NORTH NORTHUMBERLAND BIRD CLUB

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Paul on the Coastal Path *Photo: Martine Delbauve*

Young Ospreys *Photo: Lightley*

Black-tailed Godwit *Photo: R. Poyer*

BIRDING WITHOUT BINOCULARS

The easing of lockdown restrictions encouraged Paul And Martine to celebrate by walking from Berwick to Cresswell on the Northumberland Coastal Path, travelling light and using B&B accommodation. Turn to page 3 to follow in their footsteps….

BIRD RECORDS for JUNE to AUGUST

on pages 5 & 6

ROY DENNIS at BAMBURGH

Following the suggestion made that we might look back on the visits of iconic speakers, we feature Roy Dennis who came in 2009 to talk about the return of the Osprey and the amazing success story of its recovery. Turn to page 4 for Mora Rolley's excellent account of a night at the Pavilion (before social distancing was necessary……)

WHAT'S NEW ON THE WEBSITE

As ever, Phil Hanmer's Ringers Roundup makes good reading! Try his mini-challenge distinguishing juvenile Willow Warbler from a Chiffchaff if you were squinting at them through your binoculars in the top of a tree ?

BLOGS & WADERS –*online musings*

A short article on Page 2 mentions several excellent online articles on Black-tailed Godwits (and other waders) wadertales.wordpress.com which are very accessible and readable. Likewise, having read the enthusiastic write-up of Roy Dennis's visit to the Pavilion in 2009, you may enjoy visiting the website of the **Roy Dennis Wildlife Foundation** https://www.roydennis.org/ describing more recent ventures such as Golden Eagle relocations and their project re-introducing White-tailed Eagles on the Isle of Wight.

NOTICEBOARD

INDOOR MEETINGS

BAMBURGH PAVILION

All Indoor Meetings cancelled The Committee continue to monitor and assess the situation and remain in contact with each other via telephone and email. All Members will be contacted by email or phone as and when we can resume our meetings. Meanwhile stay safe and stay well.

A Message from our Chairman, Richard Poyer

Dear Members

On behalf of the committee I hope that you have kept well over the summer. As I write this, with the wind howling in the chimney, summer seems to be over. The Pavilion is preparing to re-open to the public and the Seahouses Hub is already open for its Film Nights. However, the committee has decided at their recent meeting not to go ahead with the talks or field trips until January 2021 at the earliest.

To achieve social distancing both venues have very restricted numbers (25 at the Pavilion and 30 at the Hub) and the requirement to wear masks. It was decided that the normal social interaction between members, which is a feature of a club evening, would not be possible. It was thought that we should wait until a larger number of us can meet and have a celebratory re-opening event.

What about subscriptions, you ask? It was proposed that the subscription year should be aligned with our financial year - September 1st to August 31st, and that membership fees would not be payable until September 2021.

Given the exceptional circumstances at the moment, there will not be an AGM this November.

Please keep your records coming in to John Lumby and any interesting birding experiences and/or photographs to Stewart for the Newsletters, Liz Harrison for Facebook and myself for the Website. Take care and let's hope that we can meet in January 2021. Meanwhile, stay safe and try to enjoy some bird watching over the next few months. ***Richard Poyer***

ONLINE MUSINGS: A very short article in the September Issue of the BBC Wildlife magazine begins 'Britain is a Wader Nation' before featuring the **Ruff**, one of a dozen or more waders using our coastal beaches and pools as they migrate from the north to overwinter in Iberia and Africa. We are blessed to live in a county with such a wonderful wader-rich coastline. For more information, interested readers are pointed towards the blog **wadertales.wordpress.com**

If, like me, you are 'into' waders, this is a door well worth opening, highlighting previously published research studies with the aim of making wader science more accessible to a wider audience. Several articles on **Black-tailed Godwits** include 'Project Godwit' and the recently published 'Cycling for Waders'. Whilst the most recent blog 'Teenage Waders' focusing on the Hudsonian Godwit *might* seem less immediate or relevant to readers this side of the Atlantic, it raises many important points about the conservation of larger waders and discovering 'overlooked' sites where those teenagers over-summer……. enjoy!

Stewart McCormick

BIRDING WITHOUT BINOCULARS

Back in July, when the weather was fine and lock-down started easing, we decided to celebrate by walking from Berwick to Creswell on the Northumberland Coastal Path. Staying at recently re-opened B&Bs, and carrying our kit, we took 6 days to make the journey through some of the best coastal landscape in the country, which also happens to pass through many of the best coastal birdwatching spots in the county. The one problem, when on walks like this, is that we don't carry binoculars, so we almost had to rely on the birds showing themselves to us. However, the magnificent scenery proved to be full of interesting wildlife.

We started frighteningly early from Berwick to make sure that we could cross the causeway onto Lindisfarne for our first stop. The weather started drizzly and grey as we crossed the Tweed, and both the Mute Swans on the river and the Herring Gulls on the bridge seemed to give us funny looks wondering why we were out and about. Soon, the sun broke through, and we were trudging along the cliffs looking over a steely sea. There were plenty of Gannets to watch as they flew up and down the coast, and many of the "usual suspects" like Yellowhammers, Reed Buntings and Stonechats in the scrub as we walked along the path. After a while, the path comes off the cliffs and meanders through the magnificent sand dunes into Goswick where you enter the NNR. Plenty more familiar sights and sounds like Skylarks and Meadow Pipits kept us company. (*continues page 3…….)*

We also came across a spectacular Leopard Slug on the path. Slugs aren't normally my favourite wildlife, but these ones earn their name not only from their spotty colouring, but also because they will eat other slugs. *More in my garden please!* South of Goswick you cross the saltmarsh and head for the causeway. The sun had really come out now and we had nice views of 6 Little Egret feeding along the creeks. Once on the causeway plenty of Eider seemed to be bobbing about and we saw the odd Curlew and Redshank. Pleased to be off the road once on the island, we headed across The Snook to the eastern beach to avoid cars. This took us through spectacular swathes of orchids, including some lovely Bee Orchids, and we were carefully watched by Roe Deer silhouetted on the top of the dunes. Sadly, we also saw swathes of pirri-pirri bur and had to strip them off our shoes and socks at the end of the walk.

Leopard Slug

Day two took us back across the causeway and across the fields to Fenwick, and then through forestry plantation to Belford. The views are spectacular across to Lindisfarne, but not the best territory for birds. We did see many of the expected finches and warblers, and both Kestrel and Buzzard, and enjoyed a fine day's walking. Day three, from Belford to Seahouses, only proved more ornithologically interesting when we got to the fields inland after Bamburgh. Here, the sky seemed full to overflowing with hundreds of swifts. I have never seen this many in the UK and is was a really heartening sight.

The fourth day took us from Seahouses to home in Embleton, and felt like a very familiar walk. Leaving Seahouses, I really missed my binoculars since I struggled and failed to identify some larger waders on the beach by the golf-course. We passed Long Nanny later and enjoyed the terns, both Arctic and Little, before, sadly they got washed out again by the high tide later in the season. Passing the scrape in Embleton we remembered our Avocets, now long gone along with their four fledged youngsters.

After a nice comfortable night at home we set off for Warkworth, past Dunstanburgh, Craster, Boulmer and Alnmouth. Amongst many regulars like the Razorbills still bobbing about under the castle cliffs, and plenty of Fulmars and Kittiwakes, a lovely surprise was an excellent view of a young Cuckoo just north of Howick. We avoided the crowds in Alnmouth and enjoyed plenty of butterflies as we crossed more dunes (and yet more golf courses) before crossing the bridge into Warkworth. Here we were welcomed by a very energetic group of about 12 Red-Breasted Mergansers fishing under the arches.

Our final day began with the walk along the river from Warkworth to Amble which gave us nice views of Heron, Oystercatcher and Cormorant. Through Amble we watched more Eider floating around the harbour, and then looked across to fine views of Coquet Island. We could see the buzz of birds, but had no chance of identifying anything. We then had what felt like a very long walk down Druridge Bay, past many great birding spots. The weather had turned, and we could see rain coming in from the west, so we had to put our heads down and stride out. We got to Cresswell where friends picked us up, only slightly damp, pretty tired, and rather chuffed with ourselves. Although we hadn't seen the most amazing list of birds, we had been able to develop a real appreciation of how our wonderful coastline fits together in a glorious mosaic of cliffs, dunes, islands and beaches. What a wonderful place we live in!

Write-up : **Paul Ashdown**

Photographs: **Martine Delbauve**

Bee Orchid– Lindisfarne

ROY DENNIS: OSPREYS AT HOME AND ABROAD *(slightly abridged from the NNBC Archives-March 2009)*

Those of you who attended this meeting, and there were a great many of you, will know how impossible it is for me to do justice to such an outstanding talk. For those of you who were not present I hope this will give you a taste of what happened. I cannot reproduce the beautiful images of ospreys doing what ospreys do: perching, fishing, feeding young, lying still, flying and looking extremely impressive. There were also images of nests in trees and pylons, eggs in nests, men building nests and the most amazing images taken from 'Google Earth' on which flight paths of osprey had been superimposed. Everybody there will have taken memories special to them. These are a few of mine.

Graham introduced Mr. Roy Dennis MBE as our highly qualified celebrity speaker whose life had been devoted to studying and helping wildlife and who is now an international wildlife consultant with a particular interest in ospreys. He is the Honorary President of the Highland Foundation for Wildlife.

The story began 40 years ago in Scotland at Loch Garten with one pair of ospreys appearing after being exterminated in Britain by 1916. In 1945 they became protected through the RSPB and now, thanks to helpful landowner and keepers, artificial building and repairing of nest and reintroduction schemes, there are approximately 200 pairs in Scotland, 3 in England and 1 in Wales. Ospreys occur throughout the world and should be common birds but are not because of persecution, egg thieves, predation by pine martens, eggs being broken owing to fighting male ospreys, entrapment by fishing lines but, worst of all, bad weather. Eggs viewed by using a mirror on a huge pole are beautifully marked. Thieving is prevented by round the clock protection by volunteers, the removal of branches to prevent climbing and surrounding the trunk with razor wire- but a notice must now be attached to the tree warning thieves that the wire is dangerous!

Nowadays every nest has a code number, and monitoring allows detailed information about the occupants of each nest. The nests are used by different generations with females returning each year to the dame nest, swiftly followed by the males. One year an older male was blown off course and found himself near Iceland. He was so exhausted he took a long time to return to his old nesting place in Scotland and found a younger male had taken his place and eggs already in the nest. He ousted the young male, reared the young but was not late the following year. The males do all the fishing when young are being reared while the females' job is to fill the young with food, so they are fit for their solitary journey south in autumn. 40% of nests are now either built or repaired by man. A new colony will increase, then fall slightly to reach a natural level. On average, one third will be good breeders, one third average and one third poor. Ringing of youngsters is done in the nest and is easy because the birds are very well behaved.

Lessons learnt during the reintroduction in Speyside have helped with other schemes in Rutland and across Europe. Proof that ospreys lived naturally in the area is needed before reintroduction is allowed and for Rutland one source was found in *Coriolanus* by Shakespeare. Each chick used for reintroduction is taken from a nest of two or three and placed in holding cages with two others, to make a new brood, overlooking a lake or estuary. For five weeks they are fed while nests on poles are erected nearby within their sight. When they are released these nests are filled with fish so the young can continue to eat well before setting off on their flight south. They will not catch their own fish until they are well on their way. The reintroduction started in 1995, in 1999 the first male returned, in 3001 the first young were raised and now the next generation is being produced, The authorities in Wales did not allow reintroductions so the ospreys decided to do it themselves!

Finally came the most incredible section of the evening-satellite tracking. Thanks to the development of the technology, the collection of data today about migration is amazing compared to the ringing of chicks and waiting for any rings to be returned to the BTO. Now the birds can be pinpointed on their journeys and we were treated to seeing how they meander southwards but hurry back north; how adverse winds can blow them off course into the Atlantic; how one spent five days fishing on a river before crossing the desert, whilst another covered 5741 kms in 27 days.

The evening was packed full of interest, humour, information, knowledge, hard work and passion. In his vote of thanks Graham quoted two phrases the speaker used during his talk about new technology, "It's incredible what we can learn" and "It's outstanding, the quality of this data". As Graham said, these describe the whole evening, and lengthy applause from those present agreed.

Mora Rolley

BIRD RECORDS JUNE 2020

Red-breasted Goose	1 at Long Nanny saltings with 6 **Greylag Geese** on 1st (JG), an escape.
Quail	1 at West Ord on 1st (MW).
Spoonbill	5 at Tughall Pool on 15th (PA).
Little Egret	3 at Long Nanny on 24th (MWB).
Osprey	1 fishing on the Till on 6th (RD).
Goshawk	2 at North Charlton on 19th (A&MG).
Corncrake	1 at Ferny Law on 7th (AC).
Avocet	1 pair with 4 young at Low Newton Scrape all month (etal).
Little Ringed Plover	2 at Hedgeley on 23rd (A&MG).
Turnstone	7 at Stag Rocks on 5th (JPL).
Purple Sandpiper	5 at Stag Rocks on 5th (JPL).
Woodcock	1 at Beanley Moor on 6th (I&KD), 1 at Beanley Wood on 6th (A&MG).
Common Sandpiper	2 pairs in Harthope Valley all month (SVM,DGB), 2 at Hedgeley Ponds on 23rd (A&MG).
Little Tern	22 at Long Nanny on 22nd (A&MG).
Black Tern	1 at Long Nanny on 20/24th (PA,WMB).
Cuckoo	1 at Harthope Valley on 8th (A&MG).
Barn Owl	1 all white, was at Swinhoe on the 1st (JPL), 1 at Bells Hill on 14th (DGB), 1 at Long Nanny on 22/24th (A&MG,MWB), 1 at Beanley on 23rd (I&KD).
Nightjar	2 at Beanley Wood on 6th (A&MG) & 1 on 20th (SVM), 4 at Beanley Moor on 23rd (I&KD).
Swift	c.25 at Seahouses & North Sunderland all month (JPL), 10 over River Tweed on 13th (SVM).
Raven	1 pair at Cold Law on 17th (EH,MW) & on 26th at Holburn (EH,GW).
Reed Warbler	1 at Branton Ponds on 16th (I&KD).
Asian Desert Warbler	1 at Holy Island on 15/17th (I&KD,PA).

BIRD RECORDS JULY 2020

Greylag Goose	200 at Low Newton Scrape on 25th (JPL).
Garganey	2 at Monk's House Pool on 26th (PA).
Manx Shearwater	6 at Cullernose Point on 14th (I&KD).
Little Egret	1 at Budle Bay on 2nd (A&MG) & 2 on 25th (JPL), 6 at Alnmouth on 13th (A&MG), 2 at Budle Bay on 25th (JPL).
Red Kite	1 flying over Bamburgh Castle on 30th mobbed by a gull. (PS).
Water Rail	1 at Hedgeley Ponds on 4th (I&KD).
Little Ringed Plover	1 at Hedgeley Ponds on 6th (A&MG).
Whimbrel	1 at Budle Bay on 25th (PA).
Sanderling	7 at Cocklawburn on 17th (EH).
Purple Sandpiper	5 at Farne Islands on 20th (EH).
Common Sandpiper	5 at Hedgeley Ponds on 4/6th (I&KD,A&MG), 1 at River Tweed on 26th (EH)
Sooty Tern	1 at Cullernose Point on 29th (PA,I&KD).
Arctic Skua	2 at Cullernose Point on 2nd (I&KD).
Nightjar	1 at Beanley Woods on 20th (I&KD).
Swift	10 at North Sunderland on 20th (JPL), 8 at Seahouses on 31st (DGB).
Jackdaw	250 at North Sunderland on 18th (JPL).
Mistle Thrush	30 at Branton Ponds on 27th (I&KD).
Spotted Flycatcher	2 at Harthope Valley on 2nd (DGB), 1 at Branton on 4th (I&KD).
Black Redstart	1 female at Bamburgh dunes on 29th (PS).
Crossbill	8 at Colby Crags on 8th & 6 at Lemmington on 21st (I&KD).

BIRD RECORDS AUGUST 2020

Brent Goose	45 off Longhoughton Steel on 26th (I&KD), 600 at Fenham Flats on 27th (DGB).
Garganey	1 at Monk's House Pool on 21st (JPL).
Common Scoter	9 off Longhoughton Steel on 26th (I&KD).
Red-throated Diver	1 off Howick on 28th & 3 off Cullernose Point on 30th (I&KD).
Sooty Shearwater	1 off Longhoughton Steel on 26th & 13 off Cullernose Point on 30th (I&KD).
Manx Shearwater	4 off Boulmer on 9th , 25 off Longhoughton Steel on 10th & 2 on 26th 3 off Howick on 28th with 18 off Cullernose Point on 30th (I&KD).
Little Egret	6 at Budle Bay on 6th (JPL), 6 at Fenham Flats on 16th (I&KD) & 8 on 27th (DGB).
Golden Eagle	1 adult over Cheviot on 9th (EH). (eagle project have had other records).
Marsh Harrier	1 at Holy Island on 16th (I&KD).
Golden Plover	1500 at Holy Island on 12th (I&KD) & 400 at Boulmer from 10/16th (A&MG).
Pacific Golden Plover	1 at Boulmer from 9/16th (I&KD,PA,A&MG).
Grey Plover	1 still in full summer plumage at Fenham Flats on 27th (DGB).
Whimbrel	8 at Holy Island on 12th (I&KD).
Black-tailed Godwit	1 at Monk's House Pool & 5 at Budle Bay on 6th (JPL).
Turnstone	12 at Holy Island on 15th (I&KD).
Dunlin	12 at Monk's House Pool on 2nd (JPL).
Little Stint	4 at Monk's House Pool on 2nd (JPL).
Common Sandpiper	1 at Monk's House Pool on 2nd (JPL).
Green Sandpiper	2 at Branton Ponds on 11th & 1 at Holy Island on 15th (I&KD).
Greenshank	1 at Hedgeley Ponds on 23rd (I&KD) & 3 on 27th (PA), 2 at Fenham Flats on 27th (DGB).
Roseate Tern	1 at Longhoughton Steel on 10th & 2 on 16th (I&KD).
Great Skua	1 off Longhoughton Steel on 16th & on 26th 2 off Cullernose Point on 30th (I&KD).
Pomarine Skua	1 off Longhoughton Steel on 16th (I&KD).
Arctic Skua	1 off Boulmer on 9th & 5 off Longhoughton Steel on 10th with 3 on 16th (I&KD).
Long-tailed Skua	2 off Longhoughton Steel on 16th & 1 on 26th (I&KD), 3 off Boulmer on 16th (A&MG).
Cuckoo	1 juvenile at Quarry house on 2nd & 1 at Holy Island on 16th (I&KD).
Long-eared Owl	1 at Holy Island on 16th (I&KD).
Swift	3 over Branton Ponds on 11th (I&KD).
Merlin	1 at Boulmer on 10th (A&MG), 1 at Holy Island on 15/16th & 1 at Branton on 20th (I&KD).
Peregrine	1 at Cullernose Point on 30th (I&KD).
Hooded Crow	1 at Craster on 27th (JC).
Reed Warbler	3 juveniles at Branton Ponds on 9th (I&KD), 1 at Howick on 14th (PH).
Pied Flycatcher	2 at Holy Island on 12th & 3 on 16th (I&KD).
Redstart	2 near Hedgeley Hall on 18th (I&KD).

Observers Paul Armstrong (PA), Graham Bell (DGB), Janet Chubb (JC), Alistair Cochrane (AC), Ian & Keith Davison (I & KD), Richard Dickinson (RD), Judy Glover (JG), Alan & Margaret Goodall (A&MG), Phil Hanmer (PH), Liz Harrison (EH), John P Lumby (JPL), Stewart McCormick (SVM) Paul Snell (PS), Gillian Wolverson (GW), Martin Worsfold (MW).

September Records: please submit no later than 10am, 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**.