

# Berwick Wildlife Group

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



## Monthly Review May 2008

### WILDLIFE REPORTS

**Weather.** Although the first day was very wet, May was a dry month. The wind turned into a cold easterly pattern by the 6<sup>th</sup> and remained in that quarter. Temperatures were fairly stable, with none of the warm days one expects in May. A frost was recorded on the 20<sup>th</sup>, with a low of 1.5°C (35°F) damaging much of the Cherry blossom around town. Sunshine appeared most days, except on the 10<sup>th</sup> when the wind dropped and 'fret' came in off the sea. It remained overcast with a high cloud base until 16<sup>th</sup> when the wind returned. Rainfall recorded was 35mm (1.3inches).

**Birds.** May brings the final run of Summer migrants with some more unusual birds appearing and the expected push of Sanderling and Ringed Plover northwards by the end of the month. There were unusual numbers of Wheatears moving along the coast all month, all of them being of the larger, brighter Greenland race.

A fine pair of **Siskins** were visiting a Castle Drive garden at the beginning of the month, with the first **Swift** over Berwick Station (1<sup>st</sup>) and **Goldfinches** in College Place. Another **Swift** was seen over Spittal Prom on the 2<sup>nd</sup>, and a **Sedge Warbler** was at Cocklawburn pond along with 3 **Tufted Ducks** and 4 **Wheatears**. On the 3<sup>rd</sup> **Heron**s were in the new heronry near Yarrow Slake, and a **Mute Swan** was sitting in the reed-bed there. The same day a male **Merlin** was sighted in Church Road, Tweedmouth, attacking garden birds. A single **Fieldfare** was at Billylaw (4<sup>th</sup>) and a pair of **Canada Geese** and 10+ **Swifts** were at West Ord. Also on the 4<sup>th</sup>, 2 **Tufted Ducks**, 2 **Mute Swans**, a **Moorhen**, a **Whooper Swan**, a **Mallard** and 2 **Shelducks** were at Cheswick Pond with a **Sedge Warbler** and a **Reed Bunting**. At Little Beach were 10 **Dunlin**, 12 **Ringed Plover**, 1 **Sandpiper**, 12+ **Wheatears**, 1 **Stonechat**, 3 **Turnstones**, 1 **Redshank** and 5 **Pied Wagtails**. A flock of 12+ **Swifts** were over the town (5<sup>th</sup>), and 2 **Wheatears** were at Meadow Haven with a **Gannet** behind the pier there. A **Cuckoo** was heard at East Ord (6<sup>th</sup>), and **House Martins** appeared at Scremerston. The same day found singing **Blackcap** and **Garden Warbler** in the grounds of East Ord House.

On the 8<sup>th</sup> a **Mute Swan** was sitting on a nest at West Ord, with 2 **Canada Geese** nearby, and another sitting **Mute Swan**, 2 **Moorhens**, **Yellowhammers** and a **Tree Sparrow** were at Middle Ord pond. A **Grasshopper Warbler** was 'reeling' in the scrub at the Loaning, Hiveacres (9<sup>th</sup>) and a **Yellow Wagtail** was at Tweedmouth sewage works. On the 10<sup>th</sup> a **Sedge Warbler** was at Toddles Shiel and 2 **Shelducks** on Yarrow Slake. A fine **Turtle Dove** was found with Collared Doves in Tweedmouth Old Vicarage garden (12<sup>th</sup>) staying into the next day. 50-60 **Goosanders** (mainly drakes) were at New Water Haugh on the 13<sup>th</sup>. A **Great Crested Grebe** and 8 **Tufted Ducks** were on Cocklawburn pond (14<sup>th</sup>) and 26 **Eiders** were on the shore.

The WeBS Estuary count on the 15<sup>th</sup> found 32 **Cormorants**, 12 **Grey Herons**, 182 **Mute Swans**, a pair of **Shelducks**, the 'last' **Goldeneye** of the season, 24 **Goosanders** a **Common Sandpiper**, 213 **Herring Gulls** and 12 **Sandwich Terns**. Also on the 15<sup>th</sup>, at the Whiteadder mouth were 8 pairs of **Sedge Warblers**, 3 pairs of **Reed Buntings**, a

**Song Thrush**, a **Tree Sparrow**, **Willow Warblers** and **Rooks**. 2 **Black-throated Divers** were on the sea at Cocklawburn (16<sup>th</sup>) along with 5 **Razorbills** and 12 **Guillemots**. 100+ **Swifts** were hawking low over the Tweed at West Ord (18<sup>th</sup>) with a male **Stonechat** at Billylaw and 2 **Whimbrel** on Calot Shad. A fine drake **Scaup** was on Cocklawburn pond (19<sup>th</sup>) with a pair of **Tufted Duck**, a **Moorhen** (scarce here) and a **Wheatear**. 2 **Spotted Flycatchers** were at Castle Hills (20<sup>th</sup>). A **Buzzard** was over East Ord (23<sup>rd</sup>), where a **Sparrow Hawk** took a sitting Blackbird off her nest of five eggs. At Little Beach (25<sup>th</sup>) were 60 **Ringed Plovers**, 6 **Sanderling**, 14 **Oystercatchers**, a **Turnstone**, a **Shelduck** and a **Stonechat**. A **Fulmar** flew down the Tweed at East Ord (27<sup>th</sup>), when numbers of these birds were being recorded washed up on North East Beaches – clearly a problem at sea. 10 **Greylag Geese** flew north at Cocklawburn (29<sup>th</sup>) along with a flock of 40 **Ringed Plovers**. At Little Beach were single **Sanderling** and **Turnstone** with a further 14 **Ringed Plovers**.

**Elsewhere.** On the 2<sup>nd</sup> 2 summer plumaged **Red-throated Divers** were at Cheswick with 2 **Purple Sandpipers** at Black Rocks there. On the 5<sup>th</sup> a **Greylag** with 5 goslings was seen at Foulden; and at Camphill on the 7<sup>th</sup> **Whitethroats** and a **Buzzard**. 7 **Wheatears** were on Goswick Golf course (8<sup>th</sup>). A count for the BTO Atlas on the 9<sup>th</sup> at Halidon Hill included **Wren**, **House Sparrow**, **Linnet**, **Whitethroats**, **Yellowhammer**, **Feral Pigeons**, **Skylarks**, **Chiffchaff**, **Robin**, **Swallow** and **Blackbird**.

A **Grasshopper Warbler** 'reeled' in the dunes at Cheswick Sheil (13<sup>th</sup>). 12 **Greylag Geese**, 3 **Tufted Ducks** and 12 **Lesser Black-backed Gulls** were at Monks House pool, Seahouses (22<sup>nd</sup>) with 9 **Common Scoters** and 10+ **Arctic Terns** at Stag Rock, Bamburgh. A BTO Breeding Bird Survey found **Lesser Whitethroat** and **House Martins** at Scremerston; **Garden Warbler**, **Lesser Whitethroat** and **Tree Sparrows** at Goswick; **Stonechat** and **Shelduck** on Goswick sands.

**Mammals.** Large numbers of **Rabbits** are appearing along the railway embankment as well as in the dunes at Cocklawburn and Cheswick and some Berwick gardens. **Brown Hares** also are doing well with seven seen at Billylaw, Ord Moor (16<sup>th</sup>). **Grey Squirrels** were reported in 3 different places on the 27<sup>th</sup> : in local gardens in Cornwall Avenue and Castle Drive, and on road between Fenwick and Lowick. Please would you let us know of any sightings of Grey (or Red) squirrels in the locality, as Greys can infect Reds with squirrel pox, lethal to the latter.

**Butterflies.** Windy, cold conditions prevented many butterfly sightings, but in sheltered areas there were numbers of 'Whites' with a few **Orange Tips**, **Small Tortoiseshells** and **Peacocks**. Single **Small Coppers** were seen in Tommy-the-Miller's Field on the 16<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup>; and early individuals of **Red Admiral** (23<sup>rd</sup>) and **Painted Lady** (27<sup>th</sup>) were recorded at Cocklawburn.

**Bumblebees.** Again the cool weather prevented much activity, although bumblebees are able to fly in colder, windier conditions than butterflies. A visit to St Abbs on the 24<sup>th</sup> turned up queens of **White-tailed** and **Buff-tailed** and a single **Carder** bumblebee. Mining bees (*Andrena sp.*) emerged from a lawn in Castle Terrace on the 17<sup>th</sup> and were seen sunning themselves on fence posts in the few warm intervals.

**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.

## **SUBSCRIPTIONS**

Following our AGM on 7<sup>th</sup> May these are now due for 2008/09 (except for those who joined after Christmas 2008 who have membership until May 2009). If you have not yet paid, please send a cheque made out to Berwick Wildlife Group (£8.00 single, £14.00 for more than one person at one address) to our Treasurer, Enid Turnbull, 5 Springfield Park, East Ord, TD15 2FD. If we don't have up-to-date address, phone or e-mail details for you would you please send these as well.

All money from subscriptions is used for essential expenses by the Group (hire of rooms, paper and printer ink for Newsletters, stamps, website, etc.). We are extremely grateful for your support, enabling us to build up an ever more detailed picture of the wildlife around Berwick and help with its protection. Thank you.

## **FORTHCOMING EVENTS**

**Sunday 22nd June. Bumblebee identification walk, Stanton Hall Gardens** with bee expert Shaun Hackett. **10.00 am.**, Stanton Hall Gardens is about 5 miles N.W. of Morpeth, NZ 131 896. For detailed directions or a lift please phone 01289 330591.

**Thursday June 26<sup>th</sup> (if 26<sup>th</sup> wet/windy, 27<sup>th</sup>). Bat Survey, Spittal Promenade.** To investigate reports of "large" bats at S end of Promenade. Meet at Spittal Doorstep Green car park at **10.00 pm**.

**Sunday June 29<sup>th</sup>. Border Green Festival at Five Arches Playing Field, Tweedmouth.** Berwick Wildlife Group will have a stand. Do visit us, and if you would like to volunteer to man the stand for an hour or two that would be wonderful!

**Wednesday 9<sup>th</sup> July** (if relatively dry). **Tree Survey for Forest Enterprise, Ord Drive, Berwick.** Meet at **7.00 pm**. at tiny car park on N side of Ord Drive W side of cottage. Roadside work – wear non-slip footwear, bright clothing, not suitable for children or dogs.

**Thursday 10<sup>th</sup> July (if 10<sup>th</sup> wet/windy, 11<sup>th</sup>). Bat Survey, Mount Road/Tower House, Tweedmouth.** A survey to follow up results from 2005 and to investigate other reported sightings. Meet at Dock Road, below Tower House at **10.00pm**.

**Sunday 13<sup>th</sup> July. Second 2008 Butterfly Walk at Cocklawburn, with Jaci Beaven of Butterfly Conservation.** Meet at **10.30 am**. at car park at end of Cocklawburn road by pill box – NU 032 481. Sensible shoes and binoculars if you have them. Sorry no dogs.

**Tuesday 15<sup>th</sup> July** (if relatively dry). **Tree Survey for Forest Enterprise, Ord Drive, Berwick.** Meet at **7.00 pm**. at tiny car park on N side of Ord Drive W side of cottage. Roadside work – wear non-slip footwear, bright clothing, not suitable for children or dogs.

**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. Unless weather is truly appalling (or all the wildlife is likely to be covering in shelter) outdoor meetings go ahead – bring waterproofs. If in doubt on the day, telephone 01289 330591.