



January Newsletter



Speaker Tom Cadwallander



A superb photo from Tom Cadwallander's Talk

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All the best for 2025



Club Information

Chair

Neil Hinchliff



neilskye8@gmail.com

Secretary

Paul Ashdown
01665 576771



ashbauve.pm@gmail.com

Membership

Secretary
Fiona Southern
01668 214481



ifs@robincottage.co.uk

Vice Chair

John Lumby



Treasurer

Alan Yeomans
07541 760731



a.yeomans720@btinternet.com

Committee

Member

Liz Harrison



liz.a.harrison22@btinternet.com

Committee

Member

Alan Goodall



Honorary President

Graham Bell



Committee

Member

Kevin Lever



Committee

Member

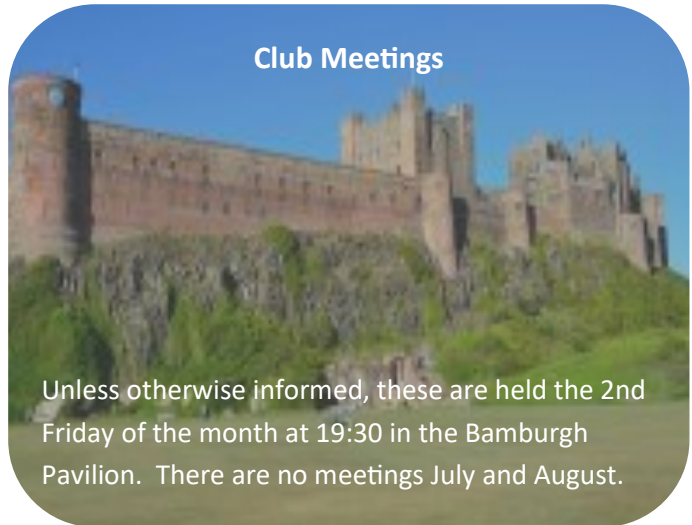
Chris Cobb



Committee Member

Sarah Elder

Club Meetings



Unless otherwise informed, these are held the 2nd Friday of the month at 19:30 in the Bamburgh Pavilion. There are no meetings July and August.

Bird Recorder

Paul Armstrong



nbcrecords@yahoo.com

On-Line Editor

Richard Poyer



ringouzel@northnorthumberlandbirdclub.co.uk

Newsletter Editor

John McCutcheon



john@waterstar.uk

Check out our Internet presence



On our web site at:

northnorthumberlandbirdclub.co.uk



On our Facebook page at:

www.facebook.com/NorthNorthumberlandBirdClub



Email us at:

ringouzel@northnorthumberlandbirdclub.co.uk



Members WhatsApp Group Chat

NNBC Chat (Join by requesting a [link](#))



Noticeboard

Red Kite Fund-Raising...

Inspired by November's talk on Red Kites, by Harold Dobson, Rosemary Bell will be selling a selection of home-made marmalades and cakes at the February 14th meeting. Rosemary says she enjoyed the Red Kite talk and was reminded that 'Friends of Red Kites' (FoRK) is voluntary and that they need support for the costs of their monitoring work. The reintroduction of Red Kites to the North East was initially organised by the RSPB but they withdrew after 5 years when 'Friends of Red Kites' continued in the Society's footsteps. We were told that all subscriptions from FoRK's 150 strong membership (£10 per couple) goes entirely for payment of a professional tree-climber – required for ringing and satellite-tagging juvenile birds. For ease, all culinary items will be sold at £2 (please bring cash). NNBC will donate the funds raised to FoRK.

HAPPY NEW YEAR

Upcoming Field Trips

Thursday 20th Feb Coquet Estuary.
Meet in Warkworth Beach Car Park at 09:30
Richard Poyer and Chris Cobb to lead

To look forward to...

We are also considering putting together more trips during this coming year...these may include longer day trips to the likes of Fairburn Ings and Tophill Low (Yorkshire); blacktoft sands (Lincolnshire); and perhaps multi-day trips to say Dumfries next wintertime.

For all Field Trips please read the Risk Assessment on our Web site beforehand. For dates and times and last minute changes / cancellations check our Facebook Page, NNBC Chat, or directly with Leaders for the event.



"Caged birds accept each other but flight is what they long for"

Tennessee Williams

Upcoming Meetings

Friday 10th Jan 2025 at 19:30
Northumberland's Birds with **Tim Dean**

Friday 14th Feb at 19:30
The BTO and BTO Surveys with **Tom and Muriel Cadwallander**

Friday 14th March 2025 at 19:30
The Peregrine Project with **George Smith**

See web site for details of other Meetings



Noticeboard

2024 Graham Bell Trophy

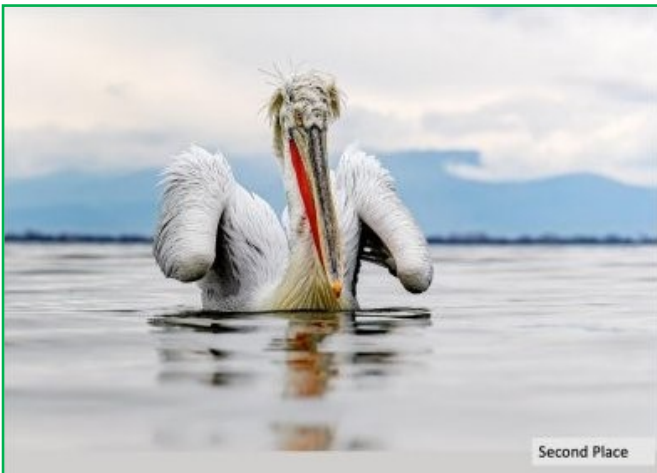
And the winner is....



Alan Yeomans



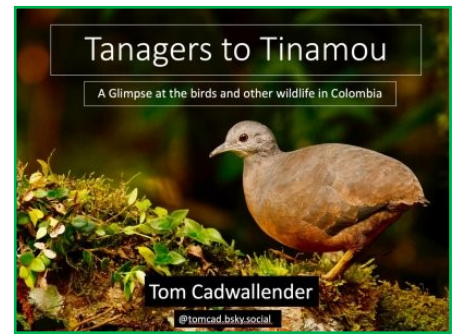
Winner Alan Yeomans with judge Tom Cadwallander





Speaker's Presentation

Tanagers to Tinamous' (A Glimpse at the Birds and other Wildlife in Colombia) with Tom Cadwallander



Nestling amongst the festive mulled wine and the celebrations for the first ever winner of the Graham Bell trophy, December's talk by Tom Cadwallander took us to the warmer climes of Colombia in South America. With superb photos from a two-week tour, Tom gave us all a real flavour of birding in a world so different from our own. The high slopes of the Andes and the lush rain forest create a myriad of niche environments which have produced some of the widest

biodiversity in the world, with over 1900 species of birds alone.

Tom's talk was energetic and fast paced, like the trip he was sharing with us. What struck us all was the succession of rainbow-coloured birds, (and other wildlife), that he flew through. I think for me they did all begin to blur together into some sort of Christmas decoration, although some of the birds we saw had even more colours than a Christmas tree. None of us will forget the Multi-coloured Tanager, which looked as though a four-year old had coloured it in using every crayon in their box!



Multicoloured Tanager ENDEMIC

Two groups of bird dominated the show. Alongside the Tanagers, there were Hummingbirds galore. Even the names of these amazing birds sound like a light-show. From Woodstars and Hillstars to Metaltails and Sunbeams. Each seemed etched with magical metallic paint, so unlike our



Blue-winged Mountain Tanager

local birds. Tom hinted that his favourite might be the Sword-billed Hummingbird, with a bill longer than its body, so long that to clean it, the bird gently inserts it into a mossy bank.

Tom explained that when he is on a trip like this, he is always keen to catch sight of endemics and other local birds, that he would never be able to see elsewhere.



Crested Ant Tanager ENDEMIC



Speaker's Presentation



These aren't always the most colourful, or the easiest to spot, but he seemed to have found plenty. I particularly liked the Antpittas, skulking around in the undergrowth, and the White-capped Dipper, which, apparently, behaves just like ours.

Two other birds Tom shared with us are particularly vivid to me. He had a very dynamic picture of Torrent Ducks and described their energetic antics on the bubbling waters. I was once lucky enough to see these beautiful birds while I was rafting down a river in Chile. Meeting them at eye-level was amazing.

The stand-out image, however, was the photo of a Black-billed Mountain Toucan, sitting, miserable, on a branch in the pouring rain. Full of character and atmosphere, as well as being a super image of a stunning bird, Tom is rightly proud of this shot. We can't all be hiking up the Andes, but coming to the NNBC for images like this gives us all a chance to dream.

Paul Ashdown





Field Trip Report

New Year Big Day led by John Lumby, 2nd January 2025

Eleven keen members turned out to start at 8:15am in High Newton free car park, (5 more would join us later): just as dawn was breaking, on a cold but sunny day, to tackle our 25-mile coastal route by car. This was our 17th attempt to see as many different species as possible; how many would we manage to see on a short winter's day?

First birds being Woodcock, Pink-footed Goose, Rook, Magpie, Robin, Starling, Blackbird, Wood Pigeon, Mistle Thrush, Chaffinch, Wren. We then drove to Low Newton Scrape & Pool plus a quick look over the Beach, this gave us Greylag Goose, Little Grebe, Redshank, Wigeon, Mallard, Teal, Moorhen, Dunlin, Stonechat, Tree Sparrow, House Sparrow, Rock Pipit, Eider, Curlew, Sanderling, Turnstone, Bar-tailed Godwit, Ringed Plover, Grey Plover, Lapwing, Oystercatcher, Purple Sandpiper, Jackdaw, Pied Wagtail, Common Gull, Herring Gull, Black headed Gull, Gannet, Guillemot, Cormorant, Common Scoter, Dunnock, Carrion Crow, Buzzard, Blue Tit, Red-breasted Merganser & Rock Dove we had clocked. An impressive 48 species gave us a really good start.

On route to Monk's House pool a Kestrel hovered overhead. At the pool Mute Swan, Common Snipe, Canada Goose Shoveler, Gadwall, Tufted Duck, Golden Plover, Taking us to 56. A further short drive and we arrived at Stag Rock where we managed to add Red-throated Diver, Shag, Long-tailed Duck, Puffin and Kingfisher; we were now on 61.

Next a move inland to the Spindlestone Wood, hides where we managed to see Great Spotted Woodpecker, Nuthatch, Great Tit, Coal Tit, Song Thrush, Raven, Pheasant, Jay and Sparrowhawk all adding up to a nice round 70.

Our next halt was Budle Bay where we added Shelduck, 1 Little Egret, Great & Lesser Black-backed Gulls, Black-tailed Godwit and Brent Geese to take our total to 76. Then up the road to Harper's Heugh where a large flock of Barnacle Geese fed. Further along the road at Elwick we managed to add Bullfinch, Yellow Hammer and Linnet, to move our tally to 80.

The light was starting to fade and with the snow coming, our last call had to be the Fenham Le Moor hide. On arrival 3 Whooper Swan were just offshore, with 3 Pintail further out. As we moved along the road we added Fieldfare & Redwing.

The day's total ended on an impressive **84**, overtaking last year's count of 81. The day seemed to be enjoyed by all 16 members, of which 5 were new to me. Well done everybody for a good day's birding.

John Lumby

Please note: From a safety angle we probably had too many cars with only the driver, so in future we should encourage car sharing, to enable us to visit the more inaccessible sites in our area.





Bird Sighting Records

Below are the highlights for December 2024...

Barnacle Goose	1 at Coquet on 12th	RP
Water Rail	1 at Howick Pool on 25th	P&AH
Grey Plover	5 at Birling Carrs on 5th	RP
Purple Sandpiper	11 at Birling Carrs on 5th	RP
Common Guillemot	25 at Alnmouth Bay on 21st	RP
Red-throated Diver	1 at Howick Beck on 27th	M&SE
Red-throated Diver	5 at Alnmouth Bay on 5th and 11 on 21st	RP
Sparrowhawk	1 at Long Nanny on 5th	PCA
Barn Owl	1 at South Chalton on 19th	PCA
Kingfisher	1 at Howick Pool on 25th	P&AH
Bullfinch	1 at Powburn on 28th	PCA
Twite	76 at Long Nanny on 28th	M&SE
Twite	c50 at Long Nanny on 11th and 27th	PCA
Twite	c70 at Long Nanny on 4th and 5th	PCA
Snow Bunting	32 at Embleton Beck on 26th	M&SE
Bar headed Goose	1 at Fenham-Le-Moor on 27th	BW

Contributors

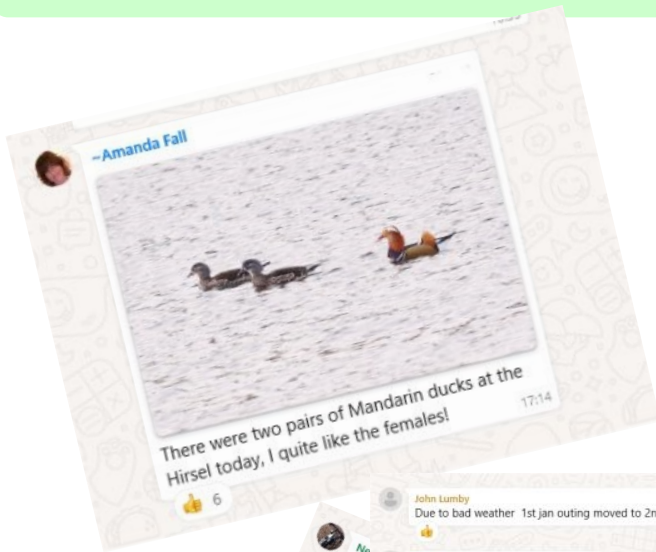
Paul Armstrong (PCA)
Mike & Sarah Elder (M&SE)
Phil & Alison Hanmer (P&AH)
Neil Hinchliff (NH)
John McCutcheon (JMCC)
Richard Poyer (RP)
Brian Warren (BW)



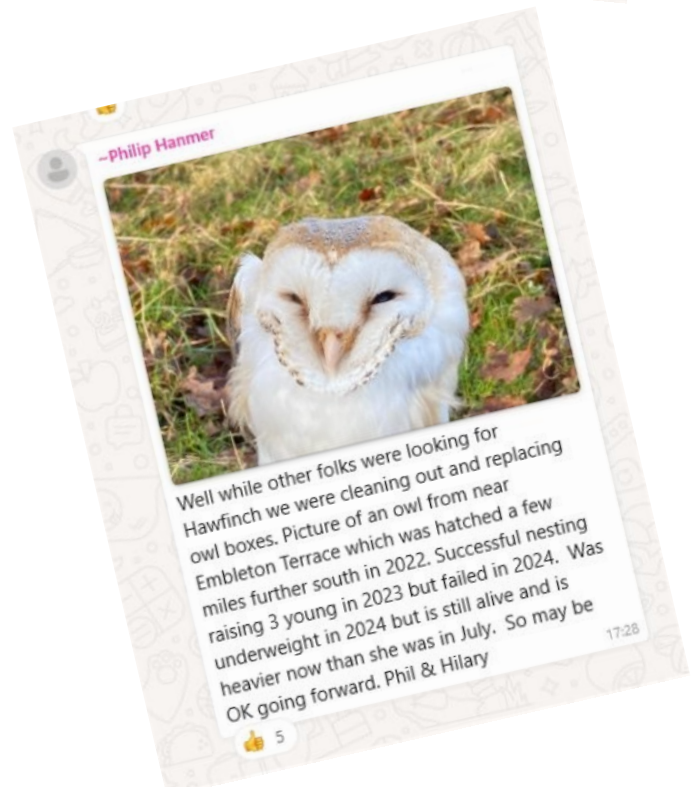
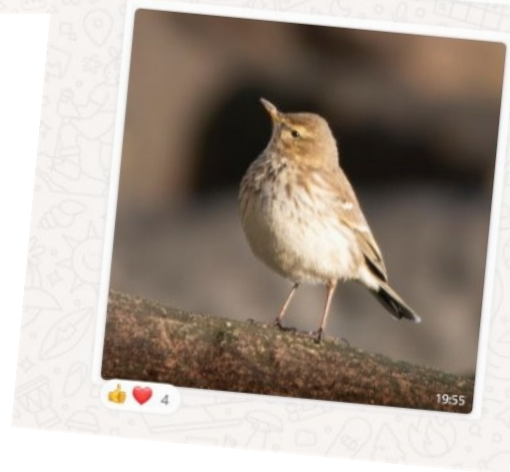


What's Up on WhatsApp

NNBC Chat—A quick look at some of the posts on the club's WhatsApp Group page



John Lumby
Due to bad weather 1st jan outing moved to 2nd jan other details stay same.





Members' Contributions

Missing in Action (MIA) - A little winter warmer....

Part 1 Early Summer Holiday—Norfolk

The one and only time I visited Norfolk before was many years ago, holidaying with friends on a Boat on the Broads. It was 1966 and a certain event coincided with our holidays which as young men, we 'cheerily' enjoyed, although remember very little about it! This year I suggested to my wife Debbie, we visit for an early summer holiday. A cottage was booked and the holiday planned, a week in Walcott (half way between Cromer and Great Yarmouth). A great location with a dog friendly beach (an absolute essential for a young Golden Retriever that likes nothing better than playing in water).

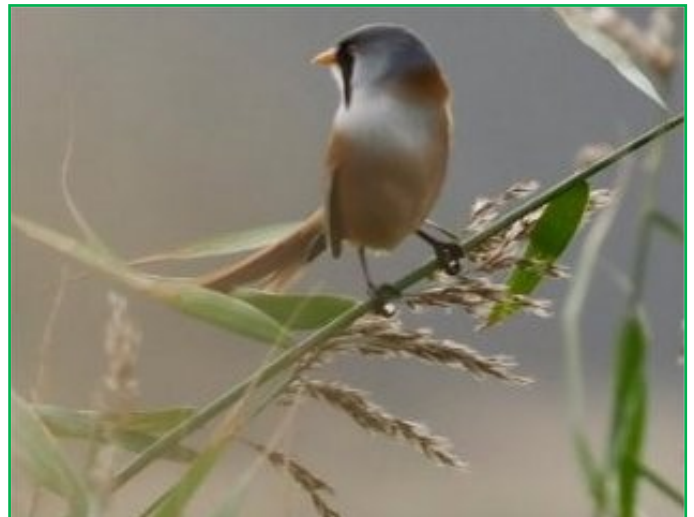
Debbie is a great bird spotter but not much of a bird watcher: if we are out walking (not birding) and I see someone with a telescope, I can hear the groan as she knows I just have to find out if they have spotted anything of note, followed by a (usually quite lengthy) conversation. A little nudge asking me not to take up their time usually works, but a threat of no dinner always does the trick and we move on! With that bit of background information, she had reminded me this was to be a family holiday, not a bird watching trip. Fair enough....

So mid-June we packed the dog (Willow) and holiday stuff (including binoculars) in the car and set out for Norfolk. The cottage was great, the weather warm and sunny and the holiday went well. I'll miss out the details and get down to the point in hand. Usually, I go to bed quite late, reach a comatose state in minutes and generally remain that way until morning. Norfolk was different. Yes, I went to bed late but was wide awake at 6ish. This happened for each of the first three days. Honestly it wasn't a ploy, but Debbie suggested if I was awake so early why didn't I go bird watching and get back at a civilised time for breakfast. Wow - sounded like a three-hour window of opportunity and Hickling Broad National Nature Reserve was only around 20 minutes away. 40 minutes travel and 2.5 hours birding, sounded great.



First visit to Hickling, I arrived with high hopes at the Visitor Centre before 7am. A pair of Red Legged Partridge crossed my path as I entered the reserve. An early birder was just leaving but gave rapid guidance on the best route for a quick visit and what I was likely to see. Crane, Black Winged Stilt and with a bit of luck

Bearded Tit; quite enthusiastic I set off with these on top of my hit list. I launched Merlin, of course - to filter out all those passerines and point me in the right direction. The place is huge, with well-made paths and exceptionally good and elaborate hides. A pleasant morning and enjoyable walk, I quickly ticked off Black Cap, Willow Warbler, Marsh Harrier, Common Tern and Cettis Warbler. On a patch of open water, Egyptian Geese and Great Crested Grebe glided by. In the far distance numerous swans clouded the horizon. Near the end of my route, Avocet and Little Egret were visible,





Members' Contributions



with a decent selection of duck species.

Early in the walk, Merlin indicated it heard both Black Winged Stilt and Bearded Tit, but unfortunately, I did not see them. Seeing is believing so they didn't get added to my list. As for Cranes, the only sight I had was a photo at the visitor centre. The trio were all *missing in action*. Getting back towards the car park my bonus find was a **Hobby** perched high in a tree just ahead. We watched each other for a few minutes then both headed off in our chosen direction. A tiny bit disappointed I had missed the target trio, but quite happy with the walk, I headed back to the cottage and off to the local café for a superb build your own Full English Breakfast and then off for a day's holidaying.

Next day same deal, arrived at 06:30 and followed more or less the same route. Warblers everywhere: Reed,

Cettis, Sedge, Willow along with Blackcap, Whitethroat, Grey Wagtail, Marsh Harriers, but still no sighting of my three targets. Not even the Hobby showed its face. However, in the short spaces of time I got 30 species day 1 and 40 on day 2. Over the holiday generally I did get a few incidental spots, including the juvenile Peregrine on Norwich Cathedral and Egyptian Geese seemed to pop up everywhere.

Enroute home we stopped at Rutland Water for a coffee and snack at lunchtime – quite nice and again a warm day. Guaranteed to see an Osprey I thought! The highlight however was watching Willow,



mesmerised by two Magpies playing tag outside the café window. A very brief walk round the shore and the Osprey stayed out of sight – another *Missing in Action*. Still, as consolation we did see Red Kites on two separate occasions on the drive home.



In the club trip to Norfolk Mr Lumby's group got a load more sightings: however they were on a birding visit, stayed for several days and visited a few reserves. John remarked however that they didn't spot an Owl. Well not only did we see one but we brought it home where it lives happily in the garden.... Although I don't know if it counts in my year list....



Members' Contributions

Part 2 Early Autumn Holiday— Cairngorms

While walking in Norfolk I remarked how flat most places were and how it suited me nicely as I hate climbing hills. Strange remarked Debbie when for a holiday in mid-September I'd suggested the southern reaches of the Cairngorms. Somewhere near Braemar sounded appealing; we might even get an invite for Tea at Balmoral. In case you're curious we didn't get invited and the castle was closed so we didn't even see the outside.

As before, we packed the car with dog and holiday stuff (including binoculars) and set off for the cottage we had booked in Craithie (midway between Braemar and Ballater, and quite near the Kirk the Royals might visit on Sunday). Strangely arriving on a Monday

evening (it had been booked for the previous weekend's Braemar Games), we ate in and with a drop of the Highland Stuff had a browse through the visitor book. One visitor had written "*while walking alongside the River Dee, we were enthralled by the sight of a White Tailed Eagle being chased by two Golden Eagles*". Now I've seen both before; several times; on Skye but the prospect of another spot nearer home sounded great. However, having researched a bit beforehand it was the Ptarmigan, Black Grouse and Capercaillie that were top of my list.



Remember this was another family holiday and not a birding trip, but incidents do happen. We visited some brilliant places where the scenery was astounding. Dramatic mountains and hills, shaded woodland, rolling valleys, cascading rivers and tranquil lochs. Willow swam in most of those we came across, as well as a splash around in the sea at Stonehaven.

In Ballater we did the Seven Bridges Walk, essentially alongside the River Dee. A pleasant 5.5 mile, round trip with woodland, river and mountain views. A great walk but sparse on the bird count. A single Jay and 4 Buzzards were the highlights from a total of 7.

Long before the holiday I had planned a visit to the Linn of Dee, on the Mar Lodge Estate, another beautiful location, a few miles east of Braemar. We had earlier picked up a leaflet at Tourist Info from the National Trust for Scotland titled "*Birds of the Mar Lodge Estate*". The birds you might see on your visit included Black Grouse, Dotterel, Ptarmigan, Crossbill and Wheatear.



The walk we chose was both pretty and dramatic. Alongside the river Lui Water, the small waterfalls were numerous and some of the 'rapids' quite dramatic. What did we see: a Chaffinch and 2 Woodpigeons, the rest were obviously *Missing in Action*.

Having decided to visit the coast we travelled to Stonehaven. Somewhere in the dim past it probably got its name from all the pebbles on the beach. The harbour was quite pretty with the local pub looking very busy. So we enjoyed lunch from a prize winning chippie. Haddock and Chips alfresco, overlooking the sea with a single Cormorant fishing just offshore. Was quite surprised that cod wasn't on the menu at all. On our return trip we took a roundabout route, travelling a long way around where we saw very little. Somewhere near Strachon



Members' Contributions

however, Debbie did spot a Red Kite which was the birding treat of the day.

Another pre-planned outing was to the Muir of Dinnet and Loch Kinord, A national nature reserve overseen by Nature Scotland. Here you find the Burn O'Vat flowing through a cauldron-shaped pothole, with access to the Vat through a narrow crack in the rock. Great echoes of the water entering the chamber as you made your way inside, stepping on the various rocks to arrive with dry feet. Crossing the small stream was Willow's favourite part, with lots of splashing around and some form of Poo Sticks game. The loch was quiet, very pretty but not much wildlife, a paltry tally of 8 fairly common species.



Glen Tanar was another brilliant place to visit. Here for sure would be a great spot to find a Capercaillie. We did the Riverside Walk, first through the forest and then alongside the river on the return. Willow enjoyed dipping in and out of the river, so we all had a great time. Both the woodland and the river were quite sparse as far as wildlife goes, but we did spot a Treecreeper and a Grey Wagtail (along with some other fairly common species). As for the Capercaillie; well, as you might have guessed, it was also *Missing in Action*.

Overall, two brilliant non-birding holidays where the weather was very kind, the locals really friendly and the food and drink most enjoyable; even if the wildlife and target species were well and truly **Missing in Action**

John McCutcheon

Photo's of stuff I didn't see courtesy of Neil Hinchliff (Part 1) and Alan Yeomans (Parts 1 & 2)





A Ringer's Year - December 2024

I have mentioned the BTO Winter Ringing Project before and one of my C Ringers (Kevin) is running his own sessions in a garden in Rothbury (south of the river) and so far, having a more interesting time than myself. On the morning of the 3/12/24 he captured 38 birds including a young male Sparrowhawk (which look very brown like the females at this age). This proved to be a Control (i.e. already ringed) and we were both fascinated to discover where it had come from (see photo). The BTO system was working efficiently and soon told us it had been ringed 31 km's away near Catcleugh Reservoir in Redesdale Forest in its nest; back on 8/7/24. This is not migration but a natural dispersal of a young bird away from its natal site.

The same day he also captured one of our distinctly winter birds that has migrated from Scandinavia 'a male Brambling' (see photo).



Ringling again on the 14/12/24 a local but relatively rare bird was captured; this was a young Marsh Tit. On a bird table they can be mistaken for just another Coal Tit or confused (quite justifiably) with their close relatives the Willow Tit (also rare). However, Northumberland seems to be unusual in having both Willow and Marsh at a number of locations, especially around the River Coquet. At the same session a Blue Tit was retrapped that had actually been ringed at a box we put up with the Middle School pupils earlier in the year. It was ringed in a nest that originally started with 10 eggs but only 3 young, fledged back on the 4/6/24.

This highlights the fact that 2024 seems to have been a poor breeding season for tits which is now showing up in the numbers of young birds captured at winter ringing sessions. What we are seeing is a higher-than-normal proportion of 'adult' as distinct from juvenile birds hatched in May & June this year. For example, at my own winter ringing session back on the 14/12/24 we captured 10 Blue Tits but every single one was an adult bird. Less scientifically relevant (but still interesting) was the capturing of 9 Robins in the same small

garden in the same three-hour period! Some probably have foreign accents!

This time of year, we also do some bird box maintenance and on the 4/12/24 we set out to do some pruning and cleaning out on a box near the village of Embleton Terrace. In the process we recaptured a roosting owl that proved to be female [GY37130] originally ringed as part of a brood of five in its nest near Coltpark on 1/7/20.

We discovered her in the current box in June 2023 where she successfully raised three young of her own. Checking in May 2024 she was again in this box but only weighed 310g (a worryingly low weight) although she had laid some eggs but on checking back in July, she was found not to have incubated these and was still underweight at 330g.



Ringer's Roundup

On the 4/12/24 she was still alive and weighed a better 350g; so, it seemed she was surviving the winter and we hope she will be heavy enough to breed successfully in 2025 (see photo).

The same day we also visited a box near Wingate's in which 3 owlets had been raised in June. We suspected this needed a major repair or replacement.

While being watched by some bored Bulls we first checked the box and found a new roosting male owl



probably in its third year (see photo); this we ringed but kept confined in a bag while we returned to inspecting the box. It was a good job we did because the box was near collapse and we quickly set about replacing it. This we were able to do expeditiously and quickly return the owl to it – where it quickly settled down and went back to sleep!

This month also saw Coast Care at work in the week of the 11/12/24 on a farm north of Embleton. Here I joined some Volunteers working on a Northumberland Coast project to build an Owl Shed. These small wooden buildings contain an owl box and are an attempt to replace old farm buildings (that owls like to nest in) that have been lost to neglect or 'holiday cottages' (see photo). Finally, I have also redesigned the traditional 'Trecreeper box' that you will find in some books, in order try to make it more attractive to these delightful little birds (already paired up in some of our woods). We had a box used successfully near Ingram this last May but it was sadly in need of replacement, which I have already done. Subsequently I have made a few more which will be put up in the New Year (see photo).



Phil Hanmer

S Ringer/Trainer, Natural History Society of Northumbria Ringing Group (Hancock Museum)

Email: tytoalbas@btinternet.com



Snippet from Graham Bell from the December issue of 'British Birds' Journal

Greylag Geese are not always as common and feral as we believe them to be. A wild population breeds in Iceland coming to the UK in winter. In Iceland and Scotland they are often shot – either as a threat to crops or as a supposed sport. It is reported in British Birds that the wild population of Greylag Geese is declining and is at risk. GPS collars attached to them in Iceland show where they are wintering, and anyone who finds a collar, or leg ring, on a dead bird is asked to contact NatureScot so that it can be retrieved, and please report a leg-ring from any dead bird to the BTO.

Also reported in the same journal: (i) A consortium of Scottish agencies is taking steps to encourage the increase in the Capercaillie population – currently down to 532 birds in Britain. (ii) Black Grouse are to be translocated (under cover of darkness) to the North York Moors from a stronghold in the North Pennines.

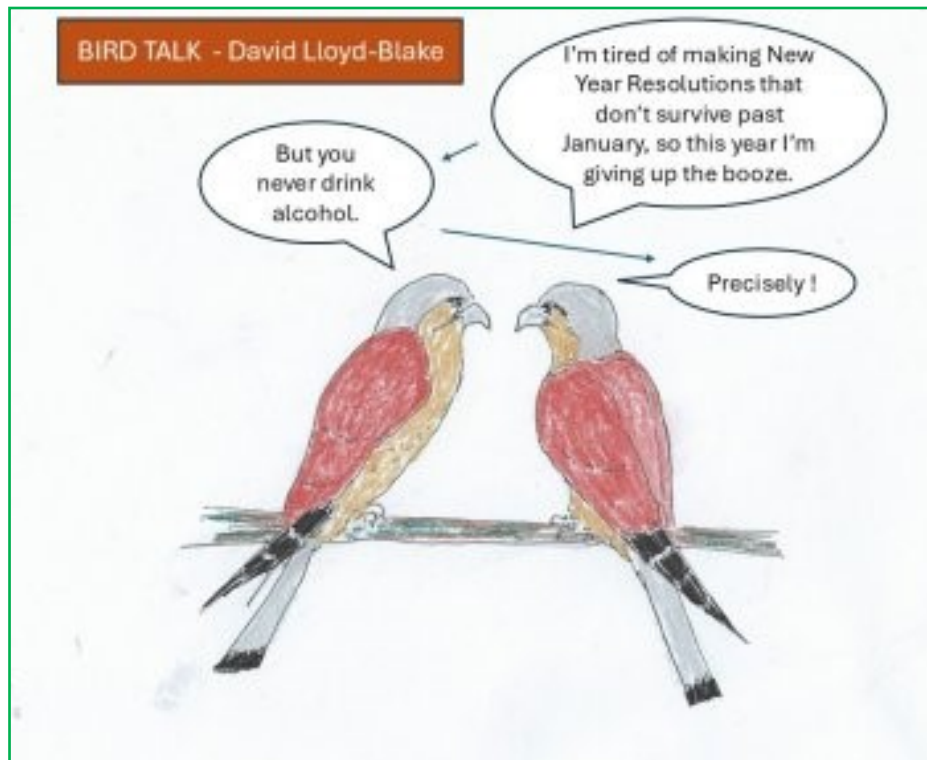


A Blast from the Past - this month's hint

Hopefully you have now cleared out and erected any nest boxes you have. Just check that the box:

1. Does not face towards the summer sun or prevailing rain
2. Is firmly fixed—not wobbly
3. Is not easily accessible to cats (bunches of prickly gorse or similar, above and below, may help deter them)
4. Is not too near sources of constant disturbance—people, bird tables, etc

Hints are from Graham Bell's early newsletters



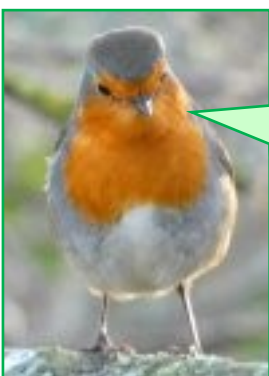
Not forgetting any photos you might like to share, especially from field trips

Members' Contributions to the Newsletter

Several members have submitted articles for publishing in the Newsletter, offered on their own volition to add interest, inform and entertain the other members.. so far all have been very interesting and much appreciated. BUT we need more, so please consider an offering you think will interest, enlighten or simply amuse your fellow members.

In 99.9% of cases, they should of course relate to birding!

Look forward to receiving your offerings!



*Got something you'd like to add?
Please let us know.*

Content for the Newsletter

Submissions for inclusion in the form of notes, articles, photographs etc are welcomed. These should be Emailed to the Newsletter Editor. Deadline for copy is the first Friday of the month, but earlier is preferred. The target date for distribution is the weekend before the club's meeting, usually on the Sunday.