NORTH NORTHUMBERLAND BIRD CLUB

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Chris Rose : photo SVMcC

ARTISTS FOR ALBATROSSES Artist Chris Rose made a big impression when he spoke to club members and visitors at the HUB in Seahouses. *'Using a clever mix of photographs, some short video footage and illustrations of their superb artwork, Chris fully engaged the audience with the prolific wildlife and stunning scenery'*. Turn to pages 3 & 4 for a report copiously illustrated with pictures of South Georgia…….

At the 5 a.m. rendezvous …. SVMcC

DAWN CHORUS at FORD MOSS Not all members are prepared to turn up in a remote corner of the county at 5am for the annual 'Dawn Chorus' on the Ford & Etal Estates, despite the lure of a glorious cooked breakfast at the other end of the walk, but for those who do the rewards make it all worthwhile! Turn to page 5 for James Joicey's equally enjoyable account of our visit.

BIRD RECORDS for MAY are on p.6

Tawny Owlet -Phil Hanmer

WHAT'S NEW ON THE WEBSITE: Anyone familiar with Hans Christian Andersen's tale of 'The Ugly Duckling 'will know that most young birds take some time to achieve their true 'beauty' ...often protecting them meantime from predators (camouflage) or by avoiding competition (mating rivalry) from adult birds. Enjoy Phil Hanmer's latest 'Ringer's Roundup' for several fluffy or scaly youngsters like this Tawny Owlet pictured opposite

SUMMERTIME: Whether its Haar, Sunshine or Rain, Summertime is almost upon us! Beyond the next Indoor meeting and field trip (details on the Noticeboard) this means that there are no further Meetings or Newsletters scheduled through our recess in July or August. Meanwhile Happy Birding– make the most of the long days of Summer!

NOTICEBOARD

Indoor Meetings — Bamburgh Pavilion

- **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

- **Friday 21st September 7.30pm An evening with WILDLIFE SOUND RECORDIST CHRIS WATSON**
  The acclaimed Musician and Wildllife Sound Recordist has a worldwide reputation for his work, having worked on such iconic BBC Series as David Attenborough's The Life of Birds or Frozen Planet, and the BBC Springwatch/Autumnwatch series as well as open our ears to the sounds all around us if we know how to listen… be prepared to be amazed.

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, 16th June 2018 St. Abbs Head National Nature Reserve.(National Trust for Scotland). Meet at the Reserve Car Park (O.S. NT913674) about a mile north of Coldingham on the minor B6438 to St Abbs. Walk to the headland for spectacular views of the seabird communities including Kittiwakes, Guillemots, Razorbills, a few Puffins and the new overspill colony of nesting Gannets(first chick recorded in 2017). Other wildlife interest might include cetaceans, butterflies and a profusion of wildflowers. Wear stout shoes/ walking boots and bring a packed lunch (alternatively there are cafes at the reserve centre or nearby village of St Abbs.)

*[*N.B.£3 car parking charge for non-National Trust/NTS members, but access to the Reserve and Centre is free]*

Leaders: Liz Harrison & Richard Poyer

We wish an enjoyable and successful birding trip for all those going on the NNBC SPEYSIDE VISIT based at the GRANT ARMS, GRANTOWN on SPEY in early June.

Liz Harrison will be representing the NNBC again at the Glendale Show on Bank Holiday Monday, 27th August. Why not pop in to the Countryside Tent if you are visiting or attending the Agricultural Show.

A 'compressed' copy of the letter of thanks from the RSPB's Stephanie Winnard sent via Chris Rose to NNBC……..

Dear North Northumberland Bird Club,

Many thanks for your generous donation of £226 to the Albatross Task Force; without donations like yours we would not be able to continue our work. Since 2006 we have been striving to protect albatrosses and other seabirds, working with fishing nations in South America and Southern Africa. In that time we have made a lot of progress and have seen a 99% reduction in albatross killed in the South African trawl fishery, have ensured legislation is now in place to protect seabirds in 9/10 of our priority fisheries. This year we hope to show a big reduction in albatross killed in Namibia, which was previously one of the worst countries in the world for bycatch.

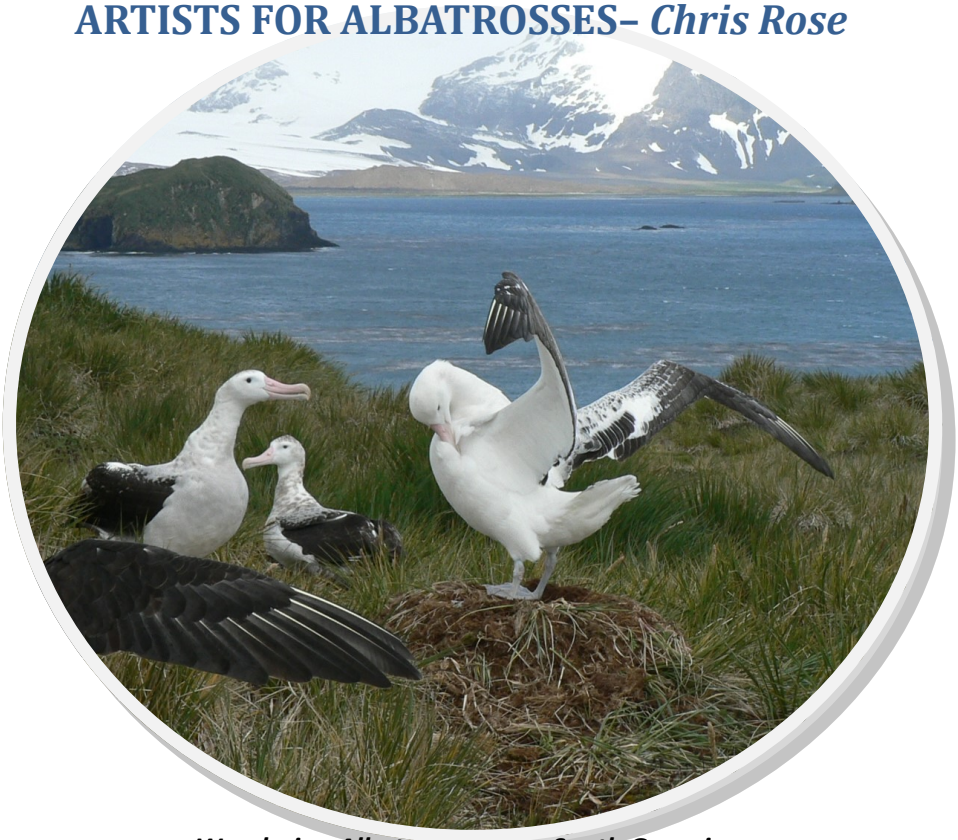
Best Wishes, ***Stephanie Winnard*** *International Marine Project Manager*

Last Chance to secure a copy at the pre-publication price

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. *Tom Brewis*

ARTISTS FOR ALBATROSSES– *Chris Rose*



Wandering Albatrosses South Georgia

A good number of North Northumberland Bird Club members and visitors turned up at the HUB in Seahouses on Friday, 11th May to hear the acclaimed wildlife Artist Chris Rose talk about the amazing experience he had in 2010 when he sailed for five and a half weeks on the *Golden Fleece,* a 20 metre yacht , along with fellow artist John Gale and a small crew, as part of an RSPB project to help raise money and awareness of the plight of the Albatross as its numbers inexorably plunge towards extinction.

Sailing from the Falkland Isles, it took them five days to cross over 800 miles of the wild southern ocean to reach South Georgia, one of the most important wildlife sanctuaries in the world: The narrow crescent-shaped island is a stark and spectacular jagged ridge of ice and mountains which rises up to 10,00ft, catching the full force of the prevailing westerly winds on its inhospitable south-western side. The north-eastern shoreline houses most of the remains of the historic whaling industry and holds the few sheltered bays and inlets including Grytviken where it is possible to land. Whereas most commercial cruises might spend a couple of days exploring the wildlife of South Georgia *en* route to Antarctica, for artists such as Chris and John several weeks are required to create enough time ashore to paint and sketch.

Elephant Seals and King Penguin

Using a clever mix of photographs, some short video footage and illustrations of their superb artwork, Chris fully engaged the audience with the prolific wildlife and stunning scenery. A metal tape measure was effectively used to demonstrate, in front of an appropriate image on screen, the *actual* size of the enormous eleven-and-a-half foot wingspan of a Wandering Albatross, and later, the twenty-one- foot length of an Elephant Seal. Wow! We were mesmerised with statistics; a Wandering Albatross recorded flying 15,500 miles in nine weeks; a forty-ton Southern Right Whale with each testicle weighing half-a- ton, the heaviest in the animal kingdom; a picture of one rookery with an estimated quarter of a million King Penguins.

Macaroni Penguin, South Georgia

Grytviken & historic whaling equipment

Chris regularly amused us with anecdotes and incidents; one photograph of the artist sitting under a rudimentary shelter fashioned from a poncho over a couple of walking poles held up with makeshift guy ropes seemed to be a triumphant solution to sketching and painting a nearby group of King Penguins in the drizzly conditions- but he had not factored in the attentions of a Sheathbill (a hen-sized scavenger) who first 'stole' a paintbrush, then a pencil, and finally removed one of the tent pegs holding the guy rope causing his 'shelter' to collapse round his ears! Later on, he had us on the edge of our seats reliving the severe storm which nearly overwhelmed their yacht on the return journey- a narrow escape from what would have been a very different outcome to their mission, thanks to the skill of the skipper.

We loved his photos of the Penguins, Petrels and Albatrosses including such features as the subtle vermiculation of the plumage of an adult Wandering Albatross, or the sheer beauty of a Light-mantled Sooty Albatross (perhaps his favourite species), and admired the little details in his paintings and sketches- e.g. only the *windward* nostril of an Elephant Seal nonchalantly closed to the gale blowing across the beach, or the light reflecting from wet pebbles on the beach so lifelike you felt as if you could stretch out and lift them up from the sand.

Naturally he finished with more alarming statistics and a plea to help stop the relentless decline of the Albatross (the victim of baited long-line fishing techniques), and the various ingenious but expensive measures being taken to save these beautiful birds from extinction, such as the use of Tori Lines, or only fishing at night, or depth- release hooks. The sum of £228 raised from the evening including proceeds from the sale of copies of their catalogue was donated to the RSPB's 'Save the Albatross' campaign. Since returning from South Georgia, Chris and John have raised over £50,000 for the campaign, working tirelessly to support the ongoing battle to save these beautiful birds. ***Report: Stewart McCormick***

Wandering Albatross– Artist: Chris Rose

NNBC DAWN CHORUS at FORD MOSS & ETAL MANOR

'Can anyone see that Treecreeper ?'

Photo: Priscilla Simpson

This is surely the Year of the Chiffchaff. All across our area the sharp staccato 'chiff-chaff-chiff-chiff-chaff' of the bird is a universal feature. There was probably not a single moment of this year's Dawn Chorus when a Chiffchaff was not audible.

Taking a slightly different approach to Ford Moss, we started at the former shepherd's cottage and slowly climbed up to look southwards onto the Moss itself and the old Caledonian pines beyond. The gorse bushes were alive with Yellowhammers, Linnets and Meadow Pipits whilst a large patch of rushes above the main circular track contained a loud, boisterous Sedge Warbler (see opposite) who obligingly sang from the single small hawthorn bush in the middle. It gave us all fabulous views of a bird that is often a little more secretive in nature. In a large oak tree nearby, a Great Spotted Woodpecker had a beakful of goodies for its young.

Sedge Warbler

Another species with tremendous volume is the Whitethroat. A few of these were evident in the scrubland between the Moss and the road, showing us their elliptical display flight. A special sight was that of two young foxes moving silently through the grasses out on the Moss, no doubt searching for nests or small mammals.

The Dawn Chorus always ends with a visit to the woodland gardens at Etal Manor, providing the opportunity to add a few more species to our list for the morning. This year it made a considerable difference to the final tally, our trip around Ford Moss having been on the thin side statistically. Swifts, House Martins, Nuthatches, Long-Tailed Tits and Coal Tits made up the body of the choir at Etal. There was an opportunity to compare the 'see-saw-see-saw' of the Coal Tit with the 'chiff-chaff' of The Bird of the Year. A high 'tseep', repeated from amongst the branches of a Swamp Cypress, revealed a Treecreeper, and almost at the end of our tour the first (for most of us) of this summer's Spotted Flycatchers appeared.

However, for most of the 19 members who joined in this year's Dawn Chorus, it was hard to know where to concentrate one's attention… Was it on the birds or was it on the beautiful colours of the Rhododendrons and Azaleas? This year's event being a week later than usual, the colours were really at their peak and matters botanical were just as widely debated as matters ornithological. On the latter point, the final score was 45 species seen or heard.

Home-grown roe venison sausages, Etal eggs and some excellent bacon from Foreman's the butcher in Norham were piled high on platters and washed down with industrial quantities of coffee and tea, all courtesy of Harriet in the kitchen. Such was the generosity of everyone that she is able to pass the magnificent sum of £110 to a charity with which she is connected, and says a very special 'Thank You' to everyone.

Species List**: Greylag Goose, Mallard, Pheasant, Common Buzzard, Kestrel, Moorhen, Black-headed Gull, Lesser Black-backed Gull, Herring Gull, Woodpigeon, Collared Dove, Swift, Great Spotted Woodpecker, Skylark, Swallow, House Martin, Meadow Pipit, Pied Wagtail, Wren, Robin, Blackbird, Song Thrush, Sedge Warbler, Blackcap, Common Whitethroat, Chiffchaff, Willow Warbler, Spotted Flycatcher, Long-tailed Tit, Blue Tit, Great Tit, Coal Tit, Nuthatch, Treecreeper, Jackdaw, Rook, Carrion Crow, Starling, House Sparrow, Chaffinch, Greenfinch, Goldfinch, Linnet, Yellowhammer, Reed Bunting* ***Report: JJ

BIRD RECORDS MAY 2018

Shoveler	5 at Monk's House Pool all month (JPL).
Tufted Duck	6 at Monk's House Pool all month (JPL).
Little Bittern	1 female at Waren Mill found by a visitor Mandy Grant (MOG) on the 4th also seen on 5th by (ID,JPL,RNa,A&MG).
Goshawk	1 soaring over Warenton on 12th (AMN).
Little Ringed Plover	1 at Hedgeley Ponds on 4th (I&KD).
Whimbrel	2 at Branton Ponds on 2nd (I&KD), 7 at Long Nanny on 11th (A&MG).
Wood Sandpiper	1 at Low Newton Scrape on 13th (I&KD).
Redshank	18 at Hedgeley Ponds on 4th (I&KD).
Woodcock	1 at Beanley Wood on 17th (I&KD).
Little Tern	13 at Long Nanny on 11th (A&MG).
Little Gull	1 at Long Nanny on 18th (A&MG).
Cuckoo	2 at Beanley Moor on 14th (I&KD), 2 at Harthope Valley on 20th (A&MG), 1 at Weetwood Moor on 21st (MV).
Short-eared Owl	1 at Holy Island on 6th (I&KD).
Swift	6 over Branton Ponds on 8th (I&KD).
Merlin	1 at Holy Island on 6th (I&KD).
Peregrine	1 at Yearle on 28th (SV&AJM).
Ring-necked Parakeet	15 + 5 flew into Haggerston Castle grounds on 2nd (JPL), 1 on a Spindlestone bird feeder on 2nd (FS).
Red-backed Shrike	2 male & female at Low Newton on 13th (GW,I&KD), 1 male at Crooked Lonnen on 26th (A&MG).
Lesser Whitethroat	1 at Holy Island on 29th (KD).
Whitethroat	2 on Holy Island on 6th & 1 at Branton Ponds on 13th (I&KD).
Reed Warbler	2 on Holy Island on 6th (I&KD).
Blyth's Reed Warbler	1 at Newton Pool on 27th (ID).
Marsh Warbler	1 at Holy Island on 29th (KD).
Dipper	3 in Harthope Valley on 20th (A&MG).
Ring Ouzel	4 in Harthope Valley on 20th (A&MG).
Spotted Flycatcher	1 at Holystone Wood on 7th (I&KD), 1 at Etal Manor on 20th (NNBC).
Red-breasted Flycatcher	1 at Holy Island Snook on 26th (A&MG).
Pied Flycatcher	1 at Holystone Wood on 5th & 1 at Branton Ponds on 10/12th (I&KD), 1 at Holy Island Snook on 26th (A&MG).
Black Redstart	1 on Holy Island on 13th (I&KD).
Redstart	2 at Holystone Wood on 5th & 6+ on 7th (I&KD).
Whinchat	1 pair on Holy Island on 6th (I&KD), 9 in Harthope Valley on 20th (A&MG).
Stonechat	3 at Beanley Moor on 14th (I&KD).
Wheatear	1 at Hedgeley Ponds on 4th & 50+ on Holy Island on 6th (I&KD).
Tree Pipit	1 at Holystone Wood on 7th (I&KD).

Observers Ian & Keith Davison (I & KD), Alan & Margaret Goodall (A&MG), John P Lumby (JPL), Stewart & Alison McCormick (SV&AJM), Alan MacNicoll (AMN), Fiona Southern (FS), Michael Veitch (MV), Gary Woodburn (GW), club excursion = (NNBC).

June Records etc: please continue to submit records <u>at any time</u> throughout the summer for county record submission & monthly e- mail to contributors.

For September newsletter please submit all outstanding records by <u>3rd September</u> to the Recorder, John Lumby, Shearwater, 2 St Cuthbert Close, North Sunderland, Seahouses, NE68 7WG.TEL:01665-720654 j.lumby@yahoo.co.uk.