NORTH NORTHUMBERLAND BIRD CLUB

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Flamingos on Mannar Island *D Richens*

MEMBERS' NIGHT

This year, we enjoyed two well contrasted short talks on birding holidays, one to the tropical island of Sri Lanka, the other *(after the mulled wine and mince pies!)* to the late winter chill of Poland in search of Owls and Woodpeckers

Turn to page three for **Paul Ashdown's** write-up

Ural Owl, Poland *Phil Hanmer*

NEW YEAR'S DAY

Eight stalwart birders met shortly after dawn on a beautiful New Year's Day , but would they break last year's record number of species seen? Turn to page two for leader John Lumby's account of their latest attempt…….

(Many thanks to Margaret Goodall for her photo of the female Long-tailed duck at Monk's House Pool)

DECEMBER BIRD RECORDS

on back page

Long-tailed Duck at Monk's House Pool *(MG)*

NNBC WEBSITE

Phil Hanmer in his year-end Ringer's Roundup revisits and updates his work with some interesting species such as redpolls, willow tits and marsh tits with good accompanying photos—always worth a visit!

NOTICEBOARD

INDOOR MEETINGS — BAMBURGH PAVILION

- **Friday 10th January 2020 at 7.30pm* Dr Chris Redfern (Emeritus Professor at Newcastle University who has led the latest research into Arctic Terns and the impact of Climate Change) will give our first talk of the New Year on 'Arctic Terns on the Farnes', based on his detailed studies of these birds over the last twenty years.**
- ***NNBC EXTRAORDINARY GENERAL MEETING - Please note this short meeting, first intimated in November 2019, which is needed to propose a change to the "Dissolution" paragraph in the Constitution, will be held at the beginning of the meeting on January 10th 2020.**
- **Friday 21st February 2020 at 7.30pm AN EVENING WITH DAVID LINDO aka The Urban Birder for an Evening of laughs and tales from urban birding around the world.**

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, 9th February, 2020: 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**

REMINDER: Please note that all subscriptions are due by 1st January 2020. If you still have to pay, please complete the Membership Form (sent out with the December Newsletter), which can be completed and returned with the appropriate payment by post or in person at the January Meeting. **It is also possible to pay online by BACS transfer to the club's bank account. The sort code of our Barclays Account is 20-58-17 and the account number 00607703. Please provide your name as a Reference.** [It would be appreciated if members paying by Bank Transfer could also email membership secretary Fiona Southern at jfs@robincottage.co.uk so that she can send out your membership card)

CORRECTION (End of 1st paragraph, Madagascar write-up) should have read "home to 6 endemic bird families, the Vangas, Asities, Ground & Cuckoo Rollers, Mesites and the Malagasy Warblers, the Couas being a further potential family split. J. Lumby

EXHIBITION Don't miss the fantastic exhibition of *New Work* created over the past two years by artist **Darren Woodhead** , at the Donald Watson Gallery, Waterston House, Aberlady, which runs until the 15th January. www.the-soc.org.uk/exhibitions/

New Year Big Day January 1st 2020.

This year warranted an earlier start and a new meeting point, so 8 members duly arrived at High Newton car park, at the dawn of a superb sunny winter's day. In our now annual attempt to see as many different species as possible to kick-start the New Year, how many would we manage to see on a short midwinter's day?

We then drove to Low Newton scrape, beach & church, which gave us Whooper Swan, Mute Swan, Wigeon, Mallard, Eider, Shoveler, Pheasant, Merlin, Moorhen, Curlew, Redshank, Magpie, Carrion Crow, Starling, Jackdaw, Rook, Wren, Blackbird, Grey Heron, Ringed Plover, Lapwing, Sanderling, Dunlin, Purple Sandpiper, Robin, Herring and Black-headed Gulls, Cormorant, Woodpigeon, Collared Dove, Dunnock, Stonechat, Song & Mistle Thrushes, Blue & Great Tits, House & Tree Sparrows, Yellowhammer, Sparrowhawk, Oystercatcher and Rock Dove (feral pigeon); we had clocked up 42 species, a good start.

Next stop, being Knacker's Hole & Beadnell Harbour, we added Turnstone, Grey Plover, Rock Pipit and Red-throated Diver. The village provided Chaffinch and Goldfinch- we were now on 48. A quick stop in Seahouses gave us Pied Wagtail, then onwards to Monk's House Pool where Teal, Common Gull, Long-tailed Duck, Coot and Brent Goose obliged. A short drive to Stag Rocks added Shag, Common Scoter, Razorbill, Slavonian Grebe and Black-throated Diver. We were on 59. Budle Bay was the next stop with Shelduck, Great Black-backed Gull, 2 Black-tailed Godwit and a Goosander, then up the road to Harper's Heugh adding 700 Barnacle Geese, Pink-footed & Greylag Geese, 2 White-fronted Geese and a Common Buzzard.

Our next port of call, Waren Mill, gave us Kingfisher and Greenfinch pushing our tally to 70. Then to Spindlestone Hides & Mill where we managed to add Great Spotted Woodpecker, Coal Tit, Siskin, Bullfinch, Nuthatch, Long-tailed Tit and Tree Creeper. With the light starting to go we called it a day, with our final tally 77 species; maybe we should have gone to Fenham-le-Moor hide and tried to crack 80, but the thought of a hot meal in the Castle Inn, Bamburgh proved too much!

John Lumby

NNBC MEMBERS' EVENING

13th December, 2019

The speakers at North Northumberland Bird Club Member's Night took us to two contrasting worlds, each very different from North Northumberland, but each with a few fascinatingly familiar birds alongside the exotic wildlife that the speakers had travelled to see.

First we visited the hot and arid world of northern Sri Lanka. David Richens showed us this little-known part of the island, now gradually opening up to tourists after many years of civil war. He was based on the island of Mannar, which sits on the chain of sand banks and islands which are all that remain of the ancient land-bridge between Sri Lanka and the Indian mainland. "Adam's Bridge" is now a nature reserve at the Sri Lankan end, and is the home of millions of migrant birds which arrive here where three major fly-ways converge.

David Richens

Amongst the colourful sight of flocks of flamingos and bee-eaters, David also showed us old friends like Redshank and Grey Plover. However, it was the impressive list of raptors that caught the imagination. Amongst a range of kites, fish-owls and fish eagles, it was the Grey-headed Eagle that stood out.

David explained that the hotel where he was based hosted and sponsored a professional ornithologist and provided fantastic (and free) support for visiting birders. Many audience members were tempted enough to take down the address!

Phil Hanmer

After the break we switched from tropical heat to the near frozen marsh lands and ancient forests of Poland as Phil Hanmer took us in search of owls, woodpeckers and stunning mammals. Based in a string of fairy-tale styled hotels adapted from castles, railway stations and abbeys, Phil showed us the fantastic range of wildlife living in a part of Europe still resembling the continent that pre-dates industrialisation.

Many of the birds we see regularly also live in the forests and marshes of Poland, so we saw herons, thrushes, and finches that were familiar. However, the list of owls was strikingly different, with lovely views of Pygmy Owl and Ural Owl. Phil also showed some great pictures of magnificent Black Woodpeckers displaying to each other by dancing around the ancient tree trunks.

The forest also hosts re-introduced Capercaillie, which had been lost and re-introduced in Poland just as they had in Scotland. There were also beavers, still going strong in Poland and now going through re-introduction in Scotland, and lots of cranes now also on the way back here. Even the storks, sky-pointing from thoughtfully provided nest platforms may also be returning to southern England.

Not on the reintroduction list so far, the charismatic ancient giant of the forest, European Bison, was perhaps the most spectacular sighting we were shown. Looking like something from a pre-historic cave painting these beasts manage to hide in the woods for most of the year, but Phil had some great shots of them looming out of the mist as they grazed on the thawing fields.

Report by Paul Ashdown

White-bellied Sea Eagle *D Richens*

Pygmy Owl *P Hanmer*

Three-toed Woodpecker *P Hanmer*

BIRD RECORDS DECEMBER 2019

Brent Goose	100+ at Harper's Heugh all month pale bellied race (JPL).
Barnacle Goose	700 at Harper's Heugh all month (JPL).
Greylag Goose	c.50 at Hoppen Kiln Flash on 30th (JPL).
Pink-footed Goose	300 at Milfield on 1st (GB).
Whooper Swan	4/5 at Low Newton Scrape all month (JPL) with 28 on 18th (SVM).
Gadwall	37 at Hedgeley Ponds on 14th (I&KD).
Pochard	2 at Branton Ponds on 14th (I&KD).
Tufted Duck	6 at Monk's House Pool on 31st (JPL).
Common Scoter	c.300 at Beadnell Bay on 31st (JPL).
Long-tailed Duck	12 at Ross Back Sands on 15th (SVM), 1 at Monk's House Pool all month, sometimes not easy to find (JPL).
Goosander	11 at Branton Ponds on 14th (I&KD).
Grey Partridge	10 at Doddington on 1st (GB).
Red-throated Diver	3 at Stag Rocks on 23rd (I&KD).
Black-throated Diver	1 off Berwick Pier on 12th (P&MN), 1 at Ross Back Sands on 15th (SVM), 1 at Stag Rocks on 23rd (I&KD).
Slavonian Grebe	1 at Ross Back Sands on 15th (SVM).
Little Egret	1 at Branton Ponds on 21st & 2 on 29th (I&KD).
Buzzard	1 at Wooler on 3rd & 20th (GB).
Woodcock	1 at Bewick Moor on 22nd (I&KD), 1 at Langleeford on 25th (SV&AJM).
Mediterranean Gull	1 at Monk's House Pool on 31st a 1st winter bird (JPL).
Black Guillemot	1 at Stag Rocks on 23rd (I&KD).
Stock Dove	2 at Branton Ponds on 15th (I&KD).
Collared Dove	12 at North Sunderland roosting on 30th (JPL).
Merlin	1 at Shoreston Hall on 30th (JPL).
Raven	1 at Branton Ponds on 14th (I&KD), 2 at Ross Back Sands on 30th (PS).
Willow Tit	1 at Branton Ponds on 1st & 2 on 21st (I&KD).
Long-tailed Tit	4 at Wooler from 9/20th (GB)), 6 at Branton Ponds on 17th (I&KD), 6 at Yearle all month (SV&AJM).
Chiffchaff	1 at Branton Ponds on 1st (I&KD).
Field fare	60 at Doddington on 1st (GB), 50 near Lilburn on 23rd (I&KD).
Black Redstart	1 at Boulmer on 28th (A&MG).
Water Pipit	1 at Seaton Point Boulmer on 21st (A&MG).
Rock Pipit	3 at Beadnell Harbour on 31st (JPL).
Bullfinch	1 at Wooler on 14/16th (GB), 12 at Branton on 26th (I&KD).
Lesser Redpoll	10 at Branton Ponds on 1st (I&KD).
Siskin	8 at Branton Ponds on 1st & 40+ on 17th (I&KD).

Observers Graham Bell (GB), Ian & Keith Davison (I & KD), Alan & Margaret Goodall (A&MG), John P Lumby (JPL), Stewart & Alison McCormick (SV&AJM), Phil & Marge Noble (P&MN), Paul Snell (PS).

Many thanks to all the observers who have contributed during the year, have a great birding year in 2020.

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