

Berwick Wildlife Group

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Monthly Review: July 2018.

WILDLIFE REPORTS.

Weather

The warm, dry conditions and light winds during June continued through most of July, turning grassland yellow with trees going into a partial leaf-fall. Even the remnants of Hurricane 'Chris' passing over Ireland on the 12th / 15th had little effect. It brought a couple of days with a veil of high cloud and warm, muggy conditions, sometimes with a spell of drizzle, with a spell of heavier rain overnight on the 17th. Temperatures started to rise further with its passing, reaching 30C (84F) on 22nd and 23rd, only falling to a warm 19C (66F) overnight.

This pattern was broken with the prolonged high pressure area being pushed west by the jet-stream. A fresh southerly wind developed bringing a band of thunder storms north, late on the 27th. A spectacular show of dancing sheet lighting went on into the night, with the occasional bolt coming to earth with a loud bang. Various amounts of rainfall were recorded around Berwick. The next day the temperature had fallen by a good ten degrees, with sunshine and showers and a blustery west wind.

The evening of 30th saw a shower with a deluge of rain (11mm - 0.45 inches in 20 minutes, in East Ord).

This pattern continued to the end of the month, with a slow rise in temperature each day.

Rainfall figures for another dry month were 33.5 mm. (1.25 inches.), well below the average of 89mm (3.5inches) over the last decade and the driest July since 2006 which recorded 11.4mm (0.45 inches).

Birds

Bird reports are usually low in July as birdwatchers are often on holiday or are studying other aspects of the natural world. However, it is also a month when the unusual bird can appear, particularly in thundery conditions, which often bring early migrant waders and other passage birds.

On the Tweed, it was good to see a successful pair of **Mute Swans** with 8 cygnets bred on Yarrow Heugh, bringing the family down 'to town'. A second pair with 6 cygnets were at West Ord. Also of note, the WeBS count figure of 458 moulting birds on the estuary, was the highest in the last decade. The Tweed Estuary has been a gathering place for Mute Swans over many years for moulting, immature birds, coming from Yorkshire/ Durham in the south and Glasgow, Fife and Angus to the north. It should be acknowledged as a part of Berwick's natural heritage by its citizens.

A party of 12 **Lapwings** and a **Common Sandpiper** were seen at New Water Heugh(1st) The first post-breeding **Redshank** returned (3rd) with 4 at Yarrow Slake. A group of 42 **Goosander** were off Cocklawburn(4th), with a pair of **Little Grebes** on the pond there. A roosting **Sandwich Tern** in a party of 8 birds was ringed with a large blue 'darvic' ring and was recorded as bred on the Farne Islands in 2014, with its last report coming from Brittany in the Spring this year..

Breeding birds were to the fore, with a pair of **Sedge Warblers** with 3 juvs at Needles Eye(7th), a pair of **Teal** with 2 ducklings(8th) at Middle Ord pond and a pair of **Tufted Duck** with 3 ducklings also there.

The estuary WeBS count (12th) found 124 **Kittiwakes** in the gull roost on Calot Shad and 2 **Common Terns** feeding near the A1 at New Water Heugh. A party of 3 **Black tailed Godwits** were on Yarrow Slake (14th) with a single on Little Beach the following day. A late 'reeling' **Grasshopper Warbler** was in Cheswick dunes(15th) with a **Whimbrel** and 6 **Dunlin** at Cheswick Black rocks on the shore. A moulting party of 85 Goosander were in shore under Spittal cliffs.

A migrant **Redstart** found itself in a member's garden at East Ord(22nd) with the local House Sparrows! An injured Immature **Golden Plover** was at Cocklawburn(25th) for a couple of days, with a gathering of 46 **Swallows** seen mobbing a Kestrel. A holidaymaker's sighting of a **Great White Egret** with a **Little Egret** and 3 **Grey Herons** at West Ord was the first for the Berwick area. Three Little Egrets were also nearby at Middle Ord pond.

Eider bred north of the Tweed, with 3 ducks and 8 ducklings seen in Fisherman's Haven(27th) A flock of 78 **Canada Geese** arrived on New Water Heugh and a single Whimbrel was with Curlew on Calot Shad. A **Green Sandpiper** was found at Middle Ord pond(29th) and a flock of 112 **Greylag Geese** came to Yarrow Slake (30th), with 3 **Greenshank** and a Common Sandpiper. Another 'scarce' bird, a female **Hen Harrier** was hunting over Whitadder Point for a couple of days with a Green Sandpiper and a Little Egret for company. A Greenshank and a Whimbrel were seen in Cargies Cove, Spittal cliffs(31st).

Mammals

A **Brown Hare** was noted running down the lane at West Ord(1st). Several sightings of **Roe Deer** were seen at Cheswick, Murton and Halidon Hill.

A pod of **Bottle-nosed Dolphins** have been seen, almost daily, between Meadow Haven and Spittal Bay with another small group joining them off Spittal(16th) making 14 in all.

Insects

Butterflies - in this unusual season, this month has produced a good number of 'whites', with peak figures of **Large White**(35) along New Road(19th) and **Small White**(32) at Scremerston(31st).. The spread of **Small Skipper** was well recorded with numbers in 3 new tetrads East Ord, Berwick Castle (Tommy the Millers field) and Halidon Hill. Our visit to the Yarrow Heugh hide to 'tidy up', recorded 8+ feeding in Great Willow-herb (*Epilobium hirsutum*) there.

High numbers for the 'browns' have also been seen with **Meadow Brown**(24) at Needles Eye(7th) and **Ringlet**(48) Cheswick dunes(4th) along with **Common Blue**(9) at Cheswick Shiel(2nd).

The 'vanessids' were scarce with a small appearance of **Small Tortoiseshell**, **Red Admiral** and **Peacock** by mid-month. Only two records of **Painted Lady** at Cocklawburn(18th) and Spittal cliffs(31st) and **Comma**(30th) at Chain Bridge were received.

Butterfly walks

Our walk to Needles Eye(7th) saw 9 members coping with the hot conditions and recording 10 species and an afternoon visit(28th) to a brown- field sight in East Ord produced 8 species. Unfortunately, only one stalwart member turned out for what was an interesting hour of recording.

Our last walk is **August 11th**, at **West Ord** checking for any possible White letter Hairstreaks in the Elm trees there.

Meet through the cattle grid, by the Tweed at NU948.520 at 2.p.m.

Other records; It was noted that the small pond that we cleared in the Spring at Yarrow Heugh, held a number of **Toad** tadpoles at the beginning of the month in good clear water.

Your records are valuable. Please send them directly to m.hutcheson08@btinternet.com to by the 30th of the month.

You might be interested in the following:

Northumbria Mammal Seal Watch – Teesside 26th August 2018 10am

On 26th August Northumbria Mammal Group is organising a visit to Seal Sands to see the seals. These are principally Harbour Seals that breed on Seal Sands and at that time of year there will be recently independent pups. There are usually a few Grey seals present as well. Late August is the peak time of year for Harbour Seal haul outs as that is when they moult, so we can expect to see around 100 seals in total. Venator have kindly given permission for us to access their seal hide on Greenabella Marsh to see the seals on Seal Sands, which is where the majority of them will be at low tide. The visit will be led by Ian Bond of INCA, who co-ordinates the Teesmouth seal monitoring programme.

Time: Start at 10am to coincide with low tide and will take about 2 hours.

Meeting place: Main car park at Venator on the A178 Seal Sand Road, TS25 2DD. There is a bus service from Hartlepool which stops there.

Route: The intention is to walk to the seal hide then continue along the sea wall to Greatham Creek to count the seals there, to get a total population count. This would involve a walk of around 4km in total but it would be possible to shorten this depending on participant's fitness levels to a walk to the seal hide and back, which would be around 2km in total. The paths are mainly flat and partially surfaced but there are some steps up to the seal hide and the occasional pipe to cross.

Facilities: No toilets or refreshments on site. The nearest are at Seaton Carew or, in the opposite direction, at Saltholme, both of which are about 1 mile away. (There is a £5 charge per car to visit Saltholme but its free just to use the café).

If you would like to attend or for more information please contact Ian Bond on bondian@hotmail.co.uk

Picture gallery: (from Cocklawburn) juvenile, slightly injured Golden plover, and freshly emerged-looking Small copper (Trixie Collin), and more or less cryptic Ringed plover (Graham White)







