September Newsletter

Wheatear at the The Hirsel - Neil Hinchliff

Ringed Plover inspecting new arrival
Curlew Sandpiper at Boulmer - Phil Hanmer

In this issue...

Club Information
Things you need (or might like) to know about North Northumberland Bird Club
page 2

Noticeboard
Lots of news and other stuff that might be of interest to you
page 3

Bird Sighting Records
Sightings made by club members in July, compiled by our Recorder **Paul Armstrong**
page 5

Bird Sighting Records
Sightings made by club members in August, compiled by our Recorder **Paul Armstrong**
page 6

What's Up on WhatsApp
A quick look at some recent posts on the clubs
page 7

Members' Contribution
Awaiting your story - A Member
page 8

Ringer's Roundup
Phil Hanmer's roundup of recent ringing outings, with information on what was found
page 9

Epilogue
..and finally
page 15

Club Information

Vice Chair & Programme Coordinator
Neil Hinchliff

Secretary
Paul Ashdown
01665 576771
ashbauve.pm@gmail.com

Membership Secretary
Fiona Southern
01668 214481
jfs@robincottage.co.uk

Treasurer
Alan Yeomans

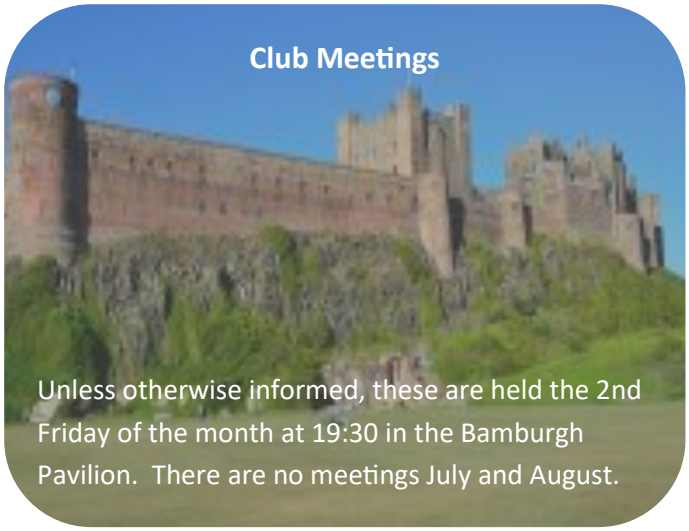
Committee Member
Liz Harrison
liz.a.harrison22@btinternet.com

Committee Member
Alan Goodall

Honorary President
Graham Bell

Committee Member
John Lumby

Committee Member (Co-opted)
Kevin Lever



"Be as a bird perched on a frail branch that she feels bending beneath her; still, she sings away all the same, knowing she has wings "

Victor Hugo

Check out our Internet presence

On our web site at:
northnorthumberlandbirdclub.co.uk

On our Facebook page at:
www.facebook.com/NorthNorthumberlandBirdClub

Email us at:
ringouzel@northnorthumberlandbirdclub.co.uk

Members WhatsApp Group Chat
NNBC Chat (Join by requesting a link)

Bird Recorder
Paul Armstrong
nnbcrecords@yahoo.com

Newsletter Editor
John McCutcheon
john@waterstar.uk

Noticeboard

Our long-standing Chairman, **Richard Poyer**, has let us know that he has to resign as Chair, for personal reasons. We all wish him well and thank him for his outstanding service to the Club. Your Committee will share arrangements for recognising this more formally in due course. In the meantime our Vice-Chair, Neil Hinchliffe, will act as Chair until the AGM in November.

Volunteer(s) Wanted

The club is looking for a volunteer to maintain and update the club's web site. Please talk to any committee member if you can help.

It's that time of year £££

Please remember that ***Membership Fees*** are due on 1st September 2024 for the coming year. Fees remain unchanged at £10 Individual, £15 Couples and Families, Students are free. Membership forms accompany this newsletter.

Annual General Meeting

Please note that the club's ***Annual General Meeting*** takes place on the club meeting night on 8th November. Details attached to this newsletter.

Upcoming Field Trips

Sunday 15th Sept 2024
RSPB Saltholme - see details on next page

Oct 2024
Holy Island - Details to follow

Nov 2024
Low Newton—Details to follow

For all Field Trips please read the Risk Assessment on our Web site beforehand. For dates and times and last minute changes / cancellations check our Facebook Page, NNBC Chat, or directly with Leaders for the event.

See web site for details of other Field Trips

Upcoming Meetings

Friday 13th Sept at 19:30
The Wildlife of Costa Rica with **Alan Yeomans**

Friday 11th Oct at 19:30
A year in the life of a Morpeth Swift
With **Graham Sorrie**

Friday 8th Nov at 19:30
Return of the Red Kite with **Harold Dobson**

See web site for details of other Meetings

The Graham Bell Trophy

A photographic competition for members. The simple rules are:

1. Open to all members of NNBC
2. Digital photographs of a bird or birds taken at any time, any place
3. Species and location to be provided with entries
4. A maximum of two entries per person
5. Files of 2MB or less, saved in jpeg format
6. Maximum image dimensions are 1600 pixels horizontal by 1200 pixels vertical

Entries to be sent to Alan Yeomans (a.yeomans720@btinternet.com) by 30th November

This year's competition will be judged by renowned local ornithologist Tom Cadwallender, with the result to be announced at the December club meeting.

Good Luck!

THE CLUB NEEDS YOU

There is still space on the committee and we would like to encourage members to consider joining it, to help organise and run the club. It is not really onerous, but it's essential to have new blood and ideas to ensure the club continues and thrives. This year marks the 40th anniversary of the NNBC and it would be good to think that it still has many years to contribute to birding in the area. Please ask any committee member if you are interested.

Saltholme Field Trip 15th September 2024

All are invited to join me for the day at RSPB Saltholme.

The plan is for everybody to meet at the reserve's car park at 10:00, which is when the reserve opens. We will tour the reserve, plus anywhere in the immediate vicinity, should there be anything of interest to see. There are toilet facilities at the reserve, plus there is a substantial menu in the cafe. Car sharing would be sensible, plus being attached to the club's whatsapp site (NNBC Chat), just in case of updates (eg anyone is running late).

The entrance fee is free to RSPB members, and £6 to non members.

If you are wishing to come along, could you please let me know beforehand, and preferably on my landline 01665 720654 (07396 755901)

Regards, John Lumby.

Bird Sighting Records

Below are the highlights for July...

Barnacle Goose	1 at Long Nanny on 6th and 10th	PCA
Egyptian Goose	1 at River Coquet on 18th	PCA
Pochard	2 at Branton on 31st	JMcC
Common Scoter	20 at Warkworth on 4th	JMcC
Grey Partridge	1 at Branton on 31st	JMcC
Cuckoo	1 at Long Nanny on 5th and 17th	PCA
Great Crested Grebe	1 at Branton on 16th	JMcC
Little Ringed Plover	2 at Hedgeley on 6th	JMcC
Bar-tailed Godwit	11 at Coquet Estuary on 17th	RP
Knot	24 at Coquet Estuary on 17th and 32 on 31st	RP
Black Tern (American)	1 at Long Nanny on 3rd and 12th	PCA
Hen Harrier	1 at Newton Steads on 26th *	PCA
	1 at Holy Island on 23rd July	SW
Barn Owl	1 at Long Nanny on 3rd and 31st	PCA
Jay	1 at Breamish Valley on 2nd	PCA
	1 at Spindlestone on 8th	PCA
Grasshopper Warbler	1 at Football Hole on 20th and 26th	PCA
Blackcap	1 at Branton on 31st	JMcC
	1 at Ingram on 2nd	PCA
	1 at Seahouses on 10th	PCA
Treecreeper	1 at Branton on 16th	JMcC
Spotted Flycatcher	3 at Dechant Woods on 13th	PCA
Whinchat	4 at Breamish Valley on 2nd	PCA

** Likely same bird seen 90 mins later by DS at Druridge Pools*

Contributors

Paul Armstrong (PCA)
John McCutcheon (JMcC)
Richard Poyer (RP)
Dave Smith (DS)
Sue Wilson (SW)

Bird Sighting Records

Below are the highlights for August...

Barnacle Goose	1 at Beadnell on 31st	PCA
Common Scoter	6 at Alnmouth Bay on 14th	RP
Goosander	154 at Coquet Estuary on 12th	RP
Red-breasted Merganser	14 at Seaton Point on 17th	P&AH
	16 at Howick Burn Mouth on 26th	P&AH
Cuckoo	1 at Howick Burn Mouth on 26th	P&AH
Avocet	2 at Coquet Estuary on 12th	RP
Grey Plover	3 at Holy Island Causeway on 29th	NH
Whimbrel	1 at Fenham on 10th	PCA
	3 at Alnmouth Salt Marshes on 14th	RP
	3 at Coquet Estuary on 12th	RP
Curlew Sandpiper	1 at Holy Island Causeway on 29th	NH
Greenshank	17 at Holy Island Causeway on 29th	NH
	1 at Long Nanny on 31st	PCA
Common Guillemot	15 at Alnmouth Bay on 14th	RP
Red-throated Diver	1 at Alnmouth Bay on 14th	RP
Osprey	1 at Wooler on 15th	DR
Sparrowhawk	1 at long nanny on 17th, 18th and 24th	PCA
Marsh Harrier	1 at Ford Moss on 16th	PCA
Kingfisher	3 at Howick Pool on 31st	P&AH
Raven	1 at Howick Pool on 31st	P&AH
Grasshopper Warbler	1 at Football hole on 7th	PCA
Blackcap	7 at Howick Ringing Station on 31st	P&AH
	1 at Bamburgh on 30th	PCA
Wheatear	15 at Howick Bathing House on 26th	P&AH
	1 at Long Nanny on 2nd, 22nd and 28th, 2 on 23rd	PCA
Greenfinch	2 at Seaton Point on 17th	P&AH

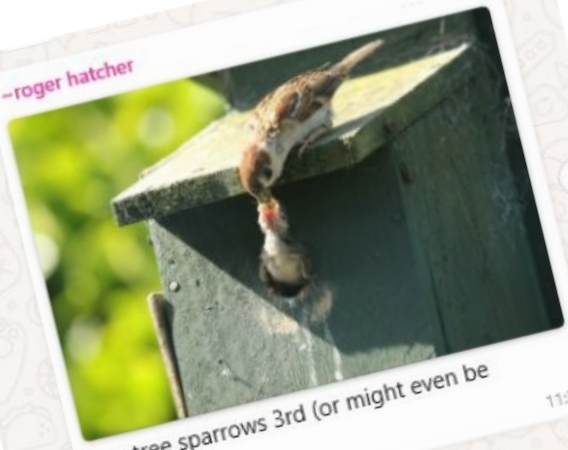
Contributors

Paul Armstrong (PCA)
Phil & Alison Hanmer (P&AH)
Neil Hinchliff (NH)
Richard Poyer (RP)
David Richens (DR)

What's Up on WhatsApp

NNBC Chat—A quick look at some of the posts on the club's WhatsApp Group page

~roger hatcher



Our tree sparrows 3rd (or might even be 4th!) brood.

11:25

3

~Liz Harrison

~Philip Hammer +44 7454 981451
Two Greenfinch feeding on beach at Boulmer (pulling at Green Seaweed). Very odd. Phil & Alison

A year or two ago I saw a flock of mixed finches including Greenfinch doing similar on North Shore Lindisfarne.I queried with one of the managers whether this was unusual behaviour and apparently they had observed this on several occasions.

2

13:16

~Liz Harrison

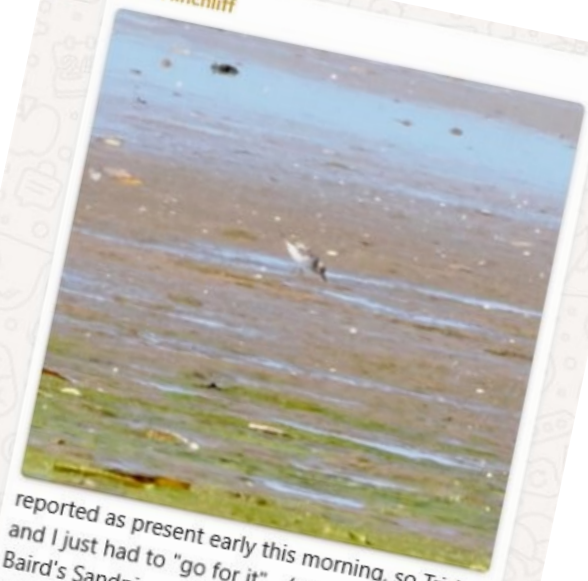
Alan Goodall
Male Sparrowhawk doing well in our garden. Last Saturday he caught a Blackbird and just now he caught a House Sparrow.

Mmm!
Tasty!😋

15:48

2

Neil Hinchliff



reported as present early this morning, so Trish and I just had to "go for it"... (sorry Graham). Baird's Sandpiper, thru the distance & shimmer @ Aberlady Nature Reserve, plus Greenshank

3

14:05

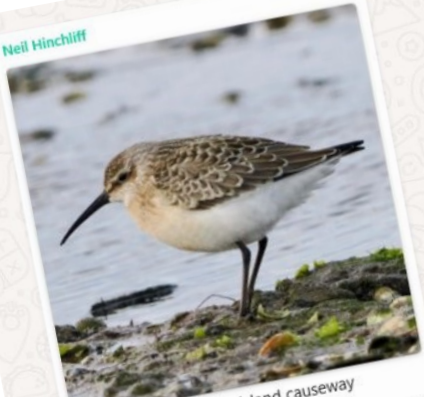
Neil Hinchliff

a few pictures of my flycatcher family at The Hirsel

14:00

3

Neil Hinchliff



curlew sandpiper, holy island causeway this afternoon

17:59

8

Members' Contributions

Sadly none this month !

Members' Contributions to the Newsletter

Several members have submitted articles for publishing in the Newsletter, offered on their own volition to add interest, inform and entertain the other members.. so far all have been very interesting and much appreciated. BUT we need more, so please consider an offering you think will interest, enlighten or simply amuse your fellow members.

In 99.9% of cases, they should of course relate to birding!

Look forward to receiving your offerings!

Redshank with Crab—Phil Hanmer

A Ringer's Year - July 2024

Well we are still ringing young Barn Owls and expect to have five nests to return to in August. These late nests are not unprecedented but usually occur as 'second broods' from pairs of owls that have had early young in May. However, this year we have not yet found any second broods (*and we only ringed two broods in May*) but it is still looking like a relatively good year, although there have been a few disappointments where owls seem to have laid eggs but then not had the inclination (*or bodily reserves*) to incubate them. Looking back on some of these (*where we were able to weigh the adult birds*) the females seem to have been underweight. For example, we encountered one female weighing only 310g immediately after laying her eggs when we might have expected her to have a weight of nearer 400g. This is not about a simple shortage of food (there have been lots of voles and mice about) but early in the year the very mixed weather seems to have made it difficult for owls to catch their prey. As the year has progressed later nesting owls have done relatively better, hence still expecting to be ringing some in August. The picture shows two from a box near Lucker.

We have had (late) nesting Kestrels in owl boxes near Warkworth (see picture), another near Bamburgh and a third in a poor 'kestrel box' south of Berwick. I would argue that what is traditionally described as a 'kestrel box' should never be used! They are frequently too small with great big gaping opening at the front and no depth to the back of the box. Kestrels often have large broods and the young birds fight; this sometimes leads to birds being knocked out of the nest boxes. To mitigate against this behaviour it's better if the box is longer with more space on the inside and a restricted opening. A traditional kestrel box is also very easy for Carrion Crows or Jackdaws to raid and steal eggs or young pulli. For all these reasons, encouraging them to utilise a larger box or a barn owl type box is a good idea. The box south of Berwick failed, we believe, because of egg predation.

Ringer's Roundup

I have now returned to check every tawny-duck box that we might reasonably have expected our rare nesting Goldeneye ducks to nest in. I do this to count any remaining eggs and try to match these up with sightings of broods of ducklings - and see if both Tawny Owls and Goldeneye have left their boxes successfully. The Goldeneye ducks made 15 breeding attempts between April – June (one more than in 2023) *and there were five tawny owl nests.* However, only eight of the Goldeneye were successful (compared to 11 in 2023). One was undoubtedly lost due to a stoat attack on an incubating female (that had first bred in 2022).

Other nests were lost after 'egg-dumping' had caused the original female to give up on incubation. Damage caused by Storm Arwen was still an issue; as a plantation that at one time contained three boxes was largely cleared before the breeding season. However, with the support of the landowner we had managed to preserve two boxes on the edge of this woodland and these were both used, one by a Goldeneye (and the other by a Tawny Owl). The most recent winter storms nearly felled two other boxes at another location and amazingly one clever Goldeneye female still managed to nest successfully in a box despite its almost horizontal angle (*pictures show the tree, and the remaining two eggs inside*)! We did not find the other box on its fallen tree until the 10/5/24. We replaced it almost immediately and were gratified to find it was being used on the 27th when we ringed a new female nesting with 10 eggs! The first 'brood' of five was seen on the River Breamish on the 14/5/24. Four brand new adults were ringed and six retrapped (one dead). Of the retraps three were from 2021; two 2022 and one from 2023.

Phil Hanmer
S Ringer/Trainer, Natural History Society of Northumbria Ringing Group (Hancock Museum)
Email: tytoalbas@btinternet.com

Ringer's Roundup

This is still the only regular colony of Goldeneye Ducks in England & Wales. However, an indication that the species just might be spreading comes from a sighting of a brood on Caistron Lake, for the first time.

The Howick swans have lost all their cygnets to an unknown cause so there will be none to ring this September.

We are now regularly ringing at Howick Arboretum on Friday and Saturday mornings (weather permitting) and on the 19/7/24 we captured 24 birds (17 new and 7 retraps). The retraps were interesting, including two House Sparrows from 2022 and a Goldcrest from 2023. The new birds included nine Chiffchaffs (warblers) - confirming that these migrants have again nested at Howick. On the 20th we captured 30 birds (23 new and 7 retraps).

The retraps included a female Chaffinch first ringed back in 2015 - so 9 years old! Included in the new birds were an adult male Bullfinch together with a fledged juvenile (twice). There were also seven very young Chiffchaffs and a single Willow Warbler. The Willow Warbler was a bird of the year but not so young as to suggest it had necessarily hatched at Howick; it seems more likely it had started its migration further north and had just called in to Howick to feed up for its trip to Africa. Managing a short session on the 26th we caught another 18 birds (10 new and 8 retraps). The retraps included a male Coal Tit from 2022, while the new birds included three young migrating Willow Warblers. There was also a very young Blackcap (another warbler).

Anyone interested in seeing what we are doing at the Howick Ringing Station is invited call in.

A Ringer's Year - August 2024

Pending something exceptional, I ringed the last young Barn Owls of this year on the 19th in a box south of Rothbury and at another nest near Longhorsley. Neither of these are second broods (just late) but while I can't be categoric about the figures yet, it does look like they achieved an occupancy of 51% compared with only 36% last year. When all the data has been sorted, I will publish a full summary.

An interesting return from the British Trust for Ornithology reached me this week. This was of a Great Tit we ringed in January 2021 near Longhorsley, which is still alive – and just been 'controlled' by another ringer in Norfolk (over 300 km away)! Not an unusual movement for a migratory warbler but certainly for our normal sedentary Great Tits.

We have continued to try and regularly ring at Howick Arboretum on Friday and Saturday mornings but the weather has been making it necessary to cancel or curtail some sessions. On the 2/8/18 we captured 25 birds (18 new and 7 retraps): these included a Garden Warbler starting to fatten up before it sets off to migrate across the Sahara to Ghana and neighbouring countries (see photo). There was also a Blackcap that will probably only get as far as North Africa.

There was also a very young (hatched locally) Chiffchaff which will probably also go south across the Sahara to the Senegambia region of Africa, and a slightly older Willow Warbler (probably not locally hatched) on its way to the Gulf of Guinea (Ivory Coast and Ghana) (see photo). The more local 'resident' birds captured included Bullfinch, Coal Tits, Dunnocks and Robins. There were also some Goldcrests, which can be migrants but these particular individuals were young birds suggesting they were from local nests.

Ringing again on the 3/8/24 we caught 33 birds (20 new and 13 retraps): these included a young Whitethroat still fattening up before heading off to cross the Sahara and spend their winter in Senegambia. There were three young Chiffchaffs, just one Willow Warbler and three Blackcaps.

We caught the first Swallow of the year (hunting around the cricket pitch), a juvenile Great Spotted Woodpecker and a beautiful Treecreeper.

Now I realise most folk think of the treecreeper as just a little brown bird – but take a look at the attached

pictures of the wings and tail which show the excellent patterns and shades of brown.

We managed to ring on the 16/8/24 (before the wind stopped us) and caught 19 birds (13 new and 6 retraps).

There were three young local Swallows; two Robins still getting their proper red breasts; three young Chiffchaff and an adult Male Chiffchaff (just nearing the end of its full moult) (see photo). Back again on the 24th we caught 23 birds (14 new 9 retraps). This time there was an adult Willow Warbler and three juveniles and it would be nice to say the male was showing them the way to Africa! However, they all travel individually. There were also four young Blackcaps. The new birds included a young Bullfinch and a pair of adults were included in the retraps; one of these was a female first ringed in 2020.

Convening again at around 7:00 on the 30/8/24 we captured 24 birds (15 new and 9 retraps). These included three young Swallows and an adult male (with his long tail steamers projecting out 48mm from his ordinary tail feathers); there were four young Chiffchaff together with an adult female and a young Blackcap. Finally, on the 31st we captured 40 birds (32 new and 8 retraps); these included a very violent juvenile Great Spotted Woodpecker that seemed quite determined to cause someone an injury (see photo). This is the

second one of the month and suggests they nested locally.

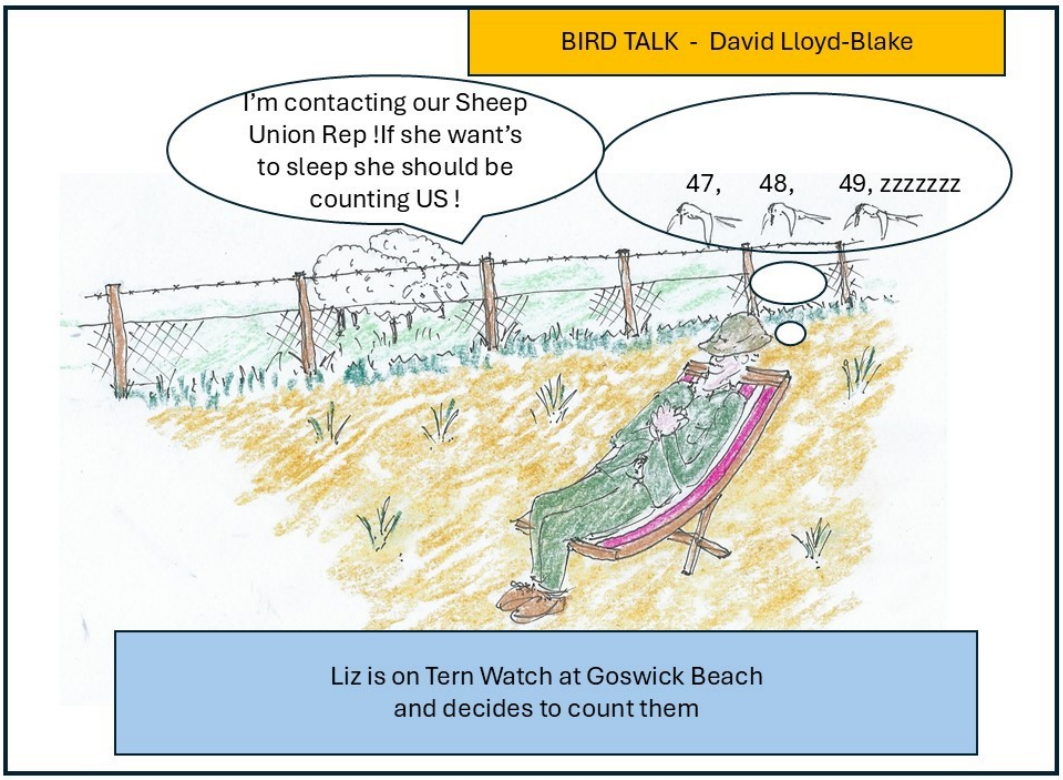
There were nine young Blackcaps; some having now moulted into distinctive adult plumage with Black heads (the males) and Brown heads (the females). We also captured some incredibly young Goldcrests (clearly of a second, unusually late brood) which showed no signs of actual 'crests'!

There were the expected young Chiffchaffs (2) and an adult; and another juvenile Whitethroat rather confirming they nested locally as well (see photo).

Alison and I encountered an adult male defending a territory earlier in the year just a short walk away from our ringing site.

Anyone interested in seeing what we are doing at the Howick Ringing Station is invited call in.

Phil Hanmer
S Ringer/Trainer, Natural History Society of Northumbria Ringing Group (Hancock Museum)
Email: tytoalbas@btinternet.com



A Blast from the Past - this month's hint

Put a twig or branch on your bird table because:

- It will make the table look less stark and more natural
- Enable shy birds to approach and leave the table more confidently and cautiously

Hints are from Graham Bell's early newsletters

Got something you'd like to add? Please let us know.

Content for the Newsletter

Submissions for inclusion in the form of notes, articles, photographs etc are welcomed. These should be Emailed to the Newsletter Editor. Deadline for copy is the first Friday of the month, but earlier is preferred. The target date for distribution is the weekend before the club's meeting, usually on the Sunday.