

Berwick Wildlife Group

www.berwickwildlifegroup.org.uk

Monthly Review May 2007



WILDLIFE REPORTS

The Group would like to start this review by expressing our sympathy to Malcolm (the Group's wildlife recorder) on the death of his mother. Due to this May's wildlife records are fewer than usual.

Weather

Although initially following on from April with dry, mild conditions, most of May seems to have been a very turbulent month with many showers and squalls. There was rain on 16 days giving a total of 74mm (3.45 inches), with the wettest day being the 29th. Even the temperature has varied tremendously with our hottest day on the 24th being 22C whilst our coolest was on the 9th going down to 4.8C.

Birds

The first week of May was still mild, bringing in a large number of Spring migrants. On **May 1st** 3 **Swifts** were over Berwick Castle and a **Lesser Whitethroat** was singing and seen in Tommy the Millers Field. A **Marsh Tit** was found in the beeches at Chateau Pedro and 8 **Greylag Geese** were on Yarrow Slake. 10 **Guillemots**, 4 **Razorbills** and a **Red-throated Diver** were in Spittal Bay. A strong wader movement on the 3rd. brought 74 **Turnstones**, 46 **Sanderling**, 5 **Purple Sandpipers** and 3 **Dunlin** to Little Beach along with a fine Greenland race **Wheatear**. Berwick's resident **Swifts** returned on the 5th, with 12 flying around Marygate.

A strong N.W. wind on the 6th brought 12 **Gannets** fishing close inshore at Spittal with a **Sedge Warbler** calling on the railway bank. On the 7th a flock of 40+ **House Martins** were round the cliffs at the Coastwatch Station with a late **Wheatear** there. 4 **Red-throated Divers** in summer plumage were in Spittal Bay with 22 **Guillemots** and 24 **Razorbills**. A party of 30 **Goosanders** (24 males), 6 **Greylag Geese**, 3 **Canada Geese** and 26 **Mute Swans** were at West Ord, and 6 **Curlews** were still in the Estuary by Longstone View. Also on the 7th (an excellent birding day!) a **Whitethroat** and **Goldfinches** were seen on the Paxton Road, a **Nuthatch** was heard at Chateau Pedro and a **Great-spotted Woodpecker's** nest discovered nearby. A **Garden Warbler** was singing at Castle Hills on the 8th, while a pair of **Tufted Ducks** and 3 **Sedge Warblers** were at Cocklawburn pond. A **Cuckoo** was calling at Scremerston, 2 **Partridges** were seen at Borewell, and at Cheswick 4 **Sedge Warblers**, 2 **Reed Buntings**, a **Heron**, a **Wheatear** and 2 **Stonechats** were recorded. On the 9th a **Wheatear** was seen on the Golf Course, and on the 10th 2 **Canada Geese** were spotted above the By-pass Bridge.

The monthly estuary count on the 11th saw 5 **Shelducks** and 2 **Sandwich Terns** upstream at Toddles Shiel with 22 **Sandwich Terns** and 14 **Kittiwakes** in the estuary gull roost at Calot Shad. A **Buzzard** was over Castle Hills. The 13th was a dull damp day with a cold north wind bringing over **300 hirundines** to feed over the

Tweed at West Ord. Amongst them were c.80 **Swallows**, c.50 **House Martins** and 32 **Swifts**. A **Common Sandpiper** was on the shore there. Another Greenland race **Wheatear** appeared on Little Beach along with the resident pair of **Stonechats**. 24 **Sandwich Terns** and 4 **Arctic Terns** were roosting on Sandstell Point, Spittal and an early **Spotted Flycatcher** was seen in East Ord.

On the 28th at Cheswick, there were 2 **Stonechats**, 2 **Sedge Warblers**, 1 **Reed Warbler**, a **Heron** and a **Cormorant** on the pond. On the 30th, c30 **Ringed Plovers**, 7 **Sanderlings** and 1 **Reed Bunting** were sighted at Little Beach, and on the 31st 2 **Yellowhammers** in the hedges near Camphill in the evening.

Outside the Berwick area, records received include a young **Osprey** on the Whiteadder near Chirnside on 10th May, being mobbed by a **Lesser Black-backed Gull**, and in the Hartshope Valley on the 16th a male **Hen Harrier** and a **Cuckoo**.

Butterflies

Seen in a Tweedmouth Garden on the 22nd, **Common Blue** (male). Present during the visit to Cocklawburn on the 26th, **Large Whites**, **Small Whites** and **Small Heaths**. Also recorded during the Group's on-going survey of Tommy the Miller's Field: **Large Whites**, **Small Whites**, **Green Veined Whites**, **Orange Tips**, **Small Coppers**, **Small Tortoiseshells** and **Peacocks**.

Bees seen at Cocklawburn on the 26th, **Red Tailed Bumblebees** (*Bombus lapidarius*) and **Carder Bumblebees** (*Bombus pascuorum*). If you are interested in bumblebee records, see next page.

With many thanks to those who have contributed wildlife records – do please send in yours.

BUMBLEBEES

This month John R has been gathering facts about bees.

There are 4 basic types of bee - bumblebees, cuckoo bumblebees, solitary bees and honeybees. We will concentrate on the bumble and cuckoo bees.

Some bumblebee facts:

- There are 16 species of bumblebees in Britain.
- They are placid and will only sting as a last resort if they are threatened. After they sting they die.
- They are social insects with a dominant female queen.
- Females (queens) hibernate through the winter, emerging in early spring to eat and find a new nest site.
- Each queen produces a thimble full of honey for feeding her first brood.
- After finding a nest site she rears her first offspring, which are workers, (other females who cannot reproduce.)
- Workers look like a small version of the queen. They forage and care for the colony. The first batch of workers are often smaller than usual as only the queen has done all the foraging and care.
- In the summer males and new queens are produced. Males often have different coat patterns to females.
- In late summer and autumn all males, workers and the old queen die.

- New queens, having mated, hibernate through the winter and form new colonies the following year.

Cuckoo bumblebees

- Often resemble the true bumblebee they prey on.
- The large female cuckoo bee takes over a social bumblebees' nest.
- She kills the smaller, less powerful queen bumblebee.
- The bumblebee workers then care for her and her offspring.
- She does not produce workers; just new females and males in late summer.
- The new females hibernate during the winter months.

Recent surveys have shown a slow and steady decline in bumblebees across Britain. This appears to be linked with the decline in their food plants in the countryside due to intensive farming. They have become more dependant upon our gardens and parks.

Our Group are taking part in the Bumblebee Conservation Trust's Beewatch 2007 by recording what bees we see in our gardens or when out for a walk. Would you like to help?

If you would the Conservation Trusts excellent identification page is at

http://www.bumblebeeconservationtrust.co.uk/bumblebees_id.htm

And their Recording Form is at

http://www.bumblebeeconservationtrust.co.uk/BBCT_recording_form.xls

If you are without access to the internet, or unable to print off the forms and pictures, please ask us for paper copies - contact details below.

If at the same time as sending in your results to the Bumblebee Conservation Trust you send a copy of your Recording Form to John at

website@berwickwildlifegroup.org.uk we will collate all your results and produce a report on what we have recorded in our area.

The identification site is excellent. In the light of it I need to apologise for the labelling the bee photo in the March Newsletter a White-tailed Bumblebee. It is (I think – let me know if you disagree) a Buff-tailed Bumblebee, *Bombus terrestris*. Workers of this species (unlike the queens) have a largely white tail (as do White-tailed Bumblebees), but there is usually a hint of buff at the front margin (shown well in the picture) and the yellow bands are a slightly darker/dirtier yellow than in the White-tailed Bumblebee. Sorry for the mis-identification. Fiona.



FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Sat 9th June "Summer Flowers and Birds" a walk from Magdalene Fields to Needles Eye. Led by Fiona and Malcolm. Meet at 10.00 above Berwick Beach (by caravan park).

Wednesday 13th June, Tree Survey. Northumberland Avenue, Berwick Cemetery, Castle Terrace. Meet at North Road end of Northumberland Avenue at **7.00pm**.

Wednesday 20th June. Tree Survey. Barracks area, Parish Churchyard and Walkergate. Meet at Parade Car Park at **7.00pm**.

Thursday 21st (or if too wet or windy Friday 22nd) **June. Bat Survey** . Emergence survey, Camphill Farm Steading, led by Jane Young, Ecological Consultant. Meet at Camphill Road junction with road over Halidon (NT 981 545) **21.40**. If you weren't on the last survey at Camphill please phone 01289 330591 for details.

Wednesday 27th June. Tree Survey. Flagstaff Park and Ditches. Meet at Parade Car Park at **7.00pm**.

Thursday 28th (or if too wet or windy Friday 29th) **June. Bat Survey** . Emergence survey, Camphill Farm Steading, led by Jane Young, Ecological Consultant. Meet at Camphill Road junction with road over Halidon (NT 981 545) , **21.40**. If you haven't surveyed at Camphill before please phone 01289 330591 for details.

Wednesday 4th July. Tree Survey. New Road, Chateau Pedro and Castle Hills. Meet at bottom of Bankhill by riverside (by New Road/Love Lane), **7.00pm**.

Sun 8th July. Border Green Festival. Mill Farm, Tweedmouth. "Thinking a bit about changing the way we live and about having some fun at the same time". **BWG will have a stall** – do come along.

Sat 14th July. Boat trip to the Farne Islands, including guided walk on Inner Farne. Afternoon (2½ to 3 hours). Cost varies according to numbers, but will probably be about £12.00 for boat trip, plus £5.40 landing fees for Inner Farne (free to NT and NTS members). Places need to be pre-booked, so if you would like to come please let us know as soon as possible - contact Fiona 01289 330591.

Contact us. Phone 01289 330591, e-mail mail2@berwickwildlifegroup.org.uk or just come to an event (non-members very welcome).

