

# Berwick Wildlife Group

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



Facebook; Berwick Wildlife Group

## Monthly Review. December 2021

### Chairman's Piece

I hope this finds you all safe and well and ready for a new year, whatever that may bring. My personal wildlife experiences have been limited this month, due to a heavy cold and family life! One very positive bit of news is that so far this year, kingfishers are doing well on the Whitadder at Blue Stanes Ford, near Chirnside. A local photographer has taken some great pictures. Talking of pictures, there have been some beautiful sunrises and sunset just recently.

### Events;

Saturday 8<sup>th</sup> January. Tweed Estuary walk. Meet for 10.00 start at the Berwick end of the Old Bridge.

Thursday 27<sup>th</sup> January. Phil Hamner. Goldeneye research and conservation in the Breamish Valley. 7.30 start. William Elder Building.

Thursday 24<sup>th</sup> February. Martin Kitching. Northeast Cetacean Project. 7.30 start. William Elder Building.

Obviously we are in a fluid situation at present regarding meetings, so please keep an eye on your inboxes/Facebook etc. where we will notify if we should need to change anything.

### WILDLIFE REPORTS.

**Weather;** The weather over the first 10 days of December was still disturbed after the events of storm 'Arwen' at the end of last month.

A spell of heavy rain brought 25 mm (1 inch) overnight on the 1<sup>st</sup>. It brought with it five days of sunny periods and fresh, cold, northwest winds. A further night of heavy rain occurred on the 5<sup>th</sup>, with a further 36mm (1.5 inches). This was the forward approach of another storm, this time named 'Barra'. It brought with it gale force winds on the 7<sup>th</sup>/8<sup>th</sup>, with showers of rain.

By the 11<sup>th</sup> things had settled down, with clearing skies and widespread frost at night. The 12<sup>th</sup> saw a sunny start slowly covered by a thin veil of high cloud, as a high pressure zone slowly settled the weather throughout the middle part of the month, with its light winds and overcast sky. The cloud layer weakened at night from the 14<sup>th</sup>, allowing a frost with a coastal mists developing into fog over the Tweed, most days saw this lift by mid-morning.

On the 21<sup>st</sup>, the wind moved round to the north bringing with it cold Arctic air. A period of intermittent rain came on the 23<sup>rd</sup>, which readily changed to snow on the higher ground around Berwick. After another night of rain, Christmas Eve saw a bright sunny day but with a biting cold southeast wind. Milder air was trying to push up from the south, which saw the weather over Christmas Day and Boxing Day stagnate with cold, misty and damp conditions that 'dragged on' until the 29<sup>th</sup>, with the day starting with a spell of rain in the morning, bringing a freshening south west wind and milder temperatures.

The following last two days of the year saw tropical winds from the Azores pushing the temperature up to 13C (56F). Along with the fresh southwest wind came spells of heavy showers, certainly not at all what one expects in mid winter.

Final rainfall figures for December were 124.5mm.,(5 inches), well above the 10 year December average of 3.2 inches.

During 2021, we have seen global warming becoming a major event and although various world leaders met in Glasgow for COP 26 in November, some countries are still in denial that global warming exists.

Here in Berwick, we saw a sequence of named storms with 'Christoph' with its heavy rain in January, storm 'Darsay' with heavy snow in East Anglia and the South East in February, followed by calm warm days in March, the temperature reaching 18C (64F) on the 30<sup>th</sup>. An Arctic 'blast' on April 5<sup>th</sup> brought snow and a day temperature of 3C (36F), with normal conditions returning in May & June.

A notable event was the partial eclipse of the sun on the 10<sup>th</sup> June. Then followed an eight week spell of warm, dry conditions, with a damp August and a warm September. Tropical air came on 7<sup>th</sup> October, remnants of a hurricane 'Sam' crossed the Atlantic Ocean with its heavy showers followed by second band of warm winds mid month. Finally, we were made well aware of storm 'Arwen' with its damaging winds in November and the less destructive 'Barra' in early December. All in all, it has been an eventful year weather-wise!

**Birds;** For those up early enough on the 1<sup>st</sup>, a surprise came with a male **Peregrine** putting to flight the local feral pigeon population around the tower of the Town Hall. It drew attention to all of those on an early morning shopping spree and the market stallholders and customers. This was one highlight of a month that was thin on bird records, as the scarcity of our bird numbers have been noted by all. The big question is, where are they all? I don't think we should be alarmed just yet as I guess most have moved to warmer climes and those that come from the Continent at this time, have remained there with the warmer conditions.

The wader numbers at Cocklawburn (2<sup>nd</sup>) were down, with 8 **Golden Plover** joining 76 **Curlew** in the coastal fields. A flock of 18 **Goldfinch** were also there with 2 **Song Thrushes** and a mobile flock of 52 **Twite** feeding amongst the cattle. Numbers were better on Spittal Bay (2<sup>nd</sup>), with 4 **Red throated Divers** on the high tide with 48 **Common Scoter**, a pair of **Goldeneye** and 11 **Shag**.

The toll of wildlife from storm 'Arwen' was for all to see with the corps's of three dead Grey Seal pups and a Puffin stranded on Little Beach. It also brought a winter arctic visitor in the shape of an immature **Glaucous Gull**. It remained for three days with a number of members noting the bird. Following a day of heavy rain, the Tweed was in spate and the flooded fields at Gainslaw were large numbers of various gulls, feeding with them were 12 **Mallard** and 18 **Redshank**. 320 **Lapwing** were in flooded fields at New water Heugh, with 28 **Wigeon** and 54 **Goldeneye** on the Tweed.

Coastal waders were up a little at Cocklawburn (9<sup>th</sup>), with 15 **Ringed Plover**, 39 **Sanderling**, 6 **Purple Sandpiper**, 18 **Redshank** and 8 **Turnstone**. The pond held 22 **Mallard** with a further 8 **Redshank** and a male **Stonechat**. Numbers were also up at Little Beach with 44 **Ringed Plover**, 12 **Dunlin**, 18 **Sanderling** and 8 **Bar tailed Godwit**.

Bird movements became fairly static mid month with wildfowl numbers starting to increase by the 15<sup>th</sup> with 122 **Teal** on Middle Ord pond. The mild conditions brought a male **Blackbird** into full song perched on Tweedmouth War Memorial. 140 **Greylag Geese** appeared at Cocklawburn (16<sup>th</sup>) where 52 **Ringed Plover**, 18 **Dunlin**, 76 **Sanderling** 16 **Purple Sandpiper**, were on the shoreline and 264 **Lapwing** in the coastal fields. A flock of 120 **Curlew** were at Cheswick.

A large number of 90 **Purple Sandpipers** were recorded at the Little Beach (17<sup>th</sup>) during the WeBS count, which also held 76 **Oystercatchers**, 28 **Grey Plovers**, 10 **Bar-tailed Godwits**, and 57 **Turnstone**.

46 **Wigeon** were at New water Heugh (19<sup>th</sup>) with 32 **Goldeneye**. On the coast, a family group of 3 **Whooper Swans** sat on the quiet, open sea off Berwick pier.

34 **Common Snipe** were recorded around Cocklawburn pond area (20<sup>th</sup>) with a fine, drake **Gadwall** and 4 **Tufted Duck**. A flock of c.100 **Fieldfare** were in a black poplar tree at Low Cocklaw (25<sup>th</sup>) with 80 **Mallard** and 20 **Teal** seen in a flooded pond there (27<sup>th</sup>).

A flock of 486 **Wood Pigeons** were heading north, late in the day over East Ord(29<sup>th</sup>) and a scarce **Jack Snipe** was lifted in the wet dune slack at Cocklawburn (30<sup>th</sup>). At the end of a very mild, final day of the year, the warm temperature brought a Song Thrush into full song at dusk in Ord Country Park.

What a splendid way to finalise an interesting year.

**Mammals;** The only record received was a dog **Otter** at West Ord (9<sup>th</sup>).

Outside our area, there was a record of a stag **Red Deer** seen on Doddington Moor (8<sup>th</sup>). Are there Red Deer in the Cheviots and did this stag wander from there?

**Insects;** No records received.

**Other records;** It was good to note a 'pod' of 12 **Bottle nosed Dolphins** off Saltpan rocks, Cocklawburn (9<sup>th</sup>).

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](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.**



Credit; Mark Kinghorn