

Berwick Wildlife Group

www.berwickwildlifegroup.org.uk



Monthly Review: November 2018.

WILDLIFE REPORTS

Weather

November has been a month of blowing 'hot and cold', with a set pattern of spells of stormy conditions, interrupted by calm, cool days with some sunshine. Although some cold nights were recorded there was only frost on two occasions all month.

The stormy periods vary in strength, the strongest now being named by the various European Meteorological authorities, as they sweep in off the Atlantic Ocean. We are basically lucky in Berwick to be situated on the East Coast, as the wind strength has generally slowed down by passing over higher ground on three sides.

The first storm appeared on the 3rd and was the remnants of ex-hurricane 'Oscar', bringing mild air from the South Atlantic. Over the month, six different stormy weather fronts passed through, each with spells of high winds, some rain and a rise in temperature. The final storm brought two weather fronts, both linked to the Portuguese, storm 'Diana'. A wet night (27th) brought 15mm (0.6 inches) of rain and gale-force winds, followed closely by the second front with its high winds from a southerly direction and another rise in temperature. The warmest days all reached 13C (56F) on the 3/4th, 14th, and 28th - all very unseasonal for November.

Even though it has been a very changeable month, it has seen rainfall figures a little below average, with a monthly total of 73.5mm (2.85 inches). The average over the past decade is 3.5 inches.

Birds

November is a quiet month for birds, except during stormy periods which can bring small movements of wintering thrushes and finches, along with sea birds. Along Spittal cliffs(2nd) was the unusual sight of a **Buzzard** hunting the shore at low tide, while in the Bay were 6 **Red throated Divers**. The gull roost at West Ord held c.120 **Common Gulls**, with a party of 8 **Long tailed Tits** roaming the hedgerow. A party of 22 **Linnets** fed on Little Beach shore, with a group of 6 **Common Scoter** offshore.

At Cocklawburn(8th), a party of 64 **Golden Plover** were with 180 **Lapwing**. A number of birders were around as the **American Black Scoter** was seen at Cheswick Black rocks in the morning. At New Water Heugh(11th), there were 26 **Goldeneye**, with 246 **Lapwing** on the riverbank. On Cocklawburn pond(15th) were 9 **Mute Swans**, 3 **Tufted Ducks** and a single **Coot**, with a party of 8 **Reed Buntings** in the bushes. Later in the day a large party of c.360 **Pink footed Geese** flew south over Tweedmouth, including a partial albino bird - *not* a Snow Goose variant, as it had grey wings. Up on Murton Craggs a party of 64 **Linnets** were in a stubble field with 6 **Grey Partridges**.

On Little Beach(18th) the high tide disturbed the rotting seaweed, attracting 72 **Redshank**, 32 **Turnstone**, 6 **Mallard** and c.100 **Black-headed Gulls**. The following day (19th) 15 **Teal**, 86 **Oystercatcher**, 26 **Curlew**, 8 **Bar-tailed Godwits**, 2 **Grey Plover** and 6 **Purple Sandpipers** were seen on the roost-site below the

Coastwatch station. A northerly gale blowing on 20th saw a sea bird movement over Spittal Bay. An hour's 'watch' recorded: 22 **Guillemots**, 3 single **Great Northern Divers**, 2 **Gannets** and 5 **Kittiwakes**, all struggling northwards.

In East Ord(24th), a group of 22 **Goldfinches** were visiting local 'feeders' around Hiveacres. At Cocklawburn (27th) a drake **Gadwall** was on the pond, with 6 **Mistle Thrushes**, and 12 **Fieldfares** in the adjacent fields. Again in East Ord a single **Waxwing** was feeding in a Whitebeam at the entrance to Cornwall Avenue, where later in the day a **Ring-necked Parakeet** flew noisily around and into the Ord Country Park.

The appearance of a Ring-necked Parakeet in our area is another instance of an immigrant 'feral' species adapting to our conditions, and moving north with climate change. These handsome birds originate in the Indian sub-Continent and birds were first noted breeding in the UK in Kent in 1971, where a small group of birds within a 10 km square escaped captivity, or were released. By the publication of the 1988/91 Bird Atlas a large expansion was recorded over Kent, Sussex and the Greater London area. Birds had also reached as far north as Birmingham, Manchester, Liverpool and Sheffield. By the time the 2007/11 Bird Atlas was published, they were being recorded as far north as Edinburgh, Fife and Angus. In the Greater London area the population had exploded, with an estimated number of 30,000 recorded.

Here, they were added to the official Northumberland county list in 2014, with small groups noted in Newcastle/Gateshead and Ponteland. So far, birds seen in north Northumberland recently have been at Haggerston, Embleton and Bamburgh. How far this expansion will grow remains to be seen. They are joining a list of 'new' birds in our country since 1950, including Collared Dove, Osprey, Marsh Harrier, Little Egret, Little ringed Plover, Black tailed Godwit and Mediterranean Gull, to name a few.

Mammals

Worryingly, the pod of **Bottle-nosed Dolphins** have not been reported this month. If members see any disturbance to the 'pod', please contact the wildlife officer at Berwick police station, as this is an offence of disturbance to a protected animal, under the Wildlife & Countryside Act.

At Allerdean(15th), a stag **Roe Deer** was seen near the road and another was a road-kill at Ord roundabout(26th).

Insects

The only sighting of note was a late **Peacock** butterfly, recorded flying along the Spittal promenade(2nd). **Any records of late flying bees, moths or other insects, please contact Malcolm Hutcheson.**

Other records

In fact Malcolm suggests that - as a temporary measure at least - members wishing to add their records to the newsletter should send them directly to him by the 30th of each month at **m.hutcheson08@btinternet.com**



Curlew, seen from Holy Island causeway (Graham White)

Next year's talks

(7:30, St Paul's church, Spittal)

16th January 2019	Tom Cadwallader	The special Winter Birds of the Northumberland Coast
20th February 2019	TBC	
20th March 2019	Mario Ray	The St Abbs Voluntary Marine Reserve (not a final title)

With best wishes from the committee for the Christmas season, and good wildlife watching.

