

NORTH NORTHUMBERLAND

BIRD



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Richard Baines
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Turtle Dove in flight: by Kind Permission of Richard Baines



Marsh Tit with Food : by Kind Permission of Phil Hanmer

THE NORTH YORK MOORS TURTLE DOVE PROJECT

Richard Baines, Officer for the Project, gave a fascinating and detailed account of their endeavours to save one of our fastest declining birds, with the European Commission recently quoting their total population around 5000 pairs. Turn to page 3 for Richard Poyer's account .

NOTICES on page 2

BIRD RECORDS for MAY turn to page 4 for the most recent sightings compiled by our Recorder, John Lumby

RINGER'S ROUNDUP Phil Hanmer records May as a 'dreadful' month this year for most nesting birds (being cold and wet!) . A more successful season for our local Goldeneyes is somewhat offset by the predation of three birds by a stoat which dived out of a nest box! The Marsh Tit opposite was busy feeding its family of five. See full report on our Website.

NOTICEBOARD

Following our traditional 'recess' in July and August, our Next Indoor Meeting will take place on **Friday 10th September 2021**, when we welcome the return of the Northumberland County Bird Recorder Tim Dean, who will give a talk on 'Arizona'. Further details will be circulated regarding time and location nearer the date, when Covid regulations are clearer.

The North York Moors Turtle Dove Project

In his talk, our Speaker, Richard Baines, mentioned their sponsored run to help raise funds and ensure the continuation of the Turtle Dove project. Any NNBC members who would like to support their efforts is welcome to donate to their project through the 'justgiving.com' page accessed below if you copy and paste the link :

<https://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/dovesteprehab21>

ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP SUBSCRIPTIONS

As mentioned in the December Newsletter No. 370 the Committee decided that NO subscription would be due until the **1st September 2021**. Membership Forms and details of how to pay, including paying by transfer, will be sent out in August

MEMBERSHIP SUBSCRIPTIONS DUE - 1st SEPTEMBER 2021.

Couple/Family £15, Individual £10, Full-Time Student/Junior Free.



FACELIFT FOR ANNSTEAD HIDE

A Working Party consisting of three committee members, Alan Goodall, Liz Harrison and John Southern set to work on 10th May to repaint the Annstead Hide following some recent repairs to the structure. Further details regarding keys and access for members are available through our Secretary or Treasurer.



The North York Moors Turtle Dove Project **Richard Baines**

For our last talk before the summer break, we welcomed back Richard Baines, **Managing Director of Yorkshire Coast Nature** and **Project Officer** for the **North York Moors Turtle Dove Project** from 2017 to 2020.

He opened his talk by describing the important identification elements of the Turtle Dove. It is our smallest European Dove with distinctively mottled upperparts of chestnut and black, and a black tail edged white. Its call is a gentle purr.

But why, one might ask, is there a Turtle Dove Project in the North York Moors National Park?

Richard explained how the Dove is one of the UK's most endangered birds, dropping from 125,000 pairs in the 1970s to no more than an estimated figure of 1,000 now. Their preferred habitat is woodland and scrub adjoining arable farmland, because their diet is predominately arable weed seeds; but changing farming methods have severely reduced such crop and arable weed seed supplies for the birds. Other factors help to explain the decline. The birds



Turtle Dove photo copyright Richard Baines, Yorkshire Coast Nature

overwinter in West Africa but face hunting pressures whilst on migration through Spain and France, whilst their African wintering grounds are experiencing droughts due to changing weather patterns.

The North York Moors area probably had a very small population at the end of the 1800's. The habitat changed in the early 20th Century when the eastern Moors were chosen by the newly created Forestry Commission as the site of a major new forest. Wide rides were left between blocks, and these were colonised by wild flowers. In many places the forests also adjoined arable farmland, creating landscape changes which enabled the Turtle Dove population to expand in this area. More recently, when the species was identified as endangered, several projects were developed in the UK. One of these was in the North York Moors, where NLH Funding was awarded and Richard, previously involved in a voluntary role, was appointed as Officer for the project.

Surveys are an essential start when establishing a baseline. Twenty grid squares were surveyed, and other observations plotted. The data has allowed Richard to direct the project's scheme to areas where they might be most fruitful. By the end of 2020 eighteen farmers had received financial help and advice to create wild-flower strips, so providing more seeds for the birds. These have been successful, with farmers keen to report their sightings of feeding Turtle Doves.

A second development has been the reinstating of dew ponds on farms. This is an area of limestone, where, in the past, the ponds provided an essential water supply for stock. However, water is also vitally important for the adult turtle doves at squab rearing time because they produce a nutritious milk-like substance called crop milk which they feed to the young birds.

Local involvement has also been vitally important with Richard giving many talks to local groups and gathering many enthusiastic volunteers to carry out the surveying and other essential work associated with the project.

Although the Covid pandemic has made surveying difficult, the figures show an increase in singing males (and so probably breeding pairs) from 55 in 2017 to 86 in 2020 in the 20 survey squares. In addition, there were 270 reported sightings of birds in a year in which outdoor movement was curtailed.

It was encouraging to hear Richard describe the successes of the Project, and to feel some optimism after Dr. Ian Newton's recent Zoom Talk to NNBC of the depressing decline of our farmland birds.

Richard's enthusiasm for this endangered bird was so evident, and the newsletter has details (see noticeboard on page 2 of how we can support the project now that formal funding has finished.

Report by Richard Poyer

BIRD RECORDS MAY 2021

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| Barnacle Goose | 6 at Holy Island on 1 st & 250 over Branton on 2 nd (I&KD). |
| Garganey | 2 at Holy Island on 9 th (I&KD). |
| Grey Partridge | 2 at Fenham Le Moor on 19 th (AMc). |
| Fulmar | 2 pairs nesting on Castle Crag Bamburgh after several years absence! (JPL). |
| Marsh Harrier | 1 at Holy Island on 9 th (I&KD). |
| Water Rail | 1 at Branton Ponds on 7 th & 2 on 22 nd (I&KD). |
| Corncrake | 1 at Newham Bog on 8 th (I&KD). |
| Avocet | 6 at Low Newton Scrape on 27 th (SVM) & 2 on 28 th (A&MG). |
| Kentish Plover | 1 at Holy Island on 12/13 th (I&KD). |
| Whimbrel | 5 at Boulmer on 1 st (A&MG), 1 on Holy Island on 1 st & 3 on 9 th (I&KD). |
| Ruff | 1 at Hedgeley Ponds on 10 th (I&KD). |
| Woodcock | 2 at Beanley Woods on 15 th (I&KD). |
| Snipe | 8 at Alnham on 13 th (EH). |
| Common Sandpiper | 3 at Branton Ponds on 9 th (I&KD). |
| Spotted Sandpiper | 1 at Budle Bay on 9 th (I&KD). |
| Glaucous Gull | 1 at Long Nanny on 14 th (A&MG). |
| Little Tern | 12 at Long Nanny on 14 th (A&MG) & 7 on 27 th (SVM), 2 at Holy Island on 12 th & 5 at Seaton Point on 23 rd (I&KD). |
| Arctic Tern | 750 at Long Nanny on 14 th (A&MG) & 100 on 27 th (SVM). |
| Black Tern | 1 at Long Nanny on 27 th (SVM). |
| Great Skua | 1 at Craster on 26 th (MH), 1 at Budle Bay on 31 st (PS). |
| Cuckoo | 3 at Beanley Moor on 3 rd , 1 at Newham Bog on 9 th & 1 at Branton on 17 th (I&KD), 1 at Yearle on 8 th (SV&AJM), 1 at Ford Moss on 11 th (A&MG), 1 at Hethpool on 14 th (EH). |
| Short-eared Owl | 1 at Fenham le Moor on 15 th (AMc). |
| Swift | 1 at Branton Ponds on 1 st & 8 on 11 th (I&KD), 2 at Wooler on 24 th (SV&AJM), 3 at North Sunderland on 30 th (JPL). |
| Lesser Spotted Woodpecker | 1 at Kylloe Woods on 17 th (AMc). |
| Reed Warbler | 1 at Holy Island on 1 st & 1 at Branton Ponds on 18 th (I&KD). |
| Grasshopper Warbler | 1 at Newham Bog on 9 th & 1 at Holy Island on 12 th (I&KD). |
| Blackcap | 2 at Branton Ponds on 9 th (I&KD), 2 at Hepburn Woods on 9 th (SVM). |
| Garden Warbler | 2 at Branton Ponds on 9 th (I&KD), 2 at Ford Moss on 11 th (A&MG). |
| Lesser Whitethroat | 1 at Seaton Point on 23 rd & 1 at Branton on 30 th (I&KD). |
| Whitethroat | 1 at Beanley Moor on 3 rd & 1 at Branton Ponds on 7 th (I&KD), 1 at Ford Moss on 11 th (A&MG), 1 at East Ord on 12 th & 1 at Hethpool on 14 th (EH). |
| Fieldfare | 25 at Holy Island on 2 nd (I&KD). |
| Spotted Flycatcher | 1 at Happy Valley on 15 th (SVM), several at Kylloe Woods on 17 th (AMc). |
| Pied Flycatcher | 1 at Holystone on 15 th (I&KD). |
| Redstart | 3 at Holystone on 15 th (I&KD) & a few at Kylloe Woods on 17 th (AMc). |
| Whinchat | 2 at Harthope Valley on 17 th (SVM). |
| Stonechat | 2 at Holy Island on 1 st (I&KD). |
| Wheatear | 11 at Boulmer on 1 st (A&MG), 2 at Holy Island on 2 nd & 8 on 9 th (I&KD). |
| Tree Pipit | 2 at Beanley Wood on 3 rd & 1 on Holy Island on 15 th (I&KD). |

Observers Ian & Keith Davison (IB&KD), Alan & Margaret Goodall (A&MG), Mike Haddrell (MH), Liz Harrison (EH), John P Lumby (JPL), Andrew McCafferty (AMc), Stewart & Alison McCormick (SV&AJM), Paul Snell (PS).

June records etc please submit all records throughout summer by e-mail, latest date 1st September to the recorder, John Lumby, Shearwater, 2 St Cuthbert Close, North Sunderland, NE68 7WG. [TEL:01665-720654](tel:01665-720654) e-mail j.lumby@yahoo.co.uk or .com if difficulty. many thanks.