

# Berwick Wildlife Group

[www.berwickwildlifegroup.org.uk](http://www.berwickwildlifegroup.org.uk)



## Monthly Review: March 2019.

### WILDLIFE REPORTS.

#### **Weather**

March has been a month of two halves, continuing the theme we've seen throughout this winter. Short spells of variable temperatures, with some stormy conditions to move each system through quickly, followed by a strong high pressure mid-month settling things down to the month's end, bringing warm days and cool nights.

Two storms passed through: 'Freya' on the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 'Gareth' on the 13<sup>th</sup>. Both brought gale force winds from the west with spells of heavy rain. The wettest spell was overnight on the 6<sup>th</sup> with 20mm (0.8inches). As 'Gareth' passed through it left us with a covering of snow on the 16<sup>th</sup>. It was all washed away the following night by another spell of rain.

Mid-month saw a build up of high pressure, and with it a period of settled, calmer conditions, right through to the end of the month. The sun is gaining strength at this time of year and temperatures rose again to reach a peak of 16.7C (62F) over the 20<sup>th</sup>/21<sup>st</sup>. Although at the time of writing totals are not all in, we seem to be heading for the warmest winter for some time.

No frosts were recorded as from the 18<sup>th</sup>. Although the month started wet, we had a final rainfall total of 89mm (3.4 inches).

#### **Wildlife summary**

The very mild start to the month brought an early arrival of Spring migrants to the south coast of Britain, but the two following storms blew several early species into our region. The surprise was the early sighting of a few butterflies, the pick of which must be a ragged Painted Lady which 'flopped' into my garden at midday on the 3<sup>rd</sup> March. It fed for a while on early spring flowering heather, before being whisked away on the very strong west wind. It's the earliest date I have ever recorded this species in the UK. Elsewhere, several birds were sitting on eggs earlier than usual and the 'mad' March Hares were to be seen locally.

#### **Birds**

Migration was in full swing with the mild weather with Geese and Waders moving north daily.

At Little Beach (2<sup>nd</sup>) were 26 **Sanderling**, 24 **Turnstones** along with 7 **Rock Pipits** feeding amongst the wrack. At West Ord(3<sup>rd</sup>) were 14 **Teal** and a **Lesser black backed Gull** with the flock of c.350 passage **Black headed Gulls**. A lone **Red throated Diver** was found in Tweedmouth Dock.

The first storm 'Freya' came on the 4<sup>th</sup>. and with it a passage of 180 **Gannets** an hour, flying south into the wind off Berwick pier. In Spittal Bay was a sheltering **Slavonian Grebe**. A large flock of 116 **Sanderling** were at Cocklawburn(5<sup>th</sup>) along with 78 **Greylag Geese** and 2 **Pink footed Geese**. The flock of 72 **Twite** were still around the cattle feeders, not to be confused with a flock of 46 **Linnets** gathered in the pond area. (a good identification challenge!!)

A pair of **Siskin** appeared on feeders in Cornwall Avenue(7<sup>th</sup>), with a male **Nuthatch** calling in the Ord Country park. Six **Redwing** were seen at West Ord (10<sup>th</sup>), 4 **Common Scoter** and a single **Guillemot** were off Saltpan rocks, Cocklawburn (11<sup>th</sup>). A drake **Gadwall** was with Mallard on the Estuary at Calot Shad(15<sup>th</sup>), remaining until the end of the month where two lucky WeBS counters noted a **Glaucous Gull** in the gull roost. A flock of 92 **Jackdaws** gathering on the sandbank, before going to roost at Castle Hills House. **Meadow Pipits** were on the move(21<sup>st</sup>) as the weather settled down, with c.60 an hour passing Cocklawburn..

Two pairs of Greylag Geese were 'on territory' at Middle Ord pond(24<sup>th</sup>) with an early calling **Chiff-chaff** at Clayholes Shiel. A pair of **Shelduck** were on Calot Shad(25<sup>th</sup>) and an early male **Wheatear** passed through Cocklawburn the next day. Still at Cocklawburn(28<sup>th</sup>) a pair of **Sand Martins** were seen with passage Meadow Pipits, and a single **Whooper Swan** flew noisily northwards. A **White Wagtail**, (European race of the Pied Wagtail) was at West Ord with 6 Pieds and a pre-migrating flock of 48 **Goldeneye** had gathered at New Water Heugh. A pair of **Wigeon** were on Middle Ord pond (31<sup>st</sup>) and 62 Redshanks gathered on Calot Shad.

### **Mammals**

A dog **Otter** was again feeding in Meadow Haven(3<sup>rd</sup>) with 2 **Brown Hares** at Ord Mains.

### **Insects**

The warm conditions at the beginning of the month brought out a few early butterflies, with both **Small Tortoiseshell** and **Peacock** seen during the first week and the very early **Painted Lady**, mentioned in the Summary at Cornwall Avenue(3<sup>rd</sup>). The following week saw **Red Admiral** at Castle Vale Park (19-20th) and a **Green veined White** in the West End, Tweedmouth(20<sup>th</sup>).

Several moth species were also on the wing by the end of the month, including the **Early Grey** and **Hebrew Character**.

### **Flora**

Following on from last month's record of **Oxlip**, I have been informed by the Regional Botanist, Chris Metherell, that the record is the first in the county since 1984. Just to clarify, a plant of garden origin in the wild (either planted or self sown), is registered in the County Flora if it is seen to be successful in establishing itself after a number of years. The ripening seed pods of a few plants of **Iris foetidissima** 'Stinking Gladwyn' or the 'Roast beef plant' can be seen in the shrubbery along New Road (see photograph).

### **Other records**

A fascinating record came from a local walker, who reported a steady line of c.150 **Common Frogs** moving along Middle Ord lane during the warm, wet day of the 5<sup>th</sup>, all heading for Middle Ord pond. The sight and sound of **Common Toads** gathering to spawn was well under way at Cocklawburn pond by the end of the month.

Many thanks to Malcolm Hutcheson for these notes and all his sightings.

Please send all your sightings/records to him at [m.hutcheson@btinternet.com](mailto:m.hutcheson@btinternet.com)

### **Next indoor meeting**

There is no April meeting. The next one is on 15<sup>th</sup> May, following our (short) AGM. More details to follow.

On which note:

The group has been without a Chair for two years and I have been treasurer and committee member for several years, I now wish to resign from my role. The committee also consists of Kate Dixon, Kay Adamson, Molly Hardie, Malcolm Hutcheson, Simon Wright and Graham White. Stephen Block is not a committee member but does sterling work editing the newsletter each month. We really need new blood on the committee especially for the officer roles. Has anyone any interest in taking this on? Please contact any of us for more information.

Enid Turnbull Treasurer.

### Photo Gallery



Stinking Gladwyn (photo by Ann Hutcheson)



Oxlip (Malcolm Huteson)

and some early moths (pictures by Rena Telfer)



Early Grey



Hebrew character

...and a couple awaiting i.d.



