

Berwick Wildlife Group

www.berwickwildlifegroup.org.uk



Monthly Review: September 2019

WILDLIFE REPORTS

Weather

September has seen conditions change, with shorter days and colder nights, yet there have still been odd quiet and warm day-times. This pattern of 'blowing hot and cold' set in, with only small amounts of rain, during the first half of the month. A long spell of stable high air pressure kept the Atlantic storms, like ex-hurricane Dorian (10th) and storm Gabriel (12th) to the north-west of the UK, the only effect here being 24-hour spells of strong winds.

During the first week it stayed warm, reaching 24.4C (76F) on the 7th, with overnight temperatures falling over the following week to 3.3C (38F) and a slight frost on the 16th. A weak warm front passed through with a cloudy day (18th), slowly moving the high pressure area east and allowing warm continental air northwards.

The final week saw change again, with sunny periods and showers, heavy on some days, bringing 35mm (1.4 inches) in a week of light winds.

This brought the total rainfall to 55mm (2.2 inches), around average for September over the last decade.

Birds

As summer migrants left our shores this month, they were starting to be replaced by returning winter migrants from their northern breeding grounds. Along with these, September often brings the odd more unusual bird.

A **Chiff-Chaff** with a family of five **Blue Tits** wandering along the lane at Billylaw (8th,) is typical of migrant warblers in the Autumn. The gull roost at West Ord held 650 **Black headed Gulls** and 340 **Common Gulls** along with a **Little Egret** and 5 **Lapwings**. Further downstream a **Whitethroat** was found at Toddles Shiel.

More Chiff-chaffs were found at Sea House, Cocklawburn (10th) and at Cocklawburn pond. Wader numbers here included 140 Lapwing, 36 **Curlew** and 2 **Knot** on the beach. Off-shore were 2 **Red throated Divers**, 12 **Guillemots** and 6 **Sandwich Terns**., with a family of 3 **Stonechats** in the dunes. At Cheswick Black rocks were 8 **Brent Geese** on the sea, with a gathering of 136 **Common Scoter**.

A visit to Yarrow Slake found 42 Lapwing, 18 Curlew and 14 **Grey Herons**, with a party of 26 **Goldfinches** using the pond at the hide. Early morning on the 13th a party of 58 **House Martins** and 36 **Swallows** used a ledge of the Berwick walls in Flagstaff Park as a roost point, and a place in the early sunshine. At West Ord (15th) were 2 **Wigeon** and 2 **Teal** and a drake **Tufted Duck** was on the Tweed at New Water Heugh.

Three Bar-tailed Godwits and 5 **Turnstone** were on Calot Shad in the Estuary and a party of 16 Goldfinches on Little Beach dunes, feeding on Sow Thistle seed heads. Late afternoon saw a **Goldcrest** with a pair of Blue Tits in my garden in Cornwall Avenue.

Wader numbers were building up on Yarrow Slake (16th) with 242 Lapwing, 106 **Redshank** and 11 **Canada Geese**. A flight of 54 **Pink footed Geese** landed briefly at New water Heugh before heading up the Tweed Valley, and were the first returning birds of the Autumn. A big gull roost here held 620 **Herring Gulls**, 8 **Lesser black-backed Gulls** and 28 **Great black-backed Gulls** and a single **Whooper Swan**!

The roost in Meadow Haven(17th) held 26 **Cormorant** and 42 **Shag** at high tide, with 14 **Mute Swans** on the sea in the quiet conditions. The Ladies Skerr (Coastwatch) roost held 14 Bar-tailed Godwits, 46 Curlew, 14 Turnstone and a single **Grey Plover**. A late **Common Sandpiper** was roosting with 5 Turnstone on the waste water pipe in Calot Shad.

A pair of Red-throated Divers were found in Spittal Bay(18th) with a migrant Chiff-Chaff in scrub at Redshin Cove. A party of 46 Pink-footed Geese headed south over East Ord. At Cocklawburn (19th) a small group of 38 **Ringed Plover**, 10 **Sanderling**, 6 Turnstone and 4 **Purple Sandpiper**, gathered on the rising tide, with 44 **Common Scoter** offshore and 258 Lapwing in the coastal fields. On the pond were a single duck Wigeon and a drake Tufted Duck, with a family group of a pair of **Moorhens** with 2 juveniles, and a passage **Willow Warbler** in the hawthorns.

A group of 26 **Skylarks** were in a newly sown field at Billylaw(20th) with a Little Grebe seen nearby at Middle Ord pond. Two **Goldeneye**, a duck and an immature drake, were at West Ord, along with 4 Teal, 86 Canada Geese and 240 Common Gulls included in the roost. More Pink footed Geese, this time 160, headed south over East Ord.

A week later 2 **Greenshank** were on Little Beach(28th) along with 12 Bar-tailed Godwit, 6 **Dunlin** and 32 Turnstones. Catching insects in the wrack were 14 **Pied Wagtails**. A very large movement of Pink-footed Geese were seen mid-morning with c.1,400 birds in 5 skeins flying NW over Tweedmouth. Over Meadow Haven a group of 8 immature **Gannets** were feeding close inshore along with 12 Guillemot.

A Greenshank and 6 Turnstone were on Calot Shad (29th). A colder north wind on 30th saw 3 Swallows over the Golf Course and Pink-footed Geese once again on the move, this time with 58 flying south over East Ord, late in the day.

Insects

It would seem that September will be known for the emergence of a large number of **Red Admirals**. It has been a spectacular year for **Painted Ladies** but emails from members have reported large numbers of Red Admirals on the flower beds in the 'Rose Garden' in Flagstaff Park, under the Walls (16th). I made a count there (19th) and saw 3 Small Tortoiseshells, 5 Peacocks, 112 Red Admirals, 21 Painted Ladies and a single Large White. I was not too surprised as my late flowering Buddlejas held 28 Red Admirals just a few days earlier. The question is: 'Where are they all coming from?' As this is surely not a normal emergence. There must have been some migration of the species here!

Their numbers have stayed fairly uniform through the month, even with cooler temperatures and spells of heavy rain.

One or two **Speckled Woods** are appearing in local gardens with singles seen in the West End, Tweedmouth, Spittal, East Ord and 3 noted in the Goody Patch on Dock Road(9th). A single **Comma** appeared in Cornwall Avenue(28/29th).

With the migrant butterflies have come good numbers of **Silver 'Y' Moths**. This is also time to find **Elephant Hawkmoth** caterpillars. These strange insects with their camouflage 'eyes' have appeared in a couple of members gardens, particularly if the perennial Fuchsia is growing near-by - their favourite food plant.

Other records

A pod of 5 **Bottle-nosed Dolphins** were at Sea House , Cocklawburn (10th).

Website update

The group committee is conscious of the poor state of the website at present and is working to improve matters.

With the help of John Rae, who initially set it up, our new treasurer Elaine (with the help of her tech savvy son!) is working to progress this. This will result either in a revamp of the present site or setting up an entirely new one. If this requires professional help then we will buy this in.

We would like to include an easier method of sending in sighting records in this process. If any members have experience or advice in this area then don't hesitate to get in touch with Elaine ecbeau21@gmail.com

Wildlife recording

Committee member **Malcolm Hutcheson** is our main recording contact for members and asks for any records to be sent to him. He will process and add to our records database and also forward to ERIC the central recording system, as he has been doing for some time

Please do this in preference to the normal method via the website, which may change due to the website work.

m.hutcheson08@btinternet.com

Newsletter

We are aware that some members have not been receiving this via email so we are checking our circulation list.

After many years of producing our newsletter, Stephen has notified us of his intention to step down as 'editor'.

We would like to sincerely thank him for his sterling work.

Therefore we are looking for someone to take this on. There would be assistance for a new 'editor' with;

Proof reading

Copy from assigned committee members or members for articles after events.

Records of interest from Malcom Hutcheson

If you think you could help with this please contact Simon. simon.nationaltrust@btinternet.com

An evening walk at Spottiswoode

On a slightly damp and grey evening towards the end of August we were privileged to be conducted round David Long's fascinating woodland regeneration project near Westruther.

David and Siobhan bought 80 acres of former Forestry Commission spruce plantation in 2002 and have set about transforming it to new native woodland.

They are gradually removing mainly semi mature Sitka, replacing with mainly Oak, Birch and smaller areas of Scots Pine, Aspen, Lime etc. They also have an open heather area, a good range of birds, plus moths and butterflies, such as Small Skipper. David told us about the work he is doing to encourage the rare and possibly only known Scottish colony of the Large Red-belted Clearwing moth, that only lays eggs on freshly cut larch stumps.

The adjoining parkland associated with the original house (now Eagle Hall) was rich in old trees until devastated by speculators felling and selling them for timber.

The areas are reverting to the natural woodland understory, and there are many interesting fungi.

The progress in 17 years is magnificent to see, David has been ably helped by a hardworking group of local volunteers.

There are bridleways and foot paths through the woodland, so if you didn't make it or did and wish to explore in better weather or a different time of year, you can. It is well worth it!

Next events (all at 7.30pm, United Reformed Church, Spittal)

16th October, Tom Cadwallender

'Some Special Summer Birds of the Northumberland Coast'

(see photo attached)

20th November,

Iain Cowe

'The White-letter Hairstreak crosses the Border!' (working title)

(Photo attached)

Committee members.

Chair, Simon Wright

Secretary, Kay Adamson

Treasurer and membership, Elaine Beauchamp

Group recorder, Malcolm Hutcheson

Molly Hardie

Kate Dixon

Graham White (not active currently as long term health problems, we wish him well).

Photos

Belted Clearwing moth (from Spottiswoode), White-letter Hairstreak (Butterfly Conservation), Dark Green Fritillary (M. Hutcheson), Large Elephant Hawkmoth larva, in threat display, and on foodplant (M Hutcheson and Mollie Hardy, respectively), and Common (or is it Arctic?) Tern (Tom Cadwallender)







