

Berwick Wildlife Group

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Monthly Review. August 2022.

WILDLIFE REPORTS.

Chairman's piece

This is, as Malcolm mentions below, looking like an odd late-summer/autumn for wildlife following on from a strange summer. There have been some beneficiaries of course, notably for me the insect feeding birds such as my personal favourite the swift, although as we know, the trend for most insect species is one of steady decline. On the downside (not directly climate related) is the catastrophic outbreak of avian flu in colony nesting seabirds. Who knows where we will be in terms of recovery of numbers of already vulnerable species in the years to come? On this last point we have a talk related to this later in the year.

It is noticeable how many of our 'fruit' producing hedgerows and trees, such as bramble, rowan and hawthorn are doing well, so plenty of chance for the relevant bird species (and others) to stock up for winter. It will be interesting to see if we get an influx of Scandinavian/European birds this year, which I think depends on how their 'local' crop of food has done. Meanwhile get making those jams and jellies!

Our first indoor meeting of the season is on **Thursday 29th September**, with Martin Kitchin telling us about the **Northeast Cetacean Project**, 7.30 start at the William Elder Building, Castle Street, Berwick. This should be a very interesting evening, given the evolving situation with sea mammals around our coast.

If you have a friend or relative who likes dolphins bring them along!

To sustain and grow Berwick Wildlife Group we need to attract new members and retain our current paid-up members. So if you are not currently 'paid-up' please do so when renewal time arrives! It is good value if you attend several meetings a year and helps keep our finances stable.

Weather.

Like most of the summer, August has been yet another dry month. With only 30% of the month's average rainfall figure, we can only hope for rain to come in the Autumn.

With the ground being very dry, the harvest has been brought in but the lack of growth is now causing stress for farmers and growers, as well as across the natural world. The drought conditions introduced in other parts of Britain could yet spread to our area, bringing restricted use of our water resources. The low level of the Tweed has seen large influxes of waterfowl and waders to an abundant food source on the riverbed at low tide.

The variation in wind direction over the month has promoted a wide range of temperature each week. The first week saw a light south wind swing to the northwest over five days, covering our sunny start with a blanket of cloud, with some nights seeing spells of light rain. The settled, sunny days returned over the next 10 days mid-month, with the temperature reaching 84F on the 10th. By the 16th, a cool northeast wind off the sea, brought cooler condition for a few days. The wind turned back round to

the southwest on the 22nd and with it a spell of rain during the morning. Sunnier conditions returned the following day for three days as yet again on the 28th the wind turned back to the north, bringing with it overcast spells. On the positive side, the temperatures started to gradually rise as we approached the last days of the month.

Rainfall figures for the month were; 29 mm. (1.1 inches). The coldest night temperature was 48F on the 21st with the warmest day reaching 84F on the 10th.

Birds.

This is the month when autumn migration starts in earnest, while the local species are busy raising second broods of young. Right on time, the local **Swift** population had left Berwick by the 11th, while small flocks of **Swallows** and **Martins** were starting to move south. A small movement of **Chiffchaff** and **Willow Warbler** was seen in several gardens over the first three days. Waders were starting to move too, with 116 **Oystercatchers**, 8 **Dunlin**, 12 **Sanderling** on Little Beach (2nd) and 12 **Sandwich Tern** and 3 **Arctics** in a low water roost in Meadow Haven.

At Little Beach (4th) were 12 **Ringed Plover** and a single **Black tailed Godwit**, while on the beach were 2 **Wheatears** with 76 **Linnets feeding** amongst the seed heads on the cliffs. A sea watch at Saltpan rocks Cocklawburn on a rising tide recorded 3 **Manx Shearwaters** and 5+ **Fulmars** flying south with a **Red throated Diver**, still in partial summer plumage and 46 **Sandwich Terns** with 8 **Arctic Terns** in a roost on the rocks. A flock of 16 **Swifts** were screaming around Marygate, Berwick (6th) late afternoon.

A visit to Yarrow Slake (8th) found 4 **Little Egrets**, 22 **Grey Herons**, a family of **Shelduck**, a pair with 3 ducklings, 14 **Lapwing**, 184 **Curlew**, 4 **Whimbrel**, 270 **Redshank** and 164 **Black headed Gulls**. A pair of **Greylag Geese** had 4 goslings at Cocklawburn pond (9th), with a single **Little Grebe**. Three **Stonechat** were also there with 7 **Reed Bunting**. A fine female **Yellow Wagtail** was with 12 **Pieds** on Little Beach (10th) and a group of 10 **Swifts** still flying around the Ness Bridge area. The trees along the edge of Ord Country park (11th) brought interest with a male **Cuckoo** flying south along the outside of the trees while an hour later a **Ring necked Parakeet** visited for an hour. Also around was a hunting **Sparrow Hawk**.

A large flock of c.130 **Swallows** and **Martins** has gathered on the wires at Middle Ord (13th). Another large flock, this time 260 **Kittiwakes** were in the gull roost on Calot Shad (15th). The roost also contained 320 **Herring Gulls**, 7 **Lesser BB Gulls**, 5 **Great BB Gulls** and 62 **Sandwich Terns**.

At West Ord (16th), a county record of 67 **Little Egrets** had gathered along the banks of the Tweed from the Border to the Whitadder confluence at low tide. The very low water at low tide had stranded small fish and other water fauna also attracted 336 **Canada Geese**, 78 **Greylag Geese** and 52 **Goosander**.

At Spittal Bay (18th) an early morning flight of 34 **Black tailed Godwits** flew south, while at Cocklawburn (19th) a flock of c.45 **Goldfinch** and 28 **Linnets** were on thistle seed heads.

Over Ord Country Park (21st), 2 **Swifts** were with 18 **House Martins** at dawn with 5 **Teal** noted on Middle Ord pond. The large group of **Little Egrets** at West Ord were a 'one day wonder' as there were only 24 noted with 84 **Common Gulls** in the gull roost. In Meadow Haven 25 **Cormorant** and 32 **Shags** had gathered on the roost point and on Calot Shad were 2 **Ruff** and 3 **Turnstones**.

A male **Peregrine** was hunting the coastline at Saltpan rocks, Cocklawburn (23rd) with 34 **Common Scoter** and 16 **Sandwich Terns**. At West Ord 2 **Greenshank** and 4 **Common Snipe** appeared the following day. Two **Greenshank** were heard calling over East Ord (25th) after dusk at 9.30p.m. A flock of 24 **House Martins** gathered at Spittal (27th) and another **Greenshank** was on Middle Ord pond. **Canada Geese** numbers had reached 384 at West Ord (28th), the most I've seen in the Berwick area. Waders at low tide that day on Calot Shad included 38 **Ringed Plover**, 64 **Dunlin**, 12 **Sanderling** 2 **Whimbrel** with the **Curlew** and 2 **Turnstone**. Another **Peregrine** (or the same bird) flew north over my house in Hiveacres (29th) at dawn. The last day of the month, Little Beach attracted 12 **Bar tailed Godwits** with 102 **Oystercatchers**, 34 **Common Gulls** and c.280 **Black headed Gulls** feeding amongst the wrack on the falling tide, with 4 **Knot**, 5 **Sanderling** and a **Greenshank** with the waders on Calot Shad.

Mammals.

Brown Hares were recorded at Billylaw (2), Middle Ord (2) and a family of 4 maturing Leverets were in the fields at West Ord. A stag **Roe Deer** was feeding on the road verge near Middle Ord (28th) where there is fresh grass in the dry conditions.

Cetaceans; A group of 12 **Bottle nosed Dolphins** and 8 **Common Dolphins** were seen off Cocklawburn beach (6th). They were in two separate groups, with the pale flanks and more upright dorsal fins noted on the more active Common Dolphins.

Insects.

Butterflies: The 'white' species have been found in good numbers over the period with the **Ringlet** and **Meadow Brown** numbers going down. Late summer is the time the **Peacock** and **Red Admiral** numbers rise, but the days of large numbers on buddleias etc. in the past, seem to have passed. The only **Painted Lady** record I have this month is one in my garden for 3 days as from the 15th. The **Wall Brown** is still doing well along the coastal sites, as is the **Small Copper**. As I write this, a **Comma** has appeared in the garden, a prize indeed! as our butterfly numbers have certainly declined in the past five years or so – we have to find a way to help them through changes in their habitats.

Dragonflies: A **Migrant Hawker** (*Aeshna cyanea*) was noted flying low over the road at The Honey Farm, Horncliffe (11th).

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.

