

**Low Tide Count.**  
**Saturday 8th December.**  
**Leaders Malcolm and John I.**

A group of 12 members attended on a bright sunny morning to survey the shoreline for waders and wildfowl, as part of a winter low tide count survey of the coast organised by the BTO (British Trust for Ornithology).



The low tide count will act to fill in data for the areas of coast countrywide not covered by the monthly Wetland and Estuary Birds Survey (WeBS). We were to cover the area from Berwick Pier north to Needles Eye. The group soon got into a set system of identifying the area to count by working small visual blocks and counting the species in each block, heading along the shore in a northerly direction.

The first area, Little Beach, was going to be most difficult as it is the largest area of rock and pools visible at low tide, plus there was some disturbance on the day by cockle pickers. By the time we walked up to the Coastwatch tower we had got into our stride of surveying and started to record a number of interesting things. By the time we reached Needles Eye we had seen all three species of Diver, recorded higher numbers of Oystercatchers and Redshank than expected, found a group of Purple Sandpipers and the odd Grey Plover near Brotherston's Hole and the "prize of the day" was a fine dog Otter on the shore near Needles Eye.

Our survey took four hours to complete in the middle of the day at the lowest point of the tide and we gathered a lot of interesting data. Malcolm and John have been asked to cover six areas of

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coast between the Border and Goswick over the Dec/Jan period and suggested the group as a whole might like to start the survey covering the most difficult stretch. We are glad they did, as although it was a bit chilly, it was thoroughly enjoyable.

Malcolm, 13th December 2006