

Berwick Wildlife Group

www.berwickwildlifegroup.org.uk



Monthly Review: September 2018.

WILDLIFE REPORTS

Weather The long, warm sunny days of summer came to an end during the first few days of the month. A hot day (2nd) with the temperature reaching 27C (80F) was 'pushed away' the following day with a cold front from the north, bringing a fresh NE wind and a day of rain.

The days had been brought back to the average for the month, with cool but sunny conditions, tempered by some rainfall every couple of days or so, which persisted well into the middle of the month.

The early approach of the first autumn Atlantic storm, named 'Ali', passed over mainland Scotland quickly (19th), bringing very strong winds over our region and the Borders. Some gusts reached up to 90mph, bring branches off trees, garden fences blown over and the odd tile removed from some houses. It was sad to see seven trees in the fine row of White Poplars at Gainslaw House, across the Tweed from West Ord, get the tops broken out. White Poplar when mature are vulnerable to damage in conditions like this, as their timber is soft and brittle.

Things had calmed down by the 23rd, and the sunny but cool days returned. As the nights got clearer, so the temperature dropped, bringing the first slight frost of the season on the 24th. Another weather front, this time from the South Atlantic, brought a strong warm wind from the SW and a daytime temperature of 21C (70F). The temperature only fell to 15.5C(60F) overnight, but oddly kept falling over the next day(27th.) to a low of 4.4C (40C) the following night. Winds were back in the cool, northerly quarter by the month's end.

Rainfall totals for the month were low: 52.5mm (2.5inches).

Birds The autumn migration was in full flow throughout the month with the first geese arriving on time, but many of the summer migrants seem to be leaving us earlier than the 'norm'.

A flock of 22 **Golden Plover** were on Billylaw, Ord Moor(2nd) with a **Greenshank**, a female **Tufted Duck**, a pair of **Shelducks** and 26 **Goosanders** at West Ord. Waders on Calot Shad, Tweed estuary, included 4 **Ringed Plovers** and 2 **Bar-tailed Godwits**. A strong north wind on the 3rd saw a **Gannet** movement past the Pier, with 860/hour flying north on the high tide.

Waders at Cocklawburn(4th) included 18 **Sanderling**, 14 Ringed Plovers and 8 **Turnstones**. On the fields, were 134 **Lapwing** and 4 Golden Plover. On the rough ground a flock of c.160 **Goldfinches** were amongst the thistles and hardheads with a **Red-throated Diver** in the Bay. An early **Whooper Swan** arrived at New Water Heugh(5th) with 3 **Wigeon**, a Greenshank and 2 **Common Terns**.

At West Ord(9th) there were 4 **Blac- tailed Godwits**, 2 Greenshank, 3 **Little Egrets** with 14 **Teal**. At New Water Heugh an early group of 4 **Goldeneye** were seen, while at Cocklawburn the Lapwing flock

'peaked' with a high of 376 birds present - the largest flock recorded there over the last 10 years. A party of 32 **Common Scoter** were seen off Saltpan rocks. A **Curlew Sandpiper** was present on Little Beach(10th).

A rarity in the form of an unfortunate **Corncrake** was found at Ancroft(16th) as a road kill.

At Cocklawburn(20th), 25 **Goosander**, and c.60 **Common Scoter** were seen. The first returning **Pink-footed Geese** were noted with 170 over East Ord at dawn(23rd). A group of 3 **Wheatears** were on Little Beach(24th). A male **Merlin** hunted the shoreline at Cocklawburn(24th) where a single **Ruff** was with the flock of Lapwing. Two **Wigeon** were on the pond with 3 Tufted Ducks and 34 Golden Plover roosted on Saltpan rocks.

More geese were noted(30th) with 80 Pink-footed Geese heading north at dawn at East Ord.

Footnote: My WeBS count at Cocklawburn on May 4th,2017 was 'special' as I was fortunate to see and record a **Black-browed Albatross**, fly around a couple of times offshore. At the time I thought the record might not be accepted, but I've received confirmation that my record and description have been officially accepted by the British Birds Rarities Committee. They also note that this is the first Black-browed Albatross accepted nationally for Northumberland as other records were of Albatross species (not being definitive). I guess the acceptance was strengthened as the bird was also seen in the following weeks off the Farnes, Whitburn in Durham and St.Abbs. A very satisfying result for me and the recording work I do on my local 'patch'.

Mammals There were very few records this month. Three **Brown Hares** were seen in cut grain fields at West Ord(23rd). The pod of **Bottle nosed Dolphins** which have been seen again all month were noted, nine-strong at Cocklawburn(24th).

Insects Butterflies - The month saw a good increase in numbers, especially of **Red Admirals**. A peak number of 21 was seen on my Orange-ball *Buddleja weryiana* in the garden on the 27th. Up to the month's end there were still a few 'whites' around, along with **Painted Ladies, Comma** and **Speckled Woods**.

There has also been a good build up of **Silver Y Moths** in our area.

Malcolm Hutcheson

Help!

At the moment, as you may have noticed, we are not able to update the sightings on our website. Does anyone have this skill, and a willingness to help us out? If so, please contact Malcolm, or another committee member. Despite this current difficult, we still need all your records, please, which are being retained and will appear in due course, as well as find their way to the appropriate national recording organisations.

Do therefore please continue sending records of sightings to Malcolm, by the 30th of each month, at m.hutcheson08@btinternet.com

Talks programme

Please note the following for your diaries. These will take place at St Paul's Church, Spittal (as last year), starting at 7:30

17th October 2018	Maurice McNeely	Barn Owls
21st November 2018 Work of the Border Forest Trust	David Long	Botany and Rewilding in the Southern Uplands - the
16th January 2019	Tom Cadwallader	The special Winter Birds of the Northumberland Coast
20th February 2019	TBC	
20th March	Mario Ray	The St Abbs Voluntary Marine Reserve

Gallery

Land birds on a beach location (Little Beach, Berwick): Linnet, Northern wheatear and Pied wagtail, this last a young bird (note the yellowish head), newly arrived from the Arctic (Graham White)





