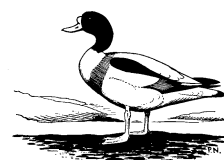


Teesmouth Bird Club Newsletter

August 2018 (No.70)



Reg.Charity No.508850

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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 or by post to Eric James, 7 Hilderthorpe, Nunthorpe, Middlesbrough TS7 0PT



Eric James

Teesmouth now has nationally significant numbers of Avocets (see page 17).

MONTHLY SUMMARIES

*With no replacement volunteer having come forward, **Chris Sharp** reviews the birding highlights of the spring and summer* periods*

MARCH 2018-JUNE 2018

MARCH 2018



Fieldfare and Redwing, garden

Mike Tucker

The bitterly cold weather early in the month saw many reports of Redwings, Fieldfares and Woodcock in urban gardens. Sadly there was little cold weather movement at the coast and as in the preceding few months many observers commented on the relative scarcity of sea ducks, divers and grebes.



Glaucous Gull, Windermere Road, Hartlepool

Ian Forrest

A Little Gull and a Puffin were in the river mouth on 2nd. A single Brent Goose was around RSPB Saltholme from 3rd. A Glaucous Gull was at Hartlepool on 4th. A fine drake Smew was at Wynyard 4th to 6th. The Green-winged Teal

reappeared at RSPB Saltholme on 5th. The first returning Avocets were on Greenabella on this date.



Green-winged Teal, Saltholme Tim Robinson
A Bittern was at RSPB Saltholme on 7th. One or two Marsh Harriers continued to be seen around the North Tees Marshes at this time. Barn Owls were also in evidence from South Gare and Liverton Moor. This species continues to increase in numbers in Cleveland.



Spotted Redshank, Salterns Ian Forrest

The wintering Greenshank and Spotted Redshank remained around Greatham Creek. The two long staying Scaup were also still to be found on the river at Bowesfield. A Red Kite was over Lockwood on 8th.



Hawfinch, Hutton Lowcross Neil Simms

Hawfinches also continued to be seen around Hutton Lowcross and Skelton. Mid-month proved to be quiet but a Slavonian Grebe was off Newburn on 13th and off North Gare the following day. A Little Gull was off Redcar on 17th, and Avocet numbers reached 30 at Salterns on this date.



Little Gull, Saltholme Ian Forrest

Single Little Gulls were at South Gare and Saltholme Pools on 18th and Avocets increased to 73. Up to 50 Twite were still to be seen at Seaton Snook. Slavonian Grebes were at Newburn and Saltburn on 24th. The same day saw a fine male Black Redstart at Bowesfield.

The first Sand Martin was at RSPB Saltholme on 26th. A drake Red-crested Pochard was at Wilton Lake the following day. The first Little Ringed Plover was at Scaling on 29th with the first Wheatear at South Gare also. Six Whooper Swans were over RSPB Saltholme on 30th

APRIL 2018

Two Black Redstarts were at Skinningrove on 1st with another at South Gare. Numbers increased to four at Skinningrove by 3rd with a further single at Hummersea. The first Swallows were at RSPB Saltholme on 3rd. An Osprey was at Scaling on this date with a Brent Goose on the Town Moor at Hartlepool.

The run of Black Redstarts continued with singles at Scaling on 4th and Hunley Hall on 5th. Two adult Mediterranean Gulls at RSPB Saltholme amongst the Black-headed Gull colony on 4th raised hopes of a potential breeding pair but sadly they moved on quickly.

Another Osprey was over Guisborough on 6th. A ring Ouzel was at South Gare and the first Willow Warbler was heard singing.

A showy Firecrest was at Huntcliff on 7th. Nearby five Ring Ouzels were at their usual spot at Hummersea and an Osprey flew over Cowbar. Highlight of the day was the six Common Cranes which flew over RSPB Saltholme. They got as far

as Seaton Carew before turning around and headed back south over South Gare. Two Garganey and a Yellow Wagtail at Saltholme meant spring had certainly arrived on this day. The good run of birds continued the following day with a Spoonbill and four Egyptian Geese at RSPB Saltholme. A Red Kite also flew over here. Another Firecrest was at Hunley Hall. A pair of Mandarin at Bowesfield from 9th proved popular. A showy Great Northern Diver was in Paddy's Hole at South Gare on 10th. It was joined by an equally showy Black-necked Grebe the following day. Both birds proved popular with the local photographers.



Great Northern Diver, Paddy's Hole

Mike Tucker



Black-necked Grebe, South Gare

Rob Young

The Spoonbill was still at RSPB Saltholme on 13th with the first Reed Warbler also present. A Firecrest was at South Gare on 14th. Even rarer here was a Willow Tit in the same bush and thought to be the first record for the Gare. Two ring Ouzels were also here with a further two at Hunley Hall along with Common whitethroat. A Great white Egret was also on Greenabella.



Common Cranes, Saltholme

Ian Forrest

The following day two more Common Cranes flew over RSPB Saltholme and a White Stork flew over Fens Estate, Hartlepool. There were five Ring Ouzels at Warsett Hill and a passage of adult Little Gulls on the North Tees Marshes saw up to 31 birds at RSPB Saltholme.

A Ruff and 39 Black-tailed Godwits were at RSPB Saltholme on 16th. Ospreys were over Scaling and Middlesbrough. A Red Kite flew towards Scaling the following day from Freeborough Hill.

Two summer plumaged Black-necked Grebes were at RSPB Saltholme on 18th. The following day they were joined by a fine drake Ring-necked Duck. The first Tree Pipit was at Boulby and there were four Whimbrel on Cowpen Marsh. A Hooded Crow flew past Hunley Hall on 20th. A Nuthatch was also here; a rare coastal visitor.

The 21st saw Common Tern at RSPB Saltholme and Cuckoo at Scaling. The summer visitors kept arriving with Redstart and Swift seen the following day. A Great White Egret was also seen briefly on Seaton Common before departing.

Two Garganey were on Cowpen Marsh on 23rd. The same site held an impressive 28 White Wagtails on 25th. Another Red Kite was over Hemlington on 26th. The Ring-necked Duck re-appeared at the Allotment Pool on 27th and remained here until the end of the month. Two Whinchats were at South Gare on 27th.



Black Redstart, Skinningrove

Neil Simms



Black Redstart, South Gare

Ian Watson



Firecrest, South Gare

Ian Watson



Willow Tit, South Gare

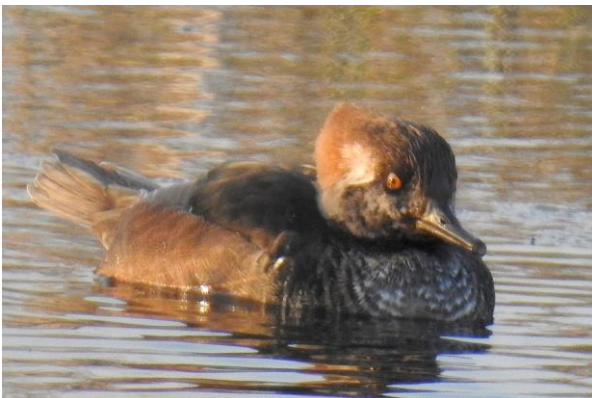
Ian Watson



Ring Ouzel, South Gare

Ian Watson

MAY 2018



Hooded Merganser, Seaton Common

Derek Clayton

Both Garden Warbler and Redstart were at Hartlepool on 2nd. A Hooded Crow flew past Warsett Hill on 3rd and a Curlew Sandpiper was at RSPB Saltholme on 4th. A Spotted Flycatcher was at Hunley Hall on 5th.

Perhaps the highlight of the spring was on Seaton Common on 6th. A somewhat elusive first-year male Hooded Merganser was present mainly sticking to the series of ditches in the area. It

was un-ringed and if accepted as a wild bird will represent the first Cleveland record of this Trans Atlantic vagrant. It was only present for the one day. A Wood Sandpiper was on Seaton Common 7th to 8th and the Ring-necked Duck remained around the Allotment Pond.



Ring-necked Duck, Saltholme

Ian Forrest



Marsh Harrier, Dorman's Pool

Ian Madisson

Up to three Marsh Harriers were around Dorman's Pool on 9th. Two Garganey were at Albert Park on this date; an unusual location for this species. A Raven was reported from Lockwood on 10th.



Temminck's Stint, Saltholme

Ian Forrest

A Spoonbill was at Dorman's Pool on 12th. A Temminck's Stint on Back Saltholme on 12th was the first of a series of records from this location until 23rd. Two birds were seen on several dates but on some days no birds were present.

A Great Northern Diver was on the sea off Hartlepool on 13th. A lull in mid-month was relieved on 18th with another Spoonbill at Greatham Creek with two present the following day. Red Kites were over Ingleby and Scaling on 19th. A Bee-eater was reported over South Gare on 20th. Both Scaup and Arctic Tern were at RSPB Saltholme on 23rd.



Quail ,Hartlepool Headland

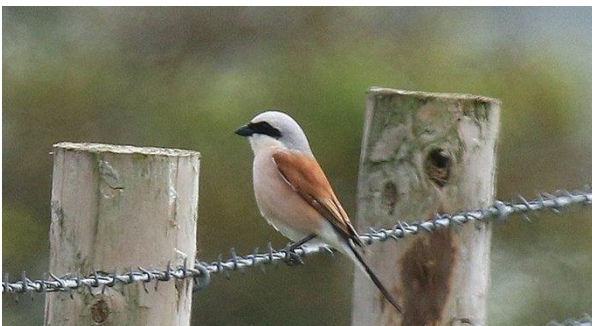
Ian Watson

A small fall of migrants at Hartlepool on 24th saw both Lesser Whitethroat and Spotted Flycatcher. The best bird however was a Common Rosefinch which was also present the following day. The next few days saw a few more migrant passerines at the coast with four Redstarts at Hartlepool on 26th along with single Whinchat and Pied Flycatcher. An Osprey also was over here This proved to be a particularly productive period in Cleveland. A superb male Red-backed Shrike was at Cowpen Marsh and a Marsh Warbler sang briefly at Hummersea. A Nuthatch was an unusual visitor to Hartlepool headland on 27th and a Black Tern was at RSPB Saltholme on this date.



Black Tern, Saltholme

Ian Forrest



Red-backed Shrike, Holme Fleet

Steve Keightley

A scattering of migrants at the coast over the next few days included small numbers of Pied and Spotted Flycatchers. The highlight, however, was a very elusive Eastern Subalpine Warbler which was at South Gare on 31st.



Eastern Subalpine Warbler, South Gare

Brian Clasper

JUNE 2018



Pink-footed Goose, Saltholme

Ian Forrest

A few Little Gulls were on the North Tees Marshes early in the month with three on Tidal Pool on 3rd. An unseasonal Pink-footed Goose was at RSPB Saltholme on 4th.



Osprey, Scaling Dam

Derick Pearson



Woodchat Shrike, Scaling Dam

Steve Keightley

Two Ospreys were at Scaling Dam on 5th. Both birds remained around for a few days with one lingering until 15th. Another flew over Billingham on 5th. A Wood Sandpiper was also at Scaling on 5th.



Wood Sandpiper, Scaling Dam

'streonshalh'

A Rose-coloured Starling was reported from Easington on 6th but was not seen by a bird watcher. A Red Kite was over Stockton on 7th with two seen at Scaling on 9th. A Hobby was at Scaling the following day along with two Whinchats. The great run of birds at Scaling continued on 12th with a Woodchat Shrike. This bird was present until 14th.

A Montagu's Harrier was seen at Lockwood Beck on 12th. Attention switched back to the North Tees Marshes on 15th with both Spoonbill and Little Stint at RSPB Saltholme.



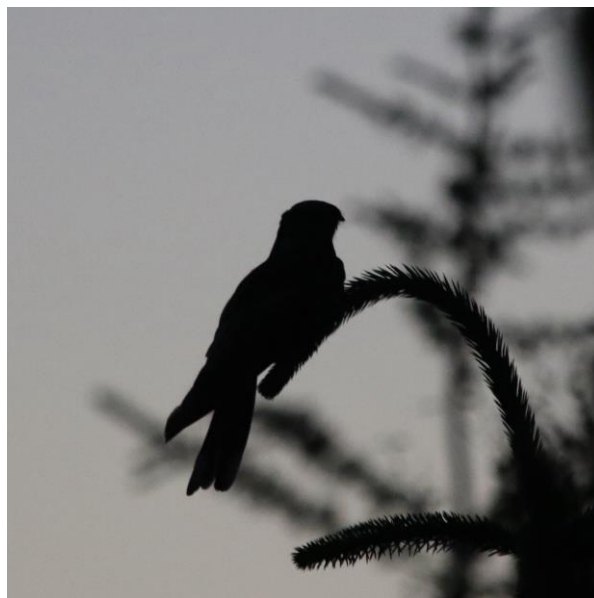
Red Kite, Stockton

Paul Welsh

The rest of the month was to prove fairly uneventful. A few Mediterranean Gulls were seen with birds at Scaling and Saltburn. Red Kites continued to be seen at Scaling and a Wood Sandpiper was at Saltholme 25th-26th

The first breeding record of Barnacle Goose for the county occurred at Scaling. The Little Egret colony north of the river continued to flourish with over 30 chicks fledging. The story was not so

good however with the Little Terns at Crimdon. Not a single chick was raised.



Nightjar, Guisborough Woods

LockhartH

BTO News March 2018

We are still seeking volunteers for the Breeding Bird Survey (BBS) this spring. As a recent recruit to the scheme, having surveyed my first squares last year, I can confirm that the survey methods are quite simple and not time-consuming. Only two recording sessions per 1km square are required (plus an additional short visit to record habitat) each taking no more than two hours. The following squares are still available to allocate for 2018.

NZ3114 Lingfield, Darlington area.

NZ3717 Larberry Pastures, Long Newton.

NZ4438 Hesleden area.

NZ5411 Greenhow Hill, Great Ayton.

NZ6914 Moorsholm area.

All BBS squares are valuable to the survey and it would be great to have full coverage. Full details are on the BTO website www.bto.org where you can register. Please contact me on 07510 996977 or mikelaquila@hotmail.com if you think you can help.

A full heronries survey is underway this spring, and while we achieve good coverage of established sites through existing long-standing volunteers, it is important that new breeding locations are reported. The Heronries Census is our longest-running single species survey, established as long ago as 1928, and collects information on the numbers of nesting Grey Herons, and more recently Little Egrets and Cormorants. We try to cover as many sites as possible each year and ask volunteers to make one or more visits in spring and early summer to

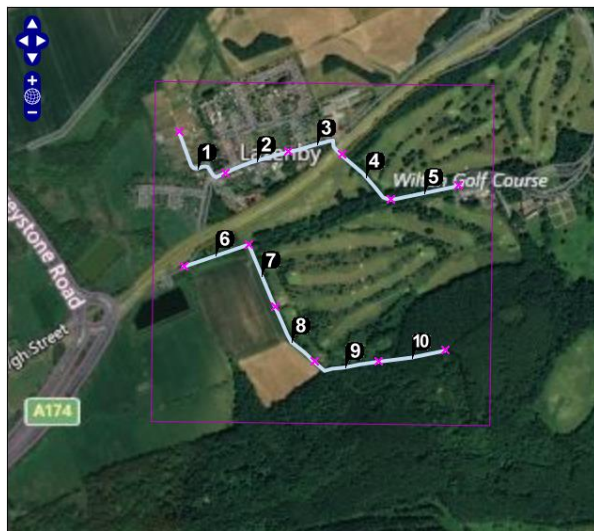
count the numbers of apparently occupied nests. Further information about the Heronries Census is available on the BTO website (<https://www.bto.org/volunteer-surveys/heronries-census>).

Mike Leakey

Some extra comments on the BBS

This is a simple, but enjoyable survey which consists of counting birds at various distances along two 1km transects. The transects are set up on an interactive map on the BTO website. This will also automatically divide each transect into five 200m long sectors, giving ten in all. See below for an example. As Mike mentioned above, the basic survey consists of three visits, with possibly a fourth if there are any colonial nesting species present. If you are into butterflies, then another visit may be made to count them. There is only one warning : this can become addictive, and I speak as someone who has had, reluctantly, to give up two BBS squares

Eric James



BBS Square (Lazenby) showing transects

OTHER SURVEYS

NATIONAL SEABIRD CENSUS

During the 2018 and 2019 breeding seasons, the Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC) is working alongside the Seabird Monitoring Programme (SMP) to increase the national survey coverage.

Two specific species, the Kittiwakes and Shags are both very much of conservation concern, particularly the Kittiwakes, which have shown alarming declines over recent years. To ensure correct and current population estimates for all seabirds, and that the trends produced by the SMP are valid, it is necessary to complement the

SMP data with a census of the entire breeding population of the UK, or as much of it as possible.

Martin Blick very kindly offered to take on the role of Cleveland co-ordinator for the Census. Extensive counting for this season has already taken place by a handful of experienced observers. Some specific locations are incredibly difficult to survey but with the help of Mike Leakey and his contact at Conoco Phillips, we have succeeded in obtaining an accurate count of the Kittiwakes and Shags utilizing the jetties at the Crude Oil Terminal. A boat was used to survey the birds and, of particular significance, is the fact that one Shag was occupying a nest. This is the first confirmation of a breeding attempt by a Shag in Cleveland. Another adult was in the vicinity and a young Shag ringed on the Isle of May last summer was also recorded on the jetties.

If any members feel they would like to offer help with the census next year or learn more, then please express your interest to Martin* or speak to someone on the Committee.

martin.blick22@yahoo.com

PARTIAL REPEAT OF CBBS

Some of you might remember the surprising changes in bird populations which became evident when I repeated the survey in one tetrad (the one I live in). It was later decided that it would be informative if repeats could be done on other tetrads. I was hoping to select some suitable tetrads in time for spring 2018, but after preparing the Newsletter, I did not have the time. With hindsight, the poor weather would not have been the best conditions for surveying. The project was therefore postponed to 2019, which is the 20th anniversary of the start of the original survey. I've compiled a selection of suitable tetrads that cover a range of habitats and hold a range of species . If you think you could cover any of these, please get in touch with me giving name, address and contact details and i'll send the project instructions and a map showing the exact area. My contact details are on the cover of any recent Newsletter, or you can email me at tbc.projects@hotmail.co.uk. Alternatively, if you are one of the original surveyors, you might consider repeating one of your own tetrads.

The spreadsheet will be added to the website.

Eric James

ROUND UP FROM THE CHAIR

Barbara Crinson summarises the items discussed by the Committee.

The Board of Trustees met again in May. Outcomes of interest for Club members and issues followed up are as follows:-

It was agreed to continue feeding the birds throughout the year at the Lockwood Beck feeding station. It has become one of the most reliable locations to enjoy seeing Redpolls, Siskins and Treecreepers. Spotted Flycatchers, Green Woodpecker and Great Spotted Woodpecker have also been observed in the surrounding trees.

Another feeding station has also been created at Holy Trinity Rosehill Primary School, Hartburn, in order to engage some more of our younger members of society in our county. Please see the separate article later in the Newsletter (page 11).

The first year of the National Seabird Census has been organised and followed through to completion, details of which are explained under a separate heading (page 7). Next year, the same census will also cover the inland breeding seabird colonies.

Ali McLee and I agreed to attend the Tees Valley Nature Partnership conference held in June. There were some intriguing workshops and presentations covering subjects such as Tees Estuary Edge Habitat Creation, Habitat Banking Process for the Tees Estuary, Ancient Grasslands, the work of the Tees Valley Wildlife Trust, plus numerous other topics. The presentations are available for all to see. Please contact Ali or myself for further details.

There has been attendance by your Chair at the Hartlepool Power Station Local Community Liaison Council meeting where contact was made with other representatives of various groups and particularly, the Environmental Compliance Coordinator based at the site.

The Marketing and Membership subcommittee are keen to ascertain whether members would be interested in re-instating informal get-togethers at a suitable venue. Please let us know your views. The main committee is always willing to consider suggestions for local achievable projects and also how members would like to see a percentage of club funds spent.

ARRIVALS AND DEPARTURES

Following on from the Trustees committee meeting and after talks with a number of Club

members, we can now confirm the following appointments:-

Tom Horne and Barbara Keville are joining the main Board of Trustees. We very much look forward to seeing them at future meetings, their participation will be valued and we hope they enjoy liaising with and also representing the wider membership.

Harry Murphy, one of our youngest members, is valiantly stepping up to take over the role of Recorder. We feel confident that everyone will give Harry the support and help he will no doubt require to get to grips with his new position. We welcome him and offer him sincere gratitude for accepting the position.

Chris Brown, who already plays a massive part in producing the Annual Bird Report has agreed to take over the role of Editor.

So many new appointments do, of course, mean that there have been some departures. Members feeling the need of a break are Dave Nelson, who has devoted so much time on main committee, Tom Francis, our long-serving and stoical County Recorder and last, but not least, Graeme Joynt, who has played a pivotal role in creating and editing such a high quality Annual Bird Report.

Moving sideways from the Club's main and sub-committees, we must also make mention of other important personnel changes. As we think most people are aware, the highly knowledgeable and dedicated Vic Fairbrother has handed over the reins of BTO representative to yet another extremely capable and hard-working individual. I refer, of course, to Mike Leakey.

Finally, we must extend a warm welcome to Chris Francis, who takes over from Dave Braithwaite at RSPB Saltholme. It will no doubt take a while for Chris to settle into his new role and we hope his time here with us on Teesside will be both rewarding and enjoyable.

POSTSCRIPT

None of the above arrivals and departures could be described as cute and fluffy! However, there is absolute certainty that (at the time of writing) we can attribute such endearing qualities to the three chicks belonging to the pair of Barnacle Geese at Scaling Dam. They have delighted onlookers by gracing us with their presence immediately in front of the hide, accompanied by such vigilant parents. The latter are, indeed, the first ever pair to breed successfully at this reserve.

PS Chris Sharp is still hoping that someone will take over compiling the Newsletter Monthly Summaries (Tel 01429 865163).

(I intended putting in a photograph of the geese in this Newsletter and assumed the website Forum would have plenty of them; if it did, I couldn't find them ETJ)

LOCAL OUTINGS AUGUST 2018 TO DECEMBER 2018

SEATON SNOOK

Sunday 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 (Tel: 07968572603)

SEA WATCHING AT HARTLEPOOL HEADLAND

Saturday 22nd September 2018

Meet at the Heugh Gun Battery from 9.00 a.m. Join Chris Sharp for this always popular outing. If the weather conditions are favourable almost anything is possible at this time of year. Four species of Skua and two species of Shearwater are the targets. Even if it is a westerly there still should be something of interest to see such as Common Scoter and Teal. If the sea watching is poor there may be something to be found in the nearby gardens.

Leader: Chris Sharp. (Tel: 01429 865163)

BIRD RINGING AT HARTLEPOOL HEADLAND

Sunday 14th October 2018

Join the Tees Ringing Group to witness a demonstration of how migrant birds are caught, processed and released. It is hoped that a variety of small birds will be caught. Given the date almost anything is possible. Meet at the bowling green by Olive Street from 9.00 a.m.

Leader: Chris Brown. (Tel: 01429 233474)

GREENABELLA/SALTERNS

Sunday 11th November 2018

Meet at the Teesmouth National Nature Reserve car park at 9.30 a.m. Hopefully a good selection of ducks and waders should be present. Geese and Swans may also be passing over at this time

of year. Both Greenshank and Spotted Redshank have wintered here in the past few years.

Leader: Julie Mason. (Tel: 01642 614583)

HARDWICK PARK

Friday 14th December 2018

Join **Brian Clasper** for a walk around this ever changing site. A good selection of ducks should be present on the lake and the recently constructed feeding station affords good close views of woodland species such as Nuthatch. Meet at 9.30 a.m. in the car park. Note a small charge is payable for car parking here.

Leader: Brian Clasper 07796 448421

TBC EVENING MEETINGS :

As usual, these will be held in Stockton Library at 7pm on the first Monday of the month.

Speakers and Subjects

3rd September - John Ingham RSPB St Aidan's Nature Reserve

1st October - Chris Redfern
Migration & Wintering Strategies of Arctic Terns from the Farnes

12th November - Richard Baines
North Yorkshire Turtle Dove Project

3rd December - Mark Pearson
Champions of the Flyways

7th January
Steve McDonnell- Spring Birding in Canada

4th February - Graham Bell
Birds in Myths & Legends

4th March
Rick & Ellis Simpson - Wader Quest

1st April-A.G.M.

Last season's talks were particularly good, so let's hope this standard is maintained

A BOOK WORTH READING

Eric James recommends a book which gives a novel presentation of the history of life on Earth.

The Ancestor's Tale, Richard Dawkins with Yan Wong (p/bk 685pp Phoenix £9.99, £7.89 from Amazon)

This book is not about birds but about the path of Evolution. There are, of course, dozens of books on Evolution but none like this. The concept is loosely based on The Canterbury Tales, as suggested by the sub-title „A Pilgrimage to the Dawn of Life“. The book starts with *Homo sapiens* and travels backwards in time meeting other groups of creatures who have their own tale to tell. There are about 60 of these tales, which form the bulk of the book and summarise current evolutionary thinking. As an example, it is sometimes said that if some faculty is lost, it cannot be recovered by further evolution, but this is disproved in the Howler Monkey's Tale. During the time of the Dinosaurs, mammals were restricted to the night time, becoming nocturnal and losing their colour vision. Primates (monkeys and apes, etc), however, regained colour vision by re-evolving cones in the retina. Each cone responds to light of a particular wavelength. We are trichromatic, having cones for red, green and blue (so pixels on a computer screen are made of these colours). The new world monkeys have a more complicated situation. They are dichromatic with one cone responding to blue and another responding to red or green, depending on how the corresponding gene is activated. This second type of cone arises from a gene on the X chromosome. Females, with two X chromosomes, have the potential of being trichromatic and seeing like we do. Males, with only one X chromosome are colourblind in two possible ways, seeing only blue and green, or only blue and red.

Like Chaucer, Dawkins has a prologue, where he criticises the conventional chronological presentation of evolution which contains the unspoken assumption that it has an ultimate objective to make Human Beings.

ANOTHER SCHOOL BIRD FEEDING STATION

Continuing the Club's aim to interest children in birds, another school has been provided with a feeding station. See below for details and photographs

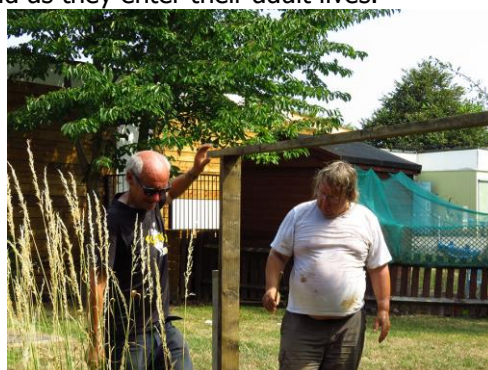
NEW SCHOOL FEEDING STATION

Barbara Crinson describes the latest project to introduce children to birdlife

Late last year one of our Club members contacted me asking if we could help towards the cost of setting up a new bird feeding station. I am sure many of you will know Sylvia Brennan, former committee member and a keen birder. She is a Higher Level Teaching Assistant at Holy Trinity Rosehill Primary School in Hartburn, where there are over 400 pupils. Sylvia is pro-active in trying to get the children interested in birds. The school borders a green area with bushes and trees along the edge, so the location already attracts quite a range of species.

The Trustees committee was in favour of the Club assisting in such a worthwhile project so, after a site visit early in the year, we decided what items would enhance the school grounds for birds and for the children. We have donated two birdbaths, a number of different types of feeder, plus some nest boxes and recently, the construction team arrived on site to erect the new feeding station. It is with great thanks to the chief workers, comprising Martin Blick, John Cutter and John Money for the hard graft they endured on the hottest day of the year. Don Page and Bert Mitchell provided supervision and team spirit, whilst we girls kept the chaps fed and watered!!

Lots of parents will be able to view the feeding station, as well as the pupils, and we look forward to hearing news of sightings from the school later in the year. Let's hope the children really enjoy the new addition to their playground and perhaps they will be more inspired to look after the natural world as they enter their adult lives.



Martin Blick and John Money in deep thought



Barbara and the volunteer gang
Photographs by Don Page

ENGLISH COASTAL PATH (ECP)

The clue is in the title and it is coming to Cleveland. The final object is to have a path for walkers all around the English coast line. This article concerns the stretch north of the Tees, from the Newport Bridge to the North Gare. Unsurprisingly, the path will be unable to follow intimately the riverside as much of it is owned by construction industry or chemical processes. Subsequently, the route will be along pavements or, where these do not exist, beside roadways – the A178. However it is not all as grim as that sounds and opportunities for improved birdwatching will arise.

Serious money is to be spent creating hard surfaces suitable for disabled access. These will run close to the main road but not on the verge itself, but rather on the land close to the existing fence line. Where there is a water body, this will be bridged or crossed by a boardwalk. The same strategy applies to service ditches carrying pipelines. For those afraid of fierce herbivores, a second fence will be built on the side next to the field. All this will mean that WeBS counters, general birders and photographers are not silhouetted against the skyline and not liable to becoming a road accident statistic. The downside is, of course that the advantage of height when viewing is reduced – a small price to pay.

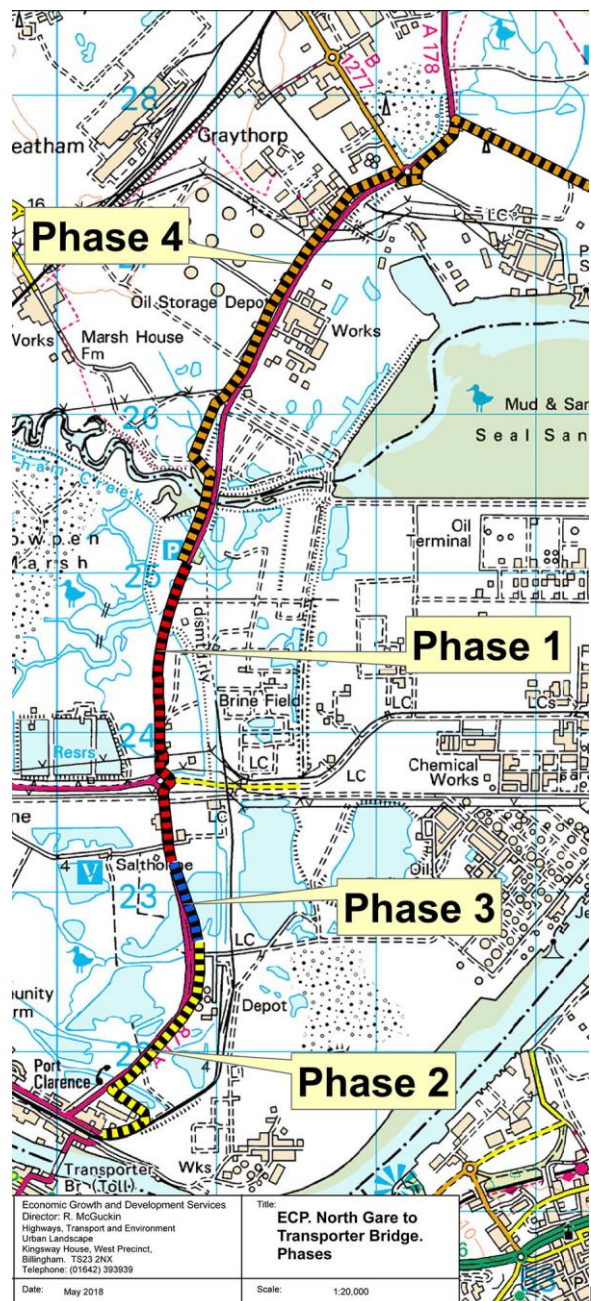
Viewing of the Calor Gas pools will be improved, as the path will run along the north side of the storage yard and be screened off so as not to disturb the birds. Birds which could previously offer only distant views, through the hedge, will now be more closely approachable. Similarly the views across Saltholme East will be safer and screened by a thin edge of reeds in the narrow, shallow area parallel to the road. Exactly what will happen at the Seal Watch Point area of Cowpen Marsh, is unclear at present. These details await negotiations with the land owner and the Environment Agency (EA) over the coastal retreat plans for the marsh, to be resolve. Access to the coast proper from the A178 will be along the Zinc works Road.

Whether the ECP and its walkers will create disturbance is a moot point. I cannot conceive there will be large numbers wishing to enjoy the experience, and the potential for disturbance will rather be from those watching birds. Sensitive areas are to be screened and elevated figures on the skyline should cease to be an issue. Car parking and some access points to the path will be a consideration.

For more details of the plans visit:

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/508912/newportbridge-northgare-chapter-1-map-annexes.pdf

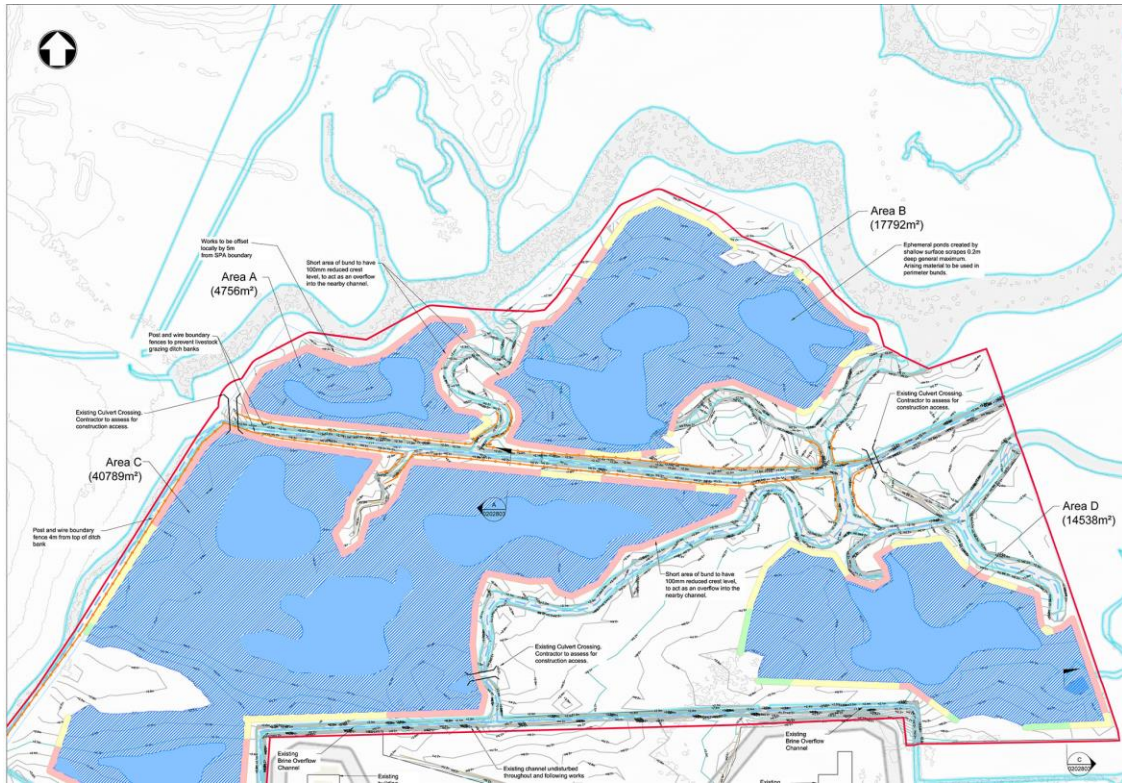
Ali McLee May 2016



Route of the ECP

A NEW WETLAND PLANNED FOR THE NORTH TEES ESTUARY

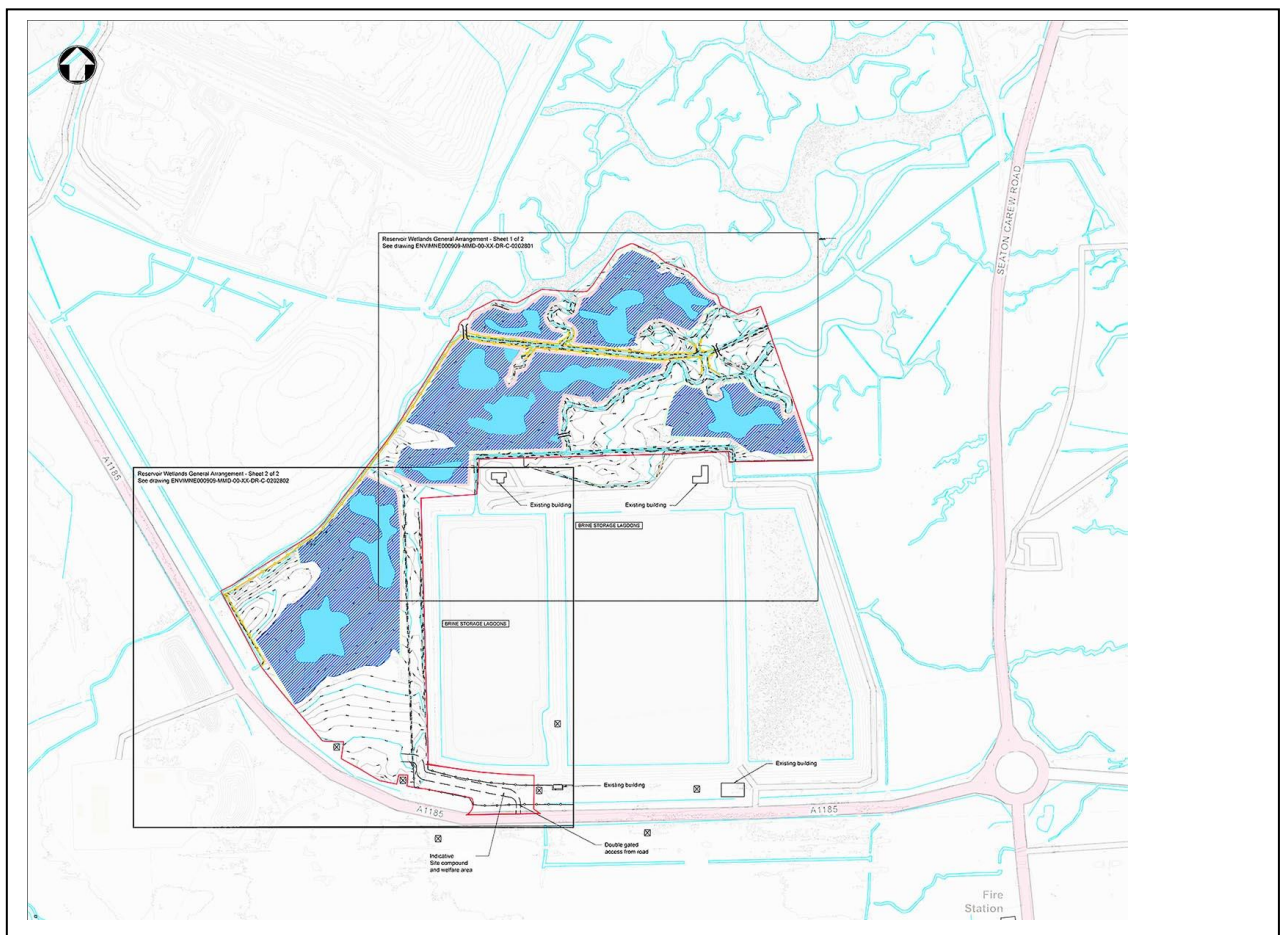
Readers will recall an earlier article on the planned conversion of part of Cowpen Marsh to salt marsh. This involves the creation of new sea walls built further inland and the breaching of the present sea wall on Greatham Creek. Essentially it is a similar exercise to that performed on the north side of the creek, when Salterns was formed a couple of years ago. This new Environmental Agency (E A) project is part of a national exercise to increase the area of the rare habitat of salt marsh in the country.



Returning some of Cowpen Marsh to its original estuarine state, will inevitably incur loss an area of fresh water wetland. This article is about the mitigating measures planned as compensation and to be carried out on adjacent improved pasture just a few meters south of Cowpen Marsh. The whole issue of fresh water habitat on the north side of the estuary is bedevilled by the periodic, summer shortage of water. RSPB Saltholme is a case in point, where efforts are made to supply water from pumped wells via local industry and utilisation of Haverton Pond as a top-

up source in dry periods.

The situation with this new planned wetland is similar, but with the added problem that the only water available will be that derived from winter rainfall onto the site itself. The area to be used for mitigation lies in the north west quadrant of the roundabout junction of the A178 and the A1185 / Seal Sands road. Some may know it as the field containing the brine reservoirs (NZ 5024). The wetland will be a few wide, shallow lagoons, excavated to a depth of less than 1 m in the centre and graded with increasing shallowness



towards the edges. The excavated spoil will be used to create gently sloping, bund walls. The plan is that winter rainfall will fill these lagoons and as summer advances, the water levels will gently fall to give an ephemeral water bodies with increasingly broad margins. Total area is to be 28 hectares of which 12 hectares are wetland.

Clearly, management by controlled grazing is key to providing a habitat of wetland pasture and, although not stated at present, it is difficult to see this role being played by any other than the site's neighbour - RSPB. The key management issue will be the creation and maintenance of open wet grassland with muddy margins, and cover for nesting. Working against this ideal, is the threat of early colonisation by phragmites, accelerating the drying and the ultimate evolution to a dry reed bed - of little conservation value.

However, as the site's owner SABIC does not want access by third parties, so we have the anomalous situation that RSPB is managing land for birds etc, but its members cannot have access to it. There are no plans for elevated viewing hides, and the inexorable requirements of health & safety makes pedestrian access to any such hide seriously problematic. I think car parking access can be discounted now.

For a more detailed understanding of the civil engineering aspects of this mitigation see Stockton's Planning Portal , reference 18/0691/FUL. The work is planned for start in June to August this year, over a period of three months. At the time of writing this article , June, no permission has been granted. though it was granted in July

Ali McLee



TITBITS: items of bird news and facts

MORE PROBLEMS FOR ARCTIC GEESE FROM CLIMATE CHANGE

Problems for Barnacle Geese arising from higher temperatures in the Arctic have been mentioned in previous Titbits in connection with Polar Bears having difficulties in catching their preferred prey, seals, and instead turning to goose eggs

Increasing Arctic temperatures are bringing Spring forward so the geese are speeding up their northward migration to claim the best breeding locations. To do this, they miss out stopovers where they would normally feed and put on fat. Although they arrive two weeks early, they still have to feed before egg laying and this delay means the chicks miss the peak in food abundance and quality. The juveniles are therefore possibly not in good enough condition for the southward migration.

WINDSCREEN SPLATTS

If you've been driving for several years, you will remember how long journeys needed a stop to clean dead insects off the windscreen, and how the headlights at night illuminated a snowstorm of moths. The RSPB organised a scheme to measure the density of these insects when it became clear that there were fewer than previously. You were provided with a piece of card which had a rectangle cut out of it. After a measured length of journey, the card was placed over the front number plate and the number of splatts in the rectangular cut out was counted.

Canadian researchers have carried out a similar test, but by attaching sticky fly paper. They drove on ten high traffic roads and ten low density rural roads. Fewer insects were found on busy roads, thought to be a result of higher emissions killing them

JUNK FOOD

Feeding on a rubbish dump might not sound appetising, but look at our local tips and think hundreds of gulls can't be wrong. To find the effect of feeding on dumps, some investigations have been made on Black Vultures in Argentina. Blood samples were taken from birds feeding naturally on the Patagonian steppe and from others feeding on dumps. Those feeding on rubbish dumps were, not surprisingly, heavier and had higher blood levels of immune proteins to protect them from dangerous pathogens. It was not all good news : the unnatural diet had excessive protein which led to high levels of uric acid in the blood, and excessive carbohydrates which cause high blood sugars. These can cause long term health problems. Vultures with Type two diabetes ,perhaps?

SULPHUROUS PLASTIC

Plastic in the oceans is now a well-known problem with estimates of over five trillion pieces floating around. Many pieces finish up in birds either via a fish in the food chain, or more directly by

mistaking floating material for food. mistakes can be visual such as a plastic bag looking like a jellyfish or squid. But birds that use smell can also be misled. They search for algae-eating krill by detecting the sulphurous smell from decaying algae. Experiments with mesh bags containing plastic beads showed that algae could colonise the surfaces and emit the sulphurous smell and attract birds to eat the plastic.

SPEEDING DUCK

Police in the Swiss town of Köniz have a problem with a persistent speed offender who has been caught on a speed camera moving at 50 km/h in a 30 km/h zone. Their problem is the offender is a duck, which makes it difficult to send a speeding ticket. More seriously, would you feel happy if a duck was flying at full speed towards your windscreen?

SEASONAL WeBS SUMMARIES

There are two this time because the Winter figures were not ready in time for the previous Newsletter.

WETLAND BIRD SURVEY TEESMOUTH - WINTER 2017/2018 SUMMARY

Coverage was good with 117 of the scheduled 120 sector counts completed over the five months.



Above and below left ; Knots - going down
Unfortunately it is low peak counts which dominate this summary with knot (250, December), purple sandpiper (16, November), redshank (651, November) and turnstone (76, December) recording their worst winter high counts (utilising data which goes back to 1988). Meanwhile cormorant (93, January), greylag (167, January), oystercatcher (792, December) and lapwing (2405, February) recorded their lowest peak counts since the early 1990's.



Wigeon ; nearly nationally important

On the flip side over 4000 wigeon were recorded for the second winter in a row, a figure which is not too far from the 4400 required for the estuary to be of national significance for the species.

Other records of interest included one green-winged teal, two greenshank and one spotted redshank wintering in the estuary.

Following this winter's series of counts, the Tees and Hartlepool Bay WeBS site retains the status of being of national significance for gadwall.

Adam Jones

WeBS Local Organizer

March 2018

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WETLAND BIRD SURVEY TEESMOUTH - WINTER 2017/2018 SUMMARY

Species	November 12	December 10	January 14	February 11	March 18
Little Grebe	<u>50</u>	38	16	31	14
Great Crested Grebe	1	2	4	1	<u>25</u>
Cormorant	29	55	<u>93</u>	29	41
Mute Swan	<u>51</u>	48	46	29	22
Greylag Goose	<u>166</u>	72	<u>167</u>	166	21
Shelduck	357*	411*	<u>452*</u>	369*	285
Wigeon	2437*	3525*	<u>4002*</u>	3768*	2752*
Gadwall	<u>287**</u>	253**	104	112	94
Teal	675	<u>945</u>	728	359	272
Mallard	170	<u>270</u>	169	201	129
Pintail	26	20	26	<u>29</u>	18
Shoveler	69	<u>106*</u>	92*	41	57
Pochard	13	35	31	48	<u>55</u>
Tufted Duck	71	<u>98</u>	78	96	92
Eider	9	<u>16</u>	6	4	10
Goldeneye	16	<u>22</u>	21	<u>22</u>	<u>22</u>
Red-br. Merganser	<u>34</u>	32	21	15	<u>34</u>
Coot	553	<u>577</u>	536	383	288
Oystercatcher	471	<u>792</u>	397	539	188
Ringed Plover	44	7	0	<u>48</u>	9
Golden Plover	203	133	372	<u>419</u>	151
Grey Plover	41	37	91	<u>156</u>	31
Lapwing	1088	697	1736	<u>2405</u>	88
Knot	43	<u>250</u>	101	106	29
Sanderling	30	116*	110*	63	<u>123*</u>
Purple Sandpiper	<u>16</u>	2	0	1	7
Dunlin	<u>302</u>	135	155	197	25
Ruff	0	0	0	0	0
Snipe	6	11	0	4	<u>14</u>
Black-tailed Godwit	<u>42</u>	20	29	29	21
Bar-tailed Godwit	4	17	18	<u>32</u>	13
Curlew	274	476	<u>870*</u>	846*	501
Redshank	<u>651*</u>	332	593	549	224
Turnstone	45	<u>76</u>	46	68	69

* Indicates a count of >50% of national importance

** Indicates a count of national importance

N.B. 'Teesmouth' includes Hartlepool Bay.

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

WETLAND BIRD SURVEY TEESMOUTH SPRING 2018 SUMMARY

Coverage was good with 115 of the scheduled 120 sector counts completed over the three months.

Record low spring peak counts were recorded for ringed plover (35, April), lapwing (90, April), dunlin (28, May) and turnstone (23, May), with all but lapwing likely to have been affected to some extent by missed counts.

Avocet (140, April) set a new spring peak record count, whilst oystercatcher (765, April) delivered its second highest spring return (data going back to 1988). Curlew (423, April) had their best showing for ten years.

Other highlights from the spring sector counts included one black-necked grebe and five little gulls.



Sanderling ; still of national importance



Above and bottom left : Who would have thought that Teesmouth would be nationally important for these?

Following this series of counts the Tees Estuary is nationally important for avocet and sanderling in spring, however, it was not significant for gadwall this time round.

Adam Jones

Local Organizer

Tees Estuary Wetland Bird Survey

June 2018

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WETLAND BIRD SURVEY TEESMOUTH SPRING 2018 COUNTS

Species	April 15	May 13	June 10
Little Grebe	<u>23</u>	<u>24</u>	8
Great Crested Grebe	<u>36</u>	15	14
Cormorant	<u>49</u>	19	46
Mute Swan	25	21	<u>61</u>
Shelduck	<u>347*</u>	225	54
Gadwall	<u>160*</u>	122	<u>205*</u>
Teal	<u>353</u>	3	13
Mallard	128	<u>191</u>	143
Shoveler	<u>104*</u>	14	15
Pochard	61	<u>69</u>	59
Tufted Duck	<u>207</u>	137	116
Eider	6	0	<u>19</u>
Coot	<u>166</u>	158	164
Oystercatcher	<u>765</u>	90	264
Avocet	<u>140**</u>	107**	80**
Little Ringed Plover	<u>3</u>	<u>3</u>	2
Ringed Plover	<u>35</u>	6	32
Golden Plover	0	0	0
Grey Plover	1	<u>2</u>	0
Lapwing	<u>90</u>	87	89
Knot	0	0	0
Sanderling	<u>190**</u>	25	19
Purple Sandpiper	0	0	0
Dunlin	3	<u>28</u>	9
Ruff	0	0	0
Snipe	<u>6</u>	0	0
Black-tailed Godwit	8	<u>28</u>	0
Bar-tailed Godwit	<u>9</u>	0	1
Curlew	<u>423</u>	4	114
Redshank	<u>436</u>	12	1
Turnstone	16	<u>23</u>	7
Sandwich Tern	0	<u>24</u>	8
Common Tern	0	77	<u>261</u>
Little Tern	0	<u>5</u>	0

Underlined counts indicate Spring 2018 maxima.

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

** Denotes count of national importance for that species

TEESMOUTH BIRD CLUB – Publications

PRICES SLASHED....PRICES SLASHED...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).

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Complete Set £40 One left, otherwise completed with CD

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1974 to 2015 £2.00 each where available. (Out of print 1974, 1976, 1978 to 1988 on a CD)
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Barn Owl at RSPB Saltholme: Print @ £2 each (Postcards 5p)

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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 me, particularly those that are "Out of print", so that they can be resold to other members.

John Fletcher

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18th July 2018