NORTH NORTHUMBERLAND BIRD CLUB

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Checking out the Dunes of H.I. Photo: Marge Noble

Auks at Warkworth Photo: Richard Calvert

'Lotti' at Howick Photo: Phil Hanmer

FIELD TRIP TO LINDISFARNE

Our first field trip in eighteen months drew a group of nineteen members eager to resume such club outings. Turn to page 4 for **Alan Goodall's report** and postscript, where he lists an impressive tally of species.

NOTICES

on **page 2** including details of the next talk at Bamburgh and details of our next Field trips.

TEA for TWO?

See page 3.....

BIRD RECORDS for SEPTEMBER

turn to **page 6** for the most recent sightings compiled by our Recorder, John Lumby

The East Coast 'Wreck' of Sept.21

Richard Poyer delves into the distressing phenomenon of seabird 'wrecks' and their causes in a short article on p.5

RINGER'S ROUNDUP

Phil Hanmer has had a busy month with many sessions ringing and training, which makes for a varied and fascinating report as some birds begin to pass through on migration. This adult Long-tailed Tit was the star catch on the 11th; other photos include a few interesting ID challenges.....you can check it out on the NNBC Website

NOTICEBOARD

Our Next Indoor Meeting takes place on Friday 8th October 2021 at 7.30p.m. when **Daniel Turner** comes to the Bamburgh Pavilion to talk about his work as Co-ordinator of the North East Beached Birds Project (NEBBS) and the Northern Fulmar Project, two long running projects to monitor and assess our vulnerable seabirds and the many threats they face.

REFRESHMENTS- A Plea for help to all members. The refreshments break at the half-way point in our meetings has always been popular with members and visitors alike, allowing time to have a cup of tea, to socialise and buy raffle tickets etc! Prior to the pandemic, we had a good refreshments team of **eight** volunteers who would take turns in organising each month's refreshments, often recruiting their own helpers for the evening. As you will readily appreciate, currently, we have only two remaining 'volunteers'- Winnie Banks and Liz Harrison– which does not begin to cover such things as absence, illness or other commitments let alone returning to a **Rota**. We would really appreciate it if you could consider offering to help, otherwise this tradition may have to be discontinued! **Please can you help?** Volunteer, or email liz.a.harrison22@btinternet.com for more details! See page 3……..

[Field Trips For all Field Trips Read Risk Assessment on Website beforehand . Please wear suitable clothing and footwear. For last-minute Cancellations e.g. adverse weather conditions, check Facebook Page.]

24th OCTOBER 2021 BIRD TRIP by CAR around Beadnell and Seahouses looking for migrants. Meet at 10 a.m. in Beadnell Car park (NU235288) on Sunday, 24th October. Warm gear, bring coffee. Leader: John Lumby.

PROPOSED FIELD TRIP TO RSPB SALTHOLME Following our successful visit in 2019 which provided close views of a Water Rail and Long-eared Owl, (plus the call of a Cetti's Warbler for a fortunate few!), we are planning to hire a *Travelsure* coach to arrive at RSPB Saltholme by 10 a.m. on SATURDAY, 20th NOVEMBER 2021 Costs are dependent on the size of bus (19 seater/33 seater) and the numbers travelling, with costs of £18 per person for the smaller vehicle or £15 per person for the larger vehicle if every seat taken. If you are interested, either sign on sheet provided at the October meeting or email Richard Poyer at richardpoyer67@gmail.com by October 31st.

ERRATUM and *CORRECTION*: NNBC NEWSLETTER 377 SEPTEMBER 2021 In the Report on our recent talk 'The Birds of Arizona', 'the impressive nests of White-throated Swifts' should read 'the impressive nests of **Cliff Swallows'. With thanks and sincere apologies to our Speaker, Tim Dean. *(EDITOR)***

NNBC MEETINGS and COVID

On September 10th we had our first meeting back in the Pavilion. There were 39 of us and as far as we know there have been no instances of Covid following the event. However, despite the Government's abolition of rules, we believe we have an obligation to make the meeting as safe as possible for all attending.

We would like you to wear a mask when entering the building, and continue to do so as you move about the room, including when getting your refreshments from the hatch.

At the break we would like you to maintain social distance as you come up for a drink and that you return to your seat once you have collected it. Your mug will be collected from you.

Many thanks, in advance, for being considerate of others. ***(NNBC Committee)***

There's a gap at the NNBC
A beverage 'emergencea…'
Though we've wonderful speakers
And twitchers and tweeters
There's none to make coffee and tea!

It's not an enormous ask
And everyone's up to the task
Just a few minutes shared
And the whole room is spared
From having to lug in a flask.

So come on gents ladies and all
Step up and get on the ball
Don't get in a tizz
Just contact our Liz
By email or telephone call.
ANON

Field Trip 25th September 2021 to Holy Island.

A group of 19 Club members met at the Chare Ends car park on Lindisfarne for the long- awaited resumption of our Club Field Trips. The seals were singing loudly, and a skein of pink-footed geese flew over to greet us. It was nice to welcome some new members, and regulars Kathy and Mick who travel from County Durham for our Field Trips.

The plan was to walk along the Straight Lonnen to Emmanuel Head, visit the Lough hide and return along the Crooked Lonnen to the Chare Ends car park. It was hoped that we might spot some returning migrants along the Straight Lonnen as a yellow-browed warbler had been reported recently. However, we were out of luck in that respect, but we did see the usual suspects and roe deer in the adjacent field.

Arriving at the end of the Straight Lonnen it became apparent that we would not have time to visit Emmanuel Head and return to the car park in time for the members that had only paid for 3 hours parking, so it was decided to omit Emmanuel Head for the main group. The 4 members wishing to visit Emmanuel Head would still do so and perhaps meet up with the main group later.

On the path to the Lough, a large airborne flock of several hundred golden plovers was seen ahead of us to the delight of some of our members. This spectacle was repeated as we progressed further along the path, and some members also saw wheatears. On the Lough there were lots of moulting ducks, wigeon, mallards, teal and a couple of shovelers along with a little grebe, a mute swan, moorhens and a grey heron.

Leaving the hide, we saw more wheatears as we walked to the Crooked Lonnen. There was a distinct shortage of birds along the Crooked Lonnen, but we did get excellent views of a female kestrel, which could have been the same bird that we had seen earlier, in the distance. We arrived back at the car park by 1pm to the relief of those members who had only paid for 3 hours.

The remainder of the group however had a picnic lunch at various locations (including the Ship Inn). Afterwards, some of us visited the harbour to look for waders, (there was a nice variety but nothing unusual) followed by a walk up past the excavations to the view over St Cuthbert's Island and the surrounding area. From here we did see around 60 razorbills and a few guillemots in the area replicating the unusual and worrying behaviour that has been seen in several places along the north-east coast recently. We finished our walk overlooking the vicar's garden, but unfortunately the only birds there were a couple of chickens. *

Despite the lack of rarities, I'm sure everyone enjoyed the day as the weather was kind to us. We finished with a creditable total of 63 species and the seals were still singing on our departure.

Report by Alan Goodall

Species List: Mute Swan, Pink-footed Goose, Brent Goose, Wigeon, European Teal, Mallard, Shoveler, Goosander, Grey Partridge, Pheasant, Red-throated Diver, Gannet, Cormorant, Shag, Little Egret, Grey Heron, Little Grebe, Sparrowhawk, Kestrel, Moorhen, Oystercatcher, Golden Plover, Grey Plover, Lapwing, Ringed Plover, Curlew, Bar-tailed Godwit, Turnstone, Dunlin, Greenshank, Redshank, Black-headed Gull, Common Gull, Herring Gull, Great Black-backed Gull, Razorbill, Guillemot, Sandwich Tern, Woodpigeon, Collared Dove, Magpie, Carrion Crow, Goldcrest, Blue Tit, Great Tit, Skylark, Swallow, Wren, Starling, Blackbird, Song Thrush, Robin, Stonechat, Wheatear, House Sparrow, Pied Wagtail, Meadow Pipit, Chaffinch, Greenfinch, Goldfinch, Linnet, Reed Bunting. (63)

* Interesting P.S. from Alan 'Would you believe that the next day there was **a flock of bramblings** in the vicar's garden and another flock along the Straight Lonnen !'

The East Coast "wreck" of September 2021

This September, from Yorkshire to Aberdeenshire, have been reports of hundreds of Razorbills and Guillemots being washed up on beaches – events called "wrecks" - and of unusual behaviour by these two species.

"Wrecks", "Die offs" or "Seabird Mass Mortality Events" are terms used around the world for the same natural event – the deaths of large or very large numbers of seabirds. Hundreds or even thousands of Shearwater, Guillemot, Razorbill or Puffin may be washed up onto beaches, but an even greater number die at sea.

This year in Scotland, dead birds started to be found in late August and early September, with as many as 60 on some beaches. By mid-September, in Northumberland, 85 birds were washed up at Berwick, 72 at Cambois and 22 at Warkworth. All along the coast smaller groups of dead birds were found; not just deaths, but reports of unusual behaviour as birds swam up estuaries and rivers – 700 near St. Andrews, 300 and 20 in the Tweed and Coquet respectively.

Razorbills on the Tweed Photo by Gill Wolverson

What was the cause of the deaths and behaviour? As yet the Centre for Ecology and Hydrology has not found an answer. Many of the birds found dead are underweight and starving, but why?

Scientists have ruled out bird flu, but are still researching the event. One avenue being explored is that of poisoning from algal blooms. *(The toxin in algae can work its way up the food chain to be ingested by the birds.)* This was the cause of a large number of deaths in the Farne Islands' Shag populations in 1968 and 1975.
(85% of the breeding population died in 1968)

A more usual cause of the UK wrecks is stormy weather. In 1969, 12,000 birds were found dead on beaches, in 1983, 34,000 on the North Sea coasts and in 2014 25,000 in the South West. All these incidents were after storm force winds. The actual number of deaths would have been much higher, maybe by a factor of 5.

Around the world there have been far higher numbers of deaths.

In 2013 on their return from the North Pacific, an estimated 3 million Shearwaters died off the Eastern coast of Australia and New Zealand. Research showed that, hungry from the flight, they ate small particles of pumice from a recent undersea volcanic eruption, thinking it was food. From the summer of 2015 to the spring of 2016 over 60, 000 Puffins and Auks were washed up on beaches from California to Alaska. An estimated the 1million birds died over this period. There was a more insidious cause of this wreck – **climate change**. The North Pacific sea temperature rose to its highest level since records began. Prey fish such as mackerel and sprats moved south, leaving the guillemots and razorbills without food.

As the North Sea warms such events may become more common here in the UK. Climate change not only influences food supplies but the warming is increasing the frequency and intensity of cyclones and hence the likelihood of more regular wrecks. All this is against the background of a 70% decline in seabird numbers over the last 60 years.

Report by Richard Poyer

BIRD RECORDS SEPTEMBER 2021

Brent Goose	5 past Cullernose Point on 1st (I&KD).
Pink-footed Goose	70 over Branton on 23rd (I&KD), several skeins over Yearle & Seahouses late in the month (SV&AJM) (JPL).
Whooper Swan	1 at Budle Bay on 25th (DGB), 2 at Low Newton on 26th (PH).
Ruddy Shelduck	1 at Newton Pool on 10th (JC) & 26th (PH) was probably an escape.
Pintail	1 at Branton Ponds on 28th (I&KD).
Common Scoter	9 off Cullernose Point on 2nd (I&KD).
Red-throated Diver	1 off Cullernose Point on 1st (I&KD) & 1 off Holy Island on 25th (A&MG).
Great Northern Diver	1 off Cullernose Point on 1st (I&KD).
Sooty Shearwater	1 at Cullernose Point on 1st & 18 on 2nd (I&KD).
Manx Shearwater	10 at Cullernose Point on 1st (I&KD).
Little Egret	8 at Budle Bay on 20th (JPL) & 9 at Fenham Le Moor on 25th (A&MG), were the largest numbers.
Pacific Golden Plover	1 at Holy Island on 5th (I&KD).
Golden Plover	600 at Holy Island on 25th (I&KD).
Black-tailed Godwit	30 at Budle Bay on 14th (JPL).
Ruff	1 at Monk's House Pool on 6th (JPL).
Dunlin	1 at Monk's House Pool on 6th (JPL)
Temminck's Stint	1 at Monk's House Pool on 6th was a juvenile (JPL).
Little Stint	1 at Monk's House Pool on 6th (JPL).
Common Sandpiper	1 at Budle Bay on 14th (JPL).
Redshank	2 at Monk's House Pool on 6th (JPL).
Little Gull	2 past Cullernose Point on 2nd (I&KD).
Roseate Tern	1 past Cullernose Point on 2nd (I&KD).
Great Skua	6 past Cullernose Point on 1st & 2nd (I&KD).
Pomarine Skua	1 past Cullernose Point on 1st & 2nd (I&KD).
Arctic Skua	3 past Cullernose Point on 2nd (I&KD).
Cuckoo	1 at Holy Island on 5th (I&KD).
Long-eared Owl	1 at Holy Island on 5th (I&KD).
Merlin	1 at Holy Island on 5th (I&KD).
Raven	1 at Reaveley on 16th & 3 on 23rd with 2 on Holy Island on 19th (I&KD), 1 at Howick on 18th (PH).
Blackcap	17 at Howick on 3rd (PH).
Wheatear	5 at Holy Island on 5th (I&KD), 9 at Dunstanburgh Castle on 22nd (PH) & 10 at Holy Island on 25th (A&MG).
Brambling	1 at Low Newton on 26th (PH).

Observers Graham Bell (DGB), Janet Chubb (JC), Ian & Keith Davison (I & KD), Alan & Margaret Goodall (A&MG), Phil Hanmer (PH), John P Lumby (JPL), Stewart & Alison McCormick(SV&AJM).

October Records: please submit no later than 1st November 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**.