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Gary Hobson

Redpoll P & A Hanmer

WONDERFUL WASHINGTON

Birding In the Pacific North West including Seattle and Whidbey Island

See a report by **Paul Ashdown** on **Gary Hobson's talk**

on pages 6,7, & 8

Residential Trip to Dumfries & Galloway

See report on pages 3,4 & 5.

RINGER'S ROUNDUP

See pages 9, 10 & 11.

BIRD BOOKS FOR SALE

See page 2

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

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

NOTICEBOARD

NNBC MEETINGS

INDOOR MEETINGS at THE HUB, SEAHOUSES.

- **Friday 10th FEBRUARY 2023 at 7.30pm Mark NEWELL** will give a talk entitled

50 years of Seabird Monitoring on the Isle of May

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 Saturday 11th 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 : Richard Poyer 07936 909649

Advance notice - there will be a field trip to **JOHN MUIR COUNTRY PARK** on **16th MARCH**, led by Phil and Marge Noble. Detail in the next newsletter.

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.

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

Several postcodes are shown on various websites for the Hub

Seahouses Hub , Stone Close, Seahouses, NE68 7YS, 7YT, & 7YL

*****NE68 7YL is the one shown on posters within the Hub*****

NNBC January 2023 Trip to Dumfries and Galloway organiser—John Lumby

The search for the elusive White-fronted Geese at Loch Ken

Early on Friday 27th, 6.00am for some, a Travelsure bus began its tour of mid Northumberland and the Borders picking up the eleven of us going on the trip. Some of us were already in birding mode having seen a Barn Owl on the way to the pick up point. On a morning with frost on the ground and the sun rising we made our way along the Borders roads heading for Selkirk, St. Mary's Loch and past the Grey Mares Tail waterfall. We were hoping to see Golden Eagle on this first part of the route, remembering Rick Taylors talk on the South Of Scotland Golden Eagle project. We drew a blank on Eagles but did see and hear Raven and on the Lochs Little Grebe and Mallard. After a stop for refreshments in Moffat we headed for Lochmaben and Castle Loch. A drake Smew had been reported the day before here but we couldn't find it. There were however large numbers of Goldeneye, Tufted Duck and Wigeon together with Grey Heron, Goosander, Cormorant and close up views of Bullfinch. Later in the day it was a bit galling to hear that a Bittern had certainly been around when we stopped there. Still, that's birding for you.

From Lochmaben it was straight to Caerlaverock, passing a small group of Fieldfare on the way. The highlights at Caerlaverock were the Barnacle Geese, Whooper Swans, Two Pergrines, a large number of Yellowhammers, Redwing and Shoveler. There were fifty one species in all for the day. Our journey back along the Nith to Castle Douglas via Dumfries was blessed with a beautiful sunset sky.

Saturday started with a stop at Carlingwark Loch, only a few hundred metres from the hotels. Dense mist suggested that that our plan of visiting the local Crannog Lochs wasn't going to happen. However, as we stood there, a Greater Spotted Woodpecker drummed away and a Nuthatch called. We decided to head for Mersehead and a stop at Dalbeatie, near the Forestry Commission wood, produced more Greater Spotted Woodpeckers and a Tree Creeper.

The sun was shining by the time we got to Mersehead and the scrapes and fields were full of Barnacle Geese, Shoveler, Wigeon, Teal, Pintails and Lapwing with two Buzzards on the far trees.

With the mist gone we re-visited Lochs Milton and Lochrutton Loch. There was no sign of Smew but we saw Snipe, Lapwing, Goldeneye, Greylags and Canada's. A flock of flying birds produced a discussion which "relegated" Golden Plovers to Starlings.

Sunday saw us make our visits to Loch Ken in search of Greenland White-fronted Geese. Despite them being reported there, two visits and assiduous searching proved negative. In compensation we had good views of Red Kites, Goldcrest, Tree Creeper, Fieldfare and Redwing.

We continued the search for Golden Eagles on the Gatehouse of Fleet to Lauriston road but Red Kite and Buzzard had to do. Arriving at the Clatteringshaws Visitor Centre we were entertained by Siskins, Redpoll, Chaffinch, Coal Tit, Great Tit and Robin squabbling over the feeders and giving the opportunity for some closer photography

On Monday morning we set off from Castle Douglas for Port Patrick with high hopes of catching up with the White Fronts, sea ducks and perhaps Hen Harrier.

The RSPB Reserve of the Crook of Baldoon, near Wigtown, was our first stop. The salt marshes had mixed flocks of Barnacles and Pink Feet Geese whilst there were seven Little Egrets. Something disturbed the Geese and up they went with a great noise, settling on the edge of the Bay. Searching the pool , a small island was the resting place for eleven Common Snipe.

Leaving the Crook we headed for Stranraer, via West Freugh, a usually reliable area for White-fronted Geese. Not this day when all we saw was a good group of Whooper Swans.

Arriving at Stranraer we headed for the harbour area, a place where anything can turn up. We were not disappointed with good views of Long-tailed Duck, Slavonian, Red-necked Grebe and Little Grebe, Red-throated Diver and Cormorant.

From the harbour we headed down the west side of Loch Ryan, seeing large groups of Scaup, Pale-bellied Brent Geese, Red-breasted Merganser, Oystercatcher and Curlew. It was late afternoon and time to head for Port Patrick but we decided to go via West Freugh hoping to find some White-fronts and roosting Hen Harrier. It was not to be.

Tuesday and our last day in Dumfries and Galloway. After four days of fine weather the day didn't look too promising with strong winds and showers forecast. Stranraer Harbour had been so rewarding that we decided to start out by going back there first. The Grebes were still there and we had closer views of the Long-tailed Duck. It was then on to Threave Estate (SNT). The Trust has a major project of change and improvement and we walked round on new gravel paths, crossed smart new bridges and went in refurbished hides. However, we saw few birds. In four months, all being well, there will be Osprey returning to nest.

And, so it was on to our final stop – Lochmaben's Castle Loch again. Through our stay there had been reports and photographs of Bittern and reports of Smew and Great White Egret. Did we see them?- no! Never mind, there is always tomorrow. We had had a very enjoyable trip seeing good birds and making new friends.

Birds seen on the NNBC January Trip to Dumfries and Galloway

New birds seen added each day to Friday 27th's list

27th – Northumberland to Castle Douglas stopping at St. Mary's Loch and Lochmaben

Pheasant, Carrion Crow, Mallard, Raven, Buzzard, Mute Swan, Little Grebe, Red-breasted Merganser, Magpie, Rook, Robin, Chaffinch, Blue Tit, Goldeneye, Cormorant, Bullfinch, Teal, Song Thrush, Collared Dove, Long-tailed Tit, Goosander, Wigeon, Tufted Duck, Grey Heron, Coot, Shelduck, Pick-footed Goose, Black-headed Gull, Blackbird, Wood Pigeon, Starling, Barnacle Goose, Shoveler, Moorhen, Canada Goose, Whooper Swan, House Sparrow, Goldfinch, Redwing, Yellowhammer, Peregrine Falcon, Dunnock, Lapwing, Reed Bunting, Great Tit, Jackdaw, Curlew, Pied Wagtail, Wren, Fieldfare, Black Grouse, Gadwall, Knot, Goldcrest, Grey Partridge. (53)

28th – Crannog Lakes, Dalbeatie and Mersehead

Nuthatch, Treecreeper, Greater Spotted Woodpecker, Common Snipe, Great-crested Grebe, Coal Tit, Greenfinch, Ringed Plover, Dunlin, Red Kite, Herring Gull, Greylag Goose, Pintail Duck and Jay .(14)

29th – Loch Ken, Clatteringshaws, Road to Laurieston

Sparrowhawk, Kestrel, Redpoll, Siskin. (4)

30th Crook of Baldoon, West Freugh, Loch Ryan, West Freugh, Port Patrick

Golden Plover, Scaup, Slavonian Grebe, Red necked Grebe, Long-tailed Duck, Little Egret, Red-throated Diver, Eider, Redshank, Oystercatcher, Black Guillemot. Pale-bellied Brent Goose, Twite, Meadow Pipit, Greater black-backed Gull, Common Scoter, Bar-tailed Godwit, Common Gull, Black-throated Diver. (19)

31st Loch Ryan, Threave, Castle Loch – Lochmaben

Stonechat, Feral Pigeon and Great Northern Diver (3)

A total of 96 species seen **Report by Richard Poyer**

WONDERFUL WASHINGTON

Birding In the Pacific North West including Seattle and Whidbey Island

Olympic Mountains

Our trip to Washington State, USA, this month's talk, was presented by **Gary Hobson,** whose sense of excitement and fun shone out throughout the talk. He has twin passions for birds and aeroplanes, both fully indulged in his week-long trip around the magnificent scenery of the north-western USA. We followed him from the flight into Seattle, around the Puget Sound, and then up into the dizzy heights of the Olympic Mountains National Park. Alongside some fantastic photos of birds, Gary couldn't resist sharing photos of planes large and small. (They have wings if not feathers, so perhaps not too much of a shock for Bird Club members!) He also gave us a very clear itinerary and details of each site he visited, providing a great route-map for any of us thinking of following in his footsteps.

Gary explained that, compared to some parts of the States, this area doesn't have a huge range of birds, and he clocked up "only" 100 species on his visit. However, some of these were captured in truly beautiful images. We saw the stunning iridescent colours of a male Anna's Hummingbird, the Walt Disney style Violet-green Swallow, and the outrageous top-knot of a male California Quail. The superb image of an osprey in flight, holding lunch in its claws, was close to perfect in my mind, and Gary said it had almost made the trip worthwhile on its own.

Anna's Hummingbird

California Quail

WONDERFUL WASHINGTON (cont.)

Birding In the Pacific North West including Seattle and Whidbey Island

There were many species within this 100 that felt truly exotic. The Rhinoceros Auklet manages to make our puffins look rather conservative, and the livery of Harlequin Ducks is worthy of a fashion show. However, Gary came back to one bird again and again, in a way other speakers studiously avoid. The American Robin, common though it is, does have remarkable style, and Gary peppered the talk with photos that shared this in all its glory. A very forgivable obsession ,I felt.

Harlequin Duck

American Robin

One of the things which struck many in the audience, was how many of the birds Gary showed us appear to be not so distant cousins of birds we see here. I suppose in biological terms this isn't too surprising as the base environmental conditions are not that different and many bird families spread over the northern hemisphere, so that evolution subtly changes things into different, but related species in widely distanced locales. Hence we saw the Great Blue Heron, looking like a larger and darker version of our Grey Heron, and the Black-capped Chickadee which wouldn't look out of place amongst the tits on our bird-feeders.

One of my favourite groups of birds is the woodpeckers, and I always get a thrill seeing one. Gary had a great selection from this family, including the Pileated Woodpecker (the model for Woody-Woodpecker himself), and the fantastic Northern Flicker. At the end of the evening, Gary had shared a great trip with us and his enthusiasm must have encouraged many of us to add Washington State to our wish-list – me included.

Paul Ashdown

Pie Billed Grebe

Cedar Waxwing

Spotted Towie

WONDERFUL WASHINGTON Pictureboard.

Warren B Mitchell State Park lakes

Oregon Junco

Blue Grouse

Common Yellowthroat

Spotted Owl

American Oystercatcher

A RINGERS YEAR

January 2023. With the weather relenting a bit we have been able to get out and about to replace some damaged bird boxes and put up a few new ones. Over near Lesbury we were aware that a particularly over large barn owl box that's been up for a number of years was quite literally starting to come apart. It was also on a tree that had lost most of its upper trunk and branches to Storm Arwen last year. So first we put a brand new box up on a near-by tree.

Then we cautiously approached the original box and quickly discovered that there was a roosting owl in residence. This we captured and discovered it was new female, less than a year old, weighing 340g (not breeding weight but OK for this time of year). We carefully transferred this owl to the new box, letting her settle in and go to sleep on clean wood shavings. Then we left her in peace.

What about the old box (?) Well I just had to push it with my hand (I didn't need to use any tools) and it fell off the tree in several pieces, so the owl had had a lucky escape from possible injury in the next gale! We also put up a commercial type A frame box in a new very open barn near Brinkburn, taking off the very large landing stage that had been attached to the front of the box. These tea-tray sized extrusions are in fashion (*partly because they afford photographers good views of owls*) but are a danger to young owls who clamber out onto them before they can fly. Adults definitely don't need them! We also went to the moorland south of Longhorsley were we found another box on a tree that was damaged by Storm Arwen. This one is more stable but we will have to replace it sometime. Again, there was an owl in residence. This was a retrap female number GY37116 weighing 380g that's at least three years old. This is the female that nested in the same box last year and appears to have a mate roosting close by. We concluded this as there was a 'vole larder' in the box and on leaving the site we saw an owl close-by hunting. Quite close by there was another box to check which just needed to have some pruning carried out around it. To our surprise there was yet another owl in residence. This was also a retrap (technically a 'Control' as it had been previously ringed by another ringer) of at least three years old from just a mile or two away. These two females could stay to breed in their respective nests if there is sufficient small mammal prey around in May. Unlike Tawny Owls they are not very territorially aggressive. We have since gone onto to put a new box up at a local equestrian center and a couple of others.

Meanwhile my C Ringer, Hilary, has had a second Fieldfare take up semi residence in her garden. As reported last month she was able to capture and ring one of these visitors from Norway (a juvenile female) by providing it with free apples! This second bird succumbed to the same bait and proved to be another juvenile but this time a male with some black feathers in its crown. Both birds are still visiting the garden.

Ringing at East Linden with Hilary and two other ringers on a cold but not actually frosty morning proved interesting as we caught some of my favourite bird. These were Redpoll which are intrepid wanderers, rather than regular migrants. They search out fine seeds from birches but will settle for Niger seed! The males are particularly beautiful.

We also captured a new Willow Tit and an adult retrap.

Finally, I have just managed to keep up to date with 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 21 birds captured on New Years Day (14 new and 7 retraps). One of the retraps was a Coal Tit first ringed in 2018 (when it was already an adult). Ringing again on the 15th I captured 26 birds (15 new and 11 retraps) including four Long Tailed Tits. Finally, I managed another session on the 28th when I captured 29 birds (15 new and 14 retraps). These include a pair of Redpoll, a new juvenile female and Control adult male (*ringed by someone else, as an adult in 2020*). Since then (outside the scope of the Winter Ringing initiative) I have trapped three adult Siskin and a Goldfinch; all coming to eat Niger seed.

One of my next tasks is to make some prototype Swift boxes using a grant kindly given by Alnwick Wildlife Group. My intention to make some practical boxes for swifts that are not so expensive or complicated as some of the versions you can find on line. I will then make a set of plans available to anyone wanting to do this themselves.

Best Regards

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

Bird Records January 2023

Below are the highlights for the month of January.

Barnacle Goose	3 at Branton Ponds on 17th	I&KD
White-fronted Goose	2 at Low Newton Scrapes on 30th	JMcC
Whooper Swan	15 at Low Newton Scrapes on 30th	JMcC
Velvet Scoter	2 off Stag Rocks on 2nd	I&KD
Common Scoter	500+ off Stag Rocks on 2nd	I&KD
	250 approx. at Beadnell on 4th	PCA
	100 at Stag Rocks on 24th	SVM
Long-tailed Duck	6+ off Stag Rocks on 2nd	I&KD
Red-breasted Merganser	4 at Stag Rock on 24th	SVM
Stock Dove	2 at Coquet Estuary on 15th	JMcC
Great Crested Grebe	16 at Alnmouth Bay on 5th	RP
	1 at Coquet Estuary on 27th	JMcC
	1 at Low Newton on 30th	JMcC
Grey Plover	43 at Birling Carrs on 5th	RP
Purple Sandpiper	70+ at Stag Rocks on 2nd	I&KD
	12 at Birling Carrs on 5th	RP
Woodcock	1 at Warren Mill on 24th	SVM
Snipe	1 at Hedgeley on 29th	PCA
Greenshank	1 at Hedgeley Lakes on 8th	I&KD
Lesser Black-backed Gull	1 at Coquet Estuary on 15, 21st and 27th	JMcC
	2 at Low Newton on 30th	JMcC
Red-throated Diver	8 off Stag Rocks on 2nd	I&KD
	3 at Alnmouth Bay on 5th	RP
Black-throated Diver	2 off Stag Rocks on 2nd	I&KD
Great Northern Diver	1 off Stag Rocks on 2nd	I&KD
Little Egret	2 at Hedgeley Lakes on 1st and 3 on 8th	I&KD
Sparrowhawk	1 at Yearle on 13th	DG&RB
Barn Owl	1 at Low Newton on 4th	PCA
	1 between Chatton & Fowberry on 13th	DG&RB
	1 at Lesbury/Foxbury on 25th	PHa
	2 at Longhorsley Moor on 27th	PHa
	1 at Longhorsley Moor on 27th	PHa
Kingfisher	1 at Long Nanny on 14th	PCA
	1 at Stag Rocks on 24th	SVM
Merlin	1 at Branton on 4th and on 27th	I&KD
Raven	1 over Branton on 8th 1 over Hedgeley Lakes on 15th	I&KD
Willow Tit	5 at East Linden on 22nd	PHa
Skylark	1 at Low Newton on 30th	JMcC
Long-tailed Tit	50 at Howick on 8th	P&AH
Goldcrest	3 at Chathill all month	PCA
Nuthatch	1 at South Yearle on 3rd	SVM
	1 at Yearle intermittently all month	DG&RB
Treecreeper	1 at Branton and Hedgeley Gravel Pits on 26th	JMcC
	1 at Yearle intermittently all month	DG&RB
Black Redstart	1 at Annstead beach on 26th	PCA

Dipper	2 on River Breamish on 8th	I&KD
Bullfinch	10 at South Yearle from 5th	SV&AJM
	4 at Branton on 9th, and 2 on 20th and 26th	JMcC
Twite	6 at Holy Island on 2nd	PN&MN
Lesser Redpoll	1 at Yearle on 5th	DG&RB
	19 at Etal Manor on 8th	JJ
	2 at Branton Ponds on 21st	I&KD
Redpoll	2 at Lemmington Hall on 28th	P&AH
	2 at East Linden on 22nd	PHa
Siskin	200+ at Branton Ponds on 10th	I&KD
	2 at South Yearle on 23rd	AJM
	3 at Lemmington Hall on 29th	P&AH
	1-3 at Yearle intermittently all month	DG&RB

Paul Armstrong (PCA)
Graham & Rosemary Bell (DG&RB)
Ian & Keith Davison (I&KD)
Phil & Alison Hanmer (P&AH)
Phil Hanmer (PHa)
James Joicey (JJ)
Alison McCormick (AJM)
Stewart McCormick (SVM)
Stewart & Alison McCormick (SV&AJM)
John McCutcheon (JMcC)
Phil & Marge Noble (PN&MN)