present. This book starts with a false conclusion based on brain structure. In mammals, the outer part of the brain (the cortex) is folded to increase the neural density. The part at the front (pre-frontal cortex) is considered important and the basis of intelligence. The outer surface of bird brains is smooth, implying on the basis of this theory that birds are not intelligent. Mammals, reptiles and birds are descended from a common ancestor that lived 300 million years ago. Birds do have parts of the brain that are responsible for the higher mental functions but they have evolved from different parts of the ancestral brain. The result is that grey matter, instead of being on the outer part of the brain, is distributed throughout it.

The bulk of this book describes the mental abilities of birds. These must be important as brains are expensive to operate, and use a significant fraction (up to 20%) of the bird's total energy needs.

It is not really surprising that birds do have sophisticated mental abilities, considering their feats of navigation, their ability to store and recover food. Another aspect is the speed of processing. A monkey swinging through the trees needs to process information quickly to avoid finishing up in a heap on the ground, but birds flying through complex environments have to think much faster.

Another reason that Birds' abilities have been underestimated is that most laboratory testing has been done on pigeons, domestic fowl and zebra finches, none of which have outstanding mental abilities.

The book has chapters on tool use, migration, memory and food storage. The last area is dependent on the hippocampus, a part of the brain found in all animals and which can form neurons when creating memories. The subsequent increase in size occurs in autumn in birds that store food for winter. A similar increase in size is seen in trainee London taxi drivers doing the 'Knowledge'. Two chapters cover the hippocampus and memory. Further chapters cover sensory systems and communication, including song learning. To demonstrate what birds can achieve, there is a chapter on Alex, the African Grey Parrot (Alex=animal learning experiment). He could communicate using words, but also understood the concepts they represented. He could name 50 objects, count up to six, identify seven colours, five shapes (based on the number of corners). Only bonobos and dolphins have reached this level of comprehension. The remainder of the book mostly covers living in groups, which requires a range of social abilities. Tool using is covered in the next chapters. The final chapters cover a sense of self, appreciating what others know and practising deception (important when hiding food), and the difficult subject of whether birds feel emotions (spoiler alert- we probably can't tell), and enjoy playing.

If you think birds are remarkable creatures, then read this book and find how really remarkable they are. A Drongo, for example, if it sees a bird of another species hiding food will mimic the alarm call of that species, thereby making the other bird flush, leaving the food for the Drongo.

WeBs Summary Winter 2017-2018

Adam Jones cannot provide a Summary yet as he is waiting for some sector counts to be submitted.

The Summary will be in the next Newsletter.