

Berwick Wildlife Group

www.berwickwildlifegroup.org.uk



Newsletter: July-August-September 2008

WILDLIFE REPORTS FOR SEPTEMBER

Weather. September was a fairly quiet, average month with light winds, good sunny spells and little rainfall. The big exception was the 24 hours over the 6/7th when the wind strengthened from a light southerly to a strong north-easterly bringing with it a very long spell of continuous rain, 48mm (2 inches) falling over the two days. Total rainfall for the month was 99mm (3.9 inches). No frost was recorded.

Birds. Autumn migration continued through the month, with a good sea bird movement during the two stormy days of 6/7th. Geese did not arrive in any numbers until the last week of the month, by which time most of the summer migrants had left. The late arrival of our winter birds was confirmed by no sighting of winter thrushes or finches by the end of the month.

Migration was in full flow (1st) with 11 **Stonechats**, 3 **Wheatears**, **Willow Warbler** and **Whitethroat** at Cocklawburn. A thunder shower brought 60+ **House Martins** and 5 **Swifts** over East Ord moving south in front of the storm. 6 **Snipe** were at Yarrow Slake on the 2nd, while at Little Beach were 42 **Ringed Plovers**, 17 **Dunlin**, 52 **Turnstone**, 7 **Rock Pipits** and an **Arctic Skua** harrying 8 **Sandwich Terns**. On the 3rd 6 **Black-tailed Godwits** were at Yarrow Slake. At Little Beach (5th) came 38 **Sanderling**, a **Bar-tailed Godwit** and 2 **Purple Sandpipers**. Upstream at Yarrow Slake were 1,420 **Lapwings**, 6 **Common Snipe**, a **Golden Plover** and a **Dunlin**. The following day saw 6 **Black-tailed Godwits** and 30+ **Golden Plover** here. A good seawatch on the second day of the northerly 'blow' (7th) off the Pier, saw a northerly movement of **Gannets** (250/hour), **Fulmar** (120/hr), along with 48 **Manx Shearwaters**, 2 **Sooty Shearwaters**, 3 **Arctic Skuas**, 6 **Great Skuas**, a fine adult **Little Gull**, 2 **Velvet Scoters**, 3 **Puffins** and 3 **Red-throated Divers**. A flight of 26 **Brent Geese** were also seen flying south with the wind and 4 **Ruff** were feeding with **Oystercatcher** on the Golf Course. A **Peregrine** was seen chasing local **Feral Pigeons** over Berwick (8th).

At Cocklawburn Dunes on the 12th were 100+ **Goldfinches**, and at Cheswick Dunes 5 **Twite** and a **Short-eared Owl**. A **Nuthatch** visited a Castle Terrace garden on the 15th. The Estuary WeBS count (16th) found 12 **Grey Herons**, 34 **Mute Swans**, 1,100 **Lapwing**, 410 **Redshank** and 6 **Common Sandpipers**. More bird movement was observed on the 17th with 42 **Teal** south over Spittal Bay; 2 **Whinchat** and 2 **Wheatears** at Cocklawburn; 3 **Wheatears** and 28 **Pied Wagtails** on the Golf Course and a **Spotted Flycatcher** which stayed a couple of days at Pier Cottage. A **Greenland Wheatear**, 3 **Yellow Wagtails**, a **Reed Bunting** and a pair of **Stonechats** were on Little Beach (18th). 4 **Ruff** were on Yarrow Slake and stayed for 3 days, with 2 **Bullfinches** seen on the nearby Haugh.

2 **Peregrines**, an adult and an immature, took up residence on the Royal Border Bridge for three days (19th). A **Goldcrest** appeared at Pier Cottage (21st) with a **Yellow Wagtail** on the Golf Course and a **Swallow** and 22 **Sandwich Terns** over the Estuary. A **Black-throated Diver** (22nd), a **Sparrow Hawk** and a flock of 54 **Goldfinches** were at Cocklawburn. The high tide roost off the Coastwatch station (23rd) held 36 **Curlew**, 3 **Bar-tailed Godwits**, 4 **Teal** and

44 **Sandwich Terns** which attracted an **Arctic Skua**. A **Sooty Shearwater** and a drake **Wigeon** were seen off the Pier.

24 **Guillemots** were in Spittal Bay (27th) and the first 38 **Pink footed Geese** flew south over East Ord. The following day (28th) was dominated by a large movement of 'Pinkfeet', with many skeins flying south at high altitudes. Numbers recorded were 500+ over Berwick, 220 over West Ord and 120 over Billylaw. This site also saw a movement of 30 **Skylarks**, 2 **Common Snipe**, 2 **Siskins** and 12+ **Chaffinches**. A **Grey Plover** was at Little Beach, where a **Short eared Owl** flew in high off the sea. A roost of 22 **Shag** was in Meadow Haven and at the end of the day 30 **Barnacle Geese** flew over East Ord. 9 **Golden Plover**, and 9 **Pink-footed Geese** were on the ground (29th) with 70 **Lapwing** at Cocklawburn. At Little Beach were 110 **Ringed Plover**, 28 **Dunlin**, 2 **Knot** and 14 **Goosander**, with 64 **Barnacle Geese** flying south off the Pier. On the 30th a female **Wheatear** was spotted on the high tide line at Sandstell Beach.

The immature **Green Woodpecker** mentioned last month was seen and heard several times around Castle Hills, and turned up regularly throughout the month feeding on ants in a Castle Terrace garden.

Apologies to John Inglis who sent in a good record of 30+ **Velvet Scoters** off Cheswick on 10th **August**. This is a scarce bird in our area and the record was missed in the August report.

Elsewhere. A **Short-eared Owl**, a **Buzzard** and 70 **Linnets** were in Cheswick dunes (1st). On 10th on Holy Island were 2 **Jack Snipe**, put up from mudflats near St Cuthbert's Isle; 1 **Black-tailed Godwit** and 3 **Ruff** in Rocket Field; a **Wryneck** near Chare Ends, plus 2 **Pied Flycatcher** and 4 **Redstart** elsewhere on the Island. A pair of **Grey Wagtails** was seen at Burnmouth (11th) and in Cheswick Dunes were 3 **Swifts**, a **Wheatear** and a **Short-eared Owl** with 2 **Common Snipe** in Cocklawburn pond, where 25 **Teal** made a brief visit the next day. Another **Redstart** sighting was made in an Eyemouth garden on the 13th. A **White Wagtail** and 3 **Greenland Wheatears** were at Cheswick (20th). On the 21st 5 **Whooper Swans** arose from flooded fields near Greenlaw. 18 **Ringed Plovers**, 2 **Dunlin**, a **Knot** and a **Wheatear** were on Cheswick shore (22nd) with a **Red-throated Diver** and 34 **Common Scoter** offshore. A juvenile **Peregrine**, 3 **Teal** and 16 **Barnacle Geese** flew over Cheswick dunes (29th), while nearby at the Black Rocks were 33 **Ringed Plovers**, 6 **Knot** and 134 **Common Scoter**.

Butterflies. Large numbers of **Peacocks** and **Red Admirals**, along with falling numbers of **Large and Small Whites** were seen throughout the month. A walk at Cocklawburn (1st) recorded **Large White**, 3 **Small Whites**, 6 late flying **Meadow Browns**, 3 **Wall Brown**, a **Common Blue**, 4 **Small Coppers**, a **Red Admiral** and 8 **Peacocks**. 2 **Commas** were at Hiveacres (2nd). At Cocklawburn Dunes on the 18th were a **Painted Lady** and a **Red Admiral**. A late **Small Tortoiseshell** was at Little Beach (29th). Further afield, 2 **Green veined Whites**, a **Comma**, 9 **Small Tortoiseshells**, 44 **Peacocks** and 14 **Red Admirals** were at St Abbs (4th).

With many thanks to all those who have supplied wildlife records. To submit a record please e-mail them to us via <http://www.berwickwildlifegroup.org.uk/Sightings.html> or phone 01289 309046, or send photos via mail3@berwickwildlifegroup.org.uk. Remember, they don't all have to be of unusual species – records of common plants and beasts doing interesting things are very valuable for our database and for forwarding to other wildlife organisations. Thank you.

DONATIONS. We are very grateful to **Three Rivers Housing**, who have kindly given BWG a cheque for £200, particularly to encourage outings and activities for everyone. This will help to offset the costs of events (advertising and speakers' expenses). "In kind" money from **Berwick Save our Squirrels Group's** work has also been added our account. Thank you very much.

MEMBERS' PHOTOS.



Save our Squirrels Day, Ord Country Park - Elizabeth



Immature Green Woodpecker, Berwick - Maurice



Silver Y moth - Barry



Squirrel Group in Detchant Wood - John

SQUIRRELS IN THE FOREST.

A visit to Kylee Woods organised for BWG by Berwick Save our Squirrels Group.

On 14th September, we visited Kylee Woods, with the Head Forester Ian Robinson and Save our Squirrels Officer Mark Wilkinson. Kylee woods once belonged to Captain Leyland who lived at Haggerston, a sea captain who sent seeds home from all over the world and grew a huge variety of trees, including of course the infamous Leyland Cypress. About 20 conifer species make up the bulk of the wood, unusual among British conifer forests in that half of the trees are about 100 years old – and very good they look too.

Red squirrels' native habitat is deciduous woods, but these are now occupied locally by grey squirrels which spread squirrel pox, fatal to the reds. The larger grey squirrels cannot live in conifer woods, but the smaller reds can, making sizable conifer plantations a useful refuge even if the habitat is not as "good" as broadleaved woodland. There are thought to be between 40 and 60 red squirrels in Kylee, leaving their "signs" (torn-up cones and hair) for us to find.

Although a commercial forest, Kylee is managed with wildlife very much in mind. Roe deer are plentiful, pipistrelle bats have a summer roost in an old hut, adders bask in sunny spots, birds of prey nest on crags in the forest, and in summer nightjars breed on a small area of heath kept open specially for them. Thanks to Ian's and Mark's expert guidance, our visit gave us a real insight into the woods at Kylee. Also, thanks to the generosity of participants, £66.86 was collected for Save our Squirrels. It is wonderful that Captain Leyland's exotic plantation is now home to so many native creatures, and that skilled and sympathetic management is allowing them to thrive. Long may this continue.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS.

Saturday 4th October to Monday 13th. Berwick Save our Squirrels display. Amazing pictures and information about squirrels, and details of how to help save our native Red Squirrel by sending in casual sightings or joining Berwick Save our Squirrels Group. **All week** in the Library, Berwick.

Wednesday 8th October. Talk on Birds of the Farne Islands by John Walton, Assistant Warden for National Trust. Berwick United Reformed Church, Main Street, Spittal, **7.30pm.**

BTO tetrad survey of Oxford square. Anyone interested is welcome to join Malcolm Hutcheson as he surveys this 2k x 2k square (1k squares NU 0046, 0047, 0146 and 0147) for the Bird Atlas 2007-11. Times to be arranged – 4 visits in Nov./Dec 2008; Jan/Feb 2009; April/May 2009 and June/July 2009. If you are interested (beginners welcome) please phone 01289 309046 or e-mail mail3@berwickwildlifegroup.org.uk.

Wednesday 12th November. Wildlife of St Abbs. A talk by National Trust for Scotland Warden, Kevin Rideout. Berwick United Reformed Church, Main Street, Spittal, **7.30pm.**

Wednesday 10th December. Big Cats. A talk based on his overseas experiences by Richard Wales (Now Red Squirrel Project Officer for Southern Scotland). **7.30pm.** Berwick United Reformed Church, Main Street, SPITTAL.

2009

Wednesday 14th January. Berwick is Brilliant for Wildlife Event. A display to consolidate and show off BWG's work in 2008, plan for 2009 and especially to celebrate our wonderful local wildlife. **7.30pm.** Berwick United Reformed Church, Main Street, SPITTAL. No charge.

Saturday 7th February (or if weather v. bad, 21st February). Wader and wildfowl Survey. Berwick Wildlife Group's annual assessment of wildfowl and waders on the coast and estuary. Meet at Tweedmouth end of Old Bridge, Berwick, **10.00 am.** Wear warm waterproof clothing, sensible boots or shoes (can include cliff-top walk).

Wednesday 11th February. "Putting Berwick on the Geological Map". Ian Kille of Northumbrian Earth. **7.30pm.** Berwick United Reformed Church, Main Street, SPITTAL.

Members and non-members are welcome at all these events. Most surveys and some walks are free to members, but non-members will be charged £3.00. At events with an outside speaker/leader we ask everyone to contribute to cover expenses, usually £2.00 for members and £3.00 for non-members. No charge is made for children, but for legal reasons they must be accompanied by an adult.

Want to know more? Look at our website www.berwickwildlifegroup.org.uk , phone 01289 330591, e-mail mail3@berwickwildlifegroup.org.uk , or just come along to one of our events. Group members (who benefit from lower charges at events, the monthly Wildlife Review, news of forthcoming surveys, and so on) do not need special skills or knowledge, just an interest in the environment. The fee is only £8.00 per year for individuals, £14.00 for families at the same address. Send fee with your name and address to The Treasurer, Berwick Wildlife Group, 5 Springfield Park, East Ord, Berwick-upon-Tweed, TD15 2FD.