

Berwick Wildlife Group

www.berwickwildlifegroup.org.uk



Monthly Review April 2008

WILDLIFE REPORTS

Weather. April has not been the beginning of Spring that we have come to expect. The month has been a contrast of weather conditions on an almost a daily basis. We saw a warm start with the temperature reaching 16°C (62°F) on the 3rd, followed by snow and sleet showers with a keen north wind with a maximum of 4°C (40°F) on the 6th. Sunshine and showers predominated mid-month with variable winds and some calm days. Conditions started to warm up at the end of the month again, which triggered some heavy showers. Total rainfall for the month was 75mm (3.05 inches), which is the highest since 2004. Frosts occurred on the 6th, 8th, 15th, 16th, 18th and 29th. The coldest night, on the 6th, was -1°C (30°F).

Birds. This is the month of migration in both directions. It was a slow start due to cold and wet weather with adverse wind conditions. By mid-month things were well under way and a number of our summer migrants were arriving a bit earlier than usual, whereas most of our winter visitors had gone by then.

A **Blackcap** at Scremerston on the 2nd could either have been an early summer migrant, or a late wintering bird from Scandinavia. 2 **Wheatears**, 7 **Red-breasted Mergansers** and 10 **Common Scoters** were at Cocklawburn. **Chiff-chaffs** arrived in numbers on the 3rd, with one calling at Chateau Pedro and one in town near Golden Square. This calm day saw 5 **Buzzards** over West Ord. 3 **Sand Martins** headed north over East Ord on the 4th, when a **Wheatear** was at Cocklawburn with a drake **Pintail** in the company of three **Mallards**, 58 **Common Scoters**, a **Red-throated Diver**, 2 **Razorbills** and a **Guillemot**. A **Swallow** headed north at Sea House, Scremerston.

Our outdoor meeting, a walk around Plantation Wood on the 5th saw a pair of **Bullfinches** at Letham Shank, at least 5 different calling **Chiff-chaffs** and a pair of **Shelduck** on Yarrow Slake where a pair of **Canada Geese** stayed for five days. The mild conditions broke on the 6th which saw 10 **Teal** on Mid Ord pond, 3 **Goldeneye** and 7 **Grey Herons** at West Ord with 50+ **Sand Martins** feeding low over the river avoiding the sleet and snow showers.

The WeBS Estuary count on the 7th found a **Red-throated Diver**, a **Little Grebe**, 3 **Shags**, 12 **Grey Herons**, 40 **Mute Swans**, 37 **Eider**, 23 **Goldeneye**, 14 **Red-breasted Merganser**, a **Common Scoter**, 92 **Curlew**, 188 **Redshank** and 2 **Fulmars**. On Little Beach were 46 **Turnstone**, 62 **Purple Sandpipers** (a record number here), 6 **Rock Pipits**, a **White Wagtail** and a pair of **Stonechats**. (Our Pied Wagtail is the British race of the European White Wagtail.) A **Treecreeper** and 4 **Long-tailed Tits** were found in Berwick churchyard (8th) and the same day produced the unusual sight of 12 **Cormorants** fishing the Tweed as a team, spread out over the river in a line and moving upstream pushing the fish into the shallow edges. They were closely followed by 8 **Grey Herons** looking for an easy meal. A **Swallow** was also spotted and 30+ **Sand Martins**.

A pair of **Mute Swans** and 6 **Tufted Duck** were on Cocklawburn pond (10th), also 3 **Wheatears** and a **Peregrine** at Cocklawburn and a **Swallow** at Pier Field. A mixed finch flock of 100+ birds, mainly **Linnets**, were at Millfield Farm (11th), and 2 more **Swallows** at Cocklawburn on the 13th. 4 **Goosander**, 2 **Red-breasted Merganser** and a **Red-throated Diver** were on the Estuary (14th). A **Sparrowhawk** was at Mill Farm (16th). A **Goldcrest**, some **Long-tailed Tits** and **Goldfinches** were noted on Pier Road (21st) with 4 **Teal** on the Estuary. On 23rd a **Sparrowhawk** killed a Starling in a Tweedmouth garden. At Little Beach on 24th were 5 **Sanderling**, 6 **Ringed Plover**, 2 **Purple Sandpiper**, 65+ **Turnstones** and 4 **Wheatears**. A **Willow Warbler**, 2 **Chiff-chaffs**, a pair of **Stonechats** and a pair of **Reed Buntings** (25th) were in Flagstaff Park. 12 **Goosanders** and 3 **Willow Warblers** (27th) were at West Ord. A **Nuthatch** was calling loudly at Ord House, while on the Estuary were 120 **Kittiwake** and 5 **Sandwich Terns** in the gull roost .

A busy migrant day on the 28th with 4 (Greenland race) **Wheatears**, a **Yellow Wagtail**, and 2 **White Wagtails** on the Golf Course, while on Little Beach were 24 **Turnstones**, 6 **Purple Sandpipers** and 30 **Oystercatchers**. Further up the shore at the Coastwatch station were a further 5 **Purple Sandpipers**. South of the Tweed, 5 **Greenland Wheatears**, 4 **House Martins** and 2 **Swifts** were over Cocklawburn, with a **Moorhen** on the pond there and 84 **Sandwich Terns** were roosting on Saltpan Rocks. 30 **Turnstones** and 180 **Mute Swans** were on the river at Berwick (29th), a **Raven** was seen over Tweedmouth heading for the coast, closely chased by the local Gulls, and a **Buzzard** sailed over Conundrum.

Elsewhere. On the 3rd 7 **Purple Sandpipers** were noted in Eyemouth. 60+ **Pink-footed Geese** flew north over Foulden (4th). 24 **Sanderling**, 12 **Common Scoters** and a **Peregrine** were at Cheswick (9th), and a drake Mandarin on the Eye Water at Houndwood. 3 **Wheatears** and 4 **Stonechats** in the dunes at Cheswick on 11th. On 13th 100 **Knot** were at Chare Ends, Holy Island, and a **Brent Goose** was on the village pond. On 21st there were 3 sightings of single **Sandwich Terns** between Eyemouth and Coldingham. 2 **House Martins** were over Ancroft ponds (22nd), while a pair of **Swallows** returned to a Paxton garden "exactly on time" and 3 were spotted near Lamberton and a **Willow Warbler** at Burnmouth. A pair of **Mandarin Ducks** were seen on the Eye Water at Jubilee Bridge on 25th, with a **House Martin**. On 26th 2 or 3 **Blackcaps** were at Duns Castle. On 27th a **Willow Warbler** and 3 **Wheatears** were on Billylaw; a **Dipper**, 2 **Grey Wagtails** and 2 **Oystercatchers** at Edington Mill; and a **Common Sandpiper**, 2 **Chiff-chaffs** and a **Dipper** at Cockburn Mill Bridge. A **Short-eared Owl** hunted the dunes at Cheswick (28th) with 12 **Sandwich Terns**, 10 **Razorbill**, 2 **Shelducks** and 14 **Purple Sandpipers** on the shore, while 3 **Blackcaps** were along the Eye Water and a **Ring Ouzel** at Blaikie Heugh. The BTO Breeding Bird Survey found 3 **Tufted Duck**, 2 **Sedge Warblers**, a **Lesser Whitethroat** and 3 **Whitethroats** at East Ancroft (29th). Also on the 29th, 2 **Whitethroats** were found at Linkim Shore and 34 **Turnstones** near Eyemouth and a **Yellow Wagtail** at Lintlaw (N or Edrom).

Mammals. On the 3rd the first **Pipistrelle Bat** of the season was seen near Tapee Fen.

Butterflies. On the 2nd there were records of **Peacocks** throughout our area (e.g. 6 at Crowbank, Whiteadder, and 5 by Till at Etal), and despite the weather some have made it to the end of the month – 4 near Lamberton on 22nd and 3 in Tommy-the-Miller's Field on 27th. A few **Commas** were also about, for instance on 2nd and 20th at Tommy-the-Miller's, **Small Tortoiseshells** (2nd Tommy-the-Miller's and 29th on coast N of Eyemouth), **Small Whites** (20th and 26th at Tommy-the-Miller's) and an early **Orange Tip** at Whiteadder Bank on the 29th.

Bumblebees. Queens of **Buff-tailed Bumblebees** (*Bombus terrestris*) have been around throughout the month, and other species have been seen, although not in large numbers because of the weather. Records include a queen **Early Bumblebee** (*B. pratorum*) near Chirnside on the 2nd, queens of 1 **Red-tailed** (*B. lapidarius*), 1 **Early** (*B. pratorum*) and several **Buff-tailed** (*B. terrestris*) in a Berwick garden on the 15th, and a fine queen **Red-tailed** (*B. lapidarius*), actively feeding in a Tweedmouth garden on the 28th.

Thank you very much to all who sent in wildlife records. Please send us records and photos. E-mail mail3@berwickwildlifegroup.org.uk or phone 01289 309046.

Forthcoming Events

We are hoping for some glorious days out in our summer programme. Do join us.

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

Wednesday May 14th. 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.

Could I also draw your attention to a public walk at St Abbs Head?

Saturday 24th May, 2.00 pm - 4.00 pm, Bumblebee Walk. Come and discover more about bumblebees with the Ranger, Jen Edwards. Find out what they eat, where they live and how to tell which one's which. Fun for all ages! Wear sturdy footwear. Meet at St. Abb's Head car park - **NT 913 674.** Cost: Adults £2, children £1 (all children must be accompanied). No booking required. Enquiries: (018907) 71443

Wednesday May 28th. 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 1st. 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 5th. 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.

Members and non-members are welcome at all these events. There may be a small charge. For more information look at our website www.berwickwildlifegroup.org.uk, e-mail mail3@berwickwildlifegroup.org.uk or phone 01289 330591. Unless weather is truly appalling (or all the wildlife is likely to be covering in shelter) outdoor meetings go ahead – bring waterproofs. If in doubt on the day, telephone 01289 330591.