

# Berwick Wildlife Group

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



## Monthly Review February 2008

### WILDLIFE REPORTS

**Weather.** The Meteorological Office has stated that last month was the best February for sunshine since records began. Our area has had at least 12 days of sunshine with temperatures being variable. Frost was recorded on 11 nights, the coldest being the night of the 18<sup>th</sup> (-4.5°C, 24°F). Strong winds from the west were a feature on the 1st, 26<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup>. On the 26<sup>th</sup> the winds peaked mid-afternoon, bringing damage in some areas. Rainfall has been well below the average of 2.25 inches, with only 1 inch (13.5mm.) all month.

**Birds.** The large numbers of Siskins and Goldfinches around bird feeding stations slowly dropped in number over the month, with a notable increase in Blackbirds visiting gardens. Many birds have come into song, particularly Song Thrushes and Blackbirds. On the coast a record number of Long-tailed Ducks were offshore all month, several groups displaying and giving their haunting calls. Strong north-west winds on the 22<sup>nd</sup> saw an early return of some of our seabirds.

110 **Goldeneye** were at Yarrow Slake (2<sup>nd</sup>). A **Red-breasted Merganser** was on Cocklawburn pond (3<sup>rd</sup>) and 24 **Fieldfares** and 10 **Redwings** were at Middle Ord (4<sup>th</sup>). 36 **Goldfinches** and 10 **Siskins** (5<sup>th</sup>) at the garden feeders in Hiveacres fell to 15 and 4 respectively on the 28<sup>th</sup>. A group of **600+ mixed finches** were in fields at Mill Farm all month.

The WeBS estuary count on the 8<sup>th</sup> recorded: 2 **Little Grebes**, 15 **Grey Herons**, 22 **Mute Swans**, 40 **Grey-lag Geese**, a **Canada Goose**, 2 **Shelduck**, 102 **Mallard**, a drake **Tufted Duck**, 246 **Goldeneye**, a drake **Long-tailed Duck**, 420 **Lapwing** and 590 **Redshank**. Offshore at Cocklawburn (10<sup>th</sup>), in misty conditions were 26 displaying and calling **Long-tailed Ducks** with 3 **Red-throated Divers**, 8 **Common Scoters**, and on the shore 60 **Twite**. 44 **Pink footed Geese** flew north and 2 **Stonechats** were seen at Spittal cliffs.

A drake **Velvet Scoter** and 3 **Guillemot** were feeding in Spittal Bay (11<sup>th</sup>), with 1,300 **Black headed Gulls** coming to roost here late afternoon in the calm conditions. 6 **Long tailed Tits** were in a small flock at Flagstaff Park (14<sup>th</sup>) – and a few have been appearing intermittently all month in Castle Terrace. 18 **Long-tailed Ducks** were still at Cheswick (15<sup>th</sup>) with 10 **Snow Buntings** flying along the shore there. 5 **Little Grebes** were at Yarrow Slake (16<sup>th</sup>), at high tide.

Stormy conditions on the 22<sup>nd</sup> saw 22 **Gannets** flying north with 10 **Fulmars** in 30 minutes sea watching mid-afternoon. 6 **Wigeon** and 44 **Teal** were at Middle Ord pond (24<sup>th</sup>). Seen at Little Beach (25<sup>th</sup>) were: 16 **Ringed Plovers**, 12 **Dunlin**, 54 **Sanderlings**, 5 **Purple Sandpipers**, 72 **Turnstones** and 8 **Rock Pipits**. Offshore were 22 **Red-breasted Merganser** and 33 **Eiders** on Meadow Haven. A Swedish ringed **Black headed Gull** was noted at Carr Rock in a roost of 40+ birds. 8 **Wigeon** were at Middle Ord pond (28<sup>th</sup>).

**Elsewhere.** 100 Fieldfares were on farmland around Cothill, Duns on the 3<sup>rd</sup>. On the 4<sup>th</sup> 60 **Sanderling**, 30 **Ringed Plover**, 1 **Grey Plover**, 10 **Purple Sandpiper**, 25 **Turnstone**, 15 **Curlew**, 1 **Bar-tailed Godwit**, 15 **Redshank** and 5 **Dunlin** were on the shore between Bamburgh and Seahouses, while there were a pair of **Goldeneye** in Seahouses Harbour, 4 **Long-tailed Duck** and a **Red-throated Diver** off St Aidan's Dunes, 40 **Common Scoter** off Monks House (N of Seahouses) and a **Great Northern Diver** close inshore off Greenhill Rocks. The same day a **Merlin** was seen, flying off the sea (from the Farnes?) just south of Bamburgh Castle. On the 5<sup>th</sup> 2 **Nuthatches** were on feeders at Cothill.

1,280 **Pink-footed Geese** were grazing on Windmill Hill, Goswick (6<sup>th</sup>). A **Crossbill** and 15+ **Siskins** were at Monynut Forest, near Cranshaws (10<sup>th</sup>), with a **Merlin** seen at Preston. On the 11<sup>th</sup> 8 **Tufted Duck**, a pair of **Wigeon** and 2 pairs of **Little Grebes** were on Learmouth lake, near Cornhill, and 6 **Skylark** including 1 in full song south of Eyemouth. 22 **Twite** and 10 **Grey Partridge** were on Goswick dunes (12<sup>th</sup>) with a raft of 140 **Common Scoters** offshore. 5 **Long-tailed Ducks**, 64 **Common Scoters** and 2 **Shelducks** were at Cheswick (15<sup>th</sup>) with 12 **Purple Sandpipers**, 16 **Ringed Plovers** and 10 **Turnstones** at the Black Rocks, Cheswick. A female **Merlin** was at Shoreswood (24<sup>th</sup>), with 26 **Yellowhammers**, 8 **Reed Buntings** and 55 **Goldfinches** feeding on the roadside verge at Mount Carmel, Norham. 17 **Mute Swans** and 21 **Whooper Swans** were feeding in a kale field at Cheswick House (25<sup>th</sup>), 18 **Long-tailed Ducks** and a **Red-throated Diver** were offshore at Cheswick and 28 **Greylag Geese** and 40 **Teal** were at Foulden pond.

**BTO Winter Atlas** results this month found: 30 **Yellowhammers** and 6 **Skylarks** at Low Cocklaw; 8 **Grey Partridge**, 7 **Stock Doves** and 9 **Reed Buntings** at Kentstone near Beal; a **Stonechat** and 12 **Tree Sparrows** at Goswick; and a **Grey Heron**, 160 **Golden Plover**, 12 **Sanderling**, 112 **Curlews** and 6 **Stonechats** at Goswick dunes.

**Mammals.** On the 12<sup>th</sup> a **Harbour Porpoise** was seen off Ross Bank Sands.

**Butterflies.** No reports from Berwick, but a **Peacock** was seen in Roughside Wood, Abbey St Bathans on the 10<sup>th</sup>, another on the 11<sup>th</sup> on the Border Ridge at Black Halls (480m.) and a **Small Tortoiseshell** at Killingworth, Tyne and Wear again on the 11<sup>th</sup>.

**Other insects.** A honey bee was discovered collecting pollen from snowdrops at Kentstone near Beal on the 11<sup>th</sup>.

**Thank you very much to all who sent in wildlife records.** Do please send us records and your spring photos for the March Newsletter and the website.

### **March and April Events**

**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.**

**Thursday March 13<sup>th</sup>.** Litter Survey at Little Beach, Berwick for Marine Conservation Society. Meet at 10.00 am in the car park at Little Beach (Berwick, near Pier).

Bring warm waterproof clothes, strong footwear and tough gardening gloves.

**Tuesday 1<sup>st</sup> April.** Butterfly surveys (Cocklawburn and Tommy the Miller's) begin!

**Saturday 5<sup>th</sup> April.** A spring walk in the Plantation, Berwick. Meet at top of Askew's Walk (NT 981 537), old Paxton road, at **10.30 am.** Park at roadside. Path through wood often very muddy, wellies or boots advised.

**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](http://www.berwickwildlifegroup.org.uk), e-mail [mail3@berwickwildlifegroup.org.uk](mailto:mail3@berwickwildlifegroup.org.uk) or phone 01289 330591.