

# Berwick Wildlife Group

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



## Monthly Review July 2008

### WILDLIFE REPORTS

**Weather.** July started well enough, with the first few days being bright and sunny. By the 6<sup>th</sup> the wind turned to an easterly direction, bringing cool air off the sea and lower temperatures. Mid-month was a mixture of sunshine and showers. On the 24<sup>th</sup> the warm, moist SE wind brought in a sea-fret which lasted for five days. Temperatures did not vary much throughout the month. Rainfall was a little below average with 62mm. (2.5 inches), the wettest night bringing 35mm (1.4 inches) on the 10<sup>th</sup>.

**Birds.** July is often a month which can turn up the unexpected. It is also a time to look for sea-birds which move around the North Sea, searching for good feeding areas. Towards the end of the month the first returning migrant waders can appear along with other early returning migrants like the Cuckoo.

Coastal breeding **House Martins** built five nests on the cliffs at Dodds Well and three nests at Little Beach, where a juvenile **Dunlin** and 40 **Goosanders** were seen (2<sup>nd</sup>). A **Mallard** and 9 ducklings were found on Yarrow Haugh (3<sup>rd</sup>). On the 4<sup>th</sup> 2 (or 3) **Siskins** were in Tweedmouth Shopping Centre. An early wake-up call (5<sup>th</sup>), in the shape of a female **Peregrine** and three immatures were flying around Ord House and Hiveacres estate at 5.30 a.m. The female was constantly calling to the young birds which were terrorising everything with wings, stooping at Starlings, Pigeons and even Herring Gulls!! 7 **Canada Geese** arrived at Yarrow Slake and are still there at the end of the month. A **Nuthatch** was in the grounds of Ord House (6<sup>th</sup>), when 20 **Goosanders** and the first returning **Redshank** was seen on the Estuary. A fresh NE wind (7<sup>th</sup>) brought good sea-watching at high tide, with 6 **Manx Shearwaters**, a **Balearic Shearwater** and 3 **Puffins** passing the Pier northward in an hour. In Meadow Haven was a female **Eider** with seven well fledged ducklings, a good breeding record north of the Tweed.

Another sea-watch (10<sup>th</sup>) saw 950 **Gannets**, 350 **Fulmars**, 380 **Kittiwakes**, 210 **Arctic Terns**, a single **Roseate Tern** and 2 **Manx Shearwaters** north past the Pier in an hour. Two adult **Little Gulls** were feeding with **Kittiwake** just out of Meadow Haven (13<sup>th</sup>), along with 8 **Manx Shearwaters**, 7 **Puffins** and 15 **Razorbill** all moving north past the Pier. At Cocklawburn, 2 juvenile **Wheatears** were seen, a local breeding record and 12 **Sand Martins** were using 12 nest holes in a sandy cliff, another new site. At Needles Eye a pair of **Puffins** were visiting a nest hole, where a **Kestrel** and a pair of **Stonechats** were also seen.

The WeBS survey along Spittal cliffs (16<sup>th</sup>) found 117 **Sandwich Terns** in three different roost sites as well as 54 moulting **Goosanders**. A **Tawny Owl** was present all day at Yarrow Haugh, with 18 **Greylag Geese**. A male **Peregrine** and a calling **Whimbrel** were over East Ord (17<sup>th</sup>).

The WeBS Estuary count (21<sup>st</sup>), found 410 **Mute Swans**, 85 **Goosanders**, 84 **Lapwings**, 48 **Curlew**, 14 **Redshank**, a **Greenshank**, and gull roost sites produced 52 **Sandwich Terns**, 126 **Kittiwakes** and a large 1,450 **Herring Gulls**, of which 70% were immatures. Where are they all coming from?? A **Wheatear** and a singing **Grasshopper Warbler** were at Cocklawburn pond (22<sup>nd</sup>) and **Greylag** numbers reach 60 at Yarrow Haugh (23<sup>rd</sup>). At the

estuary mouth, 2 **Little Terns** and 3 **Arctic Terns** were feeding with 6 **Ringed Plovers** onshore. Returning waders saw 12 **Knot**, 17 **Sanderling**, 4 **Bar-tailed Godwits** and 5 **Turnstones** at Little Beach (27<sup>th</sup>). 92 **Redshank** and 5 **Turnstone** were on Calot Shad. A **Common Sandpiper** was at West Ord on 28<sup>th</sup>, with 36 **Linnets** there and 14 **Dunlin** at Little Beach.

**Elsewhere.** 85 **Eider**, 3 **Ringed Plovers** and a **Whimbrel** were at Cheswick (2<sup>nd</sup>), and the same day 6 **Magpies**, a **Peregrine**, a **Kestrel** and a **Great-spotted Woodpecker** were "only a stones-throw from Burnmouth Brae". Highlights of the BTO Atlas visit to Scremerston (20<sup>th</sup>) were a **Chiff-chaff** feeding young, a pair of **Bullfinches**, 2 **Great-spotted Woodpeckers** and a family of fledged **Kestrels**. 7 **Dunlin** were at the Black Rocks, Cheswick (13<sup>th</sup>) with 12 **Turnstones** and 54 **Goosanders** there (28<sup>th</sup>), and 2 **Knot**, 2 **Grey Plover** and 134 **Common Scoter** (30<sup>th</sup>). Also on the 30<sup>th</sup>, a **Little Gull** and 8 **Goosander** were at Linkim Shore (N. of Eyemouth). At Kirknewton, 3 **Buzzards** a **Goshawk** and a **Dipper** (27<sup>th</sup>) were seen.

**Mammals.** 6 **Roe Deer** were at Burnmouth on the 2<sup>nd</sup>. In Tommy the Miller's Field, on the 24<sup>th</sup> a butterfly surveyor found herself standing next to a **Roe-deer faun**, which scrambled to its feet to join mum and the two hastily departed.

**Butterflies.** Its been a good month for **Meadow Brown** and **Ringlets**, but other species have to date been low with just the odd **Small Tortoiseshell** and **Red Admiral** being seen. The small **Common Blues** seen at Cocklawburn by several of our group suggest a subspecies of the single brooded North-Western or Irish race. Malcolm has written a short article for the N E England Butterfly Conservation Group Newsletter on the subject – a copy appears below. On 16<sup>th</sup> July a **Small Skipper** turned up in the butterfly transect at Tommy the Miller's Field, and both a **Dark Green Fritillary** and a **Grayling** in the transect at Cocklawburn on the 30<sup>th</sup>.

**Elsewhere** An early **Ringlet** was reported on the 1<sup>st</sup> at Cothill, and on the 2<sup>nd</sup> 16 **Northern Brown Argus** and a **Grayling** at Burnmouth Brae. By the 4<sup>th</sup> 100+ **Ringlets**, 50+ **Meadow Browns** and 2 male **Small Skippers** were reported from Causewaybank Quarry (N. of Chirnside). On the 14<sup>th</sup> a **Painted Lady** was seen at Lintlaw Burn, Chirnside, and on the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> colonies of both **Grayling** and **Northern Brown Argus** were observed at Burnmouth, Blaikie Heugh and Homeli Knoll, Coldingham. A **Small Skipper** and a **Red Admiral** were found at Kirknewton (27<sup>th</sup>) a **Painted Lady** N. of Eyemouth on the 30<sup>th</sup> and several **Small Coppers** at St. Abbs Head (31<sup>st</sup>)

**Other insects.** Records include **Common Darter Dragonflies** at Causewaybank Quarry, Chirnside (4<sup>th</sup>), and **Common Hawker Dragonflies** at Fisher's Close Plantation, Haggerston (13<sup>th</sup>) and Yarrow Slake (19<sup>th</sup>). **Narrow-bordered 5-spot Burnet Moths** have had a splendid season, with 20 reported from Pipers Knowe Quarry on the 7<sup>th</sup> and 100+ from Cocklawburn Dunes on the 13<sup>th</sup>. A **Burying Beetle**, almost certainly *Nicrophorus investigator*, was rescued from an old bath at the reclamation centre in Scremerston on 29<sup>th</sup>. Are there any beetle experts (or would-be experts) out there? Most distribution maps show a big blank for beetles in this area, probably due to absence of recorders rather than of insects – can you help?

**On the coast** at Cheswick (30<sup>th</sup>) a number of **Moon Jellyfish** have been washed up along with the odd **Lions Mane Jellyfish**.

**Thank you very much to all who sent in wildlife records.** Please send us new records and photos. E-mail [mail3@berwickwildlifegroup.org.uk](mailto:mail3@berwickwildlifegroup.org.uk) or phone 01289 309046.

## **FORTHCOMING EVENTS**

### **\*\*\* Thursday 14<sup>th</sup> August: BWG's BIG BAT EVENT \*\*\***

From **6.00pm to 8.00pm** talks and demonstrations on bat ecology at the United Reformed Church, Main Street, Spittal, followed by **Expedition to Canty's Brig** with two bat-work trainers to enhance identification skills. Meet at car park at west end of Canty's Brig, south side of road (NT 957 525), **8.30pm** (continues until dark).

**Sunday 24<sup>th</sup> August. Third 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 28<sup>th</sup> August (if 28<sup>th</sup> wet/windy, 29<sup>th</sup>). Bat survey Upper Ravensdowne/Drill Hall/The Parade.** A "fall back" survey to ascertain, if possible, the extent and location of bats' feeding area. Meet at The Parade car park at **8.00pm**.

**Thursday 11<sup>th</sup> September (if 11<sup>th</sup> wet/windy, 12<sup>th</sup>). Bat Survey, The Avenue/Palace Street.** A return visit to compare bats' feeding patterns with 2006 results. Meet at Palace Green at **8.00pm**.

**Sunday September 14<sup>th</sup> . Squirrels in the Forest.** A walk in Kylee Woods with Head Forester Ian Robinson + Conservation Officer Mark Wilkinson. Walk on the level, lasting about 2 hrs. No charge, but collection for Scottish Woodlands Trust and Save our Squirrels. Meet at East entrance to woods near Blawearie Cottages, about 1 mile S of Fenwick (NU 062391) at **1.30pm** Limited parking, car share.

**Members and non-members are welcome** at all our events. There may be a small charge. Unless weather is truly appalling (or all the wildlife is likely to be cowering in shelter) outdoor meetings go ahead – bring waterproofs. Doubt on the day? telephone 01289 330591.

## **ACTIVITIES ORGANISED BY OTHERS**

Some wildlife groups are a wee bit older than us and still going strong! 2008 marks the **Northumberland & Tyneside Bird Club's 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary**. The highlight of the celebrations will be a one-day conference on **Saturday, 25<sup>th</sup> October 2008** at the Civic Centre, Newcastle upon Tyne, and everyone interested is very welcome. The afternoon session (2.00 to 6.30 pm in the Council Chamber) features four expert speakers, and is followed by an informal get-together with a fork buffet, quiz, an exhibition of entries in the Photo Competition and a licenced bar. Tickets, £15 each including the evening buffet, from Jo Bentley, 80 Western Avenue, Prudhoe, Northumberland, NE42 6PA, e-mail [NTBC@jo.bentley.waitrose.com](mailto:NTBC@jo.bentley.waitrose.com) (Cheques payable to NTBC, please). Website [www.ntbc.org.uk](http://www.ntbc.org.uk) .

If you are worried about surviving **the Global Oil Crisis** a movement is getting underway called "Transition Towns" ([www.transitiontowns.org](http://www.transitiontowns.org) ), which aims to get "the community working together to look Peak Oil and Climate Change squarely in the eye and address this BIG question" . The inaugural meeting in Berwick features a screening of an inspirational film "**How Cuba survived Peak Oil**", on **Friday 15<sup>th</sup> August, 7.00pm at St Aidan's Hall**, off Church Street in Berwick next to the Peace Church (not the St Aidan's Room in Berwick United Reformed Church in Tweedmouth, where we have our meetings).

## **A LOCAL MYSTERY – The small Common Blue Butterfly at Cocklawburn.**

During one of our Butterfly walks at Cocklawburn in 2007, we came across a smaller and brighter specimen of the Common Blue (*Polyommalus icarus*) than the norm. This small form has come to light again this year, so I have managed to photograph it and with much delving into past Butterfly writings and modern references, have come up with a good discussion.....

The best reference I have come across was George Thomson's "*The Butterflies of Scotland, a Natural History*", published in 1980. In this book he describes the Common Blue in detail and mentions two overlapping subspecies. One is *P. icarus* subsp. *mariscolor*, an Irish form which is basically larger and brighter and is double-brooded. It has been found mainly in western and northern Scotland as well as Ireland. The second subspecies is *P. icarus* subsp. *septentrionalis*, a Scandinavian form which is single brooded and covers the rest of Scotland and Northern England.

These forms are shown on Plate 18 in his book. I have noted the similarity to the specimens collected in western Borders in 1979 to the small specimens at Cocklawburn. However, Thomson describes them in detail in his book and comes to the conclusion that "subspecies differentiation without a careful analysis of all the factors and characters involved is not considered justified". To the casual observer, what seems to be a clear difference in subspecies could be the difference in variation between Spring and Summer broods, or an incursion and overlap of the Irish subspecies at Cocklawburn.

Unfortunately no studies have been done into the variations of the Common Blue across Britain and surprisingly there is no mention of subspecies differences in the Millennium Atlas.

So we have an unsolved mystery. Is the small Common Blue at Cocklawburn an incursion of the Irish subspecies, or is it a variation between Spring and Summer broods?

Malcolm Hutcheson. July 2008.

**Want to know more?** Look at our website [www.berwickwildlifegroup.org.uk](http://www.berwickwildlifegroup.org.uk) , phone 01289 330591, e-mail [mail3@berwickwildlifegroup.org.uk](mailto:mail3@berwickwildlifegroup.org.uk) , or just come along to one of our events.

Group members (who benefit from lower charges at events, the monthly Wildlife Review, news of forthcoming surveys, and so on) do not need special skills or knowledge, just an interest in their environment. The fee is only £8.00 per year for individuals, £14.00 for families at the same address.