NORTH NORTHUMBERLAND BIRD CLUB

Chairman
Mr Richard Poyer,
12 Byron Street,
Amble, NE65 0ER
Tel: 07936 909649

Membership Secretary
Mrs Fiona Southern,
Robin Cottage, Spindlestone Mill,
Belford, NE70 7ED
Tel: 01668 214481

Secretary
Mr Paul Ashdown,
30 Creighton Place,
Embleton NE 66 3FA
Tel: 01665 576771.

Honorary President: Graham Bell

www.northnorthumberlandbirdclub.co.uk **ringouzel@northnorthumberlandbirdclub.co.uk**

www.facebook.com/NorthNorthumberlandBirdClub

Emma Wincutt & David Kinchin-Smith

FIELD TRIPS

Read **Alan Goodall's** report on the field trip to Chevington on March 24th (see page 3)

GOUGH ISLAND .. *Saving the birds*

Emma Wincutt and David Kinchin-Smith gave a fascinating talk on their epic trip to Gough Island for the RSPB…….Turn to **pages 4&5** for **Paul Ashdown's** report.

BIRD RECORDS for MARCH

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

NEWLOOK WEBSITE

Keep up to date with the latest news on our **Website**. You will also find details of local bird ringing, including an item from next month's Guest Speaker, **Phil Hamner**, and much more.
www.northnorthumberlandbirdclub.co.uk

Bird Ringing

Hilary Gostelow-Drury with Tawny Owl

NOTICEBOARD

NNBC MEETINGS and COVID

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

INDOOR MEETINGS BAMBURGH PAVILION

· **Friday 8th APRIL 2022 at 7.30pm David Lloyd Blake** will give a talk on **'Okavango ..*a mysterious, everchanging landscape of floodwater on the edge of the Kalahari Desert'*** Concentrating on the birdlife of this and the surrounding areas, observed during his many visits to the region.

Wooler Water Walks 2022-23

With engineering works planned for the Wooler Water downstream from Haugh Head Ford, the Glendale Trust has organised a series of walks along the river.

The NNBC was asked if it would like to be involved and some of it's members are leading 4 Spring/Early Summer walks this year. There is a maximum of 8 people per walk and bookings are made through the Glendale Trust**.**

The Dawn Chorus Field Trip.

Despite the storm damage to the Ford and Etal Estate, Lord Joicey is pleased to be able to lead the NNBC and others on a Dawn Chorus walk on the 15th May at 05.30. Details will be in the May Newsletter**.**

NOTICEBOARD

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.]

'Feedback on the EAST CHEVINGTON Walk, Nr Amble : Saturday - 26th March, 2022

A group of 13 club members met at East Chevington for a walk to the Chibburn Mouth and a walk around the North Pool.

It was nice to see some unfamiliar faces including some members that had travelled from Berwick and beyond as well as familiar faces including our Honorary President Graham, who was on excellent form and passed on much of his knowledge of obscure information regarding birds in his usual interesting manner throughout the walk.

From the parking area we had our first sightings including Skylarks and calling Chiffchaffs and we set off in glorious sunshine to the Chibburn Mouth to catch the high tide. Several of the group had expressed their hope of seeing a Marsh Harrier and after a few minutes into our walk their wish was granted as everyone had lovely views of these now resident birds along with sightings of the Stonechats and Reed Buntings that are also resident here.

Arriving at the Burn Mouth it was immediately obvious a few free running dogs were unconducive to sightings of the Twite which often bathe here, but we were able to observe at least 12 Red-throated Divers on the sea and a distant Scoter (thank you Fiona for allowing people access to your scope) and Redshank on the shoreline.

We then commenced our walk around the North Pool and along the path, we had sightings of Chiffchaff, Linnets and Wrens en route to the Eastern (L-shaped) hide which gave us views of lots of Goldeneye, Tufted Duck, Great Crested and Little Grebes, Grey Heron as well as the usual wild fowl commonly seen on the pool.

Continuing our walk around the pool some of our group saw a Tree-creeper, but we then encountered a lovely hedgerow featuring a mixed flock of Yellowhammer, Bullfinch, Chaffinch and Greenfinch.

Our walk terminated at the north facing hide where I was hoping we would see the 2 White-fronted Geese or, as Graham called them Anser Albifrons, that have been present for several weeks, but no sign of them unfortunately. However, we did see Red-breasted Mergansers and Lapwing to add to our list, giving us a total of 46 bird species. Notably some of our eagle-eyed members also saw a sand lizard which if its identity can be confirmed is extremely rare in the UK and certainly in our part of the UK. I'll be contacting local experts to get their opinions.

Species List :- Greylag Goose, Skylark, Dunnock, Carrion Crow, Cormorant, Wood Pigeon, Magpie, Marsh Harrier, Chiffchaff, Meadow Pipit, Mute Swan, Reed Bunting, Stonechat, Red-throated Diver, Redshank, Common Scoter, Eider, Linnet, Wren, Black-headed Gulls, Wigeon, Goldeneye, Moorhen, Coot, Great Crested Grebe, Shelduck, Mallard, Herring Gull, Grey Heron, Teal, Oystercatcher, Little Grebe, Robin, Treecreeper, Coal Tit, Great Tit, Blackbird, Chaffinch, Greenfinch, Yellowhammer, Bullfinch, Red-breasted Merganser, Buzzard and Lapwing.

Alan Goodall

Gt Crested Grebe

Yellowhammer

GOUGH ISLAND …. *Saving the birds.*

We are lucky to live in one of the wilder parts of England, but this month's talk took us to somewhere with a whole different level of "remote". Lost in the middle of the South Atlantic, midway-ish between Rio and Cape Town, Gough Island is part of the Tristan da Cunha group, a British Overseas Territory, and one of the most important sea-bird colonies in the world. David and Em, whose talk took us there, spent 13 months on the island in 2016/17 as RSPB sponsored resident biologists. They were part of the tiny group of scientists and support staff who are the only human presence in this Unesco World Heritage site. Cut off totally from the rest of the world, they had to survive on food, fuel and stores brought in with them. They had no access to doctors or dentists other than the team medic, and lived in the spartan conditions of the research base, the only buildings on the island. The pictures the pair shared with us looked like something from Jurassic Park, with misty mountain tops, steep sided ravines covered in ferns, and roiling windswept seas.

Despite these challenges, the enthusiasm and passion for this place that David and Em communicated electrified us all. They were there, the two of them explained, for three key jobs. First, they took us through the regular routines of monitoring some of the largest seabird colonies in the world. Weighing, ringing and counting an amazing range of birds, from tiny burrow nesting petrels and the critically endangered **Gough Island Bunting**, through to spectacularly plumed **Northern Rockhopper Penguins**, and the truly enormous **Tristan Albatross**. The numbers of birds nesting on the island sounds unbelievably huge (5 million pairs of **Great Shearwaters** for example), but much of their ecology and biology is unknown. Getting baseline data on population size and breeding success is vital work if we are to help these birds survive. But David and Em weren't just there for the birds. A similar monitoring job has to be done for the Sub-Antarctic Fur Seals which also breed on the island. These, we were told, can be even more feisty than the penguins, and our intrepid biologists had to arm themselves with sturdy sticks to protect themselves as they undertook the increasingly challenging task of weighing the pups, getting heavier and heavier as the season progressed. The third job for David and Em was to act as the island's Bio-Security Officers. The fragile and unique ecosystem of Gough Island is already threatened by invasive species, so bio-security involves both making sure that no new species make it onto the island, and also attempting to remove, or at least reduce the impact of, species that have already established themselves.

Gough Island Bunting

Emm monitoring Atlantic Yellow Nosed Albatross

Great Shearwaters

However, it was the story of invasive mice, covered in the second half of the talk, which really showed us all just how important this part of their role actually was.

House Mice arrived on Gough Island in the nineteenth century, probably with sailors hunting fur seals. With no natural predators or competition, the mice made the most of the food-bonanza offered by year-round breeding birds. They have developed increased mass, and with an uncontrolled population boom, were eating vast numbers of eggs. Because the nesting birds have no experience of predation, they remain passive when under attack, and this allowed the mice to develop even more gruesome feeding habits. We were shown upsetting footage of large numbers of mice feasting on the flesh of live albatross chicks at night. (Apparently, even the adults can be vulnerable to such attacks despite their size). The impact of this behaviour has been devastating on the birds. In some of the monitored colonies, such as one of the species of Prions, whole generations of chicks have been killed. The predictions for the future became grim, with the Tristan Albatross, for example, clearly heading for extinction. David and Em were on Gough Island before the well-publicised actions led by the RSPB to eradicate the mice, but they showed us footage of how helicopters were used to lay poison bait across the island in 2021. In order to exterminate the mice without killing the land-based birds which might also eat the bait, Gough Island Buntings and Moorhens had to be taken into temporary captivity while the project was underway. The logistical, financial and ecological challenge of managing this project was huge. It is a tribute to everyone involved that it went ahead at all. The really sad news, that despite all this excellent work and effort, small numbers of mice are still being found on the island, but this should not detract from the achievement. Whatever happens next, the awful pressure of rampant mice on the birds has been dramatically reduced. This should give many species the opportunity to recover while further strategies are developed. All of us who saw the pictures of David and Em's work, were left admiring the commitment and passion of people like them, working to save such special places and animals. We might never get to see such wonders ourselves, but our responsibility to protect them could not be more clear.

For more information about the RSPB's work on Gough Island, and about the birds which breed there, go to www.goughisland.com, where you can also sign up for a regular newsletter.

David monitoring Northern Rockhopper Penguins

Courting Tristan Albatrosses

BIRD RECORDS MARCH 2022

Grey Partridge	5 at West Fleetham on 1st (PAr), 4 at Middle Ord on 2nd (EH), 2 at Mile End on 23rd (I&KD), 2 at Beal on 25th (A&MG).
Brent Goose	100 at Holy Island on 6th (SVM).
Barnacle Goose	1 at Branton Ponds on 1st (I&KD), 1 at Dunstanburgh with pinks on 16th (PAr).
Whooper Swan	8 at Low Newton on 8th (PAr), 7 at Branton GP on 26th (I&KD).
Pintail	1 drake at Hedgeley GP on 1st (PAr).
Common Scoter	200 off Stag Rocks on 3rd (A&MG).
Black Scoter	1 off Stag Rocks on 3rd (A&MG).
Long-tailed Duck	35 off Stag Rocks on 1st (I&KD).
Goldeneye	15 at Hedgeley GP on 18th (PAr).
Water Rail	2 at Holy Island on 25th (I&KD).
Slavonian Grebe	1 off Cocklawburn on 3rd (A&MG).
Avocet	2 at Low Newton Scrape on 9th & 4 on 23rd (PAr).
Golden Plover	1400 at Boulmer on 25th (A&MG).
Grey Phalarope	1 at Dunstanburgh on 1st (A&MG).
Green Sandpiper	1 at Hedgeley GP on 1st (I&KD) & 1 on 22nd (A&MG).
Little Gull	1 at Alnwick on 21st (I&KD).
Red-throated Dive	2 off Cocklawburn on 3rd & 3 off Boulmer on 25th (A&MG), 1 off Holy Island on 25th (I&KD).
White-billed Diver	1 off Stag Rocks on 1st (I&KD).
Little Egret	1 at Branton on 3rd (I&KD).
White-tailed Eagle	1 on Holy Island on 7th (I&KD).
Short-eared Owl	1 on Holy Island on 6th (SVM).
Raven	1 at Harthope Valley on 13th & a pair at Kirknewton on 27th (EH), 2 at Windy Gyle on 23rd (I&KD).
Shore Lark	2 on Holy Island on 7th (I&KD) & 2 on 23rd (PAr).
Chiffchaff	1 at Berwick on 6th (DG&RB), 1 at Branton GP on 10th & 30+ on 22nd (I&KD), 1 at Harthope Valley on 13th & 1 atEast Ord on 16th (EH), 1 atEllingham on 17th (MH), 3 at Chatton on 18th (SVM), 7 at Branxton & 1 at Ford on 19th (JJ) 1 at Wooler on 30th (AR).
Blackcap	1 at Branton GP on 26th (I&KD).
Ring Ouzel	1 at Branton GP on 22nd (I&KD).
Fieldfare	120 at Shepards Law on 1st (I&KD), 30 at Biteabout on 8th (SVM), 100 at Chathill on 16th (PAr).
Redwing	50 at Shepards Law on 1st & 33 at Branton on 15th (I&KD).
Wheatear	1 at Alwinton on 23rd (I&KD).
Brambling	3 in Alnwick all month (A&MG), 10 at Shepards Law on 17th (I&KD).
Bullfinch	1 at Chatton on 8th (PAr).
Greenfinch	2 at Yearle 6/9th (DG&RB), 4 at Wooler on 16th (AR), 2 at East Ord on17/28th (EH).
Siskin	2 at Yearle from 4th (SVM), 2 at Wooler on 16th (AR).
Lapland Bunting	1 on Holy Island on 7th (I&KD).
Snow Bunting	12 on Holy Island on 7th (I&KD).
Yellowhammer	12 at Shepards Law on 17th (I&KD).

Observers Paul Armstrong (PAr), Graham & Rosemary Bell (DG&RB), Ian & Keith Davison (I & KD), Alan & Margaret Goodall (A&MG), Micheal Hall (MH), Elizabeth Harrison (EH), James Joicey (JJ), John P Lumby (JPL), Stewart Mc Cormick (SVM), Allan Robson (AR).

April Records: please submit no later than 1st May to the Recorder, John Lumby,