NORTH NORTHUMBERLAND BIRD CLUB

Honorary President: Graham Bell

www.northnorthumberlandbirdclub.co.uk ringouzel@northnorthumberlandbirdclub.co.uk

www.facebook.com/NorthNorthumberlandBirdClub

Chairman
Mr Richard Poyer,
12 Byron Street,
Amble, NE65 0ER

Membership Secretary
Mrs Fiona Southern,
Robin Cottage, Spindlestone Mill,
Belford, NE70 7ED

Secretary
Mrs Glynis Gower,
50 Ravensdowne
Berwick-upon-Tweed TD15 1DQ
Tel: 01289 330969

Graham Wren photo: F. Southern

BREEDING BIRDS OF NORTHERN BRITAIN

Graham Wren treated the audience of members and visitors to a fascinating slide show which illustrated his lifetime interest in the nests and eggs of Britain's birds. Like many of his generation his interest was first kindled by collecting eggs as a young boy, before transferring his passion to photographing the nests, eggs and habitat of as many British breeding species as possible……..Glynis Gower's article is on page 3

Approaching the Tweed: Mora Rolley

FIELD TRIP TO WEST LOANEND Martin Worsfold welcomed a dozen members and guests to the south bank of the River Tweed on a glorious spring morning, enjoying the first migrants such as Sand Martin, Swallow, Chiffchaff and Blackcap after our prolonged winter. Turn to page 4 for Marge Noble's report and full list…….

BIRD RECORD for APRIL are on p.6

Nesting Ringed Plover on H. Island 1977

SURVEY OF RINGED PLOVERS ON HOLY ISLAND

Forty years on from a major study of Ringed Plovers he conducted on the Island while based at Durham University, Paul Snell returned to Lindisfarne NNR to see how they were faring in 2017. His interesting comparisons should act as a wake-up call to all who care…….

Photo: Phil Hanmer

Photo: Margaret Goodall

WHAT'S NEW ON THE WEBSITE:

Check out more than the amazing bills! Phil Hanmer's superb HAWFINCH features in the latest **Ringer's Roundup**; or visit the **Gallery** for Margaret Goodall's fine picture of a LITTLE BITTERN which dropped in to Budle Bay a few days ago…….

NOTICEBOARD

Indoor Meetings — Bamburgh Pavilion*

- **Friday, 11th May,2018 at 7.30pm Artists for Albatrosses. Chris Rose: N.B. at the HUB, SEAHOUSES* (see April NEWLETTER for directions to the HUB)**

Don't miss Internationally acclaimed Wildlife Artist Chris Rose, who specialises in depicting wildlife within the landscape, and spent five weeks in South Georgia drawing and painting the wildlife and landscapes to raise funds for the RSPB's *Saving the Albatross Campaign.*

- **Friday, 8th June,2018 at 7.30pm (Bamburgh Pavilion) The State of Birds in the UK. Mark Eaton**

Dr Mark Eaton is Principal Conservation Scientist for the RSPB, overseeing RSPB involvement in the monitoring of birds in the UK and overseas. He is also Chair of the Rare Birds Breeding Panel and a member of the steering committee for the European Breeding Birds Atlas. Based in the North East of England, he also finds time to tweet regularly about his passion for birding @Mark_A_Eaton

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, 20th May 2018 The eagerly awaited annual visit to the Ford and Etal Estates for the peak of the Dawn Chorus! We meet at 05.00 at FORD MOSS SHEPHERDS COTTAGE (NT 969 379). This is 300m before the main gate-way into Ford Moss Reserve. The postcode is TD15 2PZ but your SatNav will take you to Ford Hill Farm which is WRONG!! We will check out the moorlands and woodlands looking and listening for spring migrants joining the resident birds. Afterwards, Lady Harriet will kindly provide breakfast at Etal Manor for those who wish to partake (donation to local charity) with the opportunity to look round the woodland gardens. [SatNav code for breakfast is TD12 4TL]

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. (further details in April Newsletter) *Tom Brewis*

Most clubs and societies, including NNBC, have had to grapple with the new regulations on Data Protection known as GDPR which come into force towards the end of this month. Our policy below outlines what data we collect and how it is stored, protected and used, and the rights of members to be in full control of their own data.

North Northumberland Bird Club Privacy Policy

The North Northumberland Bird Club (hereafter NNBC) collects the following data for each member of the club: Name, address, telephone number, email address

The data is stored electronically in a named file on the computer belonging to the Membership Secretary. *All* computers on which the club stores data are password protected.

The data is kept for as long as the annual subscription to the club is paid, or for the duration of any honorary membership granted to an individual. The information is kept up-to-date by the Membership Secretary using the annual membership form submitted by individuals. The Secretary is the Data Protection Officer for the NNBC.

The data in its entirety is held by the Membership Secretary, and electronic copies of the data are made available to view and use by other members of the NNBC Committee on a need-to-know basis. The NNBC does not share data with any third party, either individual or organisation.

Individuals opt in by completing the annual membership form and paying the annual subscription: The policy is included on the membership form and is sent out annually.

The NNBC uses the data to send members the newsletter in the months when it is published and to circulate to members information about other club activities.

Consent to the storage, viewing and use of the data as described above is obtained through the signing of the annual membership form and payment of the annual subscription. Any individual can request to see the data on him/herself that the NNBC stores, and to edit and/or up-date that information. An individual can request to have their data removed from the club data list and for that information to be deleted. Requests must be made to the Membership Secretary. Members who pay their annual subscription but do not provide personal contact details as described above will not receive newsletters or information about club activities.

BREEDING BIRDS IN NORTHERN BRITAIN *Graham Wren*

View of the North West Highlands

On 13th April, an audience of club regulars and visitors were treated to a fascinating slide show by Graham Wren which illustrated his lifetime interest in the nests and eggs of Britain's birds. Like many of his generation, Graham's interest in this subject matter was kindled by an egg collecting hobby when he was a young boy. During his national service in the Middle East, he came to the conclusion that he would be better off making a record of the birds and their eggs and so bought his first camera. Initially he took photographs of the nests and eggs he found but advice from Bruce Campbell, an ornithologist he met whilst working on a dairy farm on the Thames Valley, made him realise that the photo collection would have more meaning if he also recorded the habitat in which he found the nests.

Graham's slides were mainly taken in the 1970's and he told great tales of the people he met, including gamekeepers, who would ring him to tell of a new nest they had found so that he could add another species to his ever-growing collection. The names of famous ornithologists punctuated his talk, including such legends as the late Eddie Balfour of Orkney, the artist and raptor enthusiast Keith Brockie, and Roy Dennis whose pioneering work with Ospreys including tagging is very well known. He was at pains to point out that he always sought the required permissions and permits before embarking on a photographic mission.

Most of the habitats he recorded were in Scotland and the slides are a testament to the beauty of the northern land and seascapes. What came across in such detail was the ability of birds to utilise almost any surface for the laying of their eggs and the hatching of their chicks. From bare rock ledges and pebble beaches, through mountain, moorland, grassland and trees, to man-made features like walls, hedges, rooftops and window sills we were able to see in Graham's slides the ability of different species to find a place that would best protect their eggs and young. What also came across were the many and various avian interpretations of the "nest". We saw nests that were little more than bare rock, we saw careless constructions of twigs and grass and we saw intricate, carefully woven and beautifully lined constructions that seemed to fulfil all the meanings of the word "nest" that we use in everyday life.

Oystercatcher Scrape– Caithness

Whilst attitudes to approaching nesting birds have changed in the years since Graham amassed his slide collection, there is no doubt that this photographic record is of great ornithological interest. It comes as no surprise to learn that copies of the slides have been received by the British Trust for Ornithology and the Scottish Ornithologists' Club. For the audience, used to the beauty and bird life of the Northumbrian countryside in which the club meets and in which many members live, it was also a reminder of how fortunate we are to have the glories of the Scottish countryside and its bird life on our doorstep.

Article by Glynis Gower ***Photos : SVMcC***

FIELD TRIP- WEST LOANEND *Leader : Martin Worsfold*

Group approaching the south bank of the River Tweed from West Loanend: Photo– Mora Rolley

On a bright, sunny morning 11 members of the NNBC and 1 visitor gathered at West Loanend, enjoying the sights and sounds of the countryside and the promise of spring at last. The Tree Sparrows were chattering and a Song Thrush sang melodiously from the top of the hedge. As we set off down the road we stopped to admire four Roe Deer racing across the fields, silhouetted against the skyline. A short distance further on, a Pied Wagtail with nesting material in its beak, and a handsome Yellowhammer posed on top of a wall.

In the fields, by the side of the river Tweed, sheep and lambs were basking in the welcome sunshine and we walked quietly so as not to disturb them. We watched Goosanders, Mallards and Goldeneye in the river; a Sand Martin turned and weaved low over the water and a Common Sandpiper bobbed along the bank. A Buzzard, chased by 2 Crows, flew over the trees in the grounds of Paxton House.

On reaching the Chain Bridge we spent some time listening to the birds singing and spotted a Blackcap darting in and out of the branches and a Treecreeper working its way up the ivy-covered trunk of a tree. From there we followed the foot-path across the fields and back to the start. Everybody thanked Martin and said how much they had enjoyed the walk.

Mute Swan, Canada Goose, Mallard, Goldeneye, Goosander, Cormorant, Grey Heron, Buzzard, Moorhen, Oystercatcher, Common Sandpiper, Herring Gull, Wood Pigeon, Great Spotted Woodpecker, Carrion Crow, Blue Tit, Great Tit, Coal Tit, Skylark, Sand Martin, Swallow, Chiffchaff, Blackcap, Nuthatch, Treecreeper, Wren, Blackbird, Song Thrush, Robin, Dunnock, House Sparrow, Tree Sparrow, Pied Wagtail, Chaffinch, Greenfinch, Goldfinch, Bullfinch, Yellowhammer, Reed Bunting, (39 species)

Report: Marge Noble

Ringed plovers at Lindisfarne NNR a 40-year comparison: 1977 and 2017. *Paul Snell*

BACKGROUND FOR STUDY

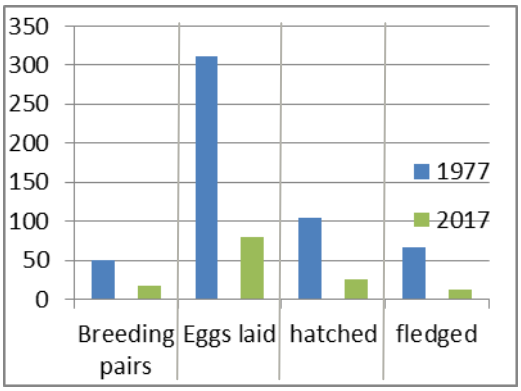
In 1977, I spent the spring and summer studying the breeding biology of ringed plovers at Lindisfarne NNR for the Zoology department, Durham University. It followed on from a previous study in the mid 1970`s by Dr Mike Pienkowski who had colour-ringed many of the birds so that they could be individually identified. My work was to identify dates of egg laying; where they nested (shingle, sand, straw etc.); incubation time; predators and predation rate; hatching and fledging success. Tourism in the 1970`s was beginning to have an impact on disturbance on beaches even in Northumberland, and it was estimated at the time that Holy Island was receiving 330,000 visitors a year. Part of my full-time study was to consider the impact of disturbance by people on ringed plovers' breeding success. The area covered was from Cheswick in the north to Budle Point in the south, taking in Holy Island as well of course. Once a month I also covered beaches as far south as Boulmer.

Last year I was given permission by Andrew Craggs, Senior Reserve Manager for Natural England, to do a follow-up study. The general feeling was that numbers of ringed plovers had declined on the Reserve for various reasons, and this was an opportunity to quantify the reduction and hopefully identify the reasons behind it. This time it was a part-time study, but involved about 10 days a month from March through to August. A number of summer wardens provided further information for me.

SPECIFIC ISSUES

At Lindisfarne NNR eggs are normally laid in scrapes on shingle or sand, having established a territory in March or April. The scrapes are found typically on the high water mark and the splash zone, and are therefore at risk from high spring tides and tidal surges. The usual 4 eggs are well camouflaged against this background, and so are the incubating parents, but are at risk from foxes, stoats, carrion crows etc. People add to their problems, especially during high tide, by walking close to scrapes, while dogs just make the situation worse. Disturbance of any sort cause incubating parent birds to run away from their eggs, leaving tell-tale marks in the sand, visible to predators.

Egg laying starts at the end of April and incubation only begins once the last egg is laid. Hatching occurs about 25 days later and chicks are up and running within a few hours. The parents regularly brood their chicks, especially in cold wet weather. They are prone to hypothermia following hatching in bad weather, and disturbance at this time can be disastrous. They are well camouflaged on the beaches as they run around feeding, but can be tempting for kestrels and gulls if spotted. Since they cannot fly for several weeks, they can be caught by foxes and dogs too. Birds may lay a second or even third clutch following predation.



1) The number of breeding pairs has dropped from 50 to 18, a fall of 64%.

(Up to 80% fall, in same time period, in East Anglia, by comparison.)

2) 311 eggs were laid in 1977 and only 80 last year.

3) 104 chicks hatched in 1977 and 26 last year.

4) 66 chicks fledged in 1977 and 13 last year.

WHAT ARE THE CONTRIBUTORY FACTORS?

1) Climate change: sea level has risen by a few centimetres, while increasingly severe winter storms have eroded sand dunes along the coast. One consequence of this has been that shingle on the high water mark has been covered over by sand, removing some of the best nesting areas.

2) Tourism has increased substantially in terms of numbers and length of season. More people take more holidays per year. We are all encouraged to get out and take more exercise. More dogs are therefore on the beaches too.

WHAT CAN BE DONE?

1)Fence off, restrict access and protect nesting areas from people and dogs from end of April to mid- July.

2) Engage voluntary wardens to help educate, provide information and, if necessary, enforce the code of conduct.

CONCLUSION

1) Numbers of ringed plovers will continue to decline as a breeding species in Northumberland if further action is not taken.

2) Tourism will continue to increase pressure on our beaches for nesting birds this century.

3) Limiting access to specifically targeted areas (for 3+ months per year) for people and dogs requires community approval and co-operation, but also enforcement of bylaws, where blatantly disregarded.

4) The fall in breeding numbers is a national issue. Other east coast counties have seen even bigger falls. They have virtually disappeared as a breeding bird in the south- west of England.

5) Birds attempting to nest in other coastal areas of Northumberland, without protection, have virtually disappeared.

BIRD RECORDS APRIL 2018

Whooper Swan	18 at Branton Ponds on 4/5th (I&KD), 19 in High Buston area on 4th (JPL).
Shoveler	9 at Monk's House Pool on 11th (JDL,JPL).
Common Scoter	4 at Stag Rocks on 14th (GB).
Black Scoter	1 off Holy island on 8th & 12th (I&KD).
Goldeneye	2 pairs displaying on Monk's House Pool on 11th (JPL).
Goosander	11 at Horncliffe on 9th (JDL).
Red-throated Diver	1 off Holy Island on 7th (I&KD), 1 at Stag Rocks on 14th (GB).
Red Kite	1 near Ewart on 3rd (GS).
Avocet	2 at Monk's House Pool on 24th (GB).
Little Ringed Plover	3 at Hedgeley Ponds on 21st (I&KD).
Common Sandpiper	1 at Branton Ponds on 9th & 4 at Hedgeley Ponds on 21st (I&KD).
Green Sandpiper	2 on River Glen on 8th (GS).
Jack Snipe	1 at Holy Island on 12th (I&KD).
Sandwich Tern	6 at Holy Island on 7th was earliest date (I&KD).
Cuckoo	2 at Holystone on 28th (I&KD).
Long-eared Owl	1 at Holy Island on 8th (I&KD).
Green Woodpecker	1 at Yearle all month (SV&AJM).
Merlin	1 at Holy Island on 12th (I&KD).
Peregrine	1 pair at Fenham Le Moor on 11th (JDL) & 1 at Branton Ponds on 21st (I&KD).
Raven	1 at Beanley Moor on 14th & 2 near Edlingham on 23rd (I&KD).
Sand Martin	6 at Branton Ponds on 6th (I&KD), 400 over Tweed at Wark on 17th (JDL).
Swallow	1 at Holy Island on 8th & 2 at Branton Ponds on 11th (I&KD), 3 at Langleeford on 16th (SV&AJM).
House Martin	5 at Branton Ponds on 11th were the first records (I&KD).
Willow Warbler	1 at Branton Ponds on 10th & 4 on 13th (I&KD).
Blackcap	1 at Branton Ponds on 7th & 6+ on 15th (I&KD).
Garden Warbler	1 at Branton Ponds on 23rd (I&KD).
Sedge Warbler	1 at Branton Ponds on 21st (I&KD).
Ring Ouzel	1 at Holy Island on 8th (I&KD), 1 in Harthope Valley on 17th & 3 by 22nd(SV&AJM).
Fieldfare	120+ over Branton on 5th (I&KD).
Redstart	1 at Howick Hall on 21st (MV).
Wheatear	2 at Holy Island on 7th (I&KD), 2 at Goatscrag on 19th (SVM), 1 at Alnwick Moor on 21st (I&KD), 1 in Harthope Valley on 22nd (SV&AJM).
Yellow Wagtail	2 at Low Newton Scrape on 14th & 1 at Hedgeley Ponds on 18th (I&KD).
Rock Pipit	3 at Fenham Flats on 15th (JDL).
Osprey	although just outside our area, 1 was at Yetholm Loch on 5th (JDL).

Observers Graham Bell (GB),Ian & Keith Davison (I & KD), James D Lough (JDL), John P Lumby (JPL), Stewart & Alison McCormick (SV&AJM), Geoff Sample (GS), Michael Veitch (MV).

May Records: please submit no later than 28th May to the Recorder, John Lumby, Shearwater, 2 St Cuthbert Close, North Sunderland, Seahouses, NE68 7WG. TEL:01665-720654 j.lumby@yahoo.co.uk.