NORTH NORTHUMBERLAND BIRD CLUB

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Osprey Expert Tony Lightley Photo :SVMcC

Photo: Marge Noble

Female Goldeneye: Photo Phil Hanmer

TheTWEED VALLEY OSPREYS Tony Lightley gave 'a thoroughly enjoyable, detailed and fascinating talk delivered with passion and humour' at our meeting in April. Turn to pages 3&4 to read Liz Harrison's excellent account of the well– attended evening. Furthermore, if you would like a chance to see the young birds being ringed, check out two ☆ exciting ☆ prizes donated by Tony which will be included in the Raffle at the Indoor meeting on Friday 10th (details on page 2)

WEST LOANEND FIELD TRIP Well wrapped up against the cool winds, some of the group stake out the River Tweed from the south bank, where they saw lots of Sand Martins and (for many) their first Common Sandpiper of the year. Full report on page 5 by Richard Poyer.

BIRD RECORDS for APRIL page 6

WHAT'S NEW ON THE WEBSITE: One of our rarest Breeding Ducks in Northumberland, the Goldeneye, stars this month in Phil Hanmer's monthly **Ringer's Roundup**. He is currently checking out the nest boxes at a confidential site, hoping to retrieve Geo-loggers from four females fitted last year, to glean more information on their lives. Swans, Dippers and Tawny Owls also feature in his fascinating 'roundup' available online.....

NOTICEBOARD

INDOOR MEETINGS — BAMBURGH PAVILION

- **Friday 10th May 2019 at 7.30pm DARREN WOODHEAD. Birds in Watercolour: Home and Abroad. Darren is a well-known artist based in East Lothian; by working outside directly from life, often in all weathers, he aims to capture the freshness and energy of his subject. He has reached a wider audience through several appearances on Springwatch and Autumnwatch, and is a member of the Society of WildLife Artists.**

- **Friday 14th June 2019 at 7.30pm STEVE RACE 'Wild Shetland'. Award-winning professional photographer and a director of Yorkshire Coast Nature, (formerly RSPB Education Officer at Bempton Cliffs Reserve), will talk about Shetland, one of his favourite places for wildlife…….**

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, 12th 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, White-throats and other Warblers. This year we shall meet at **O.S. NT922 412 (**at the sharp left hand corner on the minor road about 300m before Tindal House Farm) to walk a circuit down to the River and back up to the farm again. Afterwards, Lady Harriet will kindly provide breakfast at Etal Manor for those who wish to partake (donation to local charity) with an opportunity to look round the woodland gardens of the Manor. [**N.B. For those using Sat Nav, the postcode Reference is TD15 2PT. However, as this postcode covers a vast area including Grindon Rigg and Berryhill, it is vital that those people using this information use the Grid Reference as co-ordinates]** ***Leader: Lord James Joicey.***

Saturday, 15th June 2019 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]*

Leader: Richard Poyer

Best Wishes and 'Good Birding' for an enjoyable holiday to those club members who are travelling to Spain this month on an NNBC Birding Holiday to Extramadura and the Gredos Mountains organised by Naturetrek .

Rookery Survey: Many thanks to all volunteers who have participated in this year's survey. Rosemary Bell (*co-ordinator*)

RAFFLE PRIZE **TWEED VALLEY OSPREY PROJECT** **RAFFLE PRIZE**

If you would like to be present when some of this year's young ospreys are ringed in the Scottish Borders , why not participate in the Raffle at this month's indoor meeting. [*Tony Lightley, from the TWEED VALLEY OSPREY PROJECT has kindly donated TWO PRIZES to NNBC following his talk last month at Bamburgh.*] The first Prize is for **TWO PEOPLE** to visit the TVOP when they are ringing the birds. The second Prize is for **ONE PERSON** to visit, but is otherwise identical. Ringing is likely to take place in July on a date to be confirmed nearer the time, subject to variables such the development of the youngsters and the weather conditions. Winners of the Raffle Prizes will require to leave their names and contact details with the desk.

Return of the Osprey to the Scottish Borders

On 12th April , a large number of members and visitors welcomed **TONY LIGHTLEY,** Environment Forester from Forest and Land Scotland, to talk about the **TWEED VALLEY OSPREY PROJECT**.

The Osprey, or *Pandion Haliaetus* to give it its species name, is from the family Pandionidae and is named after King Pandion in Greek Mythology. It is found on every continent except Antarctica, with a worldwide estimate of 500,000 pairs; the Scottish population is now over 250 pairs. In 1916 the last pair to nest near Inverness succumbed to predation but in 1954 a pair nested again at Loch Garten and a 24 -hour watch began. By 1996 there were 104 pairs nesting in Scotland; some were translocated to Rutland Water in Leicestershire. There are now 20 breeding pairs in England and four breeding pairs in Wales. The original decline of the Osprey in the UK was down to persecution in the Middle Ages and during migration over France and Africa where they were shot. Loss of habitat, egg collecting, taxidermy and in the 1960's, pesticides such as DDT contributed.

The sexes differ in size and weight the male being smaller and lighter than the female. It is well adapted to fishing, with receptors in the eyes allowing it to see ultraviolet light, a beak slit which it closes as it hits the water from 30 feet in height, two toes on each side of the foot and granular pads to facilitate gripping the fish, which can be anything from half a pound to four pounds in weight – the latter being a struggle for the bird to carry! The talons are one and a quarter inches in length. The beautifully marked eggs are the size of hens' eggs, with an average clutch of three, and the young birds are well camouflaged whilst in the nest.

"young birds well-camouflaged whilst in the nest"

In 1998 the first pair returned to the Borders whereupon plans were made on how to attract more pairs. Undisturbed nesting habitat and clean rivers with plenty of fish are paramount, as are nest sites which can be guaranteed

for 10 years. Artificial platforms had to be erected, lack of disturbance from forestry, recreation, and agriculture had to be guaranteed through April and May until chicks were hatched. Cooperative landowners and visitor access were also needed. A suitable site provides the birds with access to water plus an open aspect to the nest to enable them to watch for predators. Once a nest is established, if the tree becomes unstable or loses branches, it must be stabilised while ensuring security from human predation.

Artificial Nest Platform to attract Ospreys

The Project is based in the Tweed Valley (around Peebles and including the Teviot). Between 2002-2018, 200 artificial platforms were carefully constructed by project workers with assistance from Scottish Power. 232 chicks hatched, an average of 2.19 per site and there have been 101 successful nesting attempts. Not all years prove to be successful, with 2018 being one of the worst because of heat and drought. The main site on a Scots Pine has live camera coverage. With wind farm development in the area, causing a new hazard for the birds, the installation of a series of well-stocked new ponds was necessitated so the birds didn't have to run the gauntlet of turbine blades when hunting. Education is important too, with close links to local schools, while there is an education centre at Glentress with live cameras showing the activity in the nest

When the birds return each Spring the breeding cycle starts with one egg laid each day. The chicks spend 55 days in the nest before fledging, when the male assumes sole responsibility for feeding as the females head South as soon as the chicks fledge. The males are the last to go, all birds navigating using the magnetic fields. They are tracked on migration using tiny satellite tags which give exact, sophisticated information as to the birds' whereabouts and activities, as well as their route and final destinations. Some birds overwinter in Iberia –others head directly to West Africa. Future Plans include more platforms, recruiting more volunteers, promotion of the Ospreys via the media and training for future raptor workers.

This was a thoroughly enjoyable, detailed, and fascinating talk delivered with passion and humour by Tony who is clearly devoted to encouraging the future success of the Osprey in the Borders. **Report: Liz Harrison**

(All photos of Ospreys by kind permission of Tony Lightley.)

WEST LOANEND FIELD TRIP 15th APRIL 2019

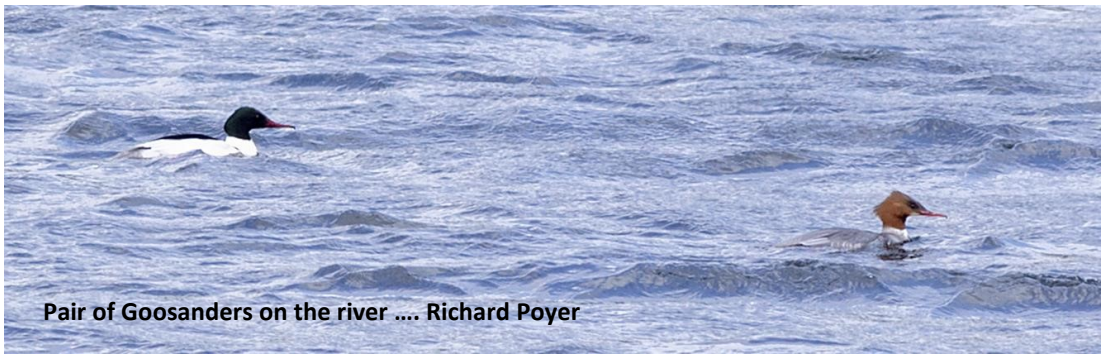
Male Yellowhammer singing *Photo: R.Poyer*

On a cool, windy morning sixteen members gathered at West Loanend ready for Martin to lead us on a circular walk that would take us down to the River Tweed, along the riverside path to the Chain Bridge and then back to the house. The way down was bordered with hedges and cropped fields on either side and here there were Yellowhammers - at least eight -plus Skylark, Tree Sparrow and Grey Partridge. Reaching the river we found pairs of Mallard and Goosander but the birds that caught the eye were the Sand Martins. For many of us the first sighting of year and there were at least fifty, skimming back and forward just above the river. Another first was the Common Sandpiper which flew across the river as we disturbed it. Also disturbed was a Grey Heron - flying downstream. A surprise bird on the riverside was a Jay, perched in a willow, whilst a Buzzard flew over the woods at Paxton.
The greatest concentration of birds was, not surprisingly, around the southern side of the Chain Bridge. Here there were feeders in the gardens as well as a large group of trees. Within 20 metres we heard or saw Bullfinch, Blackcap, Chiffchaff, Goldfinch, Greenfinch, Great tit, Blue tit and Coal Tit, Treecreeper, Great Spotted Woodpecker, Nuthatch, Siskin, Kestrel and on the river, Little Grebe.

After the excitement of those birds the way back to West Loanend was very quiet, in fact silent apart from our chatter! In all we had a total of 46 species.

Many thanks to Mary and Martin for leading us on such an interesting and varied walk. ***Richard Poyer***

Mute Swan, Canada Goose, Mallard, Goosander, Grey partridge, Pheasant, Cormorant, Grey Heron, Buzzard, Kestrel, Little Grebe, Oystercatcher, Common Sandpiper, Black-headed Gull, Herring Gull, Woodpigeon, Great Spotted Woodpecker, Magpie, Jay, Jackdaw, Blue Tit, Great Tit, Coal Tit, Skylark, Sand Martin, Swallow, Long-tailed Tit, Chiffchaff, Blackcap, Nuthatch, Treecreeper, Wren, Blackbird, Robin, Dunnock, Tree Sparrow, Pied Wagtail, Chaffinch, Greenfinch, Goldfinch, Siskin, Linnet, Bullfinch, Yellowhammer, Reed Bunting. (45 species)


Pair of Goosanders on the river …. Richard Poyer

Heron flying downstream…. R Poyer

BIRD RECORDS APRIL 2019

Red-throated Diver	2 off Dunstanburgh on 11th (KR).
Great White Egret	1 at Hedgeley Ponds from 2nd to 21st (I&KD,A&MG).
Little Egret	1 at Branton Ponds on 21st (I&KD), 2 at Fenham Flats on 28th (MV).
Golden Plover	56 in breeding plumage near Holburn on 10th (SV&AJM).
Whimbrel	1 at Branton Ponds on 25th (I&KD).
Black-tailed Godwit	2 at Hedgeley Ponds from 17/27th (I&KD).
Ruff	2 at Hedgeley Ponds on 17th & 3 by 27th (I&KD).
Common Sandpiper	1 at Hedgeley & Branton Ponds on 7th & 16th & 4 at Hedgeley on 21st (I&KD), 1 at Twizel on 27th (EH).
Green Sandpiper	1 at Hedgeley Ponds on 7th & 2 on 21st (I&KD).
Wood Sandpiper	1 at Hedgeley Ponds on 27th (I&KD).
Spotted Redshank	1 at Hedgeley Ponds on 27th (I&KD).
Greenshank	1 at River Breamish on 22nd (I&KD).
Sandwich Tern	3 at Seahouses on 5th (RH), 6 at Holy Island on 10th (I&KD).
Stock Dove	1 at Harthope Valley on 18th (I&KD).
Cuckoo	1 at Harthope Valley on 21st & 22nd (SV&AJM).
Short-eared Owl	2 at Holy Island on 10th (I&KD).
Green Woodpecker	1 at Langleeford on 29th (EH,MW).
Peregrine	1 at Hawsen Burn on 21st (SVM).
Jay	1 at Spindlestone on 19th (FS).
Raven	2 near Craster on 11th (KR).
Willow Tit	1 at Branton Ponds on 20th (I&KD).
Sand Martin	20+ at Hedgeley Ponds on 7th (I&KD), 2 at Seahouses on 10th (RH).
Swallow	1 at Hedgeley Ponds on 3rd & 8+ on 7th (I&KD), 1 at Hawkhill on 14th (IA).
House Martin	1 at Hedgeley Ponds on 3rd & 2 at Branton Ponds on 15th (I&KD).
Willow Warbler	1 at Branton Ponds on 11th , 3 on 14th & 18 on 20th (I&KD).
Chiffchaff	17 at Branton Ponds on 20th (I&KD).
Sedge Warbler	2 at Branton Ponds on 20th (I&KD).
Grasshopper Warbler	1 at Bamburgh on 17th (FS).
Blackcap	4 at Branton Ponds on 14th & 9 on 20th (I&KD), 1 at Ford Moss on 20th (MV).
Garden Warbler	1 at Twizel on 27th (EH).
Ring Ouzel	2 at Harthope Valley on 5th & 5 by 21st (SV&AJM), 1 near Craster on 11th (KR), 2 near Corby Crag on 11th & 6 at Hawsen Burn on 18th (I&KD).
Redwing	11 at Spindlestone on 19th (FS).
Redstart	3 at Holystone Wood on 19th & 1 on Holy Island on 26th (I&KD).
Whinchat	1 at Seahouses on 3rd (RH).
Wheatear	2 at Seahouses on 2nd (RH), 1 at Hedgeley Ponds on 2nd & 3 on 19th (I&KD), 1 near Craster on 11th (KR), 1 at Wooler Common on 15th (EH).
Yellow Wagtail	1 at Hedgeley Ponds on 27th (I&KD), 1 at Twizel on 27th (EH).
Brambling	several near Holburn in summer plumage on 10th (SV&AJM).
Lesser Redpoll	2 at Howick on 27th (MV), several at Yearle all month (SV&AJM).
Crossbill	1 at Holburn dead on lawn on 12th (CD), 10 at Ford Moss on 13th & 25 at Beanley Wood on 14th (I&KD).

Observers Irene Ajo (IA), Ian & Keith Davison (I & KD), Chris Duncan (CD), Alan & Margaret Goodall (A&MG), Elizabeth Harrison (EH), Roger Hatcher (RH), John P Lumby (JPL), Stewart & Alison McCormick (SV&AJM), Kevin Redgrave (KR), Fiona Southern (FS), Michael Veitch (MV), Martin Worsfold (MW).

May Records please submit records by 1st June to the Recorder, John Lumby, Shearwater, 2 St Cuthbert Close, North Sunderland, NE68 7WG. TEL:01665-720654 j.lumby@yahoo.co.uk. or .com