

# Berwick Wildlife Group

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



## Monthly Review: April 2019

### WILDLIFE REPORTS

#### Weather

April started off cold and wet with a full day (3<sup>rd</sup>) of sleet and rain. It turned out to be the wettest day of the decade (!! ) with 35mm (1.4inches.). The following day the wind turned round to a south-easterly direction, bringing quieter and milder conditions for the next fortnight, with average temperatures.

Three nights of slight frost returned on the 10<sup>th</sup> with the wind returning to a northerly quarter. Alternate days of bright sunshine and overcast skies with a thin veil of cloud followed until the 19<sup>th</sup>, when the wind returned to a light southerly. With the sunny days the temperature gradually rose, giving a very warm spell over the Easter week-end, with a high of 72F reached on the 21<sup>st</sup>. making it the warmest Easter on record in some places.

During the following few days the thin veil of cloud persisted as a late Atlantic storm named 'Hannah' approached our shores with high winds and heavy rain affecting Ireland. This time the Berwick district avoided any disruption as the centre of the low pressure passed over us on the 25<sup>th</sup>., bringing a few showers in relatively calm conditions.

Notable figures for the month: the warmest day was the 21<sup>st</sup>. with 22C (72F). Frost occurred on four nights, with a low of -1F (30F) on the night of 11<sup>th</sup>. The wet day on the 3<sup>rd</sup>. brought the monthly rainfall total above the April average of 39mm (1.55 inches) for the last decade. A total of 57.5 mm (2.3 inches) was recorded.

#### Birds

Migration was in full swing throughout the month despite the changeable weather. The **Ring necked Parakeet** returned early in the month coming to roost in Ord Country Park for three days from the 2<sup>nd</sup>. A large high tide roost of 116 **Redshank** gathered at the foot of Coxon Tower on the Walls. At Sandstell Point, Spittal(3<sup>rd</sup>), were 4 **Sanderling** with 4 **Guillemot** and 2 **Razorbills** in the Bay.

A visit to Needles Eye (5<sup>th</sup>) found breeding seabirds gathering on the sea, with c.300 **Kittiwake**, c200 Guillemot and 8 **Shag** on the cliffs with one bird sitting on a nest. A single **Swallow** and 8 **Sand Martins** were at West Ord(7<sup>th</sup>) and a single **Tufted Duck** was with 17 **Goldeneye** at New Water Heugh.

Sea mist and a fresh south-east wind(9<sup>th</sup>), brought 4 **Sandwich Terns** to Saltpan rocks, Cocklawburn with a steady passage of 160 **Gannets** flying south within the hour. A **Blackcap** was in song on Tommy the Millers field(10<sup>th</sup>) and back at Cocklawburn(11<sup>th</sup>) were a party of 4 **Stonechats**, with 22 Sanderling, 12 **Purple Sandpipers** and 8 Turnstone on the shoreline. Over the pond were 7 Sand Martins, a single

**House Martin** and 3 Swallows hawking insects before flying off north. A flock of 12 **Redwing** were noted at dawn in trees at Ord Country Park(12<sup>th</sup>) before flying off strongly out to sea.

At Middle Ord pond (21<sup>st</sup>) several **Willow Warblers** were in song with an early **Garden Warbler**. A **Little Grebe**, 4 Tufted Duck and a nesting pair of **Greylag Geese** were on the pond. A pair of **Ringed Plover** were displaying at New Water Heugh. A **Red throated Diver** and 86 **Common Scoter** were at Saltpan rocks(22<sup>nd</sup>) with an immature drake Goldeneye on Cocklawburn pond, where an early **Sedge Warbler** was in song.

Yarrow Slake (25<sup>th</sup>), held 52 Redshank, 12 **Teal** and 5 **Shelduck** on the high tide, with 2 calling **Whimbrel** passing overhead. The Calot Shad gull roost, held c.340 Kittiwakes and 16 **Great black backed Gulls**. A **Whitethroat** was seen and heard at Toddles Shiel, East Ord(27<sup>th</sup>). At Middle Ord pond a pair of Greylag Geese were with 10 new goslings, while on the pond were a pair of **Shoveler**, a scarce duck in North Northumberland.

On the last day (30<sup>th</sup>), a gathering of 124 **Goosander** assembled at New Water Heugh, before setting off to the Baltic. Also there, a pair of Goldeneye. At Cocklawburn pond were 6 Tufted Duck and 2 **Common Sandpipers**.

### **Mammals**

A dog **Otter** was again seen this month in the mouth at the Estuary near the Lifeboat station, feeding at low tide and keeping well clear of the bull **Grey Seal** that patrols that area. Two more Otters were noted further upstream between the A1 bridge and West Ord(28<sup>th</sup>).

### **Insects**

The warm conditions early in the month brought out a range of insects including bees, wasps and flies. There have been a number of reports of small clusters of **Five-spot Ladybirds** in gardens, which is good news for the gardeners amongst us, as a natural control of Aphids.

Butterflies: several species eventually were seen, but the many cold days through the month have restricted numbers into sheltered areas away from the cold winds. **Small Tortoiseshell** and **Peacock** could be found in sheltered gardens etc. but the whites are scarce so far, with single **Small Whites** at Tommy the Millers(10<sup>th</sup>), Chain Bridge, Horncliffe (12<sup>th</sup>) and East Ord (21<sup>st</sup>) A **Green veined White** was in Hiveacres gardens(14<sup>th</sup>) and wandering **Large Whites** were seen (27<sup>th</sup>) onwards in Spittal, Yarrow Slake and East Ord. An early **Small Copper** was seen in the 'pit' on Cocklawburn dunes(29<sup>th</sup>).

### **Flora**

April is the month when one of a nature's joys is the sight of embankments and cliffs covered with Primroses in flower. The coastal cliffs from Cocklawburn north to the Border have been particularly good this year. Towards the end of the month Cowslips will replace them by coming to the fore. Although restricted these days from many open grassland fields by agricultural cleanliness, they are still widespread in our coastal fixed dune systems along the coast. Cocklawburn and Cheswick dunes are our local areas for a sight now rare elsewhere, but once commonplace in the grassland fields grazed by cattle countrywide in my youth.

Occasionally a hybrid of the two species will occur, and the False Oxlip will appear amongst the Cowslips. There were several specimens recently in the Cocklawburn dunes, but last year they mysteriously disappeared. I do hope they were not moved by an ethically correct botanist or a light-fingered amateur gardener, as this is nature in its natural environment, which should be left alone for all to enjoy.

**Many thanks to Malcolm Hutcheson for his report.**

**Please continue to send in your records of sightings via the Sightings Page on the website**

**Next meeting: Wednesday 22nd May, 7:30 p.m. Berwick United Reformed Church, Main Road, Spittal**

After the AGM (which should not take too much time) there will be a talk by Raine Bryant about the Berwick Nature Trail.

### **Photos**

Cowslips and Primroses, at Cocklawburn, as mentioned in Malcolm Hutcheson's report



