

Berwick Wildlife Group



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Monthly Review. September 2020

Another great summary of the month's sightings from Malcolm, thank you!

It is now obvious that there is sadly no prospect of resuming monthly meetings for the foreseeable future and when we resume, we may need to look for a new venue.

In other groups I am involved with, we are investigating the possibility of prospective speakers delivering a talk online, either with pre-recorded or live audio commentary, to a slide presentation. Early days yet but we will let you know as things develop.

There are organisations advertising various online talks etc. so if you should come across one of interest to other members please let us know.

We do appreciate that all this does rely on being 'connected'.

It is only a few days since we saw our last house martins over Chirnside but skeins of geese are seen regularly, flying between feeding and roosting sites. Given the bumper crop of most berries this autumn, it is surprising that Malcolm reports no sightings of winter thrushes yet. As we know, one factor is the amount of food available in their 'homeland' that is a factor in mass migrations for food.

Thanks to my daughter and her fiancée, I managed a final scuba dive of the year at Eyemouth and saw my first wolf fish!

Simon, Chair BWG

WILDLIFE REPORTS.

Weather; September was a dry month, yet the first three days were effected by the remnants of Hurricane 'Laura' which swept across the USA, weakening to form a vigorous low pressure area which crossed Ireland. It brought mild SW winds and a spell of thundery showers overnight on the 3rd.

A sort of 'Indian Summer' developed after that for the main part of the month, long sunny periods with a veil of thin high cloud and rising temperatures. This peaked on the 14th & 15th with a high of 22C (72F) and a warm night in between at 15.6C (60F). The only other spell of rain came on the 24th with a cold front, a NW wind and a drop in temperature.

By the 26th the wind had strengthened to gale force from the north, with light showers in very dull conditions. On clearing away, it brought the first keen frost to some parts of the country, but only fell to 4.5C (40F) around our area.

The last few days came with lovely sunny conditions again on the 29th but the NW breeze kept the temperature down.

The rainfall total for month was 30mm (1.1inches) the driest September since 2004.

Birds; September is always a month of steady movement amongst our birds, whether its summer migrants leaving, or winter migrants arriving. On top of that is the unexpected arrival of a scarcer migrant, when birdwatchers look for unusual weather events to stimulate the prospect.

This month has been a little different, in that all these actions started a bit earlier, with many summer visitors having left by mid-month. Small skeins of **Pink footed Geese** were seen almost daily while the passage of **Pipits** and the **Swallow** family were also on the move. Oddly though, no winter thrushes have been recorded. A regular feature of the month 15/20 years ago!

The wintering flock of **Lapwing** had reached 118 by the 1st at Cocklawburn, where 3 **Whimbrel** were seen on the beach. I came across a late brood of three newly fledged **Sedge Warblers** with an adult there. A group of 22 **Sandwich Terns** along with 3 **Arctic Terns** were in a low tide roost at Saltpan rocks. The gull roost at West Ord(2nd) was building up where 86 **Common Gulls** and 12 **Teal** were seen.

At Yarrow Slake (3rd) there were 2 **Greenshank**, a **Ruff** and a **Black tailed Godwit** in the wader roost, along with 330 **Greylag Geese**. A flock of 52 **House Martins** gathered over Hiveacres at dusk.

The last of the hirundines gathered over the Tweed at West Ord (6th) including 14 Swallows and 6 **Sand Martins**. A party of 4 **Mistle Thrushes** were also noted. At Little Beach (7th) waders included 11 **Ringed Plover**, 93 **Dunlin**, 6 **Knot**, 64 **Sanderling** and 34 **Turnstones**.

At Cocklawburn (8th) a flock of 110 **Goldfinch** were feeding on Meadowsweet seed heads with 4 **Stonechats** and a **Wheatear** also there. Two Black tailed Godwit were at West Ord (13th) with a Greenshank, 8 Curlew, 14 Teal, 278 **Canada Geese** and 74 **Mute Swans**. The gull roost held 1,200 **Black headed Gulls** and 500 Common Gulls. A pair of **Ravens** were at Cocklawburn (15th), one feeding on a Rabbit carcass. A duck **Gadwall** was on the pond there and a passing flock of 15 passage House Martins. Late afternoon a fine adult **Osprey** was noted drifting southwards over East Ord.

A group of 4 Sandwich Terns were in Spittal Bay (18th) and the first 4 **Purple Sandpipers** were seen at Cocklawburn (21st.) along with a pair of **Red throated Divers**, one still in partial summer plumage.

A strong northerly gale (26th) brought a passage of **Sooty Shearwaters** along the East Coast with around 20 seen from the Coastwatch Station. Elsewhere, 2 Red throated Divers were in Meadow Haven along with 3 **Kittiwakes**, while out of the wind on the Estuary were 44 **Cormorants**, 2 **Shag**, 11 Teal with 10 Dunlin on the Calot Shad shore with a **Little Stint** and 4 Turnstones. The stormy conditions eased next day (27th) leaving 6 **Common Scoter** and a pair of **Velvet Scoter** with 24 **Eider** feeding in Meadow Haven.

A feature mid-month was the increase of migrant **Robins**. This included 5 seen in the Goodie Patch, Tweedmouth, where a group of **Blue Tits** joined a fine **Treecreeper**. Another 6 Robins were noted at Cocklawburn (29th) along with 46 **Linnets**. The pond there held 106 Greylag Geese, 5 **Tufted Ducks** and 7 **Reed Buntings**. No sign of the summering Goldeneye though. Near Sea House a migrant group of 218 **Golden Plover** were roosting on Saltpan rocks with c.160 Black headed Gulls and 3 late Sandwich Terns. The 'summering' duck **Goldeneye** was still on Cocklawburn pond on the last day of the month

Mammals; Yet more **Grey Squirrel** sightings with one seen under beech trees on Ord Road (near Tesco's) at the Industrial Estate early on the 6th. with another report of one in Ravensdown, Berwick around the 24th. The first seen there for 24 years!! A **Weasel** was also seen in Ravensdown (23rd). A fine dog **Otter** was seen fishing mid stream at West Ord (27th).

Insects; Several **Red Darter** dragonflies were noted at Cocklawburn pond at the beginning of the month.

Butterflies; The results of the **Big Butterfly Count 2020** have just been released and are a bit disappointing. Most species recorded were down on last year with the count being the lowest in the last

11 years. The only species with any increase included Large White, Small White Common Blue, Holly Blue and the Small Copper. Interestingly, there was a 50% increase in Holly Blue sightings, a species that could be added to our local records sometime soon!!

Other records

Cetaceans; One again the pod of 12-14 **Bottle nosed Dolphins** were seen regularly throughout the month from the Pier and south along Spittal Bay. A large count of 16 was made at Saltpan rocks, Cocklawburn (8th).

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



Photo, Darren Hughes