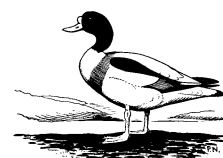


Teesmouth Bird Club Newsletter

August 2026 (No. 94)



Reg.Charity No.508850

MONTHLY SUMMARIES

Chris Sharp reviews the main birding highlights of the spring and early summer periods, which did not live up to the standard set by last year but was nevertheless interesting.

MARCH

The long staying Black-throated Diver remained in Jackson's Landing until 23rd. The Smew re-appeared for one day on 1st at Cowpen Bewley. There were still 35 White-fronted Geese at Cattersty Gill on 1st and both Slavonian Grebe and Long-tailed Duck were still at South Gare.



Smew, Saltholme

Ian Foster

It was a very poor winter for Velvet Scoter, so one offshore at Redcar from 2nd proved most welcome. The Ruddy Shelduck continued to be reported on and off from Cowpen Marsh and remained throughout the spring. Another was at Scaling Dam on 4th and the Slavonian Grebe was still present here until 10th when it was found dead.

The first Sand Martins were over Saltholme Pool on 3rd with a Red Kite over Longnewton the same day. The 4th saw a scattering of Chiffchaffs reported in the county.

A single Scaup was still at Bowesfield on 5th. A Red-necked Grebe off South Gare on 8th continued to be reported until early April. A Hen Harrier flew over Guisborough Moor on 8th. The first Wheatear was at Seaton Snook on 9th. Two Black-necked Grebes offshore at North Gare on 10th showed well. Little Ringed Plovers were at both Saltholme and Scaling Dam on 11th. The latter locality also saw two Common Cranes on 13th.

A single Spoonbill continued to winter on the North Tees Marshes and a Long-eared Owl was at Haverton 13th-20th at least. Sadly, the regular winter roost site here seems to not be used anymore.

The wintering Common Sandpiper was still at Portrack on 15th. A Water Pipit was regularly seen at RSPB Saltholme mid-month and two White-fronted Geese were here 17th-27th. A Red Kite was at Hunley Hall GC on 18th and a Raven was in Sleddale on 19th. This latter species again bred in Cleveland for the second consecutive year. Mandarin is another species that successfully bred in 2026 with birds reported from a number of localities including Cowpen Bewley, Wynyard and Skelton.



Water Pipit, Saltholme

Ian Forrest

Up to five Mediterranean Gulls were at RSPB Saltholme from 25th and again a pair remained to breed. The first Sandwich Tern was off South Gare on 25th and Ospreys were over RSPB Saltholme on 26th and 27th. Bearded Tits also showed well here at this time at the Wildlife Watch point. The first Swallow was over Dormans Pool on 28th.

APRIL

A Greenshank was at Scaling Dam on 1st. The following day saw a White-tailed Eagle fly over central Hartlepool. An impressive 100 Whooper Swans were on Saltholme Marsh on 3rd with a further 57 at Scaling Dam.

In what was to be an excellent spring for this species, an Osprey was at Lockwood Beck on 5th. A Bittern was at RSPB Saltholme the same day and one or more birds continued to be seen or heard here for the remainder of the spring.

The first Tree Pipit of the year was at Boulby on 6th and a ring-tailed Hen Harrier flew through Skelton. A very early Little Tern was at South Gare on 7th and both Redstart and Ring Ouzel were at Boulby the same day.



Spoonbill, Hartlepool

Ian Forrest

A Reed Warbler was at RSPB Saltholme on 8th with the first House Martins and Sedge Warblers on 9th. A Hooded Crow was also at Marske on 9th. A drake Garganey was at RSPB Saltholme on 10th with the first Grasshopper Warbler at South Gare on 11th. An Osprey was over Seaton Common on this date and a Spoonbill was in Rossmere

Park. This latter species continued to be reported regularly from here during the spring months and it is to be hoped that it might nest here in the not too distant future.

Another Osprey was over RSPB Saltholme on 13th. Undoubtedly the rarest bird of the spring was the female Little Crake photographed at Coatham Marsh on 13th. News only got out a week later and there was no further sign of this first for Cleveland despite a thorough search of the area. Another rarity that got away was an Alpine Swift which was photographed from a ship about four miles offshore from Hartlepool on 15th.

Other than the above it was fairly quiet in Cleveland at this time with just a few Ring Ouzels to be found including one on Greenabella Marsh on 16th. This species is found much more regularly south of the river.

A Garganey was at RSPB Saltholme on 20th and the first Manx Shearwater and Bonxie of the year were off Hartlepool on 21st. A Lesser Whitethroat was at Dormans Pool on 23rd and the 24th saw the first Swift, Cuckoo and Common Tern.

A Raven was over RSPB Saltholme on 25th and a Great Northern Diver was off South Gare. The 26th produced a Black Redstart and an early Roseate Tern at South Gare, Wood Sandpiper at RSPB Saltholme, Garden Warbler at Portrack and a very early Quail at Hummersea.

Ospreys were at Scaling Dam on 27th and over Kirkleatham on 29th. Wood Sandpipers increased to two at RSPB Saltholme and a Little Gull flew past Hartlepool on 28th. Green Woodpecker is now an increasingly scarce bird in Cleveland, so one yaffling at Roseberry Common on 29th was most unexpected. 18 Ruff opposite Cowpen Bewley Tip on 30th was a good spring count.

MAY

The first day of the month saw more Ospreys: at Scaling Dam and over Hartburn. A Whinchat was at Kirkleatham on 2nd with a

summer plumaged Spotted Redshank nearby at Wilton. A pair of Garganey was at Margrove Ponds on 4th and a Spotted Flycatcher returned to Lockwood Beck the same day. A Raven flew through Scaling Dam, and the two Wood Sandpipers were still around RSPB Saltholme.

A drake Garganey flew past Redcar on 7th with a Red Kite over Freeborough Hill on the same day. The 9th saw a Grey-headed Wagtail at Scaling Dam and a Glossy Ibis at Cowpen Marsh, the latter being seen around the North Tees Marshes until 22nd. A small influx of waders at this time included up to four Wood Sandpipers at Cowpen Marsh, a Temminck's Stint at RSPB Saltholme on 10th and a Little Stint there 14th-15th.



Glossy Ibis, Dormans Pool

Ian Forrest

Two Ospreys were over Seaton Common on 10th and another Little Stint was present at Scaling Dam 16th-23rd. A Pectoral Sandpiper at Cowpen Marsh on 20th was the rarest wader of the spring. A Hobby was over here on the same day. A Curlew Sandpiper was at Seaton Snook on 21st and yet another Osprey flew over here.

Two Spotted Flycatchers were at Brotton on 22nd. In what was a disappointing month and spring for passerines there was not a single scarce passerine at the coastal stations or a "fall" of any note.

Two Cattle Egrets were on Cowpen Marsh from 24th. Spoonbill numbers increased to four on the North Tees Marshes. A "red head" Smew was an unlikely find at Calor Gas Pool

on 26th. Formerly a scarce winter visitor to Cleveland the bird remained until the end of June.



Cattle Egret, Cowpen

Ian Foster

The second Temminck's Stint of the spring was at Scaling Dam on 26th and a second Curlew Sandpiper was at Saltholme Pools on 27th. A Little Gull was also present here. This species has become much scarcer on the North Tees Marshes in recent years.

Two Hobbies were near Longnewton Reservoir. This species continues to increase in numbers in Cleveland. A Spotted Flycatcher at Hartlepool on 29th was the rarest passerine on the Headland in the spring! An unseasonal Brent Goose was at RSPB Saltholme from 29th.

JUNE

As usual the month proved to be very quiet for scarce birds or indeed any bird movements.

Up to five Spoonbills were around the North Tees Marshes early in the month. A Little Stint was at Saltholme Pools on 5th. A Quail was at RSPB Saltholme on 6th and another flew over Seaton Carew on 7th. A Caspian Gull was at Brenda Road Tip on 8th. The Ruddy Shelduck was still around Cowpen Marsh mid-month. A pair of Egyptian Geese bred here again.

A Spotted Flycatcher was at South Gare on 12th. A Hobby was over Cowpen Marsh on 13th. A Marsh Warbler at Bowesfield from

14th proved elusive. Another was at RSPB Saltholme on 17th. A Little Gull was here 16th-20th. Up to six Wood Sandpipers were also here at this time. A White-tailed Eagle was in Sleddale on 21st.



Mediterranean Gull, Saltholme

Ian Foster

Two Roseate Terns at RSPB Saltholme on 22nd accompanied the breeding Common Terns on the main lake. A cracking Black Guillemot in full summer plumage was off South Gare on 24th. The end of the month saw more records of Quail in the county with singles at South Gare and Redcar and two at Boulby. Up to ten different Mediterranean Gulls were at Byedales and a pair successfully raised two young at RSPB Saltholme.

FROM THE CHAIR

The following provides a summary and update from the Trustees since the April newsletter.

TRUSTEES

The Club's AGM took place on 13th April. The members of the Trustees group remain the same except that Steve Ashton has taken over from Mike Leakey in the role of Vice Chair. The Trustees held two quarterly meetings via Zoom, one on 21st April and another on 28th July. We are pleased to welcome Edward Hearn, researcher, as a co-opted member. Edward has started a PhD project at Teesside University, funded by a legacy donation by Denis Summers-Smith to the RSPB, whilst doing voluntary work at

RSPB Saltholme. He is keen to get more involved with the club and learn more about Denis's work.

CONSERVATION PROJECTS AND UPDATES

Ali McLee (Conservation Sub-committee) was disappointed to report that delays in the installation of swift boxes at Seaton Carew Pumping Station meant that the breeding season had been missed, and he hoped that the site would be ready for next year.

In April, Ali reported that the peregrines on the Transporter Bridge had four eggs. In a recent update, two chicks had fledged prematurely, a male and a female. However, the female had been rescued from the Tees, contracted pneumonia and was taken to the Whitby Wildlife Sanctuary to recover. All being well, it is hoped that she can be released from a suitable location in the near future.

On Sunday 28th June, Barbara Crinson led a local outing to Cowpen Bewley Landfill Site to look at six lagoons and the recently installed Biomatrix ecosystem, comprising an island and nesting platform. Two well-grown Common Tern chicks had been observed on the small nesting platform, and some unidentified chicks had been seen on the large island. Since then, Barbara has been very pleased to confirm that two nests were present with two chicks in each, plus a good number of ducks around the islands. Considering that the islands were only moved to their present location in April, it hasn't taken the birds very long to take up residence.

DEDICATION TO MARK ASKEW

A dedication feather for Mark Askew, long-time Trustee, Chairman and Club Treasurer, was recently installed on the Phoenix Sculpture at RSPB Saltholme. Thanks go to Barbara and Graham Megson for deciding on just the right words to make this a fitting tribute to Mark. Preparations are also underway to erect a Motus Information Board at Saltholme - Motus being a project that Mark helped to initiate.

NEW SEASON 2026 - 2027

A brand new programme of indoor meetings starts at 7.30pm on Monday 7th September with speaker Colin Dodsworth giving a talk about Senegal and Gambia. I look forward to seeing you there.

Debbie Lawson, Chair

SPEAKERS 2026 – 2027

The indoor meetings will usually be on the 1st Monday of the month as usual at Stockton Library. Meeting starts at 7.30 with tea and coffee served from 7.00. Visitors are welcome.

7th September 2026 - Senegal & Gambia by Colin Dodsworth.

5th October 2026 - "What has Madagascar ever done for us . . ." by Ian Hillery.

2nd November 2026 - Lower Derwent Valley by Craig Ralston.

14th December 2026 - Tees Ringing Group by Allan Snape & Eric Wood.

4th January 2027 - My Quest for Hummers by Stewart Hinley.

1st February 2027 - Rare Breeding Birds Panel by Mark Eaton.

1st March 2027 - Dark Peak Upland Breeding Bird Survey by Paul Bingham.

5th April 2027 - AGM - RSPB Saltholme Update & Lesvos Birding.

BTO NEWS SUMMER 2026

BREEDING BIRDS SURVEY AND WATERWAYS BREEDING BIRDS SURVEY

The Breeding Bird Survey started in 1994, and a report is produced every year containing

population changes and other results from the scheme.

The 2025 Breeding Bird Survey Report highlights the varying fortunes of four of the UK's widely monitored wild doves and pigeons. Whilst Stock Dove and Woodpigeon are faring well – Stock Dove has increased by over 40% in the last 10 years – the Turtle Dove decline shows no sign of abating, and Collared Dove has declined by around 40% since 2005.

In Scotland, species of woodland and scrub – including Willow Warbler, Tree Pipit and Bullfinch – continue to increase, whilst populations further south in Britain are declining. In Wales, there are mixed fortunes. Woodland species such as Great Spotted Woodpecker have increased over threefold, and Nuthatch has increased by 55%, since 1995. Meanwhile, Curlew and Yellowhammer continue to decline.

In Northern Ireland, which sees a change of baseline for monitoring trends from 1994 to 1996, the pattern of increasing Song Thrush (+75%, 1997–2024) and declining Mistle Thrush (-35%) highlights a UK-wide pattern for these two closely related species. Several species are not monitored by BBS in Northern Ireland, particularly farmland birds such as Kestrel, Curlew and Yellowhammer, and additional efforts are underway to improve monitoring in these declining species.

The 2025 season was also noteworthy for seeing a record number of 1-km squares being visited, with over 2,800 surveyors visiting 4,058 sites. We thank these skilled and dedicated volunteers who give their time to BBS and WBBS and make the monitoring of the UK's breeding birds possible.

• [Read the 2025 Breeding Bird Survey report](#)

Latest data for the Cleveland BTO Region for the 2026 season indicates that 25 1km squares have received at least one visit, and I'm hopeful that we will surpass the record for coverage of 27 squares achieved in the pre-Covid year of 2019. As always, my sincere

thanks to all those who contribute towards this vital survey.

WETLAND BIRD SURVEY

The national annual WeBS Report, entitled Waterbirds in the UK 2024/25, was published in the spring, and contains much useful information and several fascinating articles. The Tees Estuary WeBS site achieved an aggregate total of 20,441 waterbirds in the reporting year, resulting in a 5-year mean of 21,627. The Tees Estuary currently ranks at 44th place in the list of principal sites for non-breeding waterbirds in the UK. The full report is available here:

- [Read Waterbirds in the UK 2024/25](#)

The Tees Estuary WeBS Local Organiser role has been relinquished by Adam Jones following his move to pastures new. We thank Adam for all his hard work with WeBS over the last decade. The new LO for the site is Ed Pritchard Edward.pritchard@rspb.org.uk who I'm sure will prove to be a worthy successor.

WINTER GULL SURVEY RESULTS

The results of the recent [Winter Gull Survey](#) (WinGS) have just been published and reveal substantial population declines for four of the five main wintering species. While Herring Gull numbers have remained largely stable over the last 20 years, Black-headed Gull, Common Gull, Lesser Black-backed Gull, and Great Black-backed Gull had all experienced notable declines. Over the two decades since the last WinGS, the total number of gulls wintering in the UK has decreased from 3.9 million to just under 2.5 million.

The substantial overall downturns in wintering gull populations largely reflect broader declines affecting these species across their geographical range. The drivers of these downturns include the impacts of avian influenza, changes in land use and agricultural practices, climate change, and updates in waste management and fisheries discards practices. Although not all the gulls that

winter in the UK stick around to breed here, some do, so these declines in wintering gull counts also have implications for the numbers encountered in the UK during the summer months.

NON-ESTUARINE WATERBIRD SURVEY (NEWS)

NEWS is a one-off count any day between 1st December 2026 and 31st January 2027, and is a repeat of the survey last carried out in 2015/16. I will attempt to co-ordinate counts on the Cleveland coast, which for BTO purposes stretches from Blackhall Rocks in the north to Staithes in the south. Ideally, we encourage you to count on or as close as possible to the International Waterbird Census weekend on 16th and 17th January 2027.

A NEWS survey involves a single coordinated site-based survey along an approximate 2 km section of the coastline. Volunteers should count all wildfowl and wader species in the intertidal zone, and we also encourage volunteers to count birds on the land (within 100 metres of the high water mark) and on the sea. Volunteers should carry out the survey during the 6-hour window that falls from 3 hours before low water to 3 hours after low water. Ideally, adjoining sections should be counted on the same day. If this is not possible, then counts on different dates are acceptable.

To take part in NEWS, you will need to find a vacant site and register your interest. You will be able to browse available sites once the Vacant Sites map is published in the autumn.

- You can [sign up to receive NEWS](#) updates, including information about the Vacant Sites map, via our NEWS mailing list form. The BTO will contact you by email once the NEWS Vacant Sites map is live.

Mike Leakey, BTO Regional Representative for Cleveland

WETLAND BIRD SURVEY TEESMOUTH SPRING 2026 SUMMARY

	April	May	June	National significance	International significance
Little Grebe	9	10	8	190	3700
Great Crested Grebe	29	41	27	170	6300
Cormorant	27	89	84	640	970
Mute Swan	23	35	41	540	540
Shelduck	317*	269	186	550	3100
Gadwall	229*	133	430**	340	1400
Teal	237	4	9	3300	6700
Mallard	139	177	166	7000	20000
Shoveler	198*	46	53	250	750
Pochard	95*	60	33	180	1500
Tufted Duck	129	112	77	1200	8900
Eider	12	27	44	770	12850
Coot	184	172	215	1700	15500
Oystercatcher	559	274	512	2900	8200
Avocet	119*	99*	81*	130	940
Little Ringed Plover	7	6	7	-	3100
Ringed Plover	19	145	26	500	540
Golden Plover	101	0	0	4000	12000
Grey Plover	0	0	0	360	2000
Lapwing	146	165	111	6200	20000
Knot	14	1	0	3000	3300
Sanderling	128	84	18	250	2000
Purple Sandpiper	6	0	0	95	110
Dunlin	65	83	0	3700	13300
Ruff	4	1	0	11	20000
Snipe	13	0	0	10000	20000
Black-tailed Godwit	29	6	5	540	1700
Bar-tailed Godwit	18	2	2	450	1500
Curlew	137	83	132	1100	7600
Redshank	454	10	20	1100	2400
Turnstone	93	1	10	380	2300
Sandwich Tern	2	0	11	-	1700
Common Tern	3	9	41	-	1800
Little Tern	0	34	12	-	220

Counts in bold indicate Spring 2026 maxima.

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

** Denotes count of national importance for that species

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 2026 SUMMARY

Coverage was good with 120 of the scheduled 129 sector counts completed over the three months.

For this series of counts the Tees Estuary and Hartlepool Bay recording area was nationally important for Gadwall (430 in June 2026). The peak count for Gadwall was just shy of the record for this species (431 in June 2017).

Other Spring peak counts of note were Shoveler (198, June). This is the sixth year in a row the Spring peak count has exceeded 100 for Shoveler, and the third year in four, that the count has been a record.

The peak count for Pochard (95, April) was the highest since 2011 (123, June) and fourth highest on record.

The lowest Spring peak count was however recorded for Little Grebe (10). This is lower than the count of 11 in 2012, and eight below the ten-year average.

Many thanks to all for your efforts,

Ed Pritchard

Local Organiser, Tees Estuary WeBS

August 2026