

# Berwick Wildlife Group

[www.berwickwildlifegroup.org.uk](http://www.berwickwildlifegroup.org.uk)



## Newsletter: Oct - Nov - Dec 2007

### WILDLIFE REPORTS FOR DECEMBER

**Weather.** A month of average winter temperatures. There were 16 nights of frost, the coldest being both the 21<sup>st</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> which fell to 24C., or -4.5F. An average winter rainfall was recorded 64mm (2.5inches), most of that falling during the first week of the month. Although High pressure dominated mid-month, sunshine was at a premium with only 5 days bright and sunny all month. However we have recorded a mild start to the first half of the Winter period again, as we close 2007.

**Birds.** After last month's exciting sea-bird movements, December got back to normal winter bird activity. There was a surge in wader numbers at the start of the month and good number of Winter thrushes and Siskins were reported mid-month. The Winter Bird Survey found several good species in unexpected places, as is usual with these BTO surveys. More about this at the end of the Bird report.

On December 1st 90 **Greylag Geese** were on Yarrow Slake and a **Sparrow Hawk** frequented the feeding finches around Mill Farm. 46 **Goldeneye** and 5 **Goosander** were at West Ord (2nd) while down at Cocklawburn, 2 **Tufted Duck** (3rd) were on the Pond (with a peak of 6 on the 19th) and on the sea were 36 **Common Scoters**. **Long-tailed Duck** - 1 female off Linkim Shore. Also 4 **Purple Sandpiper** on rocks at Yellow Craig, S of Coldingham.

A concentration of waders on Little Beach (4th) included, 92 **Ringed Plovers**, 86 **Sanderling**, 290 **Dunlin**, 110 **Turnstones** with 4 **Rock Pipits** and a **Grey Wagtail**. In Meadow Haven there were 7 **Red-breasted Merganser**, 3 **Teal** and a female **Long-tailed Duck**. Further up the coast at the Coastwatch station were 7 **Bar-tailed Godwits** 10 **Grey Plover**, 21 **Purple Sandpiper**, 26 **Dunlin** with 16 **Great Black-backed Gulls**. On the 7th a **Little Auk** - 1 (dead) on tideline at Killiedraught Bay, N of Eyemouth. A **Greenshank** flew over the Estuary (8th) and 160 **Golden Plovers** were at Cocklawburn. Around Mill Farm was a flock of c.180 mixed finches. 8 **Twite** fed on Scurveygrass seed, above Little Beach on the Golf Course (10th) and the WeBS count on the Estuary recorded: 3 **Little Grebes**, 26 **Cormorants**, 19 **Grey Herons**, 32 **Mute Swans**, 105 **Goldeneye**, 170 **Lapwing**, 157 **Redshank** and a large gathering of 1,050 **Black headed Gulls**.

Cold weather on the 12th brought an increase in thrushes, with 70 **Redwing** and 3 **Mistle Thrushes** on Ord Estate. 70 **Pink-footed Geese** flew south over the town (15th) and 2 **Common Snipe** were on Yarrow Slake. The next day, a **Gannet** was flying around Meadow Haven and 7 **Pintail** flew north over Sharper's Head where there were 7 **Red-breasted Mergansers** and 7 **Purple Sandpiper**. A male **Bullfinch** was in the grounds of the Middle School. On the 16th a **Kingfisher** was resting on a log on the south bank of the

Tweed above the railway bridge, and on the 17th 6 **Little Grebe** were seen on the New Road side. 3 **Long tailed Tits** were on a bird feeder at Riverdene (18th) and a **Buzzard** was in conifers on Rotary Way, East Ord. **Purple Sandpiper**, 10 on rocks in Eyemouth Bay. 3 pairs of **Stonechat** along with a female **Peregrine**, a **Long-tailed Duck** and 6 **Shag** were at Cocklawburn, **Glaucous Gull**, 1 probably 2nd winter bird, on Eyemouth promenade wall and later on rocks with **Black-headed Gulls**. (19th). (21st) **Purple Sandpiper**, 7 on rocks in Eyemouth Bay. A lone **Red-throated Diver** on the Estuary (21st) was joined by three others the next day and are still there to date. Another **Bullfinch** was at East Ord House where a **Woodcock** was seen at dawn (22nd). **Iceland Gull**, 1 - the 1st winter bird seen on many dates in and around Eyemouth harbour, with last sighting on 22nd. 170 **Redwings** were feeding under the Whitebeams on Ord Industrial Estate (23rd) and 5 **Pink footed Geese** were on Yarrow Slake. 2 **Siskins** were eating niger seed in a Tweedmouth garden on the 24th. (25th) **Pink-footed Geese**, 45 flying S along coast over Eyemouth. Another large group of thrushes were in fields at the Loaning, East Ord on Christmas Day, including 220 **Redwings**, 40 **Fieldfares** and 26 **Siskins** in the Alders, and on the 27th 4 **Fieldfares** and a **Redwing** visited a Tweedmouth garden together with a female **Blackcap**. Seawatching has been poor, with a lone **Kittiwake** on Spittal Bay(27th), a bit unusual. (29th) **Peregrine**, 1 flew in from sea, circled low along Eyemouth promenade, then all round bay to cliffs; probably an immature bird.

3 **Goldeneye**, 35 **Sanderling** and 2 **Rock Pipits** were at Fishermans Cove (30th) with 16 **Eider**, 6 **Red-breasted Mergansers** and 7 **Purple Sandpiper** off Sharper's Head. Further up the coast were 3 **Song Thrushes**, a **Grey Heron** and 2 **Shag** at Needle's Eye. Another pair of **Bullfinches** were found at Five Arches Bridge. 24 **Goldfinches** were at a garden feeder in East Ord on the 31st.

**Elsewhere.** 230 **Fieldfares** at Norham Castle (2<sup>nd</sup>) and 25 **Whooper Swans** and 62 **Mute Swan** in kale fields at Loanend. 8 **Twite** were at Cheswick (3<sup>rd</sup>) with a male **Long-tailed Duck** (8<sup>th</sup>), 9 **Purple Sandpipers** and 7 **Turnstones** (19<sup>th</sup>) on Black Rocks there. Winter Atlas work found **Peregrine**, **Merlin**, **Stock Dove**, **Siskins** and a **Brambling** at Goswick(18<sup>th</sup>) with 130 **Skylarks**, **Stonechat**, **Twite**, and **Grey Partridge** at Goswick dunes(20<sup>th</sup>). North of the River were **Barn Owl**, **Jay** and **Bullfinch** at Foulden (25<sup>th</sup>).

### **Butterflies**

11th Dec. Peacock, 1, flying over heather by plantation in sunshine on Coldingham Moor, NT 858686.

### **Mammals.**

Several sightings of **Roe Deer** with 2 at Mill Farm, Tweedmouth, 2 at Middle Ord, 3 near Castle Hills, 3 at Scremerston and 6 at Fisher's Close Wood, Goswick. A **Long-tailed Fieldmouse** has been seen scavenging below bird feeders.

**Request for squirrel sightings.** Grey squirrels are expanding their territory in our area, which is very bad news for the native red squirrel. Especially as in the last few weeks the first case of the squirrelpox virus has been confirmed at Wallington, Belsay and Fourstones. Grey's are immune and are carriers of this disease which kills reds within 2 weeks. We need to find out where both species of squirrel are now living. If you see a **red** or a **grey squirrel** do please let us know –

e-mail [mail3@berwickwildlifegroup.org.uk](mailto:mail3@berwickwildlifegroup.org.uk) or phone 01289 305189.

## THE TWEED ESTUARY SPECIAL AREA OF CONSERVATION

The Tweed Estuary has been awarded its international Special Area of Conservation status because it is "still largely natural and undisturbed" and "supports a wide range of habitats compared with other estuaries in north-east England". Plans for a new leisure marina in the Tweed estuary have been dropped after detailed investigations revealed that the cost of compensating for the environmental impact would be too great. We are delighted that the enormous importance of the Tweed Estuary for wildlife has been recognised. No other town in Northumberland or the Borders has such a beautiful, accessible wildlife site right at its core. Properly managed for appropriate river craft and promoted with trails, hides, guided walks and bird watching holidays, it could greatly increase Berwick's potential for tourism. For a full report see the Berwick Advertiser of 3<sup>rd</sup> January or the One North East website:

<http://www.onenortheast.co.uk/page/news/article.cfm?articleid=2772&paneldisplay=true> .



### BERWICK'S BRILLIANT WILDLIFE

On 12<sup>th</sup> December we held a celebration and display of our surveys and sightings in 2007. It was a lovely convivial evening. We were delighted to welcome old friends who have supported the Group in so many ways throughout the year and also to see many new faces.

Most of our surveys are designed not only to provide information on local wildlife but also to contribute to national surveys run by the British Trust for Ornithology, Butterfly Conservation, Bumblebee Conservation Trust, Forest Enterprise, Marine Conservation Society and so on. The displays showed off the wealth of scientific information collected and collated by Group members, and John had put together a very impressive slideshow of members' photos. Thank you to all the contributors.

It is really worthwhile collecting information on the distribution of local wildlife to help with future conservation – particularly as North Northumberland is not as well studied as more populous regions or holiday hotspots. We could do even better if more people helped with the surveys; beginners and experts are equally welcome. Times are sometimes planned in advance and advertised in the Reviews (see events list, below), but often can only be arranged when we know the likely size of the survey team and the weather forecast – so let us know if you are interested. Details are available at our indoor meetings, or just ask one of the Committee.

## Member's photos.



Participants at "Berwick's Brilliant Wildlife"



Gannet by Colin Green



Chaffinch by Colin Green



Kyløe in the snow by John Rae

## FORTHCOMING EVENTS, Winter/Spring 2008.

**Wednesday 9<sup>th</sup> January. Talk on "Trees, woods and people" by Ross Weddle.**  
Berwick United Reformed Church, Main Street, **Spittal, 7.30pm.**

**\*\*\*NEW ENTRY\*\*\* Sunday 27<sup>th</sup> January. A bird survey around Scremerston, the second winter visit to BWG's adopted tetrad for the BTO Atlas 2007-11. Meet opposite **Scremerston Church at 10.00am.** Wear warm clothes and sensible shoes and if possible bring binoculars. Beginners (and experts) welcome, about 2 hours very slow walk.**

**February. Estuary Bird Survey.** BWG's regular mid-winter "count" to monitor changes in water-bird populations on the estuary and coast. Meet at the Tweedmouth side of the Old Bridge, **11.00 am on Saturday 9<sup>th</sup> February** (if weather appalling 11.00am Saturday 23<sup>rd</sup> February). Will definitely be cold, possibly wet and windy, wrap up well and bring some lunch. Further information ring 01289 330591.

**Wednesday 13<sup>th</sup> February. The Music of Birds.** Demonstration and talk by Geoff Sample, wildlife sound recorder. Berwick United Reformed Church, Main Street, **Spittal, 7.30pm.**

**Wednesday 12<sup>th</sup> March. David Rollo, OBE,** will talk about his experiences as a **wildlife vet.** Berwick United Reformed Church, Main Street, **Spittal, 7.30pm.**

**Saturday 5<sup>th</sup> April. A spring walk in the Plantation, Berwick with Ross Weddle.** Meet at top of Askew's Walk (NT 981 537), old Paxton road, at **10.30 am**.

**Wednesday May 7<sup>th</sup>. AGM, followed by a talk on his Canadian Wildlife Adventure by John Rae.** Berwick United Reformed Church, Main Street, **Spittal, 7.30pm**.

**Wednesday May 14<sup>th</sup>. A walk in the Hartshope Valley, with Gillian Thompson,** ecologist with Northumberland National Park. Curlews should be calling. Meet at **Carey Burn Bridge**, about 3 miles S of Wooler on road between Earle (S of Wooler) and Langlee Ford, **NT 976 250, 11.00**. Finish about 3.00pm. Bring packed lunch, weatherproof clothes and strong footwear.

**\*\*\*NEW ENTRY\*\*\* Thursday June 5<sup>th</sup>. Secrets of Cocklawburn, from low tide mark to the dunes with Aisling Lanning,** Marine Conservation Officer, **11.00am – 2.00 pm**. Bring lunch, weatherproof clothes and wellies or sandshoes.

**Also to come in 2008: Butterfly walk; Bat walks; visit to **Kyloe Woods** with forester and red squirrel officer; talks on the **Farne Islands** and **St Abbs** (details on website) – and **lots of surveys** of butterflies, birds, bats, bees, beach litter, trees, squirrels, other insects etc.**

**Members and non-members are very welcome** at all these events. There may be a small charge, normally £2.00 for members and £3.00 for non-members.

**Contact us.** Look at our website [www.berwickwildlifegroup.org.uk](http://www.berwickwildlifegroup.org.uk), phone 01289 330591, e-mail [mail3@berwickwildlifegroup.org.uk](mailto:mail3@berwickwildlifegroup.org.uk) or just come to an event.