

Berwick Wildlife Group

www.berwickwildlifegroup.org.uk

Monthly Review January 2009



WILDLIFE REPORTS.

Weather. January 2009 has been colder than the past few Januaries with many nights below freezing. The coldest night was the 6th, which dropped to -4.5°C (23.9°F). Several damp spells with fresh westerly winds occurred bringing the total rainfall figure to 49.5mm (1.9 inches) which is well below average. Snowfall appeared on several days over the Cheviots and Lammermuirs, but did not occur in our recording area. Several warmer spells with light winds brought mild temperatures, highest on the 12th with 11.0°C (51.8°F).

Birds. A rather quiet month, with a lack of small birds noticeable in the country side although there were plenty at some garden feeders. Birds were also thin on the coast with lower than normal figures recorded in our monthly counts.

12+ **Long-tailed Tits** were at a Castle Terrace garden feeder on 1st. A northward passage of 94 **Goldeneye** up the coast past the Pier (2nd), with 16 **Eiders** in Meadow Haven, and a large roost of 500+ **Black-headed Gulls** on the Estuary, including a fine winter plumaged **Mediterranean Gull**. On the 3rd, there were a **Sparrowhawk** near the sewage farm, 3 **Dunlin** and 12 **Grey Herons** at Yarrow Slake and 5 **Little Grebe** by the Royal Border Bridge. Duck numbers squeezed onto Middle Ord pond (4th) were 108 **Mallard**, and 12 **Teal**. Also seen on the 4th were 2 **Siskins** at Riverdene and at Cheswick 3 **Wigeon**, 2 **Little Grebe**, 2 **Mallards** and a **Rough-legged Buzzard** hunting along the railway line. On the 6th a **Great-spotted Woodpecker** visited Riverdene, and 6 **Goosander** were on the Tweed at West Ord. At Cheswick on the 7th were 4 **Moorhen**, 4 **Little Grebe**, 16 **Mallard**, 100+ **Black-headed** and **Common Gulls**, 1 drake **Teal** and 3 **Golden Plover**. The same day, low tide on Calot Shad saw 74 **Dunlin**, 2 **Bar-tailed Godwits**, with a flock of 74 **Goldeneye** on the River. 5 **Red-breasted Mergansers** and 2 **Shag** were on Spittal Bay (9th), where 2 **Black-throated Divers** were seen. The **Sparrowhawk** was around the sewage works again on the 10th, while Yarrow Slake held a **Snipe**, 12 **Grey Heron** and 4 **Goosanders** and there were 24 **Goldeneye** off Yarrow Point. A **Grey Wagtail** was seen on the New Road on the 11th and there was a **mixed wader flock** of 200-300 birds at Little Beach. 120 **Common Scoter** were offshore at Cheswick on the 12th.

Our first official count (13th), north of the Tweed up to Dodd's Well, found 74 **Dunlin**, 76 **Sanderling**, 12 **Purple Sandpipers**, 2 **Grey Plovers**, 60 **Turnstones** and 2 **Goosanders**. 2 **Siskins** were seen at Dodd's Well. The WeBS estuary count (14th) recorded 3 **Little Grebes**, 24 **Grey Herons**, 16 **Mute Swans**, 32 **Eider**, 245 **Goldeneye**, 548 **Lapwings**, 267 **Redshanks** and 286 **Black-headed Gulls**. A pair of **Bullfinches** were seen at Toddles Sheil. A **Waxwing** was found (16th) in the Palace Green area feeding on holly and on fallen apples in a garden by the Walls. At Cocklawburn were a **Red-throated Diver**, 35 **Ringed Plover** and 3 **Grey Plover**. At Middle Ord pond were 22 **Wigeon** and 34 **Teal**, while low tide at Meadow Haven saw 15 **Bar-tailed Godwits**, 22 **Purple Sandpipers**, 62 **Turnstones** and a passing **Peregrine**. Also on the 16th, 52 **Goldeneye** were close to the Old Bridge and 28 in the Dock, and a **Great Northern Diver** was at Cheswick. The 18th saw a **Red-throated Diver** off the lighthouse Pier, and 18 **Bar-tailed Godwits** at Berwick Ponds. At Little Beach on the 22nd were 42 **Sanderling**, 90 **Dunlin**, 1 **Grey Plover**, 50 **Turnstone**, 50 **Redshank**, 40 **Oystercatcher** and 11 **Bar-tailed Godwit** at high tide.

10 **Tufted Duck** were at Cocklawburn on the 23rd. On the 24th there were 3 **Swans**, 3 **Moorhen**, a **Grey Heron**, 14 **Tufted Duck**, 16 **Mallard** and 3 **Little Grebe** on Cheswick Pond, with 40+ **Scoters** and 4 **Mergansers** on the sea there, 30+ **Ringed Plovers** and 4 **Purple Sandpipers** on the shore and 4 **Stonechats**, a **Song thrush**, a **Common Buzzard**, 28 **Curlews** and 70+ **Oystercatchers** around the fields. Also on the 24th a **Goldcrest** appeared in a Castle Terrace garden, and with another was a regular visitor thereafter. Duck numbers at Middle Ord peaked (25th) with 120 **Mallard** and 56 **Teal**, and a male **Stonechat** was nearby. 11 **Linnets** were on Little Beach. A 30 minute sea watch saw a **Gannet** and 12 **Fulmars** flying north past the Pier. 30 **Eiders**, 4 **Common Scoter** and a **Shag** were feeding off Cocklawburn beach. On the 26th 2 **Treecreepers** were spotted in Castle Terrace. A **Green Woodpecker** was in trees by the Railway station on the 27th. This bird has been in the upper estuary area for over 8 weeks now. 14 **Tufted Ducks** and 3 **Little Grebes** were on Cocklawburn pond (28th), with 94 **Pink-footed Geese** flying south over the sea. Also on the 28th at Black Rocks, Cheswick were 4 **Long-tailed Ducks**, 86 **Common Scoters**, 6 **Red-breasted Mergansers**, 4 **Red-throated Divers** and 5 **Shags**. A **Goosander** was near the Old Bridge on the 29th. The local garden feeders in Hiveacres (30th) saw a peak of 120 **Goldfinches** and 54 **Chaffinches**. A **Woodcock** was at Mill Farm on the 31st, and a **Whooper Swan** was at Yarrow Slake.

Elsewhere. A **Lesser Black-backed Gull** (rarely seen locally in winter) was spotted in Eyemouth Bay on the 1st. In fields at Mount Carmel, Norham (4th), were 460 **Greylag Geese**, 52 **Whooper Swans** and a flock of 340 **Wood Pigeons**. **Fulmars** were back on the ledges at Eyemouth Headland by mid-month. 12 **Stock Doves** and 42 **Whooper Swans** were at Battle Hill, Norham (25th). 26 **Canada Geese** were on Learmouth Lake (26th).

BTO Winter Atlas survey interesting records were: for Beal tetrad (NT 04 R), **Peregrine**, **Brent Goose**, **Shelduck** and **Twite**; for the Oxford tetrad (NT 04D), **Cormorant**, **Grey Heron**, **Buzzard** and **Tree Sparrow**.

Mammals. On the 5th a dog **Otter** was seen from the Old Bridge, swimming out to sea. Coastal records of note were 8 **Bottle-nosed Dolphins** moving south, close in shore at Cheswick, (12th), with at least one juvenile. 2 **Harbour Porpoises** seen in Meadow Haven (25th) and a large **Compass Jellyfish**, (*Chrysaora hysoscella*), stranded on the tideline at Cheswick (28th) was an unusual winter occurrence on our shores.

Thank you very much for all the records this month, a particularly impressive collection despite inclement weather. Please send us your February records - use our form on the Sightings page (www.berwickwildlifegroup.org.uk/Sightings.html), phone 01289 309046 or e-mail mail3@berwickwildlifegroup.org.uk. Do send digital photos too (or prints/slides).

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Saturday 7th February (or if weather v. bad, 21st February). Wader and wildfowl Survey. Our annual assessment of wildfowl and waders on the coast and estuary. Meet at Tweedmouth end of the Old Bridge, Berwick, **10.00 am**. Wear very warm waterproof clothing and boots or sensible shoes (can include cliff-top walk, and we stop frequently).

Wednesday 11th February. "Putting Berwick on the Geological Map", a talk by Ian Kille of Northumbrian Earth. **7.30pm.**, Berwick United Reformed Church, Main Street, SPITTAL.

Want to know more? Look at our website www.berwickwildlifegroup.org.uk, phone 01289 330591, e-mail mail3@berwickwildlifegroup.org.uk, or just come along to one of our events.