

## FEBRUARY SIGHTINGS

### BIRDS

Red-throated Diver	1 at Cresswell on the 20 <sup>th</sup> and 2 at Holy Island on the 26 <sup>th</sup>
Black-throated Diver	1 at Fenham Flats on the 13 <sup>th</sup>
Slavonian Grebe	1 at Stag Rock on the 8 <sup>th</sup> and 4 at Fenham Flats on the 13 <sup>th</sup>
Fulmar	7 at Stag Rock on the 8 <sup>th</sup>
Pink-footed Goose	280 at Fenham Flats on the 13 <sup>th</sup> and 3000 at West Fenton 17 <sup>th</sup>
White Fronted Goose	4 at Woodhorn on the 20 <sup>th</sup>
Brent Goose	1476 at Fenham Flats on the 13 <sup>th</sup> and 12 at Seahouses on 12 <sup>th</sup>
Shelduck	270 at Fenham Flats on the 13 <sup>th</sup> and 14 at Branton Ponds 17 <sup>th</sup>
Wigeon	90 at Fenham Flats on the 17 <sup>th</sup> and 130 at Alnmouth on 22 <sup>nd</sup>
Gadwall	1 at Branton Ponds on the 22 <sup>nd</sup>
Teal	136 at West Fenton on the 17 <sup>th</sup>
Pintail	134 all females at Fenham Flats on the 13 <sup>th</sup>
Pochard	3 at Branton Ponds on the 9 <sup>th</sup>
Long-tailed Duck	5 at Stag Rock on the 8 <sup>th</sup> and 14 at Fenham Flats on the 13 <sup>th</sup>
Common Scoter	20 at Stag Rock on the 8 <sup>th</sup>
Velvet Scoter	2 at Stag Rock on the 8 <sup>th</sup>
Goldeneye	14 at Branton Ponds on the 3 <sup>rd</sup>
Red-breasted Merganser	7 at Fenham Flats on the 13 <sup>th</sup>
Goosander	Up to 20 all month at Branton Ponds
Goshawk	1 at Harehope Hillend on the 8 <sup>th</sup> and 1 at Holystone on 27 <sup>th</sup>
Sparrowhawk	Singles at Oaky Balks on the 12 <sup>th</sup> and Swarland on the 24 <sup>th</sup> and also a pair at Harehope Hillend all month
Buzzard	2 at Swarland on the 28 <sup>th</sup>
Merlin	2 at Fenham Flats on the 13 <sup>th</sup> and 1 on Holy Island on the 26 <sup>th</sup>
Peregrine	1 at Fenham Flats on the 13 <sup>th</sup> and 1 at Oaky Balks on the 12 <sup>th</sup>
Grey Partridge	2 at Branton on the 25 <sup>th</sup> and 12 at Fenham Flats on the 13 <sup>th</sup>
Ringed Plover	89 at Fenham Flats on the 13 <sup>th</sup>
Sanderling	58 at Fenham Flats on the 13 <sup>th</sup>
Purple Sandpiper	130 at Stag Rock on the 8 <sup>th</sup>
Jack Snipe	1 at the Black Lough on the 8 <sup>th</sup>
Snipe	15 at the Post Office Pylon on the 8 <sup>th</sup>
Woodcock	Singles at Black Lough on 8 <sup>th</sup> and Hannah's Hill on the 3 <sup>rd</sup>
Black-tailed Godwit	2 at Holy Island on the 26 <sup>th</sup>
Curlew	230 at Fenham Flats on 13 <sup>th</sup> and 22 at West Fenton on the 17 <sup>th</sup>
Green Sandpiper	1 at West Fenton on the 17 <sup>th</sup>
Mediterranean Gull	9 at Newbiggin on the 20 <sup>th</sup>
Common Gull	200 at Branton Ponds on the 11 <sup>th</sup>
Razorbill	1 at Stag Rock on the 8 <sup>th</sup>
Stock Dove	2 at Pallinsburn on the 10 <sup>th</sup>
Barn Owl	2 at Beanley on the 4 <sup>th</sup> and 2 near Ellingham on the 22 <sup>nd</sup>
Tawny Owl	1 at Beanley on the 4 <sup>th</sup> and 9 <sup>th</sup>
Kingfisher	1 at Branton Ponds on the 14 <sup>th</sup>
Skylark	3 at Titlington Mount on the 26 <sup>th</sup>
Waxwing	14 at Branton Ponds on the 24 <sup>th</sup>
Dipper	2 on Wooler Water on the 9 <sup>th</sup>
Redwing	15 at the Post Office Tower on the 8 <sup>th</sup>
Marsh Tit	1 at Swarland on the 28 <sup>th</sup>
Long-tailed Tit	12 at Smeafield on the 10 <sup>th</sup>
Great Grey Shrike	1 at Holystone Common on the 27 <sup>th</sup>
Raven	3 at Hannah's Hill on the 7 <sup>th</sup> and 6 near the Chatton Mast 10 <sup>th</sup>
Starling	A murmuration at Oaky Balks all month
Tree Sparrow	14 at Townfoot Farm on the 22 <sup>nd</sup> and 20 all month at Smeafield
Goldfinch	20 all month at Smeafield
Siskin	7 on the 7 <sup>th</sup> at Swarland ,3 on the 9 <sup>th</sup> at Smeafield and 22 at Hannah's Hill on the 7 <sup>th</sup>
Linnet	45 at Pallinsburn on the 10 <sup>th</sup>
Twite	10 at Cresswell on the 29 <sup>th</sup>
Yellowhammer	27 at Townfoot on the 22 <sup>nd</sup> and 40 at Pallinsburn on the 10 <sup>th</sup>

## MAMMALS

Fox	1 at Elwick on the 13 <sup>th</sup> also 1 at Harehope on the 8 <sup>th</sup> and 25 <sup>th</sup>
Weasel	1 at Titlington Mount on the 21 <sup>st</sup>
Pipistrelle Bat	At East Lilburn on the 25 <sup>th</sup> and Yearle on the 23 <sup>rd</sup>
Bat sp	At Foxton on the 23 <sup>rd</sup>
Brown Hare	Many around Ingram all month

## AMPHIBIANS

Frogspawn	Titlington Mount on the 26 <sup>th</sup> and Holystone Wood on the 27 <sup>th</sup> + large amounts of jelly in the Ingram area
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## INVERTEBRATES

Great Diving Beetle	1 in Branton on the 26 <sup>th</sup>
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## PLANTS

Climbing Coryadalis	At Titlington Mount on the 10 <sup>th</sup>
Common Field Speedwell	At Titlington Mount on the 20 <sup>th</sup>
Hybrid Larch	At Titlington Mount on the 20 <sup>th</sup>

## MARINE

Common Sun Starfish	At Bamburgh on the 3 <sup>rd</sup>
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## OBSERVERS

G&R Bell, D Clark, J Clark, I&K Davison, G Dodds, M&M Hall, A Keeble, M Mayfield, NNBC, J&R Poppleton, S Reay, M&B Rolley, D Taylor, S Webster and S Wilson

Dinah Iredale (whose husband, Alec kept accurate records of Geese over and around Doddington for many years) has informed us that she is still keeping wildlife records and is recording them on a blog at: - [www.naturalhistorynorthnorthumberland.blogspot.com](http://www.naturalhistorynorthnorthumberland.blogspot.com) . Do have a look!

## How now! A rat!

So said Hamlet as he stabbed Polonius behind the arras. Rats are, almost, universally detested as unpleasant, highly destructive, disease-carrying vermin. I say 'almost' because there are some primitive societies that value rat as a culinary delicacy and, of course, some people who enjoy keeping captive-bred animals as pets.

Rats have been much in my thoughts recently because on the farm where we live they seem to be particularly numerous at the moment. We keep disturbing them in our back garden after dark. Then, almost next to the garden is a farm shed, part of which is used by the local pheasant shoot to store its winter grain. Three weeks ago two shooters brought terriers and in one afternoon dispatched 17 rats in the shed. Up at the main farm steading they've been digging up through thick concrete to get into the animal feed storage area – and that's even though the concrete was deliberately poured over a layer of broken glass to try to stop that very problem.



There are two species in Britain. The relationship between the Black Rat (*Rattus rattus*) and the Brown Rat (*R. norvegicus*) has similarities to the Red/Grey Squirrel competition. The Black Rat which carried the fleas that spread the Great Plague into London in 1665 is now almost extinct in the UK except for a few offshore islands like Lundy. Perhaps we should start a Rescue Our Rats organisation to rival Save Our Squirrels.

The Brown Rat is less strictly nocturnal than the Black and in addition to its other unpleasant habits is renowned for its cannibalism. Charming! Sadly poison is almost the only answer, and that is almost always just a temporary control measure. *Richard Poppleton.*

