NORTH NORTHUMBERLAND BIRD CLUB

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DAVID LINDO: the URBAN BIRDER

The February meeting of the North Northumberland Bird Club featured a much- anticipated talk by David Lindo, the "Urban Birder". David entertained members with tales from his travels, some excellent photos of both birds and locations, and stories of his rise to birding-celebrity status. All this was woven through with examples of his personal mission and philosophy to bring nature and birding to a wider, often city-dwelling audience. Paul's report appears on **page 3**

COQUET ESTUARY FIELD TRIP

Storm Ciara put paid to our original plan of visiting the Coquet . Amazingly, the re-scheduled visit on the following Sunday, 16th February, found a window of dry weather though the blustery wind made conditions difficult for the birds *and* the birders!
Turn to **page 2** for Richard's report

BIRD RECORDS for FEBRUARY on Page 6

GOSHAWK WALK at KIELDER: TRIP REPORT on Page 5

NOTICEBOARD

INDOOR MEETINGS — BAMBURGH PAVILION

- **Friday 13th March 2020 at 7.30pm* SWIFTS– KEEPING MORPETH'S SWIFTS ALIVE: Graham Sorrie Graham founded the Morpeth Swift Conservation Project in 2014, since when he has worked tirelessly to raise awareness of their decline and encourage his local community to provide nesting sites and protect this summer visitor.**
- **Friday 10th April 2020 at 7.30pm Two Seasons with the South of Scotland GOLDEN EAGLE PROJECT: Rick Taylor. Rick is a Community Outreach Officer for this ambitious project which aims to link up the existing but fragmented territories of Golden Eagles in the southern uplands and boost their numbers with young birds taken from flourishing populations in the highlands**

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.]

- **Saturday, 25th April, 2020: at 10 a.m. Farm and Riverside Walk, West Loanend**

A walk of 2 to 3 hour's duration from West Loanend over rich farmland and along the South Bank of the River Tweed (opposite Paxton House) in search of farmland and riverside birds such as Grey Partridge, Tree Sparrow, Yellowhammer, Reed Bunting, Skylark, Goosander, Goldeneye, (maybe even a Kingfisher or an Otter by the river). Wear suitable footwear such as walking boots or Wellingtons.

Directions/Parking: From the Berwick-upon-Tweed Bypass (A1) follow the **A698** west for **one mile towards Coldstream** , then take **first right** at brow of the hill signposted **Horncliffe.** Follow this road for **one mile** (ignore minor road to 'West Ord'!). Coming to a small double bend in the road on a tiny bridge, with a little road sign to **East and West Loanend, turn right.** [*Note yellow Council grit box on the corner].* In **half a mile** you will arrive at **West Loanend Farmhouse.** (**O.S. ref: NT945513**). There is plenty of space for parking at the Farmhouse. Further direction-phone Mary Worsfold on 07742 728623 ***Leader:Martin Worsfold***

NEW PROJECTOR & LAPTOP

You might remember that at the Chris Rose talk last year the projector images had white dots on them. This was due to a failure of the projector chip. The projector and the club laptop were both 10 years old, bought with funds from the Community Foundation. We decided to apply for a new grant from the Community Foundation for £1074 to replace them. The application was successful and so we now have new equipment. The money came from the Johnnie & Tricia Smith and Family Fund at the Community Foundation. The granting of this money to the NNBC has allowed the club to make donations to Bell View Care for bird food, Natural England for a wildlife trail camera, the BTO towards the Curlew Project and Charles Baker-Cresswell for seed at the Spindlestone Hides. ***Chairman: Richard Poyer***

CONFERENCE: ASPECTS OF THE TWEED: 12th October,2020 ***Leader: Maurice McNeely***

Monday the 12th October 2020 – A full-day conference convened by The Tweed Estuary Protection Group (TEPG) called "Aspects of the Tweed – a Conversation". This will be a ticketed event held at The Maltings. Tickets should be available from February at £10pp. There will be up to twelve speakers covering a fascinating range of topics from source to sea including the wildlife, river management and management issues. More detail will follow in local media.

BREEDING BIRD SURVEYS: Muriel Cadwallender (Regional organiser for the BTO BBS) is looking for volunteers to survey 13 upland squares with two visits in the breeding season.

The squares are : NT7180 Deerleeknowe, NT7307 Leithhope Forest, NT9040 Heaton Moor Crookham, NU0427 NE of Cheswick, NY6263 Hill Head, Thirwell Common, NY6781 Whickhope Nick, Kielder, NY7072 Black Fell, Wark Forest, NY7398 Blakehope Nick East, Kielder, NY7885 North Tyne Nr, Bellingham NZ0075 Mootlaw, East of Hallington, NZ1364 Clara Vale, NZ2177 Blagdon, NZ3174 Holywell

There are also 5 waterway squares :

River Till NT9139 Nr. Crookham, Wooler Water NU0026, NT995279-NT997248,

Lewis Burn NY60865, NY6318877-623874 or NY888927-900901, River Rede NY8692 NY880933-NY864943

River Rede NY8890 NY888927-NY900901

If you would like to take part in any of the surveys please contact Muriel at :

tomandmurielcadwallender@hotmail.com

'THE URBAN BIRDER'

The February meeting of the North Northumberland Bird Club on **21st February** featured a much- anticipated talk by David Lindo, the "Urban Birder". David entertained members with tales from his travels, some excellent phots of both birds and locations, and stories of his rise to birding-celebrity status. All this was woven through with examples of his personal mission and philosophy in which he aims to bring nature and birding to a wider, often city-dwelling, audience, by showing everyone the wealth and variety of bird life living in our cities and towns.

The talk travelled from Merida in Spain, to Sri Lanka, Taiwan, Serbia and Darwin, Australia. Throughout, David showed how spectacular birds can show up in the heart of urban development. This might be in parks or harbours, on river banks or on the sides of buildings. Perhaps the most spectacular example David showed us was the roost of Long-eared Owls in the trees of a town square in Kikinda, Serbia. Here, hundreds of the charismatic owls come together to spend the cold winter nights in the comparative warmth and safety of the town centre, and then head off to the countryside to hunt rodents in the farmland around the town during the night. The view of so many owls together contrasts sharply with the sightings we get in the UK. (Not long ago, sighting a lone Long-eared Owl, mostly hidden deep in the undergrowth, was one of the highlights of a NNBC field-trip to RSPB Saltholme in Teesside!) David also used this example to illustrate how "urban birding" can raise awareness and change attitudes. Whereas once, these owls were seen by many local people as signs of bad-luck, now, the benefits of eco-tourism have turned them into local celebrities and led to the designation of the town square as a nature reserve for their protection.

One story which particularly resonated with many NNBC members was of David's encounters with the Ring Ouzel which features on the logo of the NNBC. David had first seen pictures of the rare migrant thrush in a book he took out from his local library when a boy. Fascinated by the contrast between this bird and the much more common Blackbird, David wondered when he would ever see it as it is normally found in the high valleys of areas like the Cheviot and is not associated with "the big city". Despite some glimpses of it on his travels as an adult birder, David's first "proper" sighting came, true to form, in a surprisingly urban location. One April morning he was visiting his "home-patch" of urban greenery at Wormwood Scrubs in London, and met what he describes as his favourite bird. Since then, he has seen them nearly every year in the same area, including several at once, and some surprisingly over-wintering. This is a better track-record than many an NNBC member!

David's talk was fresh, informal and funny throughout. Members were delighted to share the evening with him and left inspired to look for nature and bird-life in every corner of our county.

Report by Paul Ashdown

David's 'Favourite Bird' the Ring Ouzel.

Long–eared Owls Roosting in Kakinda, Serbia

All Photos on page 3 and the Mikado Pheasant on page 4 by Kind Permission of the Urban Birder, David Lindo

The NNBC Field trip to the Coquet Estuary on Sunday 16th February 2020

Coquet Estuary beneath Warkworth Castle: Mike Elder

Postponed from the previous wet and windy Sunday, fourteen brave members gathered in strong winds at the Warkworth car park. The tide was falling, revealing the mudflats and the returning waders. It was a quiet walk down the path with just Robin and Woodpigeon in the scrub. The falling tide had left the saltmarsh pools high, with Pochard, Mallard, Teal, Redshank, Moorhen and Curlew either on the pools or feeding around the edges. Making our way towards the estuary it was good to hear and see a Skylark - a sure sign of spring to come. The Stonechat can usually be seen and heard along the main path, typically perching on a bush, and today was no exception; in the same area we also saw a Yellowhammer and a Meadow Pipit.

Along the now-exposed mudflats were the expected waders, Dunlin, Redshank, Ringed Plover and Bar-tailed Godwit. Oystercatchers and Turnstones fed amongst the wooden wrecks, watched by a flock of Lapwings. On the estuary there were Eider, Cormorant and Little Grebe whilst the Gulls started to gather on the mud spit. The surprise of the day was a Sparrowhawk skulking low in the trees along the saltmarsh.

Arriving at the North Pier a good scope of the Bay provided -nothing! -no divers. A walk along the beach and back up to the path completed our circuit with a good number of birds seen. **Leader: Richard Poyer**

Bird List: Shelduck, Eurasian Wigeon, European Teal, Mallard, Pochard, Eider, Pheasant, Cormorant, Little Grebe, Moorhen, Oystercatcher, Lapwing, Curlew, Dunlin, Ringed Plover, Bar-tailed Godwit, ,Turnstone, Redshank, Black-headed Gull, Herring Gull, Great Black-backed Gull, Woodpigeon, Magpie, Rook, Carrion Crow, Blue tit, Skylark, Sparrowhawk, Starling, Robin, Stonechat, Meadow Pipit, Yellowhammer. (33)

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…… FROM PAGE 3

Mikado Pheasant– *Syrmaticus mikado*

Not all of the birds mentioned by the Urban Birder were ‘urban’ birds. This beautiful, endangered species is endemic to the mountainous regions of Taiwan where it is revered as their national Bird.

‘GOSHAWK WALK’ at KIELDER FOREST with MARTIN DAVISON, SUNDAY 8th MARCH

Leaving the sunny climes of north-east Northumberland early Sunday morning, it was difficult to imagine that the forecast weather could be *SO* different for Kielder, but the dark clouds lowering over the bleak upland moors told their own story! Thankfully, we only experienced ‘frequent showers’ rather than the ‘unrelenting downpour’ which was the fate of the group on the previous day’s Guided Walk. Our party of 22 met up with guide, Forestry Commission ornithologist Martin Davison, and soon set off on our four-hour search for the elusive Goshawk, a buzzard-sized but secretive woodland raptor, most easily seen in early spring *(see BTO info below)*. At the top of the first steep climb we enjoyed our first *notable* birds, a small party of Crossbills feeding on the bumper crop of Sitka Spruce cones. Martin commented that this was a ‘good year’ for cones at Kielder (and therefore for Crossbills, which are largely nomadic.) Indeed, so engrossed were some with watching these attractive finches that they ‘missed out’ on a distant Goshawk Martin spotted from the other side of the road, flying over the woodland on the horizon.

We continued with our walk for a couple of hours, seeing several Buzzards and other typical woodland birds such as Chaffinches, Blue Tits, Coal Tits, Siskins and yet more Crossbills. We sheltered and lunched in a hide overlooking the North Tyne before walking a little further to a more open area where we enjoyed a displaying pair of Buzzards, and several Ravens, one amusing the group with its sudden tumbling flight as it characteristically pulled one wing into its body!

By now the rain showers had ceased, and the sun was trying its best to brighten our day as we headed back to base. Martin faithfully continued to check the woodland edges and horizons for Goshawks, though admitting that he rarely if ever saw them in the afternoon; indeed, our early sighting remained the only one! We thanked Martin for leading us round the forest and sharing his encyclopedic knowledge of this amazing environment and its wildlife.

Report & Photo Stewart McCormick

‘GOSHAWK GROUP at KIELDER CASTLE’

‘’Your chances of seeing a wild Goshawk are best during early spring, notably March to early April, when pairs may display over their chosen breeding area. Select a vantage point that provides you with a good view over a suitable piece of forest or woodland habitat and then watch for the birds. Activity peaks during early morning under fine weather and this is when the birds may be seen soaring in tight circles and, if you are lucky, plunging in a steep dive into the wood that is likely to be used for the nest.’’

British Trust for Ornithology

BIRD RECORDS FEBRUARY 2020

Brent Goose	2000 at Budle Bay on 25th pale bellied race (DG&RHB).
Greylag Goose	34 at Low Newton Pool on 27th (GH,JPL).
Pink-footed Goose	c.100 at Alnmouth (area) on 27th (GH,JPL).
White-fronted Goose	12 at Alnmouth Estuary on 22nd (A&MG), all Eurasian race.
Whooper Swan	30 at Low Newton Scrape on 18th (PA) & 34 on 27th (GH,JPL).
Shoveler	c.8 at Monk's House Pool all month (JPL).
Pochard	3 at Branton Ponds on 16th (I&KD).
Tufted Duck	4 at Monk's House Pool all month (JPL).
Common Scoter	50 off Stag Rocks on 25th (DG&RHB).
Goldeneye	10 at Branton Ponds on 7th (I&KD), 1 pair at Newton Point on 18th & 1 pair at Long Nanny on 25th (PA).
Red-breasted Merganser	4 at Stag Rocks on 25th (DG&RHB).
Grey Partridge	2 at Newton Links on 8th (JG).
Slavonian Grebe	1 at Stag Rocks on 25th (DG&RHB).
Little Egret	3 at Branton Ponds on 3rd & 4 by the 5th (I&KD).
Buzzard	1 at Yearle all month (DG&RHB).
Lapwing	400 at Branton Ponds on 16th (I&KD).
Black-tailed Godwit	15 at Low Newton Scrape on 27th (GH,JPL).
Green Sandpiper	1 at Hedgeley Ponds & 1 at Mounthooly on 7th (I&KD).
Redshank	200 at Shortridge Hall on 27th (GH,JPL).
Stock Dove	1 at Branton Ponds on 4th (I&KD).
Collared Dove	20 at North Sunderland roosting all month (JPL).
Waxwing	4 at Alnmouth on 22nd (A&MG).
Willow Tit	2 at Branton Ponds on 4th (I&KD).
Long-tailed Tit	6 at Yearle all month (DG&RHB).
Starling	c.2000 at Yearle all month (SV&AJM,DG&RHB).
Water Pipit	1 at Seaton Point Boulmer on 23rd (A&MG).
Snow Bunting	8 at Long Nanny on 17th (ME) & 3 on 25th (PA).
Escapes	
Bar-headed Goose	3 at Birling Carrs on 2nd & Alnmouth on 22nd (A&MG).

Observers Paul Ashdown (PA), Graham & Rosemary Bell (DG&RHB), Ian & Keith Davison (I & KD), Mike Elder (ME), Judy Glover (JG), Alan & Margaret Goodall (A&MG), Graham Harris (GH), John P Lumby (JPL), Stewart & Alison McCormick (SV&AJM).

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

ERRATUM: TIDE TABLE PROVIDED FOR OCTOBER-DECEMBER 2020:

PLEASE BE AWARE THAT ALL THE 'DAYS' QUOTED FROM **MON** OCT 13 (which is a **TUE)** until **TUE** NOV 25 (which is a **WED)** are 'out of step' by one day. The **NUMERICAL DATES** and the **TIDE TIMES** remain accurate.