

Berwick Wildlife Group

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Monthly Review November 2007



WILDLIFE REPORTS

Weather. The month was mild with average rainfall (69mm, 4ins). Frosts were recorded on five nights, but the quick rotation of high and low pressure meant almost alternate days of cool sunshine and mild, damp overcast conditions. The main event of the month was the vigorous area of low pressure which swept down the North Sea from 4th-10th causing a tidal surge. Our local WeBS estuary count was affected, with High Tide being reached an hour earlier than the expected time. Fortunately, no flooding occurred as the tidal flow was at the lower end of the range.

Birds. The tidal surge displaced large numbers of seabirds, particularly Little Auks, from their North Atlantic wintering grounds. Between the 6th and the 20th thousands of these small auks were recorded flying northwards along the East Coast from watchpoints from Lincolnshire to Aberdeen. Other Auks, Divers, scarce Ducks and Gulls were recorded making the month very interesting for sea watching.

Recording in our area started with a very obliging **Slavonian Grebe** in company with a **Little Grebe** swimming around Berwick Old Bridge (1st). Further down the estuary were 2 **Red-throated Divers**, 7 **Guillemots** and 2 **Razorbills**. 25 **Fieldfares** were seen flying west over the town (2nd) and 220 **Pink-footed Geese** flew south (3rd). A female **Scaup** with **Goldeneye** at West Ord was a good find, while at Yarrow Slake were 92 **Greylag Geese**, 2 **Whooper Swans**, a **Little Grebe**, 16 **Goldeneyes** and 4 **Goosanders**. A further 130 **Pinkfeet** flew south (4th) with 36 **Shags** on Meadow Haven roost and 4 **Grey Plovers** with 8 **Bar-tailed Godwits** on Little Beach, while 4 **Teal** were off Berwick Pier and 2 **Slavonian Grebes** and 5 **Red-throated Divers** off Spittal. An hour's sea watch over Spittal Bay recorded 42 **Gannets**, 58 **Goldeneye**, 8 **Common Scoter** and 4 **Kittiwakes**, the start of 'things to come'. 5 **Whooper Swans** were at West Ord (5th) and a **Pochard** and 2 **Tufted Duck** were on Cocklawburn pond.

A day of light winds (6th) brought 10 large skeins of **Pinkfeet** (totalling 2,200 birds) late morning, flying in high off the sea over the town. The first high count of **Little Auks** was noted over Spittal Bay (9th) with 500/hour at high tide. Other species included 40+ **Guillemots**, 5 **Red-throated Divers**, 2 **Long-tailed Ducks** and 5 **Snow Buntings**, all flying north. The WeBS estuary count recorded: 14 **Grey Herons**, 48 **Mute Swans**, a **Whooper Swan**, 5 **Pinkfeet**, 102 **Greylag**, 36 **Goldeneye**, a female **Long-tailed Duck**, 162 **Redshank** and 72 **Great Black-backed Gulls**. 11 **Purple Sandpipers** were found on Little Beach and a single **Waxwing** feeding on Whitebeam berries in Hiveacres stayed around for two days.

A flock of 510 **Golden Plovers** were at Cocklawburn (11th), with 66 **Common Scoter**, a **Great Northern Diver** and still a passage of 400 **Little Auks**/hour over Spittal Bay. 240 **Lapwings** were on Yarrow Slake (14th) with another skein of 330 **Pinkfeet** flying south over the Town. 76 **Fieldfare** flew over East Ord (17th) at dawn. At Little Beach (20th), 2 **Black-tailed Godwits** were found, with a **Spotted Redshank** on 21st. A **Grey Wagtail** was along New Road. Another watch over Spittal Bay (23rd) saw only 3 **Little Auks**, 3 **Great Northern Divers** and 9 **Eiders**. At West Ord (25th) was a **Kingfisher** and 42 **Goldeneye**

while at Meadow Haven at high tide were a **Black-throated Diver** 36 **Shags**, 3 **Guillemots** and 8 **Common Scoter**. The following day (26th) 3 **Tufted Duck** were on Cocklawburn pond, with 32 **Shags** offshore. Another group of 24 **Fieldfares** flew north (29th) over East Ord, while at Little Beach there were 84 **Oystercatchers**, 36 **Ringed Plovers**, 46 **Sanderling**, 92 **Dunlin**, 4 **Purple Sandpipers**, 6 **Bar-tailed Godwits**, 84 **Turnstones** and 5 **Rock Pipits**. Offshore, a roost of c.1,000 **Herring Gulls** formed on the sea at dusk.

Elsewhere. 3 **Housemartins** were still over Eyemouth on 1st and 2nd. 5 **Twite** were seen there on the 3rd with Goldfinches, and 62 **Whooper Swans** were at Mount Carmel, Norham but did not stay. 10 **Ringed Plover** and 2 **Purple Sandpiper** were at Cheswick Black Rocks (5th). C. 350 **Pinkfeet** were feeding in the Cheswick/Haggerston area (11th). A Barn Owl family with unfledged young were recorded NW of Berwick on the 12th (and subsequently). 45 **Whooper Swans** were at West Loanend (13th) with 130+ **Fieldfares** around Morrishall, Norham and 100 **Carion Crows** were in a field N of Eyemouth on the 14th. 55 **Redwing** were seen at Velvet Hall (25th). A first year **Iceland Gull** was at Eyemouth harbour (22nd to 30th) and a flock of 38 **Linnets** at Cheswick dunes (26th). On the 27th off Holy Island were 10 **Red-throated** and 1 **Black-throated Diver** and 6 **Slavonian Grebes**. A **Peregrine** was over the cliffs at Blakie Heugh on the 28th.

BTO Bird Atlas 2007-11

This month saw the start of the survey, which monitors all the birdlife in the British Isles. It is a key tool to wildlife conservation and in general records the effects of agricultural and other development pressures put on our countryside. The task is to cover all the tetrads (2 x 2 km. squares) in all of the British Isles. Several of our members have taken up the challenge covering some 15+ tetrads in our area. The group as a whole has adopted the square around **Scremerston (NU 04 E)** and must walk the area for an hour twice in the Winter months and also twice in Summer to verify breeding species. We first walked around the square on the 27th, and recorded some interesting birds which were a bit of a surprise, including a flock of 26 Siskins, 2 Woodcock, a Stonechat and a roost of Collared Doves. We will be visiting the square again in the New Year for our second survey. If you want to join in, look out for dates in our itinerary.

Mammals. An **Otter** was seen regularly for the first ten days of the month, feeding above the Royal Border Viaduct. **Weasels** were sighted at Sea House and Scremerston mid-month. 6 **Roe Deer** were seen at East Ancroft on the 6th.

Butterflies. The last butterflies were gone by mid-month. A **Small Tortoiseshell** was recorded at East Ord on the 1st, a **Painted Lady** in Eyemouth on the 2nd, and the last **Red Admirals** at Berwick on the 6th, Tweedmouth on the 13th and East Ord on the 14th.

December Events

Thursday 6th December. Beach Litter Survey (for Marine Conservation). Meet at 10.00 a.m. at Lowry Shelter, Little Beach, Berwick (NU 007 527). Wear strong footwear and warm clothes and bring tough preferably waterproof gloves.

*****Wednesday 12th December. Berwick is Brilliant for Wildlife*** – Display and discussion of highlights from our many surveys in 2007.** Invitation attached/enclosed. Seasonal refreshments provided. Berwick United Reformed Church, Main Street, Spittal, 7.30pm. **Free entry. Everyone welcome.**

Thank you for providing so many splendid records in 2007. Wishing you all a happy Christmas and amazing wildlife encounters this month and in the New Year – e-mail them to us via <http://www.berwickwildlifegroup.org.uk/Sightings.html> or phone 01289 309046.