NORTH NORTHUMBERLAND BIRD CLUB

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Bonxie *(Great Skua)* on Unst *(photo: Steve Race)*

WILD SHETLAND

Professional Photographer and *Yorkshire Coast Nature* Tour Guide STEVE RACE took us on an exciting visit to the Shetland Isles where we revelled in the superb scenery and his excellent photos of Bonxies, Tysties and Draatsies…….

translations and report by Stewart McCormick on page 3.

SAINT ABB'S HEAD

A small group enjoyed the walk out to the headland at the peak of the nesting season with great views of the birds on the cliffs including these Gannets and Auks. Turn to page 4 for Richard's report and photos

Report by Richard Poyer

SUMMER BIRD RECORDS

see page 6

RINGING THE YOUNG OSPREYS …….

In April, when Tony Lightley of Forestry and Land Scotland came to talk about his work with the Tweed Valley Osprey Project, he kindly donated two Raffle Prizes to watch the young birds being ringed later in the year. Chairman Richard recently joined three other lucky people at a secret location in the Borders as Tony climbed the nesting tree …… see report and photos on page 5

WEBSITE

Check out Philip Hanmer's Summer migrants such as Garden Warblers and Chiffchaffs in his latest Ringer's Roundup…….

NOTICEBOARD

INDOOR MEETINGS — BAMBURGH PAVILION

- **Friday 20th September 2019 at 7.30pm IAIN ROBSON DRURIDGE POOLS:** *'When A Local Patch Becomes an Obsession'.* We welcome Iain back as our Speaker tonight, when he will talk in his own inimitable style about his local patch (a flood-meadow and small pool managed as a Nature Reserve by Northumberland Wildlife Trust).
- **Friday 11th October 2019 at 7.30pm CHARLES EVERITT: A Reflection on Bird Crime.** Wildlife Photographer Charles makes a welcome return to the Pavilion wearing his 'other' hat as an officer in the UK National Wildlife Unit reflecting on the increasing pressure from over-eager wildlife photographers and drone users, disturbing wildlife in their quest for the ultimate shot– often unaware of the laws and penalties protecting many species and nest sites.

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.]

Field Trip to Musselburgh Lagoons Saturday 21st September 2019 meeting at Levenshall Links Leisure Park Musselburgh at 10.15am. Sat Nav EH21 7QE; Grid Reference NT35807. The Lagoons are approximately 1 hour North of Berwick. Follow the **A1 North** towards Edinburgh and after c.50 minutes from Berwick take the **A199 Junction signed Musselburgh**. Turn right at the top of the slip road and **follow the A199** over the next two roundabouts. After the Musselburgh town sign, take the 3rd exit off the next roundabout following the **B1348 signed Prestonpans**. Continue along this road until the sign is reached and immediately signal Left . A few metres further on turn into the entrance to the Park. *(NB This is a concealed entrance with the 'Levenshall Links Park'sign unhelpfully sited out of view!)* The well-surfaced park road soon deteriorates, but continue, bearing slightly right until the large boating lake is reached, where we meet at 10.15am. The area offers **sea-watching and scrapes with three hides**. Minimal walking is required as the site is level with good paths. Please be aware there are **no** toilet facilities. [After leaving Musselburgh, other *options* include returning via Aberlady Bay and its café, or the John Muir Country Park near Dunbar. Please car share if possible! There is no parking charge at Levenshall Links but charges would apply at the JMCPark (£2.00 per day)] ***Leaders:-Martin Worsfold .Liz Harrison***

New Safety speed Restriction at the Pavilion: Members and Visitors are requested to observe a speed limit not exceeding **5 m.p.h.** on the approach road to the Pavilion.

North Northumberland Bird Club Facebook Page

The Club's Facebook social media site has now been running successfully for over three years, a somewhat steep learning curve for its three admins Graham, Richard and Liz! Despite an unsteady start we have now well over 300 regular 'followers', some of whom are Bird Club members who have willingly shared their photographs and accounts of birding outings which are always particularly popular among our 'followers'! So what do we do?

The site shares details of bird sightings from the area; shares helpful tips on bird ID from other sites such as Bird Guides and the BTO; publishes reports of raptor persecution locally and from around the world; responds to requests from potential visitors to the area requesting the best places to watch birds ; assists with bird ID (thanks in particular to Tom Cadwallender for his invaluable help on this!). We also post details of Club meetings, Field trips and other Club news.

During the time we have been 'live' the three Admins have daily monitored the content to ensure its safety and that it always meets our standards. To date we have not had to exclude any inappropriate, improper or malicious postings.

Finally, it is worth reiterating that while only those with a personal Facebook account can submit reports, photos or comments, ANY member can and should view the site for up-to-date and urgent information regarding the (unlikely) cancellation of an indoor meeting or a more likely cancellation of a field trip, as our Facebook site is the only medium at our disposal to urgently disseminate important Club information. ***Liz Harrison***

USEFUL BIRD APP: The **Scottish Ornithologists Club (SOC)** offer a Bird App which is free to download and use, available in Apple or Android Formats. Search for 'Where to Watch Birds in Scotland' in your App Store. Covering nearly 400 sites in Scotland, users are able to find out what species to look for and when, how to get there and lists recent sightings reported via Bird Track. [Why not check out Musselburgh Lagoons if you are thinking of attending our next Field Trip?] Highly recommended ***Editor***

Wild Shetland Steve Race

Steve Race at Bamburgh (*photo SVMcC)*

Whether it was the 'Wild' tag, or simply the lure of our Northernmost Isles and their abundant birdlife, Steve-an award-winning photographer and one of the directors of *Yorkshire Coast Nature* - drew a good number to the Pavilion in June, and we were not disappointed with his lively humorous presentation and fabulous images of the abundant wildlife. Yorkshire born and bred, he was formerly Education Officer at the RSPB's Bempton Cliffs Reserve.

Beginning with images of Shetland's stunning scenery and rugged coastline, he shared some of the less well-known residents of the islands, including fine images of the endemic sub-species known as the 'Shetland' Starling and the equally interesting 'Shetland' Wren with its longer tail and bigger bill. These northern isles, closer to Norway than the UK, have retained much of their Viking Heritage and this is reflected in their local names for many familiar species; indeed some names, such as *Tystie* (Black Guillemot) have been widely 'adopted' by many birders in this country! He moved on to his search for one of the iconic birds of the islands, the beautiful *Rain Gős* or Red-throated Diver. After a suitable 'build-up', Steve's first image was of a very misty upland loch he had toiled up to reach, showing nothing more than the faintest 'shadow' outline of the bird! This was quickly replaced by some *fantastic* shots of these birds in their breeding plumage, followed by the equally stunning *Immer Gős* or Great Northern Diver, a species which doesn't regularly breed on Shetland but is often seen over- summering around the coastal waters and inlets.

On the upland moors we encountered the Golden Plover (*Plivver)* and the Whimbrel or *Peerie Whaup,* (roughly translated as 'little curlew'). We travelled to the northernmost island of Unst, looking out to the stormy outlier of Muckle Flugga from the National Nature Reserve of Hermaness. This is home to a huge colony of Gannets, and Auks such as Puffins *(Tammy Nories)* and Black Guillemots. On the moorlands above the cliffs, and on the neighbouring peninsula of Saxa Vord many Great Skuas (*Bonxies)* and Arctic Skuas breed, both favourite subjects for his lens! We had a *wealth* of excellent shots of these 'Northern Pirates', ever ready to chase down a returning auk or gull and harry it until it disgorges its hard-won catch!

The neighbouring island of Fetlar, of course, is renowned as one of the few breeding places in the UK for the dainty little **Red-necked Phalarope** on the Loch of Funzie, high on most birders' wish list. These tiny summer visitors who overwinter in South America, can be elusive and very difficult to see even when they *are* there, -indeed they eluded Steve on this visit! Another small island called Mousa, just off the east Shetland mainland is likewise something of a Mecca for birders hoping to see the tiny **Storm Petrel**, which nest in the walls of the famous Iron Age Mousa Broch, and its neighbouring drystane dykes. They only return under cover of darkness, so the experience is more 'aural' than 'visual' ; while incubating eggs or feeding their young, partners make a distinctive call as they return from the sea to communicate with their mates, swapping roles nightly.

'Shetland' Wren

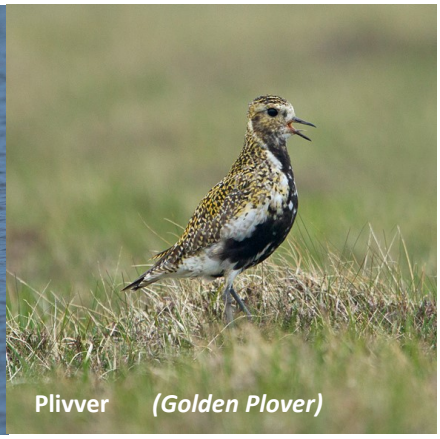
Tystie *(Black Guillemot)*

Steve touched on other aspects of his favourite islands, such the 'simmer dim' of midsummer days when the sun dips briefly just below the horizon but the sky never really darkens; or the excitement of seeing a pod of Orcas from the cliffs, or even a 'Draatsie'(otter) feeding on its catch in a nearby tangle of seaweed! For those who have yet to visit these magical islands, the temptation will inevitably be that much harder to resist after Steve's presentation!

All photos by kind permission of Steve Race ***Report by Stewart McCormick***

Skootie Alan *(Arctic Skua)*

Rain Gős *(Red-throated Divers)*



Plivver *(Golden Plover)*

NNBC Field Trip to St. Abb's Head, Sunday, 16th June 2019

Six members met in the NTS car park on a windy but sunny day. We took the traditional route, going down towards the village then heading seaward to reach the lighthouse eventually, before dropping down to walk along the SW side of the Mire Loch.

The cliffs had the usual combination of Guillemots, Razorbills, Cormorants Kittiwakes and Fulmars with large rafts of Guillemots and Razorbills on the sea. Over recent years the number of Gannets visiting the cliffs has increased with a few pairs nesting. On our visit there were at least 30 birds on the rocks. Puffins are in short supply at St. Abb's but Martin succeeded in locating one on the sea for a visitor who was hoping to see them.

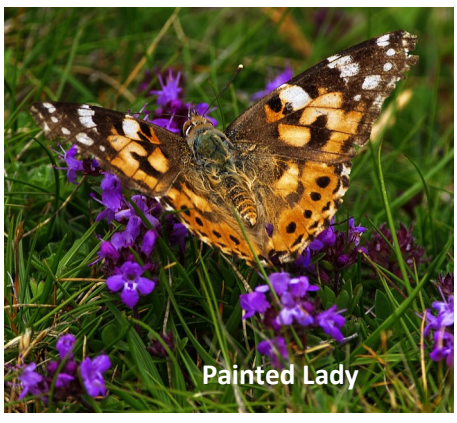
We decided to go back along the side of the Loch, with St. Abbs volunteer ranger Jean leading us and had good views of Reed Bunting, Willow Warbler and Chiffchaff as well hearing the Sedge Warbler calling.

The flora was blooming with rockrose in abundance on the rocky slopes and orchids by the Loch path. The headland wasn't left out of this year's butterfly bonanza with numerous Painted Ladies.

A very enjoyable day out in good company ended, as usual, at the café by the car park.

Report & Photos: Richard Poyer

Eider, Fulmar, Gannet, Cormorant, Shag, Coot, Moorhen, Oystercatcher, Razorbill, Guillemot, Puffin, Kittiwake, Herring Gull, Great Black-backed Gull, Rock Dove, Wood Pigeon, Carrion Crow, Rook, Jackdaw, Magpie, Marsh Tit, Swallow, Sand Martin, Chiffchaff, Willow Warbler, Sedge Warbler, Reed Warbler, Song Thrush, House Sparrow, Pied Wagtail, Meadow Pipit, Chaffinch, Goldfinch, Linnet. (34 species)



Painted Lady

Lunching Ladies (*….and Gents!)*

Ospreys in the Borders - A Visit to see ringing July 2019

On Friday 5th July, Rosemary, Marian, Michael and Richard travelled to the Borders to watch Tony Lightley and his colleagues ringing a young Osprey. Tony is the Environment Forester in the Borders Region for Forestry and Land Scotland. In April he came to the club to talk about his work, particularly the Osprey project in the Tweed Valley, and donated raffle prizes of watching a juvenile being ringed.

By far the longest part of the operation was the preparation and climbing of the tree.

I thought that Tony would lay a ladder against the tree and that would be it - not so. Half of the climb was just that with Tony using spiked boots and ropes to get to the nest - quite a feat.

The juvenile was then put carefully in a bag and lowered to the ground. There we could see the beautiful markings and the vicious talons. Tony's co-workers carefully ringed the bird with a darvic ring.

The tricky bit was trying to make sure that the bird didn't bite any fingers; to avoid that, it was encouraged to bite on a stick instead.

Eve showed us, and explained, the nature of the talons and the pads on the feet which help the Osprey grasp the fish it catches.

The various biometrics, such as weight, were recorded and then it was back to the nest for the juvenile.

During the ringing the female circled the nest whilst the male made the occasional visit.

The whole ringing operation took about two hours and the group, minus NNBC members, were off to carry out another ringing that afternoon.

Many thanks to Tony and his colleagues for letting us be part of the morning's work and for teaching us more at first hand about Ospreys - no longer such an endangered bird thanks to the work of environmentalists such as Tony and his colleagues.

Report by Richard Poyer

[Darvic rings were named after the

STOP PRESS : Tony is giving 2 raffle prizes each year from 2020 for members to go and watch the osprey ringing

Preparing to Climb the Tree

Young Osprey with its new DARVIC Ring

Tony replacing the young bird...

[FOOTNOTE from Summer Bird Records on page 6]

September Records: please submit no later than 1st October to the Recorder, John Lumby,

Shearwater, 2 St Cuthbert Close, North Sunderland, Seahouses, NE68 7WG. TEL: 01665-720654.

e-mail: j.lumby@yahoo.co.uk **or .com if any difficulty**.

BIRD RECORDS JUNE 2019

Shelduck	1 pair with 5 ducklings at Monk's House Pool on 10th (JPL).
Garganey	1 at Monk's House Pool on 5th (I&KD).
Tufted Duck	1 pair with 4 ducklings at Monk's House Pool on 16th (JPL).
Baillon's Crake	1 at Monk's House Pool on 5th (I&KD).
Avocet	2 at Low Newton on 15th (G&RB).
Little Tern	31 nesting pairs at Long Nanny (KR).
Black Tern	1 at Long Nanny for 10 minutes on the 12th (KR).
Cuckoo	1 at Beanley Wood on 5th (I&KD).
Nightjar	2 at Beanley Wood on 5th (I&KD), 1 male at Newton Pool on 7th (KR).
Swift	16 at Seahouses & North Sunderland all month (JPL).
Grasshopper Warbler	2 at Monk's House Pool on 5th (I&KD).

BIRD RECORDS JULY 2019

Quail	2 at West Ord on 24th (MW).
Little Egret	7 at Guyzance Weir on 13th (A&MG), 5 at Budle Bay on 25th , 3 were this year's young (JPL) & 3 on 29th (JB).
Red Kite	1 at Carey Burn on 14th (MV).
Pacific Golden Plover	1 at Holy Island from 23rd/27th (I&KD).
Whimbrel	1 at Budle Bay on 9th (GB).
Black-tailed Godwit	1 at Monk's House Pool on 25th (JPL).
Ruff	2 at Budle Bay on 29th (MW,JB).
Curlew Sandpiper	1 at Boulmer on 13th (A&MG).
Common Sandpiper	6 at Hedgeley Ponds on 28th (I&KD).
Green Sandpiper	1 at Hedgeley Ponds on 14th & 2 on 28th (I&KD).
Wood Sandpiper	2 at Hedgeley Ponds on 28th (I&KD).
Greenshank	1 at Hedgeley Ponds on 28th (I&KD).
Mediterranean Gull	1 adult at Holy Island on 27th (I&KD) & 1adult at Budle Bay on 29th (JB).
Great Skua	1 at Long Nanny on 12th (A&MG).
Little Owl	1 at Kentstone on 27th (I&KD).
Swift	10 at North Sunderland on 31st (JPL).
Merlin	1 at Holy Island on 27th (I&KD).

BIRD RECORDS AUGUST 2019

Shoveler	6 all month at Monk's House Pool (JPL,G&RB).
Goldeneye	24 at Branton Ponds on 1st (I&KD).
Quail	1 at Branton on 1st & 2 on 6th (I&KD).
Manx Shearwater	10 off Boulmer on 1st (I&KD).
Great White Egret	1 at Long Nanny on 20th (PA).
Little Egret	1 at Long Nanny on 21st (PA), 9 at Budle Bay on 22nd (GB).
Osprey	1 over Hedgeley Ponds on 11th (I&KD), 1 over Hethpool Pond on 13th (AR).
Whimbrel	1 at Long Nanny on 30th (PA).
Ruff	8 at Low Newton on 10th (I&KD).
Common Sandpiper	1at Hedgeley Ponds on 4th (I&KD).
Green Sandpiper	2 at Hedgeley Ponds on 4th & 3 on 24th, 1 at Branton Ponds on 8th & 1 at Low Newton on 10th (I&KD).
Wood Sandpiper	3 at Hedgeley Ponds on 4th & 1 at Low Newton on 10th (I&KD).
Greenshank	1 at Hedgeley Ponds on 4th & 2 at Low Newton on 10th (I&KD), 1 at Budle Bay on 2nd (GB).
Roseate Tern	1 at Long Nanny on 2nd & 3 on 5th (A&MG).
Swift	1 at Low Newton on 10th (I&KD).
Mistle Thrush	16 flying near Wooler on 27th (GB).

Observers Paul Armstrong (PA), Graham & Rosemary Bell (G&RB), Julian Bell (JB), Ian & Keith Davison (I & KD), Alan & Margaret Goodall (A&MG), John P Lumby (JPL), Kevin Redgrave (KR), Allan Robson (AR), Michael Veitch (MV), Martin Worsfold (MW). ***[see page 5 for FOOTNOTE]***