

Berwick Wildlife Group

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Monthly Review August 2007



WILDLIFE REPORTS

Weather. We have been told that 2007 is the wettest summer on record, yet around Berwick we seem to have missed the wettest conditions. August has been a month of high cloud, sunny spells and average temperatures. The only exception being the 19th which was cold and wet all day with 23mm (0.9) inches falling and a fresh northerly wind. On the plus side, this was a day for exciting sea-bird watching!

Birds

August is the start of the return migration and in the next ten weeks or so birds are on the move. It's a time when anything can turn up 'on our doorstep' and regularly does.

On Little Beach, migrant waders appeared on the 1st with 14 **Ringed Plover**, 4 **Dunlin** and 8 **Turnstone**. Around the Coastwatch Station a flock of 70+ **House Martins** had gathered and in Meadow Haven were a large numbers of Terns feeding with a **Great Skua** 'pestering' them. In all, 45 **Sandwich Terns** and 12 **Arctic Terns** were seen. In Spittal Bay there were 65 Sandwich Terns. A family party of **Grey Wagtails** with two immatures were at the Boathouse on the 2nd with 18 **Canada Geese**, a **Barnacle Goose** and 10 **Greylag Geese** in the Yarrow Slake area. A **Great spotted Woodpecker** was at East Ord House (3rd). The largest moulting flock this year of **Goosander** was seen early morning (5th) in Meadow Haven with 114 birds. They were with 14 **Guillemots** and 16 **Razorbills**. An hours' sea watch here saw a northerly movement past the Pier of 24 **Wigeon**, 74 **Common Scoters**, 9 **Manx Shearwaters** and 2 **Arctic Skuas**. The 'summering' **Whooper Swan** re-appeared on the estuary (6th) and stayed throughout with 4 **Common Terns** showing (8th). A very large party of 32 **Common Partridges** (9th) were feeding on weed seeds in Ramparts new estate. Off Berwick Pier a lone **Manx Shearwater** was feeding with 26 **Guillemots**.

The monthly WeBS count (11th) found 18 **Grey Herons**, 332 **Mute Swans**, 42 **Goosander**, 148 **Lapwing**, 56 **Curlew**, 73 **Redshank** and a large gathering of 1,270 **Herring Gulls**. It is obvious the estuary is being used by these birds as a regional 'nursery', from breeding sites like Holburn Moss, as the majority were juveniles. Two **Buzzards** floated over East Ord (12th) with a flock of 30+ **Swifts** (14th) over the village. The same day saw a **Kingfisher** and 2 families of **Moorhens** at West Ord and a **Common Sandpiper** at Toddles Shiel. On Little Beach were 9 **Dunlin**, 3 **Sanderlings** and a **Knot**.

The **Swift** population left the Berwick area on the 16th with not a single sighting since! The same day saw a **Peregrine** chasing waders over the sea at Cocklawburn where a count of 180 **Sandwich Terns** and 28 **Arctic Terns** was made. Good numbers of waders appeared on Little Beach (17th) with 106 **Ringed Plovers**, 12 **Dunlin**, 4 **Sanderling** 2 early **Curlew Sandpipers** and 52 **Turnstones**. A **Willow Warbler** was singing at Longridge Towers and at Cocklawburn were c.100 **Guillemots** and 6

Puffins feeding and an **Arctic Skua**. A **Greenshank** and a **Little Grebe** were at Yarrow Slake on the 18th. A driving wet, cold north-easterly wind (19th), brought a good northerly sea-bird movement past the Pier, with an hour's watch at 9a.m. recording 2,200 **Gannets**, 140 **Fulmars**, 350 **Kittiwakes** and 7 **Sooty Shearwaters**. Another hour's watch at 6p.m. saw 730 Gannets, 2 **Common Scoters**, 2 **Sooty Shearwaters**, 2 **Great Skuas**, and 3 **Arctic Skuas**. In Meadow Haven were 10 Goosanders with an early female **Goldeneye**. At Yarrow Slake (20th) were 22 **Greylag Geese** and a **Peregrine**. Another sea watch (22nd) saw 8 **Manx Shearwaters** and 3 **Sooty Shearwaters** past the Pier. At Yarrow Slake on the 23rd there were 34 **Canada Geese** and 36 **Greylag**.

Another large group of 12 **Grey Partridge** were at Borewell Farm (25th) with a further 11 birds (30th) at West Ord. A **Whimbrel** was calling after dusk (27th) at 10.30p.m. over East Ord. 260 **Guillemots** were at Cocklawburn (29th) with a **Red-throated Diver** still in summer plumage and 2 **Whimbrel**. **Black-tailed Godwit** appeared (30th) with 2 at West Ord, 3 at Yarrow Slake and a single at Little Beach. Also at West Ord were a **Spotted Redshank** and a **Common Sandpiper**, with 52 **Curlew** and 2 **Greenshanks** at the 'Slake' and a **Purple Sandpiper** on Little Beach. In the Estuary were 2 **Teal** and 5 **Manx Shearwaters** passed the Pier.

Elsewhere in the area.

8 **Mute Swans** were on the sea at Cheswick (8th) with 3 **Red-throated Divers**, 2 **Sooty Shearwaters**, 5 **Puffins** and 3 **Little Terns**. A female **Wheatear** feeding 2 immatures were on the shoreline here. At Goswick were 3 **Common Snipe** 2 **Dunlin**, and 2 immature **Shelducks**. A **Mediterranean Gull** was at Eyemouth (9th), with 2 **Little Gulls** there (16th). At Cheswick (29th) was a **Whinchat** and a **Whitethroat** in the dunes, with a **Red-throated Diver**, 26 **Common Scoter** and an **Arctic Skua** harrying the Terns.

Butterflies

It's turning out to be a poor summer for butterflies and other insects so far, but a good showing of **Peacocks** is encouraging. A **Comma** was found at New Water Haugh (2nd) along with a couple of **Red Admirals** and 5 **Small Tortoiseshells**. Good numbers of **Meadow Brown** recorded early in the month with the latest (so far) at Cheswick (29th). **Grayling** on the coastal Dunes were average with 5 in Cheswick dunes (8th) and 4 at Goswick, playing "dead" when approached as is typical of the species, then losing their nerve and flying off. Also here were the expected numbers of **Small Heaths** and **Common Blues**. 4 **Dark green Fritillaries** were in Cheswick dunes (8th). A **Painted Lady** (scarce this Autumn) was feeding on Creeping Thistle flowers (9th) on Ramparts estate with another at Middle Ord (30th). At Ford Moss on 28th were 3 **Small Coppers**, 4 **Small Heaths**, 3 **Peacocks** and 1 **Comma**.

Bees.

Lots of drones and queens of bumblebees are now around, fewer workers. The drones are looking a bit battered this season (as they live out in all weathers). Mining bees (a species of *Colletes*) were very active around their holes during fine weather mid-month near Holburn and at Ford Moss. Do you know of any other sites?

With many thanks to the recorders. Make the most of the last days of summer - get out there and observe and then send us your wildlife records and photos.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS .

Thursday 6th (or if wet Fri 7th) September. Bat Survey.

Ravensdowne/Parade/Barracks, checking perimeter of Barracks adjacent to Upper Ravensdowne for possible bat emergence/roosts. Meet at Parade Car Park at **19.30**

Saturday 8th September. Fungus Foray with mycology specialist Dr Philip Mason, Grange Wood, Coldingham. Meet at the wood at **2.00 pm**. (NT 872 652. From Reston junction of A1 drive north on B6438 towards Coldingham, then take first left at Cairncross, Grange Wood is about 1 ½ miles on left). Car sharing advised as limited parking.

Change of date and time. **Saturday 15th September. Beach Litter Survey**, (brought forward from Friday 28th) meet at car park by Little (Pier) Beach, Berwick (by Lowrie Shelter) at **10.00 am** (not 2.00pm).

Sorry, no bat survey 20th/21st September).

Last week in September (Sat 23rd to Sun 29th) is the final week of the summer's Butterfly Transect in Tommy-the-Miller's Field. As the culmination of the season's work, do please join us for a walk on a wonderfully intricate steep hillside (even if it is not your Group's "week" or you have never been before). Date and time depend on weather, but just let us know if you are interested and we'll get back to you.

Saturday 6th October. Autumn Birdwatch, Berwick. A walk led by Malcolm and John, a chance to see some unusual migrants. Beginners welcome. Meet at car park at the end of the road above Little Beach at **10.00 am**. Dress for standing around – can be cold!

Wednesday 14th November. Cyril Guthrie of Wooler will demonstrate and talk about the making of his superb wildlife films, some of which have been shown on the BBC. Berwick United Reformed Church, Main Street, Spittal, **7.30pm**.

Wednesday 12th December. Berwick is Brilliant for Wildlife – Display and discussion of highlights from our many surveys in 2007. Do come along, swap information on our local fauna and flora and consider what we might investigate in 2008. Seasonal refreshments will be provided. Berwick United Reformed Church, Main Street, Spittal, **7.30pm**.

Details of 2008's programme of winter talks and summer walks will be given in the quarterly Newsletter at the beginning of October.

Contact us. Look at our website www.berwickwildlifegroup.org.uk, phone 01289 330591, e-mail mail3@berwickwildlifegroup.org.uk or just come to an event (non-members very welcome).