NORTH NORTHUMBERLAND BIRD CLUB

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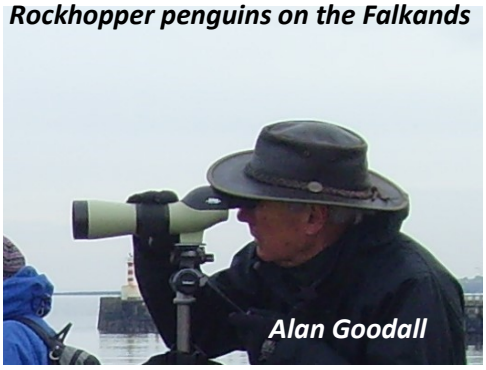
Tim Mason

WILDLIFE of the FALKLANDS Tim Mason, who twice served as Headmaster of the British Forces School in the Falkland Islands is also an excellent wildlife photographer. His talk attracted a good audience, including several visitors and members who have either visited or even lived on these windswept islands of the Southern Atlantic Ocean, (including Mary Worsfold) whose write-up of this memorable evening appears on page 3.

Rockhopper penguins on the Falkands

ROCKHOPPER PENGUINS No fewer than 'five enchanting species' of Penguin call the Falkland Islands home, along with many other fascinating birds, mammals and plants in this wildlife haven. Enjoy more of Tim's photographs which accompany the article on page 3.

WHAT'S NEW ON THE WEBSITE: Philip Hanmer has had a quieter month ringing, but is busily engaged in cleaning/replacing Owl Boxes in preparation for the next Breeding Season...check it all out on 'Ringer's Roundup '



Alan Goodall

FIELD TRIP TO THE COQUET ESTUARY on a cool but calm winter's day was led by Alan Goodall. Despite a quiet start, the list grew steadily as the group progressed to the coast. Check out his report and the final 'tally' by turning to page 4.

BIRD RECORDS from January are on page 4. Collating the Bird Records for February has fallen victim to the recent severe weather conditions and will now be published next month.

NOTICEBOARD

Indoor Meetings — Bamburgh Pavilion

- **Friday, 9th March 2018 at 7.30pm Sea Birds at KIELDER.** Martin Davidson.
  Martin is well-known in Northumberland as a professional ornithologist and wildlife guide. His intriguing subject looks at the attraction of this large reservoir to seabirds, despite being situated over forty miles from the coast.

- **Friday, 13th April 2018 at 7.30pm The Breeding Birds of Northern Britain.** Graham Wren.
  Graham, who spent two and a half years as a warden on the Farne Islands during the 1970s, is a fine photographer, and lecturer in all things ornithological. His gentle sense of humour combined with his detailed knowledge of our breeding birds ensures an interesting and enjoyable evening.

- **Field Trips & Residentials** [For all Field Trips Read please Risk Assessment on Website beforehand . [For last-minute Cancellations e.g. adverse weather conditions, check our Facebook Page.]

Saturday, 24th March at 10 a.m. Field Trip to Holy Island

Meet in the Car Park at the Beal end of the Causeway (O.S. ref. NU080427) just as the tide is receding to make the most of the available 'open' tide times. (safe crossing times 09:55-16:55). We should still encounter some overwintering geese, ducks and waders, plus the chance of some early spring migrants if the wind direction is favourable. Please wear suitable stout footwear and bring a packed lunch with you. ***Leader: Graham Bell***

PROPOSED NNBC HOLIDAY TO THE HIGHLANDS of BOLIVIA in association with NATURETREK

Following the successful Holiday to Bulgaria last year, six places have been provisionally 'held 'for members to join Naturetrek's 'Bargain Birdwatching' tour of the Bolivian Highlands between 4th-15th November2018 at a special price of £2595pp. (N.B. tour price begins and ends in London). The tour will be led by the experienced guide José Antonio Reyes, and has a potential bird list of 400 species. If you are interested in going, you can find further details on their website at Naturetrek.co.uk/ under Bolivia– Highlands. To reserve a place or discuss any aspect of the trip, please contact **John Lumby** on **01665 720654** who is liaising with Naturetrek.

BIRD RECORDS Recent discussion by the NNBC Committee has focused on the breadth and scope of our monthly records, and perhaps the perception that only sightings of rare species or vagrants should be sent in. *We would like to encourage members* to send in any sightings and numbers of amber- and red-listed species as well as seasonal migrants. Our monthly list will still reflect as many records as possible for the interest of our members, but **ALL** records submitted will beforwarded through the appropriate channels for County and National Records. Birds which are amber or red -listed can be found online at **www.rspb.org.uk/birds-and-wildlife/wildlife-guides/uk-conservation-status-explained/**

Checking out the gulls and waders on the Coquet (see p.4) SVMcC

WILDLIFE OF THE FALKLANDS

Black-browed Albatross

The North Northumberland Bird Club had an adventure on 9th February 2018 when a previous headmaster of the British Forces School, Tim Mason, led us on a memorable tour with photos and video capturing the immense allure and attraction of the Falkland Islands. It's not the easiest place to get to, situated 8,000 miles away in the South Atlantic and 300 miles East of Argentina, but the RAF makes flights twice a week and used to stop to refuel on Ascension Island. However, that is not possible at present as the runway there now has potholes. There are other airlines which fly via South America but, whichever way one travels to the Falklands, they are well worth the trip.

Tim told us of his excitement on Ascension Island at seeing Green Turtles laying their eggs on the beaches and the baby turtles scurrying out to sea. Only about one per thousand baby turtles survives to adulthood.

The main islands are East and West Falkland, with the Capital and the International Airport at Mount Pleasant both sited on East Falkland. In summer, temperatures are in the region of 18C, but it is always windy and the weather might change four times in a day. Sheltered parts can feel 'Mediterranean' in summer with Palm Trees swaying in the breeze; in winter temperatures rarely fall below -3°C, but the wind chill is bitter. Crystal clear waters surround the Falklands but, even here, plastic waste can be found washing up on idyllic shores. There are very few trees.

The capital is Stanley, which is twinned with Whitby in Yorkshire; standing beside the Cathedral, there is a whalebone arch to commemorate the whaling industry of times gone by. There are no traffic lights, roundabouts or cashpoint machines on the Falklands. A 40 mph speed limit stands throughout the islands. About 3,000 people live on the Falklands, mainly in Stanley, with 1,200 military personnel stationed 40 miles away at Mount Pleasant. Atlantic cruise ships call and may bring 60,000 visitors per year to boost the islands' economy but once, when three cruise ships arrived on the same day, 5,000 passengers disembarked overwhelming the capital. However tourism is no threat to nature.

King Penguins

For the naturalist, 200 species of birds have been recorded, many in breeding pairs numbering many thousands, including five enchanting species of Penguin; King Penguin, Gentoo Penguin, Magellanic Penguin, Macaroni Penguin, and 36% of the global population of Rockhopper Penguin. The Penguins are very approachable, as are the Caracaras, and if one stands still they might come right up and peck at one's boots. 60% of the world population of Black-browed Albatross also reside on the Falklands.

A few other interesting species likely to be seen on the Falklands include Silvery Grebe, Long-tailed Meadowlark, Cobb's Wren, Black-necked Swan, Pale-faced Sheathbill, Blackish Oystercatcher, Magellanic Oystercatcher, King Cormorant, Red-backed Hawk, Striated Caracara, Southern Caracara, Falkland Steamer Duck, Flying Steamer Duck, Falkland Skua, Ruddy-headed Goose, Black-crowned Night-heron, Kelp Goose, Dolphin Gull, Kelp Gull and Turkey Vulture.

Marine mammals that can easily be seen include Southern Elephant Seal, Southern Sea lion, South American Fur Seal and Killer Whale.

Opportunities to see all that the Falklands have to offer can be had by island-hopping and staying at very comfortable lodges in places such as Sea Lion Island, Pebble Island, Carcass Island, or Saunders Island where there are self-catering facilities, or on any of the many other islands. Tim recounted how, at weekends, he used to take parties of children from the British Forces School on free helicopter rides out to see the amazing wildlife. After an enthralling talk, Richard Poyer, chairman of NNBC, thanked Tim Mason for his extremely interesting and enjoyable presentation on the Falklands where truly nature is still in charge. ***Report by Mary Worsfold.***

Falkland Steamer Duck

Photos by kind permission of the speaker, Tim Mason.

NNBC Field Trip to Warkworth & Coquet Estuary 18th February 2018

Fifteen members met at Warkworth for what has become an annual February visit to this location. We were all pleasantly surprised by the accuracy of the weather forecast, and although it was quite cold there was only a light breeze that made for pleasant walking and birding conditions. The car park offered us a lovely view of a pair of bullfinches.

Walking along towards the estuary, initially the bird life was somewhat sparse with just the expected wigeon, redshank, curlew, carrion crow and woodpigeon; on the dunes we had stonechat, a wren, flocks of goldfinch, a song thrush and six skylarks. As this was low tide we had to wait until we approached Amble to increase our number of species, but the number of birds feeding in the estuary was unusually low. Although there were plenty curlews and redshanks, surprisingly we only saw two golden plovers and a *solitary* dunlin, whereas we would normally expect many more of these two species.

Arriving at the breakwater gave us a variety of gulls in the harbour and the opportunity for sea-watching which notably provided views of red-throated divers and a great crested grebe. ***Report by Alan Goodall***

The full list:- Pink-footed Goose, Greylag Goose, Canada Goose, Shelduck, Wigeon, Teal, Mallard ,Common Scoter, Eider, Red-throated Diver, Shag, Cormorant, Grey Heron, Great Crested Grebe, Moorhen, Oystercatcher, Golden Plover, Grey Plover, Ringed Plover, Curlew, Black-tailed Godwit, Turnstone, Sanderling, Dunlin, Redshank, Guillemot, Black- headed Gull, Common Gull, Herring Gull, Great black-backed Gull, Woodpigeon, Feral Pigeon, Collared Dove, Magpie, Jackdaw, Rook, Carrion Crow, Great tit, Skylark, Wren, Starling, Blackbird, Song Thrush, Robin, Stonechat, Pied Wagtail, Goldfinch, Bullfinch.(48 species)

BIRD RECORDS JANUARY 2018

Whooper Swan	7 at Horncliffe on 3rd (JDL), 20 near Alnmouth on 28th (A&MG).
Pink-footed Goose	2000 over Tughall Pool on 1st (NNBC), 1000 at Doddington on 29th & 2000 at Harpers Heugh on 31st (GB), were the highest totals.
White-fronted Goose	3 (Eurasian) near Alnmouth on 28th (A&MG).
Barnacle Goose	700 at Harpers Heugh on 13th (I&KD), 1000 at Holy Island on 14/ 30th (GB).
Shoveler	13 at Monk's House Pool on 29th (JDL).
Long-tailed Duck	8 at Stag Rocks on 1st (NNBC).
Common Scoter	200 at Stag Rocks on 30th (GB).
Goldeneye	6 at Horncliffe from 11/24th (JDL).
Goosander	19 at Horncliffe on 24th (JDL).
Red-throated Diver	1 at Stag Rocks on 1st (NNBC).
Little Egret	1 at Budle Bay on 1st (NNBC). 1 at Bowmont Water on 18th (JC), 1 at Fenham Le Moor on 18th (GB), 1 at Horncliffe on 19th (JDL).
Slavonian Grebe	3 at Stag Rocks on 13th (I&KD).
Purple Sandpiper	Up to 175 at Stag Rocks all month (JDL,JPL).
Little Stint	1 at Fenham Le Moor from 13th to 18th (I&KD,GB).
Green Sandpiper	1 at Branton Ponds on 31st (I&KD).
Glaucous Gull	1 (1st winter) at Monk's House Pool on 30th (GB).
Fieldfare	200 at Branton on 11th (I&KD), 61 at Chillingham on 18th (RB).
Rock Pipit	1 at Beadnell Harbour on 1st (NNBC).
Brambling	1 at Branton on 17th (I&KD).
Bullfinch	6 at Alnwick on 27/29th (A&MG), 2 at Wooler Common on 8th (DR).
Twite	4 at Fenham hide on 1st (JPL).
Snow Bunting	6 at Fenham hide on 1st (JPL), 40 at Holy Island on 18th (GB).

Observers Graham & Rosemary Bell (G&RB), Janet Chubb (JC), Ian & Keith Davison (I & KD), Alan & Margaret Goodall (A&MG), James D Lough (JDL), John P Lumby (JPL), David Richens (DR), NNBC club Excursion = (NNBC).

March Records: please submit no later than 3rd April to the Recorder, John Lumby, Shearwater, 2 St Cuthbert Close, North Sunderland, Seahouses, NE68 7WG. TEL: 01665-720654. e-mail: j.lumby@yahoo.co.uk **or .com** .