

Berwick Wildlife Group

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Facebook; Berwick Wildlife Group

Monthly Review. March 2020

Best wishes to all our members in this very difficult time

Activity wise things are going to cease for a while but please keep an eye on Facebook, if you use it and your email inbox for updates as we will also send out news on this circulation list.

Once again thank you to Malcolm for the sightings and monthly news, do keep them coming as much as possible.

Attached is Malcolm's report of the Yarrow Slake walk a summary of which is include in the sightings below.

It is with great sadness that we have to record the passing of Graham White, who died in the Margaret Kerr Unit after a battle with cancer. Graham was a passionate advocate for wildlife and a keen amateur photographer as well as a qualified glider pilot. His images appeared for a while on our earlier Facebook page. He also had long standing connections with the 'John Muir Friends' organisation in Canada. Our thoughts are with his family. Below is one of Grahams images.



WILDLIFE REPORTS.

Weather; The month opened with yet another winter storm on the 1st. This one was named ‘Jorge’ by the Spanish Met Office and it follows the rotation of our weather patterns throughout the winter months. The temperatures over the month have been mild, with a few light frosts at night, usually following passing cold fronts and unsettled days.

Yet another cold front appeared on the 10th, with it strong winds and rain which on this occasion turn wintry with sleet and hail. A dusting of snow was recorded early on the 12th. with a cold north east wind and rain clearing it by the end of the day. The next four days were bright and sunny with the wind turning to a southerly direction. Another wet night on the 18th were followed by a week of sunny days but a chill in the air in the cold southeast wind, which brought a touch of frost at night.

A thin veil of high cloud and a warm southerly wind featured on the 25th when the temperature rose to an unusual high of 16.7C (62F). A change came the following day, with the wind turning round to a cold northeasterly direction, bringing with it low cloud, sea mists and some drizzle. However by the end of the month a large area of high pressure was forming reaching a notable high of 1048 millibars on the 29th one of the highest in a century, bringing with it thin high cloud with the odd wintry shower.

Rainfall for the month has been low with only 44 mm (1.75 inches). Frost came on 8 nights, the lowest being -3.3C (26F) on the 5th.

Although the approaching Covid-19 pandemic is focusing on all of our minds at the moment, the natural world moves on as we come into the early days of spring. More than ever, the need for members to report what they see from their homes and restricted walks is important to us. The spring migration has started and we need all your wildlife records.

Birds; With the movement restrictions mid-month, records have thinned out during the

last 10 days, so observation from your home and during your exercise/dog walking spell each day are needed now so that we can keep the monthly newsletter going.

March started in stormy but mild conditions, with many winter visitors leaving our area. Numbers of songbirds were increasing, bringing a greater variation to our dawn chorus.

At Cocklawburn, a flock of 510 **Pink footed Geese** were on the coastal fields before moving north mid-morning. Also passing northwards were a group of 24 **Whooper Swans**, complete with their mournful bugling calls. Following a stormy day the wet fields attracted 68 **Curlew**, 128 **Oystercatcher**, 16 **Redshank** and unusually 4 **Turnstone**. At Saltpan rocks were 9 **Purple Sandpiper**, 5 **Turnstone** and a **Bar tailed Godwit**. Offshore there were 8 **Red throated Divers**, 62 **Common Scoter** and 3 **Guillemots**.

At West Ord (4th) were 42 **Canada Geese**, 56 **Oystercatchers** and 8 **Goldeneye**. Nearby at Lilliestead Farm, 66 **Mute Swans** were grazing in a kale field! The **Ring necked Parakeet** was seen again in Ord Country Park (5th), Ravensdown Berwick (25th) and coming out of the roost at Castle Hills (26th) with a **Jackdaw** flock.

A walk up to Needles Eye (6th) saw 126 **Guillemots**, back on the nesting cliff and 22 **Razorbills**. A further 68 **Guillemots** were on the sea. Also recorded there were 8 **Shags**, 18 **Fulmars**, 48 **Linnets** and a migrant flock of 260 **Starlings**.

The members walk to Yarrow Slake (7th) recorded 22 **Goldeneye**, 24 **Teal**, 42 **Curlew** 64 **Redshank** and 3 **Grey Herons**. A flock of 16 **Wigeon** were on Middle Ord pond (8th) along with a pair of **Little Grebes**. The group of **Whooper Swans** at Loanend, Horncliffe had dropped to 88, now with 68 **Mute Swans**.

Three returning **Lesser black backed Gulls** for the summer were in the gull roost at New water Heugh and the roost on Meadow Haven held 12 **Cormorants** and 7 **Shags**. A male **Stonechat** and 12 **Linnets** were on Berwick Golf Course (9th) and on a stormy day (11th), a group of 43 **Eider** were in Spittal Bay with 3 **Shags**, a **Red throated Diver** and a pair of **Red breasted Mergansers**. A group of 3 **Gannets** passed south offshore. Five **Goosander** were at West Ord (12th) with 7 **Goldeneye** there (16th). Further down the estuary a group of 5 **Long tailed Tits** were seen at Claylode Shiel, East Ord.

A small party of 14 **Pink footed Geese** were still at Cocklawburn (17th) with 3 **Mute Swans** on the pond. A party of 11 **Whooper Swans** flew over northwards. On Saltpan Rocks were 4 **Purple Sandpipers**, 8 **Turnstones** with 3 **Red throated Divers** offshore.

An isolated walk (18th down to Chain Bridge Horncliffe, recorded a **Red Kite** coming out of the trees and out over the Tweed before returning to roost. A good record, as this is still a scarce bird in the north of the county. Also seen there were 8 **Tree Sparrows** and 4 **Long tailed Tits**. A **Nuthatch** was calling in Ord Country Park the same day.

A short sea-watch at Cocklawburn noted 1,380 **Gannets** passing north in an hour. A strong northeast wind was blowing forcing these birds near to our shore. A party of 10 **Greylag Geese** were seen from the road at Allerdean Mill (21st). Several **Great Spotted Woodpeckers** were heard 'drumming' on 22nd at Ord Country Park, Murton White House Farm and at Gainslaw House. A pair of **Greylag Geese** were nest building at Middle Ord pond, where there were 8 **Teal**, 2 pairs of **Coot** and 4 pairs of **Moorhens** – all squabbling over territory! A party of 56 **Fieldfares** were gathered on treetops at Ord Manor with a gathering of 86 **Common Gulls** at West Ord and 12 **Yellowhammers** were feeding round the sheep troughs there. The sight of 12 **Cormorants** in a row across the Tweed fishing against the rising tide at New water Heugh, closely followed along the shore edge by 4 **Grey Herons** shows these birds have high intelligence.

The first **Chiffchaff** of the Spring was seen for two days in a garden in Osborne Rd. Tweedmouth (23rd). The same morning a female **Ring Ousel** was 'spooked' out of the old roses at the old derelict site of Cocklawburn cottages where 4 **Stonechats** were also seen. A group of 56 **Common Scoter** were off Saltpan rocks with 2 **Razorbills** and 2 **Red throated Divers**.

A fine drake **Tufted Duck** was seen by several members, at locations from the Royal Border Bridge to Toddles Shiel, often with a group of Mallard. A flock of 7 Purple Sandpipers were on Berwick Pier (28th) and a **Coal Tit** visited my feeders in Cornwall Ave., a scarce bird in my garden. A walk to Toddles Shiel found 22 Wigeon, a drake **Shoveler** and 28 Goldeneye.

A Chiffchaff was in full song in Ord Country Pk. trees (31st) and the Ring necked Parakeet was seen flying over westwards. A Wheatear (30th) was seen at Berwick pier and 38 Turnstone at Calot Shad.

Mammals; A group of 3 **Brown Hares** were seen in a corn field at Billylaw(22nd).
A Stoat in ermine (2nd) at Needles Eye, also 4 Brown hares and 5 Roe Deer.
Three Roe Deer (13th) Ord Sewage works

Insects; Several members have reported a movement of early **White tailed Bumblebees** (*Bombus licorum*) with the first being seen in Hiveacres (5th) An **Early Bumblebee** (*Bombus pratorum*) was seen here (13th), with a brief visit of a **Red Mason Bee** (*Osmia rufa*), all feeding on early spring heather. A **Tree Bumblebee** (*Bombus hypnorum*) was noted on New Road at Tintagel House(26th).
A fairly easy identification between species is that the White and Buff tailed Bumblebees have two yellow bands around the body, whereas the Early Bumblebee has three.

Early in the month the first **Small Tortoiseshell** butterflies were on the wing from the 19th, in gardens at Highfields, Castle Vale Park, West End and Hiveacres.
No early moths records have been reported.

Thank you to all who have sent in records this month. Can members wishing to add their records to the newsletter, send them to sightings@berwickwildlifegroup.uk or directly to me by the 30th of each month at m.hutcheson08@btinternet.com

We need all your records please.

More below

