

# Alnwick Wildlife Group

Promoting awareness of the countryside and its flora and fauna



## REVIEW OF DECEMBER 2012

### NEWSLETTER 136

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#### NEXT MEETING - WEDNESDAY, 27TH FEBRUARY 2013

LINDISFARNE                      SPEAKER: ANDREW CRAGGS

Andrew is the Senior Reserve Warden for the National Nature Reserve at Lindisfarne. He is employed by Natural England. This should be a very interesting talk by one of the expert naturalists on our coast. His knowledge of the habitats and species, within the Reserve, is second to none. This should be an excellent talk about one of North East England's natural jewels.

#### WHAT TO LOOK FOR IN FEBRUARY

February can often be seen as an expectant month. Spring is just on the horizon but in the same token February can be a very cold month. The first of the woodland plants start to appear. Mistle and Song Thrushes warm up with their recognisable songs. Robins increase their aggression towards their neighbours. Mammals such as badgers continue to stay underground especially if the weather is cold. On the coast there are still movements of waders, geese and ducks. However, if the spring is kind, the first of the frogs and butterflies may appear by the end of the month.

By early February, our Snowdrops will be in flower. I often associate Snowdrops with gardens but they can be a common component of some of our native woodlands. The Snowdrop (*Galanthus nivalis*) or February Rairmaids, Snow Piercers and Dingle-dangles are a member of the onion family. Found in many types of woodland, churchyards, parks and gardens, snowdrops are some of the first bulbs of the year to bloom. Carpets of snowdrops can be found between January and April. Their early arrival is aided by hardened leaf tips that can push through frozen soil. The downside to flowering in winter is that pollinating insects are scarce, so they are spread mainly through bulb division. Some of the best places to find good displays of Snowdrops are around Howick, Hulne Park, Shawdon Hall or any stately home. These woodlands are also the places to locate the male flowers (catkins) of the Hazel and early flowering Lesser Celandine and Primrose.

The pokers of Bulrush (*Typha sp*), also called Reedmace, burst open, producing fluffy-haired seeds that are dispersed on the wind. If they land on dry ground the hairs spread out so that they can be blown away in the hope of reaching still water. If the seeds land on water the hairs remain spread for a short time but then fold back, which releases the seed, which will immediately sink. In ponds and wet ditches, this plant can be common place and can be seen as an invasive on small areas of open water. The seeds of the Bulrush and Common Reed (*Phragmites australis*) can be an important seed source for birds such as Reed Buntings and the very uncommon Bearded Tit. It has also been found in the nests of Long-tailed Tits.

A number of birds can be nesting by this time of year. These include the Grey Heron and the Raven. I find it strange that a gangly bird such as the Grey Heron can decide to nest at this time of year high up in the spindly branches of a deciduous tree exposed to the worst of the elements. Yet, Grey Herons are relatively successful breeders within Northumberland. They will nest in loose colonies and very occasionally they will nest on the ground in reed beds or long grass.

February can often be seen as quiet month but there is plenty to see across our area. Hopefully the weather will stay kind to our wildlife.

*Jack Daw.*

Please send sightings reports for January, no later than 6th February 2013 to: Ian & Keith Davison, The Bungalow, Branton, Powburn, NE66 4LW or Tel: 01665 578 357 or email to [redsquirrel@alnwickwildlifegroup.co.uk](mailto:redsquirrel@alnwickwildlifegroup.co.uk) Copies of the monthly Newsletter and sightings will be made available on the web site one month after the paper publication.

## Meeting of Wednesday 12<sup>th</sup> December 2012

Last Christmas we had a disappointing turn-out for our December meeting. This time, we're pleased to say we had an audience of 34. Many who came brought an excellent selection of 'nibbles', so grateful thanks are due to all who did.

After a roundup of sightings, Jim Clark gave a summary of our various surveys for Northumberland Estates. We are in our 6<sup>th</sup> year with the upland sites associated with the Red Grouse and Grey Partridge recovery programmes. The work at the two coastal farms at Lesbury is now in its 3<sup>rd</sup> year and we have recently begun surveys at Ratcheugh and Snableazes. Both these latter two areas are mostly concerned with Grey Partridge. National England has shown significant interest in our data. Even with the upland sites data trends are still in their early days, but some signs of change in indicator bird species are becoming evident, and not all our results are consistent with national trends. We are also starting to build up plant lists for the various sites. As ever, thanks are due to Jim for negotiating our contracts with the Estates and for organising the schedules of visits. As a Wildlife Group we benefit both from the financial contributions to our funds and also with the interest the surveys provide for members who enjoy going out 'into the field' with a rather more specific scientific purpose than might otherwise be the case.

We then welcomed our Speaker, **Judy Summerson**, talking about *Red Kites in the North East*. Red Kites have a 5'8" wing span but weigh only about 2kg. They have black primaries and white wing 'windows'. Juveniles have white stripes in their wing plumage. In the air the forked tail is often diagnostic and separates kites from buzzards and in addition the buzzards tend to soar with wings held at 45° angles while kites hold theirs straight. Usually they stick to carrion feeding, although they will take beetles and earthworms.

By 1900 persecution and hunting had reduced the kite population to just 10 pairs on the Welsh border. In 1989 birds from France and Spain were released in the Chilterns and on the Black Isle in Scotland. In the Chilterns people protected them and they did well. In Scotland the shooting estates, despite good evidence to the contrary, believed they would take young Grouse and so the kites were again persecuted.

94 birds from the Chiltern population were collected by taking one chick from each nest that held three or four and were released in Gateshead between 2004 and 2006. Evidence showed that well populated areas provide decent scavenging opportunities and people tend to 'adopt' the birds and protect them – hence the choice of Gateshead. In addition the Derwent Valley provides a good wildlife corridor and nesting opportunities.



Each released bird was tagged with coloured and numbered wing tags and had small radio transmitters fitted that enables them to be tracked with directional antennae. This only happened with the initial batch of released birds because the whole project was quite costly and could only be maintained during the two year funded period. When the project ended the *Friends of the Red Kites* organisation was set up. To date it is known that 126 chicks have successfully fledged, but poor weather recently has restricted breeding success.

Young and unattached birds tend to gather each evening at pre-roost sites. The current main roost site is at Gibside. They start breeding at 2 years and usually pair for life, although some North East birds have tended to be less faithful. They build stick nests about 10 - 15 m off the ground and lay usually between 1 and 3 eggs. They often decorate the nest with coloured bits and pieces of rubbish.

Kites still face threats – poisoning, shooting, road casualties ( a bird is feeding from road kill cannot fly out of the way of approaching vehicles very quickly). *Friends of the Red Kites* work with a range of partner organisations. They publicise the birds, work with children, run 'Adopt a Kite' schemes, and generally act as the birds' human champions. You can find information about them at [www.friendsfredkites.org.uk](http://www.friendsfredkites.org.uk) .

Judy's talk was followed by food plus Ian and Keith Davison's Christmas quiz which was won by the *Milvus milvus* team consisting of Mrs Thompson, Ruth, Stewart, Mick and Richard. Richard has developed the 'uncanny knack' of teaming up with proven winners who now most of the answers – George last year and Stewart this year!

## BEYOND THE BORDER

### Number 14: December 2012

The range of local fungi – and the opportunities they exploit – seems to be almost limitless. It was during a visit to Bonaly Country Park, at the foot of the Pentland Hills near Edinburgh (December 2) that I was shown **Ear Pick Fungus** (*Auriscalpium vulgare*). The fruiting bodies are very small and non-descript being brown and slightly prickly but more unusual in that they grow on part-buried **Scots Pine** (*Pinus sylvestris*) cones. **Beechmast Candlesnuff** (*Xylaria carpophila*) adopts similar behaviour and (5th) tiny ‘wicks’ were noticed protruding from the rotting mast beneath **Beech** (*Fagus sylvatica*) trees at Windywalls near Kelso. There are many species of Waxcap Fungi and these are usually considered to be good indicators of improved and often ancient grassland. The all-white caps of **Snowy Waxcap** (*Hygrocybe virginea*) were encountered in an area of close-cropped coastal turf at Cove (18th).

December is far from ideal as a month for botanising and yet, as with all years, there were a few plants which continued to flower. The fishing village of Burnmouth was one location where small splashes of colour could still be admired on Boxing Day. Most prominent amongst the small range was **Red Valerian** (*Centranthus ruber*) originally from the Mediterranean but now well established on near-bare rocky areas of these Berwickshire cliffs. The rose-pink flowers have a smell similar to that of Vanilla and the plant has been harvested in the past for its medical properties. Uses have included those of a preventative for sleeplessness and, during WW 1, to combat shell-shock.

I used to admire another plant at Burnmouth because it was the only site in that locality where **Celery-leaved Buttercup** (*Ranunculus scleratus*) grew but was saddened to discover that the wet gravel-beds which it exploited have now been concreted over. **Lesser Celandine** (*Ranunculus ficaria*) is also a member of the **Ranunculaceae** (*Buttercup*) family and a mild spell led to a carpet of newly-emerged dark green heart-shaped leaves appearing on a woodland floor near Sweethope Farm, Stichill on the 28th.

**Red-throated Divers** continued to appear at Berwick-upon-Tweed with several sightings of 1-3 made in the vicinity of the mouth of the river. Of greatest interest was the presence of a single bird on Hoselaw Loch (nr. Yetholm/29th) because only rarely do they winter inland. I was able to enjoy regular encounters with **Little Grebes** who chose haunts which included Berwick-upon-Tweed, The Hirsell (Coldstream), Easter Softlaw (nr. Kelso), Sprouston and Upsettlington. Although not unknown it's a little unusual to find this species on saltwater but a Little Grebe swam in the bay at Burnmouth on the 26th.

**Fulmars** will not be nesting until the Spring but each year some birds return early to the breeding grounds in order to secure the most sought after rocky shelves. I visited Cove on the 18th and there found a total of 47 Fulmars which were occupying 31 sites on the cliff-ledges. When the time comes little or no plant material will be used to line the bare rock and a single chalky-white egg laid. Another bird with strong maritime connections is the **Cormorant** but in their case regular inland journeys are also undertaken. Downstream from Kelso (12th) I counted an unusually large number with 21 occupying a two mile stretch of the River Tweed.

A distant sighting of “several hundred” swans feeding on the haughs at Redden (4th) must have been made up largely (or exclusively) of **Mute Swans** but at Carham (18th) and West Learmouth (nr. Cornhill-on-Tweed /25th) there were smaller herds of 5 and 21 **Whooper Swans**. Numbers of **Greylag Geese** resting at Yarrow Slake (nr. Tweedmouth) peaked at 180+ on the 4th whilst there were regular opportunities to see **Pink-footed Geese** along the Tweed Valley (all month). Other records included 3 at Old Cambus (Cockburnspath/18th) and 500+ flying SW over Dunglass Wood near Coldstream on Christmas Day. **Canada Geese** (max=25+/4th) also made use of Yarrow Slake as a refuge.

Respectable numbers of **Wigeon** were found at Hoselaw Loch (70+/29th) and it was the same story for **Tufted Duck** with 17 swimming on the River Tweed near Easter-Hendersyde (Ednam/12th). 3 **Long-tailed Duck** swam beside the Quayside at Berwick-upon-Tweed (4th+8th) and on the latter date joined by an uncommon **Velvet Scoter**. Big numbers of **Goldeneye** could be easily be studied in the Tweed estuary (and beyond) all month and a further 20 occupied the Hirsell Lake (25th). **Red-breasted Mergansers** showed a preference for the sea but, on occasions, also ventured into the estuary but they never exceeded single figures. The closely related **Goosander** was recorded with great regularity – but always on fresh water. Sightings included 25+ at Berwick-upon-Tweed (4th), approx 20 at Upsettlington (16th) and 20+ on Hoselaw Loch (29th).

**Kestrels** hunted along the cliffs and over areas of farmland whilst others hovered beside our busy highways. It was interesting to observe one of these birds ‘mantling’ its prey (with arched wings) beside the main A1 road at Dunglass

(2nd). A **Peregrine** sat perched on top of a prominent landmark not far from Grantshouse (18th). When I returned on my walk – about two hours later – it was still there.

Whilst I've not been actively seeking **Golden Plovers** I like to think that I do spot them when they are in an area. December was disappointing with just a single bird seen. It was flying low over Windywalls (nr. Kelso/13th) → heading NW. Residents of coastal areas have told me of the fluctuations in **Lapwing** numbers which are obviously influenced by weather conditions. I live inland but have never seen so few with just one (24th) at Sprouston during all of December. 2 **Woodcock** flew out from a hedge-bottom at New Water Haugh (Berwick-upon-Tweed /4th) as I passed and another exited a **Bramble** (*Rubus fruticosus*) patch at The Hirsell (25th). A **Green Sandpiper** fed at the waters edge beside the bypass-bridge (nr. Ord, Berwick-upon-Tweed). They are nervous birds with bobbing head and tail that quickly take to the air so revealing a conspicuous white rump which breaks up the otherwise dark upperparts.

A flock of 2500+ **Woodpigeons** massed together to feed on a stubble field at Easter Softlaw (nr. Kelso/15th). I failed to notice any **Kingfishers** during the month but was told of one beside the Union (Chain) Bridge near Paxton on the 12th. Sightings of (single) **Barn Owls** were possible at Westnewton (nr. Kirknewton/9th), Gateside (nr. Redden/16th), Wooden Mill (nr. Kelso/17th) and New Ladykirk (Ladykirk/25th). **Tawny Owls** were sometimes heard but I also managed close encounters with one near Holefield (Lempitlaw/10th) and another at Kilham (nr. Kirknewton/26th). I'm always fascinated by the diurnal hunting behaviour of **Short-eared Owls** such as the bird which quartered the cliff-tops near Dowlaw (Grantshouse/18th).

The importance of winter stubbles was confirmed by the presence of roughly 20 **Skylarks** in a field near Redden (24th) and although most had dispersed a flock of 25+ **Meadow Pipits** sought shed grass-seeds and the like near Fast Castle (18th). Mounds of Kelp, dumped by storms on the beach at Burnmouth (26th), had attracted 8 **Rock Pipits** which fed amongst a mixed flock of **Oystercatchers**, **Curlews** and **Turnstones**. A **Grey Wagtail** was disturbed beside the River Tweed (New Road, Berwick/8th) – a fairly regular winter haunt for the species.

7 **Waxwings** rested at the village green in Sprouston (29th) whilst **Redwings** were present, but never numerous, all month. A group of 15+, with 60+ **Blackbirds**, near Redden (14th) was one such observation. A year ago I'd enjoyed the sight of hundreds of **Fieldfares** feeding on windfall Apples in my garden but this December had only one of these birds. 150+ were present at Kerchesters (14th) but that was by far the biggest flock I encountered. Many will have been wintering much further SW – including Ireland. Roving flocks of **Long-tailed Tits** regularly provided entertaining performances and amongst those were 25+ in Tower Dean near Cockburnspath (18th). 25+ **Blue Tits** were gathered together in a cottage garden near Hoselaw Loch (29th).

**Ravens** never fail to capture my imagination and I spent much time studying 2 near Telegraph Hill, Coldingham. One was of particular interest because it showed unusual interest in a fishing boat that had halted close to the shore. Despite my long wait I saw nothing but the bird's behaviour led me to strongly believe that there must be occasions when it has learned to pounce on deck and snatch something from the catch. A large and very noisy pre-roost gathering of 2000+ **Rooks** and **Jackdaws** had assembled near Lempitlaw (1545 hrs/29th). **Jays** appear to be faring well and might even be increasing in numbers. They were present in a great many areas with stands of mature deciduous trees which included Abby St. Bathans, The Hirsell, Jedburgh, Kelso and Upsettlington.

Small numbers of **Tree Sparrows** were regularly seen at locations in Berwickshire and Roxburghshire but I also came upon one unusually large flock. It was whilst at Windywalls (13th) that I found myself surrounded by farmland birds which included a **Reed Bunting**/15+ **Yellowhammers**/40+ **Linnets** and 250+ **Tree Sparrows**. A **Lesser Redpoll** appeared at Kerchesters (14th) and 6 **Siskins** fed in Larches (*Larix* sp.) beside the main drive of The Hirsell (25th). Sightings of another finch, the **Brambling**, were limited to single birds at Easter Softlaw and Windywalls (both=15th).

A small Bat – possibly a **Pipistrelle** (???) flew above Horn Dean (nr. Ladykirk) on the night of a mild Christmas Day. I'm well used to seeing **Brown Rats** on the roads when travelling at night but noticed unusually large numbers in certain areas during late 2012. Daylight investigations revealed some sizeable colonies in roadside hedge-banks, within unofficial rubbish-tips and beside many Pheasant feeders. Another unwelcome rodent is the **Grey Squirrel** and they were certainly active throughout December. 4 **Roe Deer** bolted off a frost-encrusted island on the Tweed as I passed (12th) and 6 scattered across Hadden Farm (nr. Sprouston/21st) as shooting parties moved through. 5 very fat all-white **Grey Seal** pups remained on Berwickshire beaches at the late date of December 18. Hunger would eventually drive them into the sea. On the 22nd I examined the almost completely consumed corpses of some spent **Atlantic Salmon**. Whilst I sometimes encounter evidence of Otters on this occasion the fresh riverside footprints of another mammal helped to confirm the predator. These fish had been eaten by one or more **Badgers**!

ROGER MANNING.

## Howick December Highlights.

Oh dear, very little to report this month I'm afraid. It's the combination of not seeing Howick in daylight from Monday to Friday, and doing things like Christmas shopping at the weekends!

On **9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup>**, 2 **Waxwings** were still on apples in the village, but the months highlight was a day-feeding **Woodcock** on our village green. Rarely seen on the ground during the day, I managed a poor quality record shot using my phone against the scope.



Phone-scoped Woodcock.

Leaving for work just before light on **18<sup>th</sup>** a **Grey Partridge** was calling in the field behind us.

A walk on a mild sunny and calm **Christmas day** (no snow) we found that 40 **Fulmars** had returned to prospect the cliffs around the Cullernose Bay.

And that's about it really other than the garden birds at the feeders. Back to speed in January...

Stewart Sexton, Howick.

## PLANT CORNER

Over the years I've written about each of our three native conifers but never all three together in one article.

**Yew** (*Taxus baccata*) is not hard to identify, but it is not clear whether our area has any truly wild specimens. The ones on the banks of the Aln at Alnwick Abbey may be genuinely wild. Yews can grow to a great age, possibly well over 1,000 years, and all parts of the plant are very poisonous. There has been a long association of yew trees with churchyards and there are at least 500 churchyards in England which contain yew trees which are older than the building itself. There are many



theories for this, from yews being planted over the graves of plague victims to protect and purify the dead to the simpler idea that yews could survive in churchyards as it was one of the only places that cattle did not have access and therefore would not be poisoned by eating the leaves. Although toxic to humans and other mammals, the fruit are quite happily taken by birds.



Unusually for conifers, Yews lack resin, which may be because many conifers use resin as a defensive mechanism, while the Yew relies on its toxicity. Male and female cones are usually on separate plants. The male ones shed clouds of pollen in February and the female ones then swell and become bright red by September.

**Common Juniper** (*Juniperus communis*) is a rather undistinguished shrubby tree. It can grow to about 6m but is often bent and twisted in its growth habit. It also has very slow growth – only a few centimetres each year. The greyish leaves grow in whorls of three on the stems and twigs.



They are usually only about 1cm long with a broad pale stripe along the upper surface and a very sharp spine at the tip. The fruit looks like a berry, but as this is a conifer the fruit are actually cones with the scales fused together and fleshy rather than woody. They are used to flavour gin, although almost all berries used today are imported. Juniper requires basic soils and examples can be found by the Holystone Burn, by the Common Burn and in the Harthope Valley, in Kyloe Woods



and, closest to us, in Hannah's Wood at Harehope. To regenerate, Junipers need a period of grazing and then a period of neglect to allow new plants to gain a hold. This combination of circumstances is not very common in Northumberland, so regeneration here is poor. The wood burns with little smoke which made it a favourite fuel for illicit whisky stills and may have helped to hasten its demise in some areas. As with so many other trees, Junipers in Britain are also currently subject to a fatal fungal disease which is threatening their survival.

**Scots Pine** (*Pinus sylvestris*) is now found truly wild only in central and northern Scotland. Pines in general are fairly easy to distinguish from other common conifers because of their long, rather coarse and twisted needles, but telling pines apart is not quite so easy. Scots Pine, even in its younger versions in plantations, gives itself away by the orangey bark on its trunk from about half way up. The form of the whole tree varies considerably depending whether it has been allowed space to grow freely or whether it has been tightly packed with other trees, but generally the branches are spreading and well-spaced and on old trees form a rather top-heavy but elegant crown.



	<b>SIGHTINGS DECEMBER 2012</b>
<b>BIRDS</b>	
Great Northern Diver	1 at Bothal Pond (4 <sup>th</sup> )
Red-throated Diver	1 at Guile Point (16 <sup>th</sup> ), 1 off Ross Back Sands (26 <sup>th</sup> )
Slavonian Grebe	4 off Ross Back Sands (26 <sup>th</sup> ), 1 off Stag Rock (13 <sup>th</sup> )
Red-necked Grebe	1 off Ross Back Sands (26 <sup>th</sup> )
Little Egret	1 in the estuary at Alnmouth (15 <sup>th</sup> ), 1 at Fenham Flats (16 <sup>th</sup> )
Whooper Swan	29+ at Fenham Mill (15 <sup>th</sup> )
Black Swan	1 (escaped bird) at Branton Ponds (1 <sup>st</sup> )
Greylag Goose	200 at Monks House Pool (13 <sup>th</sup> )
Brent Goose	840 on Fenham Flats (16 <sup>th</sup> ), 1477 near Fenham Hide (15 <sup>th</sup> ), 8 at Monks House Pool (13 <sup>th</sup> )
Barnacle Goose	80+ at Fenham Flats (15 <sup>th</sup> )
Wigeon	10 at Newton Pool (2 <sup>nd</sup> )
Mallard	32 at Newton Pool (2 <sup>nd</sup> )
Gadwall	6 at Newton Pool (2 <sup>nd</sup> )
Pochard	2 at Branton Ponds (25 <sup>th</sup> )
Goldeneye	4 ♂'s at Branton Ponds (1 <sup>st</sup> ), 17 at the Football Hole (2 <sup>nd</sup> ), 9 at Howick Haven (10 <sup>th</sup> ), 11 at Branton Ponds (13 <sup>th</sup> )
Common Scoter	6 at the Football Hole (2 <sup>nd</sup> )
Scaup	2 at Branton Ponds (29 <sup>th</sup> )
Pintail	273 near Fenham Hide (15 <sup>th</sup> )
Red-breasted Merganser	1 at the Football Hole (2 <sup>nd</sup> ), 2 on the River Aln (5 <sup>th</sup> )
Goosander	2 on the River Aln (5 <sup>th</sup> )
Shelduck	270 at Fenham Flats (16 <sup>th</sup> )
Eider	103 at Fenham Flats (16 <sup>th</sup> ), 441 near Fenham Hide (15 <sup>th</sup> )
Long-tailed Duck	1 at the Football Hole (2 <sup>nd</sup> ), 4 off Guile Point (16 <sup>th</sup> ), 6 off Stag Rock (13 <sup>th</sup> )
Rough-legged Buzzard	1 on Bewick Moors (25 <sup>th</sup> )
Hen Harrier	1 at Smeafield Farm (10 <sup>th</sup> )
Peregrine	1 at the Long Nanny (2 <sup>nd</sup> )
Sparrowhawk	1 at Newton Pool (2 <sup>nd</sup> )
Goshawk	1 near the River Font (4 <sup>th</sup> )
Grey Partridge	6 at Branton (12 <sup>th</sup> )
Woodcock	2 on Alnwick Moor (4 <sup>th</sup> )
Golden Plover	120 over Ross Back Sands (26 <sup>th</sup> )
Sanderling	A small flock at Low Newton (2 <sup>nd</sup> )
Spotted Redshank	1 at Elwick Flash (16 <sup>th</sup> )
Green Sandpiper	1 at South Healey (4 <sup>th</sup> )
Knot	860 at Fenham Flats (16 <sup>th</sup> ), 750 near Fenham Hide (15 <sup>th</sup> )
Lapwing	540 at Fenham Flats (16 <sup>th</sup> )
Oystercatcher	423 at Fenham Flats (16 <sup>th</sup> )
Bar-tailed Godwit	124 at Fenham Flats (16 <sup>th</sup> ), 1180 near Fenham Hide (15 <sup>th</sup> ), 50 over Ross Back Sands (26 <sup>th</sup> )
Glaucous Gull	1 at North Shields Fish Quay (29 <sup>th</sup> )
Woodpigeon	2000+ at Littlemill Farm (30 <sup>th</sup> )

Barn Owl	1 at Branton Ponds (10 <sup>th</sup> )
Tawny Owl	1 near Eglington (14 <sup>th</sup> )
Kingfisher	At least 2 at Branton Ponds all month, 1 at Howick Haven (30 <sup>th</sup> )
Waxwing	1 at Branton Ponds (2 <sup>nd</sup> ), 20 at Felton (10 <sup>th</sup> )
Stonechat	2 at Low Newton on the 2 <sup>nd</sup>
Fieldfare	1 at the Iron Bridge near Alnmouth (5 <sup>th</sup> ), 20 near Elwick (16 <sup>th</sup> )
Blackcap	1 at Lesbury (23 <sup>rd</sup> )
Goldcrest	2 at Littlemill Farm (30 <sup>th</sup> )
Marsh Tit	Several between Netherwitton and Ritton (4 <sup>th</sup> ), 1 at Swarland (2 <sup>nd</sup> )
Nuthatch	2 at Weldon Bridge (24 <sup>th</sup> )
Treecreeper	3 at Weldon Bridge (24 <sup>th</sup> ), 2 at Littlemill Farm (30 <sup>th</sup> )
Starling	A murmuration of approx 200 birds over Alnwick (29 <sup>th</sup> )
Raven	2 over Branton Ponds (12 <sup>th</sup> ), and 2 over Branton (16 <sup>th</sup> )
Jackdaw	1500+ (with about 100 Rooks) over Branton (4 <sup>th</sup> )
Jay	1 at Littlemill Farm (30 <sup>th</sup> )
Twite	14 at the Long Nanny (2 <sup>nd</sup> ), 8 near Fenham Hide (15 <sup>th</sup> )
Brambling	1 at Branton Ponds (8 <sup>th</sup> ), 48 at Littlemill Farm (30 <sup>th</sup> )
Siskin	100 near the River Font (4 <sup>th</sup> ), 80 at Branton Ponds (19 <sup>th</sup> )
Bullfinch	8 on Alnwick Moor (4 <sup>th</sup> ), 3 at Littlemill Farm (30 <sup>th</sup> )
Tree Sparrow	7 at Littlemill Farm (30 <sup>th</sup> )
Yellowhammer	38 at Littlemill Farm (30 <sup>th</sup> )
Snow Bunting	1 at Warkworth (27 <sup>th</sup> )
<b>MAMMALS</b>	
Brown Hare	1 near the River Font (4 <sup>th</sup> ), 8 at Newstead Farm (20 <sup>th</sup> ), 9 at Littlemill Farm (30 <sup>th</sup> )
Roe Deer	1 near Bamburgh (4 <sup>th</sup> )
Grey Squirrel	Several at Bamburgh at the start of the month
Red Squirrel	1 in Branton (11 <sup>th</sup> ), 3 at Belford (16 <sup>th</sup> ), 1 beside old A1 at Middleton (29 <sup>th</sup> )
Otter	Tracks beside the River Breamish (13 <sup>th</sup> ) and near Weldon Bridge (24 <sup>th</sup> )
Stoat	1 (in ermine) at Littlemill Farm (30 <sup>th</sup> )
<b>PLANTS</b>	
Climbing Corydalis	Kimmer Lough (8 <sup>th</sup> )
Hard Fern	Kimmer Lough (8 <sup>th</sup> )
Green Ribbed Sedge	Kimmer Lough (8 <sup>th</sup> )
<b>AMPHIBIANS/REPTILES</b>	
Common Frog	1 near Doddington (15 <sup>th</sup> )
Common Toad	1 near Branton (14 <sup>th</sup> )
<b>RAINFALL</b>	137.42 mm
<b>OBSERVERS</b>	W Banks, J Clark, I&K Davison, G Dodds, A Keeble, M McMahon, J Panton, R&J Poppleton, S Reay, M Rolley, J Rutter, S Sexton. J Turnbull.

## ***It's Subscription Time!***

Your AWG subscriptions are due from 1<sup>st</sup> January – unchanged for the 10<sup>th</sup> year running thanks to our good housekeeping, the income from our survey work and the fact that many members are able and willing to receive their newsletters by email.

If you can't get to the January or February meetings could I please ask you to fill in the payments slip below and send it to me with your cheque. The fewer reminders I have to send out the less the drain on our funds.

This year, because I've finally got my act together, we are offering the opportunity for you to set up a **Standing Order** with your bank so your subscription will be paid automatically each year. The final page of this newsletter is a Standing Order form. If you wish to use this method of payment, please:

- (a) detach the sheet (or print it out if your newsletter arrives electronically),
- (b) fill in the necessary details in the boxes shaded pink,
- (c) **sign and date it** at the bottom and send it to your bank so it arrives in time for the first payment to be made on 25<sup>th</sup> February.

Then **PLEASE** let me know that you've done so ([richard.pop@btinternet.com](mailto:richard.pop@btinternet.com) or 01665 578346).



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### PAYMENT SLIP

Name(s) .....

Address .....

.....

Email address (if possible) .....

Payment rates (unchanged for the 10<sup>th</sup> year running):

£10.00 for a single member; £17.50 for two or more members at the same address.

Please send cheques made to **Alnwick Wildlife Group** to:

Richard Poppleton, Greystone Cottage, Titlington Mount, Alnwick NE66 2EA



# **REGULAR PAYMENTS FORM**

## **Customer Account Details**

Account name

Sort code

Account Number

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## **Standing Order Beneficiary**

Sort code  2  0  5  8  1  7

Account Number  4  0  5  5  3  1  3  1

Beneficiary name: ALNWICK WILDLIFE GROUP

Reference: AWG Subscription

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## **Payment details**

Amount of first payment  Date of first payment  2  5 /  0  2 /  1  3

Amount of usual payment  Date of usual payment  0  2 /  0  1

Frequency of payment  **Annually**

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Customer signature(s)

Customer contact telephone number

Date   /   /

**Please send this completed form to your bank (or take it in to your branch)**