

# Berwick Wildlife Group

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



Facebook; Berwick Wildlife Group

## Monthly Review. January 2021

### Chairman's piece

Thanks for another interesting and comprehensive review of sightings from Malcolm, who is as you see, very grateful for the input of members. I particularly liked the story of the parakeet and the seagulls! My own highlight for the month was a twenty minutes view of a pair of otters feeding in the Whitadder Water, on a quiet stretch downstream from Chirnside Mill. An added bonus was the brief flash of a kingfisher, which perched but disappeared before I could get the camera or binoculars on it! On the down side my trail camera has picked up a mink, which is worrying, given the presence of dippers, kingfishers and other species nesting locally. It is unusual to find them where otters are resident.

Our online talk from Borders Forest Trust is scheduled for the 17<sup>th</sup> February and I saw Nicky this morning for advice on a village tree project. She assured me that we didn't need a password, the link will work and she will 'let people in' when they join.

Here is the link again, please join early so we can start as soon as possible after 7.30pm.

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84885614018>

Meeting ID: 848 8561 4018

Keep safe, Simon

### **WILDLIFE REPORTS.**

**Weather;** The New Year started with a turbulent system of weather patterns. At least the temperatures remained around normal for mid-winter. Keen frost recorded between the wet spells, which have been heavy and persistent at times, bringing the monthly total over 5 inches which has only been recorded three times before, since the year 2000.

During the first week, a period of cold NE winds brought several days of heavy wintery showers of rain, sleet and snow. By the 9<sup>th</sup>, the rain eased and skies cleared to give a keen frost at night, falling to -6C (22F). A change of wind direction to a gusty westerly prevailed over the next three days, which gradually dropped away to allow a fall in daytime temperatures. Heavy rain overnight on the 14<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> saw brighter skies with sunshine and showers and light NW winds.

The quiet scene was quickly removed by the appearance of storm 'Christoph' over the 19<sup>th</sup>/21<sup>st</sup>. Over the three days it rained persistently to bring a total of 43 mm (1.7 inches) and a lot of lying water in the fields, with some flooding and the Tweed in spate for the following week. Another feature of the storm was, as the 'eye' passed over Berwick a steep fall in Barometric pressure to 964 millibars was recorded – a feature associated with vigorous thunderstorms in summer. The air cleared again on the 22<sup>nd</sup>, with another two nights of keen frosts over the 22<sup>nd</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup>. Cold damp conditions returned on the

27<sup>th</sup>, which were followed by several westerly weather fronts pushing in, bringing some dampness overnight and the threat of black ice on the ground at dawn each day over the final week of the month.

Frost was recorded on 16 nights with the coldest nights (9<sup>th</sup> & 23<sup>rd</sup>) falling to -6C (22F). A light snow cover appeared on the 7<sup>th</sup>, which soon disappeared with a day of rain. Rainfall figures for the month were 137 mm ( 5.4 inches).

**Birds;** Once again we find ourselves in the midst of another ‘lockdown’ due to the increase in Corvid 19 cases in the county again. It seems to be affecting Berwick more this time around so staying indoors is advisable. This has made it difficult for any long time bird watching so records from members have been of great assistance with this month’s Newsletter. As if that was not the only problem, the weather has also played its part. With a high rainfall and the Tweed in spate for much of the month, along with some keen frosts to freeze the ground, most birds moved to favourite areas where there was a good food source.

The saltmarsh at New water Heugh (2<sup>nd</sup>) still held a group of 48 feeding **Wigeon** where the appearance of a male **Sparrow Hawk** caused panic in the gull roost. In Spittal Bay were 4 **Common Scoter**, a **Guillemot** and 5 **Shags**. At West Ord (3<sup>rd</sup>) a flock of 22 **Oystercatchers** had gathered with a **Little Grebe** seen on the high water of the Tweed. Two more Little Grebes were at New Water Heugh along with 5 **Goosanders**.

A visit to Cocklawburn (4<sup>th</sup>), recorded 86 **Lapwing** in the coastal fields along with 132 **Curlew**, 42 **Oystercatchers**, 46 **Greylag Geese** and a **Woodcock** raised from the cycle path. The pond scrub area held 4 **Fieldfares** and a flock of 34 **Twite**. A flock of 26 **Oystercatchers** were on the grass of Dock Road, Tweedmouth (8<sup>th</sup>) with 6 **Turnstone** on the shore. 8 **Ringed Plover** and 4 **Bar tailed Godwit** were on Little Beach and a pair of **Bullfinch** seen in the Tennis Court area. Off the pier a **Guillemot** was noted. Another **Woodcock** was lifted off the path on the Tweed riverbank at Toddles Shiel (9<sup>th</sup>).

A common bird survey of the Cemetery at Tweedmouth (10<sup>th</sup>), revealed 2 **Treecreepers** and a **Nuthatch** with a **Grey Wagtail** seen on the roof of ‘Homebase’. A small group of 10 **Golden Plover** were in the frozen fields on Billylaw, with 12 **Teal** forced on to the Tweed at West Ord, with my first winter record a **Little Egret** here. Back in Berwick area, a flock of 12 **Goldeneye** were fishing between the bridges at Blakewell Point, with a male **Mistle Thrush** in song across the river at Castle Vale.

An intriguing sight over my garden at Hiveacres (13<sup>th</sup>) saw a **Ring necked Parakeet** ‘bounced’ by several of the local **Herring Gulls**. The Parakeet easily avoided them by out-flying them in tight circles and screeching at them as if enjoying the game. The tired gulls gave up after a few minutes, except a juvenile, which was eventually scared off as the parrot did a head on low pass, scuffing its feathers. (very Spitfire like!!! and a bit of joy for staying at home).

Calot Shad (16<sup>th</sup>) saw 8 **Red breasted Merganser** feeding on the high tide with 26 **Goldeneye** and 68 **Mallard** around the shoreline. A roaming flock of c.210 **Fieldfares** were in the fields at Gainslaw (17<sup>th</sup>), with them were 9 **Blackbirds**, all migrants from Europe. Another close encounter with a bird came from Castle Terrace (18<sup>th</sup>), when a **Grey Heron** was in the member’s garden. This bird had the ‘nerve’ to come on to the patio and look through the glass doors at ‘morning coffee time’, I mean ‘the cheek of it’. Later that day a migrant party of 16 **Golden Plover** were resting at Saltpan rocks Cocklawburn, where 2 **Red throated Divers** and 16 **Eider** were feeding. A **Black throated Diver** and a **Great crested Grebe** appeared off the Pier (20<sup>th</sup>) on the high tide in a large swell along with 8 **Eider** and 2 **Goldeneye**. The high tide pushed 86 roosting **Redshanks** off the shore onto the footings of the Walls below Wellington Terrace.

A group of 3 **Mistle Thrushes** were seen near Askews Lane (24<sup>th</sup>) and a pair of **Buzzard** displayed over Castle Hills, while a **Kestrel** hunted near the shore. Yet another skein of 210 **Pink footed Geese** flew south over our area, one of several over the last days of the month.

The fine sight of a hunting **Barn Owl** in daylight (25<sup>th</sup>) was seen between the cliffs and the railway at St. John's Haven, north of Needles Eye. The same day saw an influx of geese to the fields between Cheswick and Cocklawburn which included 230 Greylag, 86 Pink footed Geese and 2 **Tundra Bean Geese**. This rare Arctic breeding species often join moving flocks of geese in severe weather. Also in the fields were 120 Golden Plover 48 Lapwing, 16 Redshanks and 5 Turnstones, all looking for softer ground to feed in. A single **Grey Plover** and 4 **Purple Sandpipers** were on Saltpan rocks.

On the 27<sup>th</sup> a milder day saw a **Song Thrush** in full song in Castle Vale and a large gathering, or 'parliament' of 82 **Carrion Crows** in the gull roost at New water Heugh. The Tweed was in 'spate again (30<sup>th</sup>) and held 68 Goldeneye, 84 Mallard , 6 Red Breasted Mergansers and 260 surface feeding **Black headed Gulls** at Calot Shad.

**Mammals;** **Otter** sighting have appeared again with records coming from Swing Bridge, Horncliffe, West Ord, by the Royal Border Viaduct and a fine male on the last days of the month showing well, feeding in the centre of the Tweed near Tweedmouth Dock. Two Grey Seals were seen well upstream at West Ord (24<sup>th</sup>) on the high tide, working their way towards Swing Bridge and the deep pools on the bend of the river.

**Insects;** No notable records this month.

**Other records;**

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](mailto:sightings@berwickwildlifegroup.uk) or 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!**

