NORTH NORTHUMBERLAND BIRD CLUB

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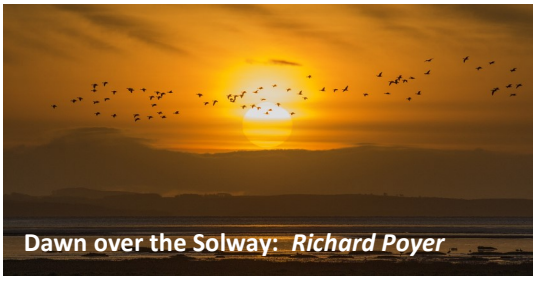
Martin Davison: *Photo SVMcC*

East Coast view towards Bamburgh:*SVMcC*



Dawn over the Solway: *Richard Poyer*

Beautiful Sunbird in The Gambia: *Photo PH*

SEAWATCH at KIELDER WATER

Members of NNBC were 'treated to 40 years of ornithological expertise' by Martin Davison, the Forestry Commission ornithologist. Although he spends much of his time tracking down the nesting sites of vulnerable Birds of Prey as a necessary part of managing forestry and visitor activities in Kielder Forest, he also keeps a sharp eye on the water whenever poor visibility or weather brings down some unexpected birds…….see p.4

FIELD TRIP TO HOLY ISLAND

Graham Bell led a very successful visit to the Island on a day 'blessed with fantastic weather and lovely clear views in the spring light'. On page 3, Janet Chubb follows their route round Lindisfarne and records their sightings…..see p.3

WINTER WEEK IN DUMFRIES & GALLOWAY

Chairman Richard Poyer reflects on an enjoyable week birding on the Solway coast …..see pages 4 & 5

BIRD RECORDS

from February and March are on p.6

WHAT'S NEW ON THE WEBSITE:

Philip Hanmer has been ringing some more exotic and colourful birds as well as catching up with several of our familiar summer migrants in their winter quarters on a recent visit to Kartong Bird Observatory in the Gambia. Well worth a visit to his latest article on **Ringer's Roundup** on the Website……

NOTICEBOARD

Indoor Meetings — Bamburgh Pavilion*

- **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 at Bamburgh Pavilion
- **Friday, 11th May,2018 at 7.30pm Artists for Albatrosses. Chris Rose: N.B. at the HUB, SEAHOUSES*** Don't miss Internationally acclaimed Wildlife Artist Chris Rose, who specialises in depicting wildlife within the landscape, spent five weeks in South Georgia drawing and painting the wildlife and landscapes to raise funds for the RSPB's *Saving the Albatross Campaign.*

***CHANGE of VENUE for MAY. SEAHOUSES Sports & Community Centre, aka the 'HUB'.**

DIRECTIONS: *coming from **BEADNELL & the SOUTH** turn first left from King Street (B1340) into James Street. At foot of road, turn Left again at the T-junction, then bear right into the Centre. From **BAMBURGH & the NORTH,** follow the coast road south through centre of Seahouses towards Beadnell (past both roundabouts). Pass **King Street Garage** and take first right into James Street (then as above)*

- **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.]**

- **Sunday, 15th April at 10 a.m. Farm and Riverside Walk, West Loanend**

A walk of 2 to 3 hour's duration from West Loanend over rich farmland and along the South Bank of the River Tweed (opposite Paxton House) in search of farmland and riverside birds such as Grey Partridge, Tree Sparrow, Yellowhammer, Reed Bunting, Skylark, Goosander, Goldeneye, maybe even a Kingfisher or an Otter by the river. Wear suitable footwear such as walking boots or Wellingtons.

Directions/Parking: At the roundabout on the A1 on the western edge of Berwick-upon-Tweed take the Coldstream Road **A698**. Proceed west for one mile; **on the brow of the hill turn right, signposted Horncliffe.** *[You will see also see brown tourist signs: "Chain Bridge Honey Farm" also "West Ord Holiday Cottages"].* Follow this road round a big right -angle and **continue towards Horncliffe**. In one mile there is a small double bend in the road on a tiny bridge **with an insignificant small road sign to East and West Loanend. Turn right.** [*Note yellow Council grit box on the corner]*. Proceed down towards the River Tweed and in half a mile you will arrive at **West Loanend Farmhouse.** (**O.S. ref: NT945513**). There is plenty of space for parking at the Farmhouse. Further direction-phone Mary Worsfold on 07742 728623 ***Leader:Martin Worsfold***

- **Sunday, 20th May at 5 a.m. Dawn Chorus on the Ford & Etal Estates.** Our Annual visit to the beautiful grounds of the Estate nestled in the Till Valley, seeking out the rich birdlife including migrants such as Spotted Flycatchers, Wheatears, Whitethroats and other Warblers. Full details in the May Newsletter. ***Leader: Lord James Joicey.***

NNBC HOLIDAY TO THE HIGHLANDS of BOLIVIA in association with NATURETREK A few places are still available for the Naturetrek tour of the Bolivian Highlands between 4th-15th November2018 at a special price of £2595pp. (See March Newsletter for further details). To reserve a place or discuss any aspect of the trip, please contact **John Lumby** on **01665 720654** who is liaising with Naturetrek.

ROOK SURVEY. Members who have volunteered to participate in the annual Rook Survey are reminded that the optimum period of time for the count is **the second half of April.** Especially if you live near a Rookery, it is still possible to take part this year. Further details are available from our Co-ordinator Rosemary Bell (email via our 'ringouzel' address on page 1)

BIRDS in SOUTH-EAST SCOTLAND 2007-13. A tetrad Atlas of the birds of Lothian & Borders

Members of NNBC are invited to order a copy of this important Atlas at the special pre-publication price of £30 before 30th June. See attachment sent out along with this e-Newsletter for further details and order form. ***Tom Brewis***

Visit to Holy Island Saturday 24th March – Leader Graham Bell

Our Field Trip to Holy Island was blessed with fantastic weather and lovely clear views in the spring light. When the sun warmed up some of us definitely felt overdressed! The day got off to a promising start with two Reed Buntings seen at the Beal car park, and a flock of Brent Geese flying across, but apart from the flocks of waders and gulls that could be seen on the sands in the far distance and some Redshanks by the causeway there was not a great variety of birds about. Accompanied by the sound of Skylarks, and the sights and sounds of farm and garden birds, we turned right at the farm along the Crooked Lonnen, avoiding the very wet Straight Lonnen, and arrived at the coast. The light SW breeze allowed good views over the calm sea, of Shags with summer 'quiffs', Cormorants displaying white feathers on their flanks, a Red-throated Diver and a characteristic low-flying line of Common Scoters. Stopping at the Lough hide, we added a few new species- Wigeon, Mute Swan, Coot and Moorhen, and a peregrine was spotted flying over. Looking inland flocks of Curlews were feeding on the grass beyond the Lough, (including a flock of 50+ Curlew which flew over to the beach); a flock of Starlings flying in to feed amongst the Black-faced Sheep. Pausing at the Emmanuel Head marker to 'sea-watch', we saw male and female Eiders, three Razorbills in winter plumage, and a Gannet further out to sea, whilst looking towards the sandy bay curving to the north we could see small groups of Sanderling. On our way back towards the harbour a Kestrel flew and perched on the rocks round the castle; a Shoveler was spotted at the wetland area opposite the harbour. In the rocks along the path 2 Rock Pipits were difficult to spot amongst the seaweed! Small numbers of waders were feeding on the muddy harbour shore – 5 Ringed Plovers, 3 Dunlins and a single Grey Plover.

We enjoyed great views from the Heugh over the estuary sandbanks, with several large clusters of basking Grey Seals and a large flock of 150+ Golden Plovers flying over towards the castle. Some Grey Plovers could be seen working a strip of sand, 3 red-breasted Mergansers flew across, and we had a good view of a Red-throated Diver showing the first signs of its summer plumage, flying across to join another, a great finish to a very pleasant day.

Full Bird List (53 species)

Mute Swan, Brent Goose, Shelduck, Shoveler, Wigeon, Teal, Eider, Common Scoter, Red-breasted Merganser, Pheasant, Red-throated Diver, Cormorant, Shag, Fulmar, Gannet, Heron, Kestrel, Peregrine, Moorhen, Coot, Oystercatcher, Ringed Plover, Golden and Grey Plover, Dunlin, Sanderling, Turnstone, Bar-tailed Godwit, Curlew, Redshank, Black-headed, Great Black-backed and Herring Gulls, Razorbill, Woodpigeon, Collared dove, Skylark, Meadow and Rock pipit, Pied Wagtail, Wren, Dunnock, Robin, Blackbird, Blue Tit, Jackdaw, Carrion Crow, Starling, House Sparrow, Chaffinch, Goldfinch, Reed Bunting.

Report by Janet Chubb

Sea-watching and Socialising at Emmanuel Head. ***Photo: Marge Noble***

SEA WATCHING AT KIELDER —*Martin Davison*

At the March meeting of the North Northumberland Bird Club members were treated to 40 years of ornithological expertise by Martin Davison, the Forestry Commission ornithologist. Working at his post from March to September, Martin tries to locate the nests of all the birds of prey in the 150 square miles of forests managed by Kielder Forestry Commission: Hen harrier, Goshawk, Peregrine, Osprey and the owls. These can then be prevented from disturbance by forestry activity and tourists such as trail and mountain bikers.

Setting the scene for his main topic, Martin traced the fortune of the birds of prey, owls and corvids. His 40-year study of Tawny Owls has shown the birds' reliance on the rise and fall of the vole population. His records show that only 16 chicks survived in 2016 (a poor vole year) compared with 200chicks in 2017. The number of Peregrine pairs has fallen from 13 to 6 but Hen Harriers and Ospreys have increased. The Kielder Hen Harriers were the only known breeding successes in England in 2107 raising 12 chicks. On the down side, two adults have recently been discovered dead having been shot. Better news is of a young Osprey born at Kielder which has recently been recorded wintering in The Gambia. Raven numbers have also increased over the last 15 years, rising from 1 to 11 pairs, although Martin suspects that there should be even more pairs in his region.

Moving on to the main subject of his talk, Martin explained the significance of the narrow Tyne Gap as a route for some of the migrant birds and the chance of these birds lighting on Kielder Water. Generally, with a lack of any high barrier, birds would use this route to fly straight over from the Irish to the North Sea. The North Tyne River valley is also used by some as a fly-way and in bad weather - mist and rain - the birds are forced to come down on to Kielder Water. The best place to spot such birds is from the main dam - sitting in a car!

Kittiwakes, Common Scoters, Fulmars and a variety of the commoner Terns are all seabirds that Martin has recorded from the Dam. Other water birds that he has seen include species such Shelduck, Smew, Scaup, Auks, Skuas, Storm Petrel, Red-throated, Black- throated *and* Great Northern Divers, Red-breasted Merganser and Shag. Quite why a shag was sitting on a boulder in the very south of his area, the Irthing Gorge, Martin still does not know. He is convinced that birds are under-recorded at Kielder, because he cannot be in two places at once and sightings are most likely in bad weather. Martin encouraged members to visit the Water and perhaps spot those birds he dreams about landing there- such as Black Tern, Surf Scoter, Manx Shearwater and even Black-browed Albatross! *Report by* ***Richard Poyer***

A Very Enjoyable Winter Break in Dumfries and Galloway

For the second year running we spent a week in February staying in a cottage at Bladnoch, south of Newton Stewart, on the edge of the Solway marshes. The winter is as good a time for birds as spring and summer in D&G, just different birds in different places! Five minutes from the cottage is the Crook of Baldoon RSPB reserve. This is Solway salt marsh where the Golden Plover along with Pink- footed, Greylag, Canada and Barnacle Geese roost at night. Visit at dawn and you will see thousands of birds take to the air and make their way inland to feed on the farmers' fields. This year, staying a week earlier than last, I was surprised to discover that wildfowling is still permitted in the area; our stay coincided with the end of the shooting season.

Rather like Northumberland, D&G's relative 'remoteness' meant that Ministry of Defence sites were located there in the war. One of these still operates at West Freugh, on the edge of Luce Bay. The fields around the base are the feeding areas for Pink-feet and Greenland White- front geese along with large flocks of Lapwing and Golden Plover. We didn't see any of the Hen Harriers which roost in the nearby pines but there were Buzzards aplenty.

The large waters of Loch Ryan north of Stranraer hold large numbers of wintering water birds. However the winds were so strong that it was very difficult to spot the birds, let alone identify them. A group of Scaups came quite near and we saw the small number of Light-bellied Brent Geese in the area alongside the more common Oystercatcher, Redshank and Ringed Plover.

At the eastern end of our D&G "patch", Loch Ken holds the other flock of Greenland White-fronts with Red Kites close by.

Cafes in D&G seem to close for half the week in winter and so the Kirroughtree Forest Visitor Centre became a favourite coffee stop; they also have a feeding station where a very obliging red squirrel comes to the peanut feeder. Sadly, there were very few birds.

The snow and rain provided interesting weather but created attractive waterfalls-altogether a very enjoyable Winter Break!

Article and Photos by Richard Poyer

Greenland White-fronted Geese

White-fronts & Pink-feet at West Freugh

Cheeky Chappie

Lapwings take to the Air

Winter weather at the Mull.....

BIRD RECORDS FEBRUARY 2018

Whooper Swan	1 at Branton Ponds on 16th (I&KD).
Pink-footed Goose	550 flying west over Spindlestone on 1st (JDL).
Canada Goose	54 on the Tweed at West Ord on 15th (MW) & 46 at Horncliffe on 24th (JDL).
Pintail	320 close in shore at Fenham-le-Moor on 1st (JDL).
Shoveler	5 at Monk's House Pool on 1st (JDL) & 1 pair at Branton Ponds from 1st /22n (I&KD).
Goldeneye	5 at Tweedmouth on 2nd & 5 at Horncliffe on 9th (JDL), 16 at Branton Ponds on 7th & 22 by the 14th (I&KD).
Goosander	14 at Horncliffe on 9th (JDL).
Red-throated Diver	1 at Stag Rocks on 1st (JDL).
Black-throated Diver	1 at Stag Rocks on 15th (JDL).
Little Egret	1 at Brandon Ford on 14th (I&KD).
Hen Harrier	1 ringtail at Swinhoe on 8th (JPL).
Oystercatcher	96 at Branton Ponds on 22nd (I&KD).
Purple Sandpiper	110 at Stag Rocks on 15th (JDL).
Green Sandpiper	2 at Hedgeley Ponds on 4th (I&KD).
Woodcock	1 at Branton Ponds on 10th (I&KD).
Willow Tit	1 at Branton Ponds on 8th (I&KD).
Blackcap	1 at Etal Manor on 8th (JJ).
Fieldfare	70 at Lowick on 25th (JDL).
Tree Sparrow	28 at Branton on 8th (I&KD).
Twite	8 at Fenham Le Moor all month (JDL).
Yellowhammer	20 at West Ord on 15th (MW).

Over the border a **Hawfinch** was seen at the Hirsel on 17th .

Observers Ian & Keith Davison (I & KD), James Joicey (JJ), James D Lough (JDL), John P Lumby (JPL), Martin Worsfold (MW).

BIRD RECORDS MARCH 2018

Whooper Swan	2 at Branton Ponds on 11th & 27 flying north at Titlington Mount on 14th (I&KD).
Brent Goose	535 at Fenham Le Moor on 10th was highest total (JDL).
Shoveler	1 pair at Branton Ponds on 7th (I&KD) & 6 pairs at Monk's House Pool on 12th(JPL) & 3 on 14th(JDL)
Long-tailed Duck	7 at Stag Rocks on 11th (I&KD).
Common Scoter	c.200 at Stag Rocks on 11th (I&KD) & 70 on 27th (JDL).
Goldeneye	24 at Branton Ponds on 7th (I&KD) & 2 at Horncliffe on 12th (JDL).
Goosander	8 at Horncliffe on 25th (JDL).
Red-throated Diver	5 at Stag Rocks on 11th (I&KD).
Slavonian Grebe	1 on the Tweed at Horncliffe on 19th (JDL).
Purple Sandpiper	30 at Stag Rocks on 27th (JDL).
Spotted Redshank	1 at Budle Bay on 11th (I&KD).
Grey Phalarope	1 at Low Newton Scrape on 30th (I&KD).
Woodpigeon	c.600 at Brownieside on 20th (JPL).
Peregrine	1 at North Sunderland on 6th (JPL) & 1 at Fenham Le Moor on 14th (JDL).
Chiffchaff	1 at Branton Ponds on 22nd (I&KD) & 1 at Ford on 29th (JJ).
Blackcap	1 male at Etal all month (JJ).
Fieldfare	c.150 at Shepherds Law on 11th (I&KD).
Tree Sparrow	37 at Branton on 15th (I&KD) & several at Wooler on 26th (MV).
Goldfinch	c.40 at North Sunderland all month (JPL) reduced from 80 winter flock.

Observers Ian & Keith Davison (I & KD), James Joicey (JJ), James D Lough (JDL), John P Lumby (JPL), Michael Veitch (MV), Martin Worsfold (MW).

April Records: please submit no later than 1st May 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.