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

John Lumby

ABOVE 15000ft in the ANDES.

John Lumby gave a talk on Above 15000ft in the Andes

Turn to page **6** for **Paul Ashdown's** report

COQUET ESTUARY and BIRLING CARRS field trip.

See report on **pages 3 & 4**

NEW YEAR BIG DAY

See report of our annual bird trip on **page 5**

Barn Owl Photo supplied Phil & Alison Hanmer

RINGER'S ROUNDUP

See **pages 6 & 7**

BIRD BOOKS FOR SALE

See **page 2**

NOTICE OF CHANGE OF VENUE FOR JANUARY, FEBRUARY, AND MARCH

see **Noticeboard** on **page 2**

NOTICEBOARD

INDOOR MEETINGS THE HUB, SEAHOUSES, NE65 7YS

Friday 13th JANUARY 2023 at 7.30pm Gary HOBSON will give a talk entitled

WONDERFUL WASHINGTON - Birding in the Pacific Northwest (including Seattle and Whidbey Island)

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 at 10am on Sunday 12th FEBRUARY STAG ROCKS and BUDLE BAY AREA.

On Sunday 12th February to view seabirds and waders from Stag Rocks round to Budle Bay via Budle Point. Meet at 10am at the second car park along the Wynd road to the Golf Club. Car sharing a good idea where possible. No cafes on the way(!) so please bring refreshments.

Leader : Alan Goodall (07538880262)

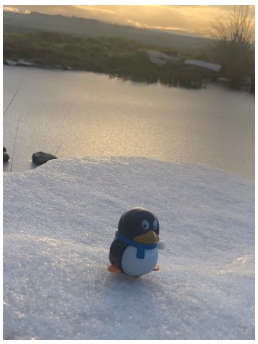
January 2023 Field trip to Dumfries and Galloway.

This trip is now confirmed but there are still some places available. Friday 27th January to Tuesday 31st January. Contact John Lumby directly if you would like to go on the trip, 01665 720654 j.lumby@yahoo.co.uk The first pick up for the coach will be 6.30am at the Bakehouse Gallery in Alnwick with further pickups.

BIRD BOOKS FOR SALE

John Lumby will bring to this and future club meetings, a selection of bird books etc for sale (club funds to benefit). If members/visitors have any book title requests, please let John know by telephoning 01665 720654. Poyser's, New Naturalist's Wayside & Woodland and general natural history are all available.

Also, at **LAST MONTH's** meeting on 9th December , Wildlife Artist Jane Harbottle, brought a selection of her work from her studio in Lowick This proved very popular and the Club received £10. as a percentage of the profit.



STRANGE SIGHTING NEAR BERWICK

Spotted near our frozen pond at High Letham, Berwick, on Sunday 11th December.

A fluke or a sign of Climate Change ??? Opinions welcome !

(photo David Lloyd-Blake)

HAPPY NEW YEAR !

IMPORTANT NOTICE !!! OUR INDOOR MEETINGS IN JANUARY, FEBRUARY,AND MARCH 2023 WILL BE HELD IN SEAHOUSES.

Seahouses Hub , Stone Close, Seahouses, NE68 7YS

Coquet Estuary and Birling Carrs. 12th December 2022

NNBC Field Trip – Coquet Estuary and Birling Carrs

Monday 12 December 2022

On a quite cold and frosty morning eight hardy souls met at 10am, in the Coquet Ice Rink - formerly known as Warkworth Beach Car Park! While equipment was sorted, we were met by Wren, Blackbird and Robin flittering through the shrubs. Tentative foot-steps made for the grass verge to find some sort of safe footing to descend down to the beach area. Four took the probably more sensible route through the ferns while the others took the direct route straight down towards the beach. Not mentioning any names but one of these four upended on the sheet ice and promptly landed horizontal. Unhurt and unperturbed they sat up and channelling their inner child, navigated the next 20 feet of ice sliding on their bottom

The small very deep pond at the bottom of the hill was frozen over with around 5 Blue Tit fluttering in the rushes. Overhead the pleasant sound of over 100 Pink Footed Geese flying in three distinct Vs were observed flying south. Turning right along the foot-path, adjacent to Warkworth Old Waters we headed towards The Coquet Estuary. Underfoot was very icy and whenever the sun became shrouded it was quite cold. With the sun out however, it gave a little heat and made for a pleasant walk with Crow, Stone-chat, Song Thrush, Dunnock and Meadow Pipit to enjoy.

Arriving at the estuary, ducks and waders were seen. On the far shore next to the new Globe sculpture some 20 Wigeon were feed-ing on the grass, with Mallard on the water in front of them. The estuary itself was quite quiet but Curlew, Pheasant, Redshank, Lapwing along with Herring, Black Headed, Common and Greater Black Backed Gulls were spotted. A particularly large flock of Wood Pigeons flew over The Braid Area on the far shore. On the Estuary mud, Oyster Catcher, Grey Heron and Dunlin were spotted. On the water, Little Grebe, Goldeneye, Teal and Shelduck were feeding, while a Cormorant flew along the river.

Approaching noon, we arrived at the start of the Harbour's southern wall. The sea had a little swell and the tide was quite low: binoculars and scopes out but the sea gave very little away. A single Cormorant was diving and quite a way out five Sea Ducks were spotted, but not sufficiently clearly to identify. A single Red Throated Diver was seen out to sea. The hard standing, with a lovely view of Warkworth beach, was chosen to have lunch. Dessert was being treated to Sanderling scurrying backward and for-ward on the beach in front of us.

Given the icy state of the footpath we decide to walk the length of the beach to Birling Carrs and six of us set off in that direction. The beach was quite deserted both in human and bird varieties. A Pied Wagtail said hello, and a few gulls (varieties already men-tioned) bobbed in the waves or flew over the sea, but otherwise it was just a pleasant walk on the beach in the sun.

At the end of Warkworth beach we climbed the public footpath to Birling Carrs. From two separate vantage points we saw Grey Plover, Turnstone, Purple Sandpiper on the Birling Carrs rocks below us, while at sea Red Throated Divers (4) and Great Crested Grebe (6) were seen. Richard had seen these Grebe a few days before. In a field to the north some 60 Whooper Swans stood out in the low winter sun. The view of the Grey Plover was particularly good through the scopes, the photo below at full zoom not quite so good:

Coquet Estuary and Birling Carrs. (cont)

Well gone 2pm, we decided that in failing light due to the descending mist and the sun running out of any warmth in our direction we would head back to the cars. We stuck to the coastal path alongside the golf course with the wintery mist thickening quickly. We took the sensible path up to the car park, festive well wishes were dished out and around 3pm we made our way home.

Despite the cold it was quite a successful day with 38 species identified as follows:

Coquet Estuary:

Pink-footed Goose, Common Shelduck, Eurasian Wigeon, Mallard, Eurasian/Green-winged Teal, Common Eider, Common Goldeneye, Common Pheasant, Little Grebe, Common Woodpigeon, Eurasian Oystercatcher, Northern Lapwing, Eurasian Curlew, Sanderling, Dunlin, Common Redshank, Black-headed Gull, Common Gull, Herring Gull, Great Black-backed Gull, Red-throated Diver, Great Cormorant, Grey Heron, Carrion Crow, Eurasian Blue Tit, Eurasian Wren, Song Thrush, Eurasian Blackbird, European Robin, European Stonechat, Dunnock, Pied Wagtail, Meadow Pipit

Birling Carrs:

Whooper Swan, Great Crested Grebe, *Eurasian Oystercatcher*, Grey Plover, Ruddy Turnstone, Purple Sandpiper, *Red-throated Diver*

New Year Big Day January 1st 2023.

Torrential rain on the 31st did not bode well for the following early morning start at High Newton. But come 6 am the met office had got it right, the rain had stopped and 7 members (1 more would join later) duly arrived at High Newton car park, just as dawn was breaking, to tackle our 20-mile coastal strip. On our 15th attempt to see as many different species as possible, how many would we manage to see on a short mid winter's day? First birds being Barn Owl, Pheasant and Mute Swan.

We then drove to Low Newton Pool & Scrape, with a quick look over the beach, these gave us Whooper Swan (c.10), Wigeon, Mallard, Teal, Shoveler, Gadwall, Moorhen, Coot, Eider, Curlew, Carrion Crow, Shag, Starling, Blackbird, Grey Heron, Robin, Herring and Black-headed Gulls, Woodpigeon, Stonechat, House & Tree Sparrows, Reed Bunting, Turnstone, Purple Sandpiper, Rock Pipit, we had clocked up 29 species, a good start. On route to Beadnell we added Collared Dove, Kestrel and Common Gull, the next stops were the Harbour & Knacker's Hole which added Oystercatcher, Grey Plover, Redshank, 50 Sanderling, the village provided Jackdaw, Rook, Great Tit, Blue Tit, Coal Tit, Chaffinch & Dunnock we were on 43. The sun arrived.

Driving next to Seahouses Golf Club and Logan's Pool, with across the road Quarryfields we found Song Thrush, 1 Goldeneye, Little Grebe, Greenfinch, Goldfinch, Wren, Pied Wagtail, Yellow Hammer and Mistle Thrush. Onwards to Monk's House Pool, where Lapwing, Golden Plover, Tufted Duck, Linnet, Common Snipe and Meadow Pipit obliged. A further short drive took us to Stag Rocks where we managed to add 300 Common Scoter, Razorbill, Guillemot, 1 Red-throated Diver, Cormorant, 5 Long-tailed Ducks, 1 Red-breasted Merganser, 1 Slavonian Grebe plus Gannet we were on 67. We then realized, we might end up beating, our previous day's best species tally! Next a move inland to the Spindlestone Wood hides where we managed to see Great Spotted Woodpecker, Tree Creeper, Sparrowhawk, Nuthatch and Marsh Tit.

Our next halt was Budle Bay (see photograph) adding Shelduck, Great Black-backed Gull, 20 Black-tailed Godwit, Bar-tailed Godwit, Dunlin, Knot, 1 Little Egret and a family party of Long-tailed Tits, we were on 80. Then up the road to Harper's Heugh were we saw Magpie and Siskin. Our next port of call was Elwick, which added Common Buzzard and Grey Partridge. We then carried on driving to Fenham Le Moor which gave us Redwing, 3 Pintail, c.90 Pink-footed & Greylag Geese, 50 Brent Geese pushing our tally to 89, the light was starting to go so we called it a day. But on returning to Low Newton car park, and leaving the car park, 12 Red-legged Partridge flew over the car making a total of 90. Our team had exceeded our previous highest total of species seen, by a mile! Well done everybody, an excellent day, enjoyed by all.

Photograph by Janet Chubb. **John Lumby**

ABOVE 15000ft in the ANDES.

John Lumby (photos by Mick Crawford)

Andean Avocet

Report by Paul Ashdown

For our 2022 Christmas special talk, our own John Lumby took us on his birding trip to the high Andes of Bolivia, sharing his experience of birding at high altitude. Whether measured in metres or feet, the mountains he showed us are well beyond The Cheviot, and the bird life is appropriately different. Despite the recalcitrant IT, John showed us so many special birds in photos taken mostly by fellow club member Mick Crawford, who had also gone on the trip to South America. Arriving in Santa Cruz, travelling all the way up to the highest capital in the world, La Paz, and then on to fabled Lake Titicaca, John and Mick had fantastic birds set against a bleak but spectacular landscape.

John explained that he had been particularly keen to spot some of the local waders to add to his personal quest for every wader in the world. Both the Puna Plover and the Andean Avocet obliged. There were also altitude specialists like the Giant Hummingbird caught on the roadside, the Burrowing Owl, and the Mountain Caracara. We all became fascinated by the catalogue of fantastically convoluted names for many of the birds. These ranged from the Greenish-yellow Finch, and the White-tipped Plant Cutter, through to the Rufus-breasted Chat Tyrant and the Black-hooded Sunbeam. The names alone are worth a journey to Bolivia.

Altogether, John explained he had seen around 260 species on this adventure. The one which entertained us most was probably the Lake Titicaca Flightless Grebe. The image of this poor little bird waddling between Andean lakes like a farmyard duck made us all chuckle. John said he thought the name might be a misnomer, and when I looked it up, I found the Short-winged Grebe (*Centropelma micropterum*), endemic to lakes Titicaca and Poopo. It is probably a relief to us all that this little bird can at least fly a bit – even on short wings!

Many coloured rush tyrant

Cochabamba mountain finch

A RINGERS YEAR

December 2022 and the story of a well-travelled owl.

It has to be said that with some pretty horrid weather and the need to take extra health precautions because of bird flu, ringing has been fairly quiet this month. However, while heading out to check and replace a couple of bird boxes with a National Park Ranger, Hilary, my colleague, and I had a very pleasant surprise. To back-track briefly I should explain that we have had some bird boxes of a type that might attract *tawny owls or even ducks* on National Trust land at Low Newton for some years. They have not been especially successful probably because of a miss-timing of their erection, just before a major pruning back of the surrounding vegetation. It is only in the last year or two that they might have become attractive to owls but we realized that the boxes might be in need of repair or replacement. So as a winter job we set out to do this on 5th December. One must always be cautious when approaching a box that just might contain a tawny owl, as a tawny owl in the face can be dangerous. Putting my hand cautiously into the first box, (wearing gloves), there was no one more surprised than myself to come out with a Barn Owl. This proved to be a very beautiful female owl, showing some hint of Northern European guttata race characteristics in her orange/brown colouring on the upper breast.

Additionally, the owl was ringed which we all read, to be certain we had it correct, as GY17093. Scrutiny of the wing pattern, to look for moulted primary flight feathers, revealed a very uniform pattern, suggesting this was a young owl.

As with all 'Controls' of this type I inputted the ring number to the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) database and waited for a reply. This came quite quickly and revealed that the roosting Barn Owl was less than a year old and had been ringed as an owlet (chick) back on the 11/7/22 by a member of the Waveney Ringing Group at Red House Farm, Bacton, Suffolk, over 400 km's away. Now I don't know that area although my older son, working for the BTO and residing in Suffolk, does. This is a remarkable movement for a young bird to make, although not totally unheard of. For example, the bird found nesting at Gosforth Park, Newcastle upon Tyne, in 2020 had moved from Cambridgeshire.

I spent several days early in the month working with Coast Care to erect two new 'owl sheds' in the Coast AONB near Bamburgh and further north. If you have not heard of these (some were put up last year as well), they are an attempt to provide Barn Owls with new nesting sites now that so many of our old barns and hemmels have been lost to holiday developments, lack of maintenance and the ravages of the weather. They are a bit taller than the average garden shed and contain a standard Northumberland Barn Owl Box on a mezzanine floor. We will monitor how they are used as the months move on. For the moment I just take the opportunity to thank everyone at the AONB/Coast Care and the Coast Care Volunteers for their assistance.

Meanwhile Hilary had an interesting garden visitor, setting up a small territory like a blackbird, but this was one of its thrush relatives, a Fieldfare. Fieldfares do have a habit of flying high and not usually being very confiding of people, they are still hunted over much of continental Europe, hence they are less often caught by ringers than their smaller relatives like redwings. Of course, all these thrushes arrive in thousands into the British Isles from Scandinavia in winter, particularly from Norway in the case of Fieldfares. After several attempts, involving quite a few apples, the bird was briefly captured, ringed and identified as a Juvenile, with outer unmoulted greater coverts in the wing, and a female bird, with mostly grey crown feathers. Hopefully it will return to nest in Norway in the spring.

I am trying to contribute to the BTO's Winter Ringing Initiative by operating a short morning ringing session, with just a couple of nets, at home once per fortnight. To date I have managed this with 45 birds captured on the 14th November including a lot of Blue Tits, Great Tits and a few Tree Sparrows. One of the retrapped Blue Tits proved to be from 2019. On the 28th I captured 48 birds including four new Robins and four retrapped Robins. The 8th December saw the catch at 49 including a female Nuthatch. Finally on the 19th I captured 32 birds with two new Robins and three retraps. The purpose of this national initiative is particularly to study age specific survival rates and age ratios (see attached picture of a Blue Tit and an unusually dark Robin with distinctive feathering around the eye).

Best Regards

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

Bird Sightings List for December

Below are the highlights for the month of December.

Whooper Swan	78 at Buston Links on 2nd	RP
	60 at Birling Carrs on 12th	JMcC
Velvet Scoter	1 at Alnmouth Bay on 22nd	RP
Common Scoter	64 at Alnmouth Bay on 22nd	RP
Red-breasted Merganser	6 at Alnmouth Bay on 9th	RP
Water Rail	1 at Branton Ponds on 25th	I&KD
Great crested Grebe	21 at Alnmouth Bay on 22nd	RP
Grey Plover	37 at Birling Carrs on 22nd	RP
Woodcock	1 at Long Nanny on 19th	PCA
	2 at Broadwood, Ellingham on 14th	MSH
Snipe	1 at Ellingham on 15th	MSH
Red-throated Diver	18 at Alnmouth Bay on 17th	RP
	17 at Alnmouth Bay on 22nd	RP
	1 at Coquet Estuary on 12th	JMcC
	4 at Birling Carrs on 12th	JMcC
Sparrowhawk	1 at Chathill on 18th	PCA
Kingfisher	1 at Long Nanny on 1st	PCA
Merlin	1 at Branton Ponds on 26th	P&AH
Willow Tit	1 at Branton Ponds on 31st	I&KD
Goldcrest	2 at Warkworth Beach Carpark on 2nd	PCA
	2 at Branton Ponds on 20th	I&KD
	1 at Longframlington on 17th (First in garden in 16 years)	JMcC
Treecreeper	1 at Warkworth Beach Carpark on 2nd	PCA
Bullfinch	8 at Branton Ponds on 30th	I&KD
	1 at Branton and Hedgeley on 21st	JMcC
Twite	20 plus at Long Nanny from 1st to 9th	PCA
Siskin	40+ at Branton Ponds on 20th	I&KD
	20 at Branton and Hedgeley on 10th	JMcC

Please send January records to Paul Armstrong NNBCrecords@yahoo.com by 1st February 2023

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.

Contributors

Paul Armstrong (PCA)
Ian & Keith Davison (I&KD)
Michael Hall (MSH)
Phil & Alison Hanmer (P&AH)
John McCutcheon (JMcC)
Richard Poyer (RP)