

# Alnwick Wildlife Group

Promoting awareness of the countryside and its flora and fauna



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NEWSLETTER 248 MAY 2022

REVIEW OF APRIL 2022

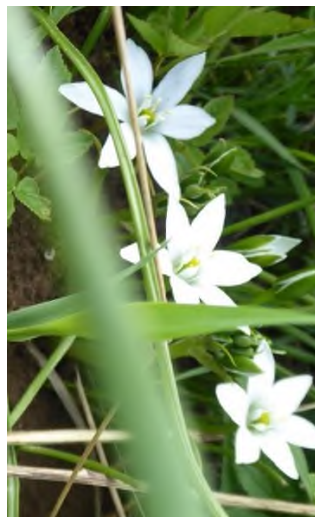
25TH MAY 2022 MAKING OTTERS COUNT - THE USE OF CITIZENS SCIENCE TO MONITOR OTTER POPULATIONS DR VIVIEN KENT

## AWG TREASURER

In the summer of next year, 2023, Richard Poppleton is planning to start stepping back from some of his organising roles with AWG. He will have fulfilled the positions of Treasurer and *de facto* Secretary for 13 years by that time and feels that, both for his own sake and for the continued health of AWG, it is more than time to try to find others to take on these jobs. Your committee think they may have lined up someone to take over as Secretary, but at their February meeting no-one rushed forward to volunteer to become Treasurer!

It seems to us that there may well be members with some previous experience with running the finances of an organisation (large or small) who might be prepared to offer their services to be our Honorary Treasurer (the Honorary bit just means there is no financial recompense involved). It is worth saying that when Richard took on this post he had no previous experience of being a treasurer! So, just a reasonable facility with figures and an organised mind would be quite enough as qualifications.

If you think you might be interested in exploring what this task might involve for AWG, then please do contact Richard on 01665 578346 or by email at [rjpoppleton@outlook.com](mailto:rjpoppleton@outlook.com) or even sidle up to him at the May meeting to have a chat.



Star of Bethlehem *Ornithogalum umbellatum* ssp. *campestre*

These pictures were taken on 8<sup>th</sup> May by the River Coquet by Meg Keeble

When Jane and I got our recent copy of the RSPB's magazine (why oh why did they have to change the title from the clearly descriptive **Birds** to the horribly twee **Nature's Home**?) we looked at this year's Top 10 garden birds list. Our immediate thought was that their national list didn't look very much like our own list. But then I suppose if you live on a moorland edge livestock farm in North Northumberland you'd expect your list to be rather different – and probably rather different from those compiled by people in the middle of Alwick. Just thought you might be interested in comparing the lists.

<b>NATIONAL 2022 List</b>	<b>Titlington Mount 2022 List</b>
<b>1. House Sparrow</b>	Siskin
<b>2. Blue Tit</b>	Chaffinch
<b>3. Starling</b>	Goldfinch
<b>4. Woodpigeon</b>	Tree Sparrow
<b>5. Blackbird</b>	House Sparrow
<b>6. Robin</b>	Blackbird
<b>7. Goldfinch</b>	Coal Tit
<b>8. Great Tit</b>	Greenfinch
<b>9. Magpie</b>	Redpoll
<b>10. Chaffinch</b>	Blue Tit

We also regularly get Great Tit, Robin, Woodpigeon, Great-spotted Woodpecker, Collared Dove, Dunnock, Pied Wagtail, Swallow, Wren, Long-tailed Tit, Red-legged Partridge, Sparrowhawk and, fortunately very rarely, Starling, Jackdaw, Carrion Crow. I've ignored the bxxxxx Pheasants!

We also see occasional specimens of other species in the garden, but very rarely and irregularly. It has been good to see an apparent improvement in Greenfinch numbers this year and the Redpolls we assume have been displaced from the storm-damaged conifer plantations on the farm, as has the extraordinary number of Siskins. In fact we appear to be feeding most of the Northumberland populations of sparrows and finches.

The downside of having so many finches is that we do see a disproportionate number of sick and dead birds suffering, we assume, from the nasty protozoan parasitic infection trichomonosis. Although, who knows whether or not it's bird flu. We try to keep the feeders as clean as possible, but then we are not the only household feeding birds in the garden here.

*Richard*

## GLANTLEES

We had our first visit to Glantlees Farm (see March and April Newsletters) at the end of April. Below are the bird records we made. We very much hope that other members will want to visit the farm and add bird sightings and counts to this initial list. If you want to go, please contact Judy Fortescue direct [JUDY@andrewrobinsonfarms.co.uk](mailto:JUDY@andrewrobinsonfarms.co.uk) to make sure the date and time are OK for her. **And do please read the article in the March Newsletter first – not least because it has maps!**

### GLANTLEES BIRDS 24TH APRIL 2022

*Liz Clark, Hilary Gostelow-Drury, Andrew & Meg Keeble,  
Richard & Jane Poppleton, Helen Reed-Jones, Peter  
Watson*

# Weather dry and sunny, but not warm, with a cool NW wind

# The wind made hearing bird song rather problematic at times

# This survey walk covered only the main farm area with its grazing  
and arable fields (but see Red-legged Partridge comment below)  
and the patches of planted, mostly storm-damaged, woodland

# All counts are merely a rough guide to numbers heard and seen

Buzzard, Common	1	
Carrion Crow	several	
Jackdaw	many	with nesting material around farm buildings
Rook	many	
Woodpigeon	many	
Feral Pigeon	several	
Collared Dove	2	
Pheasant	2	
Red-legged Partridge	2	on lower level of moorland
Grey Heron	1	by burn on south edge of site
Mallard	2	by burn on south edge of site
Black-headed Gull	1	overhead
Blackbird	3	
Pied Wagtail	4	
Skylark	5+	
House Sparrow	several	around farm buildings
Tree Sparrow	8	in hedges by Snook Back Front Field
Yellowhammer	4	
Chaffinch	many	particularly by Snook Back fields
Dunnock	1	
Wren	1	
Blue Tit	2	one with nesting material by farm road
Goldcrest	2	
Chiffchaff	3	
Willow Warbler	2	
Blackcap	1	in scrub beyond burn

**TOTAL SPECIES = 26**

ERIC North East, based at the Great North Museum in Newcastle, is our North East centre for collecting all environmental records. In 2022 they are conducting the City Challenge (in this case 'City' appears to cover the whole county of Northumberland!) which is intended to try to get as many people as possible involved in sending in their sightings to add to the 3.6 million existing records held on their database. The best way to see what is involved and how you can take part is to go to the ERIC website [eric.ne@twmuseums.org.uk](mailto:eric.ne@twmuseums.org.uk). Even if you currently send in records to other organisations or to sites like iRecord, you could make a significant contribution to our Northumbrian wildlife records by getting involved in this. Coincidentally you will see from our talks programme elsewhere in this newsletter that Fiona Greenwold from ERIC is due to give the September talk and she will be able to give us some updates on the success of this project.



George then showed us some examples of Oak Apple Galls on oak leaves. These growths are caused by the larvae of various species of tiny Ichneumon Flies which lay their eggs in the leaves. Identifying plant galls can be quite satisfying because as soon as you have identified the host plant it is comparatively easy to home in on the correct gall. Probably the best photographic guide is the Wild Guide series *Britain's Plant Galls* by Michael Chinery.

George's second specimen was a female Redstart which, having made it all the way back here from its wintering quarters in West Africa, failed to survive to breed here.

Philip Hanmer then gave us two illustrated tours in the French Pyrennees. First came the walk to the head of the Cirque du Gavarnie in July 2019, just before Covid arrived. One feature during the trek up this long valley with a spectacular waterfall at the top was the rather sad fact that many French tourists do this route, but that they seem to show little interest in or awareness of the wildlife around them. In the photo the waterfall is just visible in the far distance at the head of the Cirque



One of the major views as you start the route is the vista up Rowland's Gap (Brèche de Roland). This narrow valley (📷 right) is situated in the Ordesa y Monte Perdido National Park on the Franco-Spanish border, close to the steep cliffs of the Cirque de Gavarnie. It was supposedly cut by Count Roland with his sword Durendal in an attempt to destroy that sword, after being defeated during the Battle of Roncesvalles in 778.



There were plenty of Blackbirds feasting on cherries and in the air were Griffon Vultures, warming up in the sun

This area turned up some birds which are special species for us, like Citril Finch, Serin and Golden Eagle, as well as more familiar Chaffinch, Great Tit, Garden Warbler and Mistle Thrush. There was also Robin which, on the Continent, is a much more secretive and retiring bird than we are accustomed to in Britain.



**Citril Finch**



**Serin**



**Griffon Vultures**

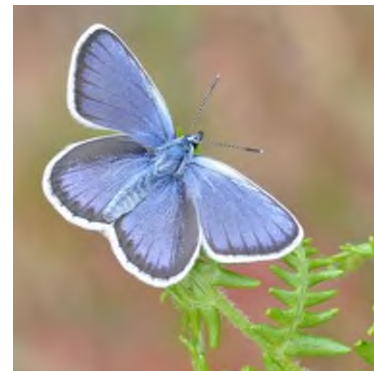
It was also surprising that there appeared to be few if any sheep in these mountain valleys which has meant that ground vegetation has been able to flourish and support a good range of butterflies, a few of which are shown below:



**Black-veined White**



**Heath Fritillary**



**Silver-studded Blue**

Particularly spectacular were the Swallowtails and the clouds of Blue butterflies of various species gathered at places where they could get at wet mud with essential minerals. Various flowering plants caught the eye. Alpine Figwort, Clustered Bellflower and Hoary Plantain were impressive. They are shown below.

Some distance up the valley was a semi-ruined hunting lodge, a part of which has been refurbished as a café. If we sit at an outdoor café we might expect house sparrows or chaffinches to come searching for crumbs, but here that role was taken by very tame Alpine Choughs which are just like the Choughs we get in the west of Britain, but with yellow beaks instead of red.

Phil's second walk was at the Lac des Gloriettes. Also in the Pyrenees, this is an artificial reservoir in limestone country. Notable among the birds were the Black Redstarts and, at the other end of the size scale, Lammergeiers. There was a fairly typical upland flora, with Pyrenean Saxifrage and Blue Iris that caught the eye.

Below and on the following page is a small gallery of some of these species.



**Swallowtail**



**Black Redstart**



**Pyrenean Saxifrage**



**Blue Iris**



**Lammergeier**

## PLANT CORNER

I was recently looking at some Ivy berries with a not-very-wildlife-savvy companion. He expressed surprise that what we were looking at was actually ivy because the leaves weren't the right shape. He assumed it was a different plant growing through an ivy thicket which did have 'normal' ivy leaves. I had to explain that the flowering/fruitlets shoots of ivy always have leaves of a different shape from those on the vegetative parts of the plant.

The drawn illustration shows the clear distinction between the two leaf shapes. But that little encounter made me think about other species that have two distinct leaf types – a phenomenon called heterophylly.

All plants, of course, will show degrees of variation in leaf size and shape depending on time of year and which part of the plant you are looking at, but heterophyllous species have consistent and usually quite obvious different leaf types. You do also need to remember that most if not all dicotyledonous plants (which have two 'seed leaves' in each seed and produce leaves with branched veins) produce their cotyledon leaves when the seed first germinates and these first leaves, which quickly fall off, are often entirely unlike the subsequent leaves. This is nothing to do with heterophylly.



Harebells (or Scottish Bluebells, if you insist) have the Latin name *Campanula rotundifolia*. This suggests that the plant has round leaves, and yet the photos below show that the round leaves are only found on the young plant. As soon as it begins to attain any sort of size the leaves become quite narrow and elongated.



**Young Harebell seedlings**

The mature plant on the right is in our garden. You have to ignore the *Anemone* and the white forget-me-nots on the left and the *Geum* leaves in the foreground and accept that in the wild, with lots of competition from grasses and other plants you won't usually get this large clump effect. But the key point is that all the mature leaves are quite unlike the round early leaves.



**Mature Harebell plant, pre-flowering**

Quite a number of heterophyllous species are water plants and the two different leaf types are often floating leaves and submerged leaves. A classic example is Common Water-crowfoot *Ranunculus aquatilis*. The aquatic species in the genus *Ranunculus* are sometimes a bit difficult to identify accurately and you often need to catch the plants during their rather brief flowering period. Several of them have aerial leaves, which usually float on the water surface, with 'normal' flat leaf blades and roundish shapes. But under the water the leaves are filamentous and superficially look as if they belong to different plants entirely.

It is quite hard to get acceptable photos of Common Water-crowfoot that show both the floating leaves and the submerged leaves in the same image, so the two shots on the next page show them separately.



Common Water-crowfoot – floating leaves and filamentous submerged leaves

A rather similar situation occurs in some of the Water-starworts *Callitriche* spp. The one you are most likely to see on your walks, often in persistent puddles and ditches by woodland tracks, is Common Water Crowfoot *C. stagnalis*. Unfortunately, I failed to find a decent image that showed the two leaf types, so the one I've used below is a close relative, Intermediate Water-starwort *C. brutia* ssp *hamulata*. I very recently found this species in a small quarry pond in the Otterburn Ranges, close to Ridlee's Cairn. This pond had been drying up for some time, showing just how dry the winter and early spring has been, but it meant I could get at some specimens of the plants without getting my feet wet. The surface rosette is clearly different from the much longer, thinner stem leaves under the water. These parallel-sided stem leaves also have a characteristic rounded notch at the end which I've shown circled in the magnified image.





A third genus of aquatics are the Pondweeds *Potamogeton* spp. Usually you see these as rather inaccessible floating plants on ponds or bog pools, but one particular species shows strong heterophylly, as is clear from its English name. The Various-leaved Pondweed *Potamogeton gramineus*. The image below is by Donald Cameron on the Go Botany- Native Plant Trust website and, because it is a particularly well-displayed specimen out of the water, shows the two leaf types very well. There are records of this pondweed from Holy Island and in the Nelly Moss Lakes in Craggside.



My final two examples on this theme of heterophylly return me to the species, like the Harebell, whose basal leaves are quite different to the stem leaves. The Goldilocks Buttercup *Ranunculus auricomus* is a rather strange plant whose flowers, while obviously buttercup-like, look as though they've been got at by pests or diseases because the petals are almost randomly different sizes or absent. The two flowers shown have not had petals eaten off - they just grew like this. The left-hand image shows quite nicely the basal and stem leaves. Goldilocks Buttercup is not very common in our area, but in woodland and on hedgebanks it's worth keeping a look-out for odd-looking buttercups with what the books call 'variably-developed or absent petals'. I've found it in the Cawledge Burn woods and at Middleton North when we were doing survey work for Charlie Bennett in 2019 near Scots Gap.



Marsh Valerian *Valeriana dioica* is a plant that you will only find in suitably wet habitats. I've seen it in bog vegetation on upland moors and also in comparatively lowland wet woodland. I couldn't find any photograph that really showed the clear differences between the basal leaves and the stem leaves, so my illustration on the next page is a picture from an old-fashioned Flora, but it does show rather nicely the leaf differences.



All of this brings me to the questions of how and why heterophylly happens? It certainly seems to be genetically determined, but must equally clearly be affected by environmental factors. A classic example is in Holly *Ilex aquifolia* in which it is often found that leaves growing lower down on the plant within reach of browsing animals are pricklier than those growing higher up.

In aquatic plants the fact that surface, floating, leaves often have broader surfaces than the submerged ones must have survival advantages in ensuring that the plant has maximum exposure to light during its summer actively growing season. To expend energy in developing broad leaves under the water where the light levels are low would not be a sensible strategy. But that doesn't really explain the differences in basal and stem leaves in plants like Marsh Valerian and Harebell.

Looking on-line it is possible to find a range of learned articles, sometimes semi-comprehensible to the layman, that seek to explain the control mechanisms that determine the relationships between leaf shape and environmental factors. But looking for anything at all that explains why, for example, vegetative leaves of Ivy are so different to the leaves on the flowering shoots, has led me nowhere.

I don't think our AWG newsletter is the right place to launch into explanations of the relationships between environmental factors, genetics and the part played by a range of plant hormones in controlling leaf size and shape. And that's even if I felt competent to do so!

Perhaps this summer, armed with your camera, you might like to seek out other examples of heterophylly and send me any good examples for publication in a future newsletter. If that task does nothing else it should get you where any good botanist should be – on hands and knees getting up close and personal with the plants.

*Richard*

## STEWCHAT.

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Last year, by a quirk of fate, I missed two good birds in quite similar circumstances. Firstly, there was the Bempton albatross fiasco with an all day cliff stand watching Gannets. Luckily the bird returned this year, as I hoped it would, and a second pilgrimage was made, this time successfully.

Also last year, much nearer to home, all for 6 miles in fact, a Black Tern summered in the Long Nanny tern colony in Beadnell bay. Whilst Black Tern is a good bird in Northumberland, it's not something I would go out of my way for. I'd rather hope to find one on my own local patch, so June and July were filled with What's App messages of its presence in the Arctic Tern nesting area, with me hoping it might give Cullernose Point a fly past. It was always a long shot and did not materialise.

Then, at the end of July, some good photographs were posted of the bird that set people thinking. It was highly odd that a Black Tern would spend this long, during the summer, in one spot. And, it looked very, very dark. Ideas that it could be from across the Atlantic rather than from across the North Sea were discussed and after some scrutiny and expert analysis, the bird was indeed confirmed as an **American Black Tern**.

Now this is an altogether different prospect. There have only been half a dozen records of this Nearctic race of Black Tern in the UK and this is the first adult in breeding plumage. I suddenly became interested and decided 6 miles might not be too far to go after all. Unfortunately, after a stay of about 10 weeks, today it had decided to migrate, leaving me sat on a sunny evening beach eating an ice cream, and wondering. Like the albatross, would it come back next year?

The good news is, yes, it came back last week, so yesterday morning I was up bright and early and on site for 06.45am after a right old faff with the car park ticket machine leaving me 7 quid out of pocket.

There was no sign initially the bird having gone out to sea, but after around 15 minutes it returned to give the best ever views. Watching from the wardens hut decking, the American Black Tern flew around, displaying and showing aggression to the Arctic Tern pairs, down to about 20 feet! Landing only for brief spells, usually behind marram grass, photography was tricky, but it was a pleasure to watch such a dapper bird at close range.

The features that differentiate it from Eurasian Black Tern were easily seen (isnt previous knowledge great). It was an intense black, like a White winged Black Tern rather than the charcoal grey of Black Tern. This contrasted well with the pale whitish underwings and pure white undertail coverts. It also showed a very obvious white forward edge to the wings, looking like headlight strips in flight.

Although it does not count as a new bird being 'just' a race of Black Tern, this did not detract from such a nice bird at all. Along with the American, there were hundreds of Arctic Terns, 16 Little Terns and single Roseate and Sandwich Terns making it a 5 tern day. A nice first summer Little Gull dropped by for good measure. Well worth the trip I'd say...

*Stewart Sexton, Howick.*



**Figure 1 / 2: American Black Tern, Long Nanny.**

## A RINGERS YEAR

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**APRIL 2022:** Another one of my trainees has just been granted their C ringing permit by the British Trust for Ornithology; so, I now have two active ringers locally who are able to do some of their own ringing and also collaborate with me on ongoing projects. Depending on both time and aptitude it generally takes a minimum of three years to get to this level. My C ringers have helped a great deal recently because April is when Tawny Owls start nesting (*yes I realise media Natural History reports always tell you about those that are found with young in February etc. but that is not usual and especially not in North Northumberland*) quickly followed by our unique English colony of Goldeneye ducks. In recent years we have put a lot of effort into the Goldeneye because of the need to fit and retrieve the Geo-loggers from them to research their movements outside the breeding season. This particular research is now at the dissemination stage as I have now done several talks about their fascinating travels. These two unrelated species do associate together because of needing similar nest sites. Locally this means that if three 'tawny-duck boxes' are put up in a wood in close proximity then the owl will choose its preferred nest site first and the ducks will take the other two. It seems likely that the goldeneye derives some protection from this arrangement from Stoats and other predators. At the time of writing, we are still finding nesting Goldeneye with three re-traps located so far (FH92086) with 14 eggs first ringed in 2021; and (FH92089) with 12 eggs also located in 2021; and (FH92088) with 8 eggs also from 2021. Another brand-new female has 8 eggs. A further 8 females appear to be laying eggs (one every day or other day) until they start incubating for a month (see picture).

Returning to the Tawny Owls most have been incubating for a month and their young are starting to hatch. They always seem to grow faster than Barn Owls and are certainly more animated and adventurous at an earlier stage. While a young Barn Owl is happy to mostly sleep in its nest box for a month or more, the young Tawny Owlet is quickly looking for ways to escape via the ground or a tree (much the safer route) well before it can actually fly. This 'branching' behaviour may have some evolutionary advantages but its not such an advantage when well-meaning people find them – pick them up and take to a Vets or animal sanctuary! If you find such a young owl on the ground the best thing to do is to put it back up in the branch of a tree and let its parents find it. A month or so ago we ringed a new female near Wingates and have now ringed her two young (see pict.). Another female refused to come out of her box until we also ringed her three young near Longhorsley (and we discovered she was a retrap from 2019 from the same farm). A brand-new box near Longframlington produced another three owlets (although the female eluded us) and a box in 'goldeneye duck territory' produced another three owlets and a brand new female. We still have several tawny owl nests to return to (see picture of a very sleepy female ringed near Howick); making this a much better year for these owls after the disaster of 2021 (when I monitored only one successful nest); for a simplistic explanation just remember what a horribly late cold spring we had last year.

Meanwhile we have continued to monitor a few other sites using mist-netting principally to ring returning migrants. This produced Chiffchaff back in March, but it was not until April that the Willow Warblers started to arrive (see picture). These birds will start nesting around the middle of May; just behind our resident tits etc. *We will start to monitor the success of this year Barn Owls towards the end of May, and it would be really helpful to receive reports of owl sightings around buildings and trees were they just might be nesting. After the winter storms many natural and artificial sites have been lost so some will be in new sites.*

Best Regards

*Phil Hanmer S Ringer/Trainer; Natural History Society of Northumbria Ringing Group (Hancock Museum). E-mail: [tytoalbas@btinternet.com](mailto:tytoalbas@btinternet.com)*



Goldeneye



Tawny Owl



Tawny Owl Chicks



Willow Warbler

## SIGHTINGS APRIL 2022

BIRDS	
Red-throated Diver	1 off Cullernose on 24 <sup>th</sup>
Little Egret	1 at Branton Ponds on 13 <sup>th</sup> 1 at Hedgeley Lakes on 14 <sup>th</sup>
Whooper Swan	2 off Rumbling Kern on 9 <sup>th</sup>
Greylag	A pair with 5 young at Branton Ponds on 20 <sup>th</sup>
Shelduck	7 at Branton Ponds on 13 <sup>th</sup>
Shoveler	2 at Branton Ponds on 14 <sup>th</sup>
Red-breasted Merganser	1 off Rumbling Kern on 9 <sup>th</sup> 8 off Stag Rocks on 28 <sup>th</sup>
Common Scoter	50 off Stag Rocks on 28 <sup>th</sup>
Long-tailed Duck	1 off Holy Island on 17 <sup>th</sup>
Osprey	1 at Fenham le Moor on 8 <sup>th</sup>
Common Buzzard	5 at Howick on 25 <sup>th</sup>
Peregrine	1 at Hauxley on 5 <sup>th</sup>
Avocet	4 at Low Newton on 11 <sup>th</sup> and 8 by 15 <sup>th</sup>
Little-ringed Plover	4 at Hedgeley Lakes on 14 <sup>th</sup> and 3 on 15 <sup>th</sup>
Purple Sandpiper	15+ at Rumbling Kern on 9 <sup>th</sup> 20 at Dunstanburgh on 1 <sup>st</sup>
Green Sandpiper	1 on Cawledge Burn on 10 <sup>th</sup>
Ruff	1 at Hedgeley Lakes on 2 <sup>nd</sup>
Whimbrel	1 on Holy Island on 13 <sup>th</sup> 1 at Newton Scrape on 21 <sup>st</sup> 2 at Craster on 16 <sup>th</sup>
Black-tailed Godwit	1 at Hedgeley Lakes on 18 <sup>th</sup>
Green Sandpiper	1 at Hedgeley Lakes on 2 <sup>nd</sup> and 1 on 13 <sup>th</sup>
Common Sandpiper	2 at Hedgeley Lakes on 13 <sup>th</sup> and 3 on 14 <sup>th</sup> 2 at Branton Ponds on 23 <sup>rd</sup>
Great Skua	1 off Cullernose on 24 <sup>th</sup>
Iceland Gull	1 at Branton Ponds on 3 <sup>rd</sup> and again on 19 <sup>th</sup>
Sandwich Tern	1 off Holy Island on 13 <sup>th</sup> and 2 on 17 <sup>th</sup> 5 off Rumbling Kern on 9 <sup>th</sup> 18 off Low Newton on 14 <sup>th</sup>
Stock Dove	2 at Besom Barn on 2 <sup>th</sup> 1 at Hauxley on 5 <sup>th</sup>
Cuckoo	1 in Harthope Valley on 29 <sup>th</sup>
Tawny Owl	1 in Alnwick on 19 <sup>th</sup>
Barn Owl	1 on Alnwick Moor on 14 <sup>th</sup> and 15 <sup>th</sup>
Swallow	2 at Hedgeley Lakes on 13 <sup>th</sup> and 1 on 15 <sup>th</sup> 1 at Chatton on 21 <sup>st</sup>
House Martin	1 at Branton Ponds on 26 <sup>th</sup>
Sand Martin	20+ at Hedgeley Lakes on 13 <sup>th</sup>
Tree Pipit	1 at Low Newton on 14 <sup>th</sup>
Yellow Wagtail	1 at Low Newton on 15 <sup>th</sup>
Redstart	3 at Hedgeley Lakes on 15 <sup>th</sup> and 1 on 17 <sup>th</sup> 2 near Shepherds Law on 19 <sup>th</sup> 1 at Ford Moss on 22 <sup>nd</sup> 1 on Alnwick Moors on 24 <sup>th</sup>
Stonechat	4 on Holy Island on 17 <sup>th</sup>
Wheatear	9 at Holy Island on 13 <sup>th</sup> 4 at Glanton on 15 <sup>th</sup> 20 on Holy Island on 17 <sup>th</sup> 1 near Shepherds Law on 19 <sup>th</sup> 5 at Howick on 25 <sup>th</sup> 1 on Alnwick Moor on 17 <sup>th</sup> 4 at Craster on 13 <sup>th</sup>
Fieldfare	400+ at Branton on 11 <sup>th</sup>
Redwing	23 on Holy Island on 13 <sup>th</sup> 1 at Holy Island on 8 <sup>th</sup>
Ring Ouzel	2 in College Valley on 15 <sup>th</sup> 1 in Hawsen Burn on 29 <sup>th</sup>
Sedge Warbler	1 at Branton Ponds on 27 <sup>th</sup>
Garden Warbler	1 at Branton Ponds on 27 <sup>th</sup>
Blackcap	5 at Branton Ponds on 13 <sup>th</sup> 1 in Alnwick on 17 <sup>th</sup>
Common Whitethroat	1 near Hedgeley on 25 <sup>th</sup> 1 at Branton Ponds on 26 <sup>th</sup>
Chiffchaff	1 at Alnwick on 9 <sup>th</sup>
Willow Warbler	6 at Branton Ponds on 13 <sup>th</sup> 1 at Hedgeley Lakes on 13 <sup>th</sup>
Goldcrest	1 at Alnwick on 9 <sup>th</sup>
Willow Tit	1 at Branton Ponds on 9 <sup>th</sup> 1 at Craster on 13 <sup>th</sup>

Marsh Tit	2 near Morpeth on 20 <sup>th</sup> 1 in Swarland Wood on 3 <sup>rd</sup>
Treecreeper	1 at Spindlestone on 26 <sup>th</sup>
Raven	1 over Branton on 27 <sup>th</sup> 2 over Hawsen Burn on 29 <sup>th</sup>
Jay	1 at Spindlestone on 26 <sup>th</sup>
Great-grey Shrike	1 on Alnwick Moor on 14 <sup>th</sup> and 15 <sup>th</sup> 1 at Dunstanburgh on 13 <sup>th</sup>
Bullfinch	A pair in Alnwick on 17 <sup>th</sup>
Lesser Redpoll	Several at Titlington Mount at start of month.
Brambling	2 at Titlington Mount on 5 <sup>th</sup> 1 at Howick on 17 <sup>th</sup> 2 at Spindlestone on 26 <sup>th</sup>
Siskin	2 at Alnwick on 17 <sup>th</sup>
<b>REPTILES</b>	
Adder	4 at Branton Ponds on 4 <sup>th</sup>
Slow Worm	1 at Branton Ponds on 24 <sup>th</sup> 1 in Harthope Valley on 29 <sup>th</sup>
<b>MAMMALS</b>	
Bottle-nosed Dolphin	4 off Howick on 17 <sup>th</sup>
Brown Hare	1 very small Leveret in a Branton Garden on 11 <sup>th</sup>
Roe Deer	2 in Hawsen Burn on 29 <sup>th</sup>
Red Squirrel	1 at Spindlestone on 26 <sup>th</sup>
Hedgehog	1 in Felton on 7 <sup>th</sup>
<b>PLANTS</b>	
Moschatel	A small patch at Hedgeley on 17 <sup>th</sup> some near Shepherds Law on 19 <sup>th</sup>
Goldilocks Buttercup	In Felton on 28 <sup>th</sup>
Bird Cherry	In flower at Branton Ponds on 18 <sup>th</sup>
<b>FUNGI</b>	
St George's Mushroom	In Felton Meadows on 28 <sup>th</sup>
<b>INVERTEBRATES</b>	
Green Hairstreak	7 at Ford Moss on 22 <sup>nd</sup>
Orange Tip	1 at Branton Ponds on 22 <sup>nd</sup>
Green-veined White	5 at Branton Ponds on 22 <sup>nd</sup>
Speckled Wood	Many at Branton Ponds on 22 <sup>nd</sup>
Emperor Moth	3 on Alnwick Moors on 24 <sup>th</sup>
Mountain Bumblebee	On Alnwick Moors on 24 <sup>th</sup>
Red-tailed Cuckoo Bee	On Alnwick Moors on 24 <sup>th</sup>
<b>OBSERVERS</b>	I&K Davison, G Dodds, M&J Drage, A Hall, P Jobson, A Keeble, R&J Poppleton, J Rutter, S Sexton.

**Please send sightings reports** for May, no later than 6th June 2018 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)



## TALKS PROGRAMME FOR 2022/23

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DATE	SPEAKER	TOPIC/TITLE
<b>2022</b>		
<b>Wed 28<sup>th</sup> Sept</b>	Fiona Greenwold (ERIC)	ERIC – what's he up to these days? A reminder and update
<b>Wed 28<sup>th</sup> Oct</b>	Charlie Bennett	Middleton North 're-wilding' – a progress report on this exciting project
<b>Wed 30<sup>th</sup> Nov</b>	Stewart Sexton	Alnwick Wildlife Oddities
<b>Wed 14<sup>th</sup> Dec</b>	Kevin & Oliver Wharf	Northumbrian night skies
<b>2023</b>		
<b>Wed 25<sup>th</sup> Jan</b>	James Joicey	Ford & Etal after the storms (title to be confirmed)
<b>Wed 22<sup>nd</sup> Feb</b>	Mark Eaton	The UK Rare Breeding Birds Panel. The work of this important body (Mark is its secretary) with special reference to the North East
<b>Wed 29<sup>th</sup> Mar</b>	John Steele	The Weird and Wonderful Beasts of our Coasts
<b>Wed 26<sup>th</sup> April</b>	George Dodds	Lunch time listing; the biodiversity of a small Northumberland farm and its surrounds.
<b>Wed 31<sup>st</sup> May</b>	To be arranged	

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