

# Alnwick Wildlife Group

Promoting awareness of the countryside and its flora and fauna



[www.alnwickwildlifegroup.co.uk](http://www.alnwickwildlifegroup.co.uk)

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## NEWSLETTER 181 OCTOBER 2016

### Review of September 2016

**MEETING NOVEMBER 30**

**CAPTURING OUR COAST**

**SPEAKER: DR JACQUI POCKLINGTON**

#### Citizen Science of the Shore

Dr Jacqui Pocklington is a marine ecologist working at the Dove Marine Laboratory at Cullercoats. She has a background of research at universities in Australia and Japan. But at present her focus here is on the science of our coast and she is the National Co-ordinator for the Capturing Our Coast project which she will be talking about at our November meeting.



Spotted Flycatcher left and Yellow Browed Warbler right. See Ringers Year over the page.

**Please send sightings reports** for October, no later than 6th November 2016 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.

**AWG welcomes contributions** for the newsletter and items for inclusion should be submitted by the 12th of the month to [redsquirrel@alnwickwildlifegroup.co.uk](mailto:redsquirrel@alnwickwildlifegroup.co.uk)



### SEPT 2016:

Ringling at Howick has continued this month with warblers feeding up on both the native and some of the more exotic wild fruits. Blackcaps (heading to Morocco) were in evidence early in the month but were subsequently eclipsed by Chiffchaffs on their way to Senegal. Our most interesting and rare (but regular) migrant, a Yellow Browed Warbler, was captured at the end of the month. This bird is pioneering a new evolving migration route from Russia to Africa (instead of the species traditional route south through China to South East Asia). The specimen we captured was no lost waive but a healthy bird carrying lots of fat (see pic.). On the same day we captured a juvenile Spotted Flycatcher also on its way south to cross the Sahara (see pic.). In coming migrants have mostly still to arrive although it's possible that some of the numerous Blackbirds around at the end of the month have Scandinavian accents!

Resident birds continued to entertain including another juvenile male Sparrowhawk, and the juvenile Great Spotted Woodpecker first captured last month – but now moulting into its adult (male plumage) as shown in the picture attached. Finally, a return from the BTO has revealed a very unusual Blue Tit which we ringed at Howick back in 27/9/14 – it was Controlled (recaptured alive) by another ringer on the 21/8/16 at a site near Preston; after travelling 196 km's!



The saga of this year's very late Barn Owls has just about come to an end with the ringing of five broods of owls this month including the last of 4 owlets near Rock on the 25<sup>th</sup>. These were a replacement brood as the original (first brood) all died around the end of June (see pic.).

Finally, some trainees had an interesting and instructive experience at Howick and Lee Moor Pools on Sunday 25<sup>th</sup>. This is when we ringed the new Mute Swan Cygnets (three at each site) (see pics. From Lee Moor). Both adults evaded capture at Howick (although we already know who they are from reading their ring numbers earlier in the year) while after some running around in circles both of the adults at Lee Moor were briefly recaptured. This revealed (again from their rings) that while the male has been at the farm before, breeding back in 2014, he has in fact acquired a new mate. Hopefully more information on her origins to follow from the BTO. Incidentally the male weighed over 11 Kg's.

*Phil Hanmer*

*A Ringer & Trainer*

*Natural History Society of Northumbria Ringing Group*

*(Hancock Museum)*

*E-mail: [tytoalbas@btinternet.com](mailto:tytoalbas@btinternet.com)*



More pictures at end of **MEETING OF WEDNESDAY 28TH SEPTEMBER**



## PLANT CORNER

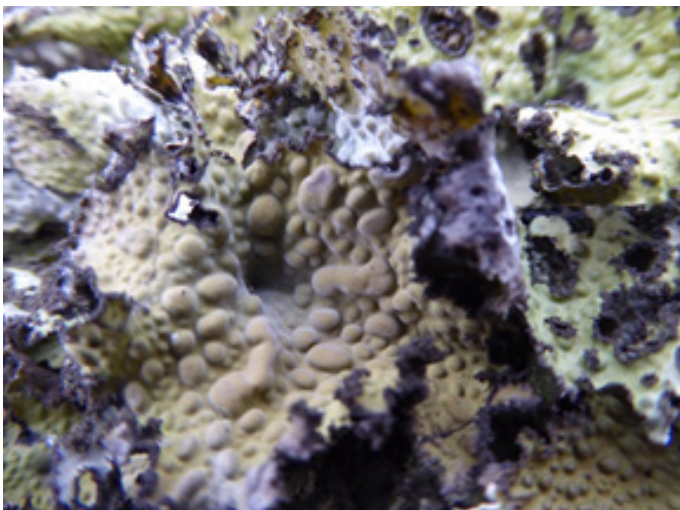
I've apologised before for writing about lichens and fungi under the Plant Corner heading, but I'm doing it again this month.

In mid-September Janet Simkin, who is our premier Northumbrian lichenologist, led a walk at Shaftoe Crag, near Bolam. As is often the case, when one has taken part in a specific event, enthusiasm (sometimes sadly temporary) is ignited and so I need to do another lichen piece while the memory is still fairly sharp.

In case you are unsure, all lichens are made up of a symbiotic ("living together") relationship between a fungus and an alga, so the algal partner enables me to treat them as honorary plants for today. Shaftoe Crag is an area of moorland with craggy sandstone outcroppings and it is well known for its good variety of lichens.



We started in a place called the Lang Byre. I've borrowed the photo from the northofthetyne.co.uk website. This is a sunken trackway between two low lines of crags. In droving times it was possible to bring cattle into the gap between the crags and pen them there for the night.



The south-facing crag edge had some good and unusual

lichens, the best of which was probably *Lasallia pustulata* (above). You can see from the photo where the *pustulata* part of the name comes from.

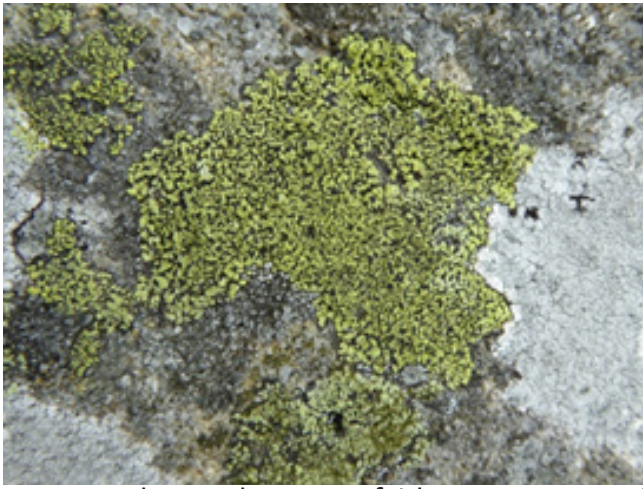
Then further on was a lichen that beautifully illustrates the idea that a fungus is one of the partners. In *Baeomyces rufus* the fungus produces little brown reproductive mushrooms on its surface.



We also noted the concept that "big fleas have little fleas ...". The very common lichen *Parmelia saxatilis* is often parasitized by another fungus which gives parts of the lichen body a brick-red colour. My photos show the *Parmelia* both without (below) and with (bottom) the parasite.







On some other rocks was a fairly common species called *Rhizocarpon geographicum* (above). Mercifully, for once, this species has a common name. Map Lichen is so called because very often its green patches look like aerial views of islands.

From a lichenologist's point of view the best was saved almost to the last. On a low 'whale-backed' rock was a vegetation of low heather, small grasses and lichens of various sorts. Amongst this were pieces of what looked like dried bits of seaweed fronds, most of which weren't even attached to the surface.



My picture unfortunately had a dead grass stem between the lens and the lichen, but the pieces of *Cetraria islandica* are clearly seen. This one also has a common name – Iceland Moss (even though it isn't a moss at all). It is common in Scandinavia where the reindeer eat it and there is also plenty in the Scottish highlands, but this site at Shaftoe is one of the very few in England.

Last of all was a quite different trip in early October to various bits of woodland in the Morpeth area to find and record slugs and snails. I was there to learn from two expert Conchologists, as such molluscan experts are called, from Yorkshire. We had a good



day, although the woodlands were very dry and so the conditions were not brilliant for your average slug. But for me almost the best sighting was in Choppington Woods where I turned over a dead log and found what you can see in this picture. This is a fungus and the colour is real and not 'photoshopped'.

It is called Green Elfcap (*Chlorociboria aeruginascens*). The fungal mycelium stains the dead wood a bright green and then occasionally it produces these brilliant small mushrooms. Apparently small pieces of the green-stained wood were used in the past in specialist veneers and marquetry to provide detailed decoration in expensive pieces of furniture.

*Richard Poppleton*

The *Pterophoridae* are known in English as Plume moths. Only 16 of the 40 British species have been recorded in Northumberland. They have apparently narrow wings, but this is because the fore and hindwings are split longitudinally to near the base and are stacked together except when flying. The chief characteristic of the genus is the resting posture which makes them look like old fashioned monoplanes. I have included one outlier that rates a genus all of its own, The Twenty-plume Moth (*Alucita hexadactyla*), which has similarly divided wings but rests in a more normal position. The larvae of Plumes feed on shrubs or herbaceous plants; some within the stems, but most on the leaves and often making a 'tent' to hide in when not feeding. The moths generally have a wingspan of 16 – 24 mm.

Brown Plume *Stenoptilia pterodactyla*

Common. Foodplant: Germander Speedwell



Twenty-plume Moth *Alucita hexadactyla*  
Very common: All months of the year, but mainly  
April – June. Foodplant: Honeysuckle



Beautiful Plume *Amblyptilia acanthadactyla*  
Fairly common. Foodplants: Woundwort, Restharrow  
and Meadow Crane's-bill



Mugwort Plume *Hellinsia lienigianus*  
Local in Northumberland : June - August



Mugwort Plume larva



White Plume Moth *Pterophorus pentadactyla*  
Fairly common: June - August



Brown Plume *Stenoptilia pterodactyla*  
Common. Foodplant: Germander Speedwell





Hemp-agrimony Plume *Adaina microdactyla*  
Local: July - August



Exit hole in a Hemp-agrimony stem



Saxifrage Plume *Stenoptilia millieridactyla*  
Common: June – September  
Foodplant: Garden Saxifrages (An Irish species, introduced from the Burren with Saxifrage plants.)



Thyme Plume *Merrifieldia leucodactyla*  
Rare in Northumberland: July  
Foodplant: Wild Thyme

*Alan Fairclough.*

## MEETING OF WEDNESDAY 28TH SEPTEMBER

At our first meeting of the new season we started with our brief AGM. The audited accounts were accepted and there were no questions. The committee and officers all agreed to stand again and there were no nominations for new committee members. The meeting agreed their re-election.



The regular meeting then began and George produced his show-and-tell items. David Turnbull had brought two photos of unusual-looking plants from Alnwick Cemetery. Then there was the 'sail' of a *Velella velella* (By-the-wind Sailor), a small jelly-fish relative, from a Hebridean beach (photo); an Elephant Hawk Moth found by chance in a Newton-on-the-Moor garden; and finally a mystery object, also from a Hebridean beach.

This last specimen was a small bone-like object (see Stewart's photo), light in weight and with a strange



hooked projection. No-one leapt forward to suggest what it was and after the meeting Stewart Sexton used the magic of Twitter to get similar 'don't know' responses from Dr Alice Roberts, of TV fame, various museum bone collection curators from across Europe and the King of Siam (OK, no, not the last one). There is uncertainty over whether it is bone at all rather than, say, coral, and some vague wonderings about whether it might be part of a man-made object eroded by its time in the ocean.

Naomi Waite from Northumberland Wildlife Trust

then gave us her presentation on Save our Magnificent Meadows.

This has been a very large, nation-wide project involving nine strategic UK locations. In Northumberland it includes both Whin Grassland and Calaminarian Grassland. The former occurs only on the thin soils overlying outcroppings of Great Whin Sill rocks, while the latter is unique to gravelly soils contaminated with heavy metals by human mining activities.

The species diversity of UK meadows is very poor. At least 97% of our meadows have fewer than 10 plant species, while probably only about 1.5% have more than 160 plant species. Good quality grasslands are important aesthetically, but also for carbon capture; for flood alleviation and for maintaining good health and condition in grazing animals.

Whin grassland is on shallow, nutrient poor and often calcareous soils, but it is not all the same. Coastal whin sites differ from inland ones. Some key species are Field Garlic, Hairy Stonecrop, Maiden Pink and Shining Lady's-mantle (only discovered in 1976 in South Northumberland).

In the UK calaminarian grassland is exclusively man-made. Some plants such as Alpine Pennycress



(pictured) accumulate metals which act as insect and slug deterrents in the plant tissues. Spring Sandwort, Mountain Pansy and Thrift are other key species.

Some other important native plants are Wild Chives (Northumberland has 5 of only 16 national sites), Annual Knawel and Common Rock Rose.

Naomi manages four main meadow sites, all in the south of the county. The actions being undertaken to help improve the meadow environments are:

- Removal of excess soil by hand and with excavators (good species rich meadows cannot survive if the soils are too deep and nutrient rich).
- Scrub clearance, especially gorse.



- The growing and planting out of plug plants – this has had limited success as many of the plants do not survive beyond their first year.
- Control of invasive species, especially Bracken and Himalayan Balsam
- Use of Flexi-graze schemes where rare breed sheep are used to graze small sites.

Other activities associated with the project are surveying work which allows her to check to see if the management actions are being effective; putting on training courses to enable volunteers to become usefully involved; working with schools; working with volunteer partners; organising events such as bioblitzes and livestock handling.

Naomi's tips for creating wildflower-rich areas of your own are:

- Use plug plants to give instant results
- Harrow the ground to open up the sward and create about 50% bare ground
- Keep the vegetation low in year 1 to allow perennials to develop good root systems
- Vary your cutting times to allow species that flower and seed at different times of year to have a chance of spreading.

If you think you'd like to get involved you can contact Naomi on:

*[naomi.waite@northwt.org.uk](mailto:naomi.waite@northwt.org.uk)*



More pictures from Ringers Year



### CADDISFLIES – THE UNDERWATER ARCHITECTS:

Caddisflies belong to the insect order Trichoptera (from the Greek words *trichos* – meaning ‘hairy’ and *pteron* – meaning ‘wing’). The description refers to the adult insects which are small (1-2 cm in length) and moth-like (see photo). There are around 10,000 species worldwide, with about 200 known in the U.K. Biogeographical evidence indicates that the order had evolved by the Triassic Period (some 200 million years ago) and that it represents a sister-order to the Lepidoptera (butterflies and moths). While adult caddisflies live on land, their larvae and pupae live in a variety of waterbodies, including rivers and lakes, both cold and warm springs, ponds and, more rarely, brackish waters. There are also a few species with terrestrial larvae, which resemble the larvae of bagworm moths (see photo).



Undoubtedly, the most prominent feature of caddisfly evolution has been the ability of the larvae to spin silk and the application of this material to solving the architectural and engineering problems associated with living in these diverse waters. Typically, larvae use their silk to construct tubular cases and carry these about with them, providing protection and/or camouflage as they roam about on stream beds or pond bottoms in search of food. Most familiar are those species that cut up autumn-shed leaves that have fallen into waterbodies and sunk to the bottom (see photo). Other common forms use their silk to bind together sand-grains and small pieces of gravel

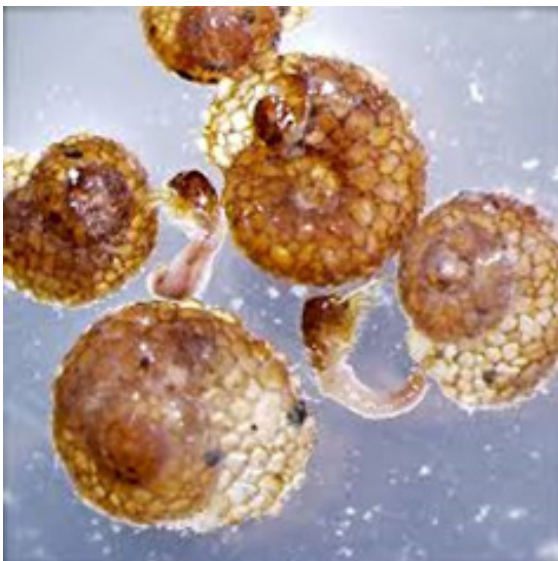
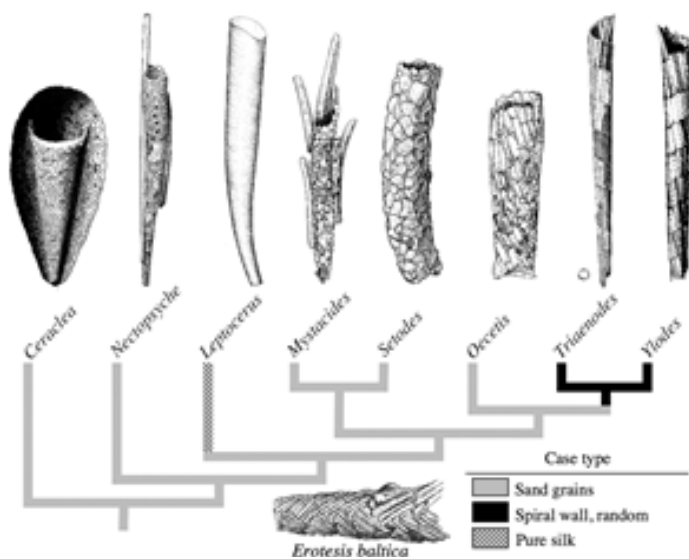
which, especially in fast-flowing streams, prevent the larvae from being swept away. Materials used for case-building are often genus or species specific, and thus can be used in larval identification (see photos).



The appearance of larval case types, such as those belonging to the family Limnephilidae (see photo), where silk is used to hold together pieces of leaf material may have led to the common name of the order: *caddisflies*. As far back as the 1400s, itinerant sellers of pieces of cloth were known as ‘cadice men’ - and had the practice of pinning their wares to their

own clothing by way of advertisement.

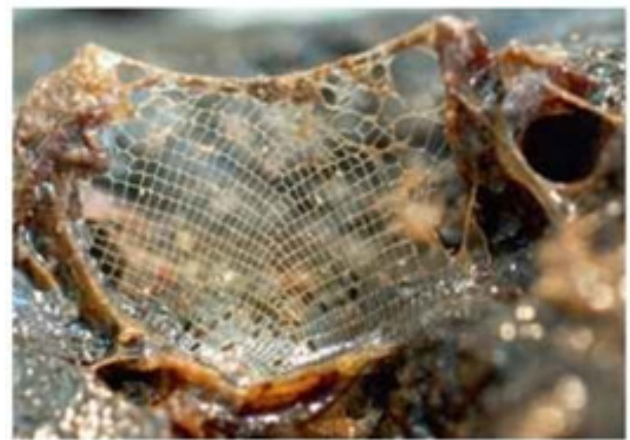
Construction of cases is an ongoing process. Newly hatched larvae immediately begin to gather together small particles of debris which they fasten together with silk. As the larva grows, it adds new materials to the front end of the case, widening it appropriately. Periodically, it turns around in the case to trim materials off the back end, using its mandibles – thus keeping the case to a manageable size. Case composition and design are highly diverse and have been honed to match the evolutionary adaptations required to enter available ecological niches (see chart below). Some are highly specialised, for example the spiral-shaped cases of the genus *Helicopsyche* – which resist the crushing forces of the streambed gravels in which the larvae live (see photo).



There is evidence to show that caddisfly cases may serve a second function, namely enhancing respiration as water is drawn through the case by an undulating motion of the larva's abdomen. Such an adaptation is believed to have allowed caddisflies to spread

from their ancestral, cool running water habitats into standing waters, such as lakes and ponds.

Alongside the many species of case-building caddisfly, there are large numbers belonging to families where silk production is used for a completely different purpose – these are known as the net-spinning caddisflies. These are typically found in running waters where they construct diversely designed silk structures for capturing small prey organisms and fine particles of food from the passing water. Predatory species tend to build nets with large meshes, whereas fine particle feeders can produce nets with mesh sizes as small as 5 microns (1 micron equals 1 thousandth of a millimeter) (see photos of a coarse-mesh net, left, and a very fine-mesh net, right).



Fossil larval caddisfly remains, in the form of chitinous body parts, like those of the non-biting midges (Chironomidae – see an earlier Invertebrate Corner) are proving to be useful palaeoecological tools in the interpretation and reconstruction of past environments (see photo at end of **FIRST ENCOUNTERS WITH A MOTH TRAP**).

Dudley Williams

*Newton on the Moor*



FIRST ENCOUNTERS WITH A MOTH TRAP

We live in Upper Howick Street, Alnwick - close to the centre of the town. Our back garden is small and surrounded by other buildings, but with the advantage (in moth terms) of a fair sized pond and a lot of flowering plants.


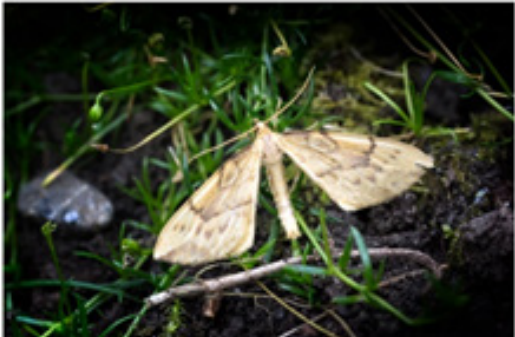



In July this year, relatives came to stay with us who are keen moth enthusiasts. Mary and Rod live in Formby, Lancashire. They set up their trap there very regularly and report all their findings. Mary is a PHD scientist and university lecturer. They both approach the moth trapping with scientific rigour and so I think you can rely on the data to be accurate. Where there is doubt, they haven't just guessed and you'll see there are still a few imponderables on the list.

The trap was put out between 18th and 26th July inclusive. The weather was mild and there was cloud cover some nights.

Mary and Rod were impressed with the number and variety of species we attracted, so I thought it might be interesting to write this article for the AWG.

It was the first time I had taken part in moth trapping and it was quite exciting unpacking the egg boxes around 8am. My overall favourite was the Buff Tip which looked so like a bit of twig on the lawn that I almost trod on it - I didn't, by the way! An unfortunate side effect of all this was that the gang of house sparrows which live in our garden were less merciful and by the end of the week were waiting for their breakfast each morning!

Jane Panton

	
Peppered Moth	Barred Moth
	
Beautifull Golden Y	Buff Arches
	
Lozotaenia Forsterana	

These are the moth records over the week. The Latticed Heath was a field record. All the rest were trapped in a 15w Actinic Heath Trap and all records were of adult moths. It just goes to show that you don't have to live way out in the countryside to get a wide range of species in your garden.

Latin Name	Common Name	Date	Quantity
<i>Phalera bucephala</i>	Buff-tip	19/07/2016	1
<i>Biston betularia</i>	Peppered Moth	19/07/2016	1
<i>Cryphia domestica</i>	Marbled Beauty	19/07/2016	7
<i>Idaea aversata</i>	Riband Wave	19/07/2016	1
<i>Peribatodes</i>			
<i>rhomboidaria</i>	Willow Beauty	19/07/2016	1
<i>Noctua pronuba</i>	Large Yellow Underwing	19/07/2016	17
??	possible Eudonia	19/07/2016	1
<i>Xestia triangulum</i>	Double Square-spot	19/07/2016	1
<i>Oligia strigilis</i> agg. <i>Zanclognatha</i>	Marbled Minor agg.	19/07/2016	1
<i>tarsipennalis</i>	Fan-foot	19/07/2016	1
<i>Caradrina morpheus</i>	Mottled Rustic	19/07/2016	1
<i>Apamea monoglypha</i>	Dark Arches	19/07/2016	3
<i>Diarsia brunnea</i>	Purple Clay - to be checked	19/07/2016	1
<i>Aphomia sociella</i>	Bee Moth	19/07/2016	1
<i>Eudonia</i> ???	to be identified	19/07/2016	1
<i>Habrosyne pyritoides</i>	Buff Arches	19/07/2016	1
<i>Yponomeuta evonymella</i>	Bird-cherry Ermine	19/07/2016	1
<i>Noctua pronuba</i>	Large Yellow Underwing	20/07/2016	16
<i>Cryphia domestica</i>	Marbled Beauty	20/07/2016	5
<i>Oligia strigilis</i> agg.	Marbled Minor agg.	20/07/2016	3
<i>Alcis repandata</i>	Mottled Beauty	20/07/2016	1
<i>Hypena proboscidalis</i>	Snout	20/07/2016	1
<i>Biston betularia</i>	Peppered Moth	20/07/2016	1
<i>Agriphila straminella</i>		20/07/2016	1
<i>Habrosyne pyritoides</i>	Buff Arches	20/07/2016	1
<i>Eudonia mercurella</i>		20/07/2016	1
<i>Eulithis prunata</i>	Phoenix	20/07/2016	1
<i>Apamea monoglypha</i>	Dark Arches	20/07/2016	6
<i>Eudonia truncicolella</i>	to be confirmed	20/07/2016	1
<i>Xestia triangulum</i>	Double Square-spot	20/07/2016	2
<i>Opisthograptis luteolata</i>	Brimstone Moth	20/07/2016	1
<i>Catoptria falsella</i> <i>Peribatodes</i>		20/07/2016	1
<i>rhomboidaria</i>	Willow Beauty	20/07/2016	1
<i>Oligia strigilis</i> agg.	Marbled Minor agg.	21/07/2016	5
<i>Rivula sericealis</i>	Straw Dot	21/07/2016	1
<i>Cryphia domestica</i>	Marbled Beauty	21/07/2016	4
<i>Agrotis exclamationis</i>	Heart and Dart	21/07/2016	1
<i>Hydriomena furcata</i>	July Highflyer	21/07/2016	1
<i>Idaea aversata</i>	Riband Wave	21/07/2016	1
<i>Noctua pronuba</i>	Large Yellow Underwing	21/07/2016	40
??	large, 2-spt Tortrix ?	21/07/2016	1
<i>Bupalus piniaria</i>	Bordered White	21/07/2016	1
<i>Autographa pulchrina</i>	Beautiful Golden Y	21/07/2016	1
<i>Pasiphila rectangulata</i>	Green Pug	21/07/2016	1
<i>Abrostola tripartita</i>	Spectacle	21/07/2016	1
<i>Eudonia mercurella</i>		21/07/2016	3
<i>Bryotropha domestica</i>		21/07/2016	1
<i>Apamea monoglypha</i>	Dark Arches	21/07/2016	4
brown micro 8-9mm	RH photo	21/07/2016	1
	Neglected Rustic check	21/07/2016	1



<i>Ourapteryx sambucaria</i>	Swallow-tailed Moth	21/07/2016	1
<i>Opisthograptis luteolata</i>	Brimstone Moth	23/07/2016	1
<i>Campaea margaritata</i>	Light Emerald	23/07/2016	1
<i>Oligia strigilis</i> agg.	Marbled Minor agg.	23/07/2016	3
<i>Ditula angustiorana</i>	Red-barred Tortrix	23/07/2016	1
<i>Cryphia domestica</i>	Marbled Beauty	23/07/2016	3
<i>Autographa jota</i>	Plain Golden Y	23/07/2016	2
<i>Noctua pronuba</i>	Large Yellow Underwing	23/07/2016	45
<i>Apamea monoglypha</i>	Dark Arches	23/07/2016	6
<i>Eudonia mercurella</i>		23/07/2016	2
<i>Agriphila straminella</i>		23/07/2016	1
<i>Mesapamea secalis</i> agg.	Common Rustic agg.	23/07/2016	1
<i>Cerapteryx graminis</i>	Antler Moth	23/07/2016	1
<i>Noctua janthe</i>	Lssr Br-bordered Yellow Underwing	23/07/2016	1
<i>Plusia festucae</i>	Gold Spot	23/07/2016	1
<i>Aphomia sociella</i>	Bee Moth	23/07/2016	1
<i>Peribatodes</i>			
<i>rhomboidaria</i>	Willow Beauty	23/07/2016	1
<i>Xestia triangulum</i>	Double Square-spot	23/07/2016	2
<i>Agrotis exclamationis</i>	Heart and Dart	23/07/2016	1
<i>Habrosyne pyritoides</i>	Buff Arches	23/07/2016	1
<i>Opisthograptis luteolata</i>	Brimstone Moth	25/07/2016	1
<i>Perizoma alchemillata</i>	Small Rivulet	25/07/2016	1
<i>Oligia strigilis</i> agg.	Marbled Minor agg.	25/07/2016	2
<i>Habrosyne pyritoides</i>	Buff Arches	25/07/2016	2
<i>Noctua pronuba</i>	Large Yellow Underwing	25/07/2016	16
<i>Eudonia truncicolella</i>	to be confirmed	25/07/2016	1
<i>Eurrhynx hortulata</i>	Small Magpie	25/07/2016	1
<i>Eulithis pyraliata</i>	Barred Straw	25/07/2016	2
<i>Apamea monoglypha</i>	Dark Arches	25/07/2016	4
<i>Eudonia mercurella</i>		25/07/2016	2
<i>Mamestra brassicae</i>	Cabbage Moth	25/07/2016	1
<i>Aphomia sociella</i>	Bee Moth	25/07/2016	1
to be identified	Uncertain / Rustic / type of Rustic?	25/07/2016	1
<i>Mythimna ferrago</i>	Clay	25/07/2016	1
to be identified	type of Pug	25/07/2016	1
<i>Chiasmia clathrata</i>	Latticed Heath	25/07/2016	1



CONTINUED FROM: INVERTEBRATE CORNER CADDISFLIES – THE UNDERWATER ARCHITECTS:

## WHAT WILDLIFE TO LOOK FOR IN NOVEMBER

The last time I wrote this article, I mentioned that thought our House martin nest had a second brood. This did not transpire but at least one pair are still feeding young in nests over the road.

September is a month of migration. Weather has generally been good and there has been a steady visible migration of mainly passerines. Species have included Siskins, Skylarks, Meadow pipits and Pied wagtails. Small numbers of Redwings and Pink-footed geese have started to appear in the last week.

Away from Glanton, the easterly winds have brought in a host of Siberian specialities including a White's thrush on Holy Island. This Mistle thrush sized woodland thrush was a one-time holy grail in autumn bird watching but over recent years this species has turned up more frequently especially in the Northern Isles. I have spent time looking for this species that gave me and 600 other birders the run-around on St. Agnes, Scillies for nearly three days. This experience and another looking for a Yellow-billed cuckoo was enough to put me off 'big crowd' twitching. It is fair to say that I missed the thrush but grabbed fantastic views of the cuckoo before someone stood in front of my scope and we left in a cloud of rage.

**Species of the month:** two buntings and what a lark!

November is a great bird watching month; sea duck, divers and grebes abound on the coast, waders and waterfowl are plentiful on the mudflats and wetlands and berry laden bushes are alive with the sound of Redwings, Fieldfares and other thrushes. A walk on some of quieter beaches and saltmarshes can provide the rewards of either Lapland or Snow Buntings or even a Shorelark.

**Lapland Bunting:** This is a species that breeds in the high Arctic in Canada, Greenland and Scandinavia. It would appear that Canadian Lapland buntings arrive in September in the Northern and Outer Isles. Scandinavian birds arrive later in October and November. This bunting is slightly smaller than a Reed bunting but is well marked with a chestnut nape and wing panels. Some of the best places to find this species include the saltmarsh on Holy Island or Beal Point. This species can turn up almost anywhere and be found inland with flocks of other finches and buntings.

**Snow Bunting:** This is one of my favourite winter species

to search for in the wilder parts of Northumberland. It is often found through it's per r r it call feeding along the strand line on beaches. This large white, brown and black bunting can often be very confiding and approachable given time. Reasonable flocks can turn up on Holy Island, Goswick or Long Nanny but we have not had the very large flocks that you can found further south. These flocks can number in the hundreds. Snow bunting can be found in the Cheviots especially if there is snow on the ground. Increasing snow cover can see flocks on stubble fields at lower ground.

**Shorelark:** This species has become a real rarity on our coast in winter but it is a stunner. It is a distinctive species with yellow and black face marking and 'black horns'. Again they can be found along the strand lines on beaches especially at Ross and possibly Goswick.

Good luck in your search for these species.

*Jack Daw.*



Lapland Bunting



Snow Bunting



Shorelark



## SIGHTINGS SEPTEMBER 2016

### BIRDS

Red-throated Diver	1 at Holy Island on 18 <sup>th</sup> 2 at Annstead on 21 <sup>st</sup>
Great-crested Grebe	1 + juvenile at Branton Ponds on 24 <sup>th</sup>
Little Egret	1 at Long Nanny on 13 <sup>th</sup> 6 at Budle Bay on 13 <sup>th</sup> 11 at Fenham Flats on 15 <sup>th</sup> 1 at Holy Island causeway on 18 <sup>th</sup> 2 at Monk's House pool on 20 <sup>th</sup>
Manx Shearwater	3 at Newton Point on 4 <sup>th</sup>
Pink-footed Goose	35 over Branton on 19 <sup>th</sup> 50 over Low Newton on 20 <sup>th</sup> 450 at Harpers Heugh on 27 <sup>th</sup> several over Smeafield on 17 <sup>th</sup>
Brent Goose	73 Pale Bellied past Newton Point on 4 <sup>th</sup> 809 at Fenham Flats on 18 <sup>th</sup> 400 at Fenham Flats on 15 <sup>th</sup>
Pintail	2 at Branton Ponds on 18 <sup>th</sup>
Wigeon	6247 at Fenham Flats on 18 <sup>th</sup> and 3000 on 26 <sup>th</sup>
Shelduck	362 at Fenham Flats on 18 <sup>th</sup> and 86 on 26 <sup>th</sup>
Goosander	5 at Branton Ponds on 11 <sup>th</sup> and 14 on 24 <sup>th</sup>
Marsh Harrier	1 at Drurdge Pools on 8 <sup>th</sup>
Merlin	1 at Holy Island on 25 <sup>th</sup>
Peregrine	1 at Low Newton on 10 <sup>th</sup>
Grey Partridge	80 at Smeafield on 20 <sup>th</sup>
Water Rail	1 at Branton Ponds on 26 <sup>th</sup> at Cresswell on 3 <sup>rd</sup>
Common Snipe	12 at Branton Ponds on 21 <sup>st</sup>
Oystercatcher	1325 at Fenham Flats on 18 <sup>th</sup>
Little Stint	2 at Low Newton scrape on 10 <sup>th</sup> and 1 on 13 <sup>th</sup>
Ruff	15+ at Low Newton scrape on 4 <sup>th</sup> 9 at Charlton Mires flash on 10 <sup>th</sup>
Knot	860 at Fenham Flats on 18 <sup>th</sup>
Golden Plover	400+ at Newton Point on 10 <sup>th</sup> 250 at Fenham Flats on 18 <sup>th</sup>
Grey Plover	256 at Fenham Flats on 18 <sup>th</sup>
Black-tailed Godwit	5 at Low Newton scrape on 6 <sup>th</sup> from 9 on 6 <sup>th</sup> to 18 on 27 <sup>th</sup> at Monk's House pool. Several at Alnmouth on 16 <sup>th</sup>
Bar-tailed Godwit	310 at Fenham Flats on 18 <sup>th</sup>
Avocet	At Cresswell on 3 <sup>rd</sup>
Common Sandpiper	At Cresswell on 3 <sup>rd</sup>
Curlew Sandpiper	1 at Low Newton scrape on 4 <sup>th</sup> 1 at Monk's House pool on 13 <sup>th</sup> 1 at Boulmer on 2 <sup>nd</sup>
Green Sandpiper	1 at Branton Ponds on 7 <sup>th</sup> 2 at Hedgeley Lakes 11 <sup>th</sup>
Purple Sandpiper	3 at Low Newton on 10 <sup>th</sup>
Greenshank	2 at Holy Island causeway on 11 <sup>th</sup> ,15 <sup>th</sup> and 18 <sup>th</sup> 1 at Cresswell on 3 <sup>rd</sup>
Redshank	304 at Fenham Flats on 18 <sup>th</sup>
Curlew	517 at Fenham Flats on 18 <sup>th</sup> and 25 on 26 <sup>th</sup>
Whimbrel	3 at Long Nanny on 13 <sup>th</sup>
Lesser Black Backed Gull	112 at Branton Ponds on 4 <sup>th</sup> and 133 on 21 <sup>st</sup>
Franklin's Gull	1 at Whittle Dene reservoir on 17 <sup>th</sup>
Kingfisher	1 at Branton Ponds on 18 <sup>th</sup> and 3 on 21 <sup>st</sup> 1 at Lesbury on 27 <sup>th</sup>
House Martin	150 at Smeafield on 12 <sup>th</sup>
Skylark	3 at Smeafield on 25 <sup>th</sup>
Yellow Wagtail	2 on Low Newton beach on 10 <sup>th</sup> 1 at Boulmer on 2 <sup>nd</sup>
Thrush Nightingale	1 at Holy Island on 18 <sup>th</sup>
Wheatear	4 at Newton Point on 4 <sup>th</sup>
Stonechat	12 at Low Newton on 10 <sup>th</sup>
Whinchat	1 at Holy Island on 17 <sup>th</sup> 1 at Alnmouth on 12 <sup>th</sup>
Fieldfare	1 at Holy Island on 15 <sup>th</sup>
Lesser Whitethroat	1 at Low Newton on 10 <sup>th</sup> 1 at Holy Island on 17 <sup>th</sup>

Yellow-browed Warbler	1 at Holy Island on 17 <sup>th</sup> and 1 on 25 <sup>th</sup>
Goldcrest	2 on Holy Island on 17 <sup>th</sup>
Red-breasted Flycatcher	1 at Holy Island on 17 <sup>th</sup>
Treecreeper	1 at Branton Ponds on 28 <sup>th</sup>
Lesser Grey Shrike	1 at Links House on 13 <sup>th</sup>
Rose-coloured Starling	1 juvenile at Roseden on 24 <sup>th</sup>
Bullfinch	4 at Branton Ponds on 24 <sup>th</sup>
Lesser Redpoll	8 at Branton on 9 <sup>th</sup>
Yellowhammer	2 at Smeafield on 25 <sup>th</sup>
<b>INVERTEBRATES</b>	
Southern Hawker	1 at Branton Ponds on 1 <sup>st</sup> and 4 on 20 <sup>th</sup>
Common Hawker	1 at Branton Ponds on 24 <sup>th</sup>
Black Darter	At Cragside on 23 <sup>rd</sup>
Common Darter	At Cragside on 23 <sup>rd</sup>
Ruddy Darter	1 at Ashington on 22 <sup>nd</sup>
Silver Y	1 at Lesbury on 30 <sup>th</sup>
Elephant Hawkmoth	1 larva at Lesbury on 12 <sup>th</sup>
Canary-shouldered Thorn	1 at Branton on 4 <sup>th</sup>
Pink-barred Sallow	1 at Branton on 4 <sup>th</sup>
Centre-barred Sallow	4 at Branton on 6 <sup>th</sup>
Frosted Orange	2 at Branton on 5 <sup>th</sup>
Chevron	5 at Branton on 6 <sup>th</sup>
Pine Carpet	1 at Branton on 6 <sup>th</sup>
Brown-spot Pinion	5 at Branton on 5 <sup>th</sup> and 10 on the 7 <sup>th</sup>
Heath Rustic	1 at Branton on 5 <sup>th</sup>
Butterbur	1 at Branton on 6 <sup>th</sup>
Svensson's Copper	1 at Branton on 13 <sup>th</sup>
Underwing	
Red Admiral	2 at Smeafield on 7 <sup>th</sup>
Painted Lady	3 at Smeafield on 7 <sup>th</sup> 1 at Boulmer on 2 <sup>nd</sup>
Speckled Wood	2 at Branton Ponds on 24 <sup>th</sup> 2 at Smeafield on 19 <sup>th</sup> and 4 on 22 <sup>nd</sup>
Wall Brown	1 at Alnmouth Village G.C. on 4 <sup>th</sup>
Small Tortoiseshell	1 at Lesbury on 20 <sup>th</sup>
<b>PLANTS</b>	
Grass of Parnassus	Lots on Holy Island on 17 <sup>th</sup>
<b>MAMMALS</b>	
Red Squirrel	1 at Branton on 18 <sup>th</sup> 2 at Branton Ponds on 22 <sup>nd</sup> 1 at Smeafield on 4 <sup>th</sup>
Brown Hare	45 at Smeafield on 20 <sup>th</sup>
<b>REPTILES</b>	
Adder	1 at Branton Ponds on 24 <sup>th</sup>
<b>RAINFALL</b>	
22 mm	
<b>OBSERVERS</b>	
G Bell, I&K Davison, P Jobson, M Mayfield, M McMahon, S Reay, S Sexton.	