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Dr. Mark Eaton

Arctic Tern and chicks.

FIELD TRIPS
See details of this month's up and coming field trip to Lindisfarne on **page 2.**

THE RARE BREEDING BIRDS PANEL
Dr. Mark Eaton gave a talk on the work of Rare Breeding Birds Panel….Turn to **pages 5,6 & 7** for **Richard Poyer's** report.

BIRD RECORDS for August
The most recent sightings in our area, compiled by our Recorder, **Paul Armstrong. (see pages 10 & 11)**

BREEDING SUCCESSES IN OUR REGION
See details on our Notice Board on **page 2**

RINGER'S ROUNDUP
(see pages 8 & 9)

MEMBERSHIPE SUBSCRIPTIONS
are now due. See details of how to pay on **page 2.**

NOTICEBOARD

INDOOR MEETINGS BAMBURGH PAVILION

· **Friday 9th September 2022 at 7.30pm Brian Clasper** will give a talk on **UGANDA—it's birds, gorillas, and other wildlife.**

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.]

Field Trip on Saturday 17th September 2022 to LINDISFARNE NNR

Meet at the Main Car Park 10.45 am. This is a Pay and Display Car Park and the fees are £5 for 3 hrs, £6 for 4 hrs, £7 for 5 hrs, £8 all day.

(Realistically the 3 hr slot will not give sufficient time. Payment by card is possible but not all machines seem to be on-line so coins are always a safe option !)

Safe crossing time to Lindisfarne on 17th September, according to the Northumberland County Council chart is 10.35 — 18.50.

MEMBERSHIP FEES ARE NOW DUE.

Following a change ratified at our last AGM the membership year now runs from 1st September to 31st August. Fees remain unchanged at :-

Family/Couple £15, Individual £10, Student - Free.

You can pay by BACS but we would ask you to also fill in the attached Membership Form for our records.

Of interest ?

The BORDERS FUNGUS GROUP (membership free) is running a series of Fungal Forays through September to November visiting some good local birding haunts (Lindisfarne, Newton links, Hirsel and several more). If you are interested contact them directly on their website nefsg.co.uk

NOTICEBOARD

BREEDING SUCCESS Northumberland saw several successes this year. At Lindisfarne National Nature Reserve a total of 33 Little Tern chicks fledged along with 9 Ringed Plovers. There was further success at Ross, however exact details will not be known until next week. Liz Harrison

Also, Avocets and Arctic Terns breeding at Low Newton. (see full report Coastal Surprises on page 4) Paul Ashdown

Avocet

Young Avocet

Arctic Tern and chicks

NOTICEBOARD

Coastal Surprises

For many NNBC members the summer seabird breeding season is usually one of the highlights of the birding year, blessed as we are with so many fantastic sites almost on our doorstep. This year, however, the disaster of bird-flu has reminded us all how fragile these wonderful places have become, and the sight of ill and dying birds has spoiled many a coastal walk. However, amongst all this truly gloomy news, there are some wonderful surprises and success stories.

Low Newton is one of my favourite local spots for walking and birding (and the odd drink at The Ship!). There have been avocets on the shallow pool behind the cottages for several years, but this year has turned out to be an amazing success for them. No less than six pairs nested in the shallow water, providing a wonderful spectacle for tourists and birders alike. These nests seem to have produced about 14 chicks. Although not all of them will have made it to fledging, it seems that the majority did, making Low Newton one of the most productive avocet sites we have. I had such fun trying to count the number of chicks as they pottered around – some nearly adult size while others seemed little more than a fluffy ball on legs, with that peculiarly odd bill sticking out from the feathers.

If you were lucky when visiting the avocets, you might have caught one of the other local breeding successes of the year. Marsh Harriers have been seen over the reedbeds on and off through the winter and spring, and a pair including a male that seemed to start the year still in juvenile plumage, just didn't go away. No one could be certain what was going on with the birds hidden in the marsh, with the only sightings coming from their spectacular hunting flights over the reeds. Breeding behaviour like exchanging prey was seen, but with the male so inexperienced, no one was really expecting too much. And then, no less than three fledged young pop up! Low Newton seems a much smaller site than most graced with these magnificent birds, and for them to have done so well is really great news.

Further north along the coast, the tern site at Long Nanny is another of our local gems. Bird flu did take a toll here, but less severe than many other places, and in fact it turned out to be an excellent year. I'm not sure how the wardens manage to count terns, I get lost so quickly whenever I try. However they do it, the news is good, with more than 50 Little Terns fledging and well over 1000 Arctics, meaning this is probably one of the best years for quite a while. If you visited Long Nanny during the season, you also had the chance to see a real surprise visitor. A lonely North American Black Tern, lost as the result of some Atlantic storm or other freak event, has decided to make the most of his life this side of the pond, and has become a regular part of the Long Nanny colony. He has turned up for the last couple of years, and shows plenty of breeding behaviour like having fish to offer prospective mates. Sadly, he is never going to be successful, but given the longevity of seabirds, he may well be around for several years to come!

Paul Ashdown.

PLUS a VISITOR !!

American Black Tern moulting at Low Newton

RARE BREEDING BIRDS PANEL.

Report by Richard Poyer

The work of the Rare Breeding Birds Panel (RBBP) Dr.Mark Eaton

The final talk before the summer break was from one of our regular contributors – Mark Eaton. Previously he has spoken to us with his RSPB hat on but now he has a different role – that of Secretary of the Rare Breeding Birds Panel. The aim of his talk was to show members the importance of monitoring, something we can all take part in, and the role that the results of this monitoring play in setting conservation policies.

But what is a rare breeding bird in the UK? It is a species with fewer than 2,000 breeding pairs, over a five year average, in the UK. So, the latest data, which is for 2019, covers 99 species of rare native birds, such as Goldeneye, and 10 rare non-native species, such as Cattle Egret.

The reports are really the end product of a long line of citizen science which start from the observations and recording that take place when people are out doing their Breeding Bird Surveys, WeBS counts, bird watching or special project counts organised by the RSPB and BTO. So those records which NNBC members submit to the club's recorder, if they are of a rare species and there is some evidence of breeding, will eventually find there way to Mark through the County Recorder, Tim Dean. Last year there were over 9,000 records submitted. All the data will help to build up information on trends which can then be used to set conservation priorities such as creating special protection areas and initiating research.

Mark used two examples to show the importance of this citizen science – the Red Kite and the Turtle Dove. The Red Kite became extinct in England in 1871 and Scotland in 1879. By 1903 when protection efforts started, only a handful of pairs were left in remote parts of central Wales. Protection, intervention and a move by the Kites to more favourable feeding areas slowly increased the number of breeding pairs through the 1970's. However, the Red Kite was on the RBB list when it started in 1973. Since then, feeding at stations such as Gigrin and Bellymack and re-introduction and breeding programmes have steadily increased the numbers until, in 2012, the Red Kite was taken off the RBB list and there are now an estimated 4,600 breeding pairs in the UK

RARE BREEDING BIRDS PANEL. (cont.)

Sadly, the story of the Turtle Dave is in the other direction. A national survey by 1,000 volunteers in 2021 produced an estimated 2,100 breeding pairs. This is a 98% drop from the estimated 125,000 pairs in the 1970's. Before the survey the estimate of breeding pairs was a much lower figure – 1,000. This low estimate meant that in 2018 the Turtle Dove was on the RBBP's list for the first time. Conservation measures were already in place in breeding areas. Richard Baines's talk in June last year took us through the North Yorks. Moors National Park Project. With hard data and monitoring, the conservation measures can be honed although it will be difficult to stop the hunting of the Dove on the Continent.

Mark summarised the picture of change that the data collection shows. On the positive side Goshawk, Mediterranean Gull, Little Egret and Cettis Warbler have all increased breeding significantly with Cettis Warbler and Mediterranean Gull now off the list of Rare Breeding Birds. Cattle Egret, on the other hand arrived on the list first in 2008. In 2019 there were probably 19 pairs breeding, nearly all in the south of England.

In contrast, Red-breasted Shrike and Montague's Harrier seem to have stopped breeding in the UK.

For some birds such as Ptarmigan, Quail and Long-eared Owl, upland habitats, secrecy in breeding or night-time activity limit our knowledge of the species breeding numbers.

The lack of monitoring and data means that a species may well appear on the list until monitoring evidence shows otherwise. Surprisingly, to me, the Barn Owl was on the list from 1996 to 2005. The 1996 and subsequent reports talk of estimates from county recorders. For example, the Northumberland estimate for 1996 was 16. As more accurate counts took place, the numbers increased so that the 5 year average of 2,000 was achieved by 2005 and the Barn Owl taken off the list. In 2020 Phil Hanmer recorded 51 breeding pairs in Northumberland.

Barn Owl success story ! (Photos DLB)

RARE BREEDING BIRDS PANEL. (cont.)

Cattle Egrets on the Somerset Levels

Cattle Egret

Little Egret

(photos R. Poyer)

A similar situation of incomplete reports and estimates occurred with the Kingfisher and it was on the list from 1996 to 2005. The problem of accurate data is evident in the RSPB estimate of UK breeding pairs of Kingfisher ranging from 3,800-6,400 – some range!

Mark concluded with words of encouragement for NNBC members to get out there and bird watch, to watch out for rarer species and, should we see any, look for evidence of breeding, submitting our records to Paul Armstrong.

(photos M Goodall)

(The RBBP have a very comprehensive web site with access to past reports at : rbbp.org.uk)

A RINGER'S YEAR

AUG 2022: Having just returned from a week visiting my son in East Anglia I noticed how much more diverse woodland and hedgerow there is in Norfolk and Suffolk, than Northumberland. There is in fact an assumption that the whole of East Anglia is made up of large arable fields; this is not true and no one has yet started massacring the hedge rows like they have around Alnwick!

Returning to one of four late nesting Barn Owls that we know about on the 18th of August we had a pleasant surprise. This tree box near Fontburn had six eggs and a two year old female bird in residence on the 21st of July; when the eggs were just hatching. On the 18th all 6 had hatched and we were able to ring all but one of them (which was exceptionally small). Checking two more near Longhorsley on the 31st we found one box had failed while another had succeeded – with four well grown young owls (see photo). This leaves us one more to return to check in September.

Turning to ringing at Howick, we had a report of an unusually well-travelled Long-Tailed Tit, from the British Trust for Ornithology. It was of a bird we 'controlled' as a retrap on the 29/7/22 that was actually originally ringed on the 25th September 2021 at 'Gravelly Marsh, Needs Ore, Hampshire 519 kms away (see photo).

We started to see the first signs of autumn migration on the 5/8/22. In amongst the 44 birds we processed (26 new & 18 retraps) there were some adult warblers on the way to Africa. Willow Warblers in particular are becoming quite rare at Howick so seeing a well feathered (newly moulted) adult bird was very nice (see photo). There was also 5 very young (locally hatched) Blackcaps and 5 similarly local Chiffchaffs. All these juvenile birds will have to 'feed-up' more to put on 'fat' before they can migrate. Almost the last bird captured was a young (but very strong and noisy) Jay. This is a resident that does not migrate and its siblings hung around in the trees waiting for it to be released! The retraps included a Coal Tit first ringed in 2020 and a pair of Nuthatch ringed as adults last year.

On the 6/8/22 two of my licensed C ringers, who live in Newcastle, travelled up to ring at Howick and brought with them a Doctorate Research Student from the University this young lady is from the Philippines and wants to add to her ringing experience before going back home to conduct ornithological field work. During the session we captured 32 birds (20 new & 12 retraps) including another adult Willow Warbler together with more juvenile Chiffchaffs and several very young Goldcrests. There was also an adult female Blackbird in Main Moult (replacing her Primary Flight Feathers etc.). Blackbirds suffer in long dry summers as they find it difficult to find food; so this one was probably coming to a bird-feeder when she flew into our net.

A RINGER'S YEAR (cont.)

Late Barn Owls, Blackcap, Long Tailed Tit, Willow Warbler.

We had a larger catch on the 12/8/22: 50 birds (37 new & 13 retraps). All but two of the new birds were juveniles of the year including Blackcaps, Chiffchaffs, Willow Warbler, Chaffinch, Dunnock, Tits and Robins. The few adults were a Great Tit and a Bullfinch. We had three more Bullfinch in the retraps; first ringed in 2020 (1) and 2021 (2) at Howick. Numbers fell back to 41 (18 new & 23 retraps) on the 13/8/22 but were still mostly juvenile birds (except for one adult Blackbird). This time we had four juvenile Bullfinch, several Blackcaps and some Chiffchaffs. The retraps ncluded an interesting male Chaffinch first ringed in 2015; that is now eight years old. On the 19/8/22 only 30 birds were processed (18 new & 12 retraps). Most of the new birds were juvenile and included 7 Blackcaps but there was also an adult male Blackcap with nice new plumage (having finished its main moult) (see photo). There were also four juvenile Goldcrest.

Ringing on the 26/8/22 (in my absence) captured 40 birds (30 new & 10 retraps) again mostly this years juveniles; including Tits, Goldcrests, Chiffchaff, Blackcaps, Chaffinch and the first Garden Warbler of the year. The Garden Warbler is a long-distance migrant on its way to humid West and Central Africa, south of the

Sahara. Its close relative the Blackcap rarely crosses the Sahara preferring to winter around the Mediterranean or North Africa. In amongst the retraps there was an adult Chiffchaff first ringed in 2021 as a juvenile; it will be interesting to get the full details on this birds travels from the BTO.

We are continuing to be at the Howick Ringing Station, weather permitting, most Friday and Saturday mornings until the end of October. If you're interested in seeing what we are doing just call in at the picnic-benches at Howick.

Best Regards

Phil Hanmer S Ringer/Trainer; Natural History Society of Northumbria Ringing Group (Hancock Museum). E-mail: tytoalbas@btinternet.com

BIRD RECORDS August 2022

Report by Paul Armstrong

Below are the highlights for the month of August.

Mute Swan	120+ on River Tweed Estuary on 19th	DG&RB
Wigeon	150+ on Holy Island on 28th	I&KD
Goldeneye	2 at Branton and Hedgeley on 25th	JMcC
Red-breasted Merganser	2 at Howick on 21st	JMcC
Cuckoo	1 at Newton Stead on 1st	PCA
Water Rail	1 at Newton Pool on 18th	AM&MG
Spotted Crake	1 at Newton Pool on 17th	M&SE
Great Crested Grebe	4 at Branton Ponds all month including 2 juveniles with the parents	I&KD/JMcC
Avocet	5 at Long Nanny on 1st	PCA
	1 at Monk's House Pool on 12th	JPL
Golden Plover	800 at Boulmer on 28th	AM&MG
Grey Plover	2 at Boulmer on 28th	AM&MG
Dotterel	1 at Boulmer on 28th	AM&MG
	1 at Longhoughton Steel on 29th	I&KD
Whimbrel	1 at Cullernose on 5th and 2 on 15th	I&KD
	1 at Fenham-le-Moor on 9th	PN&MN
Bar-tailed Godwit	24 at Newton Pool on 18th	AM&MG
Black-tailed Godwit	4 at Monk's House Pool on 19th	JPL
Knot	20 at Coquet on 5th	RP
	1 at Low Newton on 26th	PCA
Ruff	5 at Monk's House Pool on 25th	AM&MG
	1 at Newton Pool on 25th	M&SE
Curlew Sandpiper	2 at Boulmer on 28th	AM&MG
Little Stint	1 at Monk's House Pool on 12th in nearly full breeding plumage	JPL
Greenshank	1 at Long Nanny on 3rd	PCA
	1 at Holy Island on 28th	I&KD
Little Gull	1 at Long Nanny on 12th	PCA
Lesser Black-backed Gull	4 at Branton Ponds on 23rd	I&KD
Pomarine Skua	1 past Cullernose on 15th	I&KD
Arctic Skua	3 at Cullernose on 30th	I&KD
Red-throated Diver	1 on sea at Cullernose on 30th	I&KD
Little Egret	6 at Budle Bay on 25th	AM&MG
Osprey	1 juvenile at Fenham-le-Moor on 9th	PN&MN
Marsh Harrier	1 Female/Juvenile? Quartering ground at Holburn	JJ
Red Kite	1 at Etal soaring at height (500ft plus) amidst a flock of Gulls	JJ
Barn Owl	1 at Football Hole on 6th	PCA
	4 Pulli at Whittingham on 31st	P&AH
Short-eared Owl	1 hunting between Long Nanny and Link House Farm on 11th	PCA
Kingfisher	1 at Akeld on 6th 1 at Brandon Ford on 9th 1 at Branton Ponds all month, and 2 on 24th	I&KD
	1 at Hulne Park on 7th and 24th	JMcC
	1 at Long Nanny on 10th	PCA
	2 on River Coquet Pauperhaugh on 23rd	RP
Peregrine	1 at Branton on 4th	I&KD
Willow Warbler	1 at Howick on 6th	P&AH
	2 at Alnmouth Dunes on 10th	RP
Reed Warbler	1 at Branton and Hedgeley on 25th	JMcC

BIRD RECORDS August 2022 (cont.)

Blackcap	1 on Holy Island on 28th	I&KD
	8 at Howick on 29th	P&AH
Garden Warbler	1 at Howick on 26th	P&AH
Whitethroat	5 at Alnmouth Dunes on 10th	RP
	1 on Holy Island on 28th	I&KD
Nuthatch	4 at Harthope Valley on 14th	JMcC
Spotted Flycatcher	2 at Branton Ponds on 21st and 3 on 23rd (2 juvs). 4 in Branton on 23rd (2 juvs.)	I&KD
Redstart	1 near Hedgeley on 5th 1 at Branton Ponds on 13th	I&KD
Whinchat	5 at Harthope Valley on 14th	JMcC
Wheatear	2 at Newton Stead from 1st to 5th and again on 24th	PCA
	2 at Holy Island on 28th	I&KD
Dipper	2 at Hulne Park on 7th and 1 on 24th	JMcC
Yellow Wagtail	2 at Newton Scrape on 5th	PCA
	7 at Newton Scrape on 12th	M&SE
Muscovy Duck	1 Adult female at Wooler swimming with 8 young on 29th	JMcC

Contributors

Paul Armstrong (PCA)
Graham & Rosemary Bell (DG&RB)
Ian & Keith Davison (I&KD)
Mike and Sarah Elder (M&SE)
Alan & Margaret Goodall (AM&MG)
Phil & Alison Hanmer (P&AH)
James Joicey (JJ)
John Lumby (JPL)
John McCutcheon (JMcC)
Phil & Marge Noble (PN&MN)
Richard Poyer (RP)

A list of all birds reported throughout August is attached to this newsletter.

Please send September records to Paul Armstrong NNBCrecords@yahoo.com by 1st October 2022

If you want a bird adding to the highlights list, you will need to submit, the species, location, date(s) and count together with any comments. If you just want it added to the list of species seen in the month, then you only need submit the name of the bird.