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

Andy Denton,

A YEAR ON LINDISFARNE NNR

Andy Denton, Reserve Manager, gave a talk on a year on Lindisfarne NNR See **pages 3,4 &5** for **Richard Poyer's** report.

BIRD RECORDS for MAY

The most recent sightings in our area will be compiled by our Recorder, **Paul Armstrong.** (see pages 8 & 9.)

Mandarin - Hanmer

RINGERS YEAR

See pages 6 & 7.

WEBSITE

Keep up to date with the latest news on our **Website**.

www.northnorthumberlandbirdclub.co.uk

NOTICEBOARD

NNBC MEETINGS

INDOOR MEETINGS BAMBURGH PAVILION

· **Friday 16th June 2023 at 7.30pm Richard Baines** will give a talk on **The Birds of Bhutan—Land of the Thunder Dragon**

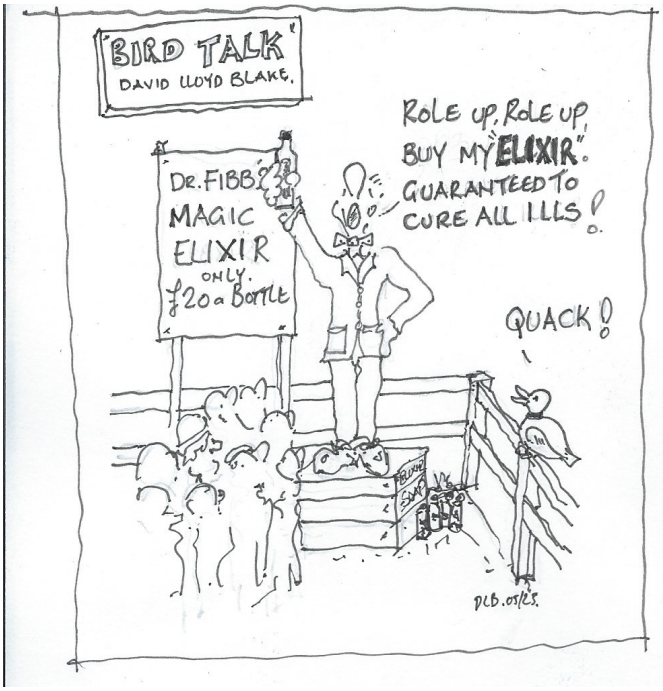
Field Trips & Residentials [For all Field Trips Read please Risk Assessment on Website beforehand . [For last-minute Cancellations e.g. adverse weather conditions, check our Facebook Page.]

St. Abbs Head

Saturday, 10th June 2023 10.00 at St. Abbs Head National Nature Reserve.(National Trust for Scotland). Meet at the Reserve Car Park (O.S. NT913674) about a mile north of Coldingham on the minor B6438 to St Abbs. Walk to the headland for spectacular views of the seabird communities including Kittiwakes, Guillemots, Razorbills, a few Puffins and the new overspill colony of nesting Gannets(first chick recorded in 2017). Other wildlife interest might include cetaceans, butterflies and a profusion of wildflowers. Wear stout shoes/ walking boots and bring a packed lunch.

The cafe at the reserve centre is not guaranteed to be open.

[*N.B.£3 car parking charge for non-National Trust/NTS members, but access to the Reserve and Centre is free]
Leader: **Richard Poyer 07936 909649**



A year on Lindisfarne NNR Andy Denton—Reserve Manager.

After last month's trip to the Pribilof Islands, it was an island much closer to Bamburgh that was the focus of our May talk as Andy Denton, Reserve Manager, discussed the characteristics and challenges facing the 3,500 hectare Lindisfarne reserve. Stretching from Cheswick in the north to Budle Point in the south, the reserve was designated in 1964 mainly to control wildfowling by the "marsh cowboys" and so protect the thousands of overwintering birds feeding chiefly on the flats between the island and the mainland. Sticking out into the North Sea as it does, the Reserve is a first landfall for many spring migrants. The dune ecology, with the slacks and dunes, has an important assortment of sedges, reeds and flowering plants. One of the latter, the Lindisfarne Helleborine, is unique to the Island. This environment is ever-changing "naturally" but needs sensitive management to retain its botanical diversity.

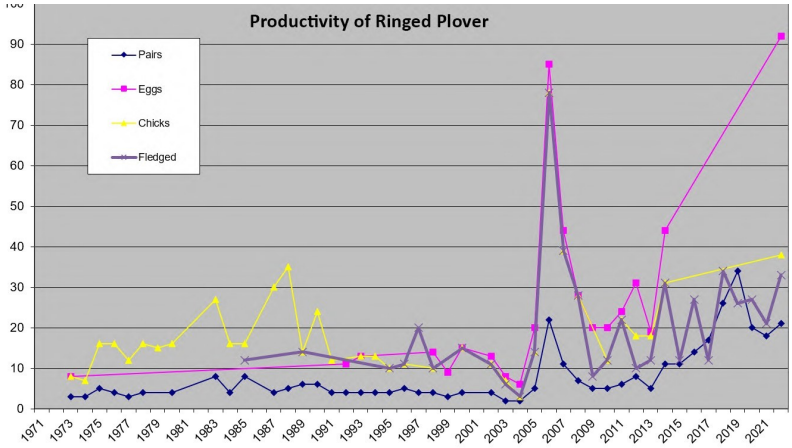
Lindisfarne Helleborine

Grazing over winter

Andy described some of the aspects of managing the botanical elements of the Reserve. One major challenge is the pirri-pirri bur. Originating from sheep skins from New Zealand, this low, invasive plant fills any unvegetated space and has proved impossible to eliminate from the 50kms. of reserve paths despite mowing, rotavating and zapping with electricity.

Cattle and sheep are brought onto the reserve in late summer with the cattle grazing freely with no supplementary feed and the sheep corralled on the Snook. This grazing keeps the rank grasses down and let's plants such as the many varieties of orchid flourish – coral, early marsh, northern marsh, common spotted, heath spotted, frog, twayblade and marsh helleborine. Volunteers also make a very small contribution to vegetation control by removing plants such as montbretia which have colonised from village gardens or hawthorns which have spread naturally. Whilst the emphasis of interest on the reserve is on the birds and other wildlife, the flora is a very significant element in the reserve landscape and the challenge of invasive species ever present.

For many people, the attraction of the natural side of Lindisfarne is the wintering birds. They are on the flats, marshes and fields in their thousands – light-bellied Brent Geese (3,500), Barnacle Geese (1,500), Pink-foot Geese (12,000), Wigeon (20,000+), Godwit (declining), Curlew, Golden Plover, Grey Plover, Dunlin, Sanderling, Pintail. Lindisfarne has half of the European population of Light Bellied Geese and the number of Barnacle Geese choosing to stay as they pass through on migration has increased to around 1,500. It is the eel grass and mud flats rich in worms that attract these birds but Andy made the point that, whilst visitors may not realise it, the winter feeding is crucial for the success of the birds in the subsequent breeding season and disturbance is just as harmful to these birds in winter as it is to the breeding waders and Terns in spring/summer.



In spring/summer the wintering birds are replaced by Little Terns, Ringed Plover, Arctic and Common Terns, Oystercatchers and Eiders. Whilst the numbers of these species are quite low, it is important that they have every opportunity to breed successfully. To this end great emphasis is paid to shorebird protection, engagement with the public and participation in the EU funded Life Wader project. The latter project has, amongst other benefits, allowed the appointment of a Wildlife Warden and the recruitment of shorebird wardens. These specialists, along with volunteers, manage the areas of breeding on the reserve to minimise disturbance by walkers, dogs and water sports enthusiasts. A series of disturbance surveys have taken place since 2020 in winter and summer and all have shown significant disturbance to wintering and breeding birds by both walkers and walkers with dogs. As a result of these surveys more Shorebird Protection Areas have been set up for the Little Terns and Ringed Plovers. These areas are fenced off, some with electric fencing, and wardens and volunteers keep watch in the day time, talking to people and explaining the significance of the areas. The result of these measures has been increased success in productivity – more eggs laid, more hatching and more chicks fledging.

However, all doesn't run smoothly. In 2022 a dog ran loose amongst the birds at Wideopen causing them all to move away whilst at Blacklaw, camera footage showed a fox moving through the colony of birds and the result was extremely low productivity from the birds.

With around 1,000,000 yearly visits to the Island, many of those walking onto and around the reserve, Andy emphasised the role of engagement and education through a programme of events such as a Shorebird Awareness Week, Nature Festival, Goose Festival and guided walks. All of these events and the less glamorous work of Shorebird "policing" and invasive species removal require many hours of work and Andy ended his talk with a request for more of us to volunteer – so come on, get out onto the reserve and give a hand!

Report by Richard Poyer.

A RINGERS YEAR

MAY 2023. I mentioned back in March that I had controlled an already ringed male Blackbird in the garden, well details of this bird have come through and its interesting to see that it was ringed near Druridge Links back on the 14th October 2017 as a juvenile. So sorry to shatter anybody's illusions that the Blackbird you see in 'your garden' is necessarily the same Blackbird you saw last week or last year, but it is nice to see that this particular individual has so far survived into its sixth year. Another bird which is six years old is a Barn Owl that's been found preparing to nest by a fellow ringer near Causey Park, just to the west of the A1. This owl has not travelled as far as the Blackbird because it was ringed (in its nest) back on the 15th June 2017 near Longhorsley.

Much time this month has been spent monitoring nesting Tawny Owls. We don't have a large number of Tawny boxes (*unlike for Barn Owls*) although some of my C Ringers are starting to put more up. This year our Tawny Owls have not done very well, with only 12 attempting to nest (compared with 14 in 2022). Out of these 12 'Nest Records' 8 were actually successful (57%), compared with 11 successful out of 14 (70%) last year. While the reason for nest failures is difficult to know precisely, some owls seem to have found finding food difficult. For example, one owl was recorded as having laid 3 eggs but later had only 1, another had 2 eggs that went down to one. Later both these owls gave up incubating. I suspect that this year's *very variable Spring weather* has been at the root of these problems. Certainly, very hungry owls will eat their own eggs. One of the owls failing to hatch any eggs was ringed back in 2018 at the same site and has been successful in the past. The largest successful brood, of 4, came from a box used for the first time (put up two years ago) in a small piece of ancient woodland that's never recovered from Storm Arwen. One of longest standing box site is at Craster and it was used every year (by the same female) from 2014 to 2020 but then stood blank until this year when a brand new female took it on and raised two young. The most amazing box was one near Howick where a box has stood completely unused since 2010 and I was contemplating taking it down. However, on the 11/4/23 I discovered there was an owl in residence with 2 eggs but there was also a hole in the roof of the box! Nevertheless, the owl has now raised one young owlet and I have promised her a new box for next year. A very new box in a small wood near Longfram also raised two young from three eggs and was seen by a small audience when my colleague ringed them. Another box specially put up for Barn owls produced two tawny owlets from four eggs.

Marsh Tit nest

Nuthatch pulli

Regular readers will be aware that Tawny owls regularly compete with the unusual nesting Goldeneye Ducks in the Breamish Valley and 'generally speaking' it's the Owls that get the boxes they want. At one reliable box used by the same female since 2017 two owlets were raised. This is the only box left out of three in a wood that was struck by Storm Arwen. At another site we had originally discovered 7 Goldeneye eggs, then we found an adult owl and a Tawny egg! The usual scenario at this point is that the duck gives up and the owl takes over the site. However, revisiting on the 18th found at least 10 warm eggs, although no owl or duck in residence. We revisited on a few occasions, but it was not until the 29th that Alison successfully captured the female goldeneye (incubating her eggs). She proved to be my retrap [FH79908] from 2022 when she had hatched 11 eggs in another box (see picture). Most amazingly, while we were processing the duck, I found a broken owl egg just below the box on the ground with a beak shaped 'bash' in it, so, it looks like the clever duck had been able to evict the tawny's egg (see picture)!

Goldeneye

Mandarin

At an entirely different site south of Rothbury there is a box in a wood that was used successfully last year by a Tawny Owl. This is the box that I mentioned last month appeared to have nine Mandarin duck eggs in it! Returning to this with Hilary on the 7th I was greeted not by the expected quacking sound of a duck, but a distinct hissing (as if from a snake!). It did however prove to be a beautiful female Mandarin (this time incubating 12 warm eggs) (see picture). Hilary was able to ring this duck with a small audience of local folks.

This month has also seen us monitoring many small bird boxes (along with trainees, including several Farne Island Summer Wardens. The last two checked, which were at the Breamish Caravan site, were interesting in that they had entirely different outcomes. One originally had 8 eggs and a female retrap Great Tit (from 2019) but by the 29th she had abandoned her nest, of now 10 eggs because it had been taken over by an expanding Wasp Nest. The other was a nest of 8 Blue Tit eggs that we recorded on the 12th when we ringed the female for the first time (only hatched herself last year). On this visit we ringed 7 healthy and well developed Blue Tits.

While Blue Tits and Great Tits are the most common species to use nest boxes there are others and Hilary was pleased to find, in a second year nest box site near Brinkburn, both a nest of Marsh Tits and Nuthatches on the 12th (see photos on previous page). Returning in the 18th these were large enough to be safely ringed as 8 Marsh Tits and 5 Nuthatches.

We are doing a couple of Bird Ringing Demonstrations at Howick Arboretum in June, for Newcastle University Students and then starting to ring Barn Owls (and a few Kestrels) as we move into July.

Best Regards

Phil Hanmer S Ringer/Trainer; Natural History Society of Northumbria Ringing Group (Hancock Museum).

Bird Records May 2023

Below are the highlights for the month of May.

Barnacle Goose	120+ over Branton on 18th	I&KD
Garganey	3 at the Lough, Holy Island on 1st	PN&I
Red-breasted Merganser	2 at Long Nanny on 19th	PCA
Cuckoo	2 at Shepherds Law on 3rd 3 at Branton on 11th	I&KD
	1 near Reaveley on 14th 1 at Beanley Moor on 13th	I&KD
	1 at Branton Ponds on 15th 1 at Beanley Moor on 21st	I&KD
	1 at Lemmington Hall on 3rd	P&AH
	1 at Longframlington on 3rd	P&AH
Water Rail	1 at Branton Ponds on 25th	I&KD
Avocet	Up to 12 at Newton Scrapes all month	PCA
	5 at Newton Scrapes on 3rd	JMcC
	1 at Newton Scrape on 27th	JMcC
Little Ringed Plover	1 at Newton Scrapes on 12th	PCA
Whimbrel	1 at Long Nanny on 3rd	PCA
	1 near Holy Island Causeway on 9th	PN&I
Black-tailed Godwit	3 at Low Newton on 27th	JMcC
Broad-billed Sandpiper	1 at Budle Bay on 22nd	I&KD
Temminck's Stint	2 at Newton Scrapes on 25th	PCA
	2 at Low Newton Scrape on 17th	I&KD
Dunlin	1 at Hedgeley Lakes on 3rd	I&KD
Little Stint	1 at Newton Scrape on 25th	PCA
	1 at Budle Bay on 22nd	I&KD
Wood Sandpiper	1 at Hedgeley Lakes on 7th	I&KD
Greenshank	1 at Newton scrapes on 25th	PCA
	1 at Hedgeley Lakes on 14th	I&KD
	2 at Newton Scrapes on 27th	JMcC
Little Gull	1 at Newton Scrapes on 25th	PCA
Marsh Harrier	1 near Holy Island Causeway on 22nd	PN&I
Barn Owl	1 at Low Newton on 5th	PCA
	1 at Branton on 11th	I&KD
Short-eared Owl	1 at Long Nanny on 19th	PCA
Tawny Owl	2 at Branton on 11th 1 at Hedgeley Hall on 26th	I&KD
Merlin	1 at Long Nanny on 3rd	PCA
	1 at Beanley Moor on 13th	I&KD
Red-backed shrike	1 at Seaton Point on 9th	PCA
Raven	7 over Bewick Moor on 28th	I&KD
Marsh Tit	2 at Brinkburn on 18th	P&AH
Grasshopper Warbler	2 at Bamburgh Castle most of month	PCA
	1 at Branton Middlesteads on 3rd	I&KD
	1 at near Low Lynn Stables, Beal on 2nd	JJ
	1 at Hedgeley on 17th	JMcC
Blackcap	1 at Low Newton on 5th	PCA
	1 at Branton on 1st	JMcC
Garden Warbler	1 at Branton Ponds on 14th	I&KD
	6 at Hedgeley on 17th	JMcC
Lesser Whitethroat	1 at Low Newton on 1st	I&KD

Whitethroat	2 at Branton on 1st	I&KD
Goldcrest	4 at Chathill on 26th	PCA
	5 at Hedgeley on 1st	JMcC
Nuthatch	2 at Brinkburn on 18th	P&AH
Redstart	1 at Branton on 18th 2 near Branton Middlesteads on 20th	I&KD
	1 at Longframlington on 3rd	P&AH
Whinchat	2 at Old Fawdon Hill on 20th	I&KD
Dipper	1 juvenile in Ingram on 20th	I&KD
Yellow Wagtail	1 at Newton Scrapes on 1st	PCA
	2 at Low Newton Scrape on 17th	I&KD
	1 at Low Newton Pool on 3rd	PN&MN
	3 at Newton Scrapes on 3rd	JMcC
Bullfinch	2 at West Fleetham on 10th	PCA
	2 at Swarland Woods on 20th	JMcC
Lesser Redpoll	1 at Powburn on 27th	PCA
Siskin	1 at Longframlington on 3rd	P&AH
	3 at Longframlington on 8th	JMcC
Grey-headed Lapwing	1 at Newton scrapes on 1st	PCA
	1 at Low Newton on 1st	I&KD

There won't be any updates during the summer while the club isn't meeting, so please send June, July and August records to Paul Armstrong
NNBCrecords@yahoo.com by 1st September 2023.
Note! If it is easier for you to send them monthly, please feel free to do so.

Contributors

Paul Armstrong (PCA)
Ian & Keith Davison (I&KD)
Phil & Alison Hanmer (P&AH)
James Joicey (JJ)
John McCutcheon (JMcC)
Phil & Marge Noble (PN&MN)