

# Berwick Wildlife Group

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



## Monthly Review: November 2019.

Welcome to the penultimate newsletter of 2019

Firstly, many thanks to Malcolm for his sterling work on the records. Also please note the new website address (**see above**), the address is the same **EXCEPT** the 'org' has been dropped. Our general contact email address is; [eberwickwildlifegroup@gmail.com](mailto:eberwickwildlifegroup@gmail.com)  
Please visit the site and give us your feedback!

We were treated to a wonderful tale for our November meeting, when Iain Cowe told us the story of the progress north of the White Letter Hairstreak butterfly. His perseverance in locating new sites in the Borders since the initial discovery, his knowledge of the species and photography gave us an informative and entertaining evening.

Our next evening meeting is on **January 22<sup>nd</sup>**, when we are scheduled to have a presentation from the Berwickshire Marine Reserve.

Before then we have an opportunity to start the New Year with a walk led by Malcolm Hutcheson. This will be on the **4<sup>th</sup> January** and will look at plants flowering at that time of year, contributing to national records. Meet at Berwick Old Bridge, (start of the walls) at 10.00am. If bad weather, will be following Saturday (11<sup>th</sup>), contact is Malcolm on 01289 309046.

An estuary **wader survey walk** will be at 10.00 am on either 08/22 February or 07 March 2020, this is governed by tide times and weather. DetailsTBC.  
All details will be added to the website as well as sent out by email.

**If members see shellfish harvesting in the vicinity of Berwick Pier, or bait digging on Little Beach, please record details where possible, with due regard to personal safety and send to the Group.**

### **WILDLIFE REPORTS.**

**Weather.** November has been a very wet month. Even so, it has not been as windy as October as the last of the autumn storms have petered out.

The first eight days saw rainfall at sometime each day, with a wet day (6<sup>th</sup>) and a total of 14mm (0.56 inches) in a 12 hour period. Clearer skies with a cold north wind over the next three days brought with it a keen frost at night, falling to 26F overnight.

The weather pattern changed on the 12<sup>th</sup> with a strong northwest wind and showers and slight frost at night. After another wet day (16<sup>th</sup>) a dry five day spell followed. High cloud brought a veil over the sun, giving hazy sunshine and cold nights. Another cold night came on the 19<sup>th</sup> when the overnight temperature fell to -6c (24F) and a white frost all round.

Milder conditions came in the following week along with cloudy skies and spells of dampness and drizzle. A damp misty day (24<sup>th</sup>), saw the thermometer rise to 52F at midday, but everywhere was cool and damp, not a nice day at all.

The last week saw a tropical storm 'Sebastien' come into the west coast of England and Ireland, but its effects had all but petered out by the time it had travelled overland to Berwick. Another change came

at the end of the month with high pressure forming and with it clear and sunny by day and keen frost at night, another -6C (24F). The days stayed cold throughout, with the light wind from the north keeping the temperature just above freezing even with the bright sunshine. Welcome to winter conditions everyone!!

A month of little sunshine with nine frosty nights produced a total rainfall figure of 117 mm (4.63 inches), the highest November total since I came to Berwick in 2001.

**Birds.** It has not been a good month for birds, not at least, reduced by the wet conditions.

I was intrigued on the first day of the month, watching over the Tweed in 'spate' at the Lifeboat Station, when I saw a small bird tempting to swim across the rising tide. At first I thought it was a Moorhen, until through my telescope I could see the long bill of a **Water Rail**. It eventually reached the other shore at Dock Road and scuttled along to the shelter of the Dock. These small water birds do migrate here in November along with Snipe and Woodcock and I guess this bird was a tired migrant. We've had records of Water Rails in past winters further upstream at Yarrow Slake where they have reed bed cover and can be heard at times, 'squealing like a pig', there 'give away' call.

On Spittal Bay (1<sup>st</sup>) were 14 **Shag** and a **Great crested Grebe**. Three **Red throated Divers** were on the Calot Shad (3<sup>rd</sup>) with 2 Shags and 37 **Cormorants** sheltering from the northerly gale. Four **Gannets** and 5 **Common Scoter** were seen flying south with the strong wind (5<sup>th</sup>) off the Pier.

The return of the **American Black Scoter** to Cocklawburn (6<sup>th</sup>) along with a very large 'raft' of c.680 Common Scoter got the notice of the 'twitchers' there with several birders looking at this rare duck with its black plumage and banana yellow bill.

A small flock of 10 **Golden Plover** were on Billylaw (10<sup>th</sup>) with a large flock of 164 **Teal** on Middle Ord pond. The same day saw a **Little Egret** and an adult **Whooper Swan** at West Ord.

At Little Beach (12<sup>th</sup>) saw the very high tide wash out the piles of rotting seaweed attracting a large feeding flock of c.850 **Black headed Gulls**. A **Slavonian Grebe** was seen on Spittal Bay (15<sup>th</sup>) along with 15 **Wigeon** on the sea, while an immature **Peregrine** flew overhead. The same day 3 **Bullfinches** and 4 **Long-tailed Tits** were in Castle Vale Park, along with a Warbler species showing a greenish Hue, probably a northern race **Chiff-chaff!**

Numbers of **Fieldfare** started to appear with 16 at Gainslaw House, and 24 at East Ord (17<sup>th</sup>). A flock of 18 **Sanderling** were on Little Beach with 38 **Turnstone** feeding amongst the disturbed seaweed.

A **Grey Plover** along with 12 **Ringed Plover** were at Cocklawburn (20<sup>th</sup>) while in the coastal fields there were 42 **Lapwing**, 26 Golden Plover and 36 **Greylag Geese**. A pair of **Gadwall** were in the pond there with 27 **Mallard** and 9 **Tufted Duck**. A male **Merlin** was also seen.

The WeBS Estuary count (25<sup>th</sup>) noted 14 **Grey Heron**, 75 **Goldeneye**, 7 **Goosander**, 80 Lapwing, 25 **Dunlin** and 218 **Redshank**. The North Shore count found 2 **Knot** along with 4 **Rock Pipits** and 15 **Linnets**. Little Beach (21<sup>st</sup>) noted 6 **Purple Sandpipers** and 46 Turnstone with 32 **Curlew** and 4 **Bar tailed Godwits** in the Coastwatch roost site. A group of 6 **Red throated Divers** were seen in Spittal Bay (22<sup>nd</sup>).

A party of winter thrushes at Billylaw (24<sup>th</sup>) included 66 **Fieldfares**, 42 **Redwings** and 14 **Blackbirds**, probably all recent arrivals from Northern Europe. Probably the same could be said of 140+ **Wood Pigeons** in the trees at Clayholes Shiel, East Ord. It was good to record a **Treecreeper** seen in Castle Vale Park (27<sup>th</sup>) associating with other small birds near the feeder and at Calot Shad (29<sup>th</sup>) Mallard numbers had risen with northern migrants to 158.

**Mammals.** A bull **Grey Seal** was seen swimming up the Tweed at West Ord (10<sup>th</sup>) on the rising tide and on the same morning a group of 4 **Brown Hares** were seen at Billylaw, Ord Moor. A fine stag **Roe Deer** was seen feeding in the open on Murton Craggs (24<sup>th</sup>).

Thank you to all who have sent in records this month. Can members wishing to add their records to the newsletter, send them directly to me by the 30<sup>th</sup> of each month at [m.hutcheson08@btinternet.com](mailto:m.hutcheson08@btinternet.com)

**We need all your records please.**

Type in sightings for the relevant month in **BWG Casual Sightings Newsletter.xls**

Please send us your records, and photos (digital or prints/slides to be scanned). Use our form on the Sightings page ([www.berwickwildlifegroup.uk](http://www.berwickwildlifegroup.uk)), phone 01289 309046 or e-mail [sightings@berwickwildlifegroup.uk](mailto:sightings@berwickwildlifegroup.uk).

**Wishing all members a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year**

