NORTH NORTHUMBERLAND BIRD CLUB

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Iain Robson makes a welcome return to Bamburgh

Stewart McCormick

Siskin: R. Poyer See Website.

FIELD TRIPS

Read **Phil and Marge Noble's** report on their visit to the Hirsel Estate on 9th Feb and see details of the upcoming field trip to Chevington (see page 2)

GEORGIA : Kazbegi & Chachuna.

Iain Robson, - a local lad who needs no introduction to regulars at the Bird Club, Manager of an ANOB for the last three years, he goes off –piste to the regions of Kazbegi and Chachuna with partner, Janet ……. Turn to **pages4&5** for **Richard Poyer's** report.

BIRD RECORDS for FEBRUARY

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

TRIBUTE to STEWART : Editor steps down

'Having now edited the Newsletter for more than 7 years, which has been a pleasure and privilege for me, I am happy to step down and pass the post on to our new Editor, **David Lloyd Blake**, with my very best wishes.' : **Stewart McCormick**

NEWLOOK WEBSITE

Check out the new look header pictures on our **Website**. You will also find details of local bird ringing, and much more.
www.northnorthumberlandbirdclub.co.uk

NOTICEBOARD

INDOOR MEETINGS BAMBURGH PAVILION

· **Friday 11th March 2022 at 7.30pm Emma Witcutt & David Kinchin-Smith,** having had to cancel earlier, are now most welcome to the Pavilion to give their talk **'Gough Island ..*Saving the Birds'*** This remote island in the South Atlantic lying roughly halfway between Cape Town and Buenos Aires !!

NNBC MEETINGS and COVID

In line with government guidance, the wearing of face masks is now a matter of personal choice

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.]

'EAST CHEVINGTON, Nr Amble : Saturday - 26th March, 2022 10.00am

Meeting point: near the turning circle at the end of the rough track (**NZ 271984** Explorer Map 325) - Directions from Amble :- take the A1068 and after the left turning for Druridge Bay Country Park take the next left almost opposite the turning to Red Row and follow the track to the very end.

Description: We will be walking around the North Pool and after a short walk to Chibburn Burn to sea watch while the tide is high **Leader: Alan Goodall**

Feedback on the Hirsel walk, Wednesday 9th February:

On a bright, sunny morning 15 of us including one new member of the NNBC met in the car park at The Hirsel. Everybody looked well wrapped up against the cold wind, but eager to enjoy a morning out in the fresh air. The paths were generally dry, but we were aware of some muddy areas and tree roots.

We set off through the woods and saw a pair of Mallard on Leet Water, a tributary of the Tweed, then through the golf course, hearing Great Tits calling. The path continued along the side of the valley of Leet Water and the drumming of a Great Spotted Woodpecker drew our attention to its location. Two Buzzards flew overhead and Long-tailed Tits flitted through the branches, whilst a Treecreeper crept silently up the bare trunk of an ancient tree.

On the slope above, two Roe Deer watched us carefully before moving on, and a Brown Hare bounded up towards them.

Standing on Dunglass bridge we were captivated by a flock of Chaffinch and Brambling high up in the branches above, and a Kingfisher darted rapidly along the river. Walking back to the homestead buildings we passed swathes of snowdrops and aconites and the Highland Cattle for which The Hirsel estate is renowned.

Some members of the group continued along the track to the bird hide and the side of the lake, from where there were good views of Goldeneye, Greylag Geese, Teal, Mute Swan and Gadwall. Every body thanked Phil and Marge and said how much they had enjoyed the walk and the variety of birds seen.

Birds seen :-

Blackbird, Blue Tit, Robin, Goldfinch, Cormorant, Great Tit, Mallard, Crow, Bullfinch.

Wood Pigeon, Great Spotted Woodpecker, Long-tailed Tit, Buzzard, Treecreeper,

Sparrowhawk, Pheasant, Little Grebe, Heron, Jackdaw, Goldcrest, Chaffinch, Nuthatch,

Kingfisher, Wren, Brambling, Jay, Mute Swan, Moorhen, Goldeneye, Wigeon, Teal, Gadwall,

Greylag Goose

Phil & Marge Noble

NOTICEBOARD

Julian Bell ,who now resides in Norway and is the son of Honorary President and Founder, Graham Bell, made a return visit to Northumberland in February and has posted a blog which can be viewed on the following link https://oeygardenbirds.blogspot.com/2022/03/north-northumberland-2002-26022022-what.html

Rosemary Bell

Can You Help ?

Like most community-based clubs and societies, our Bird Club can only run as effectively as it does because so many members give generously of their time and skills.

This ranges from helping with refreshments at our indoor meetings, to leading field trips and to helping as a member of the Committee. We all enjoy the friendly and co-operative atmosphere that this builds up, and the well-being benefits of volunteering for those involved are now well known.

For the Club to move confidently into the future, we need to make sure that as many people as possible are involved and that there is a broad base of active members. In time, we will need new officers and members of the Committee. We know that taking on such roles can feel a bit daunting, but the more people have been involved in the workings of the Club, the easier it is to step up to such challenges.

So, if you would just like to be a little bit more involved, if you feel that you have some useful skills to offer, or if you just want to "test the water", why not volunteer to help the Committee on an informal basis? There are several areas where we are really keen to get some help, but whatever your talents, if you would like to be more involved, have a chat with any member of the Committee to explore how you can help.

The areas we are looking for in particular include help with setting up and looking after the Club's electronic equipment at meetings. We are also aware that our social media presence will be an increasingly important part of future communication, and could do with help from someone happy to get to grips with this.

We have a reputation as a friendly, active and welcoming Club. We all share the thrill of birding through our incredible range of talks and the camaraderie of field trips to such wonderful locations on our doorstep. To keep all of this going into the future, **we need your help.**

Teamwork .We're in this together !

Here, give me that. I can help !

Georgia – birds of the Kazbegi & Chachuna Regions

Kazbegi Region

Chachuna Region

In April 2018 Iain Robson and his partner Janet spent a week exploring two contrasting areas of Georgia. Their trip was to see some of the birds of the Western Palearctic that they needed for their list of this biogeographic realm. Georgia is at the eastern border of that realm and so should provide some of the target birds needed to complete their list.

After collecting their 4X4 from Tiblisi, essential for the roads that they were to be on, they set off north along the military road that goes to Russia. They were staying in the Kazbegi region on the edge of the Caucasus Range. Iain explained that there was an element of luck bird watching in this region in April. Too early and the would still be snow covered. Too late and the mountain birds would have moved away. Their choice of late April was just right.

One of the first birds they saw was a Ring Ouzel – Caucasian race. The similarity didn't end there, as in this region the slopes were often clothed in sea buckthorn. It was on this that they first saw one of the target species – the spectacular Güldenstädt's (White-winged) Redstart.

Many of the birds were familiar from Northumberland – Blackbird, Twite, Mistle Thrush, Raven, Goldfinch. Dunnock, Great Tit, Chaffinches and House Sparrow. However, to see more target birds meant an early rise and scoping along the snow and ice patches of the mountain slopes. There they heard and saw the Caucasian Snowcock and Caucasian Grouse. In the valleys around Stepantsminda (their base) were Black Redstart, Northern Wheatear, Water Pipits, Ring Ouzel, White Wagtail with Alpine Chough and Steppe Buzzard overhead.

After breakfast one morning, with low cloud around, Iain and Janet decided to stay local. Meeting a group of Swedish birders gave them the opportunity of seeing, in Iain's words, "the bird of the trip" – a Great Rosefinch and on sea buckthorn.

Two of their other target birds that they were successful in seeing were equally attractive with red in their plumage – the Red-fronted Serin and the Wallcreeper.

Great Rosefinch

Red—fronted Serin

Wallcreeper

After three days in the north it was time to move south east to the area bordering Azerbaijan. Janet and Iain were staying in the town of Dedoplstskaro and were going to do most of their birding in the Chachuna Protected Area. With its rolling steppe landscape it has a completely different ecosystem to the Kazbegi region. Its semi- arid rolling grassland is grazed by sheep. Within the protected area is the Dalis Mta Reservoir and just outside it two lakes, including the Jandara Reservoir. The birds that Janet and Iain saw reflected these environments.

The plains were alive with Corn Bunting, Hoopoe, Red-backed Shrike, Black-eared Wheatear, Crested, Calandra and Skylark, Black-headed Buntings, Red-backed Woodchat, Lesser-grey Shrikes and Rollers. With such a food supply of small birds there were far more raptors. Crossing the plains Janet and Iain saw Steppe Eagle, Pallid Harrier, Long-legged Buzzard, Steppe Vulture, Short-toed Eagles, Black Kites and Griffon Vulture – quite a list.

One of Iain's target birds was the Black Francolin. A game bird of the Pheasant family it is on the eastern border of the Western Palearctic region. A bird favouring bushes near water, they set off early one morning for the Dalis Mta Reservoir. Eating their breakfast by a stream from the reservoir they heard the birds calling and were rewarded with views of a displaying male.

The reservoirs themselves, their margins and the smaller lakes had many wader, duck and tern species :Armenian Gull, Great Crested Grebe, Common Sandpiper, Green, Spotted and Common Redshank, Little Ringed Plover, Black-winged Stilt, Red-necked Phalarope, Purple Heron, Great and Little Egret, White-winged Tern.

It was on the margin of the reservoir that Janet and Iain found another of their target birds – a Menetries's Warbler. In fact most of the warblers seen on the trip were in this warmer south-east region. A sought after warbler, the Green Warbler, was in fact found in a small local park close to the hotel.

Iain commented on the fact that in the villages and towns of this part of Georgia, cattle roamed along the roadsides, grazing on the verges. The landscape was far less manicured than in Northumberland. This resulted in a far larger amount of vegetation, more flowers and more food for insects and birds. When was the last time anyone saw Corn Bunting in Northumberland? Our manicured verges are hardly encouraging for wildlife, was Iain's message.

Their hotel in Dedoplstskaro was owned by an MP and Janet and Iain's last evening in Georgia was spent sharing a delicious evening meal with the family and sampling some of Georgia's tasty wines. There were more birds to be seen the next day as they made their way back to Tiblisi and a total of 152 birds were recorded on what was a memorable trip.

Guldenstadt's Redstart

Black Francolin

Menetrier's Warbler

BIRD RECORDS FEBRUARY 2022

Grey Partridge	12 at Beal on 2nd (I&KD).
Pink-footed Goose	550 at Low Newton on 19th (A&MG).
Whooper Swan	23 at Birling Carrs on 5th & 8 at Low Newton on 19th (A&MG),10 at Low Newton on 27th (SVM), 10 at-Branton GP on 27th (I&KD).
Shoveler	c.60 at Budle Bay all month (JPL,A&MG).
Common Scoter	200 off Stag Rocks on 2nd (I&KD).
Long-tailed Duck	6 off Stag Rocks on 2nd (I&KD) & 5 on 7th (SVM).
Goldeneye	2 at Embleton Quarry on 19th (PA&MD).
Red-Breasted Merganser	10 at Birling Carrs on 5th (A&MG).
Water Rail	1 at Branton GP on 2nd (I&KD).
Great-crested Grebe	13 at Birling Carrs on 5th (A&MG).
Golden Plover	1000 at Shoreston Hall fields all month (JPL,A&MG) & 600 at Low Newton on 19th (A&MG).
Grey Phalarope	1 at Dunstanburgh on 27th (I&KD,SVM).
Red-throated Dive	1 off Stag Rocks on 2nd (I&KD)
Black-throated Diver	1 off Stag Rocks on 2nd (I&KD) & 1 on 7th (SVM).
Little Egret	1 at Low Newton on 27th (SVM).
Barn Owl	1 at Westnewton on 19th (AR).
Peregrine	1 over Alnwick on 5th (MH).
Raven	1 at Beanley Wood on 25th (I&KD).
Greenfinch	7 at Alnwick all month (A&MG).
Brambling	1 at Spindelstone Wood on 1st & 1 in Alnwick all month (A&MG), 5 at Shepards Law 25th (I&KD).
Siskin	6 at Ellingham on 16th (I&KD), 2 at Lemmington on 14th (PHa).
Snow Bunting	12 at Goswick Sands on 24th (PS), 15 on Holy Island on 26th (AJ&SVM).
Bar-headed Goose	1 at Alnmouth on 5th (A&MG) an escape.

Observers Paul Ashdown & Martine Delbauve ((PA&MD), Ian & Keith Davison (I & KD), Alan & Margaret Goodall (A&MG), Phil Hanmer (PHa), John P Lumby (JPL), Stewart & Alison Mc Cormick (SV&AJM), Allan Robson (AR), Paul Snell (PS).

March Records: please submit no later than 1st April 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**.