

Berwick Wildlife Group

www.berwickwildlifegroup.org.uk



Monthly Review: December 2018.

WILDLIFE REPORTS.

Weather A month of very mild conditions throughout, with southerly winds often coming up from the Atlantic around the Azores region.

Passing cold fronts over Scotland brought a rise in wind strength on occasions, most notably on 16th/17th when Storm 'Deirdre' passed through. Along with high winds came rain overnight, with 17mm (0.65 inches) recorded.

The mild weather kept frost to a minimum, with only nine nights dropping below freezing point. The coldest night was the 25th, when the temperature dropped to -2C (25F).

Over Christmas and on to the end of the month, fairly calm conditions had set in with thin high cloud, light winds from the south-west and some spells of warm sunshine. A final touch for the year was the overnight temperature of the 30th, which reached a warm 10C. (50F), when the usual overnight temperature is near freezing point at this time of year. 2018 has certainly been a year of contrasts.

Once again this month has been drier than normal: the total for the month being 56 mm (2.2 inches), most of it falling in the first two weeks.

The **grand total for 2018**: 70.4mm (2.8 inches).

Average rainfall over the last decade: 73.7mm. (2.9 inches)

Birds

A fairly quiet month for birds, as one would expect, but with changing weather patterns some winter movements can be anticipated. The **Ring-necked Parakeet** mentioned last month seems to be 'hanging around' the Tweedmouth area. It was seen on several occasions feeding on apples in a Cornhill Road garden and has been noted coming to roost with **Starlings** into Ord Country Park. Do let me know of any more sightings.

The sight of a large flock of winter thrushes between West Ord and Longlands School(2nd) made a good start to the month, with c.120 **Fieldfares** and c.40 **Redwings** noted. A flock of 26 **Goldeneye** were at New Water Heugh with 160 **Lapwing** roosting on the salt-marsh.

The high tide(3rd) stirred the piles of seaweed and attracted a crowd of birds to Little Beach. Of the waders were 18 **Purple Sandpiper** along with 68 **Redshank** and 32 **Turnstones**. A family group of 3 **Twite** and 4 **Rock Pipits** were also present. Further up the coast in Greenses Bay were 16 **Knot** roosting on the jetty at high tide with 5 **Grey Plover**, 38 Redshank and 12 Turnstones.

At Cocklawburn (6th) 9 **Sanderling** along with 12 **Ringed Plover** were along the shore with 130 Lapwing in the coastal fields, with 7 Twite around the cattle troughs. On the pond were 9 **Whooper Swans**, 5 **Tufted Duck** and the drake **Gadwall** reported there last month. Over the railway in fields at Cheswick were c,1,800 **Pink-footed Geese** grazing on a stubble fields and in a kale field next to them were 86 **Mute Swans**.

The presence of 3 **Waxwings** in Cornwall Avenue (12th) was welcome. These birds fed for just a couple of hours on a rich-coloured fruited Whitebeam. The local flock of **Goldfinch** had reached 12 in number. A flock of 58 **Greylag Geese** were at Cocklawburn(14th) along with 19 **Golden Plover**. The same morning saw a fine **Great Northern Diver** feeding off Cheswick Black rocks. At New Water Heugh(16th) the **Wigeon** flock had built up to 56. Along the Spittal shore(19th) a **Little Egret** was seen flying south over Spittal Bay.

On Calot Shad(23rd) a large group of 32 Turnstone were feeding, unusual as they are normally seen on the Estuary in small numbers. Also of note were 2 **Red throated Divers** and a **Shag** feeding near the Pier. A **Nuthatch** was heard calling in Ord Country Park(26th) which was also the last date the Ring necked Parakeet was noted coming to roost with Starlings. At Cocklawburn(28th) were 164 Lapwing, 74 **Curlew** and 2 **Mistle Thrushes**, joined by 7 '**Tundra**' **Bean Geese**. flying in from the north. These scarce 'true arctic' geese are only seen locally around here, once ever 5/6 years or so. On the same day, Sanderling numbers on the shore had reached 48 with 12 Ringed Plover.

Mammals

A fine dog **Otter** was noted fishing in the Tweed under West Ord farm(21st) with another in Meadow Haven (30th) at high tide near to the end of the pier. A dog **Fox** was seen, daylight hunting the hedgerows at Billylaw Ord Moor(23rd).

Insects

No notable records, though warm days mid-month might have brought out some species.

Flora

An interesting task to set yourself at the beginning of the New Year, is to take a local walk recording how many plants you can find in flower on a single outing during within the first 10 days of January. Send your results to me for the next newsletter with date, name of species and site.

All records

Could members wishing to add their records to the newsletter, as a temporary measure, send them directly to Malcolm Hutcheson by the 30th of each month at m.hutcheson08@btinternet.com

Reminder – next talks

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 2019, with good wildlife watching.

Seasonal appearance

Like refugees from Christmas cards, or carols, these ten (!) Grey partridges appeared in your Editor's garden on New Year's Day, enjoying the newly weeded beds (though failing to find ten pear trees). The second picture shows the collective "freeze" posture they adopted – for some minutes - when a Sparrowhawk flew overhead.



