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

KARTONG BIRD OBSERVATORY & THE BRITISH CONNECTION

Well -known NNBC Member and Ringer Philip Hanmer, ably assisted by his wife Alison, transported us from a cold Northumbrian night to the warmth and vibrant colours of West Africa as he shared his experiences of a week volunteering at this important Bird Observatory in The Gambia, ringing everything from familiar European migrants such as Willow Warblers, Whitethroats and Redstarts to exotic species such as Bee-Eaters, Sunbirds and Vultures. Turn to Richard Poyer's report on p 3…….

Reproduced by kind permission of Barry Farquharson

EGRETS & CRANES

We are increasingly familiar with the Little Egret, which is now quite well established in the County. Is the Great White Egret likely to follow suit? A trio of long-legged and long-necked visitors to the River Tweed near Wark have been attracting quite a bit of attention recently, with one birder, Barry Farquharson delighted to photograph **the Crane and the GW Egret together** just below the weir. As he said, " It's Really handy when two twitchable birds that you are looking for are standing together– saves so much time!"

*Crossbill, Wooler Common– **David Richens***

WHAT'S NEW ON THE WEBSITE:

Don't forget to check out Philip Hanmer's monthly **Ringer's Roundup**, discussing the mixed fortunes of our Barn Owls this month; also see the latest contributions to the **Gallery**. This female Crossbill pictured opposite on a fine December day was photographed by member David Richens.

NOTICEBOARD

INDOOR MEETINGS — BAMBURGH PAVILION

- **Friday 8th February 2019 at 7.30pm MIKE WATSON: BIRDING COLORADO'S HIGH PLAINS. Mike is an experienced leader with the specialist tour company BIRDQUEST. Amongst the many delights, expect to be engaged and amazed by the colours and antics of lekking members of the Grouse family including the spectacular Greater Sage Grouse, and both Lesser and Greater Prairie-Chickens.**
- **Friday 8th March 2019 at 7.30pm STEPHEN WESTERBERG: WHINCHATS. Stephen is the Site Manager at the RSPB Reserve in Geltsdale, CUMBRIA with a particular interest in this rapidly declining migratory species. 'Whinchats are very colourful, beautiful birds that inhabit special wild places……..'**

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, 24th February, 2019: Warkworth & Coquet Estuary 10 a.m.** Meet in the small public car park by Warkworth Golf Course (O.S:**NU255064**) . Please share cars if possible. We'll explore the area for divers, sea-birds, wildfowl and waders. Bring warm clothing, stout footwear and optional packed lunch (or an opportunity to visit one of Warkworth's cafés and/or pubs afterwards) **Leader: Richard Poyer**
- **NNBC TRIP to SPAIN 16th –23rd MAY 2019**
  This visit to Extremadura and the Gredos mountains organised through Naturetrek 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. For further details: see December Newsletter or contact Fiona Southern Tel. **01668214481** / email **jfs@robincottage.co.uk**
- **HELP with NNBC FACEBOOK** Liz Harrison is looking for anyone with sufficient technical ability/ experience of Facebook to provide some help with handling/ uploading photographs etc.to the club Facebook Page. Please contact Liz by email : **liz.a.harrison22@btinternet.com** if you think you could help.

FINAL REMINDER TO RENEW ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP SUBSCRIPTIONS

Membership Subscriptions fall due on 1st of January each year; 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; they are also available to download from our Website). Please note that no further reminders or Newsletters will be sent out.

LINDISFARNE NNR Peak Counts in January 2019

BUDLE BAY 20th Jan

2900 Golden Plover

970 Lapwing

42 Shoveler

17 Whooper Swan

750 Wigeon

60 Sanderling

HOLY ISLAND NORTH SHORE → GOSWICK SANDS 25th Jan

Flighting of roost: 6000 Pink-footed Geese

Andrew Craggs

The work of the Kartong Observatory in Gambia

Philip Hanmer opened the NNBC's new year with an interesting and enjoyable talk about his volunteer work at the Kartong Bird Observatory, Gambia in March 2018. The Observatory, sited on land formerly used for sand extraction, has been a ringing station since 1996 and a permanent ringing station since 2010, the funding mainly coming from the UK.

Each year volunteers join the staff to carry out trapping, ringing and the recording of a wide range of biometric data. After struggling south from Lemmington near Alnwick in the March snow of last year to get to Gatwick, Philip joined the team in Gambia. He took us through the various stages of setting up mist nets in the reed beds 2 to 3 hours before dusk, recovering the birds early the next morning and then recording and releasing. In March there are many migrants from Europe, as well as the local birds and indeed Tree Pipits, Yellow Wagtail, Willow Warbler, Redstart, Whitethroat and Common Nightingale were all recorded. The Nightingale had been ringed in Kartong in 2016, controlled in Suffolk and then seen back in Kartong again. The purpose of the ringing is to gather data on local bird communities and so help Gambian environmental planning and conservation. There is a lack of such base data in Gambia. As well as the data going to Gambian organisations it is also sent to the British Trust for Ornithology. The organisation has an important role in training Gambian young people who can then be part of the research team.

The day to day work with small birds such as Sunbirds, Weaver birds and Bee Eaters was quite straightforward, but more challenging were birds such as the Squacco Heron, an unusual "catch" in the nets and a bird with a vicious bite.

There is a long term study of vultures at the observatory -- a key bird in the ecosystem. Trapping these is more involved, needing cannon netting. It's quite a struggle to get the birds safely to the recorders and ringers before releasing them. The birds have alpha-numeric coloured rings and wing tags put on them - (the type put on the Red Kites in the Dumfries and Galloway release and feed project).

Squacco Heron

A trip on the River Allaheim gave views of Caspian, Royal and Sandwich Terns. Three Sandwich Terns were either ringed on Coquet Island and the rings read at Kartong or vice versa, but very few of all of the European birds ringed had UK links - the majority were linked to Spain, The Netherlands, Norway and France. The ringing and controlling across the continents serves to remind us of the fragility of the migratory bird's life and future, facing as they do, local and global environmental changes as well as trapping for food by local people.

Thanks were given not only to Philip for giving us in insight into an important element of ornithology, but also to Alison for looking after the technical side of the talk.

Photos by kind permission of Philip Hanmer

Report by Richard Poyer

African Jacana

Hooded Vulture

BIRD RECORDS JANUARY 2019

Barnacle Goose	c.2000 at Harper's Heugh on 1st (NNBC,I&KD) & 800 by the 31st (JPL).
Taiga Bean Goose	4 at Newham Hall on 9th roosting (A&MG,JPL) & 10th (JPL).
Pink-footed Goose	c.700 at Newham on 9/10th (JPL), 450 at Holburn on 14th (CD).
Whooper Swan	4 at Harper's Heugh on 1st (NNBC,I&KD) & 15 by the 31st (JPL), 6 at Milfield on 24th (D&TLB).
Shoveler	28 at Budle Bay on 26th (I&KD).
Gadwall	21 at Hedgeley Ponds on 18th (I&KD).
Mallard	117 at Hedgeley Ponds on 18th (I&KD).
Pintail	1 at Branton Ponds from 21st (I&KD).
Pochard	2 at Branton Ponds till 17th (I&KD).
Black Scoter	1 off Goswick Sands on 19th (A&MG) & same bird off Cheswick on 26th (I&KD).
Long-tailed Duck	3 off Beadnell Harbour on 1st (NNBC).
Goldeneye	5 off Low Newton on 1st (NNBC), 10 at Branton Ponds & 7 at Hedgeley Ponds on 18th (I&KD).
Red-throated Diver	2 off Stag Rocks & 2 off Cheswick all on 26th (I&KD).
Black-throated Diver	1 off Cheswick on 26th (I&KD).
Red-necked Grebe	2 off Holy Island on 22nd (A&MG) & 1 on 26th (I&KD).
Great White Egret	1 near Wark on the River Tweed from 13/16th (I&KD,SV&AJM).
Little Egret	1 at Branton Ponds on 2nd ,8th & 20th (I&KD), 1 near Wark on 16th (SV&AJM), 1 at Budle Bay on 31st (JPL).
Crane	1 juvenile near Wark from 13th (I&KD,SV&AJM).
Ruff	1 at Low Newton Scrape on 1st (NNBC).
Jack Snipe	1 at Branton Ponds on 6th & 31st (I&KD).
Green Sandpiper	1 at Hedgeley Ponds on 3rd (I&KD).
Barn Owl	1 at Branton & Holburn all month (I&KD,CD), 2 at Middleton on 3rd (RC). 1 at Duddo on 20th (D&TLB) & 1 at Wooler Common on 24th (DR).
Little Owl	1 at Branton on 15th (I&KD).
Merlin	1 at Quarry House on 1st (I&KD), 1 at North Sunderland on 14th (MH).
Peregrine	1 near Lucker on 1st (I&KD).
Jay	1 at Branton Ponds on 8th & 2 on 23rd (I&KD).
Raven	1 at Branton on 2nd & 2 at Beanley Moor on 22nd (I&KD).
Willow Tit	1 at Branton Ponds on 6th (I&KD).
Shore Lark	4 at Buston Links on 14th & 25th (I&KD,A&MG).
Chiffchaff	1 at Branton Ponds on 1st (I&KD).
Blackcap	1 at Branton Ponds on 15th (I&KD).
Bullfinch	21 at Branton Ponds on 8th (I&KD), 1 at Wooler Common on 24th (DR).
Lesser Redpoll	11 at Hedgeley Ponds on 3rd (I&KD), 1 at Wooler on 23rd (DR).
Crossbill	12 at Beanley Wood on 2nd (I&KD).
Goldfinch	60 at North Sunderland all month (JPL).
Siskin	3 at Milfield Hill on 2nd (RC), 3 all month at Ellingham (MH).

Observers Roderic Craig (RC) Ian & Keith Davison (I & KD), Chris Duncan (CD), Alan & Margaret Goodall (A&MG), Michael Hall (MH), David & Trish Lloyd Blake (D&TLB), John P Lumby (JPL), David Richens (DR), Stewart & Alison McCormick (SV&AJM), Club Excursion = (NNBC).

February Records please submit records by <u>24th February</u> to the Recorder, John Lumby, Shearwater, 2 St Cuthbert Close, North Sunderland, NE68 7WG. TEL:01665-720654 j.lumby@yahoo.co.uk. or .com