

# Berwick Wildlife Group

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



## Newsletter: January-February-March 2008

### WILDLIFE REPORTS FOR MARCH

**Weather.** March has been a fairly cold month, being dominated by winds coming from a northerly direction. Frost occurred on eight nights, the coldest being on the 5<sup>th</sup> with -2.5°C (28°F). Sunshine and showers predominated, although a calm spell between the 13<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> and a S.W. gale on the 8<sup>th</sup> broke the mould. Rainfall was a little on the high side for March with 61.5mm. or 2.6 inches.

**Birds.** 96 **Sanderling**, 78 **Dunlin**, 3 **Grey Plover** and 14 **Ringed Plovers** were on Little Beach (2<sup>nd</sup>) while 18 **Red-breasted Mergansers** were on Meadow Haven with 8 **Guillemot**, 2 **Red-throated Divers** and a drake **Long tailed Duck** in Spittal Bay. The same day saw 12 **Wigeon** and 20 **Teal** on Middle Ord pond with 66 **Redwing** out on the fields there; and 43 **Goldeneye**, 4 **Red-breasted Mergansers** and a pair of **Goosanders** at West Ord. A pair of **Common Partridges** were at Cocklawburn on the 3<sup>rd</sup>. 300+ **Pink-footed Geese** were flying north over the town (4<sup>th</sup>) and 5 **Little Grebes** and 3 **Lesser Black-backed Gulls** were at Yarrow Slake. A **Great Northern Diver** was at **Cocklawburn** (5<sup>th</sup>), with a female **Peregrine** and a male **Merlin** hunting the local fields where 7 **Pink-footed Geese** were grazing.

The WeBS count for the Estuary (6<sup>th</sup>) found 4 **Little Grebes**, 19 **Grey Herons**, 38 **Mute Swans**, 7 **Grey-lag Geese**, 3 **Wigeon**, 42 **Eider**, a **Long-tailed Duck**, 218 **Goldeneye**, 21 **Red-breasted Mergansers**, 7 **Goosanders**, 16 **Dunlin**, 320 **Redshank**, and 510 **Herring Gulls**. A **Merlin** killed a **Pied Wagtail** over Tapee Fen on the 8<sup>th</sup> (and returned to hunt on the 10<sup>th</sup>). A **Red-throated Diver**, 2 **Common Scoters** and 4 **Red-breasted Mergansers** were in Spittal Bay (10<sup>th</sup>), with 19 **Ringed Plovers**, 5 **Rock Pipits** and 4 **Reed Buntings** on Sandstell Point on a very high Spring tide. Also on the 10<sup>th</sup> a **Brambling** and 14 **Goldfinches** were in a Riverdene Garden and a flock of 64 **Goldfinches** were still coming to bird stations in Hiveacres. Little Beach on 13<sup>th</sup> held 113 **Sanderling**, 16 **Dunlin**, 22 **Ringed Plovers**, 4 **Grey Plovers**, 16 **Purple Sandpipers** and 120 **Turnstones**. 84 **Common Scoter**, 46 **Curlew** and 6 **Stonechats** (14<sup>th</sup>) were at Cocklawburn, with a pair of **Little Grebe** on the pond. At dawn on 14<sup>th</sup>, numbers of migratory **Pied Wagtails** at Tapee Fen peaked at 215.

A strong NE wind (16<sup>th</sup>) brought a northerly sea-bird movement with 80 **Gannets**, 6 **Kittiwakes** and 30 **Goldeneye** seen from the Pier in an hour. In Meadow Haven were a large flock of 74 **Goldeneye**, 26 **Eiders** and a **Razorbill**. A pair of **Common Partridge** were at South Ord. 2 **Shelducks** and 5 **Purple Sandpipers** were at Little Beach, with 45 **Pinkfeet** flying over (north) on 19<sup>th</sup>, and 3 **Fieldfares** and 30 **Goldfinches** were at Hiveacres (20<sup>th</sup>). A female **Blackcap** was in an East Ord garden between the 22<sup>nd</sup> and

27<sup>th</sup>. 12 **Redwings** were still at Middle Ord (23<sup>rd</sup>), with a **Buzzard** over West Ord. Another **Buzzard** was over Unthank. 10 **Greylag Geese** flew north over East Ord (24<sup>th</sup>), while 14 **Guillemots**, a pair of **Common Scoters** and a male **Long-tailed Duck** were at Cocklawburn, with a pair of **Tufted Duck** on the pond.

A **Slavonian Grebe** and 24 **Eider** were in Spittal Bay (25<sup>th</sup>), and a **Shag**, a **Grey Plover** and a pair of **Grey Wagtails** were on the Estuary. Another **Buzzard** was over Billylaw, Ord (26<sup>th</sup>) with 110 **Pink-footed Geese** flying north. A pair of **Long-tailed Ducks** near the Old Bridge, Berwick were joined by a second pair (28<sup>th</sup>), also on the Estuary were 10 **Goldeneye**, a female **Common Scoter** and 3 **Red-throated Divers**. 48 **Goldeneye** were at West Ord (30<sup>th</sup>) with the first 8 **Kittiwakes** of the season coming to roost on the Estuary, and 10 **Lesser Black-backed Gulls** were seen in a flock over Spittal Bay flying north. On 31<sup>st</sup> 7 **Redwing** were at East Ord House, 16 **Linnets** and 4 **Stonechats** were at Cocklawburn, while 10 **Teal**, 6 **Goosanders** and 2 **White Wagtails** (our Pied Wagtails are a subspecies of the continental White Wagtails) were at the mouth of the River Whiteadder, with 4 **Canada Geese** flying north there. A **Short-eared Owl** was seen hunting over Cocklawburn Dunes.

**Elsewhere.** A fine 1<sup>st</sup> winter **Glaucous Gull** was present in Burnmouth Harbour all month. A pair of **Red Kites** were flying over Hepburn Wood near Chillingham. The first pairs of **Fulmars** were spotted on cliff ledges at Lamberton on the 2<sup>nd</sup>. A flock of 12 **Whooper Swans** (6<sup>th</sup>) in a kale field at Cheswick House with 35 **Mutes** rose to 80 by the 8<sup>th</sup> before moving off north. A further 38 **Whoopers** were at Loanend, Homcliffe the first two weeks of the month. 5 **Buzzards**, a **Jay** and a **Stock Dove** were seen at Hutton Bridge (9<sup>th</sup>), while 2 **Greylag Geese**, a pair of **Common Partridge** and 2 **Common Snipe** were at Foulden. On the 15<sup>th</sup> a **Jay** visited a nut feeder at Cot Hill (SW of Duns). A **Peregrine** was seen S of Eyemouth on the 18<sup>th</sup>, initially chasing **Purple Sandpipers** by the shore and then flying some way out to sea. On 26<sup>th</sup> a **Peregrine** was over Burnmouth, and 2 **Ravens** on Blaikie Heugh N. of Burnmouth. On the 29<sup>th</sup> the first **Chiffchaff** in the area was reported from Cot Hill. By the 31<sup>st</sup> a group of **Purple Sandpipers** at Cheswick Black Rocks, originally of 8 birds on the 14<sup>th</sup>, had gathered 26 members. On 31<sup>st</sup> a pair of **Black-throated Divers** and 4 **Slavonian Grebes** (2 in summer plumage) were in Cheswick Bay.

**Butterflies.** Very few were reported during the month, but a Peacock was found on a garage floor in Berwick on the 24<sup>th</sup> (blown down in recent gale? – rescued and put to hibernate) and one was recorded in Walkergate, Berwick on the 29<sup>th</sup>.

**Mammals.** Several **Stoats** in (sometimes partial) ermine have been reported, including 2 in Hepburn Wood near Chillingham on the 1st, where a **Red Squirrel** was also seen. **Common Hares** have been displaying and ‘boxing’ in several localities, with a dark grey animal seen running through Cheswick dunes (21<sup>st</sup>). 2 **Harbour Porpoises** were in Spittal Bay on several dates mid-month.

**Surveys.** Many of our 2008 surveys - Squirrel Monitoring, BTO Atlas Survey, Beach Litter Survey and the two Butterfly Transects - have already started: studies of Bats, Bumblebees, Other Insects and Town Trees will begin as the season develops. It is not too late to join in with any of these. The information collected contributes to local and national conservation, it gets you out in the countryside to places you might not have visited before, and it's fun! Just let one of the Committee know and we will add you to our lists of volunteers.

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](mailto:mail3@berwickwildlifegroup.org.uk) .

### **ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING.**

We hereby give notice of our AGM, to be held at 7.30pm on Wednesday 7<sup>th</sup> May at Berwick United Reformed Church, Main Street, Spittal. The business part of the meeting will be kept as short and informal as possible, with brief reports from office-holders and election of the Committee. This past year has been our busiest ever, with more events, surveys and advisory work to arrange, so if anyone is interested in joining the Committee, we would be most grateful for some extra help. In particular, we are looking for a new Events Secretary and a Newsletter Editor, but if you'd rather help in other ways that would be fine. Please let us know.

Whether or not you are interested in Committee work, do come along to the meeting, find out about the Group's plans, tell us what we are doing wrong (or right!) and make suggestions for future activities and events.

**The AGM will be followed by a talk from BWG member and sea kayaker John Rae about his recent visit to Canada, "From Sea to Sky in British Columbia".**

### **MEMBERS' PHOTOS.**



Honeybee on snowdrops, 11<sup>th</sup> Feb., by John Rae.



Purple Henry Starfish by Jenny Prince.



Jay, in garden near Gavinton, by Gill Young.



Comma, Crowbank, Whiteadder, by Iain Cowe.

## **FORTHCOMING EVENTS.**

**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.

**Sunday 4<sup>th</sup> May. A bird survey around Scremerston**, the first summer visit to BWG's adopted tetrad for the BTO Atlas 2007-11. Meet **opposite Scremerston Church at 10.00am**. Wear sensible shoes and if possible bring binoculars. Beginners (and experts) welcome, about 2 hours very slow walk. Sorry, no dogs..

**Wednesday May 7<sup>th</sup>. AGM, followed by a talk "Sea to Sky in British Columbia"** by sea kayaker and wildlife enthusiast John Rae. Berwick United Reformed Church, Main Street, Spittal, **7.30pm**.

**Wednesday May 14<sup>th</sup>. A walk in the Harthope 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.

**Wednesday May 28<sup>th</sup>. Visit to the new reedbed reserve at the Fenton Centre** near Wooler – NT 969 337 with Anthony Johnston, People and Wildlife Officer with Northumberland Wildlife Trust. **11.00am to 1.00 pm**. Café available or bring a picnic.

**Sunday June 1<sup>st</sup>. First 2008 Butterfly Walk at Cocklawburn**. Meet at **10.30 am**. at car park at end of Cocklawburn road by pill box – NU 031 481. Sensible shoes and binoculars if you have them. Sorry, no dogs.

**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**. . Meet at car park at end of Cocklawburn road by pill box – NU 031 481. Bring lunch, weatherproof clothes and wellies or sandshoes.

**Friday or Saturday 20<sup>th</sup> or 21<sup>st</sup> June. Bumblebee identification walk** with bee expert Shaun Hackett. **10.00 am**, Stanton Gardens nr. Morpeth. Details to be confirmed

**Sunday June 29<sup>th</sup>. Border Green Festival at Five Arches Playing Field**, Tweedmouth. Berwick Wildlife Group will have a stand. Do visit us, and if you would like to volunteer to man the stand for an hour or two that would be wonderful!

**Sunday 13<sup>th</sup> July. Second 2008 Butterfly Walk at Cocklawburn, with Jaci Beaven of Butterfly Conservation**. Meet at **10.30 am**. at car park at end of Cocklawburn road by pill box – NU 032 481. Sensible shoes and binoculars if you have them. Sorry no dogs.

**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.