NORTH NORTHUMBERLAND BIRD CLUB

Honorary President: Graham Bell

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Stewart Sexton: *SVM*

FROM THE NOTEBOOK :STEWART SEXTON

"members knew they had a treat in store so turned out in good numbers!" The 'treat' was a talk by 'The Boulmer Birder', a local, well-known amateur naturalist and blogger and a talented artist!" Liz Harrison explains why we had such a good turnout for the return visit of this modest but skilful artist as he disarmingly stated that 'anyone' could sketch…….turn to pages 3 and 4 for her report.

Wintering Twite at Chibburn mouth: *GW*

DRURIDGE BAY FIELD TRIP: The re-arranged visit to Hauxley and other nearby sites led by Alan and Margaret Goodall was a great success with a total of fifty eight species seen, including a little flock of Twites at Chibburn mouth on a fine day's Birdwatching. Turn to page 5 for Richard Poyer's report.

BIRD RECORDS for **NOVEMBER** are on p.6

Marsh Tit: *PH*

WHAT'S NEW ON THE WEBSITE: The Gallery has a fine selection of recent photos from members, ranging from interesting winter visitors such as Bewick Swans, Brambling and Red-necked Grebe to some colourful exotic Kingfishers, Bee-Eaters and Rollers photographed in The Gambia. Philip Hanmer revisits a local site in November on Ringer's Roundup where he introduces three trainees to two of our declining tit species, the Marsh Tit and the Willow Tit.

NOTICEBOARD

INDOOR MEETINGS — BAMBURGH PAVILION

- **Friday, 14th December,2018 at 7.30pm (Bamburgh Pavilion) MEMBERS' NIGHT**

Following a similar format to last year's event , join us on the second Friday of the Month for

MULLED WINE —SOFT DRINKS—MINCE PIES —SHORTBREAD—TEA/COFFEE

which will accompany three varied short talks featuring birds and other wildlife from around the World. *Travel with*

STEWART & ALISON M^{C}CORMICK on their South American adventures in **PATAGONIA & the PANTANAL**

ALAN & MARGARET GOODALL as they share their recent trip to **AUSTRALIA**

PETER LEES on the **GALAPAGOS ISLANDS**

Friday, 11th January 2019 at 7.30pm Unfortunately Mark Beaman, the speaker engaged tp give his talk on Arctic Siberia : 'Spoons, Specs & Emperors' has cancelled at short notice. Discussions are currently underway to find a replacement speaker able to provide an alternative topic for our first indoor meeting of the New Year. Members who receive this e-Newletter will receive an update as soon as the new arrangements are in place; information will also be disseminated using the Website and Facebook Page.

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.]

Tuesday 1st JANUARY, 2019 **'NEW YEAR-NEW LIST'. The Traditional New Year's Day Visit to Local Sites**. Meet at the Cemetery Gates in South Lane, North Sunderland (**O.S. NU211313)** at 9.00 am and bird all day until the light goes (or sooner if you prefer), then retire to the nearest Hostelry**.** **Leader: John Lumby**

NNBC TRIP TO SPAIN 16th –23rd MAY 2019

This visit is already guaranteed to go ahead, but there are still a few places available if any other members wish to join those already 'signed up' for this two-centre holiday with 4 nights in Extremadura and 3 nights in the Gredos mountains. It is a renowned area for birding covering a wide variety of habitats including many birds of prey and the world's largest population of Great and Little Bustards. Accommodation is in family run establishments and all rooms have private facilities. The Gredos hotel has an award winning restaurant and a cellar of over 500 wines!

This trip is organised through Naturetrek and costs £1545 with a single supplement of £195. This includes flights from Edinburgh to Madrid, accommodation, all food except for lunch on day one, guides throughout and transport. If you would like to join us or know more about what may be seen etc. please contact Fiona Southern Tel. 01668214481 or email jfs@robincottage.co.uk

TIME TO RENEW ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP SUBSCRIPTIONS

Membership Subscriptions fall due on 1st of January; they remain unchanged at £10 per Individual or £15 for Couples or Family Members living at the same Address. (NB A Membership Form was sent as an attachment to the November Newsletter.) Our Programme Secretary has put together a very attractive selection of evening meetings; we hope you will look forward to joining us again in the New Year.

To Renew your membership simply fill in the form and send it to the Membership Secretary with a cheque made payable to North Northumberland Bird Club, or bring your completed copy to our first meeting of the New Year on 11th January, 2019

The Chairman and Committee of NNBC wish all our members a

Very Happy Christmas

& Good Birding in the New Year

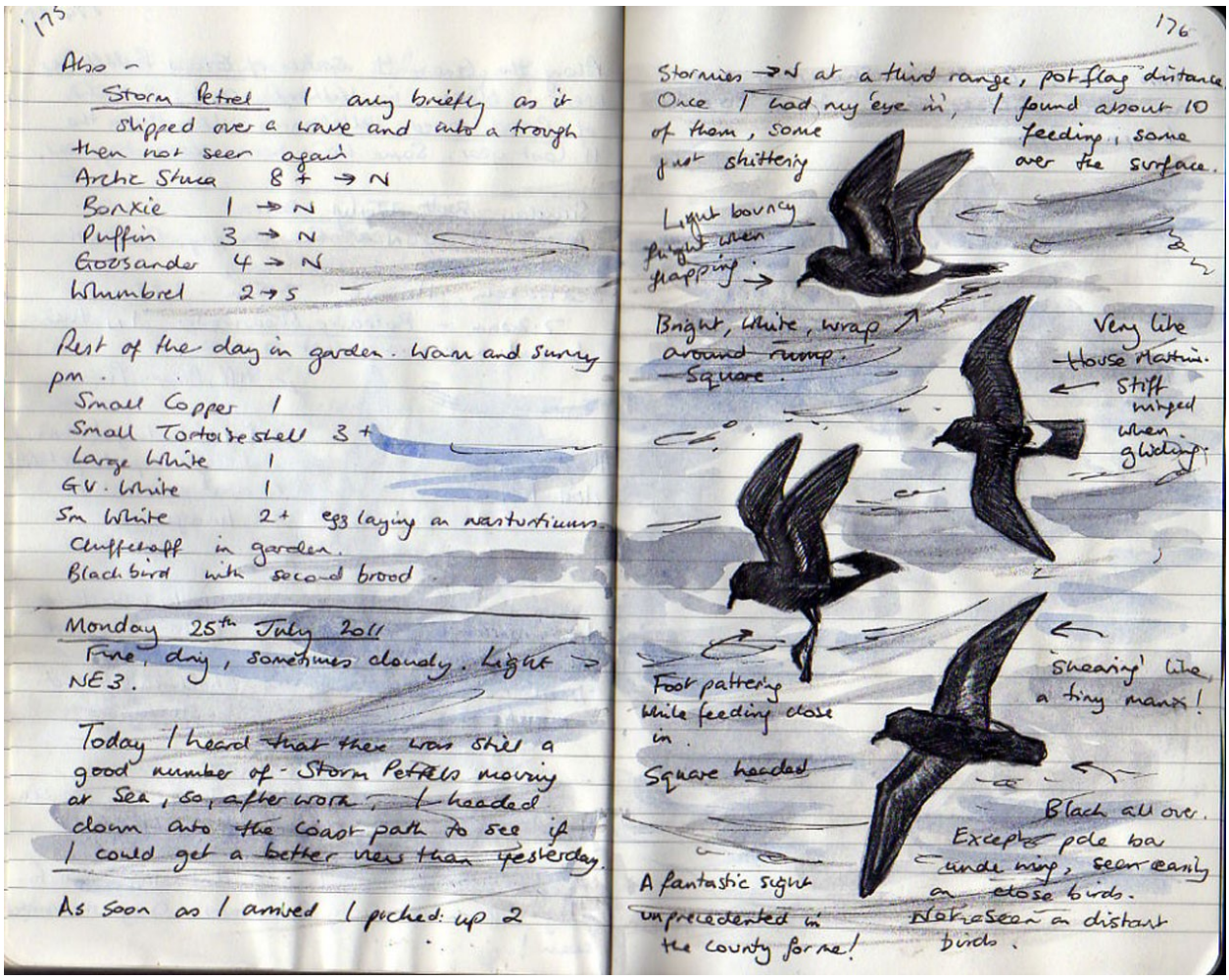
‘FROM THE NOTEBOOK’ STEWART SEXTON

There are two events which can adversely affect attendance at a Club Meeting; an AGM and/or bad weather! At our meeting on November 9th, both of the above were expected, but members knew they had a treat in store so turned out in good numbers!

The ‘treat' was a talk by 'The Boulmer Birder' Stewart Sexton a local, well-known amateur naturalist and blogger and a talented artist! This was a return visit to the Club and Stewart explained to the audience the importance of carefully recording sightings in the field, be they birds, butterflies or flowers. This has been his passion for over thirty years and he joked that he is still learning! Wildlife records have been kept for around 30,000 years but clearly the format, such as the cave drawings as seen in parts of France, differs. Records kept by Naturalists in the 1800’s continue to be a valuable source of information.

Notebook keeping is important. It is traditional, enables learning and discovery as the observer is forced to look closely at what is seen, as well as recording the habitat and weather. It can also be nostalgic when one looks back over years of notebooks! Note keeping can be inspirational. Stewart was inspired by a number of naturalists such as Eric Ennion and George Miller, a naturalist who would comb the seashores at dawn by torchlight and would record and sketch bird casualties; this helped unravel the mysteries of migration. Little equipment is needed for recording, simply a notebook, pen or pencil and spare ones for emergencies. Over the years Stewart has used notebooks of all shapes and sizes, all of which have their own advantages or disadvantages. He had a collection of 43 at the last count! Some of these with their superb sketches were displayed during the refreshments break.

Notebook keeping is not simply a matter of writing lists but once the recorder adds some narrative, details of the weather, the location and a rough drawing detailing the characteristics of the bird as observed through a scope, then it can be improved upon and the identity confirmed once at home. If you add colouring by paint or coloured pencil and some details of the background, then instead of a rough sketch one can have a beautiful, detailed precise record of the bird with its posture, characteristics and behaviour accurately recorded. Some birds are more difficult to sketch in the field than others with clearer markings. Sketching whilst sea watching is a good aide memoire as photographing sea birds can be difficult. A fall of Storm Petrels in 2011 resulted in some fantastic action sketches of individual birds.



Pallas's Warbler

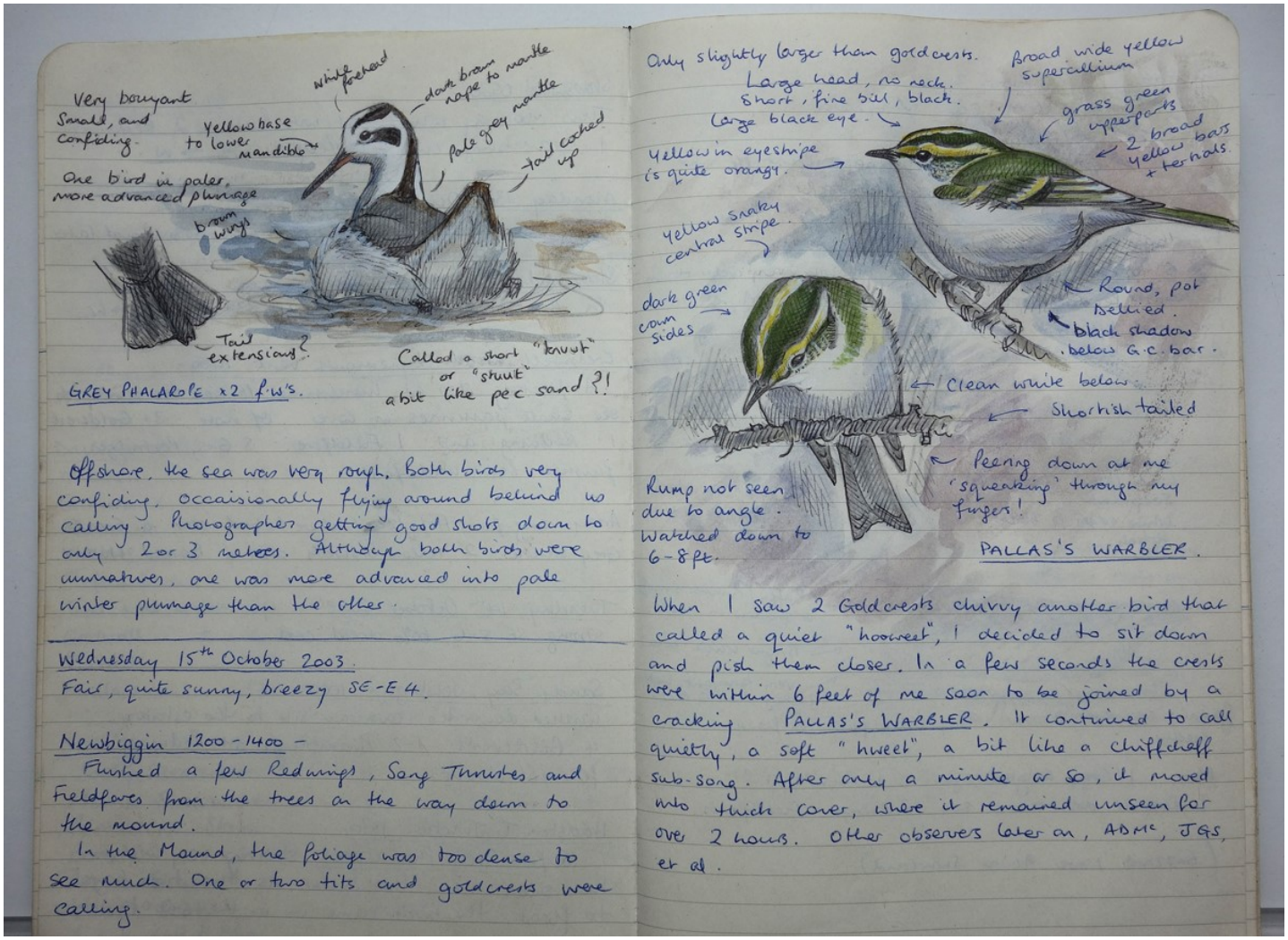
Stewart detailed some of the lengths he was prepared to go to in order to capture the essence of different birds, one anecdote referring to his two-day trip to Northern Spain most of which was time spent on the ferry noting and sketching the sea birds seen on the crossing! Another time, on receiving a call about a White-billed Diver in the vicinity, he left home in such a hurry he omitted to notice, until he had reached the location, that he was still in his slippers!

Stewart summed up by saying no artistic skills are necessary for accurate recording, indeed his art teacher at school had deemed him talentless! He maintains anyone can do what he does! Having looked at the detailed and lovingly sketched images which he had shown us, the audience found this assertion very hard to believe!

This was a superb presentation by this talented artist and naturalist, delivered with self-deprecating humour. His assertion that notes taken and kept can inspire others certainly rings true, although it is dubious that the passion and skills he demonstrated throughout the evening could easily be emulated by anyone with less ability and tenacity than our speaker. This was a superb evening with which to end our 2018 Speaker Programme and greatly enjoyed by all.

All sketches by kind permission of Stewart Sexton

Report by Liz Harrison



Field trip to Hauxley, Druridge Bay and East Chevington

On Saturday, 10th November nine of us met up at the Hauxley Discovery Centre. For some members this was their first visit to the "new" reserve. We didn't sample the coffee at the start but embarked on our walk round the reserve, stopping at all but one of the six hides. The weather was glorious, though the sun was straight in our eyes at the first hide, making watching quite difficult. There were good numbers of Canada and Greylag Geese, with Curlews as well as Tufted Ducks, Goldeneye, Mallard and Little Grebe. A Cormorant and a Snipe were in silhouette whilst a Little Grebe looked quite incongruous standing out on a rock!

The Skua hide was next and here the feeders were busy with Tree Sparrows, the tit family (including a Willow Tit) and Bullfinch. This is a very small hide so it was a case of taking turns to see the birds.

From the Skua it was on to the Tern Hide, but there were no new sightings from this hide. Continuing our walk, we reached the section of land that was bought to complete the circuit. A Great Spotted Woodpecker and Redwings were in the trees whilst there were several Shovelers on the lake by the Ponteland hide.

It was time for lunch and a drink by the cafe. Whilst there, Alan received texts telling him of Twite, Snow Bunting and Shorelark on nearby Druridge Beach. This was too good to miss, so it was “off to the beach”.

By now it was cloudy, with the light fading. Only the Twites were still there. It was good to be able to see them so close. On the water's edge there were Ringed Plovers, Sanderlings, Turnstones and Dunlins.

Finally it was back up the road to East Chevington, passing a Stonechat perching as usual on the top of a bush, and to the lake. Here there were big numbers of golden plovers and lapwings close to the hide whilst further out there were pairs of Pintailed ducks and Goosanders together with Pochards and Whooper Swans.

With cars parked at Hauxley and the gates soon to be closed, it was back in the gloom to the Centre after a good and varied day's birding. Fifty eight species were seen or heard and many thanks given to Alan and Margaret for leading the day.

Report by Richard Poyer

NNBC GROUP at East Chevington November 2018

BIRD RECORDS NOVEMBER 2018

Bewick's Swan	2 on River Coquet at Warkworth Weir on 16th (A&MG).
Whooper Swan	4 at Branton Ponds on 4th (I&KD).
Pink-footed Goose	2000 at Doddington on 4th (GB), 200 at Cocklawburn on 15th (RB).
Brent Goose	2400 at Fenham Flats on 11th (GB), 200 at Guile Point on 17th (I&KD).
Mandarin Duck	1 at Branton Ponds on 4th (I&KD).
Shoveler	Several at Monk's House Pool all month (JPL).
Goosander	16 at Branton Ponds on 4th (I&KD),was highest total.
Red-throated Diver	1 at Newton Point on 2nd (A&MG), 1 at Ross Back Sands on 17th (I&KD).
Black-throated Diver	1 at Newton Point on 2nd (A&MG).
Red-necked Grebe	1 off Buston Links on 24th (A&MG).
Red Kite	1 near Ford on 31st (CW).
Black-tailed Godwit	18 at Monk's House Pool on 6th & 7 on 7th (GB).
Jack Snipe	1 at Branton Ponds on 30th (I&KD).
Woodcock	1 at Botany on 18th (I&KD).
Little Auk	1 at Newton Point on 2nd (A&MG).
Little Gull	5 at Long Nanny on 11th (A&MG).
Collared Dove	18 at East Fenton on 4th (G&RB).
Peregrine	1 at Stag Rocks on 13th (FS), 1 at Guile Point on 17th (I&KD).
Raven	1 at Branton Ponds on 4th (I&KD).
Shore Lark	2 at Holy Island north shore on 9th (TP), 4 at Buston Links on 24th (A&MG).
Fieldfare	100 at Beanley Moor on 1st (I&KD).
Twite	26 at Long Nanny on 11th (A&MG).
Crossbill	75+ at Thrunton Woods on 1st (I&KD).

Observers Graham & Rosemary Bell (G&RB), Ian & Keith Davison (I & KD), Alan & Margaret Goodall (A&MG), John P Lumby (JPL), Terry Pawson (TP), Fiona Southern (FS), Claire Wood (CW).

December Records please submit records by 31st December to the Recorder, John Lumby, Shearwater, 2 St Cuthbert Close, North Sunderland, Seahouses, NE68 7WG.TEL:01665-720654 j.lumby@yahoo.co.uk. or .com

A VERY MERRY CHRISTMAS & A GREAT BIRDING NEW YEAR TO ALL OBSERVERS.

Two Shore Larks on North Shore, Holy Island: T. Pawsen