

# Alnwick Wildlife Group

Promoting awareness of the countryside and its flora and fauna



## REVIEW OF NOVEMBER 2011

### NEWSLETTER 123

www.alnwickwildlifegroup.co.uk

email: redsquirrel@alnwickwildlifegroup.co.uk

**NEXT MEETING: WEDNESDAY 25<sup>TH</sup> JANUARY 7.30.P.M. 2012**

**BARN OWLS IN NORTHUMBERLAND    SPEAKER: PHIL HAMNER**

The weather has turned wintery with flurries of snow, frosty mornings and chilling winds. Only three weeks ago there were the last of the season's butterflies still on the wing (2 **peacocks** at Fenham le Moor) and a few roadside plants were still in flower (e.g. **hogweed**, **knapweed** and **creeping buttercup**). One or two spring plants are attempting to flower, with **coltsfoot** and **snowdrops** attempting flower in Glanton. At the time of writing, there must be a **crocus** or **daffodil** in flower somewhere in our patch.

One of the sites of the late autumn / early winter has been the number of Scandinavian thrushes especially **blackbirds**, **song thrushes** and **fieldfares**. The 'northern' blackbird appears larger and blacker and can often be found looking for berries in our rural hedges. This year, the thrush flocks have been a combination of fieldfares and blackbirds, with smaller numbers of **redwings** and **starlings**. There also appears to be more **mistle thrushes** at the moment. Individuals are keen to defend their 'berry' bushes from all-comers. If the winter gets colder or we have a period of prolonged snow, then many of these thrushes will move further south and west.

**Norway Spruce** is popularly planted for use as a Christmas tree. Every Christmas, the Norwegian capital city, Oslo, provides the cities of New York, London, Edinburgh and Washington D.C. with a Norwegian Spruce, which is placed at the most central square of each city. This is mainly a sign of gratitude for the aid these countries gave during the Second World War.

Many birds roost together for warmth and safety. These include **starlings**, **rooks**, **jackdaws**, **carrion crows**, **pie wagtails** and even **wrens**. The best time to track down bird roosts are from an hour before sunset, when you can see numerous birds all flying in the same direction towards their communal sites. One of the biggest gatherings I know is in the Powburn area. Jackdaws and rooks have already started to gather. Currently there are at least 1,000 Jackdaws and at least 2,000+ rooks. Last February, this roosting flock was at least 5,000 birds. The trees were covered with birds, in and around the village, after sunset. It was very reminiscent of a Hitchcock film. I have always wondered how far these birds have travelled. There is some indication of this in the mornings when the flock disperse to all points of the compass. Large numbers of Jackdaws swirl in excited flocks over Glanton as they move south in the mornings. A large proportion of these appear to be heading towards Rothbury. Do they go as far as Rothbury or even further a field? I am sure that this would be an interesting Ph D project for someone. In Anglesey, there is a large flock of **ravens** that gather in a conifer plantation. It has been suggested that the ravens communicate with each other telling their neighbour where and how good the feeding has been that day. Is this the same at Powburn?

I would like to wish everyone a happy Christmas and a prosperous new year.

*Jack Daw.*

### REPORT OF MEETING OF WEDNESDAY 30<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER

The audience of 42 was reminded that subs are due in January, but Richard will happily take early payments. He also asked for new material for the information table. Lord Ridley has very kindly donated £50.

George's specimens were: a goldfinch and nest; feathers from curlew, barn owl, eagle owl and snowy owl. Then Philip Hanmer showed photos of three birds netted and ringed recently: yellow-browed warbler, Cetti's warbler and little bunting – all good rarities and also a photo of clutch of 3 very late barn owl chicks in a nest at Walkworth on 5th November

Wildlife sightings included late butterflies; very early 'next spring' cowslips at Seaton Point; short-eared and little owl sightings in the Titlington area; a pintail and two Mandarins on Howick Pool

*Speaker*      **Graham Bell**      *“Wild Geese of Lindisfarne”*

Graham had heroically agreed, at almost no notice, to stand in for the scheduled speaker who was ill. He started with the three swan species, pointing out the key identification tips and talking about their different habits and breeding areas. He then moved to the grey geese. In our area these comprise bean geese, white-fronted, greylag and pink-footed. The white-fronts have white foreheads, but some older greylags can also have smaller white areas above the beak. Most greylags here are feral rather than truly wild. The pink-footed have dark-coloured slender necks and rounded heads with small pink and black beaks.

Finally there are the black geese. Our Canadas are all feral birds. The barnacles fly in from Greenland, but most overwinter on the Solway. They sound like yapping puppies in flight. A few of the Brents are the dark-bellied race, but most are pale-bellied which breed in the high Arctic where the timing of their spring arrival is critical. Too early and the sea ice has not melted so they can neither feed nor breed, too late and there isn't enough time to fledge their young before the autumn freeze.

When geese fly in V-shaped skeins it is not always the same bird who leads. The skein ensures that the birds stay together in cloud and poor weather, it enables individual birds to avoid turbulent eddies and it prevents birds from getting soiled with droppings from those in front. During Graham's presentation he illustrated the calls of geese in flight with his own well-practised mimicry. *Richard Poppleton*

### **SUBSCRIPTIONS**

Remember that subs are due in January. Still no increase - £10 single, £17.50 for two or more at the same address.

Please make cheques to Alnwick Wildlife Group and brought to the January meeting or posted to:

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

### SWARLAND SNAPSHOTS – NOVEMBER 2011

The closing days of October heralded an increase in tit activity around the feeders which continued well into November. Coal Tits were busy almost exclusively at the feeders every day, frequently six or more at a time, typically often taking a seed away into the adjacent hedge to eat or hide rather than dwell on the feeder; Blue Tits appeared at times to be almost as numerous, but tended to arrive in distinct surges of three or four together and usually were ferreting around the nearby buildings as well as using the feeders; fewer Great Tits were seen, but nevertheless more than recorded at this season here in recent years, coming to the feeders two together as often as not, but seldom remaining in sight for long.

Weather conditions having been kind and settled during the first three weeks of this month it was possible to have ten mist-netting sessions which produced some interesting results. The near-constant activity of Coal Tits gave a misleading impression of the number of birds present, in fact 33 were caught of which only 11 were "new" birds with 22 re-traps; most being birds ringed in the previous two months with just five from earlier years, one a real old-timer from January 2003. Turning to Blue Tits, 64 were caught with 45 new birds ringed and just 19 re-traps of which 8 had been ringed before this year's breeding season, the rest being first year birds. Although Great Tits were less prominent at the feeders 28 were caught with 18 new birds to just 10 re-traps, 7 of these being ringed in previous years.

A few Long-tailed Tits appeared on the 5<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup>, one being a four-year old bird ringed in November 2007, and a three-year old Willow Tit was re-trapped on the 12<sup>th</sup>. Nuthatches were frequent visitors to the feeders at this site and have been reported from several other locations around the village. Wrens, which were logged virtually daily prior to last winter's cold snap, were noted just four times this month maintaining the small increase in activity seen in October. A mere trickle of Goldcrests was noted, the most together being three on the 6<sup>th</sup>.

Finch activity at the feeders declined appreciably as the month went on with the occasional single Goldfinch and Bullfinch and two Tree Sparrows on the 6<sup>th</sup>. Greenfinch and Chaffinch numbers were noticeably lower than usual at this time of year and at the beginning of the month there were further signs, first noted in October, that some birds might be suffering from trichomonosis. Two suspected victims have been sent to a researcher at London Zoological Society for

evaluation. A first result from the Siskin activity in August has been reported, one ringed on the 1<sup>st</sup> of that month was caught twelve days later at Lemmington Hall.

There has been very little sign of the autumn migration here. Seven Fieldfares accompanied by a single Redwing flew south on the 18<sup>th</sup> whilst on the 24<sup>th</sup> separate groups of five and seven respectively were seen. A Woodcock disturbed while sheltering in a hedge bottom early evening on the 6<sup>th</sup> and a Song Thrush, foraging on a wet and windy early morning on the 13<sup>th</sup>, may both have been migrants.

There have been several reports of apparently fit and healthy Red Squirrels from around the locality with only one further fatality, this being a road casualty, and particularly unfortunate since the animal was an adult female.

*Dave Makepeace*

### **Howick November Highlights.**

Now that it is dark early in the evening, there is little chance to get out and about during week days, but a few interesting things were noted.

An unassuming chap kicked things off on the 3<sup>rd</sup> with my first sighting of **Common Frog** at Howick in three years. One was found hopping about on the road on a mild evening. Its all Toads usually in this neck of the woods.

Some overhead migration was taking place on the morning of **Guy Fawkes day** when **7 Twite, 6 Skylarks, 6 Meadow Pipits and 1 Brambling** all flew south. Later to be followed by **800+ Pink footed Geese and 12 Whooper Swans**.

Also on the 5<sup>th</sup>, a nice flock of **12 Snow Buntings** fed along the path side just north of Cullernose Point.

The next day, 6<sup>th</sup>, another **3 Snow Buntings** were on the Rumbling Kern cliffs. All morning lots of **Pink footed Geese** were moving south with many small parties totalling over 800 birds again. A new arrival joined the usual Mallards on Howick Pond, a lovely drake **Pintail**. Nearby a pale, peachy toned, **Scandinavian Chiffchaff** fed in the wood and **5 Crossbills** flew overhead. The day was not over yet, however, as down at the Howick Burn mouth **an adult Mediterranean Gull, a female Goosander, 4 Grey Plovers and 2 Purple Sandpipers** were on the shore.

Late insects here were a lone **Red Admiral** and a male **Common Darter**.

A fine day on 12<sup>th</sup> had a **Lapland Bunting** and **3 European White fronted Geese** fly south over our garden, new records for the garden list!

After the excitement of seeing the Greater Yellowlegs and Grey Phalarope at Hauxley on 13<sup>th</sup>, as dusk approached **2 Ravens** flew around Howick, landing briefly in the village trees then flying towards Cullernose. The huge crows were giving their distinctive 'cronk' calls to each other the whole time.

On 15<sup>th</sup> a walk along the coast path first thing it was exciting to see **2 Peregrines** soaring together low overhead then flying off towards Craster. Only a few minutes later, a female **Merlin** dashed by along a similar route.

A male **Blackcap** was in our garden.

More **European White fronted Geese** flew over our house on 19<sup>th</sup> with 80 birds flying south, and **84 Curlew** were in a local stubble field.

On 20<sup>th</sup>, a finch flock feeding in Howick Village Wood consisted of **10+ Siskins, 6+ Lesser Redpolls, 4+ Goldfinches and 1 Mealy Redpoll. 6 Crossbills** flew over the pond field.

As dusk approached a **Barn Owl** flew down the lane and over the village green.

The month drew to a close with **104 Curlews** in the stubble, **12 Tree Sparrows** on our garden feeders and a female **Goldeneye** on the pond, all on the 27<sup>th</sup>.

*Stewart Sexton, Howick.*



Raven



European White fronted Geese

my way down to the shore to look for the target →

Walked hopping from stones and vegetation onto and searched for insects. very confiding, down to 10 yards at times.

Face on, has a hint of 'Rock Thrush' about it.

Wings broader than Faun wing bar panel in secondaries.

Under parts 'yellow orange' in sunshine darker in the shade.

Tertials edged buff.

Dark chestnut Rump.

Jizz/size as Black Redstart.

Chestnut tail with dark curve, like Black Redstart.

Also here - 25+ Pale bellied Brents + 10+ 1-banded Mergansers.

Eastern Black Redstart ♂  
Ssp. 'phoeniceoides'.

Had faint buff stripe at gape.

Crown, Mantle, Scap: Grey/brown depending on light.

Forehead faded paler greyish.

Large black eye. White eye ring. Fine.

Face, throat upper breast blackish, tipped buff.

Fine black bill.

Common Scurvy Grass.

Bright reflex/ chestnut below right eye to breast.

Very black legs.

Under tail is darker than top.

A superb bird! Maybe only the 5th British record of this race?

20/3

Washwater Gt 10:30 1F.

Grey Pouter 9.6.	Stonebat 10/19
Little Egret 1	Wigeon 35+
Spotted Redshank 1	Golden Plover 40+
Greenshank 1	Lapwing 200+
Snipe 20+	Box-tailed Godwit 3
Redshank 4+	Sparrows 18
Teal 50+	
Curlew 1	

Snow Bunting fr♀ showing down to 10p in track (day without food as had a small fleck on the beach).

Nearby, a Grey Phalarope

Thick set and not belted.

Doing regular fly by's past the tide and feeding in shore.

Both birds seen together.

Bill quite long and slightly up turned as Greenshank.

Head and breast streaked greyish.

White below.

Called once - peeo, peeo peeo! as Greenshank.

Greater Yellowlegs. Hauxley 13/11/11. 224.

Feeding in water all the time. Ate a stickleback.

Only seen fluttering up bank where square white rump could be seen along with white, black barred tail.

Legs dangling.

Crown streaked.

Mantle appeared plain Grey/brown. Wing coverts more brown and spotted cream.

Scaped as good range - 50yds but light poor.

Very long, bright dark yellow legs. A tall bird, size as greenshank didn't seem as bulky.

# BEYOND THE BORDER

(Late Summer / Autumn 2011)

No one could question the appeal of Northumberland's landscape and all the wildlife to be found within the county. I would argue, however, that the Scottish Borders are every bit as lovely and that this neighbouring region also offers an endless list of magical plants and animals to be enjoyed. There are many similarities between the two areas and yet each has its own special character. Having recently moved across the border I hope that I might be allowed to share a few of my early observations and thoughts with you.

The striking lilac heads of **Field Scabious** (*Knautia arvensis*) are regularly encountered in NE England but, gracing many a roadside verge, I have been delighted by the frequency with which they may be seen here. **Tutsan** (*Hypericum androsaemum*) and **Wild Basil** (*Clinopodium vulgare*) both occur along the former Berwick-upon-Tweed to Kelso line. My guess is that the former has been seeded (by birds) from Kelso gardens and the latter brought in with railway ballasts.

Much of the Tweed Valley consists of Sandstone but small outcrops of Limestone occur here and there. Immediately you approach these sites the range of flora increases markedly and **Hoary Cress** (*Lepidium draba*) is just one of the species I've noted. It was also exciting to discover a lone stem of **Corn Marigold** (*Chrysanthemum segetum*) – once a common farm weed but now extinct in most areas. Somewhat surprisingly it was not in a field of cereals but (SE of Kelso) in a roadside hedge-back.

I've not lived here long enough to know all the best Dragonfly ponds but (July 7.2011) was thrilled to be introduced to a stretch of the Whiteadder Water which supported 3 **Banded Demoiselles** (*Calopteryx splendens*). These are most elegant insects with the males having a broad single band of navy-blue across each wing. I subsequently managed to find 2 beside the River Tweed (July 10) and 3 beside the River Teviot (July 23). Modern reference books state that they 'seldom occur north of the Humber' and so it will be interesting to see if they return in future years.

The consensus seems to indicate that 2011 was a rather poor year for butterflies and yet **Small Copper** and **Painted Lady** were amongst those which visited my garden. I had final sightings for a **Small Tortoiseshell** and 2 **Red Admirals** – all at different Roxburghshire locations – on November 12. I am full of admiration for the **Atlantic Salmon** and their upstream struggle has kept me absorbed for many an hour. Numbers have been good this year.

A **Common Toad** found killed on the road (on or just before November 27) indicates just how late amphibian activity has been during the 'second mildest November since records began'.

Town Loch at Yetholm was frequented by a **Little Grebe** (Nov.20) but regular sightings (max=3 at any one site) have not proved too difficult along much of the River Tweed. Large herds of Mute Swans are a feature of the area with fields of **Oilseed Rape** being particularly popular. 14 **Whooper Swans** flew low over Sprouston (towards SW /Nov 5) and 60+ chose to remain on the huge farm of Redden (Nov 29).

'Grey Geese' are certainly not as common inland as they are on the Northumberland coast although both **Pinkfeet** and **Greylags** are to be seen. Wintering birds arrived early with 25+ Pink-footed Geese passing SW over Windywalls on September 15. A gathering of 1000+ of these birds fed near Lurdenlaw for a time but moved on once the stubbles were ploughed. The biggest flights occurred on/over Greenlaw Moor where counts into five figures have often been possible. 40+ **Canada Geese** arrived at Whitmuirhaugh (Sept 5) and a lone **Barnacle Goose** rested there (Oct. 7). The following day approx. 35 Barnacles flew inland following

the Tweed. (It is possible that they rested overnight at Lindisfarne and were then heading for the Solway Firth.)

**Goosanders** are common in the area but it was not until November 2 that the first drake was sighted for many a month (probably due to dispersal while they moulted). Birds in female /juvenile plumage have remained throughout. 39 Goosanders (1♂+1♀) were present on one short stretch of the River Teviot near Roxburgh (Nov 11). They were joined by small numbers of **Goldeneye** towards the end of that month.

Go back twenty years and **Buzzards** were almost unheard of in the Borders. It's now a rare thing to be out and not see one (and sometimes a great many more). **Sparrowhawks** frequently appear and (June 30) I witnessed one take down a juvenile **Common Sandpiper** with the parents trill calls being to no avail. A (ringtail) **Hen Harrier** drifted across a slope of the Cheviot Hills near Morebattle (September 27) and on another occasion (whilst I was sheltering beneath an **Oak** tree an **Osprey** circled round and round at low height with what was almost certainly a fourteen-inch **Perch** in its talons.

**Pheasants** are, as in Northumberland, reared in their thousands on some of the Estates. I am particularly drawn to the melanistic birds (with dark black-green pigment) and have come across populations in the Lammermuir Hills, and close to Stichill and Yetholm. **Red-legged Partridge** seem to be localised but have included 50+ at The Yett (nr. Morebattle /Sept 27). Some Tweedside farms have healthy populations of Grey Partridge but the number (and wide distribution) of **Quail** did take me by surprise.

A flock of 250+ **Golden Plovers** swirled above and then alighted on arable land at Hadden (nr. Carham/Nov 30) and a **Green Sandpiper** fed in a tiny patch of riverside marsh (R. Tweed/Nov 22). Another highlight was the sight of a juvenile **Black Tern** which flew up and down the River Tweed (nr. Sprouston/Sept 26). Perhaps my most memorable Owl sighting was of a **Tawny Owl** which sat in full view – hooting down to the Market Square in Melrose (1740hrs./Oct 2).

Migrant **Redwings**, **Blackbirds** and **Fieldfares** have all been passing through the area in recent weeks. Amongst my notes are 2000+ Redwings and 600+ Fieldfares at Kerchesters (Nov 7) and 1000+ Fieldfares near Attonburn in the Bowmont Valley. Return the following day and more often than not all moved on .... The grounds of Floors Castle are hard to beat for the sight and sound of **Nuthatches** whilst I'm most encouraged by the visitors to my garden which have so far included **Spotted Flycatchers**, **Long-tailed Tits** and **Bullfinches**. The (Scottish) Cheviot Hills have generally provided opportunities for studying **Ravens** and (Sept 27), with several dead sheep lying around 10+ of these mighty Corvids had gathered in one area. Caverton /Hume /Kelso /Paxton /Sprouston /Stichill and Yetholm all have populations of **Tree Sparrows**.

Very late sightings of **Pipistrelle** (???) **Bats** were made on November 18 with singles flying near Hownam and Oxnam. I must have made 40-50 separate Squirrel sightings in recent months yet all but one of those have been **Greys**. The one **Red Squirrel** seen (nr. Yetholm /Sept 1) is unlikely to be alone but these magnificent creatures have been greatly depleted and much searching looks to be inevitable. A most healthy population of **Brown Hares** exists on many farms in the Tweed Valley but **Mountain Hares** are fewer in number across the Lammermuir Hills.

One animal which always thrills me is the **Otter** and although I seldom see them I'm frequently reminded of their presence – usually by way of a part-eaten fish lying on the riverbank. One evening a juvenile Otter popped up out of the water to inspect me at close quarter. I was also treated to another view – this time an adult – which swam to a rudimentary holt where, upon entering, several startled **Mallard** made an abrupt and noisy exit!

*ROGER MANNING.*

## Plant Corner

In early December while doing the Northumberland Estate's bird survey at the Kimmer Lough site there were three particular plants that caught my attention.



At the east end of the lough there is an area of Bog Myrtle (*Myrica gale*) that the land owner chopped down in 2009 when he was topping off some of the rank heather and grass. Bog Myrtle is an uncommon and valued plant in Northumberland and Kimmer has one of the best areas of growth in the county, so there was great concern that such damage had been done. Fortunately, even by 2010, it was clear that the topping had done little more than 'heavily prune' the plants which by then were already starting to recover. The recovery is still evident this winter as the photograph shows.

Then underfoot, both in the wetter rather boggy areas at the foot of the moorland and among the young heather recovering from two successive large moorland fires in 2007 and 2008, there were many healthy plants of Hard Fern (*Blechnum spicant*). This fern has two types of frond. The normal vegetative winter-green ones (on the left)



have flat quite broad pinnae (leaf lobes), and the reproductive spore-bearing fronds are taller and thinner and often have their edges folded inwards. Most of the fronds at this time of year are the vegetative ones, but quite a number of spore-bearing fronds were still visible when I visited.



Lastly there was the large moss, *Polytrichum commune*. The newest field guide to mosses tries to assign English names to all the mosses, although I'm not convinced that is terribly helpful, but if you prefer common names this one is called the Common Haircap, shown in the photo.

The overnight weather had been quite frosty and one particular part of the wetter moor looked from a distance as if it was strewn with boulders with frost-rimed surfaces, but when I got up to them they turned out to be large hummocks of *Polytrichum*. This is not the season for the prominent spring capsules that this moss develops, but the plants are robust and an attractive fresh green. On our moors there are two other much smaller species of *Polytrichum* with, I think, quite attractive-sounding Latin names. *Polytrichum juniperum* (Juniper Haircap) has leaves with sharp red-brown tips while *Polytrichum piliferum* (Bristly Haircap) leaves have fine hair-points. Both are only a few centimeters tall and tend to grow on drier bare peat or on shallow soils on the surfaces of exposed rocks.



Richard Poppleton

	<b>SIGHTINGS NOVEMBER 2011</b>
<b>BIRDS</b>	
Red-throated Diver	6 off Stag Rocks on the 6 <sup>th</sup> and 2 on the 17 <sup>th</sup> .
Slavonian Grebe	8 off Stag Rocks on the 6 <sup>th</sup> .
Little Grebe	1 Horncliffe on the 17 <sup>th</sup> , 1 at Wark on Tweed on the 29 <sup>th</sup> and 3 at Carham on the 29 <sup>th</sup> .
Little Egret	3 near the Holy Island causeway on the 5 <sup>th</sup> .
Bewick Swan	2 at Big Waters on the 22 <sup>nd</sup> .
Mute Swan	50 + at Wark on Tweed from the 3 <sup>rd</sup> to 17 <sup>th</sup> , and 220+ at Norham 3 <sup>rd</sup> .
Whooper Swan	9 at Branton Ponds on the 8 <sup>th</sup> and 9 on the 28 <sup>th</sup> , 15 at Beal on the 17 <sup>th</sup> , 4 at Wark on Tweed on the 17 <sup>th</sup> and 7 at Newton Ponds on the 22 <sup>nd</sup> .
Bean Goose (Tundra)	2 Holy Island on the 16 <sup>th</sup> and 1 at Low Newton on the 22 <sup>nd</sup> .
Pinkfoot	150+ at Norham on the 3 <sup>rd</sup> and 4 at Branton Ponds on the 28 <sup>th</sup> .
Barnacle Goose	20 East Chevington on the 19 <sup>th</sup> and 20 Low Newton on the 22 <sup>nd</sup> .
Brent Goose(Pale-bellied)	2200 at Fenham Flats on the 20 <sup>th</sup> .
Brent Goose(Dark-bellied)	3 at Long Nanny on the 24 <sup>th</sup> .
White-fronted Goose	9 Holy Island on 16 <sup>th</sup> and 14 on 17 <sup>th</sup> also 80 Low Newton on 22 <sup>nd</sup> .
Goosander	18 at Carham on the 29 <sup>th</sup> .
Shelduck	1 at Branton Ponds on the 8 <sup>th</sup> .
Long Tailed Duck	1 off Stag Rocks on the 6 <sup>th</sup> .
Goldeneye	12 at Branton Ponds on the 18 <sup>th</sup> and 7 at Carham on the 29 <sup>th</sup> .
Scaup	1 at Hauxley on the 13 <sup>th</sup> .
Pintail	6 East Chevington on the 19 <sup>th</sup> and 2 at Budle Bay on the 17 <sup>th</sup> .
Red-breasted Merganser	2 off Stag Rocks on the 6 <sup>th</sup> .
Wigeon	140 at Beadnell Flash on the 24 <sup>th</sup> .
Shoveler	14 at Monks House Pool on the 17 <sup>th</sup> .
Goshawk	1 near Hulne Park on the 26 <sup>th</sup> .
Peregrine	1 at Elwick on the 20 <sup>th</sup> and 1 at Ratcheugh on the 30 <sup>th</sup> .
Merlin	2 on Fenham Flats on the 20 <sup>th</sup> .
Hen Harrier	2 on Holy Island on the 9 <sup>th</sup> and 1 at Beal on the 30 <sup>th</sup> .
Sparrowhawk	1 at Swarland on the 18 <sup>th</sup> .
Buzzard	3 at Rennington on the 24 <sup>th</sup> .
Grey Partridge	2 at Preswick Carrs on the 29 <sup>th</sup> .
Sanderling	90 at Low Newton on the 10 <sup>th</sup> .
Golden Plover	2500 on Fenham Flats on the 20 <sup>th</sup> .
Purple Sandpiper	45 at Stag Rocks on the 6 <sup>th</sup> .
Greater Yellowlegs	1 at Hauxley from the 13 <sup>th</sup> , a great rarity from North America
Snipe	8 at Monks House Pool on the 17 <sup>th</sup> .
Jack Snipe	1 at Cresswell Ponds on the 19 <sup>th</sup> .
Grey Phalarope	1 at Hauxley on the 13 <sup>th</sup> .
Greenshank	1 at Budle Bay on the 17 <sup>th</sup> .
Woodcock	1 Holy Island on 16 <sup>th</sup> , 1 Swarland on 7 <sup>th</sup> , 4 Smeafields on 18 <sup>th</sup> , 1 at Hannahs Hill 27 <sup>th</sup> and 3 at Ratcheugh on the 30 <sup>th</sup> .
Herring Gull	100+ at Swarland on the 15 <sup>th</sup> .
Barn Owl	Singles at Holy Island 17 <sup>th</sup> , Smeafield 18 <sup>th</sup> , Pawston 18 <sup>th</sup> and Ratcheugh on the 30 <sup>th</sup> Also 3 youngsters near Warkworth on the 5 <sup>th</sup> .
Little Owl	1 at Branton on the 5 <sup>th</sup> .
Short-eared Owl	1 at Ratcheugh on the 30 <sup>th</sup> .
Kingfisher	2 at Branton Ponds all month
Great Spotted Woodpecker	Singles all month at Swarland
Rock Pipit	2 at Holy Island on the 16 <sup>th</sup> .
Waxwing	3 Lemmington Bank on the 30 <sup>th</sup> .



Fieldfare	200 at Smeafield on the 8 <sup>th</sup> .
Redwing	150 at Smeafield on the 11 <sup>th</sup> and 2000+ at Horncliffe on the 17 <sup>th</sup> .
Black Redstart	1 on Holy Island on the 17 <sup>th</sup> .
Eastern Black Redstart	1 on Holy Island from the 16 <sup>th</sup> , of the form <i>Phoenicurus Phoenicuroides</i> a 1 <sup>st</sup> for Northumberland and could have come from as far away as Kazakhstan.
Wren	Singles all month at Swarland .
Willow Tit	1 at Swarland on the 12 <sup>th</sup> and 2 at Prestwick Carr on the 29 <sup>th</sup> .
Long-tailed Tit	Up to 4 at Swarland on 5 <sup>th</sup> and 17 <sup>th</sup> .
Nuthatch	Singles in Swarland all month and 1 at Horncliffe on the 17 <sup>th</sup> .
Treecreeper	2 at Branton Ponds on the 21 <sup>st</sup> .
Jay	1 at Swarland all month and 6 at Carham on the 29 <sup>th</sup> .
Tree Sparrow	Up to 7 in Swarland all month, 8 in Branton on the 25 <sup>th</sup> and 6 at Ratcheugh on the 30 <sup>th</sup> .
Twite	28 at Guile Point on the 20 <sup>th</sup> .
Lesser Redpoll	2 at Branton Ponds on the 22 <sup>nd</sup> .
Bullfinch	2 at Smeafield on the 13 <sup>th</sup> .
Greenfinch	100+ at Smeafield on the 27 <sup>th</sup> .
Snow Bunting	1 at Hauxley on the 13 <sup>th</sup> .
<b>MAMMALS</b>	
Red Squirrel	Singles at Branton on the 1 <sup>st</sup> , Lilburn on the 17 <sup>th</sup> , Smeafield on the 4 <sup>th</sup> and Swarland /Newton on the Moor all month. Also 2 at Jockeys' Bridge on the 11 <sup>th</sup> .
Hedgehog	1 at Branton on the 5 <sup>th</sup> , it weighed only 290gms (should be about 600gms at this time of year); taken to Hedgehog rescue centre at Longframlington .
Fox	Singles at Lilburn 11 <sup>th</sup> , Kyloe 12 <sup>th</sup> , Newton on the Moor 1 <sup>st</sup> and Low Heighley on the 18 <sup>th</sup> .
Stoat	1 at Branton on the 15 <sup>th</sup> .
Feral Goat	19 on Yeavinger Bell on the 23 <sup>rd</sup> .
Porpoise	2 off Stag Rocks on the 6 <sup>th</sup> .
<b>INVERTEBRATES</b>	
Red Admiral	Singles at Swarland on the 1 <sup>st</sup> and 20 <sup>th</sup> also Smeafield on the 3 <sup>rd</sup> .
Small Tortoiseshell	Singles at Swarland on the 12 <sup>th</sup> and Smeafield on the 3 <sup>rd</sup> .
7 Spot Ladybird	Singles at Swarland on 16 <sup>th</sup> and 17 <sup>th</sup> .
Honey Bee	1 ( <i>Apis Mellifera</i> ) Berwick upon Tweed on the 17 <sup>th</sup> .
<b>PLANTS</b>	
Bluebell	Carham 29 <sup>th</sup> .
<b>REPTILES</b>	
Common Toad	1 Abbeyfields (Alnwick) 30 <sup>th</sup> .
<b>RAINFALL</b>	16.4mm
<b>OBSERVERS</b>	J&E Clark, I&K Davison, G Dodds, A Keeble, D Makespeace, R Manning, S Reay, H Tindle, B Welch.

Please send sightings reports for December, no later than 6<sup>th</sup> January, 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.