

# Berwick Wildlife Group

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## Monthly Review January 2008

### WILDLIFE REPORTS

**Weather.** The weather for the first month of the New Year was fairly average for mid-winter, although it was wet with 136.6mm (5.35 inches) of rain. There was no snow cover, but there were several frosts each week with a low of 24F (-4.4C) on the night of the 12<sup>th</sup>. Each day was different and there were highs of 50F (10C) on the 13<sup>th</sup>, 25<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> and of 52F (11C) on the 27<sup>th</sup>. Strong westerly gales occurred on the 9<sup>th</sup> and the 25<sup>th</sup>.

**Birds.** Large numbers of Siskins and Goldfinches on bird feeders seemed to be the only high spot this month. Two large Starling roosts at East Ord House and the *Cupressus leylandii* hedge in the Co-op car park, Tweedmouth, both of several thousand birds, brought good and bad comments.

On Sandstell Point, Spittal were 24 **Twite** (2<sup>nd</sup>) with another 9 at Little Beach car park. 105 **Goldfinches** and 42 **Twite** were at Cocklawburn (4<sup>th</sup>), with 142 **Common Scoter** and 2 **Red-throated Divers** on the sea there. On the Tweed Estuary were 2 **Shelducks**, 2 **Shags** and 5 **Red-breasted Mergansers**. 168 **Teal** were crammed onto the pond at Middle Ord (6<sup>th</sup>), with a **Whooper Swan**, a **Canada Goose** and 22 **Goldeneye** at West Ord. 50+ **Goldeneye**, 2 **Goosander** and a female **Long-tailed Duck** were at Yarrow Slake and 140 **Greylag Geese** flew south with 2 **Stonechats** in the field there. On Meadow Haven were 2 **Red-throated Divers**, 12 **Red-breasted Mergansers** 24 **Eiders**, 10+ **Purple Sandpipers**, c.50 **Sanderling**, c.40 **Ringed Plover** and 30 **Turnstone**. A **Fulmar** was over Spittal Bay (7<sup>th</sup>), and 3 **Snow Buntings** were spotted in a *Buddleja* bush below the walls by Sandgate. On the 8<sup>th</sup> 3 **Grey Plovers** and a pair of **Stonechats** at were at Little Beach.

A female **Blackcap** visited Hiveacres gardens (10<sup>th</sup>, also 17<sup>th</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup>). A male was also seen early in the month in Castle Terrace gardens in Berwick. On the 9<sup>th</sup> 2 **Twite** were in Flagstaff Park. The WeBS estuary count (11<sup>th</sup>) found 2 **Little Grebes**, 17 **Grey Herons**, 37 **Mute Swans**, 108 **Goldeneye**, 27 **Oystercatchers**, 326 **Lapwings**, a **Grey Plover** (scarce on Yarrow Slake), 38 **Dunlin**, 190 **Redshank**, 22 **Turnstone** plus 2 **Fulmars** on Union Bridge. Both a male **Peregrine** and a **Sparrow Hawk** were hunting over the town (12<sup>th</sup>) and 140 **Linnets** and 86 **Common Scoter** were at Cocklawburn the same day. A male **Long-tailed Duck** and 2 **Goosanders** were in the Estuary (13<sup>th</sup>) with a **Buzzard** over Middle Ord and c.19 **Red-breasted Mergansers** around Meadow Haven. On Little Beach on 14<sup>th</sup> were 66 **Ringed Plover**, 154 **Sanderlings**, 186 **Dunlin**, 4 **Purple Sandpipers**, 2 **Grey Plovers** and 2 **Bar-tailed Godwits**. On the 18<sup>th</sup>, 18+ **Purple Sandpipers** and 45+ **Turnstone** were on Little Beach; and a **Common Snipe** and a **Little Grebe** were at Yarrow Slake (19<sup>th</sup>). A pair of **Long-tailed Ducks** and 6 **Stonechats** were noted at Cocklawburn.

A partially white-headed **House Sparrow** was reported from Highfields on the 20<sup>th</sup>, having been around for some days. A party of 5 **Long-tailed tits** regularly visited feeders in Castle Terrace around the same time, staying almost to the end of the month. A pair of **Wigeon** (20<sup>th</sup>) on Middle Ord pond, stayed until 25<sup>th</sup>. A **Great spotted Woodpecker** and 2 **Stock Doves** were at West Ord. A **Peregrine** was "shadowing" the East Ord Starling

roost and a **Lesser Redpoll** was feeding by the road at the Industrial Estate there. On Meadow Haven were 16 **Red-breasted Mergansers**, 42 **Goldeneye**, 16 **Shags** and a **Guillemot**. 160 **Pink footed Geese** were flying north over Berwick (28<sup>th</sup>), with a further 34 next day. 7 **Magpies** were together at the East Ord roundabout and 5 at Springhill (30<sup>th</sup>).

**Elsewhere.** 120 **Whooper Swans** and 34 **Mutes** were at Loanend, Horncliffe (6<sup>th</sup>) with a flock of 220 **Fieldfares**. 5 **Long-tailed Duck**, 310 **Common Scoter** and 6 **Red-breasted Merganser** were at Cheswick Shiel (9<sup>th</sup>). On the 11<sup>th</sup> 60 **Redshank** were in Burnmouth Harbour and nearby, with a **Purple Sandpiper** also in the harbour. On the cliffs to the north a **Peregrine** was hunting. A pair of **Bullfinch** were at Ancroft (14<sup>th</sup>) and a **Siskin** in a garden at Eyemouth on the 18<sup>th</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup>. 7 **Grey Partridge** were at Shoreswood (20<sup>th</sup>), with 72 **Grey-lag Geese** and 14 **Mute Swans** in a field at Norham West Mains.

Many people took part in the **Winter Birdwatch Survey** and interesting reports included: 3 **Long-tailed Tits** (13<sup>th</sup>), 22 **Goldfinches**, 3 **Siskins** (26<sup>th</sup>) at a Riverdene garden while feeders in four gardens in Hiveacres attracted a peak of 55 **Goldfinches** (4<sup>th</sup>) and 48 **Siskin** (10<sup>th</sup>) and a male **Sparrow Hawk**.

**BTO Winter Atlas** results this month found a **Sparrow Hawk**, 180 **Carrion Crows**, 210+ **Black headed Gulls** and c.1,800 **Starlings** near the Pig Farm, Halidon Hill; **Kestrel**, **Dunlin**, and **Mistle Thrush** at Cheswick Shiel; **Long-tailed Tits**, **Bullfinch** and **Yellowhammer** at East Ancroft; and **Woodcock**, **Sparrow Hawk**, **Buzzard**, **Bullfinch** and **Magpie** at Scremerston.

**Mammals.** An interesting report from John Ingles of a **Roe Deer** trying to cross the Tweed in spate at Chateau Pedro. It got swept downstream, eventually gaining its footing and making it ashore at Mill Farm. A **Mink** was seen amongst the harbour rocks at Eyemouth on the 15<sup>th</sup>. A **Stoat in ermine** was seen at Dowlaw, Coldingham (29<sup>th</sup>).

**Butterflies.** None reported on the wing, but a **Peacock** was discovered 2<sup>nd</sup> week of the month hibernating in a pile of logs in a Castle Terrace garden. So that's where they go....

### **February and March Events**

**Estuary Bird Survey.** BWG's regular mid-winter "count" to monitor changes in water-bird populations on the estuary and coast. Meet at the **Tweedmouth side of the Old Bridge, 11.00 am on Saturday 9<sup>th</sup> February** (if weather appalling same time and place Saturday 23<sup>rd</sup> February). Will definitely be cold, probably wet and windy, wrap up well and bring boots, binoculars and some lunch. Often a tough day, but detailed bird records for this Special Area of Conservation are extremely important.

**Wednesday 13<sup>th</sup> February. The Music of Birds.** A talk with recordings by Geoff Sample, wildlife sound recorder. **Berwick United Reformed Church, Main Street, Spittal, 7.30pm.**

**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.

**Members and non-members are welcome** at all these events. There may be a small charge. Contact details below. **Thank you very much to all who sent in wildlife records.** Please send any records and photos for February – e-mail them to us via <http://www.berwickwildlifegroup.org.uk/Sightings.html> or phone 01289 309046.