

# Berwick Wildlife Group

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

Fb; Berwick Wildlife Group



## Monthly Review: December 2019.

Here is the slightly delayed roundup for the month, thanks to Malcolm for his excellent summary of sightings.

Our only event since the last month has been the highly enjoyable and well attended (by wildlife as well as members!) 'Winter Walk' on the 4<sup>th</sup> January. Details of sightings and plant list will be included in the next newsletter.

One issue we are trying to address at the moment is the 'commercial' harvesting of periwinkles in the pier area. We are worried about the effect on food stocks for waders. Gatherers have been seen the delivery shellfish to a local business. This obviously puts it outside 'personal use'. We are in contact with the relevant organisations but please continue to gather information when you can safely do so.

### WILDLIFE REPORTS.

**Weather;** The final month of the year has proved to be a fairly mild, grey and damp.

A stormy spell with strong gusty winds came on the 10<sup>th</sup>, when storm 'Atiyah', named by the Irish Metrology Service, petered out as it crossed over central Britain days before.

Temperatures over the period have been a little above average with the mildest days (6<sup>th</sup> & 10<sup>th</sup>) peaking at 54F, and the coldest on the 1<sup>st</sup> when the daytime temperature stayed around freezing point bringing a keen frost the following night, with the temperature falling to 23F. Throughout the month, frost was recorded on 12 nights. The rhythm of several mild and sometimes damp days followed by still and cold spells, clear by day and frosty at night, ran throughout the month. Unlike elsewhere in the UK, Berwick missed any prolonged wet spells, the wettest day came on the 13<sup>th</sup>, with 7.5mm (0.3inches) recorded.

Rainfall was below the December average with 32.5mm (1.27 inches). Just slightly below the 10 year average.

As we enter a new decade, it would seem that climate change has been boosted by human activity, with hotter summers, milder winters and a speeding up of the rotation of daily conditions. We can only hope that in the next decade we can do more to control it and it will bring a lull and a reduction to the unexpected.

**Birds;** It has been a quiet month birds as the winter situation has not been severe so far.

The majority of winter migrants are here, with more arrivals coming with harsher condition over Europe. Numbers of winter thrushes were notable with flocks roaming the fruits of the hedgerow.

**Goldeneye** numbers are lower than the usual on the Tweed so far this winter, with 36 seen at New Water Heugh (31<sup>st</sup>), 34 at West Ord (15<sup>th</sup>) and 12 under the Berwick Old Bridge (26<sup>th</sup>).

**Golden Plover** numbers were noted on several dates roosting on Saltpan rocks, Cocklawburn on passage with 156 there (3<sup>rd</sup>) and 186 (17<sup>th</sup>).

Waders on Little Beach (1<sup>st</sup>) included; 36 **Sanderling**, and 18 **Ringed Plover**, with 14 **Shag** and 5 **Cormorant** on the Meadow Haven roost. A single **Grey Plover** and 8 **Purple Sandpipers** were at Cocklawburn (3<sup>rd</sup>). Sanderling numbers had risen to 66 at Little Beach (4<sup>th</sup>) with 44 **Redshank**, 5 Purple Sandpipers, 4 **Bar tailed Godwits** and a large flock of 116 **Turnstones** feeding in the wrack at high tide.

A flock of 16 **Goldfinches** were at Pier House, a male **Blackcap** was coming to a feeder in Castle Drive and 156 **Lapwing** were at New Water Heugh. A large flock of 210 **Teal** were seen in Middle Ord pond (8<sup>th</sup>), while at Spittal Bay, 5 **Brent Geese** flew south with a **Black throated Diver** seen in the Bay.

A flock of 34 **Twite** were at Cocklawburn (12<sup>th</sup>) with 68 **Greylag Geese** flying south at East Ord and 36 **Wigeon** recorded at New Water Heugh the same day. A large count of 142 **Mallard** were at Calot Shad (16<sup>th</sup>) on the high tide and an immature **Peregrine** was seen hunting over Cocklawburn (17<sup>th</sup>). A big **Common Scoter** flock was noted off Huds Head, Spittal Bay (18<sup>th</sup>), which grew to c.850 on the 20<sup>th</sup>.

A large flock of 138 **Whooper Swans** were in a ploughed potato field at Royalty Bridge, Velvet Hall (23<sup>rd</sup>). They were made up of 98 adults and 32 immatures and were with 64 Greylag and a small group of Pink footed Geese. The same day noted several flocks of **Fieldfare** with 66 at West Ord, 46 at Shoreswood and 130 near the Salutation Inn, Norham.

Numbers of **Oystercatcher** were building with 118 at Saltpan rocks, Cocklawburn (24<sup>th</sup>) where 3 **Long tailed Ducks** were seen with 260 Common Scoter. The scoter flock had built up to c.300 on the 31<sup>st</sup> with 5 Long tailed Duck with them. A flock of 52 **Redshank** and 18 Turnstone were noted feeding on the shore at Berwick Old Bridge (6<sup>th</sup>) with a group of 12 feeding mid-stream. A party of 140 Common Scoter had returned to feed off Huds Head (27<sup>th</sup>).

A flock of 46 **Chaffinches** were found feeding on Beech 'mast' at Ord Manor (29<sup>th</sup>) with 86 Teal still on the pond there. Some of the Whooper Swans at Velvet Hall had moved on, with 42 in a field near the Honey Farm, Horncliffe. A flock of 26 Goldfinch were using feeders in the Cornwall Avenue area.

A flock of 104 Lapwing were at New Water Heugh, with 34 Goldeneye mid-stream.

**Mammals;** A bull **Grey Seal** was seen swimming in the Tweed at West Ord (1st) on the rising tide. An unusual sight of a female **Common Seal** was seen in Meadow Haven (30<sup>th</sup>) hauled out on a rock on her own.

Several **Otter** sightings were recorded with a dog Otter at West Ord on the 12<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> with another seen with a fish, below the Old Bridge, Berwick on the 26<sup>th</sup>.

**Insects;** As one would expect – no records this month.

**Other records;** A sighting of **Hair Ice Fungus** (*Exidiopsis effuse*) seen by Jackie King in a garden in Spittal at the beginning of the month.

Thank you to all who have sent in records this month. Can members wishing to add there 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.**

Please send us your records, and photos (digital or prints/slides to be scanned), phone 01289 309046 or e-mail [sightings@berwickwildlifegroup.uk](mailto:sightings@berwickwildlifegroup.uk)



**Next events** Talk on 22<sup>nd</sup> January, currently titled 'An Update on Berwickshire Marine Reserve'  
Talk 19<sup>th</sup> February, The Tweed Valley Osprey Project.  
Wader Walk 22<sup>nd</sup> February, from Border Railway Bridge to Yarrow Slake.

