

BerwickWildlife Group

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Monthly Review: June 2018

WILDLIFE REPORTS

Weather

Dry conditions have dominated the month with mild, mellow days along with showers on a few of the first ten days. All this was to change on the 14th with the unusual summer event of an Atlantic storm sweeping northwards over the western approaches and Ireland. It was named 'Hector' by the Met. Office, and brought gale force winds, which fortunately did little damage. It did cause some defoliation of trees, causing a loss of some of their new leaves and damaging growing shoots.

Over the next week, conditions settled down until the 20th, when the cool northerly air stream was pushed away by a warm front coming up from the south. This brought a 12 hour period of rain, mainly overnight, with a total of 25mm (an inch).

The final week saw a return to summer conditions, with light sea breezes, hazy sunshine and rising temperatures. One day was glorious (28th), with a clear sky from dawn to dusk, raising the temperature to 78F. But as is normal on the east coast, with the current high pressure moving north, cool sea mists drifted onshore once again, tempering the daytime warmth, while the sun steadily burned the mist back giving fine summer evenings. The only problem now is the dry conditions on the ground.

Total rainfall for the month was; 345 mm (2.05 inches). We will find out next month where that leads us!

Birds

Bird reports are always in short supply in June, as most species are on their breeding sites and many recorders are on holiday.

On the estuary the moulting immature **Mute Swan** gathering reached a high total of 395 birds on the 15th

during the monthly WeBS count. Ringed birds over the years show that they come to the Tweed Estuary from as far as Yorkshire, Lancashire and the Forth/Clyde area. The Tweed is registered as the sixth site of most International Importance in the whole of the UK. The count also saw a single 'summering' **Whooper Swan**, **Pink footed** and **Barnacle Goose** and an immature male **Goldeneye**. **Canada Geese** have bred on the Estuary with a pair with 6 goslings on the Calot Shad (15th and another pair with 5 goslings at West Ord(17th).

A pair of **Grey Partridge** were in Cocklawburn dunes(18th) with a pair of **Little Grebes** on the pond there. A party of 12 **Tree Sparrows** were at Billylaw, Ord Moor(20th) with 12 **Goosanders** at West Ord. The very early return of 5 **Redshank** at the Pier(21st) is maybe a sign of a poor breeding season - normally they

return to our estuary in mid-July. Another wader around is the **Oystercatcher**, with 38 birds in Dodd's Well the same day.

Stonechat have had a good breeding season in the coastal dunes, with two pairs at Cocklawburn, two pairs at Cheswick and another pair at Goswick. All seen with fledged juveniles. Also of note were two occupied **Sand Martin** nest holes in a sand excavation site at the Golf Course at Goswick. A welcome surprise for one of our members was a **Quail** in a field at Mill Farm (22nd), a scarce summer visitor in recent years. Another scarce farmland bird breeding record was of a pair of **Yellow Wagtails** at a site south of Scremerston.

The summer gathering of moulting Goosanders saw the flock (of 110 birds) resting on Sandstell Point, Spittal(29th) only to be disturbed and scattered out into Spittal Bay by dog walkers! On the Calot Shad gull roost, numbers of **Kittiwakes** reached 156. These birds come from the breeding site at Needles Eye where they use the fresh water to bathe in, and clean salt from their plumage. They were also joined by 32 **Sandwich Terns**, while a pair of **Common Terns** fed around Tweedmouth Dock.

Mammals

A **Roe Deer** hind and fawn were noted at Middle Ord(24th) with an immature **Common Seal** coming into the Estuary regularly at low tide and resting near the Old Bridge. A pod of **Common Dolphins** (Bottlenose? Ed.) are making regular appearances off the Pier at high tide, giving local fishermen the chance to take holidaymakers out to see them.

Insects

Butterflies - In this unusual season our butterflies seem to be suffering, with very few of the regulars being recorded. However, **Common Blue**, **Small Heath** and **Wall Brown** are in the dune slacks in reasonable numbers and the 'browns' have appeared earlier this year. They include a **Meadow Brown** at Cheswick (25th) and 3 **Ringlets** at Goswick dunes the same day. Away from the coast has been a small 'eruption' of **Speckled Woods** with 18 At Lickar Dene (27th) and 12 at New Haggerston the same day. Further 'twos and threes' have been seen at Yarrow Heugh, Ord Country Park, New Water Heugh and near the Tennis Courts, Berwick, - quite remarkable, as they only re-appeared in Northumberland in 2005.

The downside is an unfortunate absence of **Small Tortoiseshells**, **Red Admirals** and **Painted Ladies**.

Moth-wise, Molly Hardie has recorded the attractive geometrid ("looper") moths **Yellow Shell** at Cocklawburn Dunes, and **Silver-ground Carpet** (Cocklawburn Dunes and Hunting Hall), as well as the migrant **Silver-y** at Hunting Hall. Also, if you look closely at Graham White's Sedge Warbler photo, below, you will see lepidopteran larvae on the Cow parsley, together with the remains of the protective silk web in which they spent their early lives. Any clue as to species?

Other records

Botanical - Orchid records show the new small colony of **Pyramidal Orchids** (*Anacamptis pyramidalis*) in Cheswick dunes has been restricted by the dry conditions, with around 100 spikes seen. Elsewhere, **Twayblade** (*Listera ovata*) are scarce in their regular sites and we have lost the **Fragrant Orchid** (*Gymnadenia conopsea*) site in Dodd's Well, due to a large landslip in the winter month.

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Reminder: Walk to Needles Eye, this Saturday - meet Jingling Bridge for 10 a.m.

Photo Gallery - Sedge Warbler, with seasonal caterpillars (Graham White), and some seasonal flora (Malcolm Hutcheson)



