

2017 Birds in Northumbria



E/STEELE

NTBC



Northumberland and Tyneside Bird Club

The Northumberland and Tyneside Bird Club, formerly the Tyneside Bird Club, was formed in 1958. Membership currently stands at 235 and is open to anyone who has a beneficial interest in ornithology. The club aims to provide members with news of local ornithological interest through monthly bulletins, this annual report (Birds in Northumbria) and other occasional publications. All members are encouraged to submit their records to the County Recorder for inclusion in these publications.

The club also undertakes to encourage and instruct members in various ornithological activities by means of indoor meetings from September to April, and field outings throughout the year.

Although ringing is not an official club activity, some members operate ringing stations at Bamburgh and Hauxley, providing additional information for these publications.

Various subscription rates for membership exist, including junior, family and institutional categories. Further details may be obtained from the Honorary Secretary.

Website: The club website is a relatively recent and excellent resource. There are numerous interesting sections, which include a photographic gallery, site information, trip reports, a county check list and progress reports on recent rarities.

The site can be accessed at **www.ntbc.org.uk**

Sightings page: The club sightings web page gives listings of birds seen locally. Adding a sighting is simple, a short email is all that is required (ntbcorg@gmail.com).

Chairman

MARTIN DAVISON
3 Rede Square
Ridsdale
Hexham
NE48 2TL

Secretary

ANDREW BRUNT
South Cottage, West Road
Longhorsley
Morpeth
NE65 8UY

Honorary Treasurer

JO BENTLEY
89 Western Avenue
Prudhoe
Northumberland
NE42 6PA

County Recorder

TIM DEAN
2 Knocklaw Park
Rothbury
Northumberland
NE65 7PW

Honorary Auditor

TONY CRILLEY

Steve Anderson, Steve Barrett, Trevor Blake and Steve Lowe also served on the club Committee during 2017. Tom Cadwallender acted as BTO representative, Lindsay McDougall as Conservation Officer, Paul Buskin as Website Manager and Muriel Cadwallender as Breeding Bird Survey Regional Organiser. Tom Brewis acted as Data Manager and John Day acted as Club Archivist.

Birds in Northumbria

The 2017 Bird Report for Northumberland, Newcastle and North Tyneside

Classified List compiled by

Steve Barrett, Graeme Bowman, Eddie Crabtree, Tim Dean,
Ian Kerr, Lindsay McDougall, Andy Mould, Mike Richardson & Steve Holliday

Edited by

Andy Mould

Illustrations by

Alan Hart, Mike Henry, Stewart Sexton & John Steele

Photographs by

Chris Barlow, Colin Bradshaw, Jack Bucknall, Tom Cadwallender, Mike Carr, Alan Curry,
Tim Dean, Jonathan Farooqi, Ian Fisher, Forestry Commission England, Hector Galley,
Frank Golding, John Hall, Phil Hanmer, Mike Hodgson, Alan Jack, Andy Mould,
National Trust, Heiko Peters, Des Taylor & Gary Woodburn

Published by

THE NORTHUMBERLAND AND TYNESIDE BIRD CLUB

ISBN: 978-1-9993398-0-7

Registered Charity No: 517641

Designed and produced by: Robson Print (www.robsonprint.co.uk)

Printed in Northumberland on FSC Stock.

© Copyright, Northumberland and Tyneside Bird Club 2018

Birdwatching sites in Northumbria

C O A S T A L		I N L A N D	
	[Grid Ref.]		[Grid Ref.]
① Berwick (Needles Eye & Pier)	[NU 003 526]	① Harthope Valley	[NT 949 219]
② Goswick Sands	[NU 059 452]	② Ingram Valley	[NU 018 162]
③ Holy Island	[NU 130 430]	③ Branton & Hedgeley GP	[NU 046 162]
④ Fenham Flats	[NU 116 396]	④ Castron NR	[NT 994 014]
⑤ Ross Back Sands	[NU 132 370]	⑤ Widdrington Moor Lake	[NZ 233 957]
⑥ Budle Bay	[NU 150 360]	⑥ Angerton Lake	[NZ 070 867]
⑦ Bamburgh & Stag Rocks	[NU 173 360]	⑦ Bothal Pond	[NZ 244 873]
⑧ Fame Islands	[NU 240 380]	⑧ Linton Pond	[NZ 257 918]
⑨ Monks House Pool	[NU 206 331]	⑨ QEII CP	[NZ 285 888]
⑩ Long Nanny Estuary	[NU 234 260]	⑩ Woodhorn Flashes	[NZ 297 884]
⑪ Newton Pool & Scrape	[NU 241 241]	⑪ Castle Island	[NZ 283 855]
⑫ Craster	[NU 258 197]	⑫ Colt Crag Reservoir	[NY 935 782]
⑬ Howick	[NU 255 177]	⑬ Hallington Reservoir	[NY 969 762]
⑭ Longhoughton Steel	[NU 263 157]	⑭ Capheaton Lake	[NZ 030 800]
⑮ Boulmer	[NU 265 143]	⑮ Bolam Lake	[NZ 080 818]
⑯ Alnmouth	[NU 246 107]	⑯ Plessey Woods CP	[NZ 238 803]
⑰ Warkworth Gut & Amble Harb.	[NU 267 041]	⑰ Prestwick Carr	[NZ 190 736]
⑱ Coquet Island	[NU 294 046]	⑱ Big Waters	[NZ 227 734]
⑲ Hauxley NR & RS	[NU 284 022]	⑲ Arcot Pond	[NZ 251 753]
⑳ Druridge Bay CP	[NU 268 001]	⑳ Holywell Pond & Dene	[NZ 320 753]
㉑ East Chevington	[NZ 271 982]	㉑ Backworth Pond	[NZ 307 724]
㉒ Druridge Pools	[NZ 273 968]	㉒ Swallow Pond	[NZ 299 693]
㉓ Cresswell Pond	[NZ 284 944]	㉓ Jesmond Dene	[NZ 262 661]
㉔ Newbiggin-by-the-Sea	[NZ 319 881]	㉔ Killingworth Lake	[NZ 274 710]
㉕ Blyth Harbour	[NZ 319 813]	㉕ Gosforth Park NR	[NZ 255 702]
㉖ Seaton Sluice Watch Tower	[NZ 338 769]	㉖ Whittle Dene Reservoirs	[NZ 068 683]
㉗ St Mary's Island & Wetland	[NZ 353 755]	㉗ Grindon Lough	[NY 806 677]
㉘ Marden Quarry	[NZ 355 715]	㉘ Kielder Water & Forest Park	[NY 670 880]
㉙ Tynemouth & Priors Park	[NZ 375 694]	㉙ Allen Banks	[NY 798 640]
㉚ North Shields Fish Quay	[NZ 363 684]	㉚ Derwent Reservoir	[NZ 010 530]

Height above sea level (approx.)

- > 0 m (> 0 ft)
- > 50 m (> 165 ft)
- > 100 m (> 300 ft)
- > 250 m (> 820 ft)
- > 500 m (> 1640 ft)

(heights of selected peaks in m)



Contents

Introduction.....	6
Overview.....	8
Acknowledgements	10
Status of Species.....	10
Species Accounts	11
Pacific Diver – First for Northumberland.....	12

Classified List / Authors:

Brent Goose - Canada Goose	Ian Kerr.....	18
Barnacle Goose - Greylag	Mike Richardson	19
Pink-footed Goose - White-fronted Goose	Lindsay McDougall	22
Mute Swan - Whooper Swan	Steve Holliday	25
Shelduck – Ruddy Duck	Graeme Bowman	26
Quail - Pheasant	Andy Mould.....	52
Fulmar - Cormorant	Lindsay McDougall	56
Osprey - Greenshank	Ian Kerr	69
Kittiwake - Lesser Black-backed Gull	Mike Richardson	101
Sandwich Tern - Black Tern	Andy Mould	111
Great Skua - Long-tailed Skua	Mike Richardson	117
Little Auk - Short-eared Owl	Andy Mould	121
Nightjar - Green Woodpecker	Steve Barrett.....	130
Kestrel - Peregrine	Ian Kerr	136
Ring-necked Parakeet - Bearded Tit	Mike Richardson	139
Skylark - House Martin	Eddie Crabtree.....	152
Long-tailed Tit - Whitethroat	Ian Kerr.....	156
Firecrest - Starling	Eddie Crabtree.....	167
Ring Ouzel - Wheatear	Mike Richardson	169
Dipper - Rock Pipit	Eddie Crabtree	180
Chaffinch - Snow Bunting	Mike Richardson.....	190
Rare and Scarce species	Tim Dean	- -
Birds of unknown origin, Escapes and Hybrids	Tim Dean	201
List of Contributors		203

Reference Section:

First & Last Dates of Summer Visitors in 2017 206

Last & First Dates of Winter Visitors in 2017 207

Additions and Corrections to Previous Reports..... 208

BBRC decisions and records under review 210

Wetland Bird Survey (WeBS) 2017 212

Ringing Recoveries Reported in 2017 225

Hen Harriers at a historical roost in Northumberland 236

The colonisation of Ring-necked Parakeets in Newcastle upon Tyne and Northumberland 244

Barn Owls - An update on an out of control hobby; the 2017 season 248

Tawny Owl and Barn Owl pellet analysis at Haughton Strother GP (near Humshaugh) 250

The County Records Committee 2017 253

Northumberland & Tyneside Bird Club Development Fund Grants 2017 254

Secretary's Report 2017 255

Species on the County List not recorded in 2017 257

Glossary of Terms..... 261

Alphabetical Index of Species 262

Notes 267



Introduction

A very warm welcome to Birds in Northumbria 2017. This is our 58th annual report, the 47th under the guise of 'Birds in Northumbria'. The entries in this report cover all species found during 2017 in our recording area, which comprises the county of Northumberland and the districts of Newcastle and North Tyneside. We hope you enjoy reading the report.

Regular readers will notice a new colour map of our recording area, kindly designed and produced by Heiko Peters.





Overview

A total of 272 full species were recorded in Northumberland in 2017. The year was always going to struggle to match 2016, with its outstanding list of autumn rarities, but readers may be surprised to learn that only two fewer species were recorded in 2017, and there were some exciting highlights. Pacific Diver was a surprise addition to the county list, which stood at 417 species on 1st January 2018 (with the split of Bean Goose into two species from that date). Of interest, 2017 was the ninth year running in which the county list has grown.

In addition to the one new species, and the returning Black Scoter, this time visiting Goswick (second record) and the returning Caspian Gull at Amble Harbour (second record when it first arrived), there were a further six species in the Extremely Rare category (no more than nine records in total): Black-browed Albatross (third record), Cetti's Warbler (third to fifth records), Black-throated Thrush (third and fourth records), Serin (sixth record), Ring-necked Duck (ninth record) and Long-billed Dowitcher (ninth record).

Species and sub-species regarded as rare or scarce in 2017 included: Tundra Bean Goose, Taiga Bean Goose, Ruddy Shelduck, American Wigeon, Green-winged Teal, Red-crested Pochard, Ferruginous Duck, Smew, White-billed Diver, Leach's Petrel, Cory's Shearwater, Great Shearwater, Night-heron, Great White Egret, Honey Buzzard, Golden Eagle, Red Kite, White-tailed Eagle, Corncrake, Spotted Crake, Crane, American Golden Plover, Kentish Plover, Dotterel, Temminck's Stint, White-rumped Sandpiper, Pectoral Sandpiper, Red-necked Phalarope, Grey Phalarope, Sabine's Gull, Ross's Gull, Yellow-legged Gull, White-winged Black Tern, Turtle Dove, Bee-eater, Hoopoe, Wryneck, Hobby, Great Grey Shrike, Golden Oriole, Hooded Crow, Shore Lark, Short-toed Lark, Red-rumped Swallow, Dusky Warbler, 'Siberian Chiffchaff', Marsh Warbler, Barred Warbler, Firecrest, 'Blue-headed Wagtail', Citrine Wagtail, Water Pipit, Common Rosefinch, Corn Bunting and Little Bunting.

Selected highlights of the year include the return of Spoonbill to the county list (with a minimum of 15 birds recorded!) after 2016 became the first blank year in the county for 21 years. A theme of the year was the availability of several local rarities over prolonged periods, allowing many to view (and photograph) a range of species often difficult to catch-up with in the county; these included Ferruginous and Ring-necked Ducks in March-April, a very approachable Citrine Wagtail in May, no fewer than three White-winged Black Terns between June-October, a Spotted Crake in August, a very popular Bee-eater in October (one of at least two this year) and a popular, if sometimes frustrating, Cetti's Warbler in October-November (one of three seen during the year). Some younger county 'listers' were relieved at the arrival of the first 'twitchable' Corn Bunting in the county for eight years (one of two during the year).

Overwintering species - The year started well for a number of species, with good numbers of Waxwings still present following the major influx of November-December 2016; two flocks totalling 250 birds in Newcastle was notable. Tundra Bean Goose numbers were also high, following the influx of autumn 2016. Glaucous Gull also appeared in good numbers, especially in the first winter period.

An early spring - Many species returned early in 2017, aided by favourable weather conditions in early spring. The earliest-ever Lesser Whitethroat (breaking a 46 year record) involved one at Maiden's Hall on 9th April. The joint earliest-ever Grasshopper Warbler was at Prestwick Carr on 9th April. A House Martin at East Chevington on 16th March became the second earliest-ever record, a Redstart at Muckley on 3rd April became the 4th earliest-ever record and a Swift at Tynemouth on 15th April was the earliest arrival for 12 years. A Pied Flycatcher at Letah Wood on 9th April became the joint-earliest arrival for 13 years. Amongst other exceptionally early returnees was an Arctic Tern on 6th April and Common Tern on 8th April; Willow Warbler saw the first March arrivals for seven years. Several other species, most notably waders and warblers, also produced early first arrival dates.

'Quail Year' - Approximately 42 individuals, most arriving in June-July, made it the best year for Quail since the large influx in 2011.

Breeding highlights - Avocets bred at a record (minimum) of four sites. There was some evidence of probable breeding by Dunlin. Little Egret bred at two sites, after no successful nesting in 2016. Pleasingly, Kittiwake, which hit the headlines in Newcastle city centre for all of the wrong reasons, saw a 35% increase at the Farne Islands, with increased productivity too. Similarly, at Coquet Island, the species reached a new record population of 448 pairs. Also on Coquet Island, Black-headed Gulls hit a new record number for the second year running, with 5,394 pairs. Herring Gull saw a 28% increase in breeding numbers on the Farne Islands.

A high vole population was at least partly linked to very good breeding seasons for Buzzard, Barn Owl (with, for example, four pairs on Holy Island for the first time), Tawny Owl and Long-eared Owl ('back to normal' in the Kielder Border Study Area, with six home ranges, following no successful nests in 2016). Also at Kielder, but not linked to the vole population, it was another very good season for Ospreys, with four pairs producing 13 young and fledging eight. Goshawk also had a (relatively) good season in the uplands. Northumberland hosted England's only successful Hen Harrier pairs, with three (of five pairs) going on to fledge ten young (a fascinating Paper in this report documents a historical roost of the species in the county). Two pairs of Red Kites also fledged broods (of two and one).

Other species enjoying a good breeding season included Black Grouse, which more than held their own in the uplands of the North Pennines, and Fulmar and Shag, which both did well on the Farne Islands. Most tern species enjoyed an excellent year, with Roseate equalling the highest modern-day population of 111 pairs on Coquet Island. Arctic Terns had an excellent year, with an increased number of pairs at each of our three colonies, coupled with increased productivity. Sandwich and Common Terns did well and Little Tern saw a welcome increase in pairs, only offset by the negative effects of another year of poor weather and high chick predation.

Ring-necked Parakeets continue to thrive in the suburbs of Newcastle (and a Paper in this report documents their extraordinary spread into the county). An exciting find in Berwick involved the largest cliff-nesting colony of House Martins to date, with 23 AON; cliff-nesting was also recorded on Holy Island for the first time. Marsh Warbler bred again (fledging two young), Crossbill appeared to have a good season and Goldfinch continued its inexorable rise in the county.

Autumn influxes - A large influx of Black-tailed Godwits in August-September resulted in several site records being broken. Little Stints also enjoyed a good influx in September. In October, a huge influx of Barnacle Geese during the first two weeks resulted in an impressive peak of 16,750 counted during the Lindisfarne WeBS on 8th. Equally impressive, especially after an estimated 118 year absence in 2016, was the return of Hawfinch to our annual list. An extraordinary national influx in mid-October brought birds to Northumberland, with a maximum count of ten at the favoured Abbey Mills area of Morpeth. Thrush arrivals, so often a major feature of autumn in the county, didn't disappoint this year, with the third week of October producing some huge totals, especially of Redwing, with for example, 17,260 at Holy Island on 19th, when the Farne Islands recorded 4,000 Song Thrushes moving W on the same day. Similarly, in recent years, we have become accustomed to the arrival of large numbers of Yellow-browed Warblers from the far East; 2017 didn't disappoint, with an estimated 92 individuals representing the second-best year on record (and, more remarkably, a singing male even made a spring appearance on Holy Island on 13th May!).

Finally, it was also good to see up to three Bitterns at Gosforth Park NR throughout the year and a welcome three Turtle Doves were recorded. Amongst the rarer species, four White-billed Divers, eight Crane sightings (of six birds), 13 Dotterels, three Cetti's Warblers (more than all previous years combined) and two Black-throated Thrushes (doubling the previous county total) were also outstanding.

Against these successes, it was inevitable that some species would have poor seasons. There was no confirmed breeding by Black-necked Grebe for the second year in a row. Our only breeding pair of Marsh Harriers laid four eggs and all hatched, but the chicks died during prolonged wet weather. Peregrine showed a slight improvement on 2016, but still had a poor season; as did Merlin, with only 18 occupied ranges. Whilst many seabirds fared well at Coquet Island and the Farne Islands, Great Black-backed Gulls suffered a 32% decline at the Farnes, our only regular breeding site for the species. Little Owl and Raven both appear to struggle with expansion, despite suitable habitat being available; persecution being cited in the case of the latter species. Dippers had a poor breeding season in the Upper Coquetdale and River North Tyne Study Areas, perhaps due to a lack of food following winter floods. Wood Warbler fared no better than in 2016, with records from nine likely breeding areas, perhaps involving only a dozen birds. Greenfinch is now teetering on the brink of 'relegation' from being a 'Common' species, when once it was regarded as very common in the county.

Amongst our less common visitors, Bewick's Swan, Storm Petrel and Sooty and Manx Shearwater numbers were all disappointing. Red-necked Grebe records were again few, with the main wintering population appearing to have moved north long ago. Barred Warbler again had a poor showing, with only six records. Common Redpoll is an irruptive visitor and few were recorded in 2017.

As usual, several expected species failed to make an appearance in 2017. Bearded Tit was absent for the second year running and other surprising absentees perhaps included Red-backed Shrike, Greenish and Icterine Warblers, Bluethroat and Red-breasted Flycatcher.

Acknowledgements

The following are all thanked for providing essential data for this report: Jennifer Clark, Thomas Hendry, Duncan Halpin and other Rangers of the National Trust (Farne Islands), Paul Morrison and the RSPB (Coquet Island), the Northumbria Ringing Group (raptor and owl breeding data), Ian Fisher (Ringing Report) and Steve Holliday, Kathy Evans and Dan Turner (Wetland Bird Survey-WeBS).

The editor would also like to thank all the illustrators and photographers who have once again produced a range of fine work. Appreciation is also extended to the authors of various papers and to Peter Fletcher, who compiled the 2017 records from monthly bulletins on to individual species sheets. The map of the recording area was prepared by Heiko Peters.

The compilers of the monthly bulletins, which form the basis of this report, are also acknowledged. An annual report would not be possible without their contribution. In 2017, bulletin data was collated by Tom Brewis and prepared by the following authors: Trevor Blake, Graeme Bowman, Tom Brewis, Eddie Crabtree, Tim Dean, Kathy Evans, Peter Fletcher, Ian Forsyth, Clive Hampton, Steve Holliday, Alan Jack, Steve Laing and Mike Richardson. David Sanders provided data from the North Northumberland Bird Club. The bulletin was proof read by Mike Smith, edited by Steve Barrett and mail distribution was by Paul Stewart.

Thanks must also go to the many observers who directly contributed approximately 114,765 records for use in this report (28,265 records were submitted electronically, plus around 1,500 paper submissions and 85,000 records via BirdTrack). Additional records came from WeBS visits, the Farne Islands, Coquet Island, Long Nanny Estuary and Lindisfarne Reports, various Breeding Data submissions etc. It would be greatly appreciated if all records, including description species, could be submitted punctually, in order to facilitate the timely production of our monthly bulletins and this annual report.

I am grateful to the many people who have answered queries during production of this report; in particular, I would like to thank Tim Dean, Steve Holliday and Mike Carr. Finally, I would like to thank Graeme Bowman and Tim Dean for proof reading the report.

Status of Species

Status Headings:

STATUS:	Describes the current status of a species.
BREEDING:	Where appropriate, describes the current breeding status and year the species LAST BRED (including the current year). This heading may also be used to refer to recent changes in breeding status, and in some cases the year the species FIRST BRED, and any historical data.

Status Definitions:

Abundant:	10,000 or more individuals per annum
Common:	1,000 to 9,999 individuals per annum
Well-represented:	100 to 999 individuals per annum
Uncommon:	10 to 99 individuals per annum
Rare:	No more than nine individuals per annum
Extremely Rare:	No more than nine individuals in total.

Breeding species: The same status definitions are used, but in reference to pairs rather than individual birds, therefore 10 to 99 pairs will be referred to as an 'uncommon' breeding species.

Irruptive species: The status of some species can fluctuate greatly between years e.g. Little Auk and Waxwing. The status illustrated signifies the norm; any irruptive behaviour during the current year will be referred to in the text.

Species Accounts

Tables: Where appropriate, tables are included to illustrate maximum monthly counts, breeding success, ringing group data and nest box data.

Observer Initials and the use of '*et al.*': Selected records within the Classified List are accompanied by observer initials. Since BiN 2005, the following simplified guidelines have been issued to section authors to maintain consistency in the use of observer initials:

1. All Category A, B and scarce sub-species, i.e. those requiring written notes
2. Annual peak counts
3. Long-term studies such as monthly counts, nest box schemes, significant breeding data etc.

Within **Guideline 1**, readers are referred to the County Records Committee paper in the Reference Section of this report for an up-to-date list of species, sub-species, age classes etc. considered by the CRC (or see the club's website at www.ntbc.org.uk). Initials used in parentheses after sightings of some rare or scarce birds are not always fully understood. BBRC place them in alphabetical order, however we haven't followed this rule. Up to four sets of initials will continue to be used. From BiN 2015, the following criteria will also be applied:

If just one person sees a bird, theirs are the only initial, e.g. (TRD); if one person finds and identifies a bird, and then more than three other people see the bird, it will be (TRD *et al.*); if one person finds and identifies a bird and just two or three other observers see the bird, then all three/four initials will be used, e.g. (TRD/JD/STH); if one person finds a bird and another identifies it, the finder's initials will always be used first, followed by the identifier and any other observers or *et al.*, i.e. (JD/TRD *et al.*).

Within **Guideline 2**, a further explanation may assist readers. A small number of species may be classified as 'Rare' but are not considered by the CRC (e.g. Hoopoe, Wryneck, Red-backed and Great Grey Shrikes) and in some years initials may be applied. These are to reflect maximum counts and not rarity status of the species. Guidelines were introduced from BiN 2015 to determine when initials are to be used under Guideline 2:

1. Up to three sets of initials per species will be used to denote annual peak counts
2. Initials will not be used where there are four or more joint highest annual counts.

Andy Mould
Editor

Pacific Diver - Druridge Bay Country Park - January





Pacific Diver in Druridge Bay - First for Northumberland

By Alan Curry

We all know that 'record shots' of birds are not to be taken at face value, but when a couple of poor images appeared on Twitter on the afternoon of 18th January 2017, displaying a purported Black-throated Diver *Gavia arctica* on the Blyth Estuary, a site that I know well and visit frequently, it triggered a significant amount of background 'noise' among several members of the local birding community.

Although the images were not exactly the best, and the opinion of the original observer was highly regarded, they certainly conveyed several features that were highly suggestive of something much more interesting. So much so, that first light the following morning saw me scouring the River Blyth and docks for a couple of hours in the vain hope that it was still around, but alas it was not to be.

Fast forward 24 hours and I received an email from the late Tim Cleeves containing an equally poor set of images of a 'Black-throated Diver' that he had taken the previous afternoon on East Chevington north pool. It was surely the Blyth individual and I immediately rang Tim to discuss this. Clearly we were both thinking along the same lines, but Tim was 'tied up' and unable to make a return visit. That was it then, the working day was hastily reorganised and an afternoon jaunt was now on the agenda.

Arriving not long after midday, I was aware that the diver had been reported as still present and it did not take long before it was located on the edge of the reedbed in the north west corner of the north pool, albeit at a fair distance of somewhere around 400-500m. Being mentally prepared for what I was looking for, it really only took a few moments to realise that I could not see anything that was actually pro-Black-throated on offer at all. However, it was very distant and I knew I needed to see it much better and hopefully secure some images before making any bold claims.

While discussing the diver with Tim, he made mention of its small size and it certainly appeared barely larger than a nearby Red-breasted Merganser *Mergus serrator*, diminutive indeed. Its behaviour also seemed noteworthy, as it rarely strayed away from the pool margin and 'snorkelled' in the manner of a Great Northern Diver *Gavia immer*, on several occasions it even swam off into the reedbed itself, presumably foraging for small fish amongst the reed stems.

Even though it never came any closer, after about an hour I hadn't seen even the slightest suggestion of a flank patch and I had completely convinced myself it had a radically differing facial expression to a Black-throated Diver, so much so that I rang both Tim and Mike Hodgson, and alerted them to the strong possibility that this was indeed a Pacific Diver.

I was positioned by the hide in the reedbed on the north shore and eventually the diver began to come a little closer, although hugging the edge of the reeds and, as a consequence, often out of sight. Almost unexpectedly, it appeared in a small bay directly in front of the hide and for a short spell gave itself up at a range of around 80m. After this showing, all the boxes were fully 'inked in'; not only did it have consistently dark flanks, a dusky facial pattern, a faint dark throat strap and a slight bill structure, but when roll-preening a distinct dark vent strap was also on offer. A 'slam-dunk' Pacific Diver for sure. Mike had timed his run to perfection and arrived as this performance was unfolding; between us we obtained a mountain of poor, but good enough, images and video, and now felt in a position to put out some news, allowing one or two well positioned locals to 'cash in' before dusk.

Description:

Size, structure and general appearance: Small and generally dark, about the size of a Red-throated Diver *Gavia stellata*, but without the 'white-faced' appearance and sporting a much more robust bill structure.

Head: Contrary to most of the popular literature, the head was quite angular in shape, with a notable steep lumpy forehead and, in this respect, quite 'Great Northern-ish'. The cheeks were distinctly dusky, interlaced with random white flecking and dark mottling under the eye. Without a sharp contour between the ear coverts and the white throat, it created a distinct hooded appearance at long range; in fact, 'Brunnich's-like' would be a good analogy. There was a diffuse, almost shadow-like, dark strap across the upper throat that, at times, would simply vanish when the neck was outstretched. It had a notably dagger shaped, blue-grey bill, but of a much slighter build than a Black-throated, that was consistently held in the horizontal. The culmen was dark all along the length. The crown and rear of the neck were a dark brownish-grey, with a distinct blackish wedge on the lower contour bordering the white fore neck. The loosely-feathered nape could appear quite silvery when the neck was outstretched. It had a dark ruby-red eye.

Upperparts: Fundamentally, a dark brownish-grey. The mantle and scapulars were distinctly pale tipped, allowing the diver to be aged as a juvenile, while the upperwing coverts were a lot more diffusely fringed. The uppertail was also a drab brownish-grey and often cocked in the manner of a Ruddy Duck *Oxyura jamaicensis*.

Underparts: The visible flanks above the waterline appeared consistently dark, without any suggestion of an anterior thigh patch. The breast and belly however, along with the underwing coverts, were a contrasting, unmarked gleaming white, apart from a well-defined, broad blackish 'vent-strap' that was only really observable in flight, or when the diver was roll-preening.

Behaviour: Undoubtedly food related, but the diver preferred to feed close into the pool margins, frequently 'snorkelling' and diving with a Shag *Phalacrocorax aristotelis*-like leap. Immediately prior to diving, the diver would occasionally undertake a bizarre transformation of its head and neck into a narrow, almost snake-like posture, something that I have never picked up on in any other diver species.

The following morning, the Pacific Diver remained on the partly frozen north pool, until it relocated to the nearby Druridge Bay Country Park lake, where it undertook an astounding behavioural transformation as it posed down to only a few metres for the gathered throng, attempting to become the most photographed Northumbrian bird in history in the process! It remained at the country park for several days before once again returning to East Chevington, where, apart from the odd brief jaunt back to the country park, it remained for the duration of its stay (being last seen on 16th March). Happy days!

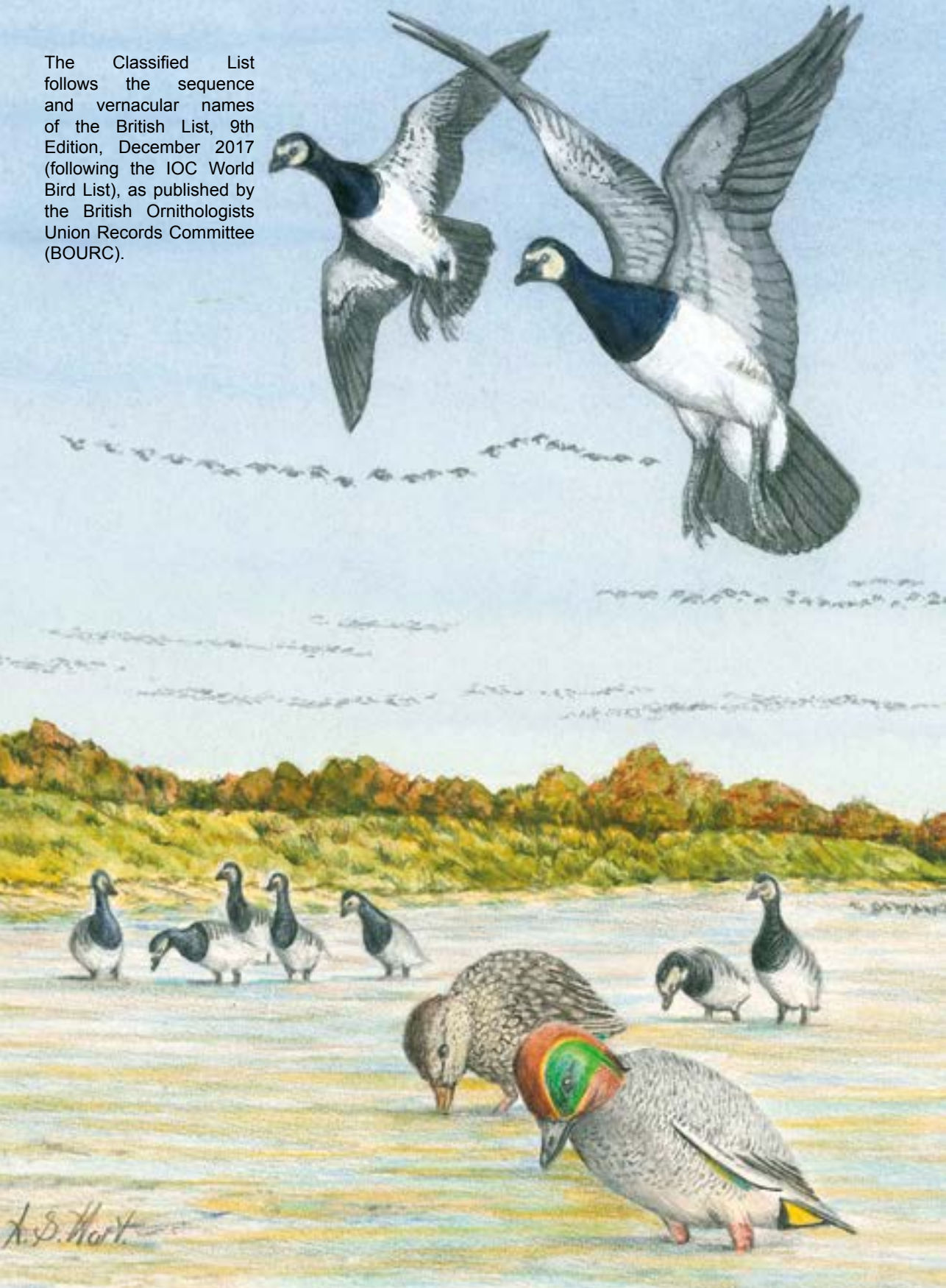


Pacific Diver - Ladyburn Lake - January (Chris Barlow)



Pacific Diver - Druridge Bay CP - January (Colin Bradshaw)

The Classified List follows the sequence and vernacular names of the British List, 9th Edition, December 2017 (following the IOC World Bird List), as published by the British Ornithologists Union Records Committee (BOURC).





Classified List

Brent Goose *Branta bernicla*

Pale-bellied Brent Goose *B. b. hrota*

STATUS: Common autumn passage and winter visitor.

Maximum counts from the regular and important site at Lindisfarne NNR (including Budle Bay) were as follows:

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
1,272	1,600	250	33	6	4	3	20	1,450	4,000	2,860	1,596

Very few pale-bellied Svalbard birds occur away from Lindisfarne NNR, their only British wintering ground. Sightings elsewhere during January-February involved 42 N at Stag Rocks on 20th January and five N at Seaton Sluice on 5th January and birds which were not racially specified included 60 at East Chevington, 19 at the Blyth Estuary, four to five at Elswick and Widdrington Moor Lake and one to two at Bradford Kaims, New Water Haugh (Berwick), Rockcliffe (Whitley Bay), Swallow Pond and West Stobswood Pool.

Movement back towards Arctic breeding grounds quickly reduced numbers during March at Lindisfarne NNR, with around 100 still at Holy Island on 31st, before reducing with further departures. Pale-bellied birds which remain at Lindisfarne NNR during summer, as indicated above, are generally regarded as sick or injured individuals incapable of migration.

The expected early return to Lindisfarne was indicated with 20 back by 27th August. Passage towards the reserve was evident during September, with north-bound flocks including 156 at Newbiggin, 118 at Seaton Sluice, 92 at Boulmer and 73 at Tynemouth being the peak day counts. Numbers on the reserve rapidly increased through the month to reach a late peak of 4,000 on 8th October (ACr), with an estimated 4,300 un-raced birds present on 26th. Light northerly movement continued during November, with small groups noted off Blyth and Seaton Sluice. As usual, numbers appeared to fall by the end of the year, perhaps as flocks broke up in response to the exhaustion of their favoured food, the eel grass *Zostera*.

Dark-bellied Brent Goose *B. b. bernicla*

STATUS: Well-represented autumn passage and uncommon winter visitor.

Maximum counts from the regular and important site at Lindisfarne NNR (including Budle Bay) were as follows:

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
9	120	170	-	-	-	-	-	2	81	80	51

Un-raced birds, particularly those away from Lindisfarne, mentioned under Pale-bellied Brent Geese may well have involved individuals of this race. Higher counts of dark-bellied birds during the first quarter included gatherings of 120 at Ross and 66 on Fenham Flats during February, while during March 170 on Holy Island on the 4th (IK) declined to 60 by the end of the month.

The first indication of a return of dark-bellied birds came in September, when four moved N at Boulmer on 24th, two were at Lindisfarne on 27th and one in Budle Bay on 29th. In October, seven were at Beadnell on 20th, two flew N at the Farne Islands on 9th, followed by a single that lingered between 14th-27th, with five N at Seaton Sluice between 18th-20th. During December, up to 51 regularly fed at low tide among the beached boats in The Ouse on Holy Island. The only other sightings involved singles at Bell's Farm (Cresswell) and Hoppen Kiln Flash.

Canada Goose *Branta canadensis*

STATUS: Well-represented resident, passage and winter visitor.

BREEDING: Uncommon, although continues to increase.

Peak counts from four localities holding good numbers all year were as follows:

Locality	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Grindon Lough	400	358	153	105	120	110	82	566	40	500	371	400
Bothal Pond	181	138	100	54	25	19	42	92	48	96	97	98
Caistron	50	104	1800	66	86	20	36	4	2	11	43	280
Killingworth Lake	39	100	19	6	25	59	82	198	54	9	140	98

Although the four localities detailed above held their usual large numbers during January-February, there were also very high counts from several other waters. These included 250 at Widdrington Moor Lake, 235 at Druridge Pools, 220 at Fontburn Reservoir and 100-169 at Derwent Reservoir, Gosforth Park and Hauxley NRs and the former Longhirst Flash. Wintering concentrations began to break up during March, with birds moving into breeding territories. The largest movement involved 130 flying W over Wark (North Tyne) on 1st and small numbers seen off Seaton Sluice.

The first broods were found in late April at Bank's Pond (Dinnington) and Marden Quarry. Between May-July, breeding was reported from at least 15 other localities. Six pairs bred at Branton GP, four at Hedgeley GP and there were three pairs at Castle Island, Coanwood, Druridge Pools and Halton-le-Gate. Two pairs raised broods at Colt Crag, Dinnington and Haughton Strother GP. Single broods were reported from Amble Braid, Big Waters, East Chevington, Gosforth Park, Grindon Lough, Hauxley NR, Linton Ponds and St Mary's Wetland. A pair spent spring and early summer on the Farne Islands, but without evidence of attempted breeding.

Northerly movement towards Scottish moulting areas occurred in June with 155 over Berwick, 100 at Holy Island, 87 at Tynemouth, 75 over the Farne Islands and 47 at Whitley Bay. Elsewhere, 333 were at Hauxley, 200 at Derwent Reservoir and 125 at Castle Island. A skein of 18 flying S at Howick in late August may have involved returning birds. Large concentrations occurred in August-September at several localities, including 470 at QEII CP, 358 at the Aln Estuary, 350 at Haughton Strother GP and 273 at Castle Island. Figures peaked at 779 at Haughton Strother GP on 6th October (MR), the year's biggest concentration, before reducing to 175 late in the month.

During November-December, flocks were settled in wintering quarters, with late peaks of 212 at Derwent Reservoir, 195 at Widdrington Moor Lake and over 100 at the Aln Estuary, Big Waters and Cresswell.

Barnacle Goose *Branta leucopsis*

STATUS: Common autumn passage and well-represented winter visitor.

The now regular over-wintering flock at Lindisfarne NNR, centred mainly in the Budle Bay-Ross Farm area, was again a well documented feature. Counts varied widely as flocks moved between favoured feeding areas.

Peak monthly counts from Lindisfarne NNR (including Budle Bay) were as follows:

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
1,050	1,100	615	55	2	1	1	1	30	16,750	1,500	1,450

In January-February, roosting birds in Budle Bay peaked at 1,100 on 20th February, with 1,070 feeding at Ross Farm during the month. Elsewhere, six were at East Chevington and well inland at Grindon Lough, with singles at five other sites. Numbers declined at Lindisfarne NNR from early March, with 300 at Fenham-le-Moor on 3rd and 615 at Budle Bay on 6th, the latter reducing to 56 by the end of the month.

Northerly movement was noted from coastal headlands in April, beginning with 100 at Craster on 2nd. Later in the month, 40 moved N at Newton Point and five N at Seaton Sluice on 24th, while 50 passed Boulmer and Seaton Sluice on 27th. In Budle Bay, 55 on 3rd had reduced to 30 from 14th-18th. There was further

passage in early May, with skeins of 180 and 80 N at Berwick on 6th. Significant movement was reported on 7th, including 200 E at Acomb, 150 N at Low Newton, 97 N at Newbiggin, 95 E at Humshaugh and 16 N at Whitley Bay; a 'large flock' flew N at East Ord (Berwick) at near mid-night on 10th. Elsewhere, records included four at the Aln Estuary on 14th and four S at Cheswick on 30th.

Summer records are unusual and generally considered to be of unknown or dubious origin. Between June-August, four were at Grindon Lough on 18th June, two, including a colour-ringed bird, were at Castle Island from July-August and singles were at the Aln Estuary, Beal Point, Budle Bay, Druridge Pools, the Farne Islands, Goswick, Hauxley NR and QEII CP; some of these birds remained into September as return passage commenced with 30 at Lindisfarne NNR on 10th-15th and eight S at the Tweed Estuary on 19th.

A substantial influx was witnessed during the first half of October, beginning with 36 W at East Ord on 3rd and 34 S at East Ord and 201 W at East Chevington on 7th. In the Lindisfarne NNR area, there was a huge WeBS count of 16,750 on 8th (ACr), with Budle Bay supporting 6,500-10,000 from 8th-12th, 9,300 on 13th and 5,000 on 14th; 7,800 (including two albinos) at Holy Island, 4,000 W at Belford and 2,450 at Goswick Sands on 8th will have included some overlap with this larger influx. Elsewhere, numbers also peaked on 8th, with 2,259 S at East Chevington, 1,570 SW/W/NW at Kielder Water, 850 N and 415 S at Boulmer, 600 S at St Mary's, 418 through Inner Sound (Farne Islands), 200+ at Newbiggin, 170 S at Berwick and 120 N at Seaton Sluice. Numbers declined in the Lindisfarne area from mid-month, with 4,000 at Ross on 19th and 2,500 at Budle Bay on 20th; the latter reduced to 1,600 by 27th. At Belford, up to 1,050 were noted on 9th and 18th. Apart from the obvious movement at Kielder on 8th, very few were noted inland, with the exception of 120 at Branton GP on 12th. Two leucistic birds flew S at East Chevington on 8th and one frequented Budle Bay.

The wintering flock in the Budle Bay-Ross Farm area numbered 1,500 on 6th and 26th November, with regular counts of 400-1,000 between these dates. In December, numbers in this area fluctuated from 600-1,100, with a peak of 1,450 on 4th. The species was typically rare elsewhere during the winter period, with four to five at nearby Hoppen Kiln Flash and Outchester and one to two at several sites in Druridge Bay, at Middle Stobswood, QEII CP and Stag Rocks.

Greylag Goose *Anser anser*

STATUS: Common passage and winter visitor.

BREEDING: Uncommon, although the feral population continues to increase.

During the first quarter, the peak count from Lindisfarne NNR was 2,000 at Harper's Heugh on 24th January (DGB), reducing to 370-385 during February-March. Elsewhere, up to 450 were at Derwent Reservoir, 320 at Castron, 217-230 at Backworth, Cheswick, Newbiggin and West Holywell and 100-191 at another seven coastal and five inland localities. Additionally, a flock of 150 flew N at Falstone on 15th March. There were two reports of neck-collared birds, one at Low Newton on 3rd February had been marked in Norway on 10th July 2013 and was seen in Spain on 3rd December 2016, and three at Derwent Reservoir on 22nd March had been ringed at Blondous (Iceland) on 18th July 2016.

In April, 120 gathered at Castron on 12th, with 52-60 at Bothal Pond, Haughton Castle (Humshaugh), Hedgeley GP and Woodhorn Flashes; 22 flew N at Seaton Sluice on 21st and eight N on 29th.

Breeding data was as follows:

Locality	No. of broods	No. of young	Date of count	Observer
Derwent Reservoir	--	197	17th May	PRM
Hedgeley GP	7	--	23rd May	LJM
Haughton Strother GP	6	28	13th June	MR
Branton GP	6	18	23rd May	LJM
Druridge Pools	3	12+	8th May	MSH/LJM
Gosforth Park NR	3	10	11th May	PJA
Woodhorn Flashes	2+	22+	14th May	CDH/LJM
Marden Quarry	2	--	29th April	KWY
Plenmeller Common	--	11	7th June	PRM
Brenkley	1	4	9th May	PCF
Cresswell Pond	1	1	11th June	STH

There was a large count of 328 adults and 197 young at Derwent Reservoir on 17th May, while smaller, although no less significant, gatherings included 130 at Haughton Strother GP on 28th, 124 at Hauxley NR on 31st and up to 77 at Caistrion. Derwent Reservoir continued to support large numbers in June, with a peak count of 1,250 (including 'hundreds' of young) on 19th. An increase was also noted at Hauxley NR, with 419 on 22nd, 97 were at Haughton Strother GP on 7th and 45 at Caistrion on 11th. Some dispersal from Derwent Reservoir was evident during July, with 650 there on 7th and 300 at nearby Airy Holm Reservoir (Shotleyfield) on 25th. A sharp increase to 370 at Haughton Strother GP by the end of the month may have involved birds from Derwent Reservoir, as there is some previous evidence of movement between the sites. Elsewhere, 158-168 were at Hauxley NR and Hoppen Kiln Flash and 85 at Arcot Pond.

Numbers at Haughton Strother GP further increased to 580 by 14th August, while 572 at nearby Colt Crag Reservoir on 30th may have been the same birds. Elsewhere in August, a general increase saw counts of 442 at the Tweed Estuary on 10th, 374 at Airy Holm Reservoir on 13th, 300 at East Chevington, 243 at Budle Bay and 85-105 at Branton GP and Holywell Pond. Up to 1,000 remained at Derwent Reservoir from early September-November. Also in September, 800 at Haughton Strother GP and 730 at Colt Crag Reservoir were again likely to have involved the same birds. Numbers at Lindisfarne NNR increased to 626 on 10th, while 321 were at Branton GP, 300+ at East Chevington and 294 at Big Waters.

The final quarter produced counts of 1,040 at Haughton Strother GP on 8th October, falling to 860 in November, 915 at Derwent Reservoir on 22nd October, falling to 450 in November-December, 715 at Airy Holm Reservoir on 18th October, 610 at Hedgeley GP on in November and 413 at Branton GP in December. Elsewhere, 200-309 were noted at Big Waters, Budle Bay, Caistrion, Colt Crag Reservoir, East Chevington, East Holywell, Hauxley NR, Low Newton, Outchester and Whittle Dene Reservoirs, with 100-182 at Druridge Pools and Low Cocklaw.

Taiga Bean Goose *Anser fabalis*

STATUS: Rare passage and winter visitor. / FIRST RECORD: HISTORICAL / LAST RECORD: 2016

Always the rarer of the two forms, only being noted in the early winter at Gloucester Lodge Farm (Blyth) on 17th January (AJR), with two birds present. In September, further sightings resulted with five seen, interestingly moving N at Beadnell on 15th (JGS). Most Pink-footed Geese *Anser brachyrhynchus* at this time of year are of course moving S, but Taiga Bean Geese will be arriving from the east in Scandinavia. The following day saw four more moving N, this time off St Mary's (AC). These four were also picked up moving N off Newbiggin the same day (JGS/SJM *et al.*). One was also seen and heard flying over Holy Island (The Snook) on 16th (MJC).

Taiga and Tundra Bean Geese were split as separate species as a result of the British Ornithologists Union decision to move over to the species list organised by the International Ornithological Congress. The CRC will continue to require descriptions for Taiga Bean Goose from 1st January 2018, as they are still rare in the county.

Pink-footed Goose *Anser brachyrhynchus*

STATUS: Common to abundant passage visitor and common winter visitor.

Movement was noticeable in January, with peak counts of 760 S at Morpeth on 4th, 155 WNW at Derwent Reservoir on 18th, 154 W at Haughton Strother GP on 19th and 130-150 N at Newcastle (Chapel House) on 20th and East Ord (Berwick) on 7th. Northerly movement continued in February, with 400 at Spittal Point on 21st, 250 at Berwick on 27th and 97-165 at East Ord, Grindon Lough and Holywell and Swallow Ponds from 15th-21st. The largest gatherings in the first two months were 5,500 at Lindisfarne NNR on 28th January, reducing to 4,500 by 11th February, 5,000 flying from a roost each morning at East Ord between 20th-27th January, 3,500 at Chibburn Burn on 28th January, 3,200 at Low Middleton on 23rd January, 2,800-3,000 at Doddington in both months and 2,000-2,540 at Cresswell Pond, Druridge Pools, Elford, Ellington and Stobswood Pools, with 1,000 at West Chevington. Elsewhere, 600-800 were at Bradford Kaims, Elwick and Gloucester Lodge (Blyth). Light northerly movement continued in March, with flocks of 500 at Stag Rocks, 70-150 at Cheswick, Seaton Sluice and Tynemouth and 22-60 at six further locations. Peak counts were 3,800 at Doddington, 1,064 at Budle Bay, 800 at Fenham-le-Moor, 600 near Earsdon, 401 at East Chevington and 200-379 at six further sites.

Light N movement was noted in April with 100 at Craster on 2nd and 20 at Dipton Wood on 3rd. Numbers in Budle Bay reduced from 700 on 14th to 80 by 21st, whilst 440 were at Howick on 2nd. The WeBS count at Widdrington Moor Lake during the month was 30 and one to nine were noted at 11 further, mainly coastal, localities. During May, one to two were at Big Waters, Fenham Flats, Gosforth Park NR, Grindon Lough and Whittle Dene Reservoirs up to 17th. In mid-summer, singles were at Haughton Strother GP on 7th June and Branton Lakes on 22nd July.

No further birds were seen until one at East Chevington on 5th September, followed by single-figure counts at Boulmer and Lindisfarne NNR; numbers soon built up to 300 at the latter site before mid-month. At Seaton Sluice, on 15th-16th, 195 flew N, with mid-month flocks of 28-100 flying both N and S at 12 further, mainly coastal, locations. On 26th, 550 flew N at Holy Island, with 182 S at Hadston on 29th and 170+ N at North Seaton on 30th. Some large flocks returned to regular wintering sites, with late September peak counts of 3,100 at Budle Bay, 2,000 at Widdrington Moor Lake and 1,800 at Fenham Flats. In October, numbers increased significantly when 4,443 flew passed the Farne Islands in 83 skeins on 3rd, more than doubling the previous peak day count of 2,061 (in 2016). Other large movements included 880 N and 3,085 S at Seaton Sluice during the month, including 1,050 S on 25th. At Holy Island, 7,100 were present on 3rd October, when a new site record of 7,000 was counted at Budle Bay. A highest annual count of 8,139 came from across Lindisfarne NNR on 8th October (ACr) and several counts of 2,000-4,000 were made at various sites within the NNR and on various dates during the month. Away from the reserve, 900 moved N/NW at Stag Rocks on 3rd, 800 N at East Ord on 16th, with 650 S there on 8th, and 500 flew S at Tynemouth on 27th; 6,000 were also at Widdrington Moor Lake on 6th, 2,500 at Doddington on 29th and 1,000-2,000 at East Chevington and Warkworth Lane.

In the final two months, peak movements in November were 250 W at Pegswood on 3rd, 210 N at Cocklawburn on 24th, 150 WNW at North Seaton on 6th and S at Killingworth on 28th, 120 N at East Ord on 11th and 110 S at Murton High Craggs on 26th and, in December, 3,000 S and 600 N at Ellington on 3rd, 2,000 E over Widdrington Moor Lake on 17th, 600 S at Boulmer on 2nd, 354 S at Seaton Sluice on 2nd-3rd and 120-127 N at East Ord and Howdon. Maximum counts in the period involved 4,500 in the Cresswell-Druridge Lane area on 19th November and, in December, 6,000 at Lindisfarne NNR on 21st, 3,000 at Cresswell on 5th and Doddington on 10th, 1,990 at Brier Dene Farm (Whitley Bay) on 3rd and 1,000 at Seaton Sluice on 10th. Smaller counts in the final two months included 600-650 near Belford and at East Holywell and Gloucester Lodge (Blyth), 300-400 at Backworth, Hauxley NR and Longhirst Flash and 60-123 at a handful of other sites, including Derwent Reservoir in the south west.



Tundra Bean Goose *Anser serrirostris*

STATUS: Rare passage and winter visitor. / FIRST RECORD: HISTORICAL / LAST RECORD: 2016

The influx from autumn 2016 continued through to April. Hence, as in 2016, all sightings where observers could be confirmed were accepted regardless of documentation (all submitted records are credited).

From 1st January, there were three still at Big Waters, which remained through to 8th (GB/SRB *et al.*). Also from 1st, the five from Backworth-Holywell in December 2016 relocated to Gloucester Lodge (Blyth) and East Holywell and were seen through to 19th (MSH *et al.*). The most regular observations were of up to three birds remaining in the Snab Point-Hemscott Hill (Cresswell) area, with sightings from 1st January-28th February (TF/JFa/HG *et al.*). A single bird was found at Cooper's Flash (Ashington) on 2nd (MSH) and up to nine at Cheswick-Goswick from 20th through to 8th March (MSH *et al.*). The remaining sighting in January was at Druridge Bay CP, with a single noted on 20th. Sightings continued in February, with one at Hartley Lane (Earsdon) on 17th, five at Longhirst on 19th and three at Newton Scrape on 24th. The influx petered out in March, with just two found at Hoppen Kiln Flash on 6th and three at Bradford Kaims on 12th (MSH). The final sighting in the early part of the year was three late individuals at Budle Bay on 21st-22nd April.

There was no marked arrival in late 2017, with the only documented sighting being a single at West Chevington on 27th October (PC).

Due to these ongoing influxes in recent years the CRC have removed Tundra Bean Goose from those species that require documentation in order for the sightings to be included in Birds in Northumbria. Hence from 1st January 2018 there will no longer be a requirement to submit formal descriptions.

Birds **not assigned to race** involved six at Elwick on 7th January, which were briefly noted on the ground before moving off NW. These were accepted as Bean Geese but the brief views meant they could not be consigned to either Taiga or Tundra Bean Goose.

White-fronted Goose *Anser albifrons*

Eurasian White-fronted Goose *A. a. albifrons*

STATUS: Increasingly rare passage and winter visitor.

A significant influx occurred in January, with 22 at Gosforth Park NR/Subsidence Pond on 1st increasing to 27 on 22nd, followed by 21 at West Holywell on 3rd and 16 at Hemscott Hill (Cresswell) on 7th. Later in the month, 33 were at Druridge Links and Pools on 24th and 29th and 28 (five first-winters) were at Backworth on 29th, where up to 22 had been noted from 4th-25th, including seven first-winters on 7th, and 50 were at East Chevington on 30th. Elsewhere, 15 were at Cheswick, 14 at Cocklawburn Pond and Woodhorn Flashes, 12 (one first-winter) at High Hauxley and one to nine at Cresswell, Derwent Reservoir, Gloucester Lodge (Blyth), Longhirst, Newbiggin, Newton Links and Seaton Sluice.

In February, the peak count of the year was 72 in fields N of Hauxley on 13th (RA), whilst 47 (one to two first-winters) were at Cheswick on 28th and 43 (41 adults) were at Holywell Pond on 4th, with 17 adults remaining there to 17th. On 3rd, 33 were at Gosforth Park NR and 32 were at Grindon Lough from 3rd-16th. Elsewhere, one to ten were at Cresswell, Druridge Pools, Elwick, Linton Ponds, Longhirst Flash, Low Newton, Newbiggin, Ross, Swallow Pond and Woodhorn Flashes. In March, 49 were at Cheswick on 3rd, 13 at Newton Scrape on 1st, ten at Budle Bay on 12th and seven at Grindon Lough on 2nd.

A bird with an injured wing at Druridge Pools from 5th March to at least 7th May might have been the injured bird seen at Haughton Strother GP from 14th-31st May.

Eurasian White-fronted Goose - Druridge Pools - January (Jonathan Farooqi).



Greenland White-fronted Goose *A. a. flavirostris*

STATUS: Uncommon passage and winter visitor.

In January, four (two adults) were at Woodhorn Flashes on 2nd-16th and one was at Longhirst on 6th. Six were with Pink-footed Geese *Anser brachyrhynchus* at Cresswell on 16th February (CB/JGS), with one there on 21st, whilst four (two adults) were at Woodhorn Flashes on 16th and at Linton Ponds on 17th and 27th, and at nearby Longhirst Flash on 27th. No further birds were seen until 3rd November, when three were at Big Waters.

Birds **not assigned to race** involved 27 at Harper's Heugh on 6th January, 16 at Big Waters on 8th January, 18 at West Holywell on 27th January, increasing to 33 on 31st before declining into February, and one to ten during the year at Beal, Big Waters, Budle Bay, Cheswick, Cresswell, Derwent Reservoir, Druridge Pools, Goswick, Newton, Seaton Sluice and heading S at South Gosforth on 5th February.

Mute Swan *Cygnus olor*

STATUS: Well-represented resident, passage and winter visitor.

BREEDING: Uncommon to well-represented.

The largest gatherings were from six regular sites, where maximum monthly counts were as follows:

Locality	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Caistron	51	36	31	19	21	25	47	53	59	53	51	42
Capheaton Lake	25	15	10	-	-	-	-	-	59	45	17	51
East Chevington	40	23	19	8	8	28	-	46	45	56	51	50
Killingworth Lake	28	43	52	42	32	51	62	74	63	51	52	57
QEII CP Lake	49	36	75	54	-	44	-	-	61	40	47	69
Tweed Estuary	33	36	58	72	205	356	320	172	192	40	26	21

Elsewhere during the first quarter, additional gatherings included 55 at Fenham Flats in January, 92 at Wark (River Tweed) in March and 15-50 at Angerton Lake, Big Waters, Bolam Lake, Branton GP, Cornhill-on-Tweed, Haugh Covert, Howdon, Middle and West Ord and Rayburn Lake. Additional non-breeding groups noted during the second quarter included 118 at New Water Haugh (Berwick) in April and 70 on the Tweed (west of A1-Gainslaw House) in May, with ten to 34 noted at the Aln and Blyth Estuaries, Castle Island, East Howdon, Foxton Bend, Grindon Lough, Howdon, Longhirst Flash, Wansbeck Estuary, Whiteadder Water and Widdrington Moor Lake during the period.

In total, some 45 breeding pairs were noted from 42 localities, with a minimum of 176 young hatched from 40 recorded nests, much of this information coming from Northumbria Ringing Group (NRG/AR). Three broods were logged at Longhirst GC and two broods at Capheaton Lake. A pair at Burradon walked their seven cygnets some 1.4km south to nearby Killingworth Lake whilst they were still very young.

The moulting flock on the Tweed Estuary held peaks of 356 on 9th June (MHu) and 320 on 21st July. A count of 65 at Howdon included 58 on the river and seven on the reserve during August, while elsewhere during July-September groups of ten to 42 occurred at Berwick Little Beach, Bolam Lake, Branton GP, Castle Island, Gosforth Park, Holy Island, Ladyburn Lake, Lindisfarne NNR, Meadow Haven (Berwick), Wansbeck Estuary, Warkworth Lane, Whiteadder Point and Water and Widdrington Moor Lake.

The Farne Islands logged a juvenile landing on The Kettle on 16th October and two adults flew N through Inner Sound on 29th October. Reducing numbers during the final three months included ten to 47 at Angerton Lake, Berwick-upon-Tweed, Big Waters, Bolam Lake, Branton GP, Budle Bay, Castle Island, Coquet Estuary, Cornhill-on-Tweed, Gosforth Park, Hedgeley GP, Howdon staithes, Ladyburn Lake, Lindisfarne NNR, Meadow Haven, Rayburn Lake, the River Tweed (Gainslaw House-Horncliffe), Wark (River Tweed) and West Stobswood.

Bewick's Swan *Cygnus columbianus*

STATUS: Increasingly rare passage and winter visitor. / LAST RECORD: 2016

Another year of few records for this rare winter visitor. A juvenile which was present near Whittle Dene Reservoirs in December 2016 was reported again on 2nd January and 3rd February, whilst three adults landed briefly at Haughton Strother GP before flying off W, on 12th January (MR). The second half of the year produced one report, when two flew S over Ashington on 1st November.

Whooper Swan *Cygnus cygnus*

STATUS: Well-represented passage and winter visitor.

A wintering flock in the Fenham-le-Moor area peaked at 39 on 28th-30th January and 42 on 20th February. Elsewhere during January, wintering groups included 36 at Horncliffe on 24th, 35 at Newton Scrape on 8th, 32 at Birling on 2nd and 30 at Warkworth; ten to 20 were also noted at Cresswell Pond and Woodhorn and single-figure reports came from a further 16 sites. A similar pattern during February included 20-24 at Low Newton on five dates, ten at Warkworth on 19th and single digit counts from another 12 locations, including several inland loughs and reservoirs.

Return passage was very noticeable during March, when a total of 284 were counted moving N past Seaton Sluice during 10th-22nd. Elsewhere, there were many reports of birds heading W/NW with 50-80 seen at Druridge Pools, Hartley, Little Mill, Prestwick Carr, Stag Rocks and St Mary's and 20-46 at Cramlington, Cresswell Pond, Ellington, Hepple, Seahouses and Tynemouth. Excellent counts of birds pausing en route through the county included 135 at East Chevington on 10th and 198 on 18th, a site record 124 at Derwent Reservoir on 18th and 90 the following day, 120 at Lindisfarne NNR on 12th, 110 at Beal on 14th, 80 at the Aln Estuary on 10th and 62 at Longhirst Flash on 12th. Some 43 were at Whittle Dene Reservoirs on 16th and ten to 35 were logged at a further 13 sites, with smaller numbers elsewhere. Further passage was noted at Seaton Sluice during April, when 47 on 1st and 15 on 8th continued N; at nearby St Mary's an additional 16 were on the sea on 8th. A flock of 22 flew W at Corbridge on 1st and 50 were present at Brandon on the same day. Groups of 12-15 were also noted at Beal, Catcleugh Reservoir, Druridge Pools, Fenham Mill and Holburn Moss, whilst singles were at 12 additional locations.

Following four on 2nd and two on 4th May at West Ord, it appears that four birds may have summered. In the north, one to two were in the River Tweed-West Ord area on five dates in June, two in July, one in August and three in September, with two birds noted together at West Ord on 11th and 14th June. In the south, single birds visited Backworth, Cresswell Pond, Druridge Pools, East Chevington, Haughton Strother GP and Killingworth Lake during May, Widdrington Moor Lake in late June, the Coquet Estuary/Warkworth, Druridge Pools, East Chevington and Widdrington Moor Lake (with overlapping dates at two of these sites on 16th and 20th) in July and the Coquet Estuary/Warkworth throughout August, being last noted at Amble Braid on 16th September.

The autumn arrival commenced on 3rd October, when 15 were seen in Budle Bay, eight flew N at Stag Rocks, six flew S at Cresswell and one was at Druridge Pools. The following day saw eight at Dunstan Steads and 25 were at Holy Island Causeway on 5th. Further movement during the month included 14 N and 82 S at Seaton Sluice between 25th-29th, 32 (five juveniles) resting on the sea off Cullercoats on 26th, with 20 S, four N and seven W at Newbiggin on 28th. A flock of 23 (two juveniles) flew S at Cheswick Sands on 26th and 20 flew E/SE over Newcastle (Exhibition Park) on 18th. Passage at the Farne Islands included six S on 26th and 11 N on 31st. Elsewhere, peak numbers included 16 on 8th, 29 on 23rd and 32 on 29th at East Chevington and one to 16 were either present or passed over at an additional 26 sites.

A large wintering herd settled in the Horncliffe-Norham area, where high counts included 207 (168 adults, 39 immatures) on 15th November and 208 on 9th December (CH). Six birds moved N at the Farne Islands on 1st November, with smaller S/SW movements elsewhere involving 22 at Budle Bay on 11th and ten to 13 at Ellington, Newbiggin, Ross and Seaton Sluice. Further wintering groups included 47 at Fenham Mill, up to 29 at East Chevington, 23 at Newton Pool and 20 at the Aln Estuary during November and 84 on the county border at Lower Birgham, 63 at Cornhill-on-Tweed, 43 (ten juveniles) at Druridge and 26 still at East Chevington during December. Elsewhere, one to 16 were logged at a further 28 widespread locations during the final two months.

Shelduck *Tadorna tadorna*

STATUS: Common autumn passage and winter visitor. Less numerous in spring.
BREEDING: Uncommon.
Peak numbers (including WeBS counts) at the principal site of Lindisfarne NNR were as follows (counts from the Budle Bay section in parentheses):

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
3,102 (120)	1,447 (145)	700 (125)	318 (86)	156 (103)	217 (217)	8 (0)	100 (2)	537 (283)	1,445 (590)	1,530 (508)	1,601 (84)

Coastal passage at Seaton Sluice during the first quarter involved nine N and three S in January and 33 N in March. The important principal wintering site of Lindisfarne NNR held a peak of 3,102 on 15th January (ACr). Peak counts away from there were 20-38 at the Blyth Estuary, Druridge Pools and Howdon Wetland in February and 64 at the Blyth Estuary and 22-42 at the Aln Estuary, Bell's Farm (Cresswell), Howdon and Howick-Boulmer in March. Counts of ten to 19 also came from Castle Island, the Coquet Estuary, Cresswell Pond, Hauxley NR, Newcastle (Elswick-Scotswood) and Widdrington Moor Lake in the opening quarter, when four to six were at East Chevington, Newton Pool, West Stobswood, Widdrington Moor Lake and Whitley Bay and one to two at a further ten coastal, or near-coastal, localities. Farther inland, one to six were at Branton GP, Caistron, Grindon Lough and Haughton Strother GP.

In April, a total of 48 flew N and 42 S at Seaton Sluice and 77 were at Howick-Boulmer. In April-May, 30-48 were at the Aln Estuary, Bell's Pond, the Blyth Estuary, Boulmer, Cresswell Pond and Druridge Pools, with ten to 29 at Amble Braid, Castle Island, Charlton Mires, Hauxley NR, Howdon Wetland, Longhoughton Steel, Scotswood and the Tweed Estuary. Counts of three to nine were made at seven sites already mentioned, as well as Bothal Pond, Ellington, the Farne Islands, Hedgeley GP, Hoppen Kiln Flash, Linton Ponds, Longhirst and Lynemouth Flashes, New Water Haugh (Berwick) and Swallow Pond, with one to two also found at 16 further widespread localities.

Successful breeding was noted at 15 localities during May-July (12 in 2016), with the first broods (two broods, 17 young) at Charlton Mires Pond on 27th May. Full details were as follows:

Locality	No. of broods/crèches	No. of young
Foxton Bend	4	13
Castle Island	3+	23+
Amble Braid	2	19
Charlton Mires	2	17
Cresswell Pond	2	9
Tyne Estuary	2	8
Coquet Estuary	1	11
Druridge Pools	1	10
Middle Ord Pond	1	10
Boulmer	1	9
Howdon	1	6
Bell's Pond	1	5
Hauxley NR	1	4
Backworth	1	3
Blyth Estuary	1	1

In June-July, 11-36 adults were at the Aln and Blyth Estuaries, Boulmer, Druridge Pools, Foxton and Scotswood. One to six were also at Branton GP, Broomlee Lough, Caistron, Castle Island, the Coquet Estuary, Derwent Reservoir, East Chevington, the Farne Islands, Hauxley NR, Longhirst Flash, Monks House Pool, the Tweed Estuary, West Hartford and West Stobswood. In August, 11-12 were at Castle Island and Druridge Pools and five to eight at Amble, Fenham Flats and Warkworth.

Passage at Seaton Sluice involved 40 N and ten S in September, including 31 N on 24th, 40 N in October, ten N and two S in November and 15 N in December. Also on 24th September, 37 flew N at Tynemouth. Apart from 16 at Howdon in December and nine at Newton Pool in November, typically few were recorded away from the core area of Lindisfarne NNR in the final four months. One to four were at the Aln and Blyth Estuaries, Boulmer, Castle Island, Cocklawburn, the Coquet Estuary, Cresswell Pond, Druridge Pools, Elswick and Hauxley NR. Farther inland, twos were at Branton GP and Whittle Dene Reservoirs.

Ruddy Shelduck *Tadorna ferruginea*

STATUS: Rare visitor. / FIRST RECORD: Pre-1875 / LAST RECORD: 2016

A female or immature was located at Budle Bay on 10th July (GPK *et al.*). It stayed through to 17th July and was well-watched during the week. It was definitely un-ringed and noticeably wary, keeping far out in the bay. These late summer sightings normally are continental birds dispersing north from the feral population now in Western Europe.

Mandarin Duck *Aix galericulata*

STATUS: Uncommon to well-represented resident.

BREEDING: Uncommon, although increasing. A population in the North Tyne Valley, established from escaped captive stock, is now self-sustaining. / FIRST BRED: 1994

Up to four drakes and two ducks were at Ridley Stokoe-Smalesmouth in February-March, when three drakes and a duck were at Wark, single pairs at Glen Ridley and Redmire, a drake at Tyne Green (Hexham), a duck at a potential nest hole at Low Angerton and one to two birds at Branton GP and Kielder Water.

In April, one to three were on the River North Tyne at Glen Ridley, Redmire bridge, Ridley Stokoe and Smalesmouth-Stannersburn and two were at Darden Lough and, in May, one to three were at Branton GP, Gosforth Park NR, Haughton Strother GP, Hexham Green, Humshaugh, Low Angerton, Low Carrieth and Wark. More unusual were a drake at Spindlestone Wood pools between 1st-3rd May and two drakes at the Farne Islands on 2nd May.

Breeding data were as follows (with 2016 figures in parentheses) (MD):

Locality	No. of nests	No. of eggs	No. of young fledged
Tarset/Redesdale	26 (33)	291* (310)	-- (260)
Kielder	3 (5)	25 (42)	-- (31)

* At least 145 eggs hatched.

High numbers of breeding Tawny Owls *Strix aluco* left fewer nest boxes for Mandarins which may have accounted for a drop in breeding figures since 2016. A female with a brood of seven young was on the North Tyne at Wark on 3rd June (JR).

Few reports were received during the summer months, with one to two at Haughton Strother GP occasionally during June-August and one at Low Angerton on 13th June. Two were at the latter site on 27th September. Also in September, one to two were at Catcleugh Reservoir and Kielder Water.

In the final quarter, one to two were sporadically at Catcleugh Reservoir, Haughton Strother GP, Kielder Water, Tyne Green and Wydon Burn Reservoir.

Garganey *Spatula querquedula*

STATUS: Uncommon spring passage and rare summer visitor.

BREEDING: Extremely rare. / LAST BRED: 2017

In March, a pair was at Arcot Pond on 17th, and on several further dates until 27th, and a pair was at Gosforth Park NR on 24th. An increase in April led to single pairs at Cresswell Pond on 7th-8th, Warkworth Lane Ponds on 28th and again at Arcot Pond but, more unusual, were a pair on the sea off East Chevington on 4th, that later flew off N, and two N at Boulmer on 13th. Single drakes were also noted in April at Druridge Pools, Holywell Pond and St Mary's Wetland on scattered dates between 1st-19th. The latter bird was observed to be paired with a female Teal *Anas crecca*. In May, a pair briefly visited Holy Island Lough on 8th, before flying off N, one to two were at Gosforth Park NR between 8th-13th, single drakes were at the Farne Islands on 2nd, Haughton Strother GP on 3rd and Druridge Pools from 12th-17th and a duck was at Monks House Pool between 28th-30th. The final spring records were in June and involved a pair at Druridge Pools on 1st-2nd and single drakes at Holywell Pond on 2nd and the Farne Islands on 5th.

A fascinating record involved a female with one young noted at Holywell Pond on the evening of 2nd July; the first confirmed breeding in the county since 2008.

In August, a juvenile was at Druridge Pools regularly between 7th-25th and, in September, singles were at Druridge Pools on 14th and 22nd, Linton Ponds on 23rd and Big Waters on 26th. The final reports were of singles in October at Bothal Pond on 7th-8th, Linton Ponds on 13th and Big Waters on 22nd-23rd.

Gadwall - Druridge Pools - April (Chris Barlow).



Garganey - Holywell Pond - April (Colin Bradshaw)



Shoveler *Spatula clypeata*

STATUS: Uncommon resident and well-represented autumn passage visitor.

BREEDING: Rare. / LAST BRED: 2017

Peak monthly counts were as follows (excludes broods):

Month	Locality	Count
January	Budle Bay	33
February	Druridge Pools	17
March	Druridge Pools	34
April	Druridge Pools	44
May	Druridge Pools	10
June	Druridge Pools	9
July	Druridge Pools	10
August	East Chevington	19
September	East Chevington	86
October	Budle Bay	35
November	Swallow Pond	54
December	Budle Bay	39

Further peak first-quarter counts involved 30 at East Chevington and ten to 20 at Druridge Pools, Gosforth Park NR and Killingworth Lake in January; ten to 16 at Budle Bay, Killingworth Lake, Monks House and Newton Pools in February and 14-19 at Monks House Pool and Newton Scrape in March. Counts of five to nine also came from Arcot Pond, Big Waters, Bothal Pond and Prestwick Carr in the first three months, when one to four were at Branton GP; the Coquet Estuary; Cresswell Pond; the Farne Islands; Grindon Lough; Haughton Strother and Hedgeley GPs; Holy Island; Holywell, Linton, Swallow, Warkworth Lane and West Allotment Ponds; West Stobswood Pool; Widdrington Moor Lake and Woodhorn Flashes. Seven flew N at Annstead on 20th March.

In April, four to ten were at Arcot and Cresswell Ponds, Hedgeley GP, Prestwick Carr and Woodhorn Flashes and, in May, four to five were at Cresswell Pond, Druridge Pools and Lynemouth Flash. One to three were also at Beanley, Bothal Pond, Castle Island, Charlton Mires, East Chevington, Grindon Lough, Hauxley NR, Longhirst Flash, Monks House Pool, New Water Haugh (Berwick) and Swallow Pond in April-May. A total of 18 localities held the species between April-July (19 in 2016).

Successful breeding occurred at two sites in June-July (one site in 2016). Full details were as follows:

Locality	No. of broods	No. of young
Bothal Pond	1-2	5-11
Swallow Pond	1	8

Away from the above breeding sites, up to nine were at Druridge Pools and four at Monks House Pool in June-July. In August, 12 were at Swallow Pond, five to ten at Bothal Pond, Druridge Pools and Whittle Dene Reservoirs and one to two at Grindon Lough, Haughton Strother GP and Monks House Pool. In September, one to two flew N at Newbiggin and Seaton Sluice, 86 at East Chevington north pool on 24th (TB) was the largest concentration of the year, and ten to 22 were at Budle Bay, Druridge Pools, the Farne Islands, Grindon Lough, Monks House Pool and Swallow Pond.

In October, one moved N at Seaton Sluice and 20-33 were at Druridge Pools, East Chevington, Gosforth Park NR, Monks House Pool and Swallow Pond; in November, 42 were at East Chevington and 26-30 at Budle Bay and Gosforth Park NR and, in December, 23 were at Swallow Pond. Counts of 14-18 also came from Linton Ponds in the final quarter, when five to nine were at Big Waters, Bothal Pond, Holy Island Lough, and Killingworth and Widdrington Moor Lakes. One to three frequented Arcot and Cresswell Ponds, Grindon Lough, Holy Island, Holywell Pond, Longhirst Flash, Marden Quarry, Newton Pool and Warkworth Lane and West Allotment Ponds.

Gadwall *Mareca strepera*

STATUS: Well-represented resident.

BREEDING: Uncommon but increasing. / FIRST BRED: 1965

Peak monthly counts were as follows (excludes broods):

Month	Locality	Count
January	Swallow Pond	38
February	Swallow Pond	58
March	Bothal Pond	26
April	Hauxley NR	20
May	Druridge Pools	37
June	Castle Island	44
July	Bothal Pond	20
August	Linton Ponds	101
September	Cresswell Pond / Gosforth Park NR	46
October	Linton Ponds	113
November	Linton Ponds	91
December	Linton Ponds	70

Additional peak counts during the first quarter were 27-32 at the Blyth Estuary and Woodhorn Flashes in January, 20-33 at Bothal Pond, Castron and Holywell Pond in February and 21-24 at Castron and Cresswell and Swallow Ponds in March. Groups of ten to 19 were at Arcot Pond, Druridge Pools, East Chevington, Gosforth Park and Hauxley NRs, Hedgeley GP, Killingworth and Ladyburn Lakes, Linton Ponds, Lynemouth Flash and Marden Quarry in the first three months, when five to nine were at Bolam Lake, Branton GP, Castle Island, Holywell Pond, Howdon, Longhirst Flash, West Stobswood Pool and Widdrington Moor Lake. One to four occurred at a further nine widespread sites and two flew S at Seaton Sluice on 31st March.

Two flew N at Seaton Sluice on 20th April. In April-May, ten to 19 were at Bothal Pond, Castle Island, East Chevington, Howdon, Linton Ponds, Lynemouth and Woodhorn Flashes and five to eight were also at Big Waters, Branton GP, Capheaton Lake, Hedgeley GP and Widdrington Moor Lake. A pair was on the River Tyne at Tynemouth on 18th April and a pair lingered at the Farne Islands between 19th-29th April.

A total of 39 localities (excluding coastal passage) held birds between April-July (34 in 2016). Broods were noted at nine sites in June-July, all in the south east (nine sites in 2016), with the first brood (12 young) at Bothal Pond on 1st June. Full details were as follows:

Locality	No. of broods	No. of young
Bothal Pond	3+	29+
Druridge Pools	3+	16
Linton Ponds	2	14
Bell's Pond	2	5
Castle Island	1	10
Ladyburn Lake	1	7
Swallow Pond	1	7
Hauxley NR	1	3
Big Waters	1	2

In June, 26-29 were at Druridge Pools and Linton Ponds and ten to 17 at Bothal Pond and Hauxley NR, with ten to 17 also at Castron, Druridge Pools and Linton Ponds in July. In August, 44 were at East Chevington and 11-22 at Bothal Pond, Hauxley NR and Swallow Pond. Additionally in the period June-August, six to eight were at Big Waters, Budle Bay and Marden Quarry, while one to four were at a number of other wetland sites, including the Tweed Estuary. Five flew W at the Farnes on 22nd August. In September, two flew S and one N at Seaton Sluice, with singles N at Tynemouth and Whitley Bay; 30 were at Linton Ponds, 21 at Castle Island and smaller numbers at nine other regular sites.

The largest concentration of the year involved 113 at Linton Ponds on 13th October (ME). Additional peak October counts were 92 at Big Waters, 52-68 at East Chevington and Gosforth Park NR and 30-45 at

Widdrington Moor Lake and Woodhorn Flashes. In November, 88 were at Big Waters and 24-42 at Caistron, East Chevington, Swallow Pond, Widdrington Moor Lake and Woodhorn Flashes and, in December, 55-58 were at East Chevington and Swallow Pond and 24-34 at Arcot Pond, Widdrington Moor Lake and Woodhorn Flashes. More unusual were 26 at Fenham Flats on 4th November. Final-quarter counts of 12-19 also came from the Blyth Estuary, Branton GP, Holywell Pond, Ladyburn Lake and Marden Quarry, with three to eight at nine other inland and four other coastal localities.

Wigeon *Mareca penelope*

STATUS: Abundant autumn passage and winter visitor.

BREEDING: Rare. / LAST BRED 2017

Peak monthly counts from Lindisfarne NNR (including Budle Bay) were as follows (counts from the Budle Bay section in parentheses):

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
1,296 (650)	962 (750)	571 (500)	95 (22)	0	0	--	0	11,000 (700)	17,182 (3,000)	10,000 (800)	2,300 (900)

Other peak counts during the first quarter were 1,200 off East Chevington and 1,000 at Druridge Pools in January, 1,354 at Cresswell Pond and 521-642 at the Aln Estuary, Big Waters and Derwent Reservoir in February and 550-620 at the Aln Estuary, Cresswell Pond, Derwent Reservoir and Newton Links in March. Additional counts during the first three months included 300-542 at Capheaton Lake, Derwent Reservoir, Grindon Lough, Hoppen Kiln Flash, Seahouses-Beadnell and Whittle Dene Reservoirs and 105-270 at Beadnell-Howick, Bothal Pond, Branton GP, Caistron, the Coquet Estuary, Doddington, Gosforth Park and Hauxley NRs, Howick-Boulmer, Linton Ponds, Low Newton, Warkworth Lane Ponds, West Stobswood Pool, Widdrington Moor Lake and Woodhorn Flashes; 81 were also at Colt Crag Reservoir. At Seaton Sluice, 30 flew N and 30 S in January, with smaller numbers in February-March.

In April, 118 at Grindon Lough on 4th fell to 22 by 14th, 98-100 were at Derwent Reservoir and Druridge Pools and 22-33 at the Aln Estuary, Budle Bay and Whittle Dene Reservoirs and, in May, up to 20 (13 drakes) were at Grindon Lough, ten at Druridge Pools and one to four at 12 further scattered localities.

Breeding was recorded at two sites in May-June (one in 2016), with the first brood (five young) noted on 21st:

Locality	No. of broods	No. of young
Derwent Reservoir	3+	19+
Plenmeller Common	1	3

In June, up to 14 were at Grindon Lough, six at Druridge Pools and a female was at the Farne Islands on 3rd and, in July, 16-28 were at Derwent Reservoir and Grindon Lough. One to three were at five other sites in June-July. In August, two to seven flew N at Seaton Sluice and Tynemouth, 83 were at Grindon Lough by 25th, 11 were at East Chevington and Lindisfarne NNR and one to four at five further sites. Movement in September included 1,551 N and 17 S at Seaton Sluice and, on 16th-17th, totals of 256-502 N at Annstead Point, Cullercoats, Newbiggin and Tynemouth. Also in September, 102-174 were at Big Waters, East Chevington and Grindon Lough.

Passage in October included 2,234 N and 37 S at Seaton Sluice. Numbers at Lindisfarne NNR peaked at 17,182 on 8th October (ACr), 892 were at Beadnell, 631+ flew N at the Farne Islands and 336-420 were at the Aln Estuary and Grindon Lough. Lighter movement at Seaton Sluice in November produced a monthly total of 676 N and 18 S. Elsewhere, 790 were at Cresswell Pond and 320-400 at the Aln Estuary, Capheaton Lake, Derwent Reservoir and Grindon Lough. On 1st-2nd December, 118 passed N at Seaton Sluice, whilst December counts included 305-433 at Bell's Farm (Cresswell), Big Waters, Boulmer-Alnmouth, Capheaton Lake, Cresswell Pond, Derwent Reservoir, Druridge Pools and Whittle Dene Reservoirs. Elsewhere during the final quarter, counts of 104-297 came from Branton GP, Caistron, Colt Crag Reservoir, the Coquet Estuary, the Farne Islands, Gosforth Park NR, Greenlee Lough, Haughton Strother GP, Warkworth Lane Ponds and Widdrington Moor Lake, with 64-89 at five further sites.

Waders and Wigeon (Mike Henry).



American Wigeon *Mareca americana*

STATUS: Rare visitor. / FIRST RECORD: 1951 / LAST RECORD: 2017

The returning drake was again found at Grindon Lough, being first located on 1st February (NF *et al.*). This male was first found in September 2015 and has returned each winter since. This time, it remained through to 8th March.

Another adult male was located at Fenham Flats on 8th October (BS). Present in a 10,000 strong Wigeon *Mareca penelope* flock, it was impressive that it was found at all! In eclipse, it was at first difficult to be sure of its identity, but further views the following day revealed gleaming white axillaries, thereby nailing the identification. Further searches on 23rd October and 4th November, by the same observer, were also successful and now in full plumage it was much easier to locate. Finally, at the end of the year, the returning male was again found at Grindon Lough on 18th December (PRM *et al.*) and remained into 2018.

Mallard *Anas platyrhynchos*

STATUS: Common resident, passage and winter visitor.

BREEDING: Common.

Peak monthly counts (including WeBS counts) from Lindisfarne NNR (including Budle Bay) were as follows (counts from the Budle Bay section in parentheses):

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
433 (300)	158 (85)	156 (150)	39 (0)	28 (0)	3 (0)	--	60 (0)	35 (10)	275 (125)	47 (0)	303 (250)

Peak monthly county-wide counts were as follows (excludes coastal passage):

Month	Locality	Count
January	Lindisfarne NNR	433
February	Lindisfarne NNR	158
March	Lindisfarne NNR	156
April	Haughton Strother GP	40
May	Whiteadder Water	45
June	Castle Island	44
July	Big Waters	146
August	Derwent Reservoir	188
September	River Tweed between Gainslaw House-Horncliffe	171
October	Lindisfarne NNR	275
November	Derwent Reservoir	210
December	Lindisfarne NNR	303

The largest concentration of the year occurred on 15th January, when 433 counted at Lindisfarne NNR included 300 at Budle Bay (ACr). The only other three-figure counts in the first quarter were 126-189 at the Aln Estuary, Cresswell Pond, Derwent Reservoir, the River Tweed between Carham-Sprouston and Whittle Dene Reservoirs in January and 124 at the Tweed Estuary in February. Gatherings of 50-92 during the first three months were also noted at the Blyth Estuary, Bothal Pond, Boulmer, Castle Island, Colt Crag Reservoir, Druridge Pools, East Chevington, Hallington Reservoir, Haughton Strother GP, Holburn Moss, Killingworth Lake, Newsham Pond, QEII CP Lake and Warkworth Lane Ponds, with 20-49 at 26 further widespread localities.

In April-May, 28-39 were at five of the above localities, plus West Ord (Berwick). Broods were found at a wide selection of sites between April-July, with the first (ten young) at Howick on 18th April. A fresh, new brood of seven young were at Newcastle (Exhibition Park) on 15th August. The most productive localities were as follows:

Locality	No. of broods	No. of young
Branton GP	5	20
Ladyburn Lake	4	15
'Northumberlandia', Cramlington	4	--
Grindon Lough	3	25
Newcastle (Exhibition Park)	3	19
Castle Island	3+	17+
Druridge Pools	3	17
Stakeford	2	19
Whittle Dene Reservoirs	2	18
Derwent Reservoir	2	15
Howick	2+	14+
Bothal Pond	2	12
Hedgeley GP	2	9
Charlton Mires	2	8
Arcot Pond	2	7
Hauxley NR	2	6
Linton Ponds	--	20
Holywell Pond	--	12

Additionally, 17 nesting females were found at the Farne Islands. Single broods were also reported from a further 22 scattered localities.

In June-July, in addition to counts in the table above, 39-68 were at the Aln Estuary, Caistron, Derwent Reservoir, Farnley Haughs, Grindon Lough and the Tweed Estuary. Numbers increased in August-September, with 101-160 at the Aln Estuary, Birgham, Budle Bay and Cresswell and Linton Ponds and 50-95 at Big Waters, Branton GP, Castle Island, Charlton Mires, Colt Crag Reservoir, East Chevington, Gosforth Park NR, Haughton Strother GP, Holywell Pond, Newcastle (Scotswood), Newton Pool, the River Tweed between A1-Gainslaw House, Shield on the Wall, St Mary's Wetland, the Tweed Estuary, Whittle Dene Reservoirs and Woodhorn Flashes. In September, 11 also flew N at Seaton Sluice,

Coastal passage at Seaton Sluice involved 50 N in October, 30 N and one S in November and six N and three S in December. Additional peak counts in the final quarter were 100-193 at the Aln Estuary, Budle Bay, Derwent Reservoir, Haughton Strother GP, Hebron, Heighley Gate, Monks House Pool and Whittle Dene Reservoirs in October, 106-196 at Haughton Strother GP, the River Tweed (two sites) and Whittle Dene Reservoirs in November and 105-229 at Aln Estuary, Big Waters, Colt Crag and Derwent Reservoirs, Druridge Pools, Haughton Strother GP, the Tweed Estuary, Whittle Dene Reservoirs and Widdrington Moor Lake in December. Counts of 52-96 came from 11 sites already mentioned, plus Cocklawburn, Coldstream, Marden Quarry and the River Tweed (Wark and Whiteadder Water).



Pintail *Anas acuta*

STATUS: Well-represented passage and winter visitor. Less numerous in spring.

BREEDING: Historical. / LAST BRED: 1945

Peak monthly counts from Lindisfarne NNR (including Budle Bay) were as follows:

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
284	340	1	9	--	--	--	3	124	75	180	273

The largest count of the year came from the Fenham Flats section of Lindisfarne NNR on 9th February, where 340 were counted (AA/MH). Away from this core area, counts during January-February involved three at Cheswick Sands and one to two at Big Waters, Cresswell Pond, Druridge Pools, Grindon Lough, Holburn Moss, Stag Rocks, St Mary's, Swallow Pond and the Tweed Estuary and one flew N at Whitley Bay on 18th February. Up to four were at Druridge Pools in March, when singles were at Airy Holm Reservoir (Shotleyfield), Grindstonelaw, Middle Ord (Berwick) and Stobswood.

Druridge Pools held up to five during April, when one to two were at East Chevington, Grindon Lough and Grindstonelaw. In May, Druridge Pools held a pair between 1st-3rd, five birds on 6th and one on 12th. One was also at Colt Crag Reservoirs on the latter date. Twos flew N at Cullernose Point on 7th and Seaton Sluice on 9th. In June, two were at Crag Reservoir on 23rd and one on 28th.

An absence in July was followed in August by one at East Chevington on 13th, three at Holy Island Lough on 28th, three at Boulmer on 30th and singles at Arcot Pond and Druridge Pools between 29th-31st. In September, a total of 23 flew N at Seaton Sluice between 14th-18th, eight to 12 N at Cullernose Point, the Farne Islands and Howick and one to three N at five further coastal sites, while 30 were at East Chevington on 13th and one to three at Big Waters, Colt Crag Reservoir, Cresswell Pond, Grindon Lough, Haughton Strother GP and Hauxley NR.

In October, 13 flew N at the Farne Islands and four N and one S at Seaton Sluice; one to two flew N at both sites in November. Up to 12 were at East Chevington in October, when three to five were at Big Waters, Cresswell Pond and Druridge Pools, with one to two at Boulmer, Haughton Strother GP and Whittle Dene Reservoirs. Away from Lindisfarne NNR, one to two were found during November-December at Big Waters, Branton GP, Colt Crag and Derwent Reservoirs, East Chevington, Farnley Haughs, Grindon Lough, Newton Scrape, Seaton Sluice, the Tweed Estuary and Whittle Dene Reservoirs.

Teal *Anas crecca*

STATUS: Common passage and winter visitor.

BREEDING: Rare.

Maximum monthly counts from Lindisfarne NNR (including Budle Bay) were as follows:

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
700	310	249	40	9	2	13	80	1,500	1,100	260	320

Peak monthly county-wide counts were as follows (excludes coastal passage):

Month	Locality	Count
January	Whittle Dene Reservoirs	807
February	Whittle Dene Reservoirs	531
March	Whittle Dene Reservoirs	301
April	Druridge Pools	200
May	Druridge Pools	70
June	Druridge Pools	12
July	Druridge Pools	22
August	Budle Bay	80
September	Budle Bay	1,500
October	Budle Bay	1,100
November	Aln Estuary	287
December	Whittle Dene Reservoirs	426

Additional January peaks were 300-453 at the Aln Estuary, Druridge Pools and Howdon and 211-269 at Bothal Pond, Capheaton Lake, Cresswell Pond and Newcastle (Elswick-Scotswood). February produced counts of 420 at Grindon Lough and 200-250 at the Aln Estuary, Cresswell Pond, Grindon Lough and Howdon Wetland. During January-March, counts of 102-182 came from Arcot Pond, Big Waters, the Blyth Estuary, Colt Crag and Derwent Reservoirs, Holburn Moss and Newton and West Stobswood Pools. Smaller gatherings of 57-99 were noted at Backworth Pond, Castle Island, the Coquet Estuary, Craggy Bog, Linton Ponds, Prestwick Carr and St Mary's. Light coastal passage involved 11 N and 25 S at Seaton Sluice during January.

In April, six moved N and one S at Seaton Sluice, 122 were at Grindon Lough on 4th and 37-82 at Big Waters, Castle Island, Derwent Reservoir, Scotswood and Whittle Dene Reservoirs and, in May, ten flew N at Snab Point, 70 at Druridge Pools on 3rd fell to 20+ by 8th and 63 at Grindon Lough on 4th fell to one by 18th; one to six were at 13 further widespread sites. A single brood was noted on 22nd June, the first confirmed breeding since 2013. Full details were:

Locality	No. of broods	No. of young
Derwent Reservoir	1	4

In June, a total of 23 flew N and seven S at Seaton Sluice between 21st-30th and 16 flew N and six S in July. Also in June, one to six were at two inland and six coastal/near-coastal sites and, in July, six to 13 were at Budle Bay and Linton Ponds and one to three at six further sites, including the Farne Islands. Numbers picked up in August, with 356 N and 125 S at Seaton Sluice and 142 N at Tynemouth; 44-60 were at Druridge Pools and Grindon Lough and ten to 30 at Arcot Pond, Charlton Mires, East Chevington, Hauxley NR, Holy Island (Rocket Fields Pools), Monks House Pool and Newbiggin. In September, 1,512 flew N and 102 S at Seaton Sluice and 186-435 N at Annstead, Cullercoats and Newbiggin. Numbers in Budle Bay rose from 100 on 1st to 600 by 6th and 1,500 by 24th (CGK/GPK); 102-193 were at Derwent Reservoir, Druridge Pools, East Chevington and Grindon Lough.

During the final quarter, coastal movement at Seaton Sluice involved 575 N and 63 S in October; 580 N and 47 S in November and 47 N in December. In October, 259 were at Druridge Pools; in November, 250-287 were at the Aln Estuary, Budle Bay and Grindon Lough and, in December, 200-325 were at the Aln Estuary, Big Waters, Cresswell Pond and East Chevington. Final-quarter counts of 105-183 also came from Arcot and Bothal Ponds, Castle Island, Colt Crag Reservoir, the Coquet Estuary, Derwent and Hallington Reservoirs, Howdon, Scotswood and West Stobswood Pool. Smaller gatherings of 50-86 were at Branton GP, Capheaton Lake, the Farne Islands, Hartburn Reservoir, Monks House Pool, Swallow Pond and Widdrington Moor Lake.

Green-winged Teal *Anas carolinensis*

STATUS: Rare visitor. / FIRST RECORD: 1952 / LAST RECORD: 2016

A quiet year for this Nearctic visitor with only a single drake seen. First found at Hauxley on 14th April, where it stayed until 22nd April (IF *et al.*), it was then re-found at Druridge Pools the following day and remained there until 30th April.



Red-crested Pochard *Netta rufina*

STATUS: Rare visitor.

A pair was at Big Waters between 2nd-4th November (GB/AJJ *et al.*).

Pochard *Aythya ferina*

STATUS: Well-represented resident, passage and winter visitor. Less numerous in spring.

BREEDING: Rare. / LAST BRED: 2017

Peak monthly counts were as follows (excludes broods):

Month	Locality	Count
January	Bothal Pond	27
February	Killingworth Lake	35
March	Bothal Pond	28
April	Swallow Pond	12
May	Holywell Pond	12
June	Bothal Pond	11
July	Holywell Pond	23
August	East Chevington	14
September	East Chevington	15
October	Killingworth Lake	6
November	Bakethin Reservoir	9
December	Widdrington Moor Lake	14

The largest gatherings of the year were in February, when 35 (27 drakes) were at Killingworth Lake on 12th (JBU) and 31 (also 27 drakes) were at Bothal Pond on 27th. Additional peak counts in the first quarter involved 21 at Holywell Pond in March and ten to 15 at Arcot Pond, East Chevington and Swallow Pond and five to six at Ladyburn and Widdrington Moor Lakes. Elsewhere during the first quarter, one to four were occasionally noted at Bakethin Reservoir, Branton GP, Cocklawburn, Derwent Reservoir, Druridge Pools, Gosforth Park NR, Grindon Lough, Hauxley NR, Ladyburn Lake, Linton Ponds, Maiden's Hall, Marden Quarry, QEII CP, Rayburn and Tynemouth Boating Lakes, Warkworth Lane and West Allotment Ponds and Woodhorn Flashes and, more unusually, at Holy Island Lough and Mootlaw Quarry (Ryal).

Six to 11 were at Arcot Pond, Big Waters and Bothal and Holywell Ponds in April and sixes were at Bothal and Swallow Ponds in May. Counts of one to three in April-May also came from Druridge Pools, East Chevington, Gosforth Park NR, Killingworth and Ladyburn Lakes, West Allotment Pond, Widdrington Moor Lake and Woodhorn Flashes.

A total of 17 localities were occupied between April-July (15 in 2016) and successful breeding was recorded at one site in June (three sites in 2016):

Locality	No. of broods	No. of young
Holywell Pond	2	8

Five to ten were at Druridge Pools and Linton Ponds in June-July, when one to three were also at Arcot and Cresswell Ponds, Haughton Strother GP and Tynemouth Boating Lake. In August, six to eight were at Bothal and Cresswell Ponds and one to four at Big Waters, Branton GP, Druridge Pools, Gosforth Park NR, Swallow Pond and Widdrington Moor Lake. Four to 11 were at Big Waters, Cresswell Pond, Whittle Dene Reservoirs and Widdrington Moor Lake and one to two at eight further sites in September.

Numbers were generally low in the final three months, with peaks, in addition to those in the table, of five at East Chevington in October, five to seven at Holywell and Swallow Ponds, West Stobswood Pool and Widdrington Moor Lake in November and five to nine at Bakethin Reservoir, East Chevington, Killingworth Lake and Swallow Pond in December. Also during the final quarter, one to four were occasionally reported at Big Waters, Bolam Lake, Broomlee Lough, Druridge Pools, Grindon Lough, Hallington Reservoir, Haughton Strother GP, Hauxley NR, Holywell Pond, Ladyburn Lake, Linton Ponds and Whittle Dene Reservoirs.

Ferruginous Duck *Aythya nyroca*

STATUS: Rare visitor. / PREVIOUS RECORDS: 13 / FIRST: pre-1827 / LAST: 2010

In March, a drake was at Gosforth Park NR on 15th-16th and 23rd (PJ/IJ), Killingworth Lake on 24th (JBU/AC) and Silverlink CP on 29th-30th (SRB/IF/PRM *et al.*). In April, it was noted at Arcot Pond on 3th (GM *et al.*) and again at Silverlink CP on 5th (TRD). These records are currently awaiting a BBRC verdict.



Ferruginous Duck - Killingworth Lake - March (Alan Curry).

Ring-necked Duck *Aythya collaris*

STATUS: Extremely rare visitor. / PREVIOUS RECORDS: 8 / FIRST: 1977 / LAST: 2010

A fine drake proved very popular, with the first sighting at Hauxley on 18th March (TM/IF *et al.*) leading to the NWT reserve being opened especially for birders on the weekend of 24th March. The drake then moved to East Chevington for the day on 25th (TF/JFa *et al.*), then back to Hauxley through to 9th April. The special opening of Hauxley was greatly appreciated by birders whilst the new visitor centre was under construction. The resultant photos from the Hauxley hides showed this dapper American duck off to its full glory. The first sighting in the county since 2010, when a drake was at Branton GP.



Tufted Duck *Aythya fuligula*

STATUS: Well-represented resident, passage and winter visitor.

BREEDING: Uncommon.

Peak monthly counts were as follows (excludes broods):

Month	Locality	Count
January	Killingworth Lake	99
February	Killingworth Lake	91
March	Killingworth Lake	77
April	Killingworth Lake	52
May	Killingworth Lake	40
June	Hauxley NR	38
July	Bothal Pond	35
August	East Chevington	58
September	East Chevington	72
October	East Chevington	80
November	Holburn Moss	65
December	Widdrington Moor Lake	80

Killingworth Lake attracted the largest concentration of the year: 99 on 15th January (LJM). Ladyburn Lake also featured during the first quarter, with respective monthly peaks of 96, 44 and 43. Counts of 48-62 came from Branton GP, Castron, East Chevington and Rayburn Lake between January-March, when 20-38 were at Arcot Pond, Bolam Lake, Bothal Pond, Castle Island, Cresswell Pond, Grindon Lough, Hartburn, Haughton Strother and Hedgeley GPs, Holywell Pond, Howick Hall, Linton Ponds, Marden and Mootlaw (Ryal) Quarries, Newcastle (Leazes Park), QEII CP Lake, Swallow and West Allotment Ponds, Widdrington Moor Lake and Woodhorn Flashes.

In April, four flew N and two S at Seaton Sluice and 44-48 were at Branton GP, Capheaton Lake, East Chevington and Woodhorn Flashes. During April-May, counts of 20-28 also came from Druridge Pools, Haughton Strother GP, Hauxley NR, Hedgeley GP, QEII CP Lake, Whittle Dene Reservoirs and Woodhorn Flashes.

A total of 52 localities (excluding coastal passage) attracted the species between April-August (46 in 2016). Successful breeding was recorded at ten localities (11 in 2016) between June-August (most in July), with the first brood (seven young) at Slaley Forest on 14th June. Full details were as follows:

Locality	No. of broods	No. of young
Haughton Strother GP	4	14
Druridge Pools	2	8
Mootlaw Quarry	2	8
Whittle Dene Reservoirs	2	3
Hauxley NR	1	8
Slaley Forest	1	7
Linton Ponds	1	4
Bakethin Reservoir	1	2
Cocklawburn Pond	1	2
Newbiggin	1	1

In June, three flew N at Seaton Sluice. Between June-August, counts of 20-44 came from Branton GP, Broomlee Lough, Caistron, Colt Crag Reservoir, Cresswell Pond, Druridge Pools, Grindon Lough, Haughton Strother GP, Holywell Pond, Killingworth Lake, Mootlaw Quarry, Swallow Pond and Widdrington Moor Lake. More unusual were two at the Blyth Estuary on 1st August. Seven to 13 moved N at Newbiggin, Seaton Sluice and Whitley Bay between 14th-24th September. Also in September, 20-40 were at Bothal Pond, Branton GP, Castle Island, Druridge Pools, Grindon Lough, Hallington Reservoir, Haughton Strother GP, Killingworth and Ladyburn Lakes, Swallow Pond and Widdrington Moor Lake.

Four flew N at the Farne Islands on 8th October. Counts from the final quarter, in addition to those in the table, included 50-68 at Killingworth and Ladyburn Lakes in October, 54 at East Chevington in November and 59-75 at Caistron and Killingworth Lake in December, when three flew N at Seaton Sluice. Groups of 20-41 were also noted at Big Waters, Bolam Lake, Bothal Pond, Branton GP, Capheaton Lake, Castle Island, Grindon Lough, Hallington Reservoir, Holywell Pond, Linton Ponds, Newcastle (Exhibition Park), QEII CP Lake and Swallow Pond.

Scaup *Aythya marila*

STATUS: Uncommon passage and winter visitor, rare in summer.

East Chevington north pool regularly held up to 11 birds in January-February and a peak of 19 on 19th March (AJR). Four to nine were also at Cresswell Pond, Druridge Pools, Football Hole (Newton), Holy Island and Ladyburn and Widdrington Moor Lakes on sporadic dates in the first two months. In March, up to four were at Killingworth Lake. Occasional first-quarter counts of one to three came from Amble, Bothal and Holywell Ponds, Horncliffe, Linton Ponds, 'Northumberlandia' (Cramlington), Spital Bay, Swallow Pond and the Tweed Estuary. Farther inland, one was at Whittle Dene Reservoirs on 14th January.

In April, two to three were at Bothal Pond on 1st-2nd, one remaining until 8th May. Also in April, two were at East Chevington on 9th and singles there and at Holywell and West Allotment Ponds and Woodhorn Flashes on single dates between 1st-16th. Four were at Seaton Sluice on 7th May.

In June, singles were at Hauxley NR on 10th and flying N at Seaton Sluice on 30th and one was at Budle Bay from 28th June-11th July. Also in July, singles flew N at the Farne Islands on 10th and Tynemouth on 25th and singles were at Cresswell Pond and Fenham Flats. One was at Widdrington Moor Lake on 13th August and, in September, singles flew N at Seaton Sluice and Tynemouth on 16th and Annstead on 18th; one was also at Bothal Pond on 21st.

Numbers were low in the final quarter, with peaks of just four at Lindisfarne NNR in December, three at Cresswell Pond on 15th October and two at Fenham Flats on 14th November. One flew N at Seaton Sluice in October, when other singles were at East Chevington and Warkworth. In December, one was at Ladyburn Lake on 10th and a drake was inland at Haughton Strother GP on 12th.

Eider *Somateria mollissima*

STATUS: Common resident.

BREEDING: Common.

Peak monthly counts from Lindisfarne NNR (including Budle Bay) were as follows:

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
357	281	431	317	309	185	97	87	230	657	394	213

At Seaton Sluice, 26 flew N and 18 S in January and 80 N and 40 S in March. Peak concentrations away from Lindisfarne NNR in the first quarter were 101-138 at the Farne Islands, Beadnell-Howick, Seahouses-Beadnell and Stag Rocks and 41-96 at the Blyth Estuary, Boulmer-Alnmouth, Cocklawburn, Druridge Bay and Howick-Boulmer. Ten to 31 were also noted at Berwick (Meadow Haven, North Shore, Pier and Tweed Estuary), the Coquet Estuary, Cullercoats, Newbiggin, North Blyth, North Shields Fish Quay, St Mary’s and Whitley Bay.

In April, 127 flew N and 106 S at Seaton Sluice. During April-May, counts of 63-111 came from the Blyth Estuary, the Farne Islands, Seahouses-Beadnell and Spittal-Cocklawburn, while 23-38 were at Amble Braid, Howick-Boulmer, Newbiggin, Stag Rocks and the Tweed Estuary; display was noted at Blyth Harbour.

A worrying decline in breeding numbers was evident at the Farne Islands, where a drop of 41% occurred since 2016. A total of only 337 nesting pairs (593 in 2016), including 197 on Inner Farne and 111 on Brownsman, was noted. The first active nest was found on 30th March (the earliest-ever recorded on the islands) and hatching began on 9th May. A total of 536 young (941 in 2016) were counted from 241 monitored nests, giving a mean figure of 2.2 young per nest (2.67 in 2016) (FIR). A total of 259 breeding females were noted at Coquet Island (329 in 2016); a decrease of 24%. First eggs were noted on 20th April (27th April in 2016) (RSPB). Monitoring of ducklings at Amble Harbour-the Coquet Estuary resulted in the first two noted on 16th May, followed by a peak of 81 on 5th June. Duckling counts decreased steadily thereafter, possibly as a result of predation by Great Black-backed Gulls *Larus marinus*, and few were thought to have survived to fledging (RSPB).

Away from the above sites, broods or crèches were noted at eight sites between May-July, with the first at Budle Bay (four young) on 12th May. Interestingly, two broods (four and two young) were recorded at the Blyth Estuary and were believed to be locally bred (LJM). In addition, a female was found under a hedge between Hipsburn-Alnmouth on 31st May. On later checking, the nest was found to contain two eggs, which were incubated for a further week but, on 21st, the female was gone and the eggs predated (TAC). Both of the above records represent rare evidence of mainland breeding by Eiders.

Full details were as follows:

Locality	No. of broods/crèches	No. of young
Holy Island Causeway	2	12
Budle Bay	2+	11+
Amble Braid-the Coquet Estuary	2+	9
Blyth Estuary	2	6
Football Hole-Newton Point	2	6
Boulmer	1	11
Warkworth	1	10
Stag Rocks	1	8
Howick	1	2

Most, or all, of the young listed above probably originated from either Coquet Island or the Farne Islands.

In June, 37 flew N at Seaton Sluice. Between June-August, counts of 114-161 came from Seahouses-Beadnell and Spittal-Cocklawburn, with 52-75 at Alnmouth, Boulmer, Longhoughton Steel, North Blyth and Seaton Sluice and 24-46 at Berwick North Shore, Birling Carrs, the Blyth and Coquet Estuaries, the Farne Islands, Low Hauxley, Newbiggin, St Mary's and Stag Rocks. In September, 128 were at Birling Carrs and 53-76 at Beadnell-Howick, Seahouses-Beadnell and Spittal-Cocklawburn.

At Seaton Sluice, 105 flew N and 44 S in October, 63 N and 38 S in November and 147 N and nine S in December. Away from Lindisfarne NNR, where the highest total was 657 during a WeBS visit on 8th October (ACr), counts were generally low in the final quarter, with peaks of 54-76 at the Aln Estuary, Beadnell-Howick, Cheswick, Seahouses-Beadnell, Seaton Sluice and Stag Rocks; 30-46 were at the Blyth and Coquet Estuaries and Newbiggin.

Velvet Scoter *Melanitta fusca*

STATUS: Uncommon passage and winter visitor, rare in spring.

At Seaton Sluice, three flew N and three S in January and three N in March. Two to three also moved N at St Mary's, Tynemouth and Warkworth in January and one N at Berwick in March. Also in January, seven were at Stag Rocks on 15th and up to four there from 5th-7th, plus four at Cheswick and one to two at Goswick, Low Newton and Whitley Bay. The only February reports were of one to two at Goswick and Newton and, in March, ten were off Cheswick on 11th, up to four off Druridge and, more unusually, one at Blyth Harbour on 24th.

In April, four moved N at Tynemouth on 3rd and two to three were off East Chevington and Stag Rocks. One flew S at Cresswell on 18th May. Two flew N at Holy Island on 29th June. One to two were at the Farne Islands, Snab Point and Warkworth in July. Passage at Seaton Sluice involved eight N in July and 15 N in August, when eight flew N at Howick and one to three N at four further coastal sites. Movement at Seaton Sluice continued in September, with 20 N, including 17 N on 16th-17th, when strong passage also involved 21 N at Cullernose Point (BS), ten to 13 N at Boulmer and Tynemouth and three to nine at five other coastal points.

Further passage movement at Seaton Sluice in the final quarter involved 13 N and one S in October, 17 N in November and two N and one S in December. Elsewhere, two to four flew N at Cullercoats, Newbiggin and Tynemouth and three S at Boulmer in October. A single flock of 20 was close inshore at Cheswick on 30th October (DF), three to nine were in Druridge Bay and at Holy Island and one to two at Beadnell, Cambois, Embleton and Newbiggin. In November, four flew N at Annstead and singles N at Newbiggin, Tynemouth and Whitley Bay, five to seven were at Cheswick and off East Chevington and one to two at Holy Island, Newbiggin and Seaton Sluice. Fewer in December involved singles N at Tynemouth on 1st, in Druridge Bay on 10th and N at Boulmer on 16th.



Velvet and common Scoters - East Chevington - October (Jonathan Farooqi).

Common Scoter *Melanitta nigra*

STATUS: Common passage and winter visitor, present throughout the year.

Peak monthly counts from Lindisfarne NNR (including Budle Bay) were as follows:

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
1,000	650	1,000	0	0	0	275	0	200	515	700	500

Coastal movement at Seaton Sluice during the opening three months involved 123 N and 25 S in January and 63 N and 23 S in March, while seven to 24 flew N and 14 S at Whitley Bay in February-March. The Cheswick-Cocklawburn-Goswick Sands area regularly held up to 1,000, with the peak counts on 29th January and 3rd March coming from Goswick, within the NNR area. Smaller groups of 85-150 were off East Chevington and Stag Rocks, with ten to 40 at Alnmouth, Cambois, Cullercoats, Embleton Bay, Low Newton, Seaton Sluice, St Mary's and Whitley Bay.

In April, 519 flew N and 30 S at Seaton Sluice, while 30-70 were offshore there and at East Chevington. In May, 35-70 were at Berwick Little Beach, Cocklawburn, Newbiggin, Seaton Sluice and the Wansbeck Estuary. An unusual inland record involved a female at Branton GP on 17th May.

Strong passage at Seaton Sluice began with 3,910 N and 890 S in June, including 1,508 N and 508 S on 20th (SSWT) and continued with 1,630 N and 70 S on 5th-6th July and a total of 2,024 N and 177 S in August. Monthly totals of 325-808 N were also noted at the Farne Islands, Newbiggin, Newton Point and St Mary's in June-July. Gatherings were few in June but, in July, 700 were off Druridge and 275-300 at Cheswick and Stag Rocks; and 300 were off Cresswell in August. Groups of 30-84 were also off Alnmouth, Newbiggin and Seaton Sluice in July-August.

At Seaton Sluice, 1,361 flew N and 96 S in September, 966 N and 69 S in October, 602 N and 97 S in November and 195 N and 13 S in December. Counts of 214-354 N also came from Annstead Point, Newbiggin and Tynemouth in September, when 115-340 were offshore at Cocklawburn-Cheswick, East Chevington and Goswick. Peak concentrations in the final quarter involved 515-700 in the Cheswick-Goswick area, 106-200 off Cambois, Druridge, Seaton Sluice and Stag Rocks and 27-64 at Birling Carrs and Cambois.

Black Scoter *Melanitta americana*

STATUS: Extremely rare visitor. / PREVIOUS RECORDS: 2 / FIRST: 2011 / LAST: 2016

The drake first found at Goswick on 29th December 2016 (RA *et al.*) remained in the area until 8th March. It was often to be seen just offshore with a large Common Scoter *Melanitta nigra* flock of up to 700. It is still felt that this individual is the same drake as in previous years, going back to 2011. The record was accepted by the British Birds Rarities Committee.

Long-tailed Duck *Clangula hyemalis*

STATUS: Well-represented passage and winter visitor.

Peak monthly counts from Lindisfarne NNR (including Budle Bay) were as follows:

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
101	120	121	2	0	2	0	0	0	14	16	48

The majority of wintering birds were found in the north of the county. In January, 101 were at Goswick on 24th, including many displaying, while 70 were off nearby Cheswick Sands on 29th, 66 at Stag Rocks and 11 at Newton Links. Fewer were recorded in February, including 50 at Stag Rocks. In March, 121 (including many drakes) were at Stag Rocks on 7th (MH/AA), ca.120 were at Goswick on 3rd, ca.100 at Cheswick on 10th and 16 were also displaying at Cocklawburn. Elsewhere in the first quarter, three to eight were at Amble, Dunstan Steads, Football Hole (Newton) and Howick-Boulmer and singles occasionally at Bothal Pond, Castle Island, East Chevington, Horncliffe and Seahouses; farther inland, one was at Grindon Lough on 18th January. The only evidence of coastal passage involved one to two N at Hadston Carrs and Seaton Sluice between 2nd-4th January.

In April, singles flew N at Boulmer, Newbiggin and Tynemouth, up to three were off Seaton Sluice between 12th-30th, one to two were off Hauxley, Low Newton and Stag Rocks and singles at Bothal Pond, Castle Island and East Chevington. May reports consisted of three N at Seaton Sluice on 1st and singles at Castle Island between 5th-7th and at Bothal Pond on 9th. Two were off Cheswick on 15th June.

There were no further reports until October, when one off the Farne Islands on 3rd and four off Goswick on 9th were the first to return. Totals of 17 at the Farne Islands and five to seven at Newbiggin, Seaton Sluice and Tynemouth all flew N between 24th-30th and up to 14 were in the Cheswick-Goswick Sands area. In November, a total of nine flew N at Seaton Sluice and seven moved N and one S there in December. Also in November, 13-16 were at Cheswick and Ross Back Sands and five to nine at Budle Point-Stag Rocks and Annstead. The December count of 48 for Lindisfarne came from Ross Back Sands; 21 were also at Stag Rocks and six at Fenham Flats. Elsewhere during the final quarter, one to two were occasionally seen at Boulmer, Cresswell Pond, East Chevington (offshore and north pool), the Farne Islands, Hadston Carrs, Hauxley, Ladyburn Lake, Low Newton, Snab Point and Tynemouth.



Goldeneye *Bucephala clangula*

STATUS: Well-represented passage and winter visitor, uncommon in summer.

BREEDING: Rare. / FIRST BRED: 2010 / LAST BRED: 2017

Peak monthly counts from the River Tweed/Tweed Estuary were as follows:

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
46	72	52	2	1	1	1	0	5	75	43	37

East Chevington held peaks of 103 on 30th January (DFF), 83 in February and 57 in March. Away from the River Tweed, other first quarter maximum counts were 20-40 at Capheaton, Castle Island, Grindon Lough, Killingworth Lake, Whiteadder Point (Berwick) and Widdrington Moor Lake and ten to 18 at the Blyth Estuary, Bolam Lake, Branton GP, Caistron, Hauxley NR, Howick-Boulmer, Kielder Water, Ladyburn Lake, Newton Pool, QEII CP Lake, Swallow Pond and Whittle Dene Reservoirs. Five to nine were also at Big Waters, Bothal Pond, Boulmer, Catcleugh, Hallington and Hartburn Reservoirs, Haughton Strother and Hedgeley GPs, Holywell Pond, Seahouses-Beadnell and Tyne Green (Hexham). Coastal passage at Seaton Sluice involved 16 N and three S in January and two N in February. Display was noted at a regular breeding site on 24th March.

In April, one flew N at Seaton Sluice, 32 were at Capheaton Lake, ten to 20 at Bothal Pond, Branton GP and Colt Crag Reservoirs and four to nine at Big Waters, Bothal Pond, Castle Island, Catcleugh Reservoir, Druridge Pools, East Chevington, Grindon Lough, Hedgeley GP, Holywell Pond, Lindisfarne NNR, Whittle Dene Reservoirs, Widdrington Moor Lake and Woodhorn Flashes. Few remained into May, with five at Widdrington Moor Lake on 4th, four at Ingram Valley on 27th and singles at Druridge Pools and New Water Haugh (Berwick) up to 27th. Eight breeding attempts occurred at two sites (a new site and the 'traditional' site) between May-July, four of which were successful. The first brood (nine young) was noted on 23rd May. Full details were as follows (PHA/AHa):

Locality	No. of broods	No. of young
North Northumberland site one	2	18
North Northumberland site two	2	10

One nesting attempt failed due to floods, one failed to hatch a clutch of 15 eggs (probably laid by more than one female) and one failed due to probable human disturbance. Four geologgers were fitted to birds from one of the above sites (supported by a NTBC grant).

Away from the breeding sites, June reports consisted of two N at Newbiggin on 30th and singles at Bothal Pond, Hauxley NR, Ingram and New Water Haugh. In July, two were at the regular breeding site on 2nd and singles were at Hauxley NR and New Water Haugh on single dates. In August, singles flew N at the Farne Islands, Howick, Newbiggin and Seaton Sluice, six were at the regular breeding site on 4th and singles at Druridge Pools and East Chevington. In September, one to three moved N at Beadnell, Howick and Newbiggin on 15th-16th, five at New Water Haugh on 15th consisted of a pair of adults and three fledged juveniles, and one to three were at East Chevington, the Farne Islands, Holy Island and West Ord and the regular breeding site on single dates.

Numbers increased markedly in October, when a total of 183 flew N and 24 S at Seaton Sluice, including 214 N and 14 S on 30th, and 17-37 flew N at Newbiggin and Tynemouth on 29th. About 75 were at Fenham Flats on 30th and 50 at East Chevington. Passage continued in November, with 178 N and nine S at Seaton Sluice, including 100 N on 13th, when 32-47 flew N at three other coastal sites. In December, 22 flew N at Seaton Sluice. Peak site counts in November-December were 56 at East Chevington, 25-31 at Bolam Lake, Castle Island, East Chevington, Grindon Lough and Newbiggin and 11-19 at Branton GP, Caistron, Capheaton Lake, Derwent and Hallington Reservoirs, Howick, Killingworth Lake, Lindisfarne NNR, Whittle Dene Reservoirs and Widdrington Moor Lake, while five to nine were at Football Hole (Newton), Hauxley NR, Holy Island, Kielder Water, Ladyburn and QEII CP Lakes, Snab Point, Warkworth and West Ord.

Smew *Mergellus albellus*

STATUS: Rare passage and winter visitor.

In January, two 'redheads' were at East Chevington on 17th (JSB/EC/DRH) and one was at Monks House Pool between 18th-25th.

Goosander *Mergus merganser*

STATUS: Well-represented resident, passage and winter visitor.

BREEDING: Well-represented.

Peak monthly counts were as follows (excludes coastal passage):

Month	Locality	Count
January	River Tweed: Tillmouth-West Newbiggin	42
February	River Tweed: West Newbiggin	29
March	West Ord	14
April	Horncliffe	39
May	West Ord	98
June	Holy Island	110
July	Cocklawburn	118
August	Holy Island	148
September	Cocklawburn	126
October	Branton GP	87
November	Birgham	31
December	Norham	34

Additional peak gatherings in January-February involved 20-21 at Branton GP and Killingworth Lake and ten to 19 at Horncliffe, Powburn, Whiteadder Point and Whittle Dene Reservoirs. Elsewhere, during the first quarter, three to nine were at Airy Holm Reservoir (Shotleyfield), Bolam Lake, Bywell, Greenlee Lough, Haughton Strother GP, Heddon-on-the-Wall, Hedgeley GP, Holywell Pond, Longhoughton Quarry, Morpeth, New Water Haugh (Berwick), QEII CP Lake, Rothbury-Thropton, the Tweed Estuary, Tyne Green (Hexham), Wark and Wylam. Light coastal passage involved one N at Tynemouth in January and five N and three S at Seaton Sluice in March.

In April, seven moved N and eight S at Seaton Sluice and three S at Cocklawburn, with 30-33 at New Water Haugh and Whiteadder Water and, in May, 23 were at Horncliffe. Counts of ten to 15 also came from Holy Island and the Tweed Estuary in April-May, when three to six were at Branton GP, Bywell, Castle Island, Derwent Reservoir, Hexham, Warden and Wark.

A total of 48 widespread localities held birds at various times between April-July (57 in 2016). A very poor total of only five nests were found in the Border Forest-Kielder area; 47 eggs were laid, of which 36+ hatched. The outcome from three nests was unknown (MD). Away from these areas, broods were noted at just two sites in May-June (nine in 2016). Full details were as follows:

Locality	No. of broods/crèches	No. of young
Derwent Reservoir	2+	27
Beanley	1	5

Two broods (six and four) were noted in the Upper Coquet Valley on 4th September. A single female with a brood of 20 same-sized young was at Derwent Reservoir on 17th May; possibly a 'dump brood' (IFo).

In June, the highest count of 110, at St Cuthbert's Island (Holy Island) on 17th, consisted mainly of fresh-plumaged juveniles; 34-36 were also at Budle Bay and Spittal cliffs and 19 at the Blyth Estuary (possibly a crèche of large juveniles). In July, 39-90 were at the Blyth Estuary, Boulmer, Holy Island, New Water Haugh-the Tweed Estuary, Spittal cliffs and Warkworth Pier and, in August, 148 were off Holy Island on 7th (NFO), 78 were at the Tweed Estuary, 42 at Amble and 20-24 at the Blyth Estuary, Haughton Strother GP, Warkworth and Whiteadder Point. A total of 30 flew N and 13 S at Seaton Sluice during September, when seven flew SW at East Cramlington LNR, 22-52 were at Birgham, Holy Island, Stag Rocks and the Tweed Estuary. During the period June-September, ten to 18 were at Branton GP, Bygate Farm (Upper Coquetdale), Fenham Flats, Fisherman's Haven (Berwick), Horncliffe, Longhoughton Steel and Seahouses-Beadnell, with five to nine at four other sites including the Breamish Valley.

Coastal movement in October involved one to four N and six to seven S at the Farne Islands, Newbiggin and Seaton Sluice and one to two S at East Chevington and Embleton Bay; in November, a total of 12 flew N and one S at Seaton Sluice. Peak counts in the final quarter, other than those in the table, were moderate, with 12-17 at Budle Bay, Horncliffe-Gainslaw House, Stag Rocks, Whiteadder Water and Whittle Dene Reservoirs and three to eight at the Aln Estuary, Arcot Pond, Bolam Lake, Broomlee Lough, Bywell, Castle Island, Corbridge, Derwent Reservoir, Killingworth Lake, Marden Quarry, Newcastle (Exhibition and Leazes Parks), Warden and Warkworth. More unusual was one on a bog garden pond at Howick on 13th November.

Red-breasted Merganser *Mergus serrator*

STATUS: Well-represented passage and winter visitor.

BREEDING: Extremely rare. / FIRST BRED: 1975 / LAST BRED: 2017

Peak monthly counts from Lindisfarne NNR were as follows:

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
55	8	37	18	21	27	29	16	46	23	20	41

In January, 55 were at Goswick on 25th (MJC) and 12-14 at Cheswick Sands and East Chevington and, in February, ten to 13 were at Druridge Pools, East Chevington north pool and Ladyburn Lake. A total of eight flew N and three S at Seaton Sluice in March, when 11-12 were at Cambois and East Chevington. Smaller first-quarter counts of seven to ten came from Beadnell-Howick, the Blyth Estuary, Boulmer-Alnmouth, Ladyburn and QEII CP Lakes, Stag Rocks and the Tweed Estuary and three to five from the Coquet Estuary, Longhoughton Low Steads, Meadow Haven (Berwick), Newbiggin-Cambois, Seahouses-Beadnell, Spittal Bay and Tweed Dock. One to two were seen at six other sites and display was noted at Budle Bay in February and East Chevington in March.

Spring passage at Seaton Sluice involved 28 N and five S in April, with three past in May. Ten flew S at Boulmer, three N at Tynemouth and one N at St Mary's during this period. Also in April-May, ten to 14 were off Cambois and Druridge and three to seven at the Blyth Estuary, Castle Island, Cocklawburn, Cresswell Pond, East Chevington and the Tweed Estuary, with one to two at Druridge Pools, the Farne Islands, Monks House Pool and Widdrington Moor Lake.

A single pair bred at the Farne Islands, with a brood of ducklings noted on 4th July. A second pair may also have attempted to breed (FIR). In June, five to ten flew N at Newbiggin and Seaton Sluice and seven moved N at Newbiggin in July.

During the period June-September, in addition to the counts at Lindisfarne NNR, 24-36 were at Alnmouth, Amble, Boulmer, Coquet Island, Craster and Newton, with one to three at Cullernose Point, East Chevington, the Farne Islands, Ladyburn Lake, Longhoughton Steel, Seahouses, Stag Rocks and the Tweed Estuary. More unusual was a drake, in eclipse plumage, inland at Whittle Dene Reservoirs on 21st June. In September, three to eight also flew N at Seaton Sluice and Stag Rocks.

Coastal movement at Seaton Sluice continued in October, with eight N and four S, while seven flew N in November and nine N and one S in December. Away from Lindisfarne NNR, counts were modest in the final quarter, with 11 at Beadnell-Howick and five to nine at Boulmer-Alnmouth, Cresswell Pond, Druridge-East Chevington, Newbiggin-Cambois and Warkworth. Three to four were at the Blyth Estuary, Cocklawburn, East Chevington north pool and the Tweed Estuary, with one to two at six other sites, including the Farne Islands. Two drakes vigorously displayed to a duck at Cresswell Pond on 28th December.

Ruddy Duck *Oxyura jamaicensis*

STATUS: Rare visitor / LAST RECORD: 2014

BREEDING: Rare / FIRST BRED: 1964 / LAST BRED: 2008

In June, a drake discovered at Bothal Pond on 8th was noted on several further dates until 29th. A drake was also at Holywell Pond on 2nd July. One at Fenham Mill on 15th July was considered a probable escapee from a collection about 2km away. After an apparent absence in July-August, a drake was again at Bothal Pond on 12th September. A female was at Grindon Lough on 22nd November.

Black Grouse *Lyrurus tetrix*

STATUS: Well-represented resident.

BREEDING: Well-represented.

The North Pennines remain the stronghold for this species. In January, four males and three females were at High Knock Shield Farm (Allendale) on 19th, with five to the south in roadside trees at Peasmeadows (Spartylea) on 23rd. Four were in the Hexhamshire area on 14th, two at Grindon Lough on 17th and one at Whitfield Moor on 22nd. Eight males together in a rushy meadow at Coanwood Common on 14th February were presumed to be part of a lek. Elsewhere in February, three males were at Meadow Cottage (near Allenheads), a male was with two females at Swinhope Shield (Allenheads) and one to two frequented Coatenhill, Plenmeller Common, Slaggyford, Smallburns Moor (Carrshield) and Spartylea.

Lek activity became a feature in March, with five males and six greyhens at two leks on Hexhamshire Common on 25th (STE) and six were lekking at Allendale Common the following day. One to four birds were also seen at Blanchland, Carrshield, High Knock Shield, Ridley Common, Ropehaugh and Rowley Burn. In April, three males and a female were again at a lek on Hexhamshire Common on 3rd, four males and three females were at Westburnhope (Hexhamshire) on 15th and one to three were at several other regular locations, with a male at Sundaysight the observer's first record there. May records involved two on Blanchland Moor on 18th and a single there on 6th and, in June, a single male was on Whitfield Moor on 21st. A total of nine were at a nest near Spartylea in July, where young fledged successfully at the end of the month.

Spartylea was the focus during August, with between four and ten birds seen all month; one to two were also seen at Allenheads. In September, a male and three females were noted at Coalcleugh on 15th and four males were at Dryburn (Allendale) and three birds at Carrshield on 23rd.

The final quarter is always quiet for Black Grouse records and none were reported in October. In November, four to 15 were noted all month at Spartylea and a single male was in a pasture near Derwent Reservoir Sailing Club on 12th and 14th. The final records of the year involved four at Spartylea on 1st December, with a female there on 21st.



Black Grouse - Allenheads - August (Colin Bradshaw).



Red Grouse - Allendale Common -
March (Mike Hodgson).



Red Grouse - Blanchland -
May (Alan Jack).

Red Grouse *Lagopus lagopus*

STATUS: Common resident.

BREEDING: Common.

The North Pennines and Cheviot Hills remain the stronghold for this species in the county. In January, the peak count was 24 at Hedgehope, followed by 20 at Swinhope Moor (Allenheads) and 15-16 at Ouston Fell, the Border Ridge in the Cheviots and High Knock Shield Farm (Allendale). The only sizeable gathering in February involved 21 at Plenmeller Common. In March, numbers were reported as 'very high' on Allendale Common, with many calling and displaying by 23rd. Elsewhere, 24 were counted at Broadstruther in the Cheviots and 12 were displaying at Hawsen Burn on 24th.

Breeding evidence involved several pairs with young in Allendale on 25th May and ten birds, including four chicks, on Fellhouse Fell on 21st June. During the period April-September, many suitable localities held good numbers of birds, including sites already mentioned, as well as Acton Fell, Alnwick Moor, Barrow Law, Carey Burn, Catcleugh, Catton Moss, Harwood Shield, Ingram Valley, King's Law, Kirknewton, Langleeford, Longframlington Common, Pithouse Fell (Slaley), Simonside, Sipton Burn, Spartylea, Thrunton Wood, Whitfield Moor, Windy Rig and Winnows Hill (Slaley).

Reports dwindled into the final quarter, with the highest count involving 25 active on the snow-covered Simonside Hills on 28th December (TD). The only other double-figure count was 12+ at Hareshaw Common (Bellingham) in November. Otherwise all reports were of one to six, including two cocks displaying at Quarry House Moor (Chillingham) in October.

Red-legged Partridge *Alectoris rufa*

STATUS: Common resident, sustained by frequent releases for sporting purposes.

BREEDING: Uncommon.

The peak counts in the first quarter were 25 at Shilbottle in January, 20 at Alnham in February, 14 at Bradford in January and ten at Mootlaw Quarry (Ryal) in February; otherwise counts of one to nine came from many other, mostly inland, localities.

In April, a count of 40 in the Harthope Valley, between East Langleeford-Yearle, was notable on 8th. An increase in coastal records during April prompted concerns regarding possible competition with Grey Partridge *Perdix perdix*. A more general increase in numbers was noted from May onwards, culminating in a count of 150 at Blawerie (Bewick Moor) on 16th July (SW). Few reports were received in August and the highest count in September involved 40+ in the Holywell area on 20th.

Larger counts in the final quarter involved 20 at Brier Dene Farm (Whitley Bay) in October (reducing to 12 in December), 17 in Upper Coquetdale in November, 15 running all over a minor road at Swindon in November and 12 at Alnham in December.

Grey Partridge *Perdix perdix*

STATUS: Common resident.

BREEDING: Common, although declining in some areas.

In January, peak counts included 18 at Whittle Dene Reservoirs (SR), 12 in an autumn-sown field adjacent to Blyth Links Cemetery and at Druridge Links and ten in the Cresswell Pond-Hemcote Hill area. A further count of ten came from North Walbottle in February. Single-figure counts during the first quarter were widespread, but mostly from coastal, and near-coastal, sites. More unusual amongst reports was a single on Holy Island Causeway on 14th January, with seven in stubble fields at Chare Ends (Holy Island) throughout the month.

Pairs were noted at numerous suitable breeding sites during the period April-August. These included a pair with seven chicks at Quarry Cottage (Newbiggin) on 24th June, increasing to ten young on 6th July, although only one large youngster was still present by 29th July. Elsewhere, a pair with eight juveniles was at Longhoughton on 7th July, a pair with one juvenile at Cresswell Pond on 21st and, earlier, a single bird with one large young at Arcot Lane on 1st. Higher counts during this period included 16 at Chugdon Wood (Ellington) and 12 at Waren Mill Caravan Park (Bamburgh).

In the final four months, a large covey of 18 was at Callerton Subsidence area on 18th December (MH), 17 were at Beal, 14 at Old Bewick, 13 at Cresswell Links, 12 at Letham (Berwick), 11 at Newbiggin GC, Snab Point and Whittle Dene Reservoirs and ten at Big Waters and Quarry Cottage.

Quail *Coturnix coturnix*

STATUS: Uncommon to rare summer visitor. Numbers fluctuate from year to year.

BREEDING: Rare. Difficult to prove and certainly overlooked. / LAST BRED: 2013

After a run of lean years, it was good to finally see a 'Quail Year' in the county. The first record involved a bird flushed from long grass at Boulmer on 13th May; it was followed by one flushed from a wide grassy verge by the bike-riding observer near Todburn the following day and one was calling in fields near Cheswick railway line on 21st May.

During June, birds were heard at an encouraging 11 localities, beginning with a male singing near Longhirst Flash on 2nd, increasing to two on 21st. Three were at Hadrian's Wall Path (Hexham) on 16th, twos were heard at Pegswood and Stobswood Pools on 19th, with singles calling at Bellasis Bridge on 3rd, Low Newton on 4th, Howdon on 12th, Bamburgh on 16th, Branton on 20th and Shotleyfield on 24th. Finally, a male was singing from just west of Wark village (North Tyne) on 25th. This influx continued into July, with reports from 11 sites. The Elford area of Bamburgh held up to four singing males on 4th July (CGK/GPK) and twos were heard or seen at Beal Pont, Brier Dene Farm (Whitley Bay), Fenham-le-Moor, Northside Farm (Horsley) and Stobswood, with singles at Holburn Grange, Holy Island, Low Newton, Mootlaw Quarry (Ryal) and St Mary's.

As would be expected, numbers dropped into late summer. In August, a male was singing from a barley field at Budle Bay from 1st-20th and further singles were reported from Bellasis Bridge on 1st, Duddon on 10th, Hoppen Kiln Flash on 21st and Fenham-le-Moor on 27th. Finally, a single flushed twice from dunes at Hadston Carrs on 24th September became the latest record in the county for nine years.

Pheasant *Phasianus colchicus*

STATUS: Common resident.

BREEDING: Common.

Few records no doubt reflect continued apathy towards this widely released and often passive bird. The only double-figure counts in the first quarter were 14 at Alnham in February and Whiteadder Water in March and ten at Gosforth Bridleway in January and Towsbank in February.

Counts during the period April-July were all in single figures and no confirmed breeding reports were received, although a juvenile was being harassed by a Stoat *Mustela erminea* at Hauxley on 26th August. On 15th August, 50 young birds were released at Mootlaw Quarry (Ryal) and on 30th August, 12 were in the Ingram Valley. Some larger counts in September may have been linked to releases, including 60 at Mootlaw Quarry (ALT), 40+ at Derwent Reservoir and 20 at Green River Mill (Mitford).

A high count of 52 was made at Pegswood on 11th October, 27 were at Scrainwood on 19th November, 25+ were at Bothal Pond on 14th October and counts of ten to 20 came from Alnham, Derwent Reservoir, Farnley Haughs and Hauxley RS during the final quarter.

Red-throated Diver *Gavia stellata*

STATUS: Well-represented passage and winter visitor, uncommon in summer.

At Seaton Sluice, in January, 75 flew N and 37 S (in 36 hours), representing an average count for the month. Elsewhere, 47 were offshore at East Chevington on 19th, various counts of 30-32 came from Lindisfarne NNR during the month, 20 flew S (in one hour) at Hauxley on 29th, 17 were at Stag Rocks on 20th and 15 at Newton Links on 2nd. Passage at Seaton Sluice in February comprised three N and 19 S. The peak offshore counts were 50 at Amble on 4th and 41 at East Chevington on 17th. Elsewhere, the highest counts were 16 offshore at Ross Back Sands on 16th and 12 off Cheswick on 15th. In March, at Seaton Sluice, 45 flew N and 32 S (in 38 hours), well above the monthly average. Additionally, six flew N and eight S at Rockcliffe (Whitley Bay) on 23rd, 20 were at Goswick on 3rd, 14 at Cocklawburn on 15th and 11 in Blyth Bay on 29th. Reports of one to ten came from many other coastal localities during the quarter.

In April, below average totals of 60 N and 12 S (in 93 hours) passed Seaton Sluice and six flew N at Newton Links on 22nd and at Newbiggin on 26th. Peak offshore counts were 27 at Cocklawburn on 14th, 19 at East Chevington on 2nd and 12 off Cheswick Sands on 27th. Five at Cocklawburn was the highest May count and the only June sightings involved three N and three S at Seaton Sluice from 20th-30th.

Numbers increased slightly in July, with seven N and two S (in 31 hours) at Seaton Sluice and two N on 3rd, 12th and 16th at Newbiggin, with widespread reports one to two elsewhere. At Seaton Sluice, three flew N and five S during August and one to two were at two other localities. Above average passage was noted in September at Seaton Sluice, with 125 N and 138 S (in 75 hours). At Tynemouth, 15 flew N and ten S (in four hours 15 minutes) on 16th and 15 flew N and 18 S (in two hours 15 minutes) on 17th. Similar passage elsewhere saw 24 pass Newbiggin on 17th, with 18 on 18th and 12 on 16th; 16 flew S (in one hour 45 minutes) at Beadnell Point on 15th and one to nine were noted at many other coastal locations.

The species was well-reported in October, with 70 N and 137 S (in 50 hours) at Seaton Sluice, whilst the offshore flock in Druridge Bay peaked at 60 on 8th. Elsewhere, 25 were at Cheswick Sands on 8th and 11 flew N (in five hours 45 minutes) at Newbiggin on 28th. By contrast, numbers were below average at Seaton Sluice in November, with 68 N and 44 S (in 47 hours). Elsewhere, 17 were in Druridge Bay on 5th, 15 at Cheswick Sands on 8th and 12 at Holy Island on 14th. The highest-ever December numbers were recorded at Seaton Sluice, with 211 N and 105 S (in 33 hours), including 100 N and 22 S on 1st-2nd (SSWT). Farther north, 25+ were at Goswick on 22nd, 16 at Buston Links on 18th, 14 between Boulmer-Alnmouth on 22nd and at East Chevington on 19th, 12+ at Stag Rocks on 3rd and 11 in Lynemouth Bay on 21st. One to ten were noted from numerous other coastal sites during the final quarter.

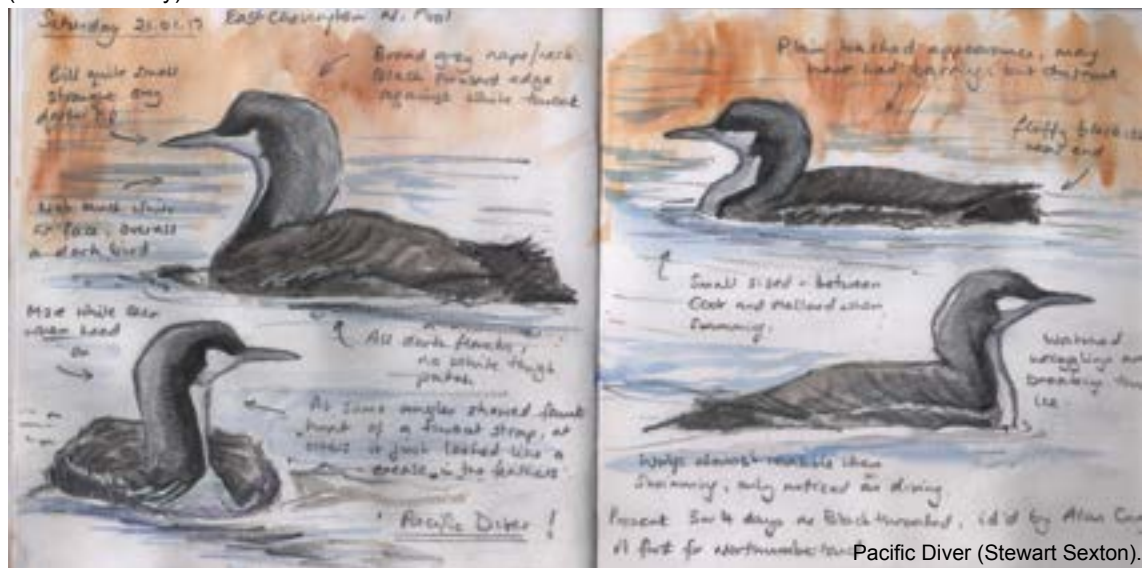
Black-throated Diver *Gavia arctica*

STATUS: Uncommon passage and winter visitor, rare in summer.

In January, singles were noted during the month at Cambois, Cheswick Sands, Cocklawburn Beach, East Chevington (Chibburn Mouth and NWT Reserve), Goswick and Snab Point. In February, singles were noted at Cheswick, Goswick and Stag Rocks, whilst on 14th, at Druridge Bay, an unfortunate individual was attacked by a Great-backed Gull *Larus marinus*, held under water until it drowned and then promptly eaten! Only singles were again noted in March; at Cheswick, Low Hauxley, Newton and Rockcliffe (Whitley Bay). Late singles were noted at Stag Rocks on 7th April, passing Seaton Sluice on 26th April, at Cresswell on 10th May and in the Craster-Dunstanburgh area on 30th May.

No more were seen until September, when a single flew N at Snab Point on 13th, where one was seen close inshore on 16th, and further singles were at Alnmouth Bay, Cocklawburn Beach, the Farne Islands, Holy Island and Seaton Sluice. Numbers increased in October, when four flew N and one S at Seaton Sluice from 10th-30th, two were with Red-throated Divers *Gavia stellata* off Cheswick Sands on 8th and singles at Goswick on 8th, S at the Farne Islands on 9th, Church Point (Newbiggin) on 18th and flying past Beadnell and S at Boulmer on 19th. Singles were noted on the coast in November at Annstead, Boulmer, Brown's Bay (Whitley Bay), Seaton Sluice and Tynemouth and inland at Derwent Reservoir on 3rd. During December,

three flew N at Seaton Sluice, two of which were on 1st and almost certainly the birds seen flying N that day at Tynemouth then Howick. Two were at Ross Back Sands on 21st and singles at Berwick Pier, Calot Shad (Tweed Estuary) and Goswick.



Pacific Diver *Gavia pacifica*

STATUS: Extremely rare visitor. / PREVIOUS RECORDS: 0

The event of 2017, with this first record for the county. This individual was suspected to have been the one photographed at the Blyth Estuary on 18th January, when it was thought to be a Black-throated Diver *Gavia arctica*. The resultant photos had several observers scouring the area. It then moved to East Chevington on 19th and again was distant and not able to be definitely identified. Suitably encouraged that this was definitely worth investigating further, an observer arrived at East Chevington on 20th and re-found the bird (AC *et al.*). Better views showed off its fully dark flanks, faint throat strap and, together with the small size and fascinating 'snorkelling' behaviour enabled the sighting to be broadcast. Luckily, it decided that the nearby Druridge Bay CP was a better feeding option and fantastic close views were possible in the following weeks, as it swam unconcernedly close to the shore. It remained right through to 16th March, having given an enormous amount of pleasure to many observers. The record was accepted by the British Birds Rarities Committee.

Great Northern Diver *Gavia immer*

STATUS: Uncommon passage and winter visitor, rare in summer.

In January, singles flew S at Newton Links on 1st and at Seaton Sluice on 13th-14th, with birds N at Hadston Carrs on 2nd, Tynemouth on 2nd and 14th and Newton Links on 3rd. Offshore, two were at Holy Island on 8th, Cheswick Sands on 17th and Goswick on 24th, with singles on various dates at East Chevington, Embleton Bay, Newton Links and Stag Rocks. Three were off Cheswick Sands on three dates from 5th-17th February, with one on 19th, and two were at Goswick on three dates from 4th-27th February. In March, four were at Goswick on 3rd, three at Cocklawburn on 10th, two at Cheswick Sands on 11th and a single at Stag Rocks on 2nd.

In April, singles were at Bamburgh on 1st, Hauxley on 19th and Newton Links on 23rd. On 29th, one flew N at St Mary's and was probably the same bird seen at Seaton Sluice, where another was seen on 4th May. A bird in full summer plumage was feeding offshore at Holy Island (Emmanuel Head) on 8th, one in partial summer plumage was offshore at East Chevington on 13th and a full summer bird was at the Farne Islands on 20th May. Singles in June were at Amble Links on 1st, Druridge Bay on 6th, Dunstanburgh on 15th and close inshore at Newbiggin on 30th. The sole July record involved a single, in winter plumage, close inshore at Boulmer on 9th. One was seen regularly at Howick Haven throughout August, with one at Sugar Sands (Loughoughton) on 20th increasing to two on 29th.

Two flew S at Hauxley on 16th September, with two N at Cullernose Point on 17th. Singles were noted flying S at Seaton Sluice on 1st and 17th September, with others at Birling Carrs, Boulmer, Emmanuel Head, the Farne Islands, Newbiggin and Tynemouth. In October, seven flew N and four S at Seaton Sluice; four also flew N (in five hours) at Newbiggin on 28th, with another four N the following day and three N on 18th. Two were off Holy Island on 7th October, two flew N at St Mary's and S at Tynemouth on 29th October and two flying W at the Farne Islands on 30th may have been those at Stag Rocks the same day. Singles were at Cheswick, East Chevington, the Farne Islands, Goswick, Hauxley, Holy Island (three) and Low Newton on various dates during the month.

In November, five flew N and four S at Seaton Sluice, whilst, at the Farne Islands four were noted on 13th, three flew N on 29th and two flew N on 12th, with singles on four further dates. Four flew S at Newbiggin on 13th and three (including one in summer plumage) were off Holy Island (Snipe Point) on 14th. Elsewhere, one to two were noted at Annstead, Boulmer, Brown's Bay (Whitley Bay), Cheswick Sands, Cullernose Point, East Chevington (Chibburn Mouth and north pool), Goswick, Hadston Carrs, Meadow Haven (Berwick), Ross Back Sands, Snab Point, Stag Rocks and Tynemouth. A first-winter bird was well inland at Derwent Reservoir from 14th-19th November. At Seaton Sluice, four flew N from 1st-3rd December and two flew N at Howick on 1st. Two were at Ross Back Sands and Stag Rocks on 21st December, with two first-winter birds at Widdrington Moor Lake from 3rd-10th (one to 17th); one or more singles were at Boulmer, East Chevington and Goswick.

White-billed Diver *Gavia adamsii*

STATUS: Rare visitor. / FIRST RECORD: 1829 / LAST RECORD: 2010

White-billed Diver is becoming increasingly regular in the UK and there were four sightings this year.

The first, however, was distinctly unusual as it involved one flying S over the coach park on Holy Island on 12th October (JDr/TDr/MWi). At a range of only 40m all the distinctive features could be appreciated and the three observers were in no doubt as to the identity, having seen many individuals in Scotland. The second individual was altogether more typical, as one was tracked N up the coast with a Great Northern Diver *Gavia immer* so, once it had been identified off Whitburn (County Durham) on 29th October, observers were in place at many seawatching points awaiting its arrival. The first sighting was off Tynemouth at 10:34hrs (MK/DRW), with further sightings off St Mary's at 10:46hrs (AC), Seaton Sluice at 10:47hrs (MHP/TRC/RD), Newbiggin at 10:58hrs (TF/JFa *et al.*), East Chevington at 11:18hrs (NFO) and, finally, the Farne Islands at 12:47hrs (DH/JCr/TH). A second bird that day, in winter plumage, was also located off Newbiggin at 11:20hrs (TF/JFa *et al.*), again being seen at East Chevington at 11:40hrs (NFO) and off the Farne Islands at 13:38hrs (DH/JCr/TH).

Another individual was seen off Whitburn on the morning of 29th November and this was also picked up flying N past Seaton Sluice (MHP/TRC). Extreme close views were obtained as it flew high at 100m range. There is little doubt that sightings will become more regular in the future with seawatchers now well aware that birds can be seen off the Northumberland coast.

Black-browed Albatross *Thalssarche melanophris*

STATUS: Extremely rare visitor. / PREVIOUS RECORDS: 2 / FIRST: 1965 / LAST: 1973

In recent years there has been a wandering individual in the North Sea that normally remains at Heligoland, off the German coast. With increased sightings off the British coastline, it was always hoped that it would pay a visit to Northumberland. On 4th May, an experienced observer (MHu) was seawatching off Cocklawburn, when he noticed four Great Black-backed Gulls *Larus marinus* harrying a much larger seabird! At 300m range, with a scope, it was immediately identified as this species, even down to the black brow! Having seen albatrosses in New Zealand, he was well aware of the powerful strong flight and this looked suitably impressive as it made two passes around the bay constantly harassed by its pursuers. It was pushed out to sea and headed off to the NE. It was well documented and accepted by the British Birds Rarities Committee. In their annual report they stated that the German individual was still present in Heligoland in early May, hence all the 2017 British sightings are noted as relating to a different individual. Constant seawatching over subsequent days revealed no further sightings until early morning on 29th June when it was seen again passing N off Whitburn (County Durham). With everyone alerted, it managed to elude seawatchers along most of the coastline, before being picked up again from Brownsman cottage (Farne Islands) at midday (TH/DH). In a fierce north easterly gale, it made surprisingly easy progress N, as it glided through. The observers were scoping from inside the cottage and had 15 seconds of good views before losing the bird to the north.

Their subsequent evocative account was accepted by the British Birds Rarities Committee. It was also accepted off St Abbs Head (Borders) later in the afternoon, as it continued its movement north.

Certainly a jaw dropping moment for all three observers and the two sightings are the first since the two previous county records at Hauxley in September 1965 and Seaton Sluice in November 1973. These two previous sightings were accepted as Black-browed Albatrosses by the CRC, but only as albatross sp. by the British Birds Rarities Committee.

Storm Petrel *Hydrobates pelagicus*

STATUS: Uncommon on passage in summer and autumn, rarely seen from land and possibly overlooked.

In a poor year for this species, the first record involved two trapped and ringed at Druridge Pools on the night of 12th-13th August (IDR). One flew N, close to the shore, at Beadnell Point on 15th September. In October, one flew slowly N at Newbiggin on 28th with singles, or possibly the same bird, N at Tynemouth and then Newbiggin the following day. None were recorded at the Farne Islands despite tape-luring.

Leach's Petrel *Oceanodroma leucorhoa*

STATUS: Rare visitor. / FIRST RECORD: 1828 / LAST RECORD: 2016

One was well observed in Newbiggin Bay on 18th October (CH). It gradually made its way out to sea and was not relocated elsewhere.

Fulmar *Fulmarus glacialis*

STATUS: Well-represented resident and common passage visitor.

BREEDING: Well-represented.

Very light passage occurred at Seaton Sluice in January, with a peak of 25 N (in three hours 30 minutes) on 4th. Returning birds were noted at several breeding sites, including 33 at Cullernose Point on 19th and ca.30 at Coves Bay (Holy Island) on 15th. During February-March, maximum counts involved 44 at Cullernose Point on 7th March, 27 at Annstead on 20th March, 25 passed Newton Links on 12th February and 24 at Howick on 24th March, with 21 on the sea at Stag Rocks, 20 at Rockcliffe (Whitley Bay) and 14 on the cliffs below Newbiggin caravan site.

Significant passage was noted at the end of April, with 550 N (per hour) at Berwick Pier on 25th, 90 N at Seaton Sluice on 25th, 550 N (in five hours), including a 'blue phase' bird, at Seaton Sluice on 26th, when 360 flew N (in one hour) at Howick. Elsewhere, 80 flew N (in one hour) at Newton Links on 22nd, with 80 N (in one hour) at Newbiggin on 25th. Lighter passage was noted in May, with 132 N (in two hours) at Annstead on 8th and 65 N at Seaton Sluice from 8th-9th the main counts.

At the Farne Islands, a partial count was undertaken this year, revealing a 7% increase for the islands surveyed. The first egg was noted on 24th May and productivity on the Outer Group was low at 0.46 chicks fledged per pair (FIR). After several years of decline, the population on Coquet Island bounced back, reaching an all-time high of 84 AON; however, productivity was low at 0.31 chicks fledged per pair (RSPB).

The table below details some sites with apparently occupied nests (AON) during the breeding season (DMT *et al.*):

Locality	No. of AON 2017	No. of AON 2016
Farne Islands	180 *	244
Coquet Island	84 (26 young)	42 (31 young) young)
Needles Eye	No Count	22
Dunstanburgh Castle cliffs	19-20 (6 young)	12 (3 young)
Old Hartley	16 (5 young)	13 (2-3 young)
Whitley Bay (High Point cliffs)	9 (unknown)	7 (3 young)
Whitley Bay (Brown's Bay)	2 (0 young)	1 (1 young)
Tynemouth cliffs	37 (14 young)	39 (12+ young)
Coves Bay (Holy Island)	Unknown (22) young)	No Count
Snab Point	12 (5 Young)	No Count
Spital Point (Newbiggin)	13 (2 young)	No Count

* There was not a full count of nests on the Farne Islands this year.

The only sizeable July report involved 46 at Annstead on 24th. A large movement occurred at Seaton Sluice on 9th August, when 310 flew N during the day. On Holy Island, 29 were at Emmanuel Head on 21st and four large downy young were still in nests during the month at Coves Bay. The only significant movement in September occurred on 17th, when 701, including a single 'blue phase bird', flew N (in nine hours) at Seaton Sluice (SSWT) and 180, including a single 'blue phase' bird, flew N at Cullernose Point; otherwise 30 flew N at Boulmer on 14th, with 21 N on 16th.

Birds returned to the Farne Islands on 14th November and 'large numbers' were reported on the cliffs by the end of the month. In December, the peak count was ten at Tynemouth on 1st.

Cory's Shearwater *Calonectris borealis*

STATUS: Rare visitor. / FIRST RECORD: 1962 / LAST RECORD: 2016

Two sightings this year, with the first off Newbiggin on 22nd August (MHp/TF/JFa). Close views were obtained as it flew N past Church Point. The second sighting involved one S past Holy Island (Emmanuel Head) at 14:15hrs on 16th September (MJC). Views were inconclusive at first, but luckily it made another pass at 15:15hrs, when closer views made identification much easier.

Sooty Shearwater *Ardenna grisea*

STATUS: Well-represented autumn passage visitor, uncommon in summer.

As in the two previous years, numbers were again low in 2017. January and February records are very rare in the county, March records even more so; one that flew N at Seaton Sluice on 23rd March became only the second county record for that month (following one in Inner Farne Sound on 1st March 2009). No further birds were seen until 22nd July, when two flew N at Newbiggin and singles flew N at the Farne Islands on 23rd and Seaton Sluice on 26th. In August, there were only three sightings, with three at Newbiggin (in two hours) on 22nd and singles S at the Farne Islands on 9th and Tynemouth on 23rd; no records from Seaton Sluice during the month was considered exceptional.

Numbers remained low in September, with a highest count of 57 N at Cullernose Point on 17th (BS). At Seaton Sluice, the monthly total was 53 N, of which 51 were between 15th-17th. This constituted a low count for the site for the seventh year running. Elsewhere in September, northerly movement included 49 at the Farne Islands from 15th-18th, 24 at Tynemouth on 16th, five on 16th and 14 on 17th at Newbiggin, 13 at Cullercoats on 17th, 12 at Holy Island on 15th and 11 at Rockcliffe (Whitley Bay) on 16th. One to nine were noted on other dates during this period at Beadnell Point, Boulmer, Cullernose Point, Hauxley, Newbiggin and Whitley Bay; earlier in the month a single flew N at Newbiggin on 1st. The final birds of the year were two offshore amongst a Kittiwake *Rissa tridactyla* feeding frenzy at Boulmer on 24th September.

Great Shearwater *Ardenna gravis*

STATUS: Rare visitor. / FIRST RECORD: 1936 / LAST RECORD: 2016

Another multi-observer sighting, with one picked up flying N at 07:18hrs at Howick on 16th September (BS). News was quickly put out, enabling other observers to make contact. Further sightings resulted at Craster at 07:20hrs (SS), Beadnell Point (GW) and in Staple Sound (Farne Islands) at 08:10hrs (DH).

Manx Shearwater *Puffinus puffinus*

STATUS: Well-represented to common passage visitor, more numerous in summer.

Unusually, single birds were seen very early in the year at Goswick on 25th January and flying S at Stag Rocks on 24th February. No more were noted until April, when one flew N at Seaton Sluice on 17th, followed by four N at Newbiggin on 18th. The largest N movement occurred on 26th, when ten were seen at Newbiggin, four at Seaton Sluice, two at Howick and one at Tynemouth. Singles were also seen off Cambois and Newton Links.

Numbers increased in May, with peak counts of 58 at Seaton Sluice on 29th, 57 flying N (in 50 minutes) at Boulmer on 20th, when 21 were also noted at Seaton Sluice and nine N (in one hour) at Tynemouth. At Seaton Sluice, 21 were also noted on 8th, with 16 on 23rd and 19 on 26th-27th. Ten (three N and seven S) passed Rockcliffe (Whitley Bay) on 18th and ten flew N (in 20 minutes) at Hadston Carrs on 29th. One to seven were also noted at Annstead, Cocklawburn, Coquet Island, the Farne Islands and St Mary's. Significant N passage was noted in late June, with an all day total of 737 at Beacon Point (Newbiggin) on 26th (STH/PS/ADMc *et al.*), followed by 77 (in one hour) on 27th and 39 on 30th. At Seaton Sluice, 310 moved N, plus 20 S, from 20th-30th (with 201 N in 90 minutes on 26th); elsewhere, 43 passed the Farne Islands on 26th, 22 passed Snab Point on 26th and one to four were at Boulmer, Hauxley and St Mary's.

In July, 137 (117 N and 20 S) passed Seaton Sluice, well below the expected average for the month. At Newbiggin, 70 flew N on 12th and 12 flew N (in 30 minutes) at St Mary's on 11th. One to six were seen at six other coastal locations. The August total of 38 N and six S at Seaton Sluice was extremely low for the third successive year. At Newbiggin, 90 were noted sitting on the sea on 1st but, elsewhere, only very small numbers were observed.

Counts remained low in September, with only 142 (137 N) from 15th-18th at Seaton Sluice (in 75 hours of seawatching). Mid-month, 14th-17th, was the significant northerly passage period, with 55 (in three hours 20 minutes) at Newbiggin and 23 (in three hours 30 minutes) at Boulmer on 16th, 36 (in one hour 20 minutes) at Cullernose Point on 17th and 20 (in one hour 45 minutes) at Beadnell Point and 18 at Boulmer on 15th being the highest counts. A fascinating record involved a juvenile roadside victim found outside Arcot Hall on 8th. The bird was deemed to have been dead for one to three days and was one of several picked up across the country during this period, although most were rehabilitated and released. In October, the only reports were of two passing Holy Island (Emmanuel Head) on 6th, four N at Newbiggin on 28th, with two N on 29th, and only a single at Seaton Sluice during the entire month. The final records for the year came on 12th November, when three flew N at Seaton Sluice and singles flew N at Cullernose and Snab Points.

Balearic Shearwater *Puffinus mauretanicus*

STATUS: Uncommon visitor. / FIRST RECORD: 1860 / LAST RECORD: 2016

Only three documented individuals, with another four claimed sightings, making for a quiet year. First was one at 19:06hrs on 22nd August at Tynemouth (DRW), which was also picked up off Whitley Bay five minutes later (IJJ). Next came one, again N, at Boulmer the following day at 09:25hrs (ME), which again was picked up farther north independently at Newton Point at 09:40hrs (TRD). Finally, one moved N in Staple Sound (Farne Islands) at 07:46hrs on 18th September (JCr). This bird had been seen earlier, off Beadnell, at 07:27hrs.

Little Grebe *Tachybaptus ruficollis*

STATUS: Uncommon to well-represented resident, passage and winter visitor.

BREEDING: Uncommon.

Some high counts were noted in the first quarter; in January 20 were at East Chevington and Caistron, 12 in the Aln Estuary and ten at Hauxley and the Tweed Estuary; in February, eight were at Tyne Green (Hexham); in March, ten+ were at Arcot Pond and, elsewhere during the quarter, one to seven were recorded at 44, predominantly lowland, locations, with 'trilling' heard at several of these sites.

The April peak count of adults was 12 at Woodhorn Flashes during a WeBS visit; whilst in May the peak count was only six at Holywell Pond and Monks House Pool.

A total of 54 sites were occupied during the breeding season (54 in 2016) with breeding confirmed at 18 sites (18 in 2016). Those with two or more broods are tabulated below:

Location	No. of broods	No. of young
Bothal Pond	5	12
Swallow Pond	4	16
Ladyburn Lake	4	7
Holywell Pond	3	3
Mootlaw Quarry Pond	2	4
Arcot Pond	2	3
East Chevington	?	*
Caistron	?	*

* Breeding was known to have occurred and juveniles were present at both sites late in the season.

Single broods were noted at Bank's Pond (Dinnington), Blyth Golf Course, Craggside, Druridge Pools, Grindon Lough, Hartside Farm Pond (Breamish Valley), Hauxley NR, Heighley Gate Garden Centre (Morpeth), Linton Pond, Monks House Pool, Newton Pool and 'Northumberlandia' (Cramlington).

In August, the peak counts were 21 at Bothal Pond, 20 at Holywell Pond, 19 at Hauxley NR and Swallow Pond, 18 at Castle Island, 17 at Big Waters, 12 at East Chevington and 11 at Linton Ponds. After a successful breeding year, numbers peaked in September, with 42 at East Chevington on 13th (PRM), 21 at Caistron and Hauxley NR, 19 at Bothal Pond, 18 at Swallow Pond, 16 at North Seaton Weir (River Wansbeck) and ten to 15 at the Aln Estuary, Capheaton, Druridge Pools, Grindon Lough, Linton Ponds and the River Tweed at Chain Bridge.

Numbers remained high into the final quarter. Maximum counts were 28 at East Chevington in October and at Castle Island in November, 24 in the Aln Estuary in October, 18 at Coldstream in October, 17 on the River Tweed between Horncliffe-Gainslaw House in December, 16 at Swallow Pond in October and ten to 15 at Bothal Pond, Caistron, Capheaton, Grindon Lough, Hauxley NR, Holywell and Linton Ponds and the Tweed Estuary. One to nine were noted at 48 further sites.

Red-necked Grebe *Podiceps grisegena*

STATUS: Uncommon autumn passage and winter visitor, rare in spring and summer.

This species remains scarce in the county, with only five records in the first quarter. One was offshore between Chevington-Cresswell on 29th January; whilst at Stag Rocks singles were present on 3rd February and 2nd-5th March. Singles were also at Cheswick on 15th February and 10th March.

No further sightings were made until 23rd August, when one was distantly offshore at Stag Rocks. In September, a juvenile was close inshore at Druridge Bay on 1st and, at Seaton Sluice, three flew N from 8th-17th, which may account for sightings at St Mary's on 16th and Church Point (Newbiggin) on 17th; another was off Annstead on 18th. A winter-plumage bird was off North Wamses (Farne Islands) on 23rd October and one was at Linton Ponds from 28th October-8th November. Singles flew N at Seaton Sluice on 9th and 13th November and a first-winter bird delighted many observers at QEII CP Lake from 3rd-7th December.



Red-necked Grebe - QEII CP Lake -
December (Colin Bradshaw).



Great Crested Grebe - Killingworth Lake -
March (Chris Barlow).



Little Grebe - Gosforth Park NR - August (Mike Carr).

Great Crested Grebe *Podiceps cristatus*

STATUS: Uncommon resident, passage and winter visitor.

BREEDING: Uncommon.

In January, three were at Whittle Dene Reservoirs and one to two at Bothal Pond, Druridge Pools, East Chevington, Killingworth Lake and Warkworth. Birds started to arrive at their breeding sites in February, with six at Whittle Dene Reservoirs, four at Bothal Pond, three at Killingworth and pairs at Derwent Reservoir and Widdrington Moor Lake. Singles were at Airy Holm Reservoir, Big Waters, Haughton Strother GP and Stag Rocks. Numbers increased in March, with nine at Derwent Reservoir, seven at East Chevington and Whittle Dene Reservoirs, six at Druridge Pools and Widdrington Moor Lake, five at Killingworth Lake and four at Haughton Strother GP. One to three were noted at nine further waters.

During April-May, the peak counts were eight at East Chevington, seven (one juvenile) at Big Waters and six at Derwent Reservoir, Killingworth Lake, Whittle Dene Reservoirs and Widdrington Moor Lake. A total of 22 waters were occupied during the breeding season (revised figure of 18 in 2016). Two broods were noted at Killingworth Lake and single broods at Big Waters, Bothal Pond, East Chevington, and Widdrington Moor Lake and, for the first time, at Ladyburn Lake.

In the June-September period, the peak counts were 14 (at least two young) at Widdrington Moor Lake on 2nd July (CBI), nine at Whittle Dene Reservoirs, eight (one juvenile) at Big Waters, seven at East Chevington and six at Bothal Pond, whilst singles flew S at Cullercoats in July and N at Seaton Sluice on 9th September. Numbers were lower in October, with four at East Chevington and Widdrington Moor Lake, three at Killingworth Lake and one to two at eight further locations. The peak November count was three at Whittle Dene Reservoirs and Widdrington Moor Lake. The highest December count was nine on the sea at Buston Links (Alnmouth), whilst three were off Seaton Sluice, two were at Whittle Dene Reservoirs and singles at Boulmer, Hallington Reservoir, Killingworth Lake, Longhoughton Quarry and Widdrington Moor Lake.

Slavonian Grebe *Podiceps auritus*

STATUS: Uncommon passage and winter visitor.

Peak counts from the regular wintering sites in the north of the county were as follows:

Locality	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Lindisfarne NNR	12	8	8	6	-	-	-	-	4	2	6	26
Stag Rocks	6	3	10	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	4	5

Away from the above core wintering sites, in January, singles were between Blyth-Seaton Sluice and at Druridge Bay, East Chevington and Snab Point. In February, singles were at Blyth South Harbour, East Chevington on many dates and, more unusually, at Swallow Pond on 14th (the fourth site record). Two were in the East Chevington area on 12th March (one on the north pool and one at Chibburn Mouth), with one remaining all month.

On 17th June, an individual in striking, full summer plumage was found at Bothal Pond, relocating to Linton Ponds on 20th, where it remained until at least 12th July.

No more were seen until late September, when one was in Alnmouth Bay on 26th and two at Cocklawburn Beach on 30th. In October, two were off Chibburn Mouth on 8th, with one to two in the East Chevington area until at least 24th November, and singles were at Boulmer and Tynemouth. Also in November, one to two were at Snab Point and singles flew N through Inner Sound (Farne Islands) on 11th and 29th. Another unusual inland record involved one at Branton GP on 2nd November. The highest count of the year involved 26 at Ross Back Sands on 21st December (CH), with a further five at Stag Rocks on the same day; elsewhere during the month two were at Howick on 16th.

Black-necked Grebe *Podiceps nigricollis*

STATUS: Rare passage, summer and winter visitor.

BREEDING: Rare. / LAST BRED: 2015

On 17th January, one was found with the Common Scoter *Melanitta nigra* flock at Cheswick Sands, with a further single at East Chevington on 15th February.

During the breeding season, the first returning bird occupied the regular breeding site in the south east of the county on 9th April. It was followed by a calling bird at Capheaton Lake on 14th April. A single was at Arcot Pond on 5th May and only one pair occupied the regular site during the month. Pairs occupied two sites in the south east throughout June, with one pair still noted in July. Breeding was not confirmed for the second year running.

The final report involved a juvenile at Druridge Pools on 4th September and East Chevington from 8th-24th September.



Spoonbill *Platalea leucorodia*

STATUS: Rare to uncommon passage visitor, mainly in the spring.

After none were seen in 2016, the first blank year since 1995, Spoonbill sightings were numerous in 2017, commencing with an adult over the Farne Islands on 9th April. The following day, a sub-adult was in the Druridge Pools-East Chevington area, where it remained until 13th, before departing to the N; presumably it was the bird that flew S past Seaton Point (Boulmer) at ca.15:30hrs the same day. One was at Druridge Pools again on 17th-18th, with two on 19th. On 21st May, an adult again passed over the Farne Islands, whilst two were in Budle Bay on 27th, with up to three adults present at Druridge Pools from 28th-30th and one on 3rd June. Four were watched briefly at Beal Point at 06:19hrs on 4th June before flying E over Holy Island, this being only the third record for the island (ADM). Birds presumably from this flock were noted later in the month, with two at Fenham Flats on 11th, one at Druridge Pools on 13th and then at Widdrington Moor Lake on 20th, with two there on 22nd and three on 25th, when presumably the same three were also noted at Druridge Pools, remaining until at least 28th, before being noted at Widdrington Moor Lake again on 30th. This group remained in the county until 7th July, being noted at Cresswell Pond, Druridge Pools and Widdrington Moor Lake. A single bird was in Budle Bay from 11th-18th July and it, or another, was at Cresswell Pond on 25th July, where it remained until 23rd August, with it, or another, seen in a tree at North Seaton (Wansbeck Estuary) on 4th August.

The final sightings of the year occurred in October, when one was at Druridge Pools on the morning of 21st, then moving later that day to East Chevington north pool, and finally to Cresswell Pond on 22nd and 24th. This, or another, bird was at Beal Point on 28th October.

Bittern *Botaurus stellaris*

STATUS: Uncommon winter visitor, rare in summer.

BREEDING: Historical. / LAST BRED: 1956

Three were present at Gosforth Park NR during a WeBS count on 13th January (ISD), with two remaining until at least 18th February and one to at least 22nd February. Also in January, one was at East Chevington until at least 21st, with presumably the same bird noted again on 3rd February. One was at Branton GP from 17th-24th February, one was found dead at Ford west woods on 15th March having flown into a pylon and one was seen again at East Chevington on 1st April.

No more were seen until 21st July, when one was at Gosforth Park NR, being sighted again on 29th July, 30th August and 9th and 25th September. One was also noted at East Chevington north pool on 7th August.

In October, singles were seen regularly at East Chevington and Gosforth Park NR from 8th onwards, with two at the latter site on 26th. Sightings continued at Gosforth Park NR throughout November, with two seen on 27th; one was also at Branton GP on 14th. Finally, in December, one was at East Chevington on 4th-5th and one was seen again at Gosforth Park NR on 17th, 23rd and 25th.

Bittern - Branton GP - February (Mike Carr).



Night-heron - Whittle Dene Reservoirs - August (Alan Curry).



Night-heron *Nycticorax nycticorax*

STATUS: Rare visitor. / PREVIOUS RECORDS: 15 / FIRST: 1870 / LAST: 2013

A juvenile was located at the Great Northern Reservoir (Whittle Dene) on 1st August (SR *et al.*). It soon flew to the side channel and was re-found, enabling many observers to see one at close quarters. It stayed through to 5th August and was the first in the county since one at Haggerston in May 2013 (which will always be remembered as being located via a large swan paddleboat in the caravan park!).

Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea*

STATUS: Well-represented resident, passage and winter visitor.

BREEDING: Uncommon.

Peak counts for the Tweed Estuary were as follows (MHu):

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
19	5	11	9	4	8	18	20	27	28	19	14

Away from the Tweed Estuary, the highest counts in the first quarter were 22 at Druridge Pools in January, 20 at Howdon Wetlands in January-February, 12 in the Aln Estuary in March and nesting at Howick Hall in February, ten at Whiteadder Water in January and one to nine at 68 further widespread localities. In April, away from breeding sites, the peak counts were 12 in the Aln Estuary, nine at West Ord and eight at Whiteadder Water. One to seven were noted at 31 further localities.

Several sites, including Berwick, Druridge Pools, Hauxley, Howdon Wetlands, Howick and Warkworth Weir were occupied during the breeding season. Details of breeding success involved a nest with young in Hauxley RS wood on 18th April and three juveniles in Berwick on 1st July, two of which were still returning to their heronry. Two juveniles were also noted at Colt Crag Reservoir.

Larger gatherings in the summer months (May to August) involved 18 at Howdon, 15 in the Aln Estuary, 14 at Lindisfarne NNR, 13 at Druridge Pools and Boulmer and ten in the Berwick area and at Hauxley. In September, the highest counts were 14 in the Aln Estuary and ten at Boulmer, Hauxley and Whittle Dene Reservoirs. In an excellent year for the species on the Farne Islands, a maximum of four were around the Outer Group in mid-September. A melanistic bird was at Woodhorn Flashes on 27th.

The final quarter produced the highest count of the year, with 28 during a WeBS visit to the Tweed Estuary on 5th October (MHu). Elsewhere, 17 were in the heronry at Howdon Wetlands in December and, in October, 13 were at North Blyth staithe, 12 in the Aln Estuary and 11 at Hauxley NR and between Howick-Boulmer. One to nine were noted at a further 49 widespread localities during the quarter.

Great White Egret *Ardea alba*

STATUS: Rare visitor. / FIRST RECORD: 1977 / LAST RECORD: 2016

An exceptional year for this increasingly regular egret. It is always difficult to be certain as to how many individuals were present, as 'hopping' from one site to another is the norm. However seven individuals seems a good educated guess.

The first sighting of the year was interesting as an adult was seen at Hallington East Reservoir on the early date of 15th February (RL). Just reward on a WeBS visit and usefully standing next to Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea* for size comparison! Only the second-ever February record for the county, with the other at Cresswell Pond on 6th February 2013. Although seemingly settled on the southern edge of the reservoir, it was not seen the following day. More typically, the next individual was found on 26th March, with one at Big Waters (JH/KB/GB *et al.*). It soon flew off NE and was seen later the same day at Woodhorn and Druridge Pools (TF/JFa *et al.*). It remained at the latter site through to 8th April.

A long gap then entailed as the next sighting was at Holy Island Causeway on 27th May, with Little Egret *Egretta garzetta* for comparison (MHAr). Another gap through to late June followed, when an adult was seen at Druridge Pools on 20th, handily alongside a Grey Heron again (TRC). Likely the same individual was seen at Swallow Pond on 21st, perched in the waterside vegetation (SPP/MSH *et al.*). It then seemingly moved to Newton Pool on 22nd, where it stayed until the following day, being well photographed from the hide

(GW *et al.*). Another gap ensued, with birders having to wait until mid August for the next individual to set foot, with one on 27th at Fenham Mill (RA). This bird also found Newton Scrape and Pool, with a short flight S the next day, and settled here through to 12th September (BS/GW/LD *et al.*).

Early October saw another bird arrive, which is suspected to account for all of the following October sightings as it moved N and then S. Firstly, found at East Chevington on 8th (TF/JFa), it then moved to Cramlington, where it was seen flying W, inland, near Laverock Hall Farm (Blyth) on 9th (STH). It found Holywell Pond on 11th (DSO), where it was only present briefly before moving off again, this time heading N and being re-found at Goswick on 15th (AD), where it was well photographed flying S over the GC. On its now southward trajectory, it turned up at Boulmer on 16th (MB/RB) and, finally, at Earsdon on 19th, where it was still moving SW, with views over the roundabout for observer as he was in his van (AC). It presumably then headed S for warmer climes. It is possible that two birds were responsible for the October sightings, but difficult to prove. Finally, there was time for one last sighting, with one flying SE at Cheswick on 8th November (CH).



Little Egret *Egretta garzetta*

STATUS: Uncommon resident and passage visitor.

BREEDING: Extremely rare. / FIRST BRED: 2014 / LAST BRED: 2017

Numbers of this attractive, small heron continued to increase with birds being seen in every month of the year. In January, the peak counts were four at Holy Island Causeway and in fields adjacent to the Horton Burn at Boghouses (Cramlington). On 22nd February, seven were roosting in the Blyth Estuary near the A189 road bridge, with four again seen regularly at the Horton Burn; whilst in March, four were at Fenham-le-Moor. One to three were noted at numerous other localities during the first quarter, including the ninth record for the Farne Islands on 30th March and singles well inland at Akeld Steads, Great Whittington, near Rothbury GC, at Sharpeton and at Whittle Dene Reservoirs.

Peak numbers in April increased to five at Fenham-le-Moor and four at Druridge Pools; at the latter site, numbers increased to seven in May, with six present in June, when the same number were also in Budle Bay. Counts of four were noted at the Royal Border Bridge (Berwick) and Beal. One to three were noted at 28 further localities.

After no confirmed successful nesting in 2016, it was pleasing that breeding took place at two sites: Druridge Pools, where the young died in the nest during a period of heavy rain, and Warkworth Weir, where two young were successfully fledged.

Numbers increased significantly in July, with peak counts, no doubt including duplication, of 15 in Budle Bay, 14 at Fenham Flats, 11 at Bothal Pond and nine at Beal Point; several reports during the month were of juveniles. Counts increased in August, with maxima of 18 at Fenham Flats, 17 in Budle Bay, 12 at Goswick Sands, nine in the Blyth and Tweed Estuaries and eight at Warkworth Weir. During September, 18 were at Budle Bay (a new site record) and Fenham Flats, 16 in the Tweed Estuary, 15 from Beal Point-South Low, ten at Castle Island and nine in the Blyth Estuary. One to eight were at numerous other localities, including one well inland at Dilston (Corbridge).

The October WeBS count produced the highest WeBS total so far for the county, with 59 (51 coastal, eight inland), including a record 29 at Lindisfarne NNR (ACr). Away from this area, the peak count was seven on the coast south of Alnmouth. Numbers were significantly lower in November-December, with counts of four in both months in the Fenham-le-Moor area. In the final quarter, one to three were noted at 21 further locations.

Gannet *Morus bassanus*

STATUS: Abundant passage and non-breeding summer visitor, uncommon in winter.

In January, there was a record total for the month of 350 (340 N and ten S) at Seaton Sluice (in 36 hours of seawatching). Elsewhere, 20 off Newton Point on 2nd was the highest count. Passage in February was light, with 40, mainly N, (in ten minutes) at Stag Rocks on 24th and a peak of 31 (nine N and 22 S) at Seaton Sluice (in three hours) on 2nd. The only significant passage in March involved 302 at Annstead on 20th.

Passage increased in April, especially towards the end on the month, beginning with 800 N (in one hour) at Newton Links on 22nd and 308 past Holy Island (Emmanuel Head) on 23rd. On 25th, 860 flew N (per hour) at Berwick Pier and 400 N (in one hour) at Newbiggin. The following day, 1,200 moved N (per hour) at Saltpan Rocks (Cocklawburn), 1,110 passed Seaton Sluice, 1,000 flew N (in one hour) at Howick and 800 N (in one hour) at Newbiggin. In early May, passage was again significant in strong north-easterlies, with 1,700 (per hour) passing Berwick Pier on 7th and 1,000 (per hour) the following day, when 1,557 flew N at Annstead and 100 (per hour) N at Snab Point. At Seaton Sluice, 500 on 8th were followed by 260 on 9th and 524 on 20th; other day counts were all below 155. A further 236 passed Annstead on 15th, with 223 at Cocklawburn on 22nd. The largest movements in June involved 1,000 N at the Farne Islands on 29th, 730 at Annstead on 20th and, at Seaton Sluice, 400 N on 28th and 430 N (in three hours) on 29th.

Large movements also occurred on 24th July, when 1,517 flew N at Annstead (in two hours 15 minutes), 1,350 N at Seaton Sluice (in three hours), 760 N (per hour) at Berwick Pier and 140 N (in one hour) at St Mary's; at Seaton Sluice up to 790 (per day) were noted on seven further dates during the month. Elsewhere, 200-440 were noted at five localities between 11th-31st. Unusual sightings in the Tyne Estuary involved ten feeding as far upstream as Black Middens on 22nd and one at North Shields Fish Quay Sands on 25th July. On 9th August, 3,640 flew N (in seven hours) at Seaton Sluice. Other larger counts during the month included 303 at Newton Point on 14th, 284 at Annstead and 201 at Emmanuel Head on 21st. Huge passage numbers were recorded in mid-September, when 3,250 flew N at Seaton Sluice on 16th, increasing to 5,000 N on 17th (SSWT), before falling away to 1,400 N on 18th, when 3,582 flew N (in four hours 20 minutes) at Annstead. Elsewhere, 3,000 flew N (in three hours) at Emmanuel Head on 16th, 2,500 N at Cullernose Point on 17th and further counts of 1,000-1,400, mostly moving N, came from Annstead, Berwick Pier, Boulmer, Cocklawburn, Hauxley and Stag Rocks from 11th-17th. At Seaton Sluice, 1,872 flew N from 20th-29th.

Numbers in October were dramatically lower, with a total of 370 (330 N and 40 S) at Seaton Sluice on 29th, with 122 there on 21st, when 367 passed Beadnell. The only other notable count was 292 at Annstead on 2nd. The species continued to be recorded at Seaton Sluice in November, with 300 N and 60 S (in two hours) on 7th and 534 between 12th-28th. A record December total at Seaton Sluice involved 159 N and six S (in 33 hours), including 93 N and two S on 15th; up to 15 were recorded elsewhere.



Shag *Phalacrocorax aristotelis*

STATUS: Common resident and well-represented passage visitor.

BREEDING: Common.

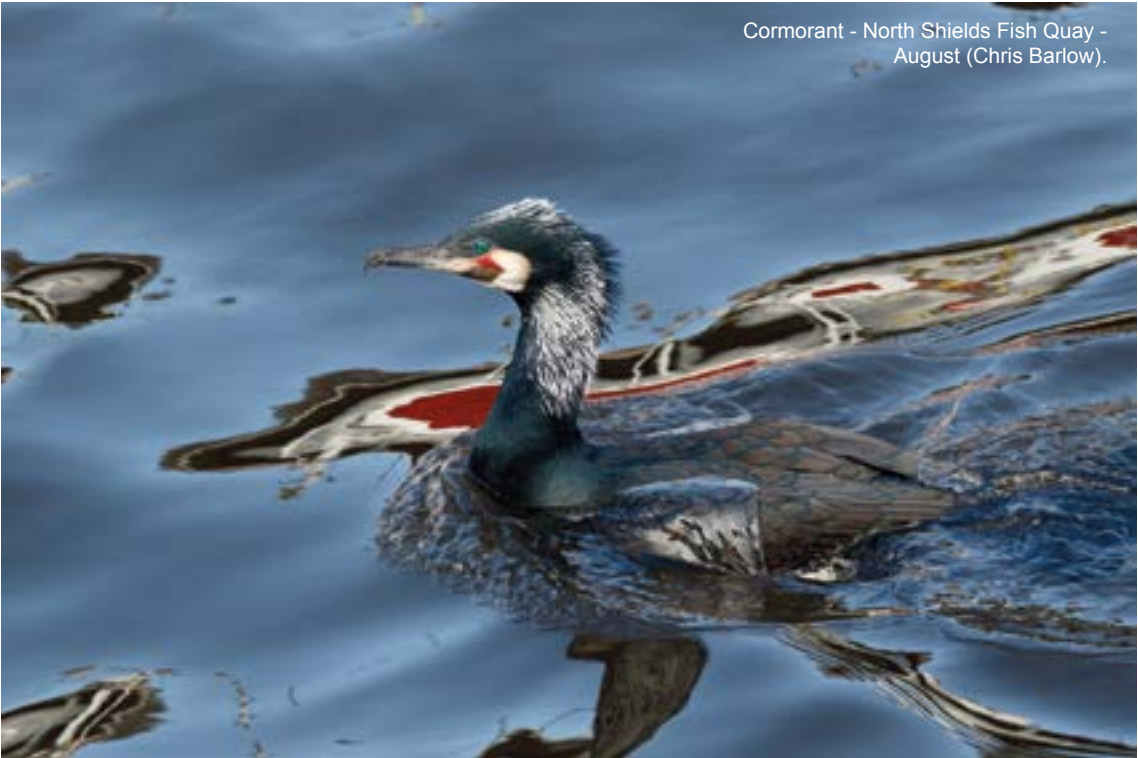
Throughout the year, the majority of sightings were in the north of the county. At Seaton Sluice, 13 flew N and seven S during January, 34 S (in two hours) on 9th February and 17 N and nine S during March. Peak counts during the first quarter involved 113 in the Cheswick-Goswick-Beal area on 27th February and 98-100 at Stag Rocks on 20th January and 3rd March.

In April, passage was again light at Seaton Sluice, with only 31 N and nine S. At least 70 were at the favoured location of Stag Rocks on 18th. Away from the Farne Islands, numbers were very low in the period May-June, with ten at Needles Eye on 22nd June the only double-figure count.

At the Farne Islands, in an incomplete count, 710 pairs nested (688 in 2016). The first egg was discovered on 26th March, the first chick on 4th May and fledglings from mid-June. A total of 510 chicks fledged from 406 monitored nests, giving an improved productivity figure of 1.26 (1.19 in 2016) (FIR). No reports of mainland breeding were received this year.

The peak count in July was 30 at Stag Rocks on 11th. In August, three flew N at Seaton Sluice on 9th, 37 passed Holy Island (Emmanuel Head) on 21st, 30 were again at Stag Rocks on 26th and 54 fed in the bay at Meadow Haven (Berwick) on 28th. Very light passage was noted in September, with 17 N at Emmanuel Head on 3rd and small numbers, not exceeding five per day, on a regular basis at Seaton Sluice. Other counts included 46+ at Boulmer on 2nd, 39 at Stag Rocks on 21st, 35 at Emmanuel Head on 4th, 28 between Beadnell-Howick on 11th, 26 in the Meadow Haven roost on 3rd and 13-20 at Boulmer, Lindisfarne NNR and Spittal-Cocklawburn.

Light passage during the final quarter was restricted to Seaton Sluice in November, with four N and 13 S from 12th-14th and 11 N and three S from 27th-28th. Highest counts during the quarter involved 459 still at Inner Farne (Farne Islands) during November, a peak of 110 at Stag Rocks on 4th October, 93 at Boulmer on 16th October, 67 at Beadnell on 16th October, 65 at Lindisfarne NNR in November and a maximum count from the Meadow Haven roost of 46 on 28th October.



Cormorant - North Shields Fish Quay - August (Chris Barlow).

Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo*

STATUS: Well-represented resident and winter visitor.

BREEDING: Well-represented.

Peak monthly counts at favoured coastal sites were as follows (DMT/STH/LJM *et al.*):

Locality	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Lindisfarne NNR	20	11	11	13	36	21	-	1	49	46	123	9
Coquet Estuary	13	2	4	-	-	-	26	63	85	18	-	110
Blyth Harbour	51	67	36	24	20	-	52	146	134	74	96	30
Tyne Estuary	68	110	11	7	8	14	24	55	41	31	54	59

In addition to the main roosts tabulated above, the peak coastal counts in the first quarter were 28 in the Tweed Estuary, 24 between Beadnell-Howick, 22 at St Mary’s and on the River Tyne from Redheugh-Scotswood Bridge, 21 at Annstead, 20 at Berwick North Shore and 16 at nearby Meadow Haven. Inland, 48 were at Hallington Reservoir, 30 at Whittle Dene Reservoirs, 28 at Derwent Reservoir, 18 at QEII CP Lake, 15 at Greenlee Lough and 12 at Colt Crag Reservoir. One to 11 were noted at numerous other localities.

In the period April-June, as well as the counts above, the peak gatherings were a maximum River Tweed count of 62 at New Water Haugh, 46 in the Tweed Estuary, 34 flying towards the sea at East Ord (Berwick), 29 at East Chevington, 22 at St Mary’s, 21 at Annstead, and Derwent Reservoir, 20 at Druridge Bay, 16 between Newbiggin-Cambois and Seahouses-Beadnell, 14 at Castle Island and 12 at Big Waters.

At the Farne Islands 92 pairs bred this year (96 in 2016), continuing the relatively stable trend of the last five years compared to the steady decline over the last three decades (FIR).

Movement was noted at Newbiggin on 17th July, when 48 flew N (in one hour 45 minutes). The peak counts during the month were 101 on a breakwater in Newbiggin Bay, 90 at Annstead, 80 at North Blyth, 40 at East Chevington, 36 at Castle Island and 15-25 at Berwick North Shore, St Mary’s, Derwent Reservoir and Woodhorn Flashes. In August, a flock of 42 flew N at Newbiggin on 9th and some large concentrations

included 99 in the Aln Estuary, 77 at Holy Island, 61 at East Chevington, 55 at St Mary's, 54 at Coquet Island, 48 at Castle Island and up to 41 at many other localities. In September, 59 flew N (in three hours) at Holy Island (Emmanuel Head) on 16th, with the same number at East Chevington on 6th, 51 were noted at Seaton Sluice, 44 roosted at Howdon, 42 were in the Aln Estuary, 40 at Castle Island and Spittal-Cocklawburn, 33 at the base of 'The Couple' statue (Newbiggin), 26 at Annstead and 24 at Derwent Reservoir. Smaller numbers were noted at a further 11 coastal and 20 inland localities.

The only movements in the final quarter involved 65 N and 26 S at Seaton Sluice from 1st-2nd December. A highest count of 123 was achieved during a WeBS visit at Lindisfarne in November (ACr). Elsewhere, in addition to counts in the table, 92 were at Calot Shad (Tweed Estuary), 70 at Norham, 57 at Howdon Staithes and 46 at Meadow Haven (Berwick) and Whittle Dene Reservoirs. Counts of 21-34 came from Beadnell, other areas around Berwick, East Chevington, East Howdon, Gosforth Park NR and Newbiggin Bay, with one to 20 at 18 further coastal and 26 inland locations.

‘Continental Cormorant’ *P.c.sinensis*

STATUS: Uncommon visitor.

The number of records of this race continues to rise, with greater observer awareness. Birds are now seen throughout the year. In January, three were at North Shields on 13th and singles at Newsham Pond (Blyth) on 7th and Alnmouth on 8th; whilst, in February, four (two immatures) were at QEII CP Lake on 3rd and an adult at North Shields Fish Quay on 1st. In March, two were in the Blyth Estuary on 3rd.

Two Immature birds were at Cresswell Pond on 16th May, where one first-summer was present on 12th June. During July-August, up to three were noted on several dates at Amble Braid whilst, in September, singles were seen at Arcot Pond and Hauxley NR.

In the final quarter, singles were at Druridge Pools on 9th October and the Coquet Estuary on 4th November; also in November, five were at QEII CP Lake and three at North Shields Fish Quay on 13th. The peak count of the year involved nine at QEII CP Lake on 7th December (IF).

Osprey *Pandion haliaetus*

STATUS: Uncommon summer and passage visitor.

BREEDING: Rare. / FIRST BRED: 2009 / LAST BRED: 2017

Spring arrival began on 22nd March when one flew from Wark towards Stonehaugh. By 2nd April, a pair was back at a nest site at Kielder and singles were at Beal and Haughton Strother GP. One was at Derwent Reservoir on 4th, one visited East Chevington on 14th, two were at Derwent Reservoir by 15th and singles were at Druridge Pools on 20th, Killingworth on 23rd and Carham on 30th.

One to two remained at Derwent during May, when one visited Farnley Haughs on 18th and 24th and a sub-adult arrived at Holy Island on 20th and was re-found the following day in the favoured fishing area along the Pilgrims' Way.

A total of four pairs, the same adults as 2016, settled to breed at Kielder. They produced a total of 13 eggs and eventually fledged nine young, two fewer than in 2016, but still viewed as a good result considering the wind and rain during the 2017 breeding season (MD). Among casualties, one chick perished at an early stage, probably a victim of bad weather, and another was seen to have a damaged wing. The bird was brought down by a climber and examined. Advice was sought from Roy Dennis, Britain's leading Osprey expert. He had experienced similar wing injuries and none of the chicks had recovered, despite treatment, and so, reluctantly, it was decided to euthanize the injured bird.

The table below details nesting success from 2015-2017 (MD):

Year	No. of successful nests	No. of young fledged
2015	4	6
2016	4	11
2017	4	9

Two remained around Derwent Reservoir during June, but with no indication of breeding behaviour. Movement from mid-June, probably involving summering non-breeders, produced sightings of three at Fenham Flats, one at East Chevington that twice came down to bathe and singles at Pauperhaugh and St Mary's. A bird flying to roost in Slaley Forest at dusk on 21st June was presumably a Derwent Reservoir individual. During July, up to three frequented Derwent Reservoir, two were at Lindisfarne throughout and one was at the River Tweed at Wark on 19th. During August, two continued to be seen regularly at both Derwent Reservoir and Lindisfarne, a single carrying a fish flew over Rochester towards Kielder and other singles were at Druridge Bay and Warkworth.

Return migration during September produced a peak of four at Derwent Reservoir on 5th (IFo) and 7th (ML), with sightings of one to three on several other dates. Singles were at Beal on 4th, with perhaps the same individual eating a fish at nearby Goswick Sands on 10th, Stocksfield on 6th, Big Waters on 7th and over Hulne Priory on 30th.

Honey-buzzard *Pernis apivorus*

STATUS: Rare visitor and former breeder. / FIRST RECORD: HISTORICAL / LAST RECORD: 2016

A juvenile was watched over The Snook on Holy Island, being mobbed by a Peregrine *Falco peregrinus* at 08:56hrs on 27th September (ADM). Unfortunately, the mobbing resulted in a relatively brief sighting, but it was comprehensively photographed and totally identifiable from the photos. The observer was, of course, well aware that Common Buzzard *Buteo buteo* would be almost as rare on Holy Island, seemingly seeing the sea as an insurmountable barrier. It was not picked up again in the county, but may well have been the individual seen over Edinburgh the following day, especially given the fact that the Holy Island individual was last seen moving off high NW.

Golden Eagle *Aquila chrysaetos*

STATUS: Rare visitor. / FIRST RECORD: HISTORICAL / LAST RECORD: 2013

BREEDING: Historical. / LAST BRED: 2001

A sub-adult male was a major surprise on one of the observer's organised walks around Kielder on 25th March (MD *et al.*). It was soaring with two Common Buzzards *Buteo buteo* over the Kielder Burn and was visible for three to four minutes.

Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus*

STATUS: Common resident, also a passage and winter visitor.

BREEDING: Well-represented.

Birds were typically widespread during the first quarter, in both rural and suburban localities, with gardens again providing prime hunting areas. Three were in the air together at Arcot Pond on 24th March, two mobbed a Buzzard *Buteo buteo* at Low Cocklaw (Berwick) on 13th February and other twos were noted at Budle Bay, Cambois, Derwent Reservoir, Ellington, Haughton Strother GP, Howdon, Slaley Forest, Spital (Newbiggin) and Whitley Bay GC. Singles were noted at numerous other localities, including an individual attacking a pre-roost gathering of Ring-necked Parakeets *Psittacula krameri* in Newcastle (Fenham) on 5th February.

With the onset of breeding during April, displaying pairs were seen at Big Waters, Blyth, Ellington, Gosforth Garden Village, Newcastle (Chapel House) and South Gosforth. During May, pairs were noted at Dukeshouse Wood (Hexham) and Howdon.

Breeding data from Northumbria Ringing Group showed that in the Border Forest at least 16 home ranges were occupied and 12 pairs fledged 28 young (14 sites, six pairs and 11 young in 2016). Failure at two nests was established. At one, the nest collapsed and at the second the chicks were predated by Goshawk *Accipiter gentilis* (NRG). In Slaley Forest, seven nests were found, six pairs laid and four went on to produce seven young. Two nests were known to have failed because of felling operations. Elsewhere, breeding reports included an urban pair fledging two to three young at Gosforth (Regents Centre), two to three juveniles being fed at Gosforth Park NR and three recently fledged young food-begging from adults at Cramlington (Valley Park). The presence of birds in at least 11 other widely scattered areas during June-July probably involved local breeding.

Early passage produced a female roosting on the Farne Islands on 28th June. During August-September, there were sightings of two from nine localities, with singles noted in numerous other areas. Two juvenile females regularly roosted in a garden on Holy Island in October, often noisily jousting in the air at dusk, and a large female, possibly of the Fennoscandia race, was on Inner Farne on 16th October.

Elsewhere, the species continued to be extremely well-reported during the final quarter, with birds settled in winter hunting areas. Three were at Borough Wood (Morpeth) on 6th November, with reports of two at Alnwick, Ellington, Gosforth Garden Village, Gosforth Park and Hauxley NRs, Marden Quarry, Morpeth (Abbey Mills and Fulbeck), Newbiggin and Whittle Dene Reservoirs, while singles were widespread in suitable habitat right across the county. One was on Inner Farne on 6th November.

Goshawk *Accipiter gentilis*

STATUS: Uncommon resident.

BREEDING: Uncommon.

As usual, upland forested areas produced most sightings during the year, with birds regularly noted at prime localities, particularly Harwood Forest, where males regularly displayed between February-April and three (two males and a female) were present on 12th March (JBu). Earlier, three adults were in the air simultaneously at a confidential site on 19th February (MH/AA). Elsewhere during the first quarter, one to two were noted at Farnley Haughs, Fourlaws, Kielder Forest, Ridsdale, Slaley Forest and several confidential localities. During March, a single also hunted wildfowl at Grindon Lough on 2nd.

During the breeding season, monitoring by Northumbria Ringing Group found 37 occupied home ranges, 31 pairs laid eggs, from which 24 pairs went on to fledge 42 chicks (19 pairs and 35+ young in 2016) (NRG). The only lowland sighting involved a single at Prestwick Carr on 1st May

Post-fledging dispersal during August produced a juvenile in the Harthope Valley, a young female near Ryal and an adult male at a locality on the River Till. The only September sighting involved a single over Haughton Strother GP. During October, an immature female was at Grindon Lough and a juvenile was at a confidential site. Coastal occurrences are rare, so an adult male which flew S over Lindisfarne Castle on 15th October provided a very unusual record (MJC/ADM/DG).

The final records came in November, with a single near Wooler from 8th-10th and three other individuals noted at confidential sites between 21st-30th.



Marsh Harriers - East Chevington - June
(Ian Fisher).

Marsh Harrier *Circus aeruginosus*

STATUS: Uncommon passage and summer visitor, extremely rare in winter.

BREEDING: Extremely rare. / LAST BRED: 2017

Spring arrival began late, when a male and female briefly visited Druridge Pools on 30th March before drifting N towards East Chevington, where a male was seen later In the day and also on 31st. Two males and a female were at East Chevington throughout April, when other singles were noted at Druridge Pools on four dates from 1st-25th, Tynemouth on 13th, Ellington on 28th and Big Waters on 30th. Others followed in May at Woodhorn Flashes on 2nd, Cresswell Pond on 7th and Boulmer on 12th, while on 13th one arrived 'in-off' from the east at Holy Island. Further singles followed at West Stobswood Pool on 21st and Detchant on 29th.

A pair soon settled in the county's only breeding site at East Chevington, producing four eggs which all hatched. Disappointingly, the chicks died during prolonged wet weather. On several occasions the female was seen to be trailing a leg in flight (IF/NRG).

During June, the only sighting away from the Druridge Bay area was a single at Boulmer on 20th. A scattering of sightings in July involved a female at Cresswell Pond, an immature at Druridge Pools and a 'tatty' looking female and an adult male at Boulmer; the latter bird remaining throughout August. Another male flew N at Ellington, a female or juvenile was at Linton Ponds and a juvenile flew S at Druridge Pools, all between 13th-15th August. A fascinating inland record involved a male, female and juvenile at Plenmeller Common on 21st August; a juvenile flew S at St Mary's on 26th and a female or juvenile was at Fenham Mill on 27th.

The species continued to be well-reported during September, with one, possibly two, juveniles in the Druridge Bay area throughout. Other singles visited Prestwick Carr on 2nd, Lindisfarne NNR on 10th, Big Waters on 14th and 25th and Holywell Pond on 30th. Druridge Bay provided most sightings during October, no doubt involving some duplication. Three were at Widdrington Moor Lake on 5th, four (three juveniles and a second calendar year) visited East Chevington on 22nd (MH), two were seen at Druridge Pools on several dates and singles were at Cresswell and Linton Ponds. Elsewhere, singles also visited Fenham Flats on 3rd, Beadnell on 16th and Big Waters on 24th October. The final record involved a juvenile at Bell's Pond (Cresswell), Druridge Pools and East Chevington on 2nd November.

Hen Harrier *Circus cyaneus*

STATUS: Uncommon passage and winter visitor.

BREEDING: Rare. / LAST BRED: 2017

Two 'ringtails' produced sightings around Druridge Bay from 2nd-8th January, regularly hunting the dunes at East Chevington and grassland around Widdrington Moor Lake. January singles were reported from six other localities. February produced upland sightings involving a peak of six at one moorland roosting area. Adult males were seen over moors in the south west and at a confidential location. A female was also seen at another moorland fringe locality. During March, a male and female were regularly at one moorland site but, unfortunately, never at the same time. A pair was seen hunting at another site on 12th March and a single male and single female were at other confidential sites on 5th and 21st March.

During the breeding season the county held England's only successful pairs. Five pairs nested, with three going on to successfully fledge ten young from closely guarded Forestry Commission sites; all of the young were checked, ringed and fitted with satellite tracking technology. The other two pairs failed, Fox *Vulpes vulpes* predation being blamed at one site and prolonged heavy rain at the other (MD). With two failed pairs in Cumbria, it was almost a repeat of 2016, when England's only successful nesting involved two pairs fledging six young in the county and one pair raising a single chick in Cumbria.

The table below details nesting success from 2015-2017 (MD):

Year	No. of successful nests	No. of young fledged
2015	2	8
2016	2	6
2017	3	10

A juvenile was watched being mobbed by a Buzzard *Buteo buteo* and a Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus* at an upland site in early August. During September, a 'ringtail' was at Otterburn Training Area on 10th, while coastal singles visited East Chevington on 13th and Goswick GC on 30th. A 'ringtail' was at Rothley Lake on 3rd October whilst another on Holy Island hunted fields between the Straight Lonnen and the Lough on 6th October and an adult male was seen at Prestwick Carr on 16th. During November, records involved 'ringtails' in five areas and a male at one locality. The year ended on a high note with at least seven roosting in one upland area (Anon.), three visited another site and single 'ringtails' were found in three other areas. An adult male hunted on Prestwick Carr on Christmas Eve and was seen again four days later.

Red Kites (Mike Henry).



Red Kite *Milvus milvus*

STATUS: Rare, although increasingly regular, visitor.

BREEDING: Extremely rare. / LAST BRED: 2017

Sightings during the first quarter all came from localities close to the species' stronghold in the Derwent Valley. These included regular reports of one to two birds from around Derwent Reservoir, Carterway Heads, Low Waskerley and Snods Edge.

Two pairs bred in county localities close to the core area, fledging broods of two and one (one pair fledged two young in 2016) (FoRK).

In April, presumed non-breeding birds wandered widely, with singles at Newcastle (over Jesmond Dene) and Nunwick on 2nd, Greenhaugh on 3rd, Druridge Pools on 10th, Backworth and Spartylea

on 13th, Blanchland on 22nd and Wooler on 28th. Singles were reported from eight Tyne Valley localities near to the core range in May, when others were at East Chevington on 10th, Branton GP on 27th and in the Druridge-Cresswell area on 28th. During June, a single at Berwick on 7th was the year's farthest sighting from the core area. Another single was at Hemscott Hill (Cresswell) on 23rd.

Further wandering non-breeders, or juveniles, probably accounted for sightings at Cresswell Pond, Druridge Pools and East Chevington on 1st-2nd July; again all other sightings were from the core area. The only reports during August-September involved one to three around Derwent Reservoir on various dates and a single flying E over Mootlaw Quarry (Ryal) on 4th.

During the final quarter, two records came from mid-Northumberland, one from an area in the west and records of one to two, over ten dates, came from localities at, or close to, Derwent Reservoir. The most unusual involved a sighting on 7th November of a bird at the reservoir carrying the head from a Greylag Goose *Anser anser* carcass to a tree stump, where it proceeded to feed. It eventually left the carcass, even though there was plenty of meat remaining.

White-tailed Eagle *Haliaeetus albicilla*

STATUS: Rare visitor. / FIRST RECORD: HISTORICAL / LAST RECORD: 2015

An immature was watched by the Farne Islands' Rangers as it flew around Megstone on 2nd April (JCr/TH/SLa). Watched from Inner Farne, it was suitably impressive, pursuing gulls in flight. It stayed for about 20 minutes and left heading towards the mainland, but was not relocated in the county. However, it may well have been the individual seen at Dollar (Clackmannanshire) five hours later.

Buzard *Buteo buteo*

STATUS: Well-represented resident and a passage visitor.

BREEDING: Well-represented.

Soaring groups were again a feature of the first quarter as pairs competed for breeding territories. The largest gatherings involved 12 over Middlemoor (North Charlton) on 5th March (MH), 11 at Slaley-Blanchland Moor on 28th February, eight at Broomley Woods, Grindon Lough, Rothbury (Pauperhaugh), Sweethope Lough and Wide Hope and seven at Chatton Moor and Lambley Viaduct. Parties of five to six were found at Carey Burn, Corbridge, Derwent Reservoir, Farnley Haughs, Harwood Forest, Haughton Strother GP, Nunnykirk, West Newbiggin (River Tweed) and West Ord. Smaller groups, pairs and singles were found in numerous other widespread localities.

As the breeding season commenced during April, large groups continued to be prominent with, for example, ten over the Tyne Valley from Blucher, eight at Haughton Strother GP, six in the Harthope Valley and five at Barrowburn and Prestwick Carr.

The only detailed data for a very successful breeding season, resulting from a very high vole population, came from Northumbria Ringing Group. In the Border Forest, 49 nests were found with 37 pairs producing an excellent 57 chicks. In the South Cheviots and Otterburn Training Area, 60 home ranges were occupied and 30 pairs went on to fledge around 30 chicks. At Slaley Forest, four successful pairs fledged nine chicks, including an exceptional brood of five. In the North Cheviots, 25 home ranges were occupied (NRG). Breeding elsewhere included a pair with three flying young along the River Till at Shellacres. Many groups of three to six, noted throughout August-September and at more than 15 widespread localities, probably included family parties.

The species remained prominent during the final quarter, with peaks of ten at Farnley Haughs, nine on Lucker Moor, five to six at Berwick, Haughton Strother GP and Lambley Viaduct and three to four at Corbridge, Derwent Reservoir, Holburn, Holystone, Prestwick Carr, Rennington and Whiteadder Water. Reports of one to two at many other widespread localities once again indicated the species' status as by far our most numerous large raptor.

Water Rail *Rallus aquaticus*

STATUS: Uncommon resident, passage and winter visitor.

BREEDING: Rare, although undoubtedly overlooked.

Typical wetland wintering areas produced sightings during the first quarter. The peak count was four 'squealing' at Gosforth Park NR on 16th March. Three were at East Chevington, twos at Branton GP, Fenham Flats, Prestwick Carr, Swallow Pond and Whiteadder Point, while singles were in at least 12 other widespread localities.

During the breeding season (April-August), four were heard or seen at Gosforth Park, three were at East Chevington and Holy Island Lough and two at Big Waters and Druridge and Newton Pools. Singles were in other potential nesting areas at Arcot and Backworth Pond, Hedgeley GP, Swallow Pond and West Hartford. As usual, because of its skulking nature, it was very difficult to prove breeding, but a juvenile and a very small chick were seen at Holywell Pond on 31st August.

The arrival of birds from the continent was suggested when singles visited Inner Farne (Farne Islands) on 9th August and 25th September. One was at St Mary's on 26th September. October marked the main arrival of wintering individuals, including three discovered on Inner Farne after thick fog lifted on 20th; two sought refuge in the pump house shed and the other in the men's toilets, all leaving without assistance. They provided the islands with their joint highest day count for the species; the only other record of three dating back to 30th October 1883!

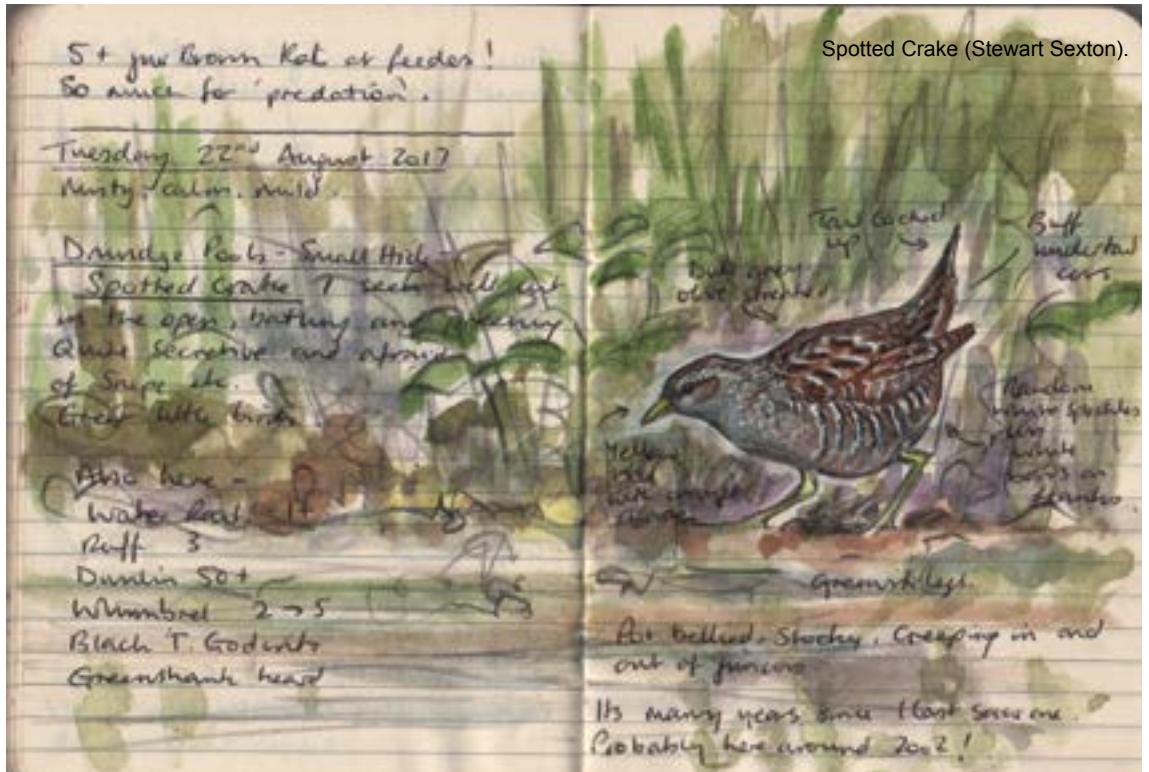
Elsewhere during the final quarter, birds were widely reported from numerous typical reedbed localities. Five were heard at East Chevington on 8th October (MJC), at least three were at Holy Island Lough and Newton Pool and two were heard or seen at Backworth Pond, Coanwood Moss, Druridge Pools, Gosforth Park NR, Prestwick Carr and Swallow Pond. Singles were in winter quarters at Arcot Pond, Big Waters, Cresswell Pond, Haughton Strother GP and St Mary's Wetland.

Corncrake *Crex crex*

STATUS: Rare summer and passage visitor. / LAST RECORD: 2014

BREEDING: Historical. / LAST BRED: 1992

Another sign that anything is possible, even in your own garden, with a resident of Berwick-upon-Tweed finding one on 27th September in a somewhat distressed state, unable to get out of a confined space. The residents managed to capture it and take it to Berwick Swan & Wildlife Trust, where a local observer (DGB *et al.*) was notified to come and identify the mystery visitor. He quickly solved the puzzle and suggested that the bird be released nearby, as it was in better health and looked strong enough for release. This was quickly done and it flew away strongly. Still a rare visitor to the county, with many birders yet to have any luck.



Spotted Crake *Porzana porzana*

STATUS: Rare visitor and former historical breeder. / LAST RECORD: 2013

An adult was discovered at Druridge Pools on 18th August and remained there through to 23rd (ADMc *et al.*). On occasions, it showed very well from the south facing hide, but normally chose the north east corner of the main scrape. A popular bird in the year, as the last sighting in Northumberland was back in 2013, with a long staying individual at East Chevington.

Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus*

STATUS: Common resident.

BREEDING: Well-represented, but very much under-recorded.

Lowland waters and riverside localities providing good feeding held peaks during the first quarter of 25 at Druridge Bay CP on 12th February, 21 at Castle Island, 19 at Hauxley NR, 18 at Chirton Dene Park (North Shields), 17 at Swallow Pond and Whiteadder Point and smaller numbers at numerous other localities.

During the breeding season (April-August), birds were typically widespread at suitable nesting localities. Broods were noted at Haughton Strother GP, Hauxley NR, Hedgeley GP, Holy Island

(Lough and Rocket Field drain), Jesmond Dene and Middleton and Wallsend Halls. Pairs and small groups at numerous other waterside localities suggested further local breeding.

Post-breeding gatherings during September included 25+ at Castle Island, 19 and 11 in Newcastle (Exhibition and Leazes Parks respectively), 15 at Hauxley NR, 11 at Haughton Strother GP, ten at Druridge and Newton Pools and lesser numbers at many other widespread localities.

During the final quarter, larger wintering groups involved 42 at Newton Scrape on 16th December (AJH), 35 at Castle Island on 18th November, 17 at Hauxley NR, 16 at East Chevington, 15 at Druridge Bay CP, 14 at Newcastle (Exhibition Park) and QEII CP, 13 at Chirton Dene Park and Linton Ponds, 12 at the Aln Estuary and Bothal Pond, 11 at Gosforth Park NR, Spindlestone and Whiteadder Water and smaller groups at numerous other waters.



Moorhen - Howdon Wetland - January
(Colin Bradshaw).

Coot *Fulica atra*

STATUS: Well-represented to common resident and winter visitor.

BREEDING: Well-represented, but under-recorded.

Larger concentrations of wintering birds during the first quarter included 96 at Swallow Pond on 17th February, 81 at East Chevington on 19th January, 45 at Killingworth Lake, 32 at QEII CP, 28 at Bothal Pond, 27 at Linton Ponds and lesser numbers at ten other widespread localities.

Early breeding was shown by a pair with a brood of three young at Swallow Pond on 31st March. As usual, few other breeding reports were received, exceptions including six pairs and nests at Bothal Pond, where young were seen in May, three occupied nests at Swallow Pond and young at Hauxley NR, Holy Island Lough and Newcastle (Exhibition Park) in May. Further broods followed in June at Burradon and Coanwood Ponds, Grindon Lough, Humshaugh, Killingworth Lake and Linton Ponds.

Post-breeding gatherings formed by late June, with new peaks of 59 at Bothal Pond, 56 at Swallow Pond, 28 at Druridge Pools and smaller groups at many other localities. Numbers continued to rise between July-September, with summer peaks of 119 at Swallow Pond, 70 at Bothal Pond, 60 at East Chevington and 40-50 at Grindon Lough, Killingworth Lake and Linton Ponds.

The arrival of wintering birds during the final quarter provided late peaks of 125 at Swallow Pond on 31st December (CDH), 102 at Big Waters on 19th November, 80 at Linton Ponds, 76 at Branton GP, 68 at East Chevington and Grindon Lough, 44 at Killingworth Lake, 28 at QEII CP and 24 at Gosforth Park NR.



Cranes - Longhirst Flash - April (Ian Fisher).

Crane *Grus grus*

STATUS: Rare visitor. / FIRST RECORD: HISTORICAL / LAST RECORD: 2016

An excellent year for sightings, with eight in total, but only involving six individuals. First came early visitors, with two NE over Holystone on 23rd March (JTP). The observer was used to the bugling call and looked up to see them passing directly overhead.

Next was a coastal bird, with one at Druridge Pools on 9th April (HG *et al.*). This was well photographed and obviously found the area to its liking, as it was re-found at East Chevington early the following day (JBu *et al.*). It was happily tagging along with a flock of Greylag Geese *Anser anser* on fields to the west of south pool. Later that morning, at 08:49hrs, it was seen circling over Amble, before moving off N (RA), only to be picked up again flying N over Embleton at 09:40hrs (GW). Veering more NW, it moved inland and was not relocated. April is always a strong month for sightings and two more were found at Longhirst Flash early on 20th (ADMc *et al.*). These also moved off N after several hours.

Into May, and passage movement continued, with one over the Lewis Burn (Kielder) on 18th (MD/EE/JDa). This was again as a result of the observer's organised walks! It was photographed in flight by one of the party. The final sighting of the year was one over Melkridge (Haltwhistle) on 25th July (SJH). This was again picked up by its bugling call, as it flew E along the South Tyne Valley. Annual now in the county, with varying numbers seen each year, mostly in early-mid spring.

Oystercatcher *Haematopus ostralegus*

STATUS: Common passage and winter visitor.

BREEDING: Well-represented.

Maximum counts from Lindisfarne NNR (including Budle Bay) were as follows:

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
605	450	471	311	113	194	--	150	415	807	663	311

Favoured feeding areas attracted the largest concentrations during the first quarter, with additional peaks of 90 at Cullercoats, 81 at the Tweed Estuary during a WeBS count, 62 at the Blyth Estuary and 21 at Brier Dene (Whitley Bay). Some exceptionally early movement towards inland breeding areas occurred in January, with a single at Caistron on 14th and five at Derwent Reservoir on 30th. Movement inland increased rapidly during February, with 84 at Derwent by 24th, the highest February count for the reservoir. Small groups also arrived at Airy Holm Reservoir (Shotleyfield), Big Waters, Hexham, the North Tyne and Whittle Dene Reservoirs.

Many remained at coastal sites during February, with 80 at St Mary's, 67 at Berwick North Shore, 60 at the Blyth Estuary and Cullercoats and 40-50 at Bamburgh, Hauxley and West Ord before numbers fell sharply during March, with most dispersing inland. These movements created large pre-breeding gatherings of 165 at Branton GP, 160 at Caistron and 98 at Derwent Reservoir.

The first indications of breeding came in April, when a nest with three eggs was noted at Redesmouth on 20th. The most detailed breeding data came from the Farne Islands and Lindisfarne. On the Farne Islands, 13 pairs bred, with the first chicks noted on 5th June and fledglings on 24th June. Like the Farnes, the colony at Lindisfarne is particularly vulnerable to gull predation; ten nest scrapes were found, but only five young fledged. Other scrapes were washed out by high tides and one was predated by an Otter *Lutra lutra*. At mainland sites, broods were found at Branton GP, the College Valley and Haughton Strother GP, while a more unusual nest site was a council yard at Powburn in June. Another pair was suspected of nesting on a school roof in Cramlington.

Summering non-breeders remained prominent on the coast in June-July, with 130 at Boulmer, 118 at Cheswick, 102 at Berwick, 55 at St Mary's and smaller groups at other localities. During August, 49 moved N and 239 S at Seaton Sluice Watch Tower.

A general return to coastal haunts, and the influx of wintering birds, swelled numbers during the final quarter. The highest annual count was an unremarkable 807 at Lindisfarne on 8th October (ACr). Elsewhere, the largest concentrations included 162 at St Mary's, 142 on the Farne Islands, 121 at Cocklawburn, 110 at Berwick, 88 at the Aln Estuary, 83 at North Blyth and 58 at Beacon Point (Newbiggin). Smaller groups frequented at least 20 other widespread localities.

Avocet *Recurvirostra avosetta*

STATUS: Uncommon summer and passage visitor, rare in winter.

BREEDING: Rare. / FIRST BRED: 2011 / LAST BRED: 2017

Spring arrival began in early March, with two at the favoured locality of Cresswell Pond on 8th, a week earlier than in 2016. Numbers soon rose to five by 17th, with seven on 20th and ten by 30th. Also in March, singles were at the Blyth Estuary on 15th and 26th, with three present on 24th. Arrivals continued during April, with up to 20 regularly present at Cresswell Pond (MAL). Four were at Blyth from 3rd-5th, a mating pair was at Druridge Pools on 16th and display occurred at Cresswell on 23rd.

During May, a peak count of 20 was again made at Cresswell Pond on 14th (PL) and birds incubated at seven nests here, with a chick seen on 24th, although by the end of the month only one nest appeared to still be active. Elsewhere, four birds were at a site in the south east, where one pair appeared to have a nest, four were also at Druridge Pools and Ellington, two at Warkworth Lane and one at Blyth. Inland, two provided a first record for Derwent Reservoir on 9th May. Cresswell Pond remained the prime site during June, with six young reported on 11th (later declining to four) and a maximum of 13 adults present on 22nd. Breeding was confirmed at two additional localities in the south east. Two visited Beehive Flash (Earsdon) on 23rd June and 2nd July.

During August, up to six remained at Cresswell, with four juveniles recorded up to 18th. A single visited Monks House Pool and Budle Bay on 20th. The only September sighting was at Cresswell on 29th. The final record involved a single which remained at Monks House Pool throughout October and for the first three days of November.

Lapwing *Vanellus vanellus*

STATUS: Abundant passage and winter visitor.

BREEDING: Common.

Maximum counts from Lindisfarne NNR (including Budle Bay) were as follows:

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
2,500	2,680	69	30	35	29	--	550	450	2,254	1,000	1,000

The highest counts during January-February all came from Lindisfarne, with a peak of 2,680 on 12th February (ACr); elsewhere 500 were at Widdrington Moor Lake. During generally mild conditions, many were already inland, the largest groups comprising 1,500 at Fourstones and 1,350 at Derwent Reservoir, while flocks of 500-800 were at Grindon Lough, Haughton Strother GP and Stannington. Smaller gatherings were found in numerous widespread localities, both along the coast and inland. By March, most records involved pre-breeding flocks close to prime nesting habitats, particularly in western areas and in the North Pennines. These included 500 at Acton Moor, 200 at Derwent Reservoir, 140 at Grindon Lough and 100-150 at Haughton Strother GP and Prestwick Carr.

During April, 120 pairs, many on nests and with young, in Allendale was by far the highest count from breeding areas. The first broods quickly followed at Beanley, Lynemouth Flash, Spartylea and West Hartford during the final week. Further success from May was indicated by broods at Backworth, Castle Island, Charlton Mires, Haughton Strother GP, Hauxley NR, Linton Ponds, Prestwick Carr and Wingates. At least seven pairs bred on Holy Island and a pair with three large young indicated success; other young on the island were probably predated. Four pairs at Haughton Strother GP also appeared to have suffered a similar fate. Small groups and pairs were found in numerous other suitable breeding areas.

The first post-breeding gatherings formed in early June, with 92, including juveniles, at Derwent Reservoir, 58 at Cresswell Pond and 42 at Longhirst Flash the highest counts. Gatherings swelled rapidly during July, when 560 were at Charlton Mires Pond, 316 at Cresswell Pond, 150 at St Mary's and 100-130 at three other sites. Numbers soared during August-September, with 700 at Derwent Reservoir, 600+ at Cresswell Pond, 550 at Grindon Lough, 475 at East Chevington, 390 at Bothal Pond and 376 at the Aln Estuary. Elsewhere, 250-350 were at Caistron, Castle Island, Haughton Strother GP, Newcastle Business Park and the Tweed Estuary, with smaller gatherings in numerous other localities.

During the final quarter, aided by favourable weather, peak numbers were often higher at inland localities than in the more usual coastal haunts. Maximum counts involved 1,650 at Grindon Lough, 1,000 at Derwent Reservoir, 260 at Whittle Dene Reservoirs and 100-200 at Bothal Pond, Corbridge, Haughton Strother GP and Horton. Away from the Lindisfarne area, larger coastal, and near-coastal, gatherings included 1,000 at Alnmouth, 510 in the Tweed Estuary, 480 at Boulmer, 441 at Charlton Mires Pond, 425 at St Mary's, 400 at Bamburgh, 350 at Cresswell Pond and many counts of 100-300.

Golden Plover *Pluvialis apricaria*

STATUS: Abundant autumn passage and winter visitor.

BREEDING: Well-represented.

Maximum counts from Lindisfarne NNR (including Budle Bay) were as follows:

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
3,500	3,500	--	70	22	250	1,000	1,000	2,300	4,000	1,200	2,000

By far the largest counts during January-February were those at Lindisfarne and mainly involving birds around Budle Bay. Major counts elsewhere involved 1,500 at Blyth Links, 1,002 at Druridge Pools, 1,000 at Prestwick Carr, 900 at Seaton Sluice, 800 at Boulmer and Derwent Reservoir, 500 at Gloucester Lodge (Blyth), St. Mary's and Widdrington Moor Lake and 300-320 at Grindon Lough and Stannington. Smaller groups frequented numerous other localities. Although numbers remained high in coastal areas during March, movement inland to regular breeding areas was also apparent, with 300 at Corby's Crag (Alnwick) and Grindon Lough, 160 at Prestwick Carr, 122 at Derwent Reservoir and 68 at Acton Moor, birds often being in the company of Lapwings *Vanellus vanellus*. Elsewhere inland, 30-50 frequented six other areas.

Spring movements, involving 'northern' race birds, intensified during April, with 800 in East Allendale, 700 at Grindon Lough, 150 at Backworth, 120 at Bellingham, 100 at Prestwick Carr and 70 at Holy Island.

Breeding evidence in May-June came from the North Pennines, with pairs and young on Blanchland Moor and other pairs on moorland at Plenneller, Slaley and Whitfield also suggested breeding.

By late July, a post-breeding flock of 300 was at Derwent Reservoir. Typical early return of 'northern' race birds also began in late July, when a gathering of 1,000, many still in breeding plumage, was on Holy Island on 31st. Up to 550 were at Newbiggin, 500 on the Farne Islands and 450 at St Mary's, with smaller arrivals at seven other coastal localities. Larger flocks during August included 600 at Newbiggin, 300 still at Derwent Reservoir, 250 at St Mary's and 200 at Howick. Further influxes increased numbers during September, as shown by the Lindisfarne totals in the table above. A gathering of 1,300 was at Boulmer and the St Mary's flock increased to the same figure. Other larger groups during September included 300-500 at Alnmouth, Annstead, Craster, Grindon Lough, Newbiggin and Newton Point.

As usual, numbers remained high during the final quarter, with flocks settled mainly in coastal feeding areas. Away from Lindisfarne, where there was a highest count of 4,000 on 8th October (ACr), larger flocks of 2,300 at Seaton Sluice, 2,000 at St Mary's and 1,044 at Blyth may have involved the same birds moving around feeding and roosting areas. Interchange may also have been at play with flocks of 800 in Druridge Bay, 500 at Cresswell and 450 at Widdrington Moor Lake. A little farther north, 1,000 were at Warkworth. Sizeable flocks remained inland with, for example, 1,512 at Grindon Lough on 10th October and 600 at Derwent Reservoir and 350 at Ryall in mid-November before gradually declining. By December, the largest remaining inland gathering was 100 at Prestwick Carr.

American Golden Plover *Pluvialis dominica*

STATUS: Rare visitor. / PREVIOUS RECORDS: 11 / FIRST: 1982 / LAST: 2016

Mirroring last year's sighting at Newton Scrape, a juvenile this time, was found on the rocky area of the beach at Low Newton on 26th September (MHal). It was seen in flight with a Golden Plover *Pluvialis dominica* and showed off its grey underwing. It was then 'scoped' for 15 minutes, when they landed, before being flushed by dog walkers and moving off S. Another long-stayer would probably be appreciated, as in the September 2013 individual at St Mary's.

Grey Plover *Pluvialis squatarola*

STATUS: Common passage and winter visitor, some birds lingering into summer.

Maximum counts from Lindisfarne NNR (including Budle Bay) were as follows:

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
848	192	7	0	227	130	0	36	200	120	292	47

At Lindisfarne NNR, 848 on 15th January represented the highest day count in the county for seven years (ACr). Away from their prime area of Lindisfarne, few were found during the first quarter. Peak counts involved 20 at Boulmer, 19 in the Blyth Estuary, ten in the Tweed Estuary and one to six at Bamburgh, Newton and Seaton Sluice. Much more unusual was a single at Derwent Reservoir on 23rd March, only the second spring record for the locality.

Further unusual inland records followed, with up to five at Grindon Lough between 4th-16th April and one at Derwent Reservoir on 1st May. One at Druridge Pools on 2nd May was just coming into breeding plumage; other May singles were recorded at Annstead, Boulmer and Craster. The 130 recorded for Lindisfarne during June involved a gathering of first-summer birds in Budle Bay; another first-summer remained at Boulmer throughout July.

Early return was evident in August, with small numbers back at Lindisfarne, nine at Longhoughton Steel, five moving N at Seaton Sluice and up to four at Boulmer. Further passage increased figures during September but, away from Lindisfarne, numbers remained very low, with only one to two found at Birling Carrs, Boulmer, Seaton Sluice and St Mary's.

Numbers at Lindisfarne remained fairly low during the final quarter. Typically few were found elsewhere, with peaks of 18 in the Aln Estuary on 28th October, 12 at Berwick on 1st November and nine flying S at Tynemouth on 1st October. One to five were at Birling Carrs, the Blyth Estuary, Boulmer, Cocklawburn, the Coquet Estuary, East Chevington, Monks House, Newbiggin, Snab Point and Stag Rocks.

Ringed Plover *Charadrius hiaticula*

STATUS: Well-represented passage and winter visitor.

BREEDING: Uncommon.

Maximum counts from Lindisfarne NNR (including Budle Bay) were as follows:

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
116	60	8	17	400	48	14	330	415	64	479	96

Additional peak counts during the first quarter involved 52 in a high-tide roost at Chibburn Mouth, 48 in the Blyth Estuary, 47 at East Chevington, 24 at Tynemouth and 22 at St Mary’s. Elsewhere along the coast, numbers were generally low.



The first indication of a return to regular breeding localities involved a pair back at Derwent Reservoir on 6th February, followed by a displaying pair at ‘Northumberlandia’ (Cramlington) during March. A more general return to other potential breeding areas followed during April, with sightings at Blagdon, Brenkley, Castle Island, Derwent Reservoir, Hedgeley GP, Haughton Strother GP, Longhirst Flash and Mootlaw Quarry (Ryal). On the coast, 50 were at Boulmer, with smaller numbers at many other sites.

Northward passage quickly swelled coastal numbers during May, with the highest counts from the Lindisfarne area. Other substantial gatherings included 257 in the Blyth Estuary, 90+ at Boulmer, 60 at Annstead, 43 at Boulmer, 39 at Amble Braid and Cocklawburn and 30 in the Tweed Estuary. Smaller groups passed through at least a dozen further localities.

During June-July, breeding records came from Derwent Reservoir, Haughton Strother GP, Lindsfarne, Longhirst Flash and Mootlaw Quarry. The presence of birds at eight other mainland localities during this period may also have involved breeding. The most detailed data came from Lindisfarne and the Farne Islands. At Lindisfarne, 27 scrapes were found, but ten were lost to high tides or were buried by blown sand. Successful pairs fledged 12 young. At the Farne Islands, four pairs produced eggs, but problems of predation, bad weather and disturbance meant that probably only one chick fledged.

The first post-breeding gatherings also occurred in July, with 14 at Cheswick Black Rocks, ten at Chibburn Burn Mouth and smaller groups at Amble, Cocklawburn, the Coquet Estuary, Holy Island (Sandham Bay), Longhirst Flash and Tynemouth. Passage produced much larger numbers during August; away from Lindisfarne, 100+ were at Boulmer, 44 at St Mary’s, 41 at Amble, 35 at Newton Scrape and smaller groups at a further 16 sites. Larger counts in September involved 54 at Cocklawburn and 25 at East Chevington.

During the final quarter, in addition to the Lindisfarne counts, which peaked at 479 in November (ACr), the largest gatherings were from the regular rooftop roost at Blyth, where numbers increased during October from 60 on 1st to 135 by 14th, before falling back to 99 by December. Elsewhere, other large counts involved 80 in the Tweed Estuary, 58 at Berwick Little Beach, 56 at the Aln Estuary and Long Nanny Burn and 55 at Chibburn Mouth. Smaller gatherings occurred in at least 13 other coastal localities.

Little Ringed Plover *Charadrius dubius*

STATUS: Uncommon passage and summer visitor.

BREEDING: Uncommon. / FIRST BRED 1968

Spring arrival commenced in late March, beginning with one at Cresswell Pond on 24th, followed closely by two at Derwent Reservoir on 26th, with one still present on 28th, and one at Haughton Strother GP on 29th. Arrivals rose sharply during April, with seven at a site in the south east, six in the Wansbeck Estuary and other reports involving 32 birds at 16 widespread quarries, river gravels, lakes and coastal localities.

During May-June, indications of breeding, or suspected breeding, came from eight localities, with birds displaying and showing distraction behaviour, whilst others were incubating. During July, nine birds (three adults, three juveniles and three chicks) were found at one inland site on 20th (ALT) and breeding evidence was noted at another three to four sites. Singles were noted at Beal salt-marsh on 9th, flying S at Holy Island on 13th (first island record) and Goswick on 20th.

Records in August were dominated by birds dispersing from breeding sites. Up to four juveniles were found in the Wansbeck Estuary, with single juveniles at Boulmer, Druridge Pools and Monks House Pool. The final records involved one to three on the River Wansbeck between 3rd-5th September.

Kentish Plover *Charadrius alexandrinus*

STATUS: Rare visitor. / PREVIOUS RECORDS: 11 / FIRST: 1918 / LAST: 2012

An excellent find by one of the shorebird wardens at Lindisfarne NNR, with a fine male at Goswick on 1st May (JScr). Unfortunately, news could not be put out as it was close to a new Little Tern *Sternula albifrons* colony. The photographs were suitably impressive. The first for the county since the popular bird at Holy Island Causeway in May 2012.

Dotterel *Charadrius morinellus*

STATUS: Rare visitor and former historical breeder. / FIRST RECORD: HISTORICAL / LAST RECORD: 2016

A prolific year for this rare migrant to Northumberland, with 13 individuals recorded.

Two were located at Whittle Dene Reservoirs on 14th April (SR). These were first picked up on call and were seen very well in flight, at close range, as they moved low over the adjacent field to the Great Northern Reservoir. They continued to move S and were not relocated. Two days later, on 16th, another fly-through was located at Longframlington Moor (MJC). This was again located on call, with good views of the underparts, before moving off N, heading towards the Cheviots. These mid April records are unusual, with May being the typical month for sightings. This duly proved to be the case with a 'trip' of three females found on a coastal bare field at Boulmer on 6th (BS *et al.*). These proved very popular, with close views obtained from the coast path. There were no sightings on 7th and 8th, so when a party of six were found on 9th, these were very likely to be new migrants (CRS *et al.*). Also, the mix of two females and four males again suggested they were a different group. These were again popular, remaining through to 11th.

Finally, there was another sighting from Whittle Dene Reservoirs and for the same observer! A juvenile was located on the adjacent field to the west of the Great Northern Reservoir on 25th August, accompanying a single Golden Plover *Pluvialis dominica* (SR/MR). News was put out, enabling one other observer to view. It was certainly a record year for the county in recent times. The fact that seven of the years this millennium were devoid of any sightings puts this deluge into context.



Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus*

STATUS: Well-represented passage visitor, usually more numerous in spring.

The first arrivals were singles at Ellington on 13th and Seaton Sluice on 14th April, numbers increasing steadily thereafter. Peaks included 26 at Hadston Carrs on 20th and 29 at East Chevington and 26 at Cresswell Pond on 28th. Migrants passed through nine other coastal localities, including Seaton Sluice, where a monthly total of 17 moved N and 11 S, and the Farne Islands, with inland records from Haughton Strother GP and Prestwick Carr.

Passage continued during May, when by far the biggest count involved at least 61 in fields north of Widdrington Moor on 4th (ME). Elsewhere, 14 flew N at Low Newton on 9th and 13 were at Boulmer on 10th. Other records involved one to seven birds passing through ten additional coastal localities, with further inland sightings from Derwent Reservoir, Grindon Lough, Haughton Strother GP and flying W at Hazlerigg (near Wideopen) on 1st.

As usual, very early return passage was evident during June, when two were at Druridge Pools on 9th and on the Farne Islands on 13th, when four were at Fenham-le-Moor. Singles followed at Holy Island on 15th, the Farne Islands on 15th-16th and 21st, Branton on 18th, Boulmer on 20th and 29th, Howick on 23rd and Newbiggin on 30th, when two were in Budle Bay. Passage increased sharply from mid-July, with counts of 15 at Tynemouth on 15th, ten at Holy Island on 18th and 12 at Beal Point on 20th. The highest counts came on 30th when 50 flew S at Holy Island and 20 arrived in Budle Bay. The following day, 12 were at Annstead. Counts of one to six came from 22 other localities during July, including one-four on many dates at the Farne Islands. Strong passage continued throughout August, with peaks of 34 S at Tweedmouth, 11-16 at Lindisfarne on five dates and 14 at Alnmouth. Single-figure counts came from 25 other coastal localities.

Onward passage quickly reduced figures during September, with 12 past Seaton Sluice on 9th and a dozen reports of one to three from nine further coastal localities. The final records came in October, with singles at Fenham-le-Moor on 1st and Annstead on 2nd, with two at Longstone (Farne Islands) on 10th.

Curlew *Numenius arquata*

STATUS: Common resident, passage and winter visitor.

BREEDING: Common.

Maximum counts from Lindisfarne NNR (including Budle Bay) were as follows:

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
1,073	781	1,168	391	108	137	225	200	732	867	496	675

Large flocks gathered in coastal feeding areas during January-February. These provided some good counts around Lindisfarne, in addition to 440 at Boulmer, 200+ at the Long Nanny, 110 at Cocklawburn, 104 at Hauxley, 100 at St Mary's and 80-85 at the Blyth Estuary and Newton Scrape. Smaller flocks were recorded in a further 12 coastal and nine inland localities; the latter including Derwent Reservoir, with the first February record for the locality on 14th, before numbers rose rapidly to 138 by 28th.

Although inland sightings increased sharply during March, as birds moved towards upland breeding areas, the largest flocks remained along the coast. These included a count of 1,168 at Lindisfarne on 12th (ACr), 312 passing N at Holy Island on 25th, 292 at Newton Links, 240 at Yarrow Slake (a record site count), 172 in the Coquet Estuary and up to 120 at Druridge Pools. Inland, numbers remained high at Derwent Reservoir, with a monthly peak of 122 and 60-64 were at Grindon Lough and Prestwick Carr. Smaller counts were recorded at eight other inland localities. During early April, larger parties included 100 still at Druridge Pools, up to 80 at Prestwick Carr, 67 at Cresswell and 22 in the Tweed Estuary.

As April progressed, displaying birds became prominent in regular upland breeding areas around Allendale, Elsdon and the Otterburn Training Area. During May, breeding pairs were settled in at least a dozen other localities. Several pairs with young were found in Allendale by 2nd June.

The usual early post-breeding flocks formed from late June. Although many gathered at inland localities, there was also some early movement back to coastal areas, with, for example, 68 flying N at Seaton Sluice on 29th-30th. The majority of July records involved flocks back on the coast. The largest gatherings comprised 234 at Boulmer, 112 in the Tweed Estuary, 100 at Hauxley NR, 90 in the Coquet Estuary and 75 at Long Nanny Burn. The only inland sightings involved small groups in Allendale, Cramlington and Spartylea. Numbers continued to rise during August-September, with peaks of 287 in the Aln Estuary, 280 at Long Nanny Burn, 241 at Longhoughton Steel, 168 in the Tweed Estuary, 130 at Old Hartley, 120 at the Blyth Estuary, 108 at Newton Links and 100 at Boulmer, the Farne Islands and Snab Point, with smaller numbers elsewhere.

During the final quarter, the highest numbers were again at Lindisfarne as shown in table. Elsewhere, the main concentrations were 180 at Old Hartley, 167 in the Aln Estuary, 137 at Boulmer, 107 at Cocklawburn, 106 in the Tweed Estuary and 100 at Druridge Bay.

Bar-tailed Godwit *Limosa lapponica*

STATUS: Common passage and winter visitor. Lindisfarne NNR supports a non-breeding summer population.

Maximum counts from Lindisfarne NNR (including Budle Bay) were as follows:

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
2,175	407	55	1,107	200	268	300	350	440	2,000	667	883

As usual, only small numbers occurred away from the prime wintering area at Lindisfarne, where the peak count was 2,175 on 15th January (ACr). During the first quarter, other counts involved 37 at Boulmer, 30 at Stag Rocks and parties at Berwick comprising 12 at Little Beach and 11 at the North Shore during regular WeBS counts. One to ten were at the Blyth Estuary, Cocklawburn, East Chevington, Embleton Bay, Hauxley, Low Newton, Sleekburn and Warkworth.

Passage towards Arctic breeding grounds was evident during April, with the spring peak at Lindisfarne, indicated above, perhaps involving flocks which had wintered farther south. Elsewhere, between April-June, 18+ at Boulmer was the highest count, with eight at Hauxley and one to four at seven additional localities. The usual summering non-breeders remained at Lindisfarne throughout the summer period.

Early return passage of birds, still in breeding plumage, was noticeable at Holy Island from mid-July, when they joined the summering flocks in high tide roosts. A scattering of sightings of one to six came from Amble Braid, Annstead, Boulmer, Hauxley, Newbiggin, North Blyth, Seaton Sluice, Snab Point and Tynemouth. Numbers gradually built-up at Lindisfarne during August-September and, as usual, numbers elsewhere along the coast were modest, the only double-figure reports involving up to 21 and 23 at Newbiggin and Boulmer respectively.

During the final quarter, the bulk of the population was at Lindisfarne, with a peak recorded during October, after which numbers declined with onward migration. Elsewhere, small groups were settled in suitable feeding areas, with many counts coming from regular WeBS visits, providing local peaks of 21 between Boulmer-Howick and at Newbiggin. Elsewhere, 19 moved N at Seaton Sluice on 30th November and one to 12 were at the Aln Estuary, Annstead, Beadnell, Blyth, Cocklawburn, the Coquet Estuary, Druridge Bay, East Chevington, Hauxley, Newbiggin and the Tweed Estuary.



Bar and Black-tailed Godwits - Cresswell
Pond - May (Ian Fisher).

Bar-tailed Godwit - Cresswell Pond -
May (Alan Curry).



Black-tailed Godwit - Cresswell Pond -
May (Alan Curry).



Black-tailed Godwit *Limosa limosa*

STATUS: Uncommon passage visitor, rare in winter.

The steady increase in wintering numbers was evident during January-February, with peaks of 32 at Druridge Pools, 25 at Howdon and 16 at Holy Island (Rocket Field Pools). During March, parties involved 29 in the Coquet Estuary, 26 at Howdon, 25 at Druridge Pools and nine at Holy Island. One to five were also recorded on the Blyth Estuary and at East Chevington on various dates during the first quarter.

Northward passage swelled numbers during April to provide an impressive gathering of 52 at Holywell Pond on 20th. Other main concentrations included up to 24 at Druridge Pools, 21 at East Chevington, 18 at Howdon and Warkworth and 17 at Cresswell Pond; smaller counts came from six further localities. Most records in May were from Druridge Bay and involved up to 14 birds moving around feeding areas. Similarly during June, most sightings were again at Druridge Bay, many involving summering birds in full breeding plumage. The highest single count was of 19 at Druridge Pools on 2nd.

Much greater numbers followed during July, again mainly from localities around Druridge Bay. Peak counts involved 84, three quarters in breeding plumage, at Hauxley NR on 9th, 58 at Druridge Pools, 30 at Amble Braid and 17 at Cresswell Pond and Warkworth Gut. Again, these sightings may have involved the same birds visiting varied feeding and roosting sites. Elsewhere, 20 visited St. Mary's, 19 were in Budle Bay and, unusually for mid-summer, five visited the Rocket Field Pools. Large influxes during August-September were mainly concentrated around Druridge Bay and the Coquet Estuary. Peak counts, some site records, involved 180 at Amble Braid on 24th August (CSa), 127 at Druridge Pools on 29th August, 111 in the Aln Estuary on 8th September, 108 at Hauxley on 30th August and 33 at East Chevington. Farther north, peak counts included 73 in Budle Bay, 41 passing through Staple Sound (Farne Islands) and 36 at Monks House Pool. Smaller counts were made at many other coastal sites.

Departures led to numbers falling during October, although 147 were still in the Coquet Estuary on 19th, 55 in the Aln Estuary on 22nd and up to 30 in Budle Bay. During November-December, small numbers were settled, with ca.20 at Bothal Pond on 11th November and 20 a good winter count for the Rocket Field Pools on 9th December. Up to nine in Budle Bay and one to three at Bradford Kaims, Fenham-le-Moor, Hoppen Kiln Flash and Monks House Pool may have involved some of the Holy Island birds. Seven to eight remained at Druridge Bay and records of one to four also came from the Blyth and Coquet Estuaries, Hauxley, Howdon and Newbiggin.

Turnstone *Arenaria interpres*

STATUS: Common passage and winter visitor, smaller numbers remaining in summer.

Rocky and muddy feeding areas and regular roosting sites provided the highest concentrations during the first quarter. These included peaks of 90+ at Boulmer, 55 at Stag Rocks, 47 in Budle Bay, 45 at Low Newton, 37 at Berwick Little Beach and Newbiggin, 33 at Snab Point and the Tweed Estuary, 30 at Cresswell Pond and 28 at St Mary's. Groups of under 20 frequented at least 18 other localities.

Numbers remained high during April with, for example, 80+ at Boulmer, 44 at Tynemouth, 38 at Seaton Sluice, 36 at Boulmer, 33 at Cresswell Pond and 20-30 at Craster, the Farne Islands, Hauxley and Stag Rocks before northward departure reduced counts from the first week in May. Far more unusual was a single in breeding plumage at Derwent Reservoir on 1st May. Summering groups remained throughout June, with 50 at Snab Point on 26th, 20 at Low Newton on 8th, 15 at Boulmer and Hauxley, 12 on Holy Island (Sandham Bay), 11 on the Farne Islands and one to six at seven other coastal localities.

Return passage increased numbers during July, with 142 on the Farne Islands and an increase to 88 in the Snab Point gathering. At Seaton Sluice, 32 moved S on 26th. Other flocks included 33 at North Blyth Staithes, 30 in Sandham Bay and 20-28 at Annstead, Blyth, Hauxley, St Mary's and Tynemouth. Numbers continued to rise during August-September to produce new peaks of 221 on the Farne Islands on 13th August (FIR), 150 at Boulmer, 89 at Stag Rocks, 48 at Craster, 39 at North Blyth Staithes and 28-32 at Low Newton, Seaton Sluice, Snab Point and St Mary's; 25 were still in full breeding plumage at Sandham Bay on 4th August. Smaller groups frequented at least 15 other coastal localities and a single at Castle Island from 3rd-5th September was regarded as a rarity for the site.

During the final quarter, parties were settled in typical rocky feeding areas, northern coastal stretches providing the highest counts. Peaks included 200 on the Farne Islands, 55 at Annstead, 54 at Stag Rocks, 47 at Boulmer, 45 at Newbiggin, 44 at Holy Island, 42 at Berwick Little Beach and 30-34 at Cocklawburn, Fenham Flats, Hauxley, St Mary's and the Tweed Estuary. Counts of 20-25 came from Cheswick Black Rocks and Craster, with lesser numbers at seven further localities.

Knot *Calidris canutus*

STATUS: Well-represented passage and common, but decreasing, winter visitor.

Maximum counts from Lindisfarne NNR (including Budle Bay) were as follows:

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
1,721	1,443	19	500	60	1	135	160	500	150	100	574

Away from Lindisfarne, where 1,721 were noted during a WeBS count on 15th January (ACr), numbers were generally very low during the first quarter, the exception being 122 in the Coquet Estuary on 5th March. Elsewhere, 28 were at Boulmer, 20 at Cresswell and the Tweed Estuary, 13 at Seaton Sluice and one to nine at the Blyth Estuary, Cocklawburn, Druridge Pools, Hartley Bay and Longhoughton. An unusual inland record involved a single which arrived at Derwent Reservoir during heavy rain on 19th March.

Numbers remained low in April, when 35 were at Warkworth, 30 at Boulmer, 12 at Seaton Sluice and one to six at Cresswell Pond and Rockcliffe (Whitley Bay). During May, the Lindisfarne count of 60 (see table) involved winter-plumaged birds in the regular St Cuthbert's Island roost on 20th, where they were presumed to be spending the early part of the summer; at least 44 were still in the area on 29th. One to two were also at Amble Braid and the Blyth Estuary and, inland, at Derwent Reservoir and Branton and Hedgeley GP. The only reports in June involved 12 at Holy Island on 1st, a peak of 121 on the Farne Islands on 13th and a single in Budle Bay on 30th.

Flocks with many adults still in breeding plumage appeared during July, the largest being the Lindisfarne count, which came from Budle Bay on 22nd. Groups of 25, also in breeding plumage, were at Cresswell Pond and Newbiggin, 23 S was the largest day count at Seaton Sluice (on 26th) and one to 12 were at Amble, Berwick, Boulmer, Low Newton, St Mary's and Tynemouth. Fresh influxes led to a slow rise in numbers during August, when 84 flew S at Seaton Sluice from 1st-4th and 70 were on the Farne Islands. The highest concentration in September was at Lindisfarne (see table), with 30 at Cresswell Pond on 7th and only one to 12 occurring at seven other localities.

During the final quarter, virtually all of the wintering population was concentrated at Lindisfarne. Elsewhere, the only double-figure counts were 42 at Birling Carrs on 19th November, 42 also N at Seaton Sluice from 29th-30th November and 18 at Boulmer on 30th October.

Ruff *Calidris pugnax*

STATUS: Well-represented passage visitor, mainly in the autumn, uncommon in winter.

BREEDING: Historical. / LAST BRED: 1850s

A single wintering bird was at Druridge Pools throughout the first quarter. Spring passage began in April with a single at Cresswell Pond on 1st and the single at Druridge Pools was joined by two more on 3rd. Further light arrivals increased numbers at Cresswell Pond to four by 9th and six at Druridge Pools by the end of the month. The only other April sighting was a single at Grindon Lough from 9th-14th.

During May, all but one sighting was from the Druridge Bay area, with birds present throughout. They involved peaks of four at Bell's and Cresswell Ponds and three males at Druridge Pools, with single females on various dates. An adult male on a roadside pool provided a rare spring record for Newbiggin. Onward movement in June left only a single male at Druridge Pools by 3rd, before it was joined by another on 20th and a third on 22nd. A single male remained at Druridge Pools until 19th July, one was at Hauxley on 21st, two at Cresswell Pond on 23rd and a single at Backworth on 30th July.

Return passage during August produced continual turnover at several sites, with peaks of 35 at Longbridge End (Lindisfarne) and 11 at Druridge Pools; one to three were seen at a further 14 coastal localities. Further heavy influxes during September gave a peak of 59 at Fenham-le-Moor on 19th (ME), with smaller counts elsewhere at Lindisfarne NNR probably involving some of these birds moving around between feeding areas. Away from Lindisfarne, 43 were at Boulmer, 18 at St Mary's, 12 at Hauxley NR, nine at Druridge Pools, five at Castle Island, four at Bothal Pond and one to three at 11 further sites. By far the biggest inland flock involved 18 juveniles at Grindon Lough on 26th and 28th September.

Numbers reduced slightly during October, with peaks of 52 at Low Newton, 46 at nearby Long Nanny Burn, 25 at the AIn Estuary and Fenham-le-Moor, 18 at St Mary's, 12 at Old Hartley and ten at Grindon Lough. Seven flying N over the Farne Islands on 20th was the latest record for the locality since 2010. One to two were also at Budle Bay, Charlton Mires, Cresswell Pond, Druridge Pools, Goswick, Hauxley NR, Monks House Pool and Newbiggin. Most had gone by November, leaving only one at Grindon Lough from 1st-24th, one at the Tweed Estuary on 15th and two at Hoppen Kiln Flash and three at Monks House Pool on 26th. A very late individual was at Newton Scrape on 2nd December.

Curlew Sandpiper *Calidris ferruginea*

STATUS: Uncommon to well-represented passage visitor, usually more numerous in the autumn.

Spring passage commenced with a first-summer at Long Nanny Burn on 30th April, followed by an individual in Budle Bay on 16th May, with three there from 18th-22nd May.

Early return passage began in July, when one in breeding plumage at Cresswell Pond on 27th remained until 5th August; it was joined by a second from 28th-30th July. Other August singles were at Beacon Point (Newbiggin) on 1st, Bondicarr on 2nd and Boulmer on 9th, while a juvenile was at Druridge Pools on 30th.

There was a small influx, mainly involving juveniles, during September. Two were at Boulmer on 5th, with one from 9th-10th, and further singles were at Creswell Pond on 7th and St Mary's on 11th. Two flew over Druridge Pools and one was at Howick on 16th. At Lindisfarne NNR, one to three were seen on various dates from 6th-24th September, by when there was a peak count of nine at Fenham Flats (RA). A later individual was at Druridge Pools on 30th, with a juvenile at Monks House Pool the same day. Light movement continued in October, with a juvenile at Druridge Pools from 1st-13th and singles at Low Newton and Seahouses on 1st. Two which frequented Budle Bay and Fenham Flats on various dates between 2nd-30th may have been responsible for a single at Holy Island (The Snook) on 7th. Finally, a late single was at Monks House Pool on 30th October.



Sanderlings - Druridge Bay - July (Heiko Peters).



Purple Sandpiper - Amble - December (Heiko Peters).



Dunlin - Druridge Bay - August (Heiko Peters).



White-rumped Sandpiper - Cresswell beach - August (Frank Golding).

Temminck's Stint *Calidris temminckii*

STATUS: Rare visitor. / FIRST RECORD: 1832 / LAST RECORD: 2016

A typical year, with four individuals, all in May. An adult at Cresswell Pond was the first to be found on 14th (SS/JWR *et al.*). It was found just north of the causeway. Although well described (and painted!), it was only on view for five minutes, before vanishing completely. Another brief stay proved to be the theme, as one was watched in flight over the north pool at East Chevington on 19th (ME). Good views were obtained of the distinctive white outer tail feathers on this tiny stint. It was thought to have moved through as extensive scanning did not reveal its presence. Luckily, the next individual proved to be more co-operative, at Castle Island from 20th to 22nd (TF/JFa *et al.*). This was well photographed on occasions, as it fed close to the coast path. A fine adult, in full plumage, showing how buff they can look. Finally, one was found on 27th and was still on view the following day, at Monks House Pool (NJM/BS *et al.*).

Sanderling *Calidris alba*

STATUS: Well-represented passage and winter visitor, smaller numbers remaining in summer.

Maximum counts from Lindisfarne NNR (including Budle Bay) were as follows:

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
209	150	70	19	66	40	62	130	55	100	65	143

Open sandy beaches providing tideline feeding attracted the main concentrations during January-February. A flock of 150 that was regularly on Holy Island (Sandham Bay) may well have included some of the 209 counted at Lindisfarne in January. Away from Lindisfarne, 120 were at Chibburn Mouth, 90 at Boulmer, 70 at Snab Point, 60 at St Mary's and 54 at Berwick Little Beach, while 53 at Tynemouth (Long Sands) was regarded as a very high count for the locality. Smaller groups frequented ten other coastal sites. Numbers fluctuated during March, with the largest count being 220+ at Boulmer. Counts fell to 105 at Chibburn Mouth and 70 at Holy Island. Elsewhere during March, 69 were at St Mary's, 67 at Cocklawburn and 35-45 at Berwick Little Beach, Cresswell, Hauxley and Newbiggin.

Spring passage northwards during April produced increases at Boulmer, with a peak of 360 on 13th (ME), and numbers at Cocklawburn rose to 92 on 20th. Elsewhere, numbers declined from mid-month with onward passage. Further movements during May produced counts of 100 at Newbiggin on 8th, 66 at Holy Island on 29th, 60 in Budle Bay on 25th, 51 at Tynemouth and 50 at Cheswick. By early June, most had departed, although 40 were still at Lindisfarne on 2nd, 20 at Low Newton on 8th and a late bird at Newbiggin on 11th.

Return passage, including birds still in breeding plumage, was evident from mid-July, with 62 at Cheswick Black Rocks on 14th, 20 N at Seaton Sluice on 24th, 48 at St Mary's on 26th and, during the last few days, 100 at Chibburn Mouth and 81 in Newbiggin Bay. Fresh influxes increased numbers during August-September to provide new peaks of 182 at St Mary's, 130 in Sandham Bay and 75-95 at Bondicarr, Chibburn Mouth, Cresswell, Hauxley and Newbiggin.

Prime feeding areas held the largest concentrations during the final quarter, with peak counts, in addition to those at Lindisfarne, of 180 at St Mary's, 150 at Chibburn Mouth, 120 at Bondicarr, 90 at Berwick Little Beach, 85 at Hadston Carrs, 80 at Boulmer, 70 at Newbiggin, 60+ at Druridge Pools, 55 at Hauxley, 51 at Beadnell and 44 at Low Newton, with smaller groups frequenting many other localities.

Dunlin *Calidris alpina*

STATUS: Abundant passage and winter visitor.

BREEDING: Uncommon.

Maximum counts from Lindisfarne NNR (including Budle Bay) were as follows:

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
3,649	1,555	400	1,614	724	31	120	550	1,657	2,620	3,205	3,106

Lindisfarne held by far the highest numbers during January-February, with 3,649 on 15th January representing the highest total in the county for seven years (ACr). Elsewhere, regular muddy feeding areas attracted significant flocks, with counts of 400 in the Blyth Estuary, 270 at Boulmer, 263 at Cresswell Pond, 200 at Druridge Pools and Tynemouth (Spanish Battery), 140 at Berwick Little Beach and 120 at St Mary's. Numbers fell sharply in March, although 150 were still at Boulmer on 8th and 200 at Druridge Pools on 10th. Smaller feeding and roosting parties were reported from many other coastal stretches during the quarter. One to two were inland at Derwent Reservoir, Prestwick Carr, Swallow Pond, Whittle Dene Reservoirs and, closer to the coast, at Castle Island and Widdrington Moor Lake, in February-March.

Away from Lindisfarne, numbers remained low into April-May as passage slowed. Peak counts included 130+ at Boulmer, 104 in the Blyth Estuary, 50 at Amble Braid and 40 at Boulmer. Movement towards upland breeding areas produced seven at Derwent Reservoir, five at Grindon Lough and one to five at Haughton Strother and Hedgeley GPs.

An indication of probable breeding came on 26th May, when a bird flushed in the Cheviots flew off after feigning injury, being joined by its presumed mate and another confiding bird. During June, two were found in potential nesting habitat near Grindon Lough and three at Derwent Reservoir.

Return movement was noticeable from mid-July, with large gatherings in favoured areas, including 150 in the Coquet Estuary, 104 at Cresswell Pond, 60 in the Blyth Estuary and 52 at Boulmer. Typically, numbers rose considerably during August, particularly at Lindisfarne, where counts on different dates involved flocks of 550 in Budle Bay, 270 at Beal Point and 150 at Fenham Mill. Elsewhere, 146 were at Druridge Pools, 144 flew S at Seaton Sluice on 15th, 100+ were at Boulmer and 60 at Castle Island. Numbers continued to increase during September, especially at Lindisfarne, but other peak counts were 105 at Boulmer, 80 at Druridge Pools and 60 at Cresswell Pond.

During the final quarter, most of the population was again concentrated at Lindisfarne (see table). Movement was noted at Seaton Sluice, where 255 flew N from 29th-30th November. Two prime feeding areas attracted significant flocks: 304 at the Blyth Estuary in December and 125 in the Coquet Estuary in November. Smaller flocks were scattered along the entire coastline with, for example, 42 at Berwick Little Beach and 40 at Cresswell Pond. Inland sightings occurred in each month, with maximum counts of 15 at Derwent Reservoir on 9th November and 12 at Grindon Lough on 24th November.

Purple Sandpiper *Calidris maritima*

STATUS: Well-represented passage and winter visitor, a few remaining in summer.

Maximum counts from Stag Rocks were as follows:

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
102	75	94	85	60	0	0	7	15	75	176	150

By far the most important mainland wintering locality was the regular Stag Rocks site. Elsewhere, during the March WeBS count for the Budle Point-Seahouses stretch, which includes Stag Rocks, 130 were found. Typically, first-quarter numbers were much lower away from Stag Rocks with, for example, highs of 43+ at Low Newton, 31 at Blyth Harbour, 24 at Cheswick, 20-21 at Boulmer, the Farne Islands and Football Hole (Newton), 19 at Cocklawburn and 17 at Tynemouth. A count of 15 on Holy Island (Sandham Bay) was considered good for that locality; elsewhere, one to 13 were found at eight additional coastal localities.

During April, numbers at Stag Rocks held up well and, elsewhere, 38 were at Craster, 25 at Boulmer, 19 at Tynemouth, 15 at Cocklawburn, 11 at Seaton Sluice and ten at Rockcliffe (Whitley Bay). Passage towards Arctic breeding grounds then reduced numbers in May, the Stag Rocks flock declining from 60 on 5th to 26 a fortnight later. Away from here, 25 lingered at Newbiggin and nine at Tynemouth Pier. One to four were at Annstead, Coquet Island, Cresswell, Hauxley, Holy Island, Newbiggin, Seaton Sluice and Warkworth Pier.

Six lingered on the Farne Islands in June, with return passage increasing numbers there to a year peak of 43 in July, when two were at Warkworth Pier at the month end. Light return passage in August produced singles S at Seaton Sluice on 1st and 2nd, one at Boulmer and two at Tynemouth on 9th and a single at Seahouses on 19th. Three were at Newbiggin on 21st and seven had returned to Stag Rocks by 23rd. The species was scarce during September, with three at Monks House, two at Cullercoats and singles at Boulmer, Newbiggin and Seahouses.

During the final quarter, the Stag Rocks flock peaked at 176 on 10th November (ASJ), 59 were at Low Newton, 43 roosting at Blyth North Pier, 31 on the Farne Islands, 29 at Boulmer and WeBS totals of 27 between Seahouses-Beadnell, 26 between Beadnell-Howick and at Birling Carrs and 24 at Berwick and Tynemouth Pier. Elsewhere, 19 were on Holy Island, 15 at Rockcliffe, 11 at Cheswick Black Rocks and one to ten at a further eight sites.

Little Stint *Calidris minuta*

STATUS: Uncommon passage visitor, usually more numerous in the autumn, extremely rare in winter.

The county's first wintering individual, present since early December 2016, remained at Lindisfarne during the first quarter, with sightings at Fenham-le-Moor on five dates to 23rd March.

An influx of spring passage birds was apparent in May, beginning with singles at Budle Bay and Beadnell Pool on 11th; the latter a full summer-plumage bird. Singles followed at Fenham Flats on 13th and Cresswell Pond from 24th, with two at Charlton Mires Pond on 27th and a summer-plumage bird on Holy Island (Sandham Bay) on 29th, when one was also on Inner Farne (Farne Islands). An individual in breeding plumage was at Longhirst Flash on 2nd June.

Return passage began with singles at Cresswell Pond and Goswick on 23rd July. They were followed in August by a single at Goswick and an adult at Sandham Bay on 6th and one at Druridge Pools on 16th. A more substantial influx, mainly of juveniles, followed during September, beginning with singles at Fenham Flats on 3rd, Boulmer from 6th-9th and Druridge Pools on 7th. A total of nine at Lindisfarne on 9th (five at Goswick and four at Beal Point) probably involved different birds (PRM) and probably accounted for records of one to two at Fenham Flats and Holy Island to the end of the month. Another was at Druridge Pools on 18th, with one at Cresswell Pond on 19th, two at St Mary's on 21st and two well inland at Haughton Strother GP on 24th. Finally, two were at Budle Bay on 28th, one at Monks House Pool from 28th-29th and four at Cresswell Pond and Druridge Pools and three at Low Newton on 30th.

Numbers held up into early October. The Goswick party remained until 9th, with a maximum of six recorded, and was perhaps responsible for records of singles at Holy Island Causeway on 5th and 7th and Fenham Flats on 13th and 17th. Three were also in Budle Bay on 1st and one at Holy Island (Rocket Field Pools) on 15th. Away from the Lindisfarne area, three were at Low Newton, one at Cresswell Pond and two at Druridge Pools on 1st; the latter increasing to three on 3rd. Two at Monks House Pool on 3rd-5th reduced to one from 6th-18th and further singles were at East Chevington north pool on 8th and Cresswell Pond from 8th-10th.

The sole sightings during November-December involved a juvenile on the beach at East Chevington on 3rd November and an adult, perhaps last winter's individual, in the Fenham Mill-Fenham Flats area, seen on 5th and 28th November and 17th December (and into 2018).

White-rumped Sandpiper *Calidris fuscicollis*

STATUS: Rare visitor. / PREVIOUS RECORDS: 21 / FIRST: 1963 / LAST: 2016

A moulting adult was located at St Mary's on 7th August amongst washed up weed on the beach (AC *et al.*). It was well photographed and proved very popular. The next day, it moved up to Cresswell Pond (HG *et al.*), then relocated to the beach, this time at Green Skeers. It soon moved again, onto Druridge Pools, staying through to 20th August and thus enabling many people to view.

Pectoral Sandpiper *Calidris melanotos*

STATUS: Rare visitor. / FIRST RECORD: 1853 / LAST RECORD: 2016

A below average year for the species, with only four individuals seen, all in mid summer-early autumn. An adult was located on Druridge Pools on 2nd July and remained through to 5th (MK *et al.*). Another adult was again at a typical site, with the man made scrape at Newton proving popular once more. This bird was present from 17th to 20th July (GW *et al.*). Finally, two juveniles were found feeding together at Druridge Pools on 30th August, with both remaining the following day and one through to 2nd September (TF/JFa *et al.*).



Long-billed Dowitcher - Boulmer - July
(Alan Curry).

Long-billed Dowitcher *Limnodromus scolopaceus*

STATUS: Extremely rare visitor. /
PREVIOUS RECORDS: 8 / FIRST:
1959 / LAST: 2016

A stunning summer-plumaged bird graced Boulmer between 7th-15th July (BS *et al.*). An excellent find and an indication of the draw of this site for coastal waders. The record was accepted by the British Birds Rarities Committee. Sightings are increasing in the county, with only two blank years since 2011.

Woodcock *Scolopax rusticola*

STATUS: Well-represented resident, passage and winter visitor.

BREEDING: Well-represented.

Regular wintering areas held small numbers during the first quarter, with five at Slaley (PC), two at Belford Moor, Grindon Lough and Longhorsley Moor and singles from 22 other widespread areas. Birds continued to arrive, with two flying 'in-off' at Seaton Sluice in January and a single arriving at Holy Island during strong easterly winds in February. Emigration was suggested on 28th March when a single flew past Inner Farne (Farne Islands). The propensity of this species to turn up in odd places was demonstrated by one which flew into North Shields Police Station, while another sheltered in a daffodil patch in a Gosforth garden in April.

The first indications of breeding activity came on 1st March, when two were 'roding' at Harwood Forest. Later in the month, another displaying male was at Hexhamshire Common. During April, birds were settled in breeding areas and an adult with a single chick was seen in the Harthope Valley (Langleeford) on 26th. Local breeding was also suggested by birds in suitable habitat at Allenheads, Kielder Forest, Otterburn Training Area (Cottonshope and North Yardhope), Rothbury and Spartylea. Between May-August, a peak of five was noted at Winnows Hill (Slaley) (JBU/EC *et al.*) and pairs and singles were reported from other breeding areas, including Beanley Plantation, Derwent Gorge, Kidland Forest, Stagshaw and Wark Forest.

Light arrival began in October, with one to two on three dates on Holy Island, singles on two dates on the Farne Islands and individuals at the Aln Estuary, Boulmer, Howick and Newbiggin. Increased sightings during November, on both the coast and at inland localities, indicated fresh arrivals, although numbers were modest. Peak passage on the Farne Islands involved four on two dates. Singles were also noted arriving from the east at Newbiggin and Snab Point, with others found at Arcot Pond, Backworth, Chugdon Wood (Ellington), Cresswell Pond, East Chevington, Longhoughton Steel (sheltering in nettles behind a seat), Lynemouth, Northumberland Park (North Shields), Shiremoor, Stag Rocks (feeding on the road at first light) and Tynemouth. Singles were again reported on several dates at Holy Island (The Snook, Straight Lonnen, Vicarage lawn and flying through village gardens). Farther inland, five were on Longhorsley Moor (AB/LB), three at Gosforth, two at Chillingham and 'Northumberlandia' (Cramlington) and singles at Gosforth Park, Mootlaw Quarry (Ryal) and Windyhaugh.

Arrival continued during December, with coastal sightings of two on Holy Island, including one hitting a glass panel over the door of Snook House! Another arrived from the east at Bamburgh. Inland sightings involved twos at Backworth, Belford Moor and the Cheviots and singles at Alnwick Moor, Colt Crag Reservoir, Eglington Moor, Howdon, Ovington, Wark, Wooler and Woolsington Ponds (a first for the site).

Jack Snipe *Limnocryptes minimus*

STATUS: Uncommon passage and winter visitor.

Wet areas offering feeding and concealment provided a scattering of sightings during the first quarter. The most regular site was Newburn Riverside CP, with a peak count of five present on 19th January (IFO). Twos were at Goswick, Haughton Strother GP and West Hartford and singles at Beal, Gosforth Park NR, Goswick, Grindstonelaw, Holywell Pond, Monks House Pool, Mootlaw Quarry (Ryal), Newbiggin and Quarry House Moor (Chillingham). A single disturbed from marshy ground in the College Valley on 22nd January perhaps indicates that many others could go undetected in more remote areas.

Departure from breeding grounds reduced sightings in April, when singles at Backworth, Gosforth Park NR, Mootlaw Quarry, West Hartford BP and Weetslade CP were the only reports. A single lingered at Druridge Pools during May, being seen on 3rd-7th and 27th.

They were then absent until 30th September, when one flew E over Holywell Pond on 30th. Very light arrival during October produced three at Beal on 27th, two at the Farne Islands on 19th and coastal singles at Boulmer on 3rd, Budle Bay on 4th, Beal on 9th, Cheswick on 10th, the Farne Islands on 13th, Holy Island (The Snook) on 15th, St Mary's on 16th, Beal on 17th and Newbiggin GC on 20th. Five were again inland at Newburn Riverside CP on 23rd October (ME). Only two singles were found during November: at Arcot Lane Flash on 19th and Arcot Pond on 23rd. Finally, in mid-December, singles were at Beal salt-marsh, Cramlington and Goswick.

Snipe - Allendale - May (Alan Jack)



Snipe *Gallinago gallinago*

STATUS: Common resident, passage and winter visitor.

BREEDING: Common.

Wet lowland areas offering prime feeding conditions attracted the largest concentrations during the first quarter, with peaks of 74 at Newburn Riverside CP on 19th January (IFO), 72 at Backworth, 59 at Callerton Subsidence Pond, 51 at Druridge Pools, 43 at Haughton Strother GP, 31 at Arcot Pond and 23 at Haughton Strother GP. One to 20 frequented 30 other widespread localities.

For the first time since 1983 none were recorded on spring passage at the Farne Islands.

Many returned to upland breeding areas, particularly in the North Pennines, during March, with 11 'drumming' males on Acton Moor, four displaying at Burnt Ridge (Hexham) and two displaying pairs at Allendale Common, Carrshield, Coalcleugh and Plenneller Common. In the Cheviots, two males displayed at Broadstruther. Further breeding areas were occupied during April-June, with ten displaying at Spartylea, six pairs at Winnow's Hill (Slaley), five pairs at Halton-le-Gate, three pairs at Catton Moss and Grindon Lough, two pairs at Broomlee Lough, the Harthope Valley and Whitfield Moor and single pairs at Coanwood Pond and Ouston Fell. Single males displayed at Alnwick Moor, Blanchland Moor and Longframlington Common. On low ground, two displayed at Blagdon.

Post-breeding gatherings formed during August, with up to 26 at Druridge Pools, 11 at Bothal Pond, ten at Grindon Lough and lesser numbers at ten other localities. Immigration was noted at the Farne Islands during August-September, with a maximum of four W over Inner Farne on 10th September; eight also arrived from the east at St Mary's on 27th September. Numbers at prime wetland areas steadily increased into the final quarter.

Between October-December, regular feeding areas attracted the largest concentrations. Peaks included 59 at Haughton Strother GP, 43 at Newburn Riverside, 41 at Callerton, 34 at West Hartford and 26 at St Mary's. Counts of ten to 20 came from Cresswell Pond, Druridge Pools, East Chevington, Low Newton, Prestwick Carr, Weetslade CP and Whittle Dene Reservoirs, with single-figure counts reported from 19 other widespread localities.

Red-necked Phalarope *Phalaropus lobatus*

STATUS: Rare visitor. / FIRST RECORD: 1828 / LAST RECORD: 2016

The returning female was again back at Grindon Lough on 18th May, though with a short visit this time, staying only through to 4th June (PRM *et al.*). This lone bird has been unsuccessful in finding a male, with the habitat here possibly being suitable for breeding. There was also a record of it having been photographed at Broomlee Lough on 14th June. This is the third year that this individual has been found at Grindon Lough.

A long overdue record for Druridge Pools came with a juvenile found unconcernedly spinning there on 10th October (JD *et al.*). The south facing hide provided excellent views for everyone. The last individuals at this locality were back in 1986, with three juveniles appearing after a storm. The phalarope proved to be a 'wild hit', with many people coming to view through to 16th October. Intriguingly, another juvenile was located at Grindon Lough, also on 10th October (PRM). This one only stayed for one minute only, before moving off W, but it was photographed distantly.

Grey Phalarope *Phalaropus fulicarius*

STATUS: Rare passage and winter visitor. / FIRST RECORD: 1823 / LAST RECORD: 2016

September saw the first sighting, with one on 15th off St Mary's (AC). It was seen jinking its way N in the middle of a flock of Kittiwakes *Rissa tridactyla*.

Late autumn storms provided suitable conditions for a small influx late in the year. On 12th November, two first-winters were seen off Snab Point (TF/JFa *et al.*). Both individuals were moving N independently between 13:15hrs-14:15hrs. The latter individual was also seen moving N at 15:10hrs off Boulmer (ME). On 25th November, another moved through, associating with a movement of Black-headed Gulls *Chroicocephalus ridibundus* (ME). Finally, on 7th December, another moved N off Cullernose Point (PRM). Good views were obtained as it steadily passed through.



Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos*

STATUS: Well-represented summer visitor and passage migrant, rare in winter.

BREEDING: Well-represented.

An early first spring arrival was at East Chevington on 19th March. Further singles followed in April at Haughton Strother GP on 2nd and Branton GP on 8th, while one to two also visited Cresswell Pond, Derwent Reservoir, Hedgeley GP and Thrum Mill (Rothbury) by 19th. Thereafter, birds became widespread at inland breeding areas and passage localities. Peak counts during the final week of April involved 19 pairs on the River Coquet between Hepple-Blindburn (ASJ) and 12 pairs at Carham, 11 birds at Derwent Reservoir, eight at Castle Island, five at Hedgeley GP, Derwent Reservoir and the River Wansbeck and one to two at 22 other widespread waterside localities.

During May, passage was apparent with four at Castle Island on 1st, followed by singles at eight further localities, including the Farne Islands on 30th. Meanwhile, pairs were settled in many breeding areas with, for example, 11 pairs in the Breamish Valley and three pairs around Derwent Reservoir. There were also counts of four from Caistron and Haughton Strother GP, three at Alwinton and Beltingham and twos at Airy Holm Reservoir, Allerwash, Colt Crag Reservoir, Cupola Bridge and Hedgeley GP. Singles were at nine other inland localities. Other breeding areas produced sightings in June, with four at Whittle Dene Reservoirs, pairs at Catcleugh Reservoir and Falstone and singles at Beanley, Ingram and Wark.

The first indications of typical early return passage came in late June, with four at Castle Island on 22nd and two at Cresswell Pond and one in Budle Bay on 25th. Many vacated breeding areas during July to provide peaks of 15 at Castle Island, 14 at Branton GP, 11 at Cresswell Pond, ten at Charlton Mires Pond, eight at Hauxley NR and six at Derwent Reservoir, Foxton Bend, Haughton Strother GP, Newbiggin and Whittle Dene Reservoirs. One to four were at 26 other widespread localities, including the Farne Islands.

Onward passage quickly reduced numbers during August, with maximum counts of five at Castle Island, four at Charlton Mires and Whittle Dene Reservoirs and one to three from 15 other localities. The only sizeable counts in September involved 11 at Derwent Reservoir on 4th and five flying S at Seaton Sluice on 9th; elsewhere, singles lingered at the Aln Estuary, Big Waters, Castle Island and Hauxley NR between 1st-19th. The final records were of late singles at Whittle Dene Reservoirs on 6th October and Holy Island on 9th November.

Green Sandpiper *Tringa ochropus*

STATUS: Uncommon passage visitor; rare, although increasing, in winter.

Wintering individuals were found at eight localities during the first quarter. The regular haunt at Whittle Dene Reservoirs held a peak of four during February (MR/SR/PJA), while singles frequented Blagdon, Branton GP, Carham, Haughton Strother and Hedgeley GPs, Linton Ponds and the River Coquet between Thropton-Rothbury.

Spring passage then augmented numbers during April. Birds remained around the regular wintering areas, while elsewhere a single briefly visited Tynemouth Boating Lake on 8th and later in the month two were at Castle Island and singles at Backworth, Holywell Pond, Powburn, Prestwick Carr, Wallington and the River Wansbeck. During May, singles visited a small roadside pool at Rising Sun CP on 1st and another was at Longhirst Flash on 9th.

Early return passage was suspected in June, when singles were at Low Newton on 18th, Backworth on 22nd and Haughton Strother GP from 22nd-29th. Movement increased slightly during July, with three at Charlton Mires Pond, two on the Farne Islands and singles visiting Beal Point, Branton GP, Budle Bay, Druridge Pools, East Cramlington LNR, Goswick, Haughton Strother GP, Holy Island, Howick and Whittle Dene Reservoirs. Passage was much more conspicuous during August, with reports from 18 localities. Peaks of four were at Hedgeley GP from 13th-28th (IBDa/KDa/NFo) and Whittle Dene Reservoirs on 31st (SR), three were at Charlton Mires and Druridge Pools and singles visited 13 other widespread localities, including new sites for the year at Big Waters, Boulmer, Cocklawburn, Hoppen Kiln Flash, Gosforth Subsidence Pond, Hauxley, South Low (Lindisfarne) and West Hartford.

Onward movement reduced sightings during September-October, with up to three still at Whittle Dene Reservoirs, twos at Branton GP and Lilburn Burn and 12 singles at 11 localities, including new sites at Arcot Pond and Norham. During November-December, birds were settled into winter quarters, with twos at Caistron, Hedgeley GP, Norham and Whittle Dene Reservoirs and singles at Branton GP, Longhirst and Morpeth.

Redshank *Tringa totanus*

STATUS: Common passage and winter visitor.

BREEDING: Well-represented.

Maximum counts from Lindisfarne NNR (including Budle Bay) were as follows:

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
1,533	374	375	670	34	28	230	400	1,091	1,114	1,337	411

The highest count of the year, involving 1,533 at Lindisfarne on 15th January (ACr), represented the largest gathering in the county for ten years. Away from Lindisfarne, larger concentrations during the first quarter involved 250+ roosting at Howdon, 200 at Cresswell Pond, 167 during the March WeBS count in the Tweed Estuary, 105 in the Blyth Estuary and 100 at Cullercoats, while lesser numbers frequented numerous other coastal localities. Inland, mud banks on the River Tyne held peaks of 78 at Newcastle BP in January and 83 at Scotswood and 25 at nearby Elswick during February. A single at Derwent Reservoir throughout the quarter provided the first wintering record for the locality in its 52-year history; it was joined by ten others on 24th March.

During March, there was also the usual early return movement to inland breeding areas, with 22 displaying males on Action Moor by 25th and 17 at Grindon Lough on 31st. Three birds were at Prestwick Carr, two displayed on Hexhamshire Common and one did at Plenneller Common. Inland numbers continued to rise in April, with 22 pairs in Allendale, 29 birds at Grindon Lough and ten at Derwent Reservoir. Two pairs were at Caistron and one at Kirkhaugh (South Tynedale).

Coastal pre-emigration gatherings remained high in April with, for example, WeBS counts of 192 in the Tweed Estuary, 105 in Blyth Estuary, 86 at Boulmer and 79 at Castle Island. Onward passage rapidly reduced coastal numbers during May-June, with 35 at Amble being the largest count. Further regular and potential breeding areas were occupied, with seven at Spartylea and two at seven new inland sites.

Numbers increased rapidly during July-August, with a general return to coastal haunts. During this period, Lindisfarne attracted the biggest concentrations, with the August figure of 400 (see table) involving the regular high-tide roost on St Cuthbert's Island. A total of 329 moved S during the month at Seaton Sluice and peaks of 344 were at the Blyth Estuary on 16th August, 150 at the Coquet Estuary, 118 at Berwick, 115 at the Aln Estuary, 100 at the Tyne Estuary and 78 on the Farne Islands, with lesser gatherings at numerous other coastal localities. Fresh influxes of migrants swelled numbers during September, as indicated in the Lindisfarne table. During the month, other three-figure concentrations involved 222 in the Tweed Estuary, 210 at Boulmer, 200 in the Blyth Estuary, 167 at Howdon and 120 in the Aln Estuary.

During the final quarter, numbers remained high in prime locations, with 314 during the October WeBS count in the Tweed Estuary, 263 at Howdon, 196 at North Blyth Staithes, 145 at St Mary's, 132 in the Aln Estuary, 130 at Boulmer and 120 at Cresswell Pond. A few remained around ponds, including up to six at Hoppen Kiln Flash and Prestwick Carr (where they are unusual in winter) and one at Big Waters in November (where they are a local scarcity).

Wood Sandpiper *Tringa glareola*

STATUS: Uncommon passage visitor.

BREEDING: Historical. / LAST BRED: 1853

Light spring passage began with a single at Druridge Pools on 30th April. During May, one-two frequented Druridge Pools from 1st-29th and singles were at Hoppen Kiln Flash on 3rd, Longhirst Flash on 7th and West Hartford on 9th.

There was then an absence of records until mid-June, when a scattering, perhaps of very early returning birds, began to appear at widespread waterside localities. Singles were at Druridge Pools from 16th-25th, Bothal Pond and Monks House Pool on 19th, Longhirst Flash on 25th and three arrived ahead of heavy rain at Backworth Flash on 30th, when a single was on the Farne Islands (remaining until the following day) and one was at Widdrington Moor Lake. Movement peaked in July, with three at Hemscott Hill (Cresswell) on 4th and five at Druridge Pools on 8th (HP), gradually falling to two by the end of the month. Singles visited Backworth, Beal Point, Boulmer, the Farne Islands, Hauxley NR, Longhirst Flash, Low Newton and Monks House Pool.

Light passage decreased through August, when only singles were recorded, starting at Druridge Pools from 1st-7th, followed by one heard flying over Tughall Wood (near Beadnell) on 2nd and further singles at Lynemouth Flash on 4th, Monks House Pool on 8th, Mootlaw Quarry (Ryal) on 9th, Hoppen Kiln Flash on 12th, Hedgeley GP on 16th and Newton Scrape on 22nd. The final records involved a very late single, or singles, at Monks House Pool on 24th and 29th September.

Spotted Redshank *Tringa erythropus*

STATUS: Uncommon passage visitor, more frequent in the autumn and rare in winter.

A single wintering in Budle Bay throughout January-February, and up to 14th March, was joined by a second bird on 13th March (DF). Another, or perhaps one of these birds, was at Stag Rocks on 7th March. Further indication of passage during April involved a single at Druridge Bay on 11th and a summer-plumaged individual in Budle Bay on 28th-29th. The final spring bird was at East Chevington on 22nd May.

Return passage commenced with a single at Newton Pool on 28th June. One was at Budle Bay on 2nd July, where an adult moulting out of breeding plumage was present from 11th July and then remained for more than two months. During August, singles, mostly juveniles, were at Beal Point, Cresswell Pond, Druridge Pools, the Farne Islands and Fenham-le-Moor. Light passage continued during September, with a juvenile joining the long-staying adult in Budle Bay from 3rd-22nd (GPK/JPL) and singles at Bothal Pond from 1st-24th and flying E over Holy Island (The Snook) on 28th.

During October, the adult and juvenile were in Budle Bay on 1st, with the adult remaining to 18th, and occasionally being seen at Fenham Flats. Singles were at Cresswell Pond on 1st and Bothal Pond from 7th; the latter bird remaining to 14th November. An adult, possibly the regular bird again, was in Budle Bay from 18th November-3rd December.

Greenshank *Tringa nebularia*

STATUS: Well-represented passage visitor, more numerous in the autumn, rare in winter.

Typical very light spring arrival began in April, with singles at Druridge Pools on 7th and at St Mary's on 9th. One was at Castle Island on 25th, increasing to two on 26th, and singles were at Budle Bay, Fenham Flats and Holy Island by the end of the month. Light passage continued in May, with three in Budle Bay on 10th, two at Foxton Bend on 6th and on the River Tweed at New Water Haugh on 14th and singles at Big Waters, Boulmer, Fenham-le-Moor, Hedgeley GP, Longhirst Flash and flying N at Newton Links.

Early return passage began in late June, when an adult visited Cresswell Pond and Druridge Pools on 26th and other singles were at Alnmouth and Hauxley. Further influxes in July brought five to Foxton Bend on 21st, three in Budle Bay and two at Beal Point, Boulmer, Castle Island, Druridge Pools and Holy Island, with seven singles at six other coastal localities.

Much stronger passage during August-September produced high counts, particularly around Lindisfarne, with peaks of 12 at Beal Point on 9th September (PRM), seven on Fenham Flats, five in Budle Bay and off Holy Island Causeway and smaller numbers elsewhere, perhaps involving some of the same birds moving around the reserve to feed in response to tides. Elsewhere, there were peaks of five at Bothal Pond and Castle Island, four at Druridge Pools, three at Foxton Bend, two at the Aln Estuary, the Boulmer-Craster coastal stretch, Cresswell Pond, Hauxley NR, Hoppen Kiln Flash, the Wansbeck Estuary and West Hartford and singles in at least 20 other coastal, or near-coastal, localities. The species is always more scarce well inland but, during this period, peaks of three visited Derwent Reservoir and Grindon Lough.

Onward movement reduced numbers during October. A maximum of eight at Beal Point on 10th fell to just one by the end of the month. Four were at Alnmouth on 25th and two at Holy Island on 21st, while elsewhere singles lingered at Bothal Pond from 7th-25th, the Farne Islands on 23rd and Fenham-le-Moor on 26th. The final records, in November, involved one (or more) at Beal on 7th, 12th and 19th and a single in Budle Bay on 18th.

Kittiwake *Rissa tridactyla*

STATUS: Abundant summer and passage visitor, uncommon in winter.

BREEDING: Common.

A count of 30 from Rockcliffe (Whitley Bay) on 2nd January was unusually high for mid-winter. Sightings from Seaton Sluice Watch Tower were typically sparse, seen on only four January days, with a total of nine N and nine S. The first record from the Newcastle breeding colonies involved 23 on 23rd February, rising to 260 by 16th March. Gatherings of 300-400 were noted at other breeding colonies at Cullernose Point and Tynemouth by the end of March. Elsewhere, 496 were at Howick on 24th March, while 150-200 were recorded moving S at Rockcliffe and Seaton Sluice on 12th and 28th respectively. An unusual inland record involved a single at Whittle Dene Reservoirs on 14th.

Passage continued apace in April, beginning with 550 N (per hour) at Cocklawburn on 10th and intensified from 22nd, when 890 moved N (in five hours) at Seaton Sluice, with 360 N (per hour) at Berwick on 25th. Numbers peaked on 26th, when birds moving N included 2,200 (in five hours) at Seaton Sluice (SSWT), 1,500 (in one hour) at Newbiggin and 800 (in one hour) at Howick. Early May produced passage N of 500 (per hour) at Berwick Pier and 400 at Seaton Sluice on 8th, while 273 were noted from Seahouses-Beadnell on the same day and 124 were in the gull roost at the Tweed Estuary on 28th. In June, 500 were reported from Seahouses on 30th and 200 (per hour) moved N into strong winds at Holy Island on 24th.

The breeding season on the Farne Islands was much improved, with a 35% increase in numbers and an increase in productivity from 0.58 in 2016 to 0.69 in 2017 (467 chicks fledged from 674 monitored nests). The first egg was seen on 14th May and the first chicks hatched on 3rd June (FIR). The Coquet Island colony reached a new record number. The first egg was laid on 20th May and productivity was 1.2 from 30 sample nests (RSPB). Counts from other breeding colonies included at least 60 birds on nesting ledges at Tynemouth Priory Castle on 5th May, 400 at Needles Eye on 22nd June, 400 (including many fledged young) at Dunstanburgh Castle on 18th July and 100-120 (including many juveniles) at Cullernose Point and Tynemouth in August.

Breeding data from monitored colonies was as follows (FIR/MHu/RSPB/DMT):

Locality	Pairs in 2017	Pairs in 2016	Pairs in 2015	Pairs in 2014	Pairs in 2013
Farne Islands	*4,753	3,527	3,956	4,175	3,443
Needles Eye	No data	820	1,120	1,130	880
Coquet Island	448	317	326	288	185
Tyne Bridge – North tower and bridge	354	338	378	377	312
Newcastle Guildhall	77	56	--	--	--
Newcastle Quayside	42	43	159	80	55
Newcastle Dean Street	14	30	--	--	--
Newcastle Red House	No data	8	--	--	--
** Tyne Bridge - South tower and bridge	218	188	--	--	--
** Baltic Arts Centre	126	100	--	--	--
** Gateshead Kittiwake Tower	119	--	--	--	--

* Incomplete total (no count undertaken on Big Harcar this year).

** Although counts from the south side of the river lie outside our recording area, they are given here for reference and as an indication to the overall size of the important Newcastle city centre colony.

The maximum count from Seaton Sluice in July was 550 S (in two hours) on 22nd, while 80 (per hour) moved N at Berwick Pier on 24th. Elsewhere, gatherings included 284 in the Tweed Estuary on 21st and 23rd and 100 feeding offshore at Newbiggin on 8th. In August, 175 were counted from Seahouses-Beadnell, with up to 80 in the Tweed Estuary. Notable passage N in September included 600 (per hour) at Berwick Pier on 15th, 370 (in two hours) at Snab Point on 13th and 223 (in three hours) at Holy Island on 16th. Further September counts included 150 at Boulmer on 24th and 88 in the Tweed Estuary on 6th.

Apart from October counts at Beadnell of 123 on 16th and 440 on 18th, the species was rather scarce during the final quarter. There was no significant movement at Seaton Sluice, with a maximum count of 45 N on 29th November and a similar number, 44 N (in one hour 30 minutes), came from Newbiggin on the same day; 30 also moved N (in 30 minutes) at St Mary's on 28th. In December, only four birds passed N at Seaton Sluice, with five others elsewhere, before the last at Longhoughton Steel on 31st.

Sabine's Gull *Xema sabini*

STATUS: Rare visitor. / FIRST RECORD: 1920s / LAST RECORD: 2016

An excellent mid September spell of northerlies gave rise to two sightings. A juvenile was picked up moving N off St Mary's on 15th (AC/PC). On 17th, another juvenile was noted moving N at Snab Point at 16:34hrs (TF/JFa). Further sightings of this individual heading N were made at Craster at 17:15hrs (SS) and at Cullernose Point at 17:35hrs (BS). It is presumed that this individual was feeding in the area, accounting for an about-turn, as it was again seen off Cullernose Point, at 19:10hrs (ME). It was thought to be trying to roost with many Kittiwakes *Rissa tridactyla* on the sea.

Black-headed Gull *Chroicocephalus ridibundus*

STATUS: Abundant resident, passage and winter visitor.

BREEDING: Common.

Maximum monthly counts from Lindisfarne NNR (including Budle Bay) were as follows:

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
430	38	200	4	445	82	--	2,000	2,680	1,932	119	146

In addition to the Lindisfarne counts, larger coastal gatherings during the first quarter included a huge flock of 3,200 foraging in roadside fields between Widdrington-Red Row on 6th March and 800 likewise at Bell's

Farm (Cresswell) two days later. Elsewhere, 132 at the Tweed Estuary in January increased to 460 in February, before declining to 66 in March, 146 at the Blyth Estuary in January increased to 206 in February and 331 in March, and 150 at the Aln Estuary in January increased to 420 in March. Other notable counts involved 392 between Howick-Boulmer, 394 on the River Tyne at East Howdon and 300-330 at Cresswell and Linton Ponds. Inland sites also featured strongly, with maximum counts of 383 between Redheugh-Scotswood Bridges in February and 223 at QEII CP in January. Counts of 110-200 came from a further six coastal and five inland sites. The spring roost at the Farne Islands was smaller than in previous years, with a peak count of 240 across the Inner Group on 19th March. Colour-ringed sightings involved Norwegian birds at Amble and Druridge Bay CP and a Danish bird at Killingworth Lake.

April counts included 122 at Derwent Reservoir on 4th and 93 at Grindon Lough on 11th, while 84 were at the latter locality on 12th May and 100 at Hauxley on 31st May.

For the second year running, the colony size at Coquet Island surpassed all previous records. The first egg date was 17th April and productivity remained relatively low at 0.86 chicks fledged per pair (RSPB). On the Farne Islands, where colony size continues to fluctuate, the first egg was laid on 25th April and the first chick appeared on 15th May. An interesting observation involved a chick wandering into an Arctic Tern *Sterna paradisaea* nest where it was brooded by the adult tern, but was not fed and eventually died (FIR). Away from these well documented breeding sites, the large colony at Plenmeller Common contained 600+ birds (including juveniles) on 7th June.

Data from the principal breeding sites was as follows (FIR/RSPB):

Locality	Pairs in 2017	Pairs in 2016	Pairs in 2015	Pairs in 2014	Pairs in 2013
Coquet Island	5,394	5,348	4,627	4,740	4,128
Farne Islands	487	506	475	610	565

Post-breeding dispersal swelled numbers from late July and, by August, peak counts included 2,000 in the Budle Point gull roost on 15th, 500-700 at Whittle Dene Reservoirs from 15th-19th and 536 in the Aln Estuary, 461 in the Blyth Estuary, 337 at Castle Island, 308 in the Tweed Estuary and 144-260 at Arcot and Cresswell Ponds and Cocklawburn. In September, higher three-figure counts included 619 on the coastal stretch from Beadnell-Howick on 11th, 450 at East Chevington on 10th and 382 in the Aln Estuary, 356 at Gosforth Subsidence Pond and 100-290 at a further six coastal and five inland sites.

Numbers remained high almost everywhere during the final quarter. The largest gathering of the year came from a traditional gull roost at Derwent Reservoir, where 3,300+ were noted on 24th November (PRM); on the same day, 800 were at Howdon. Elsewhere, an impressive WeBS count of 1,045 came from Beadnell-Howick on 9th October, 798 were at the Aln Estuary in October and 550 were at Boulmer in December. Counts of 100-360 came from seven localities already mentioned, plus Annstead, Bothal Pond, Cambois, Cheswick, Hallington Reservoir, Hauxley NR, Jesmond Dene, Monks House Pool, Newbiggin, Newcastle (Exhibition Park), St Mary's, Swallow Pond, the Tyne Estuary-North Shields and Weetslade CP.

Little Gull *Hydrocoloeus minutus*

STATUS: Uncommon to well-represented non-breeding summer and passage visitor, uncommon in winter.

The first records of the year came from Football Hole (Newton) and Stag Rocks on 5th and 7th February respectively. In March, a single flew N at Annstead on 20th and two adults S at Druridge Bay on 30th.

An immature at Charlton Mires Pond on 14th and 17th April and another in the evening gull roost at the Farne Islands on 16th were followed by a light influx at the end of the month, when a single moved N at Seaton Sluice on 24th, an adult was off Newbiggin on 25th-26th and three first-summers were briefly at Big Waters and one at Beadnell on 30th. May sightings began with first-summers at the Farne Islands on 1st (remaining to 24th) and Seaton Sluice on 2nd, when an adult was also at the Farne Islands. Another first-summer was at Monks House Pool on 9th. In Druridge Bay, first-summers were at Druridge Pools on 17th and 20th and at East Chevington on 22nd. Later in May, two were at Monks House Pool on 28th, one at Stag Rocks on 30th and a first-summer at Hauxley NR on 31st.

It was another disappointing summer, with a peak June count of up to four immatures at Cresswell Pond on various dates from 2nd-25th. At Seaton Sluice, an immature moved N on 22nd, with two adults and an

immature on 30th, and three moved N at Holy Island on 29th. Elsewhere, singles were noted at Boulmer on 1st, Amble on 7th, Newton Pool on 12th and in Newbiggin Bay on 22nd; a first-summer was at the Farne Islands on 28th and 30th, while an adult and a first-summer were at Newbiggin on 30th. Five birds (four adults and an immature) flew N at Tynemouth on 1st July and two first-summers were at Hemscott Hill (Cresswell) and one at Boulmer the same day. An adult flew S at Hadston Carrs on 2nd July and first-summers were at Cresswell Pond and Low Newton on 8th, Berwick Little Beach on 9th and Low Newton on 10th. Singles were at St Mary's on 13th and Amble and Cresswell Pond from 16th-18th, while another light influx from 23rd produced two adults N at Tynemouth and Seaton Sluice. The following day, four immatures flew N at Tynemouth, two adults N at Newbiggin and a first-summer S at Annstead, while a first-summer was at Cresswell Pond on 25th. Only two were reported in August, with a single at Monks House Pool on 1st and an adult at Warkworth on 5th.

In September, a bird roosting with terns at Budle Point throughout the month may have been responsible for sightings at Annstead on 11th and 16th and Stag Rocks on 14th. One was noted during a WeBS count from Howick-Boulmer on 4th September, an adult flew N at Cresswell on 13th, three juveniles moved N at Seaton Sluice and one at Newbiggin on 17th, with a first-winter N at Cheswick on 22nd while, on the latter date, two were at St Mary's. A notable movement of 15 (mainly adults) passed N at Seaton Sluice on 25th October (SSWT), a single adult was at Cocklawburn on 17th and two first-winters were flushed from Linton Ponds by a Marsh Harrier *Circus aeruginosus* on 29th. The final records were in November, when an adult and an immature flew N at Berwick Pier on 5th and an adult was at Ross Back Sands on 19th.

Ross's Gull *Rhodostethia rosea*

STATUS: Rare visitor. / PREVIOUS RECORDS: 10 / FIRST: 1960 / LAST: 2008

Expect the unexpected seems as good a motto in Northumberland as it is anywhere. A leisurely scan of Wigeon *Mareca penelope* at Fenham-le-Moor on 29th October turned distinctly frantic as an adult Ross's Gull flew S through the scope view! (RA). One of those moments when the heart beats a little faster. Following the bird with the scope, it flew low over the mudflats, giving excellent views of all the major field points, before landing next to a Wigeon flock. The observer, by now, was a gibbering wreck, visibly shaking with emotion and close to tears! However, he did manage to compose himself and put the news out. On trying to relocate the bird, though, it was evident that it must have taken off. Even with much searching, both that evening and the following day, it was not relocated.

There must have been increased coverage of the coast in further days in the hope of relocating this Arctic waif so, come New Year's Eve, calm had returned, only to be further shattered comprehensively. A leisurely walk at Boulmer at 15:20hrs on 31st December had another observer scanning gulls only to come across another adult crouched down with Black-headed Gulls! *Chroicocephalus ridibundus* (BS *et al.*). News was again put out quickly and a scattering of out-of-breath birders managed to connect before dusk, as it roosted on the rocks. A large gathering assembled at dawn on New Year's Day 2018 but, unfortunately, with no luck in re-finding and again it was not relocated in subsequent days.

With only ten previous records in the county, two in one year was distinctly unusual. Both sightings were accepted by the British Birds Rarities Committee and as different individuals. Logic here being that there was a number of other records in the country as part of an influx. Also it seems unlikely that an adult would have gone unnoticed along the coast for two months, especially given increased coverage at this time of year. They represent the first county records since 2008, when a sadly missed individual, and his seawatching chum, found one in summer plumage off Seaton Sluice in late March.

Mediterranean Gull *Ichthyaetus melanocephalus*

STATUS: Uncommon resident, passage and winter visitor.

BREEDING: Extremely rare. / FIRST BRED: 2009 / LAST BRED: 2017

This attractive gull continues to be well-reported, particularly from the favoured Newbiggin area and, more recently, from sites farther north along the Druridge Bay coastline and beyond.

Maximum monthly counts from Newbiggin were as follows:

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
20	26	14	3	1	4	49	64	68	39	13	18

In addition to the above, there were first-quarter sightings of one to two from Amble, Blyth, Boulmer, Cresswell, Cullercoats, Holywell Pond, Lynemouth, Rugley Farm (Alnwick), Seaton Sluice, St Mary's, Swallow Pond, Tynemouth, Warkworth and Woodhorn Flashes. In March, a pair was prospecting a potential nesting site among Black-headed Gulls *Chroicocephalus ridibundus* at a confidential site on 13th.

Only one sighting away from Newbiggin was unusual for April, with an immature at Castle Island on 26th. In May, two adults flew over Amble Braid on 15th and singles were at East Chevington on 14th and Seahouses Harbour on 25th. More unusual, were single immatures (or the same) well inland at Haughton Strother GP on 14th and Derwent Reservoir on 18th. June singles were at East Chevington, Ross Back Sands and Snab Point, whilst the peak Newbiggin count of four on 22nd included an adult ringed at Antwerp (Belgium) on 14th May this year.

One pair nested on Coquet Island, fledging three young. Two other birds showed interest, one of which had been ringed on the island as a chick in June 2015. All the young from this year's nest were colour-ringed and were reported later in the year (RSPB). One was seen locally at St Mary's, another in Dumfries and Galloway in September and the third in Cheshire in October. On Inner Farne (Farne Islands), a second-summer took up residence on 2nd April, calling and displaying to Black-headed Gulls, before being replaced by a different bird from 19th-25th May. The new arrival had been colour-ringed as a chick on Coquet Island in June 2015. There was no evidence of a nesting attempt, but these events encouraged speculation that the species may soon become the next breeding bird for the Farne Islands (FIR).

A typical summer influx from mid-July produced the build-up at Newbiggin, together with up to ten at Cresswell on 8th, five at Linton Ponds on 12th and threes at Boulmer on 13th, Budle Bay on 16th and Castle Island on 18th, with one to two at a further ten coastal localities, mainly in the Druridge Bay area, and one at Swallow Pond on 5th. Around 50 records, mostly of adults, were submitted in August. As with Newbiggin, the Cresswell-Ellington-Warkworth Lane area was popular, with numerous reports of up to 57 birds. Budle Bay held six on several dates during August and six were at QEII CP on 6th. One to two were also reported from Blyth, Castle Island (an adult colour-ringed in Holland), Cocklawburn, Lindisfarne NNR (three sites), Stag Rocks, St Mary's and Tynemouth. Numbers at Newbiggin peaked at 68 on 28th September (STH); elsewhere, 17 adults flew N past Snab Point on 5th, up to four birds were at Budle Bay throughout, four were at Elwick on 10th and one to three at Amble, Beal, Birling Carrs, Ellington, Holy Island, Linton Ponds, Seaton Sluice, Stag Rocks, St Mary's, Swallow Pond and Tynemouth; farther inland one was at Whittle Dene Reservoirs on 14th.

As numbers began to decline at Newbiggin in October, there was some evidence of inland dispersal with two at Arcot Pond on 23rd and singles at Holywell Pond on 21st and Big Waters on 25th. Up to six were noted at Cresswell and one to three at a further nine coastal localities, including three sites in the north of the county. In November, a total of eight passed Seaton Sluice and one to three were noted at Blyth, Boulmer, Cambois, Castle Island, East Chevington, Holy Island, Newcastle (one at Millennium Bridge on 28th) and Swallow Pond. Six passed Seaton Sluice in December, while up to three were noted regularly at Swallow Pond, one of which was a Danish ringed bird. Elsewhere, one to two were at Amble, Boulmer, Cresswell Pond, Marden Estate (Cullercoats), St Mary's, Tynemouth and Warkworth.

Common Gull *Larus canus*

STATUS: Abundant passage and winter visitor, less numerous in summer.

BREEDING: Historical. / LAST BRED: 2000

Maximum monthly counts from Lindisfarne NNR (mostly Budle Bay) were as follows:

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
860	700	600	69	20	55	3	1,700	270	561	247	575

This 'seagull' winters predominantly inland, where large flocks are a regular feature of permanent pasture, unimproved grassland and fields recently cultivated or fallow. Notable gatherings from mid-January included 300 at Chapel Lands (Alnwick) on 18th and 150-250 at Haughton Strother GP, Howdon and Ordley (Hexham). In February, 300 were at Widdrington Moor Lake on 12th, 200 at Farnley Haughs on 4th and 124-150 at Branton GP, Grindon Lough and Ross Back Sands. Return passage is a regular feature during March, when numbers often increase significantly. Large migratory flocks included a maximum of 2,485 coming in to roost at Kielder Water on 16th, 1,000 at Whittostall on 23rd, 800 at Haughton Strother GP on 13th, 400-500 at Heddon-on-the-Wall and Ordley and 150-200 at Bellingham, Caistron and West Woodburn.

Heavy coastal passage, mostly N, at Seaton Sluice throughout April included counts of 270 on 2nd, 215 on 3rd, 325 on 6th, 460 on 8th, 250 on 22nd and 375 on 25th. Inland, 900 were at Ryal South Farm (Grindstonelaw) on 7th, 400 were still in the Haughton Strother GP area on 2nd and 20 at Widdrington Moor Lake on 9th. Only small numbers remained by early May, with 18 at Castle Island on 12th and 16 in the Aln Estuary on 14th the largest gatherings. Nine at Haughton Strother GP on 5th June was an unusual mid-summer record for this site; elsewhere, seven in the Aln Estuary was the highest count.

In July, four were at Howdon on 5th, six at Swallow Pond on 19th, 12 at Berwick Little Beach on 24th and one to four at three inland and four coastal sites. A roost at Budle Bay increased from 450 on 14th August to 1,700 the following evening. Inland, 900 were at Whittle Dene Reservoirs on 19th, 400 at Mootlaw Quarry (Ryal) on 6th and 125 at Haughton Strother GP on 29th. On the River Tweed, numbers rose from 120 at West Ord on 5th August to 360 at the A1 border by 11th September. Elsewhere in September, 1,000 had gathered at Haughton Strother GP by 27th (remaining into October), 650 were at Mootlaw Quarry on 10th, 500+ at Widdrington Moor Lake on 21st and 300 at Whittle Dene Reservoirs on 14th.

Additional October counts included 640 roosting at New Water Haugh (Berwick) on 15th, 500 at Airy Holm Reservoir (Shotleyfield) on 29th, 400 at Widdrington Moor Lake on 8th, 200 still at Mootlaw Quarry on 5th and 120 at Goswick on 27th. Large inland gatherings during the final two months of the year included 6,200 in the Derwent Reservoir gull roost on 24th November (PRM), ca.500 on a flooded sheep pasture near Matfen on 20th December and 200-210 at Airy Holm Reservoir and Haughton Strother GP on 11th November and 4th December respectively; 139 were at East Howdon on 17th December and 78-118 at Grindon Lough throughout the period. On the coast, 260 were at Cheswick Sands on 2nd November.

Great Black-backed Gull *Larus marinus*

STATUS: Common passage and winter visitor, well-represented non-breeding summer visitor.

BREEDING: Uncommon, regular at only one site.

Maximum monthly counts from four regular localities were as follows:

Locality	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Tweed Estuary	13	10	17	8	8	9	4	6	22	21	24	40
Lindisfarne NNR (incl. B/Bay)	42	19	--	1	6	5	12	170	64	193	28	14
Blyth Estuary	21	86	4	5	1	--	1	12	13	135	9	28
Tyne Estuary - N/Shields FQ	28	52	43	15	17	32	30	79	--	101	162	120

A significant passage of 450 N was witnessed during a seven hour seawatch at Seaton Sluice on 13th January (SSWT). Elsewhere during the month, 100 were at Rockcliffe (Whitley Bay) on 7th, while WeBS counts produced 87 on the coastal stretch from Whitley Bay-Tynemouth on 22nd and a total of 36 on the River Tyne between Redheugh-Newburn Bridges on 15th. Some overland movement was detected

at Grindon Lough and Haughton Strother GP, where there were nine on 4th and 13 on 16th respectively. Away from the counts above, the largest February gathering involved a WeBS count of 33 from the Howick-Boulmer coastal stretch on 20th. An interesting, if somewhat unfortunate, sighting in Druridge Bay on 14th February involved a bird seen to attack and kill a Black-throated Diver *Gavia arctica* before proceeding to eat it! Inland, Grindon Lough was a continued attraction with maximum counts of 13-15 from February to early April. WeBS counts in March included 17 from Seahouses-Beadnell on 9th, 24 from Beadnell-Howick on 10th and 44 at Castle Island on 12th.

The small breeding colony on the Farne Islands bucked the recent upward trend, seeing a population reduction of 32% to 15 pairs (22 in 2016). The islands remain the only regular breeding site in the county.

North Shields Fish Quay continued to attract double-figure counts throughout the summer period. Elsewhere, however, there was a noticeable decline, with peak monthly counts of 30 at Widdrington Moor Lake on 14th May, 42 from Seahouses-Beadnell on 22nd June and 35 in the Aln Estuary on 17th July. A further 12 were well inland at Derwent Reservoir on 8th May and 26 were noted on the coastal stretch from Howick-Boulmer on 27th July. Numbers increased again during August to include 170 in the Budle Point roost on 14th, 120 at Boulmer on 26th, 77 at Seaton Sluice on 23rd and 49 at Warkworth Gut on 26th. In September, 180 moved S (in three hours) at Seaton Sluice on 25th, 85 were at Amble Harbour on 6th, 76 at Warkworth Gut on 23rd and 64 at Woodhorn Flashes on 10th.

As expected, numbers rose strongly at several sites in October (see table). Elsewhere, 81 were at Linton Ponds on 29th, with monthly WeBS activity including 36 from Howick-Boulmer on 7th and 35 at Castle Island and 33 at East Chevington on 8th. A movement of 300 N (mainly adults) was observed at Seaton Sluice on 30th November; elsewhere, 99 were at Newbiggin on 23rd, 69 at Castle Island on 19th, 61 from Beadnell-Howick on 20th and 57 at Linton Ponds and 50 at East Chevington, both on 19th. Further heavy passage at Seaton Sluice included 250 on 1st December, with other December counts including 70 at East Chevington, 59 at Linton Ponds and 41 from Beadnell-Howick. Inland, 15 were at QEII CP on 10th December and up to 15 were well inland at Derwent Reservoir in November-December.

Glaucous Gull *Larus hyperboreus*

STATUS: Uncommon passage and winter visitor, rare in summer.

An influx occurred in January, almost all of which were immatures. A total of eight N and two S were logged at Seaton Sluice during the month and up to five were present at the favoured locality of North Shields Fish Quay throughout (ASJ *et al.*). Elsewhere, during the first eight days, singles were reported from Boulmer, Cheswick, East Chevington, Goswick, Hemscott Hill (Cresswell), Holy Island, Rising Sun CP, St Mary's, the Tweed Estuary, Warkworth, Whitley Bay and on the River Tyne at Wylam; the latter the only adult reported during the month (on 5th). Others were at Boulmer on 11th, Lindisfarne NNR (three sites) on 12th, between Amble-Chevington on 15th and well inland at Haughton Strother GP on 16th. Two appeared at the Blyth Estuary on 19th and at Tynemouth on 22nd and one at Goswick from 24th-25th. Although some duplication is inevitable this remains one of the largest influxes of recent years.

Three to four remained at North Shields Fish Quay to 6th February, with a single to 22nd, one took bread from a Tynemouth garden on 3rd, two were again at the Blyth Estuary on 5th and singles at Widdrington Moor Lake on 5th and Football Hole (Newton) on 12th. The final sightings from North Shields Fish Quay were on 5th and 7th March, with others at Howick on 24th and St Mary's on 28th. A second-winter bird at Inner Farne (Farne Islands) on 18th March was joined by another second-winter in the roost at West Wideopen; one bird was seen on a further 34 dates to 28th May.

A first-summer was at Monks House Pool on 2nd April and again on 13th, 15th and 29th May, with presumably the same bird at Inner Farne on 28th. At least one bird remained to summer in the region, with sightings of an immature between Seahouses-Beadnell on 22nd June, at Embleton Links-Newton Scrape on 24th June, Boulmer on 1st July, Annstead on 10th July and Tynemouth on 16th July and 12th August.

A second-winter was at East Wideopen (Farne Islands) on 18th September, with another at Budle Bay on several dates from at least 9th October-5th November. Elsewhere in November, a first-winter moved N at Tynemouth on 11th and a second-winter N at Snab Point on 12th and another was in The Kettle (Farne Islands) on 22nd. In December, two immatures flew N at Seaton Sluice on 1st, another was at North Shields Fish Quay on 27th and the second-winter bird from Budle Bay was again seen there on 28th.

Iceland Gull - North Shields Fish Quay - January (Frank Golding).



Glaucous Gull - North Shields Fish Quay - January (Alan Jack).



Iceland Gull - North Shields Fish Quay - February (Tim Dean).

Iceland Gull *Larus glaucooides*

STATUS: Uncommon passage and winter visitor, rare in summer.

The first of the year was an immature at the Blyth Estuary on 1st and 7th January, with presumably the same bird at nearby Cambois on 5th. The regular wintering site at North Shields Fish Quay held one first-winter from 4th January, it being joined by a second from 11th; both remained to at least 6th February, with one to 22nd; while at Seaton Sluice, an adult and an immature flew N and an immature S on 5th January (SSWT). Elsewhere in January, an immature was at Tynemouth on 7th-8th, an adult at Swallow Pond from 22nd-30th and immatures at Newton Haven on 25th and Castle Island on 26th. The adult at Swallow Pond made further brief appearances on various dates to 20th February and was seen again on 4th March, while immature birds were noted on the coastal stretch from Beadnell-Howick on 20th February and at QEII CP on 26th February, with a first-winter again at North Shields Fish Quay on 5th March. More unusual was a near-adult well inland at Grindstonelaw (Ryal) on 20th and 29th March.

In April, immature birds were noted at St Mary's on 1st, Tynemouth on 3rd, 5th and 25th and Castle Island-Wansbeck Estuary on 23rd and 25th. Adults were reported from Newbiggin on 17th and Newton Scrape on 23rd.

There were only three reports during the second winter period, beginning with a second-winter W at Inner Farne (Farne Islands) on 28th November. A first-winter flew N at Seaton Sluice on 30th November and an adult flew in to East Chevington north pool for a brief 'wash and brush-up' on 5th December, before flying off S.

Herring Gull *Larus argentatus argenteus*

STATUS: Common resident, passage and winter visitor.

BREEDING: Well-represented to common.

Maximum counts from regular localities, including some favoured coastal stretches, were as follows:

Locality	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Tweed Estuary	684	247	388	390	400	576	144	852	574	1,542	216	266
Lindisfarne NNR	110	137	180	138	802	86	150	2,000	2,000	3,944	319	84
Seahouses-Beadnell	76	43	54	143	116	347	415	59	62	216	35	45
Beadnell-Howick	49	8	147	--	--	--	--	--	609	1,511	66	37
Blyth Estuary	76	105	167	104	245	203	273	286	132	74	129	131
N/Shields FQ - Tyne Estuary	172	148	128	157	199	137	246	--	--	392	506	312
Redheugh-Scotswood Bridges	54	151	132	90	176	140	109	--	21	86	89	104

In addition to the above counts, first-quarter gatherings included 550 at Newburn Riverside on 19th January, 450+ at Linton Ponds on 17th February, a peak roost of 291 at the Farne Islands on 21st March and 230 between Low Cocklaw-Leatham Shanks (Berwick) on 22nd March. Elsewhere, 100-170 were at Houghton Strother GP, Holburn Moss (into April), Howick-Boulmer, Seaton Sluice and West Ord (Berwick).

During the period April-June, 322 were at New Water Haugh (Berwick) on 16th May, up to 221 at Seaton Sluice in April-May, 200 at Warenton on 7th April, 177 at Swallow Pond on 19th April and 100-135 at Budle Point-Seahouses, Coquet Island, East Howdon, Howick-Boulmer and West Ord.

A 28% increase in breeding pairs was noted at the Farne Islands cf. to 2016 (FIR). In the Blyth Estuary, breeding included 24 nests on the James Burrell building and eight nests at South Harbour in May and four pairs on North Blyth Staithes. In July, 50 juveniles were noted at Blyth Riverside Industrial Estate and 23 at the Power Station (STH/LJM). Three pairs bred at Wallsend (Davy Bank) and at Wansbeck Hospital and a pair hatched two young from a nest on the observer's house roof at Monkseaton in June.

Data from offshore breeding sites was as follows (FIR/RSPB):

Locality	Pairs in 2017	Pairs in 2016	Pairs in 2015	Pairs in 2014	Pairs in 2013
Farne Islands	847	660	No data	937	874
Coquet Island	8	1	1	2	2

Numbers at the AIn Estuary peaked at 195 on 17th July, while 130-160 were at Cheswick, New Water Haugh and West Ord. An impressive inland count of 600 came from Whittle Dene Reservoirs on 19th August, while in the Berwick area during the month, 652 were found from Spittal-Cocklawburn on 13th, 270 were at Whiteadder Water on 30th and 220 at Cocklawburn on 7th. A colour-ringed adult at Cresswell Pond on 7th August had been marked at York in October 2016. In September, 300 had gathered in a stubble field at Embleton on 8th, while 120-150 were noted at Goswick, Leatham Shanks and New Water Haugh. WeBS counts from Widdrington Moor Lake included 110 on 10th September and 8th October. Large numbers were wintering around the Farne Islands, particularly on Knoxes Reef and the Wideopens.

Huge numbers were at Lindisfarne NNR in October, peaking at 3,944 on 8th (ACr), with 200 nearby at Warenton on 20th and ca.1,000 at Linton Ponds on 31st. There was a marked decline in the north of the county from November, but counts from farther south included a noticeable increase at North Shields Fish Quay (see table); elsewhere, 295 remained at Linton Ponds on 19th November, 180 were at Widdrington Moor Lake, 168 at Castle Island and 142 at QEII CP; the latter gathering building to 307 on 10th December. Other December counts included ca.300 at Swallow Pond on 31st, 153 at Linton Ponds and 119 at Castle Island; farther inland 80+ were at Colt Crag Reservoir and 42 at Airy Holm Reservoir (Shotleyfield).

'Northern race Herring Gull' *L. a. argentatus*

STATUS: Uncommon winter visitor.

Two adults were at North Shields Fish Quay on 12th January (PRM) and a single was feeding in a Quarry Cottage (Newbiggin) garden on 15th.

Caspian Gull *Larus cachinnans*

STATUS: Rare visitor. / PREVIOUS RECORDS: 9 / FIRST: 2007 / LAST: 2016

After the deluge of seven individuals in 2015, it was maybe expected that this would continue. However this was not the case and birders had to rely on the reliable returnee to see this species on their year lists. The ringed Polish individual 'PKCS' was again present at Amble Harbour from 28th July-7th September (JFa *et al.*). This was its fourth year in succession and it was again prone to seizing its prime perch on top of one of the high floodlights.

Yellow-legged Gull *Larus michahellis*

STATUS: Rare visitor. / FIRST RECORD: 1955 / LAST RECORD: 2015

Another lone record, with a juvenile located by an avid gull watcher at the Blyth Estuary on 5th August (AC). It was well-watched and photographed and suitably well documented. However, it soon flew off upstream and was not relocated in subsequent days. Still a good find in Northumberland as most birds in the UK prefer warmer climes farther south. It is always suspected that juveniles especially, must be present in late summer-early autumn, and detailed observation is required for positive identification.

Lesser Black-backed Gull *Larus fuscus*

STATUS: Common passage and summer visitor, uncommon in winter.

BREEDING: Well-represented.

The trend towards overwintering was again apparent in January, with two at Newcastle Quayside on 1st, Corbridge on 10th-11th and Ladyburn Lake on 29th and singles, perhaps involving some overlap, at Blyth, Chain Bridge (River Tweed), Chollerford, Cramlington, East Chevington, Holywell Pond, Mootlaw Quarry (Ryal), Newcastle (Exhibition Park), Seahouses, Swallow Pond and West Hartford. Singles at North Shields Fish Quay on several dates increased to ten+ from late January-February. Castle Island held 12+ on 7th February; elsewhere an influx from mid-month brought nine to Grindon Lough on 15th, five to Swallow Pond on 27th, two in Budle Bay on 21st and singles at a further nine inland and seven coastal localities. Counts increased further during March, with a roost of 110 at the Farne Islands on 19th and a peak of 30 at Plessey Checks (Cramlington) on 30th. Twenty passed Seaton Sluice between 9th-31st March, 18 were at Annstead and 13 at Newburn on 20th and one to 12 at a further 23 widespread sites.

In April, a very large concentration of 150, mostly immatures, was at Forestburn Gate on 23rd. The peak count from Swallow Pond was 37 on 16th, 27 were noted in Newcastle (between Redheugh-Scotswood Bridges) on 9th (increasing to 31 in mid-May) and one to 16 at a further 17 localities. Other May counts included ten to 25 at Branton GP, Budle Bay, Byker, Derwent Reservoir, Exhibition Park, Grindon Lough, Haughton Strother GP, Monks House Pool and Swallow Pond. Flocks of 47 and 55 were at Wingates and in the Breamish Valley on 1st and 17th June respectively, while 30 were at Beadnell on 30th and smaller gatherings of 11-12 at seven further localities.

Despite a 4% population increase at the Farne Islands, it was again a below average breeding year (FIR). A more dramatic reduction of almost 57% was seen at Coquet Island, where the first egg date was 10th May and productivity was 0.22 (RSPB). Further breeding data came from Davy Bank (Wallsend), where four nests were noted, and the Blyth Estuary, with three nests on the James Burrell building and three visible nests at Wimbourne Quay; the latter producing eight juveniles in July. There were also three nests at Blyth Power Station and two at Blyth Riverside Industrial Estate. Three recently fledged young were at Southfield Green (Cramlington) in August, probably from a nest in the nearby Industrial estate.

Data from the principal breeding sites was as follows (FIR/RSPB):

Locality	Pairs in 2017	Pairs in 2016	Pairs in 2015	Pairs in 2014	Pairs in 2013
Farne Islands	593	572	No data	799	765
Coquet Island	11	26	28	26	22

Peak counts in July were 54 at Annstead on 10th, 50+ at Coquet Island on 8th, 43 at Stag Rocks on 24th, 38 at Haughton Strother GP on 8th, 26 in the Blyth Estuary on 23rd, 20+ at Boulmer on 9th and Redheugh-Scotswood Bridges on 23rd, up to 17 at Killingworth Lake and six to 12 at a further five localities. A gull roost

at Budle Bay held 210 on 14th August (CGK), while 40 were at Whittle Dene Reservoirs on 19th, 25+ at Gosforth Park on 4th and ten to 16 at four other localities. An impressive 116 were at Branton GP on 20th September, with 15-20 at four localities during the month.

The gull roost at Budle Bay had reduced to 74 by 8th October. Branton GP continued to attract birds during October, although there was a steady decline from 54 on 3rd to eight by 23rd. A gathering of 29 at Yetlington on 14th was the only other count above three during the month. Unusually large winter gatherings included 20 at Budle Bay in November, 15+ at Castle Island on 18th November, 11 at Farnley Haughs on 10th December and ten leaving Ashington New Moor tip on 24th December. Elsewhere during the final two months, one to two were reported from ten inland and five coastal localities.



Sandwich Terns (John Steele).

Sandwich Tern

Thalasseus sandvicensis

STATUS: Common summer and passage visitor.

BREEDING: Common.

One N at Seaton Sluice on 22nd March was the first of the year, followed by another single N at Druridge Pools on 30th, when several were back at the Farne Islands. Numbers passing Seaton Sluice increased from 1st April, with the main passage from 19th-22nd, when 151 moved N and 292 S. The largest gatherings were 41 at Holy Island on 23rd and 22 in the Tweed Estuary on 25th April; more unusual was a single briefly at Haughton Strother GP on 19th and a pair flying high NW over the same site on 21st.

At least 300, including many displaying

pairs, were on the beach in Budle Bay on 5th May and 945 moved past Seaton Sluice over three dates from 12th-20th May.

Numbers breeding at Coquet Island do fluctuate widely, but 1,573 pairs represented a welcome increase of 16.6% over 2016. The first egg date was 2nd May. Productivity was not measured but thought to be good, with large flocks of fledged young. Ring reading again showed colony movement, with one bird in particular revealing interesting data. Ringed as a chick in Texel (Netherlands) in June 2015, it spent summer 2016 in the Gulf of Cadiz (Spain), was then in the Netherlands on 5th August this year, on Coquet Island on 13th August, back in the Netherlands again on 16th August and, finally, in Scarborough in early September; an unprecedented frequency of movement across the North Sea (RSPB). At the Farne Islands, the first egg was discovered on 14th May, the first chick on 3rd June and fledglings from 24th June. An 11.6% decrease in breeding pairs (to 556) saw a continuation of the decline since 1982, when 4,082 pairs bred; an overall reduction of 86.4% FIR).

Breeding data 2013-2017 was as follows:

Locality	Pairs in 2017	Pairs in 2016	Pairs in 2015	Pairs in 2014	Pairs in 2013
Coquet Island	1,573	1,349	1,624	1,754	670
Farne Islands	556	629	750	959	824

Some mid-summer movement involved 60 N (in one hour 30 minutes) at Seaton Sluice on 28th June, with unusual inland records of two NW over Haughton Strother GP on 22nd and a single NW over Longbenton on 30th June. In July, southerly movement in the period 15th-25th included maxima of 400 (in one hour) at Hadston, 282 (in three hours) at Tynemouth and 280 (in two hours) at Seaton Sluice. These movements were exceeded in August, when large numbers, mostly heading S, passed Seaton Sluice during the first three weeks, including 156 N and 850 S from 1st-3rd and 145 S (per hour) on 17th (SSWT).

The largest passage movements in September again came from Seaton Sluice, with 144 N and 91 S from 9th-11th. Numerous sightings of up to 40 birds followed to the end of the month, but with few remaining into October this year, the last record involved two S at Seaton Sluice on 20th October.



Little Tern - Druridge Bay - June (Heiko Peters).

Little Tern *Sternula albifrons*

STATUS: Well-represented summer visitor.

BREEDING: Uncommon.

The first arrivals, on the same date as last year, were a single N at Boulmer and up to four at Lindisfarne NNR on 28th April. The traditional St Cuthbert's Cove (Farne Islands) roost held 42 on 30th April, quickly rising to a peak of 124 on 8th May (FIR); this second highest-ever count for the islands included a colour-ringed individual from a colony near Hartlepool. Another, caught on 16th May, was originally ringed as a chick at a former colony at Montrose Bay (Angus). Numbers built up at the Long Nanny Estuary from 3rd May and, elsewhere, 24 were at Lindisfarne NNR on 6th May, six were at Boulmer on 19th-20th, with one

to three at Annstead, Bamburgh, Beadnell, Craster-Dunstanburgh, Cresswell Pond, Embleton, Howick, Low Newton, Monks House Pool, Newbiggin and Seahouses on dates throughout May. In June, 24 moved N at Stag Rocks on 10th, with one to six seen at Boumer, Druridge Bay, the Farne Islands, Holy Island and Low Newton.

At the start of the breeding season, the Long Nanny Estuary colony held 14 nests, with a first egg date of 18th May; however high tides washed out all but three nests in June. A subsequent influx of adult birds resulted in 38 pairs laying, or re-laying. However, a combination of poor weather, with heavy rain and strong winds, and predation of chicks (by a range of species, though predominantly Black-headed Gulls *Chroicocephalus ridibundus*), meant that only four of 63 chicks hatched are known to have definitely fledged; a disappointingly low productivity figure of 0.11 chicks fledged per pair, similar to last year's failure (NT). The first egg date at the Lindisfarne colony was 21st May. A typical early season disaster saw 15 scrapes washed out by a very high tide on 25th May; many replacement clutches were then lost to a violent storm on 6th June. Unsurprisingly, productivity was low, with 16 fledglings giving a figure of 0.27 chicks fledged per pair (NE).

Breeding data 2013-2017 was as follows (with adjusted totals for some years at Lindisfarne):

Locality	Pairs in 2017	Pairs in 2016	Pairs in 2015	Pairs in 2014	Pairs in 2013
Long Nanny	38	17	27	30	17
Lindisfarne NNR	59	37	17	35	18

Away from the breeding colonies, summer counts were again low this year. In July-August, six flew N at Boulmer on 10th August, a maximum of five were at Budle Point to 16th August and one to four were recorded at Annstead, Beadnell, Cheswick, Craster, Embleton Bay, Holy Island, Low Newton and Seaton Sluice, before the last, a single, off Bamburgh on 24th August.

Roseate Tern *Sterna dougallii*

STATUS: Uncommon summer and passage visitor.

BREEDING: Uncommon.

The first record came from Coquet Island on 1st May and was followed by one at Amble on 14th and further May arrivals of one at Hauxley on 19th and four+ at Boulmer on 20th. One to two were seen on various dates during June at Amble, Druridge Bay, East Chevington, the Farne Islands and Hauxley.

It was a bumper year at Coquet Island, with a joint-highest modern-day population of 111 breeding pairs. First egg date was 16th May. An exceptional year, with dry weather and plentiful fish, led to low chick mortality and the highest productivity on record at 1.5 chicks fledged per pair (a record 166 chicks, all of which were ringed). Over 220 adult rings were read in the field, with the proportion fledged from Coquet Island exceeding that from elsewhere for the second year running; however more detailed analysis now suggests that the colony is not quite at the point of being sustainable without immigration (RSPB).

Breeding data 2013-2017 was as follows:

Locality	Pairs in 2017	Pairs in 2016	Pairs in 2015	Pairs in 2014	Pairs in 2013
Coquet Island	111	104	111	93	78
Farne Islands	0	0	1	0	0

The first juvenile at the Farne Islands was noted with its parent on 16th July and both were identified from their ring numbers as originating from Coquet Island. Two adults and two juveniles were then noted on Inner Farne on 30th July and numbers increased to seven adults and two juveniles on 1st August, with a peak of eight adults and three juveniles on 7th August.

The first two returning birds at Seaton Sluice headed S on 26th July and post-breeding gatherings built up, with eight (four adults and four juveniles) at Beacon Point (Newbiggin) on 29th and six (four adults and two juveniles) at Budle Point on 30th July. Elsewhere, one to three were seen at seven localities during July, with ten at Stag Rocks on 30th. Numbers increased at the Budle Point roost during August, with peak counts of 33 (29 adults and four juveniles) on 14th and 42 (31 adults and 11 juveniles) on 21st. Elsewhere during August, 32 were at Goswick on 6th, increasing to 63 on 13th, 16 were at North Low (Lindisfarne) on 7th, up to 12 at Beacon Point throughout the month and one to six at Alnmouth, Bamburgh, Druridge Pools, Howick, the Long Nanny Estuary, Newton and Seaton Sluice.

Small numbers were logged around Longstone (Farne Islands) from 26th August-13th September, with a maximum of ca.30 on 2nd September. Elsewhere during the first half of September, one to three were at Bamburgh, Beacon Point, Newbiggin, Ross Back Sands and St Mary's. Two were at Beal and one at Boulmer on 24th, when 16 (12 adults and four juveniles) were still in the Budle Point roost. The last was a single at Bamburgh on 30th September.

Common Tern *Sterna hirundo*

STATUS: Common summer and passage visitor.

BREEDING: Common.

An early returnee at Coquet Island on 8th April was followed by one at Whittle Dene Reservoirs on 14th, two at St Mary's on 17th, three at East Chevington on 18th, one at Hauxley on 19th and two N at Seaton Sluice and 11 at East Chevington on 20th April, with the main influx from 21st. Maximum counts involved 22 N at Seaton Sluice and an exceptional 350 N (all day count) at Newbiggin on 25th April and 40 at East Chevington north pool on 28th. Elsewhere in late April, 13 were on Inner Farne (Farne Islands), with one to eight at Amble, Arcot Pond, Big Waters, Gosforth Park, Killingworth Lake and Tynemouth.

The Coquet Island colony continued to thrive, with 1,257 pairs representing a 4.70% increase over 2016 and a new seven year high. The first egg date was 10th May and a sample check revealed a high productivity of 1.70 chicks fledged per pair (RSPB). Meanwhile, at the Farne Islands, the downward trend continued this year, with 75 pairs representing the lowest number since 1975; all nested on Inner Farne. Pairs started to settle from 2nd May and fledglings were noted in early-mid July (FIR).

Breeding data 2013-2017 was as follows:

Locality	Pairs in 2017	Pairs in 2016	Pairs in 2015	Pairs in 2014	Pairs in 2013
Coquet Island	1,257	1,201	1,160	1,196	1,041
Farne Islands	75	87	98	88	94

Elsewhere, 28 at Whittle Dene Reservoirs on 21st June included six young on the raft, all of which had disappeared by 26th, possibly predated. At Big Waters, at least five nests held young by 18th June.

A pair with three large young was at Holywell Pond on 3rd July and three pairs, each with three young, were at Swallow Pond on 5th July. A first breeding record from North Blyth staithes involved 13 pairs that hatched a minimum of 20 young, of which eight had fledged successfully by August. Up to 47 birds were noted at Gosforth Park NR, where the species again bred, but no breeding data was available.

Light return passage was noted at Seaton Sluice from late June onwards, with a maximum count of 130 S (in four hours) on 26th July; movement, mostly southerly, was noted daily during August at the same site, peaking with 114 on 14th and a maximum of 80 (per hour) on 21st-22nd. Elsewhere, resting birds included a mixed flock of 200, of all ages, on the beach at Chibburn Burn on 30th July and 40-130 frequented the roost at Beacon Point (Newbiggin) throughout August, with the maximum recorded on 30th. Good numbers remained into September, with 204 (142 N and 62 S) past Seaton Sluice from 1st-18th, although very few thereafter, 100+ still in the Budle Bay roost on 30th, 15-57 at Annstead, Bamburgh, Boulmer, Newbiggin, Seahouses and Snab Point from 9th-17th and one to seven at eight other sites. Finally, in October, a maximum of six were at Stag Rocks on 4th, one flew S at Hauxley on 7th and a late adult, still largely in summer plumage, was perched on drift material at Goswick on 27th.

Arctic Tern *Sterna paradisaea*

STATUS: Common summer and passage visitor.

BREEDING: Common.

Exceptionally early records involved twos at Cocklawburn and in flight over the Farne Islands on 6th April. Also in April, two flew N at Craster on 15th, birds returned to Coquet Island from 19th, one at East Chevington north pool on 21st rose to six on 23rd, birds were at Bamburgh and the Farne Islands from 21st, one flew N at Tynemouth on 22nd, four flew N at Seaton Sluice on 25th, up to ten were at Newbiggin on 26th and two passed Snab Point on 27th. Numbers increased rapidly into May, giving counts of 100+ at Newbiggin and 400+ at the Long Nanny Estuary on 3rd, 200+ in Budle Bay on 5th and 3,000 at the Farne Islands on 15th. More unusually, two first-summer birds in ‘portlandica’ plumage were noted at Budle Bay and East Chevington in June.

Numbers breeding at Coquet Island increased for the eighth year running, with a 6.0% growth in the colony compared to 2016. The first egg date was 9th May and a sample check revealed the highest productivity on record at 1.39 chicks fledged per pair (RSPB). At the Farne Islands, the first egg was noted on 15th May, the first chick on 6th June and the first fledglings from early July. It proved an excellent breeding season with a 24.9% increase in breeding pairs from 2016. Overall productivity, at 0.53 chicks per pair, was the highest since 2014. Interestingly, productivity on Brownsman, that has no visitor access, was 0.27, compared to 0.75 for Inner Farne; one theory being that the terns benefit from protection from predators (mostly large gulls) afforded by regular human activity (FIR).

At the Long Nanny Estuary, the first egg was laid on 13th May and the first chick hatched on 8th June. The colony held 1,865 AON on 9th June, the third highest figure ever, but high tides once again washed out many nests. Despite this, the highest fledgling count of 479 gave an improved (on recent years) productivity figure of 0.26 chicks fledged per pair; this could have been higher as it was thought the true number fledged could have been significantly more, perhaps 600-1,000 (NT).

Breeding data 2013-2017 was as follows:

Locality	Pairs in 2017	Pairs in 2016	Pairs in 2015	Pairs in 2014	Pairs in 2013
Coquet Island	1,579	1,490	1,471	1,464	1,224
Farne Islands	1,883	1,508	1,688	2,212	1,921
Long Nanny	1,865	ca.1,100	1,957	2,443	1,504

Early return passage was noted at Seaton Sluice, with a maximum of 60 S on 25th and 46 S on 26th July; a total of 45 also flew S here (in three hours) on 3rd August. Elsewhere in August, the maximum count involved 40 still at the Long Nanny colony on 8th. In comparison with 2016, birds remained much later this year, with September records involving 30+ at Bamburgh on 9th, 500 past the Farne Islands on 12th, with 200 the following day and 18 on 20th, 200+ in Budle Bay on 30th and up to five at Annstead, Boulmer, Holy Island, Seaton Sluice and Stag Rocks.

Five records of singles at Stag Rocks from 5th-14th October possibly related to the same first-winter bird and the same individual may have accounted for sightings at Boulmer, East Chevington and Newbiggin during the period 22nd-31st. A late adult was at Cheswick Sands on 27th October and a very late individual at Beacon Point on 3rd-4th November was assumed to be the lingering October bird.



Arctic Tern - Farne Islands - July (Andy Mould).

White-winged Black Tern *Chlidonias leucopterus*

STATUS: Rare visitor. / PREVIOUS RECORDS: 21 / FIRST: ca.1879 / LAST: 2013

A summer-plumaged adult was first found at Monks House Pool on 30th June (JS). It was still there the next morning and then relocated to Newton Scrape in the afternoon (GW *et al.*). Excellent views were obtained, as it quartered the flash. It stayed through to 5th July, thereby entailing many to connect. Intriguingly, another summer-plumaged adult was found at Druridge Pools on 1st July (TF/JFa *et al.*), having been first reported at East Chevington. It stayed for several hours, 'hawking' over the main scrape. These two individuals were definitely different as the Monks House-Newton bird had white flecking on the forehead, a first indication of moult. The Druridge bird was seemingly in immaculate plumage.

Having been spoilt in the spring, there was also an autumn sighting as well, with a moulting adult found off Stag Rocks on 24th September (TRD/CGK/GPK *et al.*). Initially, this individual was fairly distant, but after news was put out of a potential White-winged Black Tern offshore, it was confirmed later, with views at roost on rocks. An interesting individual, as it still retained black lesser coverts from the summer plumage. Again, this proved a popular bird, with many people having views at Stag Rocks through to 6th October. These three individuals comprise the first county records since August 2013, when one was at East Chevington and Bothal Pond.



White-winged Black Tern -
Newton Scrape - July (Gary Woodburn).



White-winged Black Tern -
Druridge Pools - July (Jonathan Farooqi).



White-winged Black Tern - Druridge Pools - July (Frank Golding).

Black Tern *Chlidonias niger*

STATUS: Uncommon passage visitor.

April records are unusual and four occurred this year. The first, in summer plumage, at East Chevington north pool from 21st-23rd April, became the earliest in the county for 15 years. Two flew N at West Ord (Berwick) on 28th and a single was at Grindon Lough on 30th April. One on the River Tweed at West Ord on 4th May could have been one of the earlier birds.

A single adult fed with Common Terns *Sterna hirundo* at Tynemouth on 24th July before slowly moving N past the Priory. One was at Holy Island on 20th August with it, or another, at Fenham-le-Moor on 24th. A juvenile was at Beacon Point (Newbiggin) on 30th August, with possibly the same bird feeding in King Edward's Bay (Tynemouth) later the same day. Finally in August, twos were at Stag Rocks on 30th and Newbiggin on 31st. In September, a single was offshore at Newbiggin on 1st, four (including at least three juveniles) were in the Budle Point tern roost until 29th, regularly commuting to Stag Rocks to feed (CGK) and, at the latter site, single juveniles were noted on five dates from 12th-30th. Elsewhere during the month, two juveniles moved N at Boulmer on 15th and single juveniles were at Annstead, Boulmer, Goswick, Newbiggin and Snab Point between 6th-15th, with a single at Longstone (Farne Islands) on 29th and one at East Chevington the following day.

Three of the Budle Bay juveniles remained there until 6th October, with one to two also recorded at nearby Stag Rocks during this period. A single juvenile at East Chevington on 15th October became the latest county record for 23 years.

Great Skua *Stercorarius skua*

STATUS: Well-represented passage visitor, mainly in the autumn, rare in winter.

There were three notable January records, with singles S at Stag Rocks on 2nd, N at Seaton Sluice on 4th and S at East Chevington on 30th. There were no further reports until mid-April, when a single was noted at Newbiggin on 17th, followed by two at Newton Links on 22nd and two at Newbiggin on 26th. In May, two passed Seaton Sluice and singles were at Seahouses and moving N with Gannets *Morus bassanus* at Berwick Pier on 8th, with another E, low over Brownsman (Farne Islands), on 11th. Light movement at the end of June produced singles S at Seaton Sluice on 28th and 30th, while on the latter date four moved N at Newbiggin and two N at the Farne Islands.

Passage gathered pace in July, particularly towards the end of the month. The first was at Tynemouth on 1st, followed by further singles at Seaton Sluice on 5th, Boulmer on 9th and the Farne Islands on 11th, and two were at Newbiggin and a single at Snab Point on 12th. One at Boulmer on 22nd was the prelude to a more conspicuous N movement on 24th, when six were observed from Seaton Sluice, five were at St Mary's, four at Tynemouth, three at Newbiggin, two at Stag Rocks and one at Annstead; some of these reports potentially involving the same birds. Another passed Seaton Sluice on 26th. Seaton Sluice recorded 13 N and one S during August, while elsewhere there were reports of four N at Newbiggin and Annstead and two N at Tynemouth on 9th, two N at Holy Island (Emmanuel Head) on 21st and three at Boulmer on 23rd. One or more singles were also noted at Annstead, Bamburgh, Boulmer, Craster, Newbiggin, Seahouses and on a North Sea pelagic on various dates throughout the month.

Notwithstanding duplication, some significant movement was witnessed in September, with a total of 54 N and seven S at Seaton Sluice (in 75 hours), including 45 N between 16th-17th. One to three were noted at Annstead, Boulmer, the Farne Islands and Holy Island from 2nd-11th, with the main passage beginning with three N at Newbiggin and singles off Beadnell and Boulmer on 14th. On 15th, seven flew N at Tynemouth, six were off Boulmer, five at Beadnell, four at Holy Island and Newbiggin and two to three at Cheswick, Cocklawburn and Whitley Bay. Passage, mostly N, then peaked from 16th-17th. On 16th, 21 flew N at Tynemouth (in four hours 15 minutes), seven passed Newbiggin (in seven hours), five were at Boulmer (in three hours 30 minutes) and N at St Mary's (in one hour 45 minutes) and four at Hauxley. On 17th, 32 flew N at Cullercoats (CGK), 27 passed Newbiggin (day total), 13 at Tynemouth (in two hours 15 minutes) and one to eight were at Cullernose Point, the Farne Islands, Holy Island, Seahouses and Snab Point. On 18th, as passage eased, 13 moved N at Tynemouth and six N at the Farne Islands. In the period 18th-29th, one to three were at Annstead, Boulmer, Low Newton, Seaton Sluice and Stag Rocks.

Lighter passage in October began with singles at Newbiggin on 1st, past Emmanuel Head on 6th and the Farne Islands on 13th; the latter being the last of 47 there during the year. One to two were at Beadnell on 16th and 19th-21st, with another passed Emmanuel Head on 18th and a single at Boulmer on 24th. In late October, a total of four flew N and three S at Newbiggin from 28th-29th and five N at Seaton Sluice from 29th-30th. Elsewhere, one flew S at Tynemouth on 29th and one was at Low Newton on 30th. The final bird of the year flew N at Snab Point on 12th November.

Pomarine Skua *Stercorarius pomarinus*

STATUS: Uncommon passage visitor, mainly in the autumn, rare in spring.

It was another disappointing year for this heavyweight skua, although an unusual winter record on 12th February concerned a pale phase adult scattering waders at Boulmer as it flew N close inshore.

There were no further reports until two pale phase birds moved N at Newbiggin on 30th June, when one was off Seaton Sluice. Singles followed at Newton Point on 14th August and Church Point (Newbiggin) on 22nd, with a dark phase bird S through Inner Sound (Farne Islands) on the latter date. Light passage followed in September, beginning with a juvenile and dark phase adult S at the Farne Islands on 5th, and a pale phase adult N at Annstead and a dark morph S at the Farne Islands on 11th. Two flew N at Newbiggin on 14th, an adult and juvenile N at Holy Island on 15th, an adult N and sub-adult S at Tynemouth and a dark juvenile N at Staple Sound (Farne Islands) on 16th. Passage peaked on 17th, when two flew N at Seaton Sluice and singles flew N at Boulmer, Holy Island, Newbiggin, Seahouses, St Mary's and Tynemouth. The final records during this period involved a juvenile N at Annstead and a dark juvenile N at the Farne Islands on 18th. Late autumn birds were noted passing Beadnell on 16th October and flying S at Holy Island on 14th November.

Long-tailed Skua - Goswick GC - September-October





Arctic Skua *Stercorarius parasiticus*

STATUS: Well-represented passage visitor, mainly in the autumn, rare in winter.

The first of the year involved two dark phase birds N at Low Newton on 23rd and one N at Newbiggin on 25th April. Singles were noted in May, at Seaton Sluice on 9th and Boulmer on 20th. In June, 14 flew N at Seaton Sluice on 29th-30th, including a pale phase bird that stopped to steal a fish from a Roseate Tern *Sterna dougallii* as it went past on 29th(!), and nine (possibly including duplication) flew N at Newbiggin on the latter date. Elsewhere, three flew N at Rockcliffe (Whitley Bay) during the month and further singles were at Beadnell, the Farne Islands, Newbiggin and the Wansbeck Estuary. July's monthly total from Seaton Sluice was a modest five N and four S, while one to six were noted at the Farne Islands on seven dates. Elsewhere, reports fell into two periods, 2nd-12th and 18th-28th, and involved one to three at Annstead, Boulmer, Cambois, Chibburn Mouth, Cresswell Links, Druridge Pools, Hadston Carrs, Hauxley, Newbiggin, Stag Rocks and Tynemouth; juveniles, second-summers and adults of both colour morphs were represented.

Although passage intensified during August, a monthly total of only 18 N and 14 S (in 39 hours) at Seaton Sluice was considered poor, continuing the recent trend for the month. Two dark phase juveniles chased Sand Martins *Riparia riparia* and a Swallow *Hirundo rustica* at Tynemouth on 1st and three were off Chibburn Mouth on 8th and Rockcliffe on 9th. Later in the month, four were off Newbiggin and four flew N at Tynemouth on 22nd, with four S at Tynemouth on 23rd. One to three were noted on various dates in August at Boulmer, Cheswick Sands, Chibburn Mouth, Cocklawburn Dunes, Cresswell Pond, Druridge Pools, Goswick, Longhoughton Steel, Low Newton, Newbiggin, Rockcliffe, St Mary's and on a North Sea pelagic. One to six were at the Farne Islands on 21 dates from 5th August-30th September.

Seaton Sluice posted low numbers for September, with totals of 62 N and 17 S (in 75 hours). Peak passage began on 13th, with four N and one S at Cresswell. On 14th, 16 flew N at Newbiggin and seven moved N at the Farne Islands; while on 15th, eight flew N at Holy Island, six were noted at Boulmer, five at Beadnell and four at Newbiggin. Notable movement continued on 16th, with nine at Boulmer, nine N at Tynemouth and eight, mostly passing N, at Newbiggin. Passage N was particularly conspicuous on 17th, when 31 passed Cullercoats (CGK), 15 were at Newbiggin, 12 at Tynemouth, 11 at Holy Island, ten (three pale and seven dark birds) through Staple Sound (Farne Islands), nine at Cullernose Point, seven at Cresswell and six at Boulmer. Eleven were noted at Annstead and one at Spittal Bay (Berwick) on 18th, after which passage had virtually ceased. One to three were also noted on other dates at Annstead, Beadnell, Boulmer, Cocklawburn, Holy Island, Seahouses, Spittal Bay, Stag Rocks and Whitley Bay. In October, two immature birds moved S at Annstead on 2nd, singles were at Stag Rocks on 3rd-4th, Boulmer on 7th and Inner Sound (Farne Islands) on 9th, and two were at Beadnell on 18th, with three there on 20th. The final report involved another single moving N at St Mary's on 12th November.

Long-tailed Skua *Stercorarius longicaudus*

STATUS: Uncommon to rare passage visitor, mainly in the autumn.

An adult in full breeding dress flew N at Inner Farne (Farne Islands) on 13th August. In September, two adults and a dark juvenile passed Snab Point on 13th. They were in a tight group, only 100m offshore, and watched for several minutes as they leisurely moved N (PRM). A juvenile was noted off Tynemouth at 07:23hrs on 15th September (DRW/MK). This individual was also seen off St Mary's at 08:00hrs (AC/PC). At 08:30hrs the same day, what must have been a different juvenile passed N off Holy Island (Emmanuel Head) (SR). This was described well as it slowly moved offshore in northerlies. An intermediate morph juvenile moved N off St Mary's on 18th September (AC).

No-one, however, was expecting the next individual to be so obliging! A birder/golfer was playing at Goswick GC on 24th September, when he came across a skua on the golf course. Aware that Long-tailed Skua was the most likely species to frequent inland sites, he quickly put photos out and his hunch was confirmed (RP/TRD *et al.*). Many birders, over subsequent days, reckoned that the incredibly close views of this juvenile on the golf course were the highlight of the year. It seemed to take no notice of humans at all and was frequently seen on various greens, whilst golfers were putting. It stayed through to 15th October and, unsurprisingly, proved to be the final record of the year.

Auk sp. *Uria* / *Alca* / *Fratercula*

The first quarter produced some large movements, including 150 N (in one hour) and 150 S (in two hours) on 1st and 18th January respectively, the vast majority being Common Guillemots *Uria aalge*, 150 N at the same site on 7th February and four flocks of 500 N from the mainland at Coquet Island on 25th March. In April, Seaton Sluice produced counts of 250 N on 22nd and several large counts of up to 500 (per hour) from 26th-29th. At Snab Point, 290 flew N on 8th May.

Seaton Sluice then dominated counts for the remainder of the year, with several large movements of Razorbills *Alca torda* or Common Guillemots in the final ten days of June, including a maximum of 750 N (in two hours 30 minutes) on 28th, and on 5th July with 160 N and 20 S. The same site then produced counts of 600 auk sp. N (in two hours) on 24th September, 260 N, mostly Common Guillemots, (in two hours) on 2nd November, 300 N, mostly Common Guillemots, (in seven hours) on 29th November and 560 auk sp. N (in four hours) on 1st December. The final large movement involved 630, almost all Common Guillemots, N at Howick on 21st December.

Little Auk *Alle alle*

STATUS: Uncommon winter and autumn passage visitor. Weather dependant, can occur in large numbers after northerly gales.

A slow start to the year produced only two N past Seaton Sluice on 13th January and one N at Snab Point on 7th March.

Strong northerly winds in November brought the species into the North Sea, as birds battled N towards their wintering areas. The first record came from the Farne Islands, where two flew S through Inner Sound on 5th. The main movement occurred on 12th, when 28 passed Snab Point (TF&JFa/TRD&JD/ADMc), with eight at Cullernose Point, six at Newbiggin, five N through Staple Sound (Farne Islands), four at Tynemouth, three at Seaton Sluice and one to two at Druridge Bay, Holy Island and St Mary's. Four were noted on 13th at Newbiggin, with singles elsewhere on 13th-14th at Annstead, North Shields, Seaton Sluice and Tynemouth. One slowly drifting along the River Tyne at North Shields was taken by a Great Black-backed Gull *Larus marinus* on 14th. Eight flew N at Inner Farne (Farne Islands on 29th, with one to four at the Aln Estuary, Boulmer, the Farne Islands, Newbiggin, North Blyth and Tynemouth on various dates between 17th-30th.

The final records, in December, involved two at Tynemouth and one N at Howick on 1st and three at Holy Island on 12th.



Little Auk - Snab Point - November
(Jonathan Farooqi).

Common Guillemot *Uria aalge*

STATUS: Abundant resident and passage visitor.

BREEDING: Abundant.

January movements at Seaton Sluice involved 107 on 13th and 155 on 18th. Few were then noted before 'thousands' were seen around the Farne Islands by an observer on the mainland on 28th February. At Berwick Pier, 130 (per hour) moved N on 25th April and 280 (per hour) N on 8th May; 425 passed N (in 30 minutes) at Saltpan Rocks (Cocklawburn) on 27th May. Up to 90 passed Seaton Sluice on various dates before 420 were noted on 26th May, with 1,130 the following day.

At the Farne Islands, the first egg was discovered on 16th April, the first chick on 21st May and the first 'jumping' on 13th June. A total count of 48,234 individuals excluded birds on Megstone and Big Harcar, which were not counted this year (FIR).

There were several notable movements in June, including 514 at Stag Rocks on 12th, 204 at Newton Point on 14th, 180 at Annstead on 20th and 191 at Seaton Sluice on 30th. Autumn counts were relatively low, but 80+ remained around the Farne Islands on 29th October, 100 passed N at Brown's Bay (Cullercoats) on 30th November, with the same number seen at Tynemouth on 1st December.



Razorbill *Alca torda*

STATUS: Uncommon to well-represented resident and passage visitor.

BREEDING: Well-represented.

The year began with a notable gathering of 140 at Stag Rocks on 20th January, with 24 there on 22nd. Other counts during the first quarter included 100+ from the Cheswick-Goswick-Beal area on 27th February and 20+ at Ross Back Sands and Budle Bay on 5th March. In May, 110 passed Seaton Sluice on 26th, with 170 logged the following day; elsewhere 47 gathered off Craster on 17th May and 50 were counted at Needles Eye on 22nd June.

Rangers arriving at the Farne Islands in mid-March were greeted by birds already present. The first egg was discovered on 26th April and the first chick on 3rd June. A total count of 459 pairs excluded birds on Big Harcar, where the cliffs were not surveyed this year (although it is likely that only around a dozen pairs would have been discovered based on the 2016 survey). Breeding productivity was measured on Inner Farne, where 0.50 chicks per pair represented an increase on 2016, though still below the five year mean of 0.59 (FIR). Elsewhere, a pair prospected the cliff at Tynemouth Priory on 29th April and 14th May. At Dunstanburgh Castle, 25 were on the sea and the ledges on 18th July, but no young were noted.

Mid-summer movements at Seaton Sluice included 35 on 29th June and 42 the following day. The final records involved 38 at the A166 Estuary on 29th November and one to three at four sites in December.

Black Guillemot *Cephus grylle*

STATUS: Uncommon passage and winter visitor, rare in summer; former historical breeder.

An unexpected summer-plumaged bird flew past Annstead Point, with other auks, on 13th May (CGK/GPK). Always a surprise in this plumage. Another summer-plumaged individual moved S off Seaton Sluice on 2nd August (MHP). This was the only auk seen that morning. Intriguingly, another sighting was made of a part summer-plumaged bird moving S off Boulmer on 23rd August (ME). It is open to speculation as to whether one summered somewhere offshore, as all three sightings seem unlikely to be passage birds, given the dates.

Later in the year, there were three sightings at the Farne Islands. The first was on rocks by the lighthouse on Inner Farne on 24th October, next came one on 2nd November and finally one on the sea at North Wamses on 15th November. This small wintering presence continues on the islands.

There were several other claims during the year, but no written reports received. Any individuals away from the known wintering area of Holy Island and the Farne Islands need to be documented as it remains a rare bird in the county to the extent that the County Recorder still needs it for his Northumberland list!

Puffin *Fratercula arctica*

STATUS: Abundant summer and passage visitor, rare in winter.

BREEDING: Abundant.

Birds had returned to the Farne Islands on 20th March, with 'thousands' reported back at Coquet Island on 31st March. Elsewhere, all counts remained in single figures until 20 were noted at Annstead on 8th May, with 28 there on 15th May, and Seaton Sluice recorded 14 on 9th May, 47 on 29th May and 40 on 21st June.

At the Farne Islands, the first chicks were recorded on 23rd May and the first fledglings by 1st July. No population counts were undertaken ahead of a full census in 2018. Heavy rain affected productivity giving a low value of 0.52 chicks per pair, below the 2016 figure of 0.70 and the five year mean of 0.77. Rangers noted a stark difference in productivity between Inner Farne (0.60) and Brownsman (0.43), with Grey Seals *Halichoerus grypus* the possible culprit after their spread onto the soil cap of Brownsman in recent years, compacting and collapsing many of the burrows (FIR). A single bird was on the stack at Needles Eye in June, possibly still holding on there as a mainland breeding species.

Unusually, there were no large movements during the second half of the year; 61 at Annstead on 24th July and 37 N (in three hours) at Seaton Sluice on the same date being the highest counts. Small numbers were noted around the Farne Islands in September. Other than six at the Aln Estuary on 29th November, only singles were recorded during the final quarter, with the last being on the sea at Howick and Ross Back Sands on 21st December.



Puffins - Farnes Islands - July (Andy Mould).

Rock Dove [Feral Pigeon] *Columba livia*

STATUS: Common resident.

BREEDING: Common.

Some of the highest counts during the first quarter came from Whittle Dene Reservoirs, where 76 on 31st January increased to 118 on 7th February. Elsewhere, 100 were in Blyth town centre on 27th February, 60 at Morpeth on 8th February and around 45 at North Seaton throughout March.

Numbers dwindled during the summer months before 100 gathered at Whittle Dene on 25th August. As usual, numbers at the Farne Islands increased to several hundred birds in autumn, providing a ready food supply for Peregrines *Falco peregrinus*. A huge daytime roost at New Bridge (Berwick) during September held 880 on 13th (CH), whilst 60 were at Stakefield on 10th. During the final quarter, ca.200 were in central Blyth on 17th October, with 118 at Blyth bus station on 9th December and ca.100 in Wallsend town centre on 30th December.

Stock Dove *Columba oenas*

STATUS: Common resident.

BREEDING: Common.

Some high first-quarter counts included 133 at Howdon on 16th January (CB), reducing to 48 on 19th March, and 90 at Haughton Strother GP on 13th February and 20th March; elsewhere 14 were at Stanington on 11th February and ten at Whittle Dene Reservoirs on 4th January.

A flock of 57 was counted at Coldwell on 2nd April, with 24 at Druridge Lane on 14th and 16 at Haughton Strother GP on 5th April; the latter site produced the next double-figure count, when 24 were seen on 13th June. Also in June, 37 were at Howdon on 26th and ten at Widdrington Moor Lake on 28th. During August-September, up to 44 were noted at Howdon, with 12-15 at Chugdon Wood (Ellington), Cresswell Pond and Derwent and Whittle Dene Reservoirs. One of two at Mootlaw Quarry (Ryal) on 3rd September was chased by an immature Peregrine *Falco peregrinus*.

The largest counts during the final quarter came from the pre-roost gathering at Howdon, with 82 on 9th October, peaking at 123 on 12th October, before declining to 96 on 25th November and 67 on 29th December. Elsewhere in December, 19 were at Cresswell Pond on 3rd, 16 at Gosforth Bridle Path on 25th, 15 at Gosforth Park NR on 17th and 13 at Whittle Dene Reservoirs on 6th.

Woodpigeon *Columba palumbus*

STATUS: Abundant resident and a passage visitor.

BREEDING: Abundant.

The highest count of the year involved 2,000 at Cresswell Pond on 14th February (TB). Other large counts during the first quarter included 1,150 overhead (in 30 minutes) at Haughton Strother GP on 26th January, 1,000+ at the same site on 12th February and 500-600 at Holywell Pond in January-February and Bradford Kaims in February.

Counts were low in March but, in April, a flock of 1,000 was at Airy Holm Reservoir (Shotleyfield) on 28th and 755 were counted at Holywell Pond on 19th. In a quiet year at the Farne Islands, only six individuals were noted, with the first over Staple Island on 22nd May. Thereafter, the highest counts to late September involved 100-169 at the Aln Estuary, Stobswood Pools and Weetslade CP. A pair fledged two young in Cramlington on 17th August and a nest with chicks ready to fledge was at Hauxley on 21st October.

The final quarter produced counts of up to 400 at Gosforth Bridle Path in October and December and, also in December, 625 at Whiteadder Water during a WeBS visit on 11th and 500 at Haughton Strother GP on 8th and Lynemouth Flash on 30th.



Turtle Dove

Streptopelia turtur

STATUS: Rare summer and passage visitor. / LAST RECORD: 2015

BREEDING: Historical. / LAST BRED: 1992

The first of three reports this year involved an intriguing record of one seen and heard singing on several occasions at Spring House (Slaley) over a three week period from 29th May. On one occasion, Collared Doves *Streptopelia decaocto* and a Woodpigeon *Columba palumbus* made 'quite a fuss' in the vicinity of the Turtle Dove (SB/CJ).

One was seen briefly, but well, at St Mary's on 19th September. It was noted amongst a large flock of Woodpigeons, Feral Pigeons *Columba livia* and Stock Doves *Columba oenas* that took flight, having been feeding in a freshly cut field to the west of the footpath (PC). The final record involved a first-winter being harassed by a Collared Dove as the two fed on seed in a Seahouses garden on 18th October (DT).

Collared Dove *Streptopelia decaocto*

STATUS: Common resident.

BREEDING: Common.

Counts of 15 in a Corbridge garden on 3rd January and at High Buston on 24th February represented the only double-figure totals before 12, including three juveniles, were noted at Quarry Cottage (Newbiggin) throughout June. One on Brownsman on 19th May was the only record for the Farne Islands. On Holy Island, 35 were noted on 4th June, 25 of which were attracted to seed scattered by the farmer's wife at Chare Ends.

Breeding evidence during the summer months was limited to reports from Gosforth and Newbiggin.

Post-breeding flocks in August-September included 30 on wires at Amble on 23rd August, 22 at Ellington, up to 18 at the Aln Estuary and up to 14, including three juveniles, at Quarry Cottage.

The final quarter produced the highest count of the year, with 37 at Slaley village on 21st December (RMH); elsewhere, many counts of 12-30 came from the Aln Estuary, Fenham-le-Moor Farm, Holy Island, Quarry Cottage, Saltwick (near Morpeth), Wark (North Tyne) and Wideopen on various dates. Display and mating was noted at Newcastle (Chapel House) on 17th December, with display at Stonehaugh two days later.

Cuckoo *Cuculus canorus*

STATUS: Well-represented summer visitor.

BREEDING: Well-represented.

The first arrival flew past Backworth on 16th April. Further April singles were seen or heard at Winnowhill Common on 22nd, Low Alwinton on 27th and Harthope Valley on four occasions in the final week of the month. Some decent counts in May involved seven between Simonside-Tosson Hill on 18th (MJC), six at Harwood Forest on 19th and 27th, five at Lordenshaw on 10th, four at Alwinton on 10th, Kirknewton on 17th, Kielder Water on 18th and Blanchland on 25th and three at Breamish Valley, Derwent Reservoir, Langleeford and Wingates. Reports of one to two came from several dozen additional scattered sites.

As usual, numbers were lower in June, with the highest counts being three at Stonehaugh on 3rd and Beldon Burn on 18th; twos were at Blanchland Moor, Derwent Reservoir and Halton-Lea-Gate, with singles at 23 further sites. In July, passage was denoted by juveniles at Hauxley on 19th and Holy Island on 30th, and a single at Budle Bay on 29th, with two there on 30th; singles were also at Harbottle on 1st and Headshope (Otterburn) on 29th. All reports in August were of singles, mostly juveniles, with records from Old Hartley on 2nd, Lowick from 5th-12th, Holy Island on 6th and 16th, Derwent Reservoir, Druridge and Seaton Sluice on 14th, Hartley on 15th, Haughton Strother GP on 24th and Cresswell Pond on 27th. The final sighting of the year, and the joint latest record for 15 years, involved a juvenile S over St Cuthbert's Island (Holy Island) on 26th September.



Barn Owls - Holy Island - October
(National Trust - Total Ecology).

Barn Owl *Tyto alba*

STATUS: Well-represented resident.

BREEDING: Well-represented.

The year started well, with at least four at Holy Island throughout January, including one (unusually) roosting in the reedbed at The Lough. What was presumed to be this bird was found dead here on 15th January having been ringed in Cambridgeshire in summer 2016; a record movement to the county of 401km for a largely sedentary species, it was thought to have been blasted

against the hide in a violent storm. Elsewhere during the first quarter, two were in a tree at Bedlington on 7th January, with other twos at Bellingham and Littlehoughton in February and singles at numerous sites, including seven road casualties on the A1 and one on the A69 near Mowden Hall.

Northumbria Ringing Group (NRG) checked 146 nest sites, of which 72 held pairs of owls, 68 pairs laid eggs and hatched young, and 67 pairs fledged 266 chicks; an outstanding year (NRG). Elsewhere, at least two young were in a nest with a sitting adult at Mootlaw Quarry (Ryal) on 8th April, one to two adults were seen entering barns with prey at Bell's Pond, Cresswell and Druridge Pools, four juveniles were at Holystone Grange on 3rd July, a pair fed young in a tree nest site at Eshott on 22nd July and, for the first time, four pairs bred on Holy Island, including a pair at the Castle for the first time since the late 1940s. This pair, which used a cavity in the masonry to lay their eggs, fledged four young during October, after an earlier attempt failed. The other pairs included two in the village, one of which fledged three young in May; one youngster died of starvation and the pair laid four further eggs, two of which hatched, but the young were predated in October. The second village pair hatched four young in May, all of which subsequently died. At the fourth Holy Island site, a pair produced three eggs, two hatched and one youngster fledged. Seven youngsters fledged from four pairs represents poor productivity for the island; the causes are not fully understood, but a degree of inbreeding may at least be part responsible (IK). A corpse on the island on 17th August was likely fox 'kill'.

Despite a good mainland breeding season, numbers remained low to the end of the year. Away from the above breeding sites, and apart from four at Longhorsley Moor in July and an adult with two to three young at Tughall Wood (Beadnell) on 2nd August, the second half of the year produced only twos at Berwick Little Beach, Humshaugh, North Charlton, Stonehouse and Walwick, with singles at many widespread sites. A further road casualty came from East Newbiggin (Norham) on 8th September.

Tawny Owl *Strix aluco*

STATUS: Well-represented resident.

BREEDING: Well-represented.

During the first quarter, a minimum of eight (at least six singing males and two calling females) were in the Slaley Forest-Blanchland Moor area on 4th March (PC) and three called at Brenkley on 7th January, with the same number at Spartylea on 24th and 31st January. Twos were noted at Alnwick, Ellington, Grindstonelaw, Howick, Humshaugh, Prestwick Carr, Rothbury and Stamfordham, with singles at 28 additional sites, including road casualties at Brunton Bank on 25th January and near Ridley Hall on 16th February.

Breeding evidence in March involved females on eggs at Branton on 2nd, Low Hedgeley on 14th and Doddington and near Wooler on 24th. In April, a pair called all month at Spartylea and pairs were nesting at Hauxley RS and Lemmington Hall (Edlingham). May records included a fledgling about to leave a garden nest box at Stamfordham on 14th and two juveniles called from the same garden throughout June. A pair were calling at Rothbury in June and a pair with two juveniles were calling in a garden at Fulbeck (Morpeth) on 30th July and 20th August. Northumbria Ringing Group covered seven areas and found 110 pairs laid eggs, of which 108 pairs hatched eggs and 106 pairs fledged 226 chicks. It was described as an excellent breeding season, helped by very good vole numbers throughout the county. In the Wark-Tarset-Redesdale part of the study, five nests were in natural sites: one in a tree hole, one on the ground at the base of a Sitka Spruce *Picea sitchensis*, one on a tree growth and two used old Buzzard *Buteo buteo* nests (NRG).

Data from Northumbria Ringing Group's long-term study (fledged young in parentheses):

Locality	Pairs in 2017	Pairs in 2016	Pairs in 2015	Pairs in 2014
Wark-Tarset-Redesdale	40	7 (9)	29 (72)	37 (91)
Kielder	38	8 (8)	32 (72)	34 (84)
Slaley-Healey	16	2 (0)	10 (12)	16 (34)
Linnels (Hexham)	0	1 (2)	1 (2)	1 (2)

The period April-September produced additional records of four calling males at Winnows Hill (Slaley) on 1st June, up to four at Spartylea during July-August, threes at Mootlaw Quarry (Ryal) on 8th April, Harsondale Burn on 29th August and Prestwick Carr on 21st September and twos at Allenheads, Bedlington, Berwick, Dipton Common, Embleton, Greenhaugh, Harbottle, Harwood Forest, Howick, Humshaugh, Longhorsley, Snod's End, Walkmill Campsite and Warren Mill. Numerous reports of singles included a 13 year old female at Lemmington Hall on 12th May and road casualties on the A1 at Hampeth on 30th May and at Weldon Bridge on 2nd July.

The final quarter produced four very vocal males at Ellington on 17th December, two vocal pairs at Stamfordham throughout October, with one bird roosting in a garden nest box, two calling at Fulbeck and Holystone in October and at Howick in December, with two also at Alnwick in October, and singles at a further 19 localities. A final road casualty was on the A1 at Priestbridge on 28th October.

Little Owl *Athene noctua*

STATUS: Well-represented resident.

BREEDING: Well-represented.

The first quarter produced counts of twos at Derwent Reservoir in all three months and at Shiremoor in January and March. Singles occurred at Blyth, Dinnington, Druridge Lane, Grindstonelaw and Ordley (Hexham) in January, near Big Waters and at Branton and Derwent Reservoir in February and at Alnwick, Derwent Reservoir, Druridge and Slaley in March. In April, singles were again noted near Big Waters and at Derwent Reservoir and, in May, two were at Druridge Pools, with singles at Alnwick Moor, Branton and West Kyloe.

Breeding evidence involved an adult and three large juveniles near Big Waters at dusk on 22nd June (GB), pairs holding territory at Backworth and Shiremoor from June-July, a family group of up to four at Druridge throughout July-August (CB/JGS *et al.*) and a pair that fledged young at Brier Dene Farm (Whitley Bay) on 9th July.

Additional records in the period June-August involved twos at Derwent Reservoir in June and August, Birgham in July and Druridge Pools throughout August, with singles at Bell's and Cresswell Ponds, Edlingham, Longhirst, Spindleston, Wark Forest and Whittle Dene. Away from Derwent Reservoir and Druridge Pools, the only report in September involved one calling at Hexham evoking response from a Tawny Owl *Strix aluco*; the observer's first site record in 47 years.

Records during the final quarter came from only two areas. Two were at Derwent Reservoir in October and November, with three on three dates between 7th-28th December, and single reports came from the Druridge Lane-Druridge Pools area in all three months, the last being on 5th December.

Birds were recorded at a lowly 24 localities during the year (21 localities in 2016).

Long-eared / Short-eared Owl *Asio otus / flammeus*

An *Asio* species, thought to be a Long-eared Owl, flew over the A1 just north of Alnwick on 15th October.



Long-eared Owl *Asio otus*

STATUS: Uncommon resident, passage and winter visitor.

BREEDING: Uncommon.

It proved another poor year for the species, with the only records for the first quarter being two that flew out of a roost late pm at a confidential site in the south east of the county on 4th January, a male singing from scrubland at East Chevington on 19th January and singles at Dipton Wood on 4th February, roosting in a village garden on Holy Island on 3rd March, at Stobswood Pools on 9th March and calling mid-morning at a confidential site on 11th March.

The only April report was of one at Longhirst GC on 27th. Another showed regularly at Druridge Pools from 10th May-17th June, occasionally seen carrying prey. Other reports during the period May-July involved a male hunting at Chibburn Burn on 19th May, one 'hooting' at Bigges Pillar (Edlingham) on 24th May, singles at the Breamish Valley and Swallow Pond in late May, two at East Chevington on 2nd July and singles in that month at Corbridge and North Walbottle.

Northumbria Ringing Group (NRG) reported a more normal year in the Kielder Border Forest Study after no successful nests were recorded in 2016; six home ranges were occupied, four pairs laid eggs and three nests fledged eight young. At the same nest site as 2016, a new adult female was also predated by a Goshawk *Accipiter gentilis*. Away from Kielder, NRG recorded one nest near Otterburn Training Area, which fledged one chick. Elsewhere, three separate families of one, two and three calling juveniles were noted at Wark Forest on 21st June (PRM), with two juveniles calling at Nunwick on the same date, two juveniles were calling at Thrunton Wood on 15th June and one juvenile was calling at Druridge Pools on 2nd June. Breeding possibly occurred in the south east of the county.

The final records of the year involved one heard at Swallow Pond on 24th September, a migrant on Holy Island on 21st October and a winter roost in the south east at the year end. The Farne Islands witnessed only their second blank year since 2007.

Short-eared Owl *Asio flammeus*

STATUS: Uncommon resident, passage and winter visitor.

BREEDING: Uncommon.

The highest counts in the first quarter, and for the year, involved seven at Widdrington Moor Lake on 2nd (JC) and 4th (TB/AWG) March. Elsewhere, five were at Holy Island during January and at Prestwick Carr on 6th March, three were at Newton Links on 7th January and Goswick on 24th January, with twos at Cresswell Pond, Longhirst Flash and Low Newton and singles at several inland and coastal sites.

Passage singles and twos were noted at Cheswick dunes, Druridge Pools, the Farne Islands (Brownsman and Inner Farne), Fenham-le-Moor, Holy Island, Newton Links, Ross Links and St Mary's in April-May, with inland records coming from Alnwick Moor, Longhirst Flash, Longhorsley Moor, Newham, Prestwick Carr and near Spartylea.

Northumbria Ringing Group (NRG) reported one pair in the south Cheviots/Otterburn Training Area, which fledged two chicks; their only other record in the breeding season involved a single summering in Kielder Forest (NRG). Breeding was suggested by a displaying bird at Shieldbridge (West Allendale) on 6th May and one carrying prey at Catton Moor on 9th May; a pair fledged at least two young from a confidential moorland site in June. A very fresh plumage juvenile was on Holy Island on 17th July.

Elsewhere, during the period June-September, two were hunting at Corby's Crag (Alnwick) on 9th June, two were on moors above Allenheads on 10th August and singles were at the Aln Estuary, Boulmer, Fenham-le-Moor, Holborn Mill, Holy Island, Old Hartley, Prestwick Carr, Rugley Moor (Alnwick) and 'in-off' at St Mary's; the latter bird on 25th September.

During October, three to four were on Holy Island all month, with singles at Druridge Pools on 18th, St Mary's on 19th, Cambois and Low Newton on 23rd and Inner Farne on 30th (the last of only three records for the islands this year). In a poor second winter period, November records were restricted to one which flew across the A1 at Longhirst on 5th and a single on Holy Island on 9th; the latter bird or another single was at Holy Island on 3rd and 7th December.



Nightjar *Caprimulgus europaeus*

STATUS: Uncommon summer visitor.

BREEDING: Uncommon.

Birds returned to traditional breeding territories during May, beginning with a male 'churring' at Harwood Forest on 19th. This bird was still on territory on 24th, when a male was 'churring' at Edlingham Crag and Woods, one was at Corbridge Common and another at the regular site at Winnows Hill (Slaley). Two were 'churring' at Thrunton Wood on 27th May and three (two males, one female) were at Slaley Forest on 31st.

In June, Winnows Hill held five males on 2nd (PRM) and four on 7th and 18th, with two birds on 12th and a single heard there on 21st. At Beanley Plantation, one-two were seen or heard from 13th-15th June, with two still present on 30th July. The Edlingham area held two pairs on 14th June.

An early migrant was seen at Whitley Bay GC at dusk on 16th July. A single was at Beanley Plantation on 1st August, with two present on 6th August. In September, one was found in a garden at Heddon-on-the-Wall at 09:00hrs on 8th and the last of the year was at St Mary's Wetland on 27th.

Swift *Apus apus*

STATUS: Common summer visitor.

BREEDING: Common.

The first arrival, and earliest for 12 years, involved a single N at Tynemouth on 15th April, with another over Druridge Pools (Budge fields) on 24th. Two were at Big Waters and another at Druridge Pools on 30th April. The first major arrival occurred in early May, when 50 were at Big Waters on 5th and 7th, 37 flew N (in two groups) at East Chevington on 10th and 35 were at Seaton Sluice on 20th. Thereafter, gatherings of up to 30 were reported from over 30 sites to the end of the month, with 40+ at Druridge Pools on 29th. Numbers increased in June, with a peak of 400+ over fields east of Holywell Pond on 2nd (SPP), 120 N over Weetslade CP on 26th, 100+ at Bothal Pond on 12th, 60+ at Backworth on 30th, 46 at Gosforth on 16th and 40 at Druridge Pools on 5th and Arcot Pond on 12th.

Nesting colonies at Cullercoats and Whitley Bay held 40 and 35 birds respectively during June. Four dead young were found below three nests at Newcastle (Lemington) in the last week of June.

Significant movements in July involved 200+ S at Budle Bay and 80 N (per hour) at Cocklawburn on 3rd. Notable flocks included 200+ at Whitley Bay on 9th, 170 feeding at Bellasis Bridge on 8th, 100 over Chugdon Wood (Ellington) on 7th and at Fell House Farm (North Walbottle) on 11th and 24-60 at 11 other localities.

Southerly movement was noted in August, with 21 (in five minutes) at Cramlington on 14th and two at Cocklawburn on 16th. Groups of 20+ were widespread during the month, with highest counts of 95 at Newbiggin and 50+ at Hauxley NR on 7th, plus 45 at Berwick on 4th. By September, many birds had departed, with five at East Hartford on 10th the peak count. Thereafter, three were at Boulmer on 10th, twos were at Amble on 7th, Castle Island on 10th, Inner Farne (Farne Islands) on 11th and Ellington on 12th and singles were at over ten further localities from 8th-30th. The final record involved a late single flying S at Warkworth on 3rd October.

Kingfisher *Alcedo atthis*

STATUS: Uncommon resident.

BREEDING: Uncommon.

The first quarter produced regular reports of this conspicuous species, with the majority of records coming from lowland freshwater localities. Two were at East Chevington in January and pairs were noted in February at Chain Bridge (River Tweed), Druridge Bay CP, Gosforth Park NR and Jesmond Dene, with four at the latter site on 26th March (MJCo). In April, pairs were at Hagg Bank (Wylam) and Jesmond Dene, with singing noted from a pair at Ouse Burn (South Gosforth).

Breeding was reported at very few sites, but included two pairs feeding young only 700m apart to the west of Morpeth between 9th-21st May. The only other confirmed breeding came from the Ouse Burn at Gosforth on 15th July, where a pair fed at least three fledged juveniles.

The period May-August also produced three in the Aln Estuary, plus twos at Borough Woods (Morpeth), Low Angerton, Shellacres (River Till), Shillmoor Farm (Upper Coquetdale), Whittle Dene Reservoirs and Wylam, with singles reported from many widespread inland and coastal localities. Some shift in population towards the coast was apparent from September onwards. Three were at Newton Pool on 1st September and at least two were noted at Budle Bay and Horncliffe, with other twos at Beal Point-South Low, Gosforth Park NR, Haughton Strother GP, Jesmond Dene, the River Till, Shellacres and Whittle Dene Reservoirs.

Widespread reports during the final quarter included two at St Mary's throughout October, with a single trapped and ringed at Bamburgh on 27th October. Twos were at Haughton Strother GP and Jesmond Dene in November, with a more unusual report of two fishing in rock pools at Howick on 13th November. Further reports of two came from Jesmond Dene, Thrum Mill (Rothbury) and Wark (North Tyne or River Tweed not specified) in December, with three in Jesmond Dene on 18th December.

Bee-eater *Merops apiaster*

STATUS: Rare visitor. / PREVIOUS RECORDS: 13 / FIRST: 1879 / LAST: 2015

Another case of being in the right place at the right time. Two juveniles were heard flying over East Chevington north pool on 15th October (TF/JFa *et al.*). The distinctive call enabled the initial finders to let others know nearby and this enabled a select band to view the birds moving over and heading N. Over the next couple of days birders were quite envious of this select group and thought the birds were long gone. Hence the surprise when a juvenile was found at 09:40hrs on 18th October at Druridge Pools (DE/TRD *et al.*). It was making aerial sorties at the turning circle at the north end of the track and returning to a lone small tree. As would be expected for the first-ever 'twitchable' bird in the county, birders descended on Druridge en masse. By late morning, everyone was suitably less breathless and marvellous views were possible, both perched and in flight. As often happens, the mad dashes for a rarity proved unnecessary as the juvenile stayed through to 29th October, having entertained hundreds of birders in the process.

The saga was not over though, as another juvenile (or possibly the same individual) turned up at the base of Tynemouth Pier on 5th November (PC *et al.*). It was very well photographed, but soon turned inland after 20 minutes. Fortuitously, some observers saw it fly over Front Street (Tynemouth), as it passed through 30 minutes later. It was thought likely that only two juveniles were responsible for all of the 2017 sightings.

Bee-eater at Druridge (Mike Henry).





Mike Henry 18



Bee-eater - Druridge Pools - October (Chris Barlow).



Hoopoe - Derwent Reservoir - April (John Hall).

Hoopoe *Upupa epops*

STATUS: Rare visitor. / FIRST RECORD: HISTORICAL / LAST RECORD: 2016

A lucky observer saw and photographed a bird for 15 minutes at 16:00hrs from the hide at Derwent Reservoir on 17th April (JH).

Wryneck *Jynx torquilla*

STATUS: Rare visitor.

BREEDING: Historical. / LAST BRED: 1975

One was found on Holy Island (north dunes) at 16:20hrs on 6th May, but soon flew off to the north; it may have been glimpsed again later, in flight, between Chare Ends and The Snook (ADM).

Great Spotted Woodpecker *Dendrocopus major*

STATUS: Well-represented resident and uncommon passage visitor.

BREEDING: Well-represented.

This well-reported and conspicuous species was seen throughout the year in suitable habitat from mature woods to suburban gardens with their feeders. Birds were seen at over 60 localities, similar to that reported in recent years.

During the first quarter, reports of four came from Chugdon Wood (Ellington), Gosforth Park NR (two pairs) and Plessey Woods CP, with threes at Bilsmoorfoot (near Hepple), Cramlington (Valley Park), Howick, Jesmond Dene, West Newbiggin (River Tweed) and Widdrington, with one to two at numerous other widespread localities.

Breeding evidence involved a pair nest building in Newcastle (Armstrong Park) in April and, in May-August, three adults with juveniles at Spartylea, two adults with three young at Chugdon Wood, two adults with two juveniles in a Tynemouth garden, a pair with at least one juvenile at Fulbeck (Morpeth), two juveniles at Newcastle (Exhibition Park) and Whittle Dene Reservoirs and nesting pairs at Cramlington (Southfield Green and Valley Park), Harwood Forest and Newcastle (Nuns Moor). Additional larger counts during this period involved seven at Gosforth Park NR on 14th April (MJC), five at Farnley, four at Allen Banks, Linhope (Ingram) and Low Angerton and three at Arcot Hall GC, Jesmond Dene and Killingworth Lake. More unusual reports included a juvenile that crashed into the County Recorder's living room window at Rothbury in June, before making a recovery, and a juvenile trapped and ringed at Bamburgh on 8th August.

The final quarter produced counts of five at Holystone and Wallington, three at Bakethin Reservoir (Kielder), Hepburn Woods and Hexham and one to two at many widespread localities.



Green Woodpecker (Alan Hart).

Green Woodpecker *Picus viridis*

STATUS: Well-represented resident.

BREEDING: Well-represented.

Birds were calling in January at Bakethin Reservoir (Kielder), Prestwick Carr, Ridley Stokoe and Rothbury. Two were at Healey In February, with additional singles In the first quarter at Borough Wood (Morpeth), Broomley Woods (near Stocksfield), Dukes House (Hexham), Ellington, Gosforth Park NR, Gosforth Subsidence Pond, Harthope Valley, Hexham, Kielder Castle, Kyle Woods, Letah Wood (Hexham), Ridsdale, Tyne Riverside CP (Newburn), Weetslade CP, West Newbiggin (River Tweed) and Winnows Hill (Slaley).

Breeding evidence involved an adult flying with a large mouthful of food at Beggar's Bush Plantation (near Longhorsley) on 23rd May and the presence of a juvenile at Haughton Strother GP on 17th July.

Elsewhere, during the period April-September, twos were at Dukes House and Willowbog (Stonehaugh), with singles reported at Allen Banks, Bank's Pond (Dinnington), Bearsbridge, Cawburn, Chugdon Wood, Comb (near Falstone), Craggside (Rothbury), Debdon, Derwent Reservoir, East Chevington, Farnley, Fourstones Quarry, Glen Ridley Bridge (Park End), Gosforth Park NR, Gosforth Subsidence Pond, Ha'penny Woods (Blyth), Harbottle, Harwood Forest, Hauxley NR, Howick, Kielder Castle, Kyloe, Langleeford (Harthope Valley), Letah Wood, Netherwitton Common, Plankey Mill, Prestwick Carr, Swallowship Wood (Corbridge), Wallington Hall, Wark, West Dipton Burn and Woodhorn Flashes.

The species became much less conspicuous in the final quarter. Two were heard at Dukes House in November and Letah Wood in December, with singles seen or heard at Derwent Reservoir, Ellington, Kielder Water, Quarry Cottage (Newbiggin), Tyne Riverside CP and West Hartford. In a good year, reports came from 53 widespread localities (44 in 2016), with a bias towards the southern half of the county.



Kestrels (Alan Hart).

Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus*

STATUS: Common resident, also a passage and winter visitor.

BREEDING: Well-represented.

Hunting birds were typically widespread during the first quarter, with localities holding abundant prey species providing multiple sightings. Three were at Prestwick Carr and around Widdrington Moor Lake and two frequented Berwick, Big Waters, Brier Dene (Whitley Bay), Cheswick, Derwent Reservoir, East Chevington, Grindon Lough, Haltwhistle, Harwood Forest, Haughton Strother GP, West Hartford and Whittle Dene Reservoirs. Singles were in numerous other widespread localities.

The first indications of breeding behaviour came in April. A pair was observed mating at Backworth and two were back in the Harthope Valley. During early May, a male and female on the Farne Islands were the only indications of spring passage. Also during May, pairs were widespread in potential breeding areas and two newly fledged young were at Derwent Reservoir by 22nd June. A pair predated tern chicks at the Long Nanny Estuary from 6th June and another pair displayed at Lindisfarne Castle, but there was no evidence of successful nesting.

Monitoring by the Northumbria Ringing Group showed that in four study areas, 22 territories were occupied (16 in 2016). With a high vole population, 13 pairs produced eggs and fledged 44 chicks (14 young in 2016). The most productive area remained the South Cheviots and Otterburn Training Area, with 15 of the 22 occupied home ranges. However, even there, the comment was made that the take-up of territories remained low (NRG). During July-August, a pair with three juveniles around St. Mary's indicated local breeding and a pair fledged young at an inland quarry. Post-breeding dispersal and possible early passage in late August produced a single female on the Farne Islands. Individuals, mainly females, then followed on ten further dates until early November, the exception being on 18th October when a male and female were present. Elsewhere, September produced sightings of six at Old Hartley (MNC), four on Holy Island, three at St Mary's and one to two from 22 other localities.

During the final quarter, the species remained typically prominent, both along the coast and at inland localities providing good hunting. Four remained on Holy Island during October, before declining to two during November. Elsewhere, five were in the Aln Estuary, four at Callerton subsidence area and the west Simonsides, three at Simonburn Common and two at Blucher, Castle Island, Craster, Guyzance, Grindon Lough, Hepple, Newbiggin, Prestwick Carr, Ulgham, West Hartford and Whiteadder Water. Singles were at numerous other widespread localities.

Merlin *Falco columbarius*

STATUS: Uncommon resident, passage and winter visitor.

BREEDING: Uncommon.

Wintering birds were spread along the coast in good hunting areas, while eight singles were inland during the first quarter. Coastal birds included a young female, resident on Holy Island, which was watched being mobbed by one of the resident Barn Owls *Tyto alba* on 15th January. Other coastal singles were at Berwick, Boulmer, Budle Bay-Bamburgh, Cullernose Point, the Farne Islands, Fenham-le-Moor, Howick, Newton, Seahouses and just inland at Maiden's Hall and Widdrington Moor Lake. Another was at Morpeth (Dyke Neuk). Others were well inland at Carrshield, Lorbottle, Slaley, Snods Edge (Allensford) and at three confidential sites. During April, singles remained on the coast, with sightings from the Farne Islands, Fenham Flats, Holy Island, Rockcliffe (Whitley Bay) and Tynemouth. The only May coastal sighting involved a single S at Boulmer on 1st.

During the breeding season, monitoring by the Northumbria Ringing Group showed that it was a disappointing year. Only 18 home ranges were occupied, with 17 pairs producing eggs and nine going on to fledge 27 chicks (15 successful pairs and at least 48 young in 2016) (NRG).

By July, singles were back on the coast at Fenham-le-Moor on 23rd and in Budle Bay on 30th. Coastal, and near-coastal, singles followed in August at Berwick, Boulmer, Chugdon Wood (Ellington), Druridge Pools, the Farne Islands, Fowberry, Holy Island and Monks House Pool. Others remained inland at Greenlee Lough, Rothbury and on the Tarset Burn. During September, singles were regularly at Boulmer, the Farne Islands and Holy Island, with others at Dunstanburgh Castle, Newbiggin and Warenford; one briefly tried to mob a juvenile Long-tailed Skua *Stercorarius longicaudus* frequenting Goswick GC on 26th.

As usual, during the final quarter, most sightings came from regular hunting areas along the coast, with regular sightings on the Farne Islands until Rangers departed in December. Two were at Budle Bay on 18th November (CGK) and singles were reported from at least 16 localities from Newbiggin northwards to Berwick. A few lingered inland. A juvenile was seen near Harwood in October. Other inland singles were at Bellingham, Derwent Reservoir, Glorum, Quarry House Moor (Chillingham) and West Stobswood during November. In December, one was watched mobbing a Peregrine *Falco peregrinus* at an undisclosed inland locality and a female in the south west was considered very unusual for mid-winter.

Hobby *Falco subbuteo*

STATUS: Rare to uncommon, although annual, summer visitor.

BREEDING: Rare. / LAST BRED: 2011 (?)

A typical year began with the first sighting near Holystone north wood on 16th May (MKir). This was seen well, scattering hirundines, but soon moved off S after two minutes. The only other May sighting was at Boulmer on 29th, where an adult was watched just north of the village and soon moved off N (BS). June saw two sightings, with an adult just offshore, moving N, past Holy Island (Emmanuel Head) on 15th (PRM) and another adult on 29th at Newton Pool, again briefly, before moving inland (JRo).

Two records were submitted in July, conceivably involving the same individual. An adult on 11th was seen heading NW over Budle Bay (GPK) and probably the same individual was seen on 22nd over Holy Island Causeway, after having perched briefly (SM). Into August and continued sightings followed, with one that flew in from the N at Hadston dunes on 14th and passed directly over the observer, before making its way quickly S (MN). Another adult, at Cornhill-on-Tweed, moved W over the A698 near 'Donaldson's Lodge' on 21st, being seen well, but briefly, from the observer in his vehicle (MJC). The first juvenile was found at Howick on 24th, flying directly over the observers' heads, as it quickly moved S (SS/JDo).

Hobby - Druridge Links - July (Frank Golding).



September saw the final sightings, with a fascinating record of a juvenile in an Ellingham garden on 8th (AGr/MSHa) which, unfortunately, stunned itself by hitting a window. It was photographed on the gravel drive, then put in a cardboard box to quietly recover, but soon died. The corpse was taken to a North Northumberland Bird Club meeting, where everyone was able to see this bird at close quarters. The final sighting involved another juvenile seen at Holy Island (The Snook) on 16th (MJC). Again it was a brief sighting as it quickly moved through the dunes. Finally, there was a juvenile briefly over Grindon Lough, chasing hirundines, on 26th (PRM).

It was certainly a typical year, with at least 11 sightings, all brief. There were another seven claims, with two submitted but deemed 'Not Proven' by the CRC. It is always difficult to know the origins and whether or not there is some breeding presence in the county keeping incognito.

Peregrine *Falco peregrinus*

STATUS: Uncommon resident, passage and winter visitor.

BREEDING: Uncommon.

Coastal areas holding large numbers of waders and wildfowl were the major attractions during the first quarter, when two adults and an immature were regularly at Budle Bay and two urban birds were around the River Tyne bridges. One to two were widely scattered on the coast at Amble, Bamburgh, Berwick, Blyth, Boulmer, Coquet Island, Cresswell, Cullercoats, Druridge, the Farne Islands, Fenham-le-Moor, Goswick, Hauxley, Holy Island, St Mary's and Widdrington Moor Lake. Inland records came from Alnwick, Backworth, Derwent Reservoir, Dinnington, Farnley Haughs, Foulfaws, Grindon Lough, Haltwhistle, Haughton Strother GP, Horncliffe, Longhorsley Moor, Mootlaw Quarry (Ryal), Prestwick Carr and Rayburn Lake, all areas offering abundant prey. An immature female stooped at a Buzzard *Buteo buteo* at West Hartford on 31st January and a pair displaced a Merlin *Falco columbarius* from a crag at an inland location on 21st March.

Breeding sites were occupied from March, although during April-May a few Individuals remained on the coast at Boulmer, Budle Bay, Needles Eye, Seaton Sluice and St Mary's. During June, two adults were on cliffs below Marshall Meadows (Berwick), singles were at Beadnell and Holy Island (Sandham Bay) and pairs or singles were at, or near, breeding areas. Monitoring by the Northumbria Ringing Group showed that pairs were in occupation at 18 of the 44 home ranges which were checked. Ten pairs failed at an early stage, while of eight known to have produced eggs, only six went on to fledge a total of 15 young. One early failure involved a clutch being crushed by wild goats *Capra hircus* but the pair re-laid and eventually fledged two chicks (NRG). These results were only a slight improvement on a very poor 2016 (five pairs fledged 12 young). During summer, two birds continued to be reported in Newcastle, with sightings from the River Tyne bridges (with a suspected nest on the Tyne Bridge), Forth Banks and St Mary's Cathedral. One took a random selection of species on Coquet Island throughout the summer and another killed an adult Arctic Tern *Sterna paradisaea* at the Long Nanny Estuary on 2nd June.

Post-breeding dispersal led to the usual return to coastal localities in July, with two adults in Budle Bay, where they were to remain until late October. Other July sightings included threes at Greenhaugh (Kielder) and Howick, two at Humshaugh and singles at seven further coastal and inland breeding sites. During August-September, the drift to the coast continued, but again others remained inland. Sightings included two juveniles interacting aggressively over Derwent Reservoir, two at Beal Point and Holburn Moss, at least two females on the Farne Islands from 14th August and an adult stooping three times at a juvenile Honey-buzzard *Pernis apivorus* on Holy Island on 27th September, forcing it to flee.

During the final quarter, birds were widely distributed, with three at Mootlaw Quarry in October, two on Holy Island and at least one female resident on the Farne Islands. Elsewhere, singles were found at 13 typical coastal and 15 regular inland localities, including new sites for the year near Anick and at Bothal Pond, Cocklawburn, Doddington, Howdon, Morpeth (Abbey Mills), Newbiggin, Rockcliffe (Whitley Bay), Ross Links and Warkworth.

Ring-necked Parakeet *Psittacula krameri*

STATUS: Added to the official county list in 2014; previously regarded as an escape, or of unknown origin.

It seems likely the Newcastle upon Tyne area now holds a small breeding population, as numbers continue to increase year on year. The first reports of the year involved one at Gosforth Subsidence Pond on 6th January, followed by three at Fenham on 14th, five at Jesmond and Moorside and a high count of 17 roosting at Nuns Moor (Fenham) on 26th and 28th January. In February, 26 came in to roost at Moorside Allotments (Nuns Moor) on 5th but were attacked by three Magpies *Pica pica* and a Sparrowhawk *Accipiter gentilis* and flew off W (PJA); 22 were at the same location on 12th and one to two+ were seen over the Royal Grammar School on two dates.

There were numerous sightings from Gosforth Subsidence Pond from March to the end of the year, with a peak of seven on 21st August. Also in March, singles were noted at nearby Melton Park, Walker and Wallsend Metro station, while, in April, two flew SW over Gosforth Garden Village on 4th. There were regular sightings at Walker in May, when up to nine were noted flying towards the Byker Wall most evenings, with others at Exhibition Park and Moorside Allotments.

Mid-summer records, from June-July, were fewer, with a maximum count of three at Exhibition Park and Nuns Moor; at the latter site, five, including a courting pair, were present on 25th August. Others in August were noted at Brunton Park, one other Gosforth site and High Heaton. In September, three flew over Byker Metro station on 3rd and twos were at Exhibition Park, Nuns Moor and Regent Centre (Gosforth).

Strangely, no reports were received in October but, in November, a maximum of ten were at Moorside Allotments on 22nd and a maximum of six to seven flew over Byker on 12th. A large count of 25 came from Denton Dene on 8th December, with six there on 11th and at Moorside Allotments on 12th.

Great Grey Shrike on Osprey nest - Kielder - April
(Forestry Commission England).



Great Grey Shrike

Lanius excubitor

STATUS: Rare winter visitor. / FIRST RECORD: HISTORICAL / LAST RECORD: 2016

The wintering bird at Prestwick Carr from 2016 was regularly reported until 2nd April and was heard singing on 25th March. In addition, one was seen on a roadside hedge between Warenford-Lucker on 3rd, 15th and 16th January, another was at Ford Moss from 3rd-9th January, one was near Felton on 29th January and one at a traditional wintering site in Harwood Forest on 20th January

and 8th March. One was photographed on an Osprey nest at Kielder on 1st April before the resident Osprey chased it off.

What was presumably the regular wintering individual at Prestwick Carr was seen again from 4th November, remaining in the area into 2018. Assuming this to be the same bird, it has been present here in consecutive years since the winter of 2011-2012.

Golden Oriole *Oriolus oriolus*

STATUS: Rare visitor. / FIRST RECORD: 1821 / LAST RECORD: 2015

BREEDING: Extremely rare. / LAST BRED: 1999 (?)

Another sighting at Gosforth Park NR, after the two individual records there in 2015. A male was heard at 05:00hrs on 22nd May (AW) during the dawn chorus. As always, a diagnostic sound, but the observer also managed to obtain views as it sang at the top of a tree, before it moved off NE. There were no further observations, though it does give the impression that this mature woodland, just north of the urban area, could potentially host a breeding pair in the future.

Jay *Garrulus glandarius*

STATUS: Well-represented resident.

BREEDING: Well-represented.

There were reports from 91 widespread localities during 2017, from Budle Bay and the River Till in the north to the suburban south-east, and west to Featherstone, Grindon Lough and the Kielder-Wark Forest complex. Peak counts during the first quarter were five at Farnley Haughs in January, four to six at Gosforth Park NR from January-March and five at Humshaugh in March. Elsewhere during the period there were counts of up to four at Milkwellburn Woods (Shotleyfield) and Tritlington and three from Borough Woods (Morpeth), Howick and Ovington.

In April, five were noted at Gosforth Park NR and two pairs at Wylam, while three were reported from Ellington Dene, Howick and Ulgham. Sightings from widespread localities in May included twos at Allen Banks NT, Gosforth Park NR, Jesmond Dene and Thrunton Woods. Upland areas, although sparsely populated, included a report from Whitehall in the College Valley in June, while four to five were at Ellington in June-July. Higher counts in August were six at East Cramlington LNR, five at Harwood Forest and at Shellacres (River Till) and four at Chugdon Wood (Ellington). Reports from at least 25 localities in September included six at Farnley Haughs and three at Cramlington (Windmill Lane) and Newcastle's Coast Road.

The species was again well-reported during October, with a high count of seven at Holystone on 27th (MJC) and three at Big Waters, East Chevington, Ellington, Horton (Blyth) and Wallington Hall. Counts of four in November came from Abbeycombe (Rothbury), Abbey Mill (Morpeth), Farnley Haughs and Gosforth Park NR, while, in December, five were at Hepburn Woods and three at Derwent Reservoir and Ponteland.

Golden Oriole (Alan Hart).



Magpie - Gosforth Park NR - December
(Jack Bucknall).



Magpie *Pica pica*

STATUS: Common resident.

BREEDING: Common.

There were some notable gatherings at Howdon during the first quarter, with up to 26 in January, 18 in February and 12 in March. At Druridge Bay CP there was a count of 20+ in January, while 21-24 were at Gosforth Subsidence Pond in February-March. Counts of 14 came from Tyne Green (Hexham) in February and Darras Hall (Ponteland) in March, while elsewhere 13 were at Walker Riverside Park in January and 12 at North Seaton Colliery and Tynemouth Boating Lake in February. The Blyth Estuary was another popular locality, with ten to 12 noted throughout the period. A nest was being refurbished in a Monkseaton garden on 12th January and a pair was nesting at Newcastle (Kenton) by 5th March. More unusual were two at Spartylea on 24th-25th March; the observer's first sightings here since 2015.

The only notable report for April was ten at Weetslade CP. In May, around 15 were at Killingworth Lake on 1st, ten at Gosforth Park NR on 9th and at Prestwick Carr on 18th and eight at Wylam-Newburn on 8th and Allen Banks on 19th. Six were noted at Jesmond Dene on 24th June and two juveniles were at Quarry Cottage (Newbiggin) from 26th-30th. Post-breeding gatherings included 19 at Castle Island and 11 at Newbiggin Water Treatment Works on 9th and 7th September respectively.

Howdon was again popular during the final three months of the year, with sequential peak counts of 24, 22 and 26. In October, 20+ were noted at Weetslade CP, ten at Quarry Cottage and eight at Furnace Bridge (Blyth). There were some sizable counts from the Cramlington area in November-December, with 26 roosting at 'Northumberlandia' on 16th November and 58 likewise at Whitelea Chase on 22nd December (STH); elsewhere in the area, ten were at Beacon Hill and Valley Park in November and 15 at Northburn in December. Finally, 11 were noted at Brier Dene (Whitley Bay) on 3rd December.

Jackdaw *Coloeus monedula*

STATUS: Common resident.

BREEDING: Common.

A daily pre-roost gathering of *corvids* at Gosforth Park NR in January contained no less than 500 Jackdaws; ca.300 were at Farnley Haughs on 22nd, 250 at Ordley (Hexham) on 15th, 200 at Prestwick Carr on 9th and 100 at Beacon Hill (Cramlington) on 15th. A peak count of ca.600 was noted at Gosforth Subsidence Pond on 4th February, while elsewhere 210 were at North Shields, 185 at Grindon Lough, ca.150 at High Newton, 110 at Newbiggin and 60 at Spartylea, the latter declining to 25-40 during March. Numbers were generally much reduced by mid-March, although up to 100 were still at Gosforth Subsidence Pond during the month, with 239 there on 9th April.

Howdon held 88 on 26th June and a peak of 45 in July, while ca.100 were at Alnmouth in July and up to 32 had returned to Spartylea during the month. Birds were beginning to gather in numbers by early August, when 200 were at Derwent Reservoir and 150 at Chain Bridge (River Tweed).

Gosforth Subsidence Pond again posted some impressive numbers during the final four months of the year, beginning with 202 in September and rising to 1,400 from 29th October-2nd November (PMJ). Counts of 100-130 were noted in the Low Cocklaw (Berwick) area in September-October, while elsewhere in October, 163 were at Alnmouth and 124 at Prestwick Carr. An in-flight flock of 400 was at Derwent Reservoir on 8th November, while a pre-roost gathering of 300 was at Prestwick Carr on 14th and 250 flew S at Arcot Pond on 23rd. Elsewhere, during the final two months, 150-200 were at Cramlington (St Nicholas Manor), Cresswell Pond, Harper's Heugh, Hexham, Howick, Low Cocklaw, near Warkworth and Whittle Dene Reservoirs. Numbers at Low Cocklaw had reduced to 90 by the end of the year.

Rook *Corvus frugilegus*

STATUS: Abundant resident.

BREEDING: Abundant. Some colonies have declined in recent years.

There were some reasonably healthy gatherings of this typically under-recorded species during the year, beginning in January with 120 at South Ord (Berwick) on 26th and 100+ at Derwent Reservoir on 15th. In February, 157 were noted at High Newton on 13th and 60 at Grindon Lough on 16th, while nest repairs were underway to a Rookery at Powburn, where 30+ birds were present on 4th. Flock sizes in March included 190 at Derwent Reservoir and ca.60 at Howick.

As in previous years, limited Rookery data was received. During the period March-May, estimated numbers of active nests were 55 in Holywell Dene, 32 in the Fontburn area, 20+ at Langley Dam and Staward Manor, 14 at Mitford Churchyard, nine at Cramlington Hall, six at Seaton Burn, five at QEII CP and four at Rising Sun CP Visitor Centre.

Flock counts in April included 190 at Derwent Reservoir on 6th, 60 at Howick on 2nd and 22-43 at Carraw, Haltwhistle and Winshiels. Some coastal movement was noted with six E over Holy Island (The Snook) on 2nd, two to four over Tynemouth on four dates and singles at the Farne Islands on two dates. The Derwent Reservoir gathering peaked at ca.200 on 3rd May. Post-breeding produced counts of 140-150 at Benridge Moor and Haughton Strother GP in June, while 25 at Prestwick Carr included ten juveniles. In July, 200 were at Mootlaw Quarry (Ryal) on 13th and, in August, a stubble field at High Cocklaw (Berwick) attracted 120 on 31st.

In the Aln Estuary there were regular counts of 67-132 from August-December, with a peak on 28th October. Fields at Cresswell Pond held 160+ on 23rd September, 60+ were at Derwent Reservoir on 7th and two more at the Farne Islands during the month. Emerging crops at Low Cocklaw (Berwick) attracted up to 200 during October-November and 80-150 were at Warenton during the same period. More than 200 were at Harper's Heugh on 13th December (MSH) and 100 at Alnwick on 28th. A flock of 80 was at Chain Bridge (River Tweed) on 9th and numbers at Low Cocklaw had declined to 60 by the end of the month.

Carrion Crow *Corvus corone*

STATUS: Common resident.

BREEDING: Common.

There were regular reports from Gosforth Subsidence Pond, where peak monthly counts were as follows:

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
--	50	100	25	--	40	40	26	80	100	20	20

In January, a roost at West Hartford numbered 70 on 5th, 51 were in the Tyne Estuary on 6th, 44+ at Spittal (Berwick) on 16th, 34 at nearby New Water Haugh on 8th and 30+ at Druridge Bay CP on 28th, with 17-21 also reported from Aydon (Corbridge), the Blyth Estuary, East Chevington, Grindon Lough, Kitty Brewster (Blyth) and Powburn. The largest February gatherings were 53 at North Shields Fish Quay on 12th and 17 at the Blyth Estuary on 4th. In March, a total of 34 moved N and one S at Seaton Sluice from 13th-31st, while 34 were searching for shellfish in the Tweed Estuary on 3rd, 25 were at nearby Whiteadder Point on 11th and a peak count of 30 came from the Spillers Mill site (Byker) on 20th.

Passage intensified at Seaton Sluice in April, with a record monthly total of 195 N and 39 S over the sea. Movement was also apparent at Holy Island, with 58 W on 30th and 52 W on 23rd; on the latter date a further ten flew 'in-off' at Budle Bay. Elsewhere in April, 29 were at Hemscott Hill (Cresswell) on 1st and 20 at Derwent Reservoir on 12th. May gatherings included 44 at New Water Haugh on 16th, 33 in the Blyth Estuary on 20th and 19-20 at Druridge Bay and Spillers Mill. Spring passage at the Farne Islands peaked in May with 14 on 1st, 20 on 9th and 13 on 16th; elsewhere 51 passed Seaton Sluice on 10th and six flew E over Holy Island (The Snook) on 4th.

Few breeding reports included two nests found on a railway pylon at Needles Eye on 3rd June and a pair that fledged three young from a tree in Newcastle (Leazes Park) in July.

In June, 90 birds were at Berwick on 21st and 180 were foraging around the tideline at New Water Haugh on 1st July (CH). Coastal movement was noted on Holy Island in September, with 11 W on 17th, 16 E on 25th and 25 E on 28th. In addition, 14 passed S at Seaton Sluice from 10th-27th and 14 were at the Farne Islands on 10th. A count of 15 birds at Hauxley NR on 2nd September increased to 42 by 28th October.

Elsewhere in October, 21 were at Weetslade CP on 27th and 19 on mown grass at Willington Gut (Wallsend) on 11th; further light movement included four N and eight S at Seaton Sluice from 19th-26th and three arriving from the N at Holy Island on 6th. In November-December, 56 were at the Blyth Estuary and 41 at Arcot Lane in December, with counts of 18-21 at Farnley Haughs and Weetslade CP.

Hooded Crow *Corvus cornix*

STATUS: Rare and declining passage and winter visitor. / LAST RECORD: 2016

BREEDING: Historical. / LAST BRED: Hybrid pair 1979

One was at Newbiggin on 13th March. Another was at St Mary's on 9th April before flying off W. Later in the month, a bird was seen at Alnmouth, Alnwick, Boulmer and Hipsburn on 14th. Presumably the same bird was in Druridge Bay on the same day, where it remained at various sites to 24th April, when it, or another, flew N from rocks at Seaton Sluice at first light. One was at Dunstanburgh Castle on 2nd June. More unusual were two July sightings, singles at Stobswood on 9th and Fenham Flats on 30th.

Raven *Corvus corax*

STATUS: Uncommon resident.

BREEDING: Uncommon, but increasing.

The species was again reported from all suitable upland breeding areas in the Cheviot Hills, Upper Coquetdale and the North Pennines. In January, seven were seen during a 17km walk in The Cheviots from Barrowburn-Windy Gyle on 8th and three at Ouston Fell (North Pennines) on 19th, with two noted at Belford Moor, the College Valley and Harbottle Wood. Twos in February were at Bellshiel Law (Redesdale), Carlcroft Burn, Dudlees Farm (Horsley), Kielder Forest Drive and Rothbury; another two were mobbed by a Goshawk *Accipiter gentilis* at Chatton Moor on 28th. There was a peak count of four from Blanchland Moor in March, when twos were at Bell's Valley (Wooler), Featherwood (Otterburn Training Area), Fourlaws,

Harthope Valley, Mootlaw Quarry (Ryal), West Woodburn and Winter's Gibbert (Harwood Forest). Elsewhere during the first quarter, singles were reported from a further 11 inland localities and from the coast, just west of Cullernose Point, on 7th March.

Data from Northumbria Ringing Group covered 22 nesting pairs (21 in 2016), 17 of which laid eggs, with 15 nests fledging 30+ young (16 nests and 40 young in 2016). With record submissions continuing to increase, it is surprising that the breeding population has remained at 20-30 pairs over recent years; NRG believes that persecution is one of the main problems, with some historical nest sites now vacant (NRG).

All the usual upland areas were occupied from April-July, with peak counts of five at Corby's Crag (Alnwick) and three at Darden Lough (Rothbury) in April; four in Upper Coquetdale in May; four (two adults and two juveniles) at Ravenshaugh Crag (Wark) in June and seven at Kypoe Knowe (Otterburn Training Area), five (two adults and three juveniles) at Chew Green (Upper Coquetdale) and four at the Ingram Valley and Thirlmoor (Otterburn) in July. During this period, one to two were reported from an additional 14 inland localities and, on the coast, from Craster on 15th April and Dunstanburgh and Beadnell Bay on 8th and 20th May respectively.

Five were still in the Ingram Valley on 30th August, while elsewhere during the month singles were at Beanley, Greenlee Lough, Melkridge Common and Spartylea and on the coast at Cocklawburn on 31st. In September, three flew E at Allenheads on 15th, two were at Hulne Park (Alnwick) on 3rd and singles at Grindon Lough, Kielder Water, near Shilbottle and Shoreswood. Coastal records were prevalent in October, some of which potentially related to the same wandering birds. A single was at Dunstanburgh on 4th, two at Chain Bridge (River Tweed) on 7th, one to two at Fenham Flats from 17th-22nd and one at Craster on 25th. In upland areas three were at Holystone on 27th.

During the final two months of the year, one to two were reported from mainly upland areas at Barrowburn, Hepburn Woods, Holystone, Rothbury (Addycombe and Cragside), Usway Burn, West Simonside and Winter's Gibbert; more unusually, singles were also noted at Prestwick Carr on 5th November and at Holy Island on 12th December. The largest gathering of the year was 12, seen together, on the Scottish border near Carter Bar, on 7th December, presumably near, or en route to, a roost site (MHe).

Waxwing *Bombycilla garrulus*

STATUS: Uncommon winter visitor. Given to irruptive behaviour when, in such years, it may become more numerous.

Following the influx of November-December 2016, large numbers continued to be reported during the early months of 2017. Two flocks totalling 250 birds were reported from Newcastle (Coast Road) on 15th January (SRB) and 130 were at nearby Benfield Road the following day. The mobile nature of the species probably results in some duplication; however, 114 were at Stakeford on 9th January, with nearby flocks of 50 at Ashington on 7th and Bedlington on 26th, and 20 at Choppington on 26th. Other smaller gatherings during the month included 28 at Lemington on 27th, 23 near Ponteland on 17th and 11 at Cramlington (Horton) on 15th. Farther inland, 17 were at Corbridge on 30th, 15 at Blanchland Moor on 14th and 12 at Wark (North Tyne) on 21st. Elsewhere, one to eight were noted at Alnwick, Colt Crag Reservoir, Druridge Bay CP, Hauxley NR, Hexham, Newbrough, Newcastle (Exhibition Park and Kenton Lane), Prestwick Carr, Prudhoe, Rothbury, Slaley Hall, Stobhill (Morpeth), Throckley, Tynemouth and Ulgham.

The largest February gathering was ca.100 at Pegswood on 7th. Numbers in the Newcastle area had declined significantly by mid-month, with 75 still at Benfield on 12th, 16 at West Moor on 5th, 15 at Byker on 8th and eight at Walker on 16th. A flock of 25-26 at Morpeth on 3rd and 12th presumably involved the same birds, while 20 were at Corbridge on 10th. One to nine were also noted at Gosforth Garden Village, Hexham, Lynemouth, Seaton Delaval, Stobhill and Warkworth.

In March, 45 were noted at Forest Hall on 8th, 21 were at Tynemouth on 5th, 13 at Cramlington (Northburn) on 7th, six to 12 at Wallsend from 25th-27th, ten at Gosforth Garden Village on 3rd, four at Hexham on 11th and Howdon on 27th and two near Slaley on 12th. A flock of 14 was in a South Blyth garden on 1st April and, finally, four late birds flew low over Swallow Pond on 8th May.

It seems likely observers will have to wait for the next large influx, as two at Acklington Prison on 16th November and three at Beanley Plantation on 18th November were the only reports during the second winter period.



Waxwing - Whitley Bay - February (Alan Curry).



Waxwing - Embleton - February (Gary Woodburn).



Waxwing - Embleton - February (Gary Woodburn).

Coal Tit *Periparus ater*

STATUS: Abundant resident.

BREEDING: Abundant.

At Spartylea, 12 in January declined to eight in February and six from March-April. There was a large count of 45 from Wallington Hall on 19th February (MEc) and ‘many’ were noted singing at Broomley Woods (Stocksfield) by 9th March. Three were trapped and ringed and one re-trapped at Spindlestone on 18th January, fours were at Howdon on 8th January and trapped and ringed at Bamburgh on 6th February, whilst another four visited garden feeders at Tynemouth in March-April.

Details from one nest box study area were as follows (no boxes were used at Linnels this year):

Locality	Nests	Eggs laid	Young fledged	Productivity	Observer
Low Carriteth	1	6	3	3.0	JR

Typically, reports were very sparse during the spring and summer period (April-August), with records including four at Gosforth Park NR on 9th May, a family party at Cramlington (Valley Park) on 18th July and 25 counted (in 15 minutes) at Netherwitton on 12th August. In September, 16 were at Hauxley on 16th and four were on feeders at Howdon on 3rd.

There were counts of nine at Craster and Holystone on 25th and 27th October respectively, six were at Derwent Reservoir on 24th October and four at Bamburgh, Berwick, Hauxley and Tynemouth. Holywell Dene held 19 on 29th November, 17 were at Bolam Lake on 18th November, up to 12 at Spartylea all month, six to seven at Borough Woods (Morpeth) and Spindlestone, five at Windyhaugh and four again on garden feeders at Tynemouth. There was a good count of 42 from typical habitat at Hepburn Woods on 22nd December and up to 25 were at Wallington Hall during the month. Numbers at Spartylea increased to 15 in December, 12 were at Bolam Lake, 11 at Holywell Dene and Lemington Hall and eight at the Aln Estuary and Colt Crag Reservoir.

Marsh Tit *Poecile palustris*

STATUS: Well-represented resident.

BREEDING: Well-represented.

After an apparent contraction in earlier years, distribution would appear to have levelled, with reports from 29 localities in 2017, as illustrated in the table below:

Year	2017	2016	2015	2014	2013
Localities	29	27	24	24	26

Traditional sites in the Morpeth-Mitford-Longhorsley area were again favoured, the population here remaining relatively stable. Reports from these areas during the first quarter produced one to two at Borough Wood, Hartburn, Linden Hall, Morpeth riverside, Newton Red House and Scotch Gill Wood. Elsewhere, in January-February, three+ were at Hyons Wood (Prudhoe) on 7th January and singles at Bolam Lake, New Mills Wood (Berwick), Ordley (Hexham), Rothbury, Thrum Mill (Rothbury) and Wallington. The first signs of breeding activity were noted from early March, when two were singing at Linden Hall and two were involved in display and aggression at Colliersdene (Widdrington). Elsewhere during the month, singles were reported from Alnwick, Gainslaw (Berwick), Letah Wood (Hexham), Low Cocklaw (Berwick) Newton Burn and Prestwick Carr. In April, up to three were noted at Linden Hall, two at Borough Wood, Fontburn and Nunnykirk and one at Hagg Bank (Wylam).

Confirmed breeding was noted in May, when nests were found in stone walls at Highford Bridge (Mitford) and Mitford Castle and birds were carrying food at Highford Bridge, Linden Hall and Nunnykirk Bridge. In June, a pair accompanied five fledged juveniles at Fontburn on 3rd (TD). Thereafter, reports away from the Morpeth-Linden Hall areas were sparse, with singles at Rothbury in August, Wallington Hall in September and Rothbury (old railway line) in October.

The return of winter produced a ‘spike’ of sightings, notably a total of five in the Abbey Mill-Whorall Bank (Morpeth) area on 6th November and two at Windy Edge (Stonehaugh) on 2nd December. Elsewhere during the final two months of the year, one to two were noted at the regular sites of Borough and Letah Woods, Linden Hall, Mitford, New Mills Wood, Rothbury, Scotch Gill Wood, Spindlestone, Wallington Hall and Widdrington.

Willow Tit *Poecile montana*

STATUS: Well-represented resident.

BREEDING: Uncommon.

The distribution of this sedentary species would appear to remain stable, with reports from 45 localities in 2017, as illustrated in the table below:

Year	2017	2016	2015	2014	2013
Localities	45	45	40	37	45

Prestwick Carr, and nearby Dinnington, remain by far the most reliable sites, with a peak of seven at Prestwick Carr on 19th January (PRM) and at least two to four in every other month of the year. Threes were at Branton GP on 30th January and Parish Haugh (Morpeth) on 16th February. Elsewhere during the first quarter, one to two were noted at Airy Holm Reservoir (Shotleyfield), Alnwick, Backworth, Big Waters, Craster, Derwent Reservoir, Druridge Bay CP, East Cramlington LNR, Gosforth Park NR, Green Letch (Bedlington), Holywell Dene, Hyons Wood (Prudhoe), Longhorsley (Haredene, Linden Hall and Linkham Lane Pond), Netherwitton, Rothbury and Swallow Pond.

Breeding was confirmed at Absheil (Longhorsley), Craster and Prestwick Carr. At the latter site, a pair attended a nest in May and fed five fledged young on 6th June (PCF), while at Craster five+ on 24th May included two singing and an adult carrying food. At Absheil, a pair accompanied three juveniles on 18th June. Elsewhere during the breeding season (April-August), one to three (mainly singles) were reported from a further 14 localities, including most of the aforementioned sites, as well as Beacon Hill (Longhorsley), Bellasis Bridge, Benridge Moor, Cresswell Pond, Hauxley NR, Linton Ponds, Newburn Riverside, Reigh Pond (Throckley) and Seaton Sluice.

In September, three were at Craster and twos at Big Waters, Brier Dene (Whitley Bay), Cambois and Derwent Reservoir; singles at a further seven localities included new sites at Arcot Pond, Ellington and an unusual record from Budle Point. Three were again at Craster in October and three were also at Longhorsley Moor, while one to two were reported from six localities, including new sites at Longhirst Flash and Weetslade CP. Up to three attended feeders at Big Waters in November and four likewise at Craster and East Linden (Longhorsley) in December, the latter a new locality. Elsewhere during November-December, one to four were reported from a further 11 regular localities.

Blue Tit *Cyanistes caeruleus*

STATUS: Abundant resident.

BREEDING: Abundant.

There were some notable counts during the first quarter, with an impressive 70 reported from Wallington Hall on 19th February (MEc) and ca.30 at Ouseburn (South Gosforth) on 29th January. The species was particularly prominent at Spartylea, where there were up to 25 in January, 19 in February and 12 in March. Another popular locality was Gosforth Subsidence Pond, where there were up to 20 in January and 12-15 in February-March. Ringing sessions at Spindlestone produced 21 on 18th January and 28 on 6th February. Elsewhere during this period, there were counts of 12-15 from Morpeth (east), Ordley (Hexham), Stobhill (Morpeth), Stobswood and Tyne Green (Hexham).

Peak counts in early April included 11 at Chain Bridge (River Tweed) on 8th and Ha'penny Woods (Blyth) on 4th and up to ten were at Spartylea all month.

An early pair was nest building in a box at Gosforth Garden Village from 5th March and two pairs had completed nest building in boxes at Fulbeck (Morpeth) by the end of April; these pairs went on to fledge only four young (two each).

Coal Tit - Howdon Wetland - November
(Colin Bradshaw).



Great Tit - Howdon Wetland - November
(Colin Bradshaw).



Blue Tit - Howdon Wetland - November
(Colin Bradshaw).



Details from nest box study areas were as follows:

Locality	Nests	Eggs laid	Young fledged	Productivity	Observer
Linnels	17	163	90	5.3	AM
Wallington Hall	9	No data	No data	--	JCD
Letah Wood	7	47	39	5.8	RMH
Big Waters	6	37	15	2.5	JCD
Dye House	4	29	25	6.3	RMH
March Burn	3	20	17	5.7	RMH
Chesters	2	No data	No data	--	JCD
Rothley Lake	2	No data	No data	--	JCD
Low Carriteth	2	17	16	8.0	JR

Results from Linnels were described as relatively poor, with only 17 nesting attempts and lower productivity compared to the previous year (6.9 in 2016). Other results were mixed and very wet weather around the time of fledging may have been a factor at some sites.

Over 20 were in a mixed tit flock at Haughton Strother GP on 27th July and 16 were counted (in 15 minutes) at Netherwitton on 12th August. There were counts of 12 from the Aln Estuary and Gosforth Subsidence Pond in August. Numbers at Haughton Strother GP rose to 40 by 1st September, while elsewhere up to 30 were at Hauxley, 22 between Low Cocklaw-Cantry's Brig (Berwick) and 16 were ringed at Bamburgh RS during the month.

A further 23 were ringed at Bamburgh in October, with 16 ringed at Hauxley from October-early November, and 20 were at Brier Dene (Whitley Bay) on 22nd October. In November, the largest gathering was 21 (in 1km of hedgerows) at Low Cocklaw on 15th, 13 were still at Brier Dene and at Ulgham, up to 12 at Spartylea and ten at Jesmond Dene and Windyhaugh. Over 30 were noted at Wallington Hall on 27th December, 27 were counted (in 2km of hedgerow) at Low Cocklaw on 22nd, 26 were at Alnham on 27th and ten to 18 at Bolam Lake, Brier Dene, Farnley Haughs, Holywell Dene, Lemington Hall and Spartylea.

Great Tit *Parus major*

STATUS: Common resident.

BREEDING: Common.

A ringing session at Spindlestone on 18th January produced 20 birds (15 ringed and five re-traps) (BRS). Ten were at Prestwick Carr on 24th, Longhorsley on 27th and Ouseburn (South Gosforth) on 29th, while up to eight were at Spartylea. The largest February count was 20 at Wallington Hall on 19th (MEC), while 15+ were at Morpeth and 12 at Letah Wood (Hexham); seven were ringed and two re-trapped at Spindlestone on 6th. In March, 11 were at Chain Bridge (River Tweed) on 4th and Prestwick Carr on 8th, with seven to eight at Jesmond Dene and Spartylea; the latter site saw four to five throughout the summer.

A female was nest building at Humshaugh by 1st April and ten were noted at Wylam on 16th.

Details from nest box study areas were as follows:

Locality	Nests	Eggs laid	Young fledged	Productivity	Observer
Wallington Hall	30	No data	No data	--	JCD
Linnels	15	105	83	5.5	AM
Big Waters	15	103	70	4.7	JCD
March Burn	12	85	74	6.2	RMH
Chesters	11	No data	No data	--	JCD
Rothley Lake	10	No data	No data	--	JCD
Tarset	7	45	32	4.6	JR
Low Carriteth	6	36	29	4.8	JR
Dye House	5	26	12	2.4	RMH
Letah Wood	3	23	21	7.0	RMH

Productivity at the majority of nest box study sites was higher than in 2016. Also of note were three albino chicks (out of a brood of seven) from the same nestbox at Linnels that contained two albinos in 2016.

Ten were seen and heard around Killingworth Lake in May, when there was further evidence of breeding with four, including recently fledged young, at Gosforth Garden Village on 28th; six to eight were also at Allen Banks and Gosforth Park NR during the month. Two family parties were at Prestwick Carr on 4th June and likewise at Cramlington (Valley Park) on 7th July. Counts in July included 11 at Spindlestone, ten at Farnley Haughs and six at Hauxley NR (four ringed and two re-trapped). In September, 12 frequented Low Cocklaw-Cantry's Brig (Berwick) on 11th, ten were at Haughton Strother GP on 1st and six+ at Bamburgh on 25th.

At Bamburgh, 17 were ringed during October and six were ringed at Hauxley during October-early November; five to eight were also at Brier Dene (Whitley Bay), Lemington Hall, Spartylea and Valley Park during the final quarter.

Skylark *Alauda arvensis*

STATUS: Abundant resident, passage and winter visitor.

BREEDING: Abundant.

Good numbers remained in the county throughout January-February, encouraged by the generally mild weather, with an absence of any significant periods of snow cover. Flocks of 40-65 were recorded in lowland areas at Beacon Hill (Cramlington), Brier Dene Farm (Whitley Bay), Cawledge Burn (Alnwick), Goswick Farm and Haughton Strother GP, with smaller groups of up to 25 at Cheswick, Elwick, Fenham-le-Moor, Lowick and a handful of other sites, including ten at Hepple Heugh, a moorland breeding site, on 19th February. The benign conditions in February encouraged many males to sing with up to nine reported from at least 15 localities; the start of the seasonal movement N was also noted. March records included 20 on high ground at Chew Green (Upper Coquetdale) on 11th and ten singing at Newcastle (Town Moor) and Ross Back Sands, with five to nine at three other sites. The last week in March saw totals of 41 and 79 at Holy Island, indicative of the onset of northerly migration towards breeding territories.

Ongoing passage increased in April, resulting in 96 on Holy Island at the month end; 20-30 were also noted on breeding territories in Allendale and Simonside. During May-June, records from major upland breeding sites included 110+ at Otterburn Training Area, with 20-32 at Allendale, Buteland Fell, Ingram Valley, Lamberton, Rayburn, Simonside and The Wanneys (near Ridsdale). Many counts of ten to 20 came from localities on the lowland and coastal plains, including Amble, Belford, Cresswell, Dunstanburgh, Holy Island, Prestwick Carr, Seghill, St Mary's Wetland and Weetslade CP, with smaller numbers at many other widespread locations. Reports were fewer in July-August, but birds were still singing at a number of upland and coastal sites and small groups were seen at Holy Island and St Mary's.

Return passage south was witnessed from mid-September onwards, with peak counts of 156 at Holy Island, 92 at Beal Point, 50 (per hour) at Budle Bay and 30 at Goswick and St Mary's; concentrations of up to 100 resting and feeding, were recorded at some 14 locations, including Boulmer, Cresswell Pond, Newbiggin and St Mary's. Southerly movement was even more pronounced in October, with coastal counts from Holy Island (The Snook) of 54-79 from 6th-18th, peaking at 183 on 19th (MJC/ADM), 124 at East Chevington, 80 at Embleton Bay, 60 at Boulmer, 54 at Craster, 50 at Druridge Pools and up to 41 at 20 other widespread sites, including inland records from Mootlaw Quarry (Ryal) and Whittle Dene Reservoirs.

In November-December, a number of flocks were reported, the largest being 77 at Fenham-le-Moor in early November and 50 at Low Cocklaw (Berwick) at the end of December. Elsewhere, groups of ten to 33 were seen at Beacon Hill, Beal Point, Glororum (Bamburgh), Heiton (near Kelso) and St Mary's, with one to nine at six other localities.

Shore Lark *Eremophila alpestris*

STATUS: Rare winter visitor. / FIRST RECORD: HISTORICAL / LAST RECORD: 2016

The wintering flock of seven birds, which arrived in November 2016 at Chibburn Mouth (TB/HG *et al.*), remained throughout January-February, sustained by seed provision, to be admired by numerous enthusiasts enjoying the opportunity to see these increasingly rare winter visitors; the flock size remained at seven until at least 12th March, declining to four by 18th and a single on 9th April. A small group of four appeared in the

Boulmer area on 12th April, almost certainly individuals from the dispersal of the long-staying Chibburn flock, and these birds remained for a few days before declining to two by the month end, with a single still present to 31st May. Another single was recorded at Newbiggin from 15th-17th May.

In October, one was again at Chibburn Mouth from 14th-31st, increasing to four by 23rd November, but not recorded there subsequently, although four birds, possibly the same individuals, were seen at the Long Nanny Estuary on 26th November. An earlier November record was of a single flying 'in-off' at Snab Point on 12th.



Shore Lark - East Chevington - April (Chris Barlow).



Short-toed Lark - Catton Moss - May (Ian Fisher).

Short-toed Lark

Calandrella brachydactyla

STATUS: Rare visitor. / PREVIOUS RECORDS: 14 / FIRST: 1976 / LAST: 2012

A superb find inland with one located at Catton Moss on 8th May (NL *et al.*). The observers were carrying out an upland survey, when a small sandy lark flew up on the track they were on and then settled again. Views through the windscreen, at only a few metres range, enabled them to quickly realise the identity. News was put out, with the permission of the landowner, and a number of birders managed to see it up to 14th May. Unsurprisingly, the first inland and only the fifth-ever away from the Farne Islands.

Sand Martin *Riparia riparia*

STATUS: Common summer and passage visitor.

BREEDING: Common

The earliest sightings were on 12th March, when seven were at East Chevington, five at Druridge Bay and three at Rayburn Lake. One was at Red Row on 13th and the number at East Chevington rose to nine on 18th. Thereafter, from 20th-28th, a trickle of birds arrived in groups of up to three, seen at eight other localities, followed by a more rapid build-up and, by the month end, 30 had been recorded at Killingworth Lake, with 19 in the Berwick area, 13 at Haughton Strother GP and seven at Swallow Pond. During the first half of April, large feeding concentrations of newly arrived migrants were recorded at many ponds and lakes, including 420 at Whittle Dene Reservoirs, 300 at East Chevington and 100 at Capheaton. Later in April, significant gatherings involved 350 at Big Waters and 100-200 at Bothal Pond, Branton GP, Gosforth Subsidence Pond, Haughton Strother GP and West Ord (Berwick). Smaller counts of 40-75 came from Beanley, Druridge Pools, Killingworth Lake, QEII CP Lake, the River Tweed (four localities) and Wark, with one to 30 reported from a further 30 widespread locations.

Breeding records during May-June included AONs as follows: 140 at Haughton Strother GP, 90 at a recently restored site at Roddam, 90 at Hexham A69 Tyne Bridge, 35 (in two colonies) between Longhoughton-Howick, 27 at Beacon Point (Newbiggin), at least 16 at Tynemouth Priory cliffs and 11 at Wark. During this period, 200 moved steadily N over Bamburgh beach on 14th May, 196 were at Roddam, 140 at Whittle Dene Reservoirs and ca.100 at Tynemouth Priory, with one to 70 at 14 other sites.

Post-breeding concentrations in July included 470 on the River Tyne at Spittal (Hexham) on 29th (SW) and, on earlier dates, 250 at Haughton Strother GP on 4th, 100 downed by poor weather at Druridge Pools on 1st, 75 at Blagdon and 30-70 at six other coastal sites and at Barrowburn (Upper Coquetdale) and Gosforth Subsidence Pond. Pre-migration flocks in August appeared to be smaller than in previous years and no significant movements were reported, apart from 150 which came down briefly at Cresswell Pond in heavy rain on 12th, quickly departing after clearance of the squall. Elsewhere, gatherings of 150 were at Whittle Dene Reservoirs, 100 at Druridge Pools, 55 at Hexham Race Course and 25-40 at the Aln Estuary, Big Waters, Derwent Reservoir, East Chevington, Gosforth Subsidence Pond and Holy Island, with up to ten at a dozen other sites, including Newcastle (Town Moor), where they are regarded by the observer as scarce.

Few birds remained into September, although three very late nests were still occupied at the Haughton Strother GP colony on 1st; the largest counts were 30 at Cresswell Pond on 8th, 25 still around the breeding colony at Hexham A69 Tyne Bridge on 4th, 20+ at Derwent Reservoir on 7th, nine S at Chugdon Wood (Ellington) on 10th and four to seven feeding over water at Cocklawburn, Cresswell Pond, Druridge Pools and East Chevington on various dates from 8th-23rd, with one to two sighted at eight other locations. The last records of the year involved two extremely late birds at Backworth and one over Inner Farne (Farne Islands) on 17th October, the same 'latest-date' as last year, and representing the joint latest sightings since 2004.

Swallow *Hirundo rustica*

STATUS: Common summer and abundant passage visitor.

BREEDING: Common.

The first arrivals involved three N at East Chevington and two N at Druridge Pools on 1st April; the following day a single was at Old Mousen and singles were at the Farne Islands on 5th and Ellington and Gosforth Garden Village on 6th. Thereafter, up to mid-month, one to ten were recorded at more than 30 widespread localities. Numbers then increased rapidly and 60 (per hour) headed W at Budle Point and a very large concentration of ca.500 were feeding over East Chevington north pool, both on 21st. Lesser counts of 20-50 were at Bothal Pond, Caistron, Cresswell and Holywell Ponds, Horncliffe, QEII CP Lake and Woodhorn Flashes. During the first half of May, migration N was witnessed at several sites, with 200 over Bamburgh beach on 14th, 100 (per hour) at St Mary's on 9th and smaller numbers at Alnmouth, East Chevington, Newbiggin and Seaton Sluice; conversely, movement S or SW was noted on 11th-13th, involving 28 at Boulmer, 50 (in ten minutes) at Newbiggin and 100 (per hour) at Budle Point on 14th; all of these records presumably 'overshoots' returning to their breeding territories. Throughout May, groups of up to 50 were recorded at another 15 locations and nesting birds at a further eight.

The on-going Holy Island study reported another below-average breeding season, with 30 monitored nests successfully fledging only 109 young, and a further 29 pairs produced around 80 young. A disastrous few days at the end of June, with very cold and wet conditions, totally destroyed many broods and significantly reduced others. However, replacement broods were successfully raised, aiding a certain recovery from this bad weather event (IK). The regular study at Coquetdale and the Otterburn Training Area found 31 pairs laid 202 eggs, from which 160 young hatched and 152 fledged (these figures include second clutches from 17 pairs, when 70 eggs were laid, 54 young hatched and 51 young fledged) (JR). Active nests were also found in June in Newcastle (Exhibition Park) and in the natural cave at Stonehaugh, where successful breeding was first recorded last year. On the Farne Islands, the small breeding population, this year consisting of five pairs (six in 2016), successfully raised young, including a number of second broods. Broods were still present at Howick and Exhibition Park in late July.

In June-July, feeding groups of 30-73 were reported from Alnmouth, Backworth, Blagdon, Cresswell, Holy Island and Warenton as recently fledged young boosted populations. The first indication of return migration was recorded from Gosforth, when five flew S on 27th July.

Large post-breeding flocks were reported in August, with three-figure counts involving 200 at Chollerton, 153 on Holy Island, 150 at Preswick and 105 at Humshaugh, with 30-82 at 11 other coastal and inland localities. Visible migration S throughout the month included 150 at Fenham Mill on 2nd and 110 near Boulmer on 25th. Migration reached its peak during September, with maximum counts of 500 at Cresswell Pond on 19th, 250 at Holy Island on 3rd, 150 at Chugdon Wood (Ellington) and Warkworth Lane and 120 at Newbiggin; many other reports, of 30-100, came from at least 22 widespread localities, some groups actively moving S, others resting or feeding during their migratory passage. A very impressive record of 5,600 *hirundine* sp. moving S over the sea (in one hour) during the morning of 13th September came from Spittal Bay (Berwick); it was estimated that some 70% were Swallows (MHu).

The first week in October saw small numbers moving S, with peaks of 27 at East Chevington, 12 at Holy Island village, ten at Fulbeck (Morpeth), six at East Holywell and five at Ellington. One to five were sighted at 14 coastal locations from 8th onwards, with the last records being singles at Cheswick Dunes, East Chevington and Seaton Sluice on 25th. The final record involved a single which flew N into a strong wind at Holy Island (The Snook) on 2nd November.

House Martin *Delichon urbicum*

STATUS: Common summer and passage visitor.

BREEDING: Common.

An extremely early single was at East Chevington north pool on 16th March, where it fed over the water with Sand Martins *Riparia riparia*; this early date is only beaten by a record from 1989 when one was at Ulgham on 13th March. In April, there was a slow build up, with one at Lynemouth on 2nd, singles moving N at Gosforth on 4th and Ellington on 5th, with two N at Woodhorn on 11th and one N at Cresswell Pond on 14th. Thereafter, numbers increased markedly during the second half of the month, with many reported at Bamburgh on 20th, six at Rothbury on 22nd, five at Swallow Pond, three at Longframlington and one to two at around 15 other locations from 16th onwards. The main influx occurred from 10th May and included 200 N over Bamburgh beach on 14th (ME) and 30 at Ashington, Holy Island and Lynemouth on dates from 12th-21st. At East Chevington, 18 moved N on 10th and two to ten were at eight other sites, with nesting recorded at Cramlington on 21st, where two to five nests were at each of three urban locations.

Following several years of cliff-nesting in the Berwick area, a new discovery on 12th June involved a larger colony of 23 AON on cliffs south of Fisherman's Haven, off Magdalene Fields (Berwick), only viewable at low tide (CH). Also at Berwick, four cliff nests were found at Dodds Well, with three at Needles Eye; away from cliffs four nests were at East Ord, with 50+ nests on the Tweed Railway Bridge (MHu). Elsewhere throughout the main breeding season, June-July, good numbers of AON were recorded, including ca.60 in Upper Coquetdale, 23 at Capheaton, 11 at Ingram and six at Fontburn but, worryingly, none were found on a BBS in an urban area of Newcastle (Denton Burn), where a slow decline in numbers had been noticeable in recent years. The first newly fledged young on the wing were seen at Howick on 31st July. In early August, four active nests, all with large young, were found on cliffs at Holy Island (Coves Haven); the first recorded cliff-nesting for the island (IK).

Post-breeding gatherings in August, indicative of a successful breeding season for this species, were 120 at Warenton on 13th, 100 at Seaton Point (Boulmer) on 26th and 40-65, on dates throughout, at Alnmouth, Bardon Mill, Cramlington, Hexham Race Course, Humshaugh, Lynemouth, Newbiggin, Newcastle (Town Moor), Old Hartley, Old Mousen and Waren Mill; smaller groups of 20-32 were at Boulmer, Craster, East Ord, Ellington, Holy Island, Howick and Spartylea, with three to 16 at six other locations. An interesting record was 40 flying N (in 30 minutes) at Cocklawburn on 31st August.

Large pre-migration flocks in September included 160 on cliff faces at Berwick Little Beach on 12th, 150+ arriving together at Druridge Pools on 6th, 150 in the Aln Estuary on 11th and 80 at Beal on 3rd. At Haughton Strother GP and Warkworth Lane, 50 and 75 respectively flew S on 10th-11th and other gatherings, or movements S, in mid-month, were 20-60 at Annstead, Bamburgh, Cresswell Pond, Ellington, the Farne Islands, Farnley, Hauxley, Holy Island and Warenton. Twelve localities hosted smaller flocks of up to 15 until around 21st, after which numbers declined rapidly into single figures. Sightings during the first week of October involved eight at Fulbeck (Morpeth), six S at West Hartford and five at Dunston Steads and Rothbury, with singles at Alnwick (Chapel Lands and Hulne Park), Craster, Cresswell Pond, Druridge Pools, East Chevington, the Farne Islands, Newbiggin, Seaton Sluice, St Mary's and Tynemouth from 2nd-26th. The final record, and the latest in the county for eight years, involved a single S at Tynemouth on 5th November.

Red-rumped Swallow *Cecropis daurica*

STATUS: Rare visitor. / PREVIOUS RECORDS: 15 / FIRST: 1977 / LAST: 2012

Spring is always the main period for sightings in the county, though there are a few in late autumn as well. The earliest ever county record involved one at East Chevington on 10th April (ADMc). It was seen with Sand Martins *Riparia riparia* low over south pool and was a surprise for the observer as he was trying to find his first Swallow *Hirundo rustica* for the year. It soon moved S towards Druridge Pools and, with news having been put out, several observers there were able to see it as well. The next sighting was farther north and involved one heading E over Snook House (Holy Island) on 13th May; although only seen briefly it was well documented (MJC). Finally, two more individuals were found at Druridge Pools on 15th May (ADMc/SS *et al.*). They were briefly seen together, with close views obtained of one, and with both individuals documented independently.

Cetti's Warbler *Cettia cetti*

STATUS: Extremely rare visitor. / PREVIOUS RECORDS: 2 / FIRST: 2010 / LAST: 2011

A sign that the species is finally making a push north with, somewhat strangely, more sightings in 2017 than in all previous years put together in Northumberland!

A male was heard singing at East Chevington on 7th October (ADMc *et al.*). It initially favoured the south east corner of the north pool and was heard regularly (though rarely seen) through to 19th October, when it moved over to the south pool, where it was heard singing through to 14th November. It proved more co-operative on the south pool, with views obtainable. After this initial sighting, there was another male caught and ringed at Druridge Pools on 8th October (IDR *et al.*). Further reports here, of it singing through to 20th October, showed this to be a different individual to the East Chevington male. Into November and another bird was caught and ringed, this time at Big Waters on 17th (JCD/AJJ). It was not seen again after being released.

Long-tailed Tit *Aegithalos caudatus*

STATUS: Common resident.

BREEDING: Well-represented.

Larger roving parties during January-February included 23 in Gosforth Park NR, 22 along the Tweed (Tilmonth-West Newbiggin) and at Tyne Green (Hexham) and 21 at Haughton Strother GP. Groups of eight to 16 frequented the Blyth Estuary, Druridge Links, Gosforth Bridle Path, Howick Hall, Longhorsley, Newcastle (Lower Ouseburn), Prestwick Carr, Spartylea, Wallington Hall and Woodhorn, while smaller flocks were found in numerous other localities.

The usual early breeding behaviour occurred during March with nest-building at Hexham and Longhorsley.

Another pair was building during April at East Ord and a pair was at a nest at Ellington. The first family parties, of six to ten, followed in May at Capheaton, Cramlington (Alexandra Park), Fulbeck (Morpeth) and Newburn Business Park. In June, two family parties were at Colt Crag Reservoir and family groups of ten to 16 followed in July and August at Ellington, Humshaugh, Morpeth and Newcastle (Brandling and Leazes Parks). Other big gatherings in August included 24 at Waren Mill, 15 at the Aln Estuary, 13 at Alexandra Park and visiting garden feeders at Tynemouth and 12 at Netherwitton.

Larger groups during September involved 22 at Gosforth Garden Village, 15 at Prestwick Carr, 14 at Houghton Strother GP and ten to 12 at Arcot Lane, Cramlington (Barns Park), Hauxley RS and Wark (North Tyne).

They continued to be well-reported throughout the final quarter. Coastal counts in October included 30 on Holy Island, where they have become a regular autumn visitor in recent years, 30 at Bamburgh, 22 at East Chevington, 19 at Whitley Bay Cemetery and 12 at the Aln Estuary, Brier Dene, Druridge Pools and Newbiggin. Just inland, 32 were in Holywell Dene, with other inland gatherings of 12-13 at Callerton Subsidence Pond, Holystone and Prestwick Carr. During November-December, the largest parties involved 42 at Hepburn Woods on 2nd December (MJC), 25 at North Shields (Northumberland Park), 20-22 around Hexham (Dukeshouse Wood, Letah Wood and Tyne Green), up to 20 at East Sleekburn, 17-18 at the Aln Estuary and Amble and ten to 15 at a further 21 localities. Much more unusual was a regular party of eight on Holy Island until the end of the year.



Willow Warbler

Phylloscopus trochilus

STATUS: Abundant summer and common passage visitor.

BREEDING: Abundant.

The first arrivals in March for seven years involved singing males at Thrurton Woods on 29th, Bedlington on 30th and Swallow Pond on 31st. As usual, much heavier arrival occurred during April and by the end of the month some high counts of singing birds included 49 on a 4km stretch from Heighleygate-Longhorsley on 29th (ASJ), 25 at Beacon Hill (Longhorsley) and Widdrington Tip, 20 at Wingates, 17 in the Breamish Valley, 15 in the Harthope Valley and

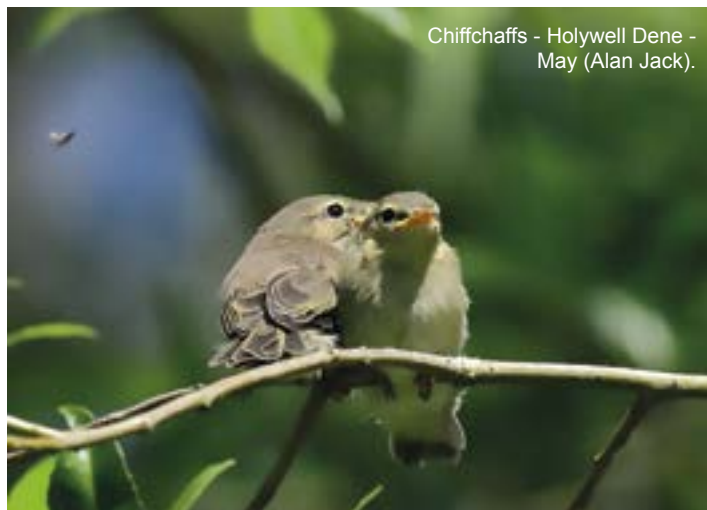
ten to 12 at Derwent Reservoir, Gosforth Park NR and Prestwick Carr. Coastal passage on Holy Island during April involved nine on 29th, rising to 29 the following day and 40 on 1st May, before declining to 15 on 7th May. At the Farne Islands, the first migrant appeared on 15th April with others then recorded almost daily until a peak of 15 on 1st-2nd May.

Many more breeding areas were occupied during May, with more high counts of singing males. These included 43 at Wandylaw woods (Wingates), 40+ in the Breamish Valley, 39 at Stonehaugh, 29 at Derwent Reservoir, 23 at Beacon Hill (with 17 at nearby Longhorsley Moor the same day), 16 at Arcot Pond, 12 at Prestwick Carr, 11 at Swallow Pond and ten at Whittle Dene Reservoirs. Smaller numbers sang in at least 29 other widespread areas. Similarly, there were further high counts during June, with 34 singing males in the Breamish Valley, 15 at Arcot Hall GC, 13 at Longhorsley Moor and 12 at Whittle Dene Reservoirs. The first indications of breeding success came on 6th, when a pair carried food to a nest at Arcot Hall GC. Meanwhile, one to two late migrants, perhaps non-breeders, were on Holy Island to 17th June.

Early return movements commenced during July on Holy Island, with seven present on 16th and 17 on 30th. On the Farne Islands singles were seen on four dates. Southerly movements during August resulted in a monthly total of 20 ringed at Bamburgh and light coastal 'falls' producing ten at St Mary's on 19th and Hadston on 20th, eight at Cresswell Pond and five at Alnmouth and Ellington. On the Farne Islands there were peaks of five on three dates in early August.

Although eight remained at Longhorsley Common and three were at Cramlington, most inland areas were vacated by early September, when all other reports were coastal. These included day peaks of 15 at Hauxley RS on 2nd and four at Cresswell Pond on 8th, while light passage through Holy Island produced one to three

on six dates to 30th. Individuals were present almost daily on the Farne Islands until 10th. The final sightings occurred during October, with one on Holy Island on 1st-2nd, two on the Farne Islands on 4th and very late singles at St Mary's on 19th and in a Tynemouth garden on 30th.



Chiffchaffs - Holywell Dene -
May (Alan Jack).

Chiffchaff

Phylloscopus collybita

STATUS: Common summer and passage visitor, rare in winter.

BREEDING: Common.

Wintering individuals were found during January-February at Alnmouth, Amble, Bolam Lake, East Chevington, Gosforth Park NR, Goswick, North Shields-Tynemouth area and St Mary's Wetland.

Spring arrival during March produced high counts of both passage birds and those occupying breeding areas. Coastal passage on Holy Island produced day counts of 13 on 25th and

28th. Inland, by the end of the month, 13 were at Branton GP, ten at Derwent Reservoir, nine were singing at Arcot Pond, nine were at Whittader Water and eight were singing at Ha'penny Woods (Blyth). Five to seven, many singing, were at eight inland and one coastal locality. April produced more passage with a day peak of 16 on Holy Island on 30th and 14 were ringed at Bamburgh during the month. High counts of singing males included 23 at Derwent Reservoir on 9th, 22 at Branton GP also on 9th, 17 at Beacon Hill (Longhorsley), 15 between Ha'penny Woods-Kitty Brewster, 13 in Gosforth Park NR and ten to 12 at five further sites. In May, peak coastal passage involved 23 on the Farne Islands on 2nd and 20 on Holy Island on 4th, followed by another arrival of 13 on the Farnes on 12th. Thereafter, individuals passed through the islands almost daily until early June.

On 6th June, 24 in the Arcot Pond area included a pair carrying food to a nest and 22 singing males (LJM). Other breeding localities with high numbers of singing males during June included 15 at Beacon Hill, 11 in Holywell Dene and nine at Wandylaw woods (Wingates). Meanwhile, two late migrants were on Holy Island on 4th June.

Typical early return passage was evident in July, with singles on the Farne Islands on 4th and Holy Island on 30th. Many more were on the move during August, including 33 ringed at Bamburgh, the highest-ever August total for the site. Elsewhere, eight were at Alnmouth on 23rd and between Boulmer-Craster on 25th. Movement increased in September, with day peaks of 16 at Hauxley RS on 16th and at Low Cocklaw-Canty's Brig (Berwick) on 11th, 15+ at Budle Point on 26th and up to 13 at Cresswell Pond. Smaller numbers passed through Bamburgh, Brier Dene (Whitley Bay), Cambois, Druridge Pools, Holy Island and St Mary's. Meanwhile, some remained inland, with four to seven at seven localities.

Passage continued during October, with another day peak of 16 at Hauxley RS (on 14th), as well as up to 12 on Holy Island, ten at St Mary's and seven on the Farne Islands, with one to three at 12 other coastal localities. Inland, six were at Byrness, three in two areas of Cramlington and one to two at 13 other localities. Late migrants during November included singles at Druridge Pools on 3rd, Hauxley RS on 4th and the Farne Islands on 6th, two on Holy Island between 12th-16th, three at Newton Scrape and two at Tynemouth on 18th, singles at Druridge Pools on 19th, Holy Island on 23rd and St Mary's Wetland on 25th and one-two at Marden Quarry up to 26th. Inland, singles were at Cramlington (Horton Park) on 2nd, East Sleekburn on 3rd and Borough Woods (Morpeth) on 6th.

During December, presumed wintering individuals were at Branton GP, East Chevington, Howick, Marden Quarry, Newbiggin and Tynemouth on various dates from 5th-23rd.

Single birds showing characteristics of Eastern-type individuals were on Holy Island on 15th (MJC/ADM) and 18th (MJC) October.

‘Siberian Chiffchaff’ *P. c. tristis*

STATUS: Rare visitor. / PREVIOUS RECORDS: 39 / FIRST: 1923 / LAST: 2016

The lack of easterlies in 2017 accounted for the fact that only two individuals were seen, with both being wintering birds. One at Tynemouth, from 9th-19th February (CB/DRW) was thought to be the same individual as seen in December 2016. The other sighting was at the tail end of the year, with one found at Newbiggin on 23rd December (GB/LAR). It was well documented and another indication of this species predilection for wintering now in the UK.

Wood Warbler *Phylloscopus sibilatrix*

STATUS: An increasingly uncommon summer and rare passage visitor.

BREEDING: Uncommon.

The rapid decline of this increasingly rare summer visitor to our deciduous woodlands was again evident with records from only nine probable, or potential, breeding localities, perhaps involving only around a dozen birds; a very similar situation to 2016.

The first report involved a singing male at the regular woodlands at Allen Banks on 30th April. The only indications of coastal passage were in May and involved singles on Inner Farne (Farne Islands) on 1st, Holy Island (Vicarage Garden) on 4th and 7th and Brownsman (Farne Islands) on 19th.

During May, a pair were alarm calling and carrying food at Derwent Gorge on 29th (AAR). Singing birds were again reported from Allen Banks on 5th-6th and 24th, at a confidential site on 10th, at Todburn from 14th-20th, Eals on 19th, Longhorsley from 19th-20th and West Dipton Burn from 19th-21st. The only June reports involved two singing males at Derwent Gorge on 4th (IK) and singles at Sidwood on 15th and Stawardpeel Wood (Langley) on 16th.

The sole indication of return passage was provided by a single on Inner Farne on 5th August. The only other record during the month involved a late individual still in breeding habitat at Sidwood on 25th.



Wood Warbler - Holy Island - May (Mike Carr).



Wood Warbler - Allen Banks - May (Jack Bucknall).

Dusky Warbler *Phylloscopus fuscatus*

STATUS: Rare visitor. / PREVIOUS RECORDS: 30 / FIRST: 1980 / LAST: 2016

Two sightings during a brief spell of south-easterlies, with one located on Inner Farne on 16th October (JCr/TH/GF) and another caught and ringed at Bamburgh on 20th October (MSH/GPK). The Farne Islands individual was only seen and heard calling for two hours, with the Bamburgh individual only seen briefly after release.

Pallas's Warbler *Phylloscopus proregulus*

STATUS: Rare autumn passage visitor; extremely rare in spring. / FIRST RECORD: 1951 / LAST RECORD 2016

Just one record this year: a single around Brownsman Cottage (Farne Islands) on 2nd-3rd May. Extremely confiding, it occasionally landed within touching distance of the Rangers. This was the twenty-first record for the islands and the first in spring.

Yellow-browed Warbler *Phylloscopus inornatus*

STATUS: Uncommon autumn passage visitor, extremely rare in spring.

An extraordinary spring record of this superb little Siberian leaf warbler involved a singing male on Holy Island (Captain's Garden) on 13th May (TF/JFa).

The now-expected autumn arrival commenced in September, with singles at Budle Point on 19th, Holy Island on 20th and Low Newton on 22nd. The influx gathered pace from 24th, with two on Inner Farne (Farne Islands) and two at Boulmer from 24th-28th; one remained at the latter site until 30th. They were rapidly followed by at least four at Craster on 25th, with three at St Mary's on 25th increasing to six the following day, while numbers on the Farne Islands also rose to six on 28th (four on Inner Farne and two on West Wideopen). On Holy Island, so often the epicentre of arrivals, six on 26th rose to nine the following day, before soaring to 22 on 28th, a new record day count for the county (MJC/RA/CGK); numbers fell back to 13 the following day with onward movement. Elsewhere during this period, a maximum of three were at Bamburgh (Castle Wood) on 29th, twos were at Tynemouth on 26th-30th and Budle Point on 27th, with singles at Blyth (Ridley Park), Craster, Cresswell Pond, Druridge Pools, Goswick, Hauxley RS, Newbiggin and Newton Links.

Holy Island again attracted the largest numbers in October, although not on September's scale. Singles remained on The Snook from 1st-5th and Straight Lonnen from 1st-6th, with another in the Churchyard-Vicarage Garden area from 6th-9th; by mid-month three to six were present, peaking on 20th. New influxes produced one at Hauxley RS on 7th, two at East Chevington on 8th, one at St Mary's on 9th, one at Druridge Pools on 9th and 12th, the year's only inland record, a single in Newcastle (St Cuthbert's School, Benwell Hill) on 12th (MJC), a new arrival at Hauxley RS on 14th and one at Howick Hall on 14th and 19th. On the Farne Islands, there were two new arrivals on 17th, with one staying until 22nd. Elsewhere, numbers built up to three at St Mary's on 19th and four between Bamburgh-Budle Point on 20th, when singles were at Lynemouth and Newbiggin. A single was at Hauxley RS on 21st and twos were at Craster on 19th and 25th, Cresswell-Snab Point on 20th (one staying to 23rd) and Low Newton from 22nd-25th; one was at the latter site from 20th-22nd.

As ever, a high submission rate, and multiple counts, including duplication, makes it difficult to judge the true numbers passing through the county. However, a conservative total of 92 individuals, consisting of one on Holy Island in May, 23 on Holy Island and 35 elsewhere in September and seven on Holy Island and 26 elsewhere in October, would seem a reasonable estimate. This figure is three higher than 2016 and one below the record county total in 2015; a remarkably consistent run of records.



Yellow-browed Warbler - Holy Island - May (Jonathan Farooqi).

Sedge Warbler *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus*

STATUS: Common summer and well-represented passage visitor.

BREEDING: Common.

The first arrivals, during April, were singles at Castron on 12th and East Chevington on 14th. Others quickly followed and by the end of the month there were counts of seven at Prestwick Carr, five at Budle Bay and East Chevington, four at Backworth Pond and three at Holy Island Lough. One to two were settled in at least eight other localities.

An indication of coastal passage was provided by four singles on the Farne Islands on dates between 1st - 21st May. Other coastal records in May included eight+ at Bamburgh and seven singing males at Holy Island and St Mary's.

Further arrival during May swelled numbers in prime breeding areas; counts involved many singing males, with 17 around Alnmouth, 13 at Prestwick Carr, 12 at Whittle Dene Reservoirs, seven at Holywell, six at Arcot Pond and Druridge Pools, five at Beadnell Bay, Dissington, Mootlaw Quarry (Ryal) and West Hartford and one to four at a further 28 widespread breeding areas. Singing and flight displaying males remained prominent in June, with four pairs at Cheswick the highest count. Eleven at Whittle Dene Reservoirs on 12th July indicated a good local breeding season. Family parties were also noted at Arcot Pond and on Holy Island. During August, young were being fed at Cresswell Pond on 1st and a family party of five was at Monks House Pool on 13th; five ringed at Bamburgh was a very low monthly total for the site. At East Chevington,

a total of 101 (ten adults and 91 juveniles) were ringed between June-August, indicating both local breeding success and the attraction of its reedbeds for migrants. Two adults ringed at the site in previous years were also re-trapped and the highest day figure was 49 individuals ringed on 24th August (IF).

Light return passage was evident from 25th July, when one was on the Farne Islands. Further movement during August produced six at Boulmer, three at Cocklawburn, two at Hadston Carrs and St Mary's Wetland and singles at Hauxley and Holy Island on three dates. Up to three were still inland at Gosforth Subsidence Pond mid-month, with two at Whittle Dene Reservoirs on 25th and singles at Big Waters on 17th, Haughton Strother GP on 29th and Gosforth Park NR on 30th. The final records came in September, with singles at Newton Pool on 1st, Arcot Pond on 2nd, Gosforth Park NR on 5th, Cresswell Pond on 8th, West Hartford on 10th, Whittle Dene Reservoirs on 14th, Cambois on 21st and Inner Farne (Farne Islands) on 30th.

Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus scirpaceus*

STATUS: Uncommon summer and passage visitor.

BREEDING: Uncommon.

The first spring arrival involved a singing male at East Chevington from 21st April, with perhaps the same individual singing at nearby Chibburn Mouth on 30th.

The only indication of coastal passage was a single on the Farne Islands on 1st-2nd May.

Further occupation of prime reedbed breeding areas followed during May, with six at East Chevington on 17th, five at Cresswell Pond on 27th, four at Gosforth Park and two singing males at the Blyth Estuary, Warkworth Lane Pond and Weetslade CP; singles were at Brownsman (Farne Islands), Druridge Pools, Hauxley NR, Holy Island Lough, St Mary's Wetland and Whittle Dene Reservoirs on various dates.

Breeding evidence in June consisted of a family party of five at Holywell Pond and one of three birds at Cresswell Pond carrying a faecal sac. Further counts included threes at East Chevington, Gosforth Park NR and Whittle Dene Reservoirs, with one to two at Big Waters, Burton (near Bamburgh), Druridge Bay CP, Druridge Pools, Holy Island, Low Newton, QEII CP, St Mary's Wetland and Weetslade CP; more unusual was two at Spartylea throughout the month.

During July-August, further breeding success was indicated with birds carrying food at Druridge Bay CP in July and at Big Waters in August. Maximum counts were eight (five singing) at Druridge Bay CP, eight (four singing) at Gosforth Park NR, four singing at Holy Island Lough and three singing at Bates Minewater Treatment Works (Blyth) and at Big Waters. Two remained at Cresswell Pond and singles at Holy Island (The Snook), Hauxley NR, Howdon, Low Newton, St Mary's Wetland, Swallow Pond, Warkworth beach car park and Whittle Dene Reservoirs. At the important breeding and migration stopover site at East Chevington, 58 (20 adults and 38 juveniles) were ringed between June-August, together with nine adult re-traps, and a highest day count of 22 on 2nd August (IF).

September records involved five (minimum four first-winters) at Cresswell Pond on 8th and singles at Gosforth Park NR on 5th, 19th and 25th, Druridge Bay on 20th and Holy Island Lough on 29th. The final record of the year was one at East Chevington on 14th October. For the first time since 1985 there were no autumn records on the Farne Islands.

Marsh Warbler *Acrocephalus palustris*

STATUS: Rare visitor. / FIRST RECORD: 1963 / LAST RECORD: 2015

BREEDING: Extremely rare. / LAST BRED: 2017

Another breeding record for the county, with a particularly well documented account of a pair fledging two young at a coastal site (Anon.). Once it was realised that a pair were holding territory, RSPB advice was sought and that advice was that the site be kept confidential. The male was initially heard on 29th May, with the female tentatively seen on 31st May, with definitive views of the pair on 10th June. On 6th July, two young looking fledglings were seen and the adult was still seen to be feeding on 9th July. The final sighting was of one adult on 19th July. The Northumberland coastline certainly has considerable suitable habitat, so hopefully further breeding will take place.



Grasshopper Warbler - Holy Island - May
(Mike Carr).

Grasshopper Warbler *Locustella naevia*

STATUS: Well-represented summer and uncommon passage visitor.

BREEDING: Well-represented.

A single at Prestwick Carr on 9th April became the joint earliest-ever returnee to the county, matching a bird from the same site, and found by the same observer, in 2011. Other singles followed from 14th onwards, when birds were at Arcot Pond, St Mary's Wetland and Weetslade CP. Three at East Chevington on 20th increased to eight on 29th (ME) and seven were at Prestwick Carr on 23rd. Other breeding areas around Berwick, Big Waters, Budle Bay, Cambois, Coquet Estuary, Druridge Pools, East Sleekburn, Ellington, Farnley Haughs, Fontburn, Hauxley NR, Lynemouth Flash, Newton Pool, Scotchcoulthard (Kielder), West Hartford and Whittle Dene Reservoirs were occupied by the end of the month.

Coastal passage during May involved singles on Holy Island on three dates between 1st-7th, including an unusually showy 'reeling' male in the rough field next to the Vicarage Garden. The year's sole sighting on the Farne Islands involved an individual on Inner Farne on 2nd-3rd May. Another migrant was at Beal Point on 13th. Elsewhere during May, counts of 'reeling' males included eight at East Chevington (MJC *et al.*), five at Prestwick Carr, four at Arcot Pond and St Mary's Wetland, three at Halton-lea-Gate and two at Brough Law (Cheviots). One to two were in at least 19 other localities.

The only detailed breeding data came from the long-running Cramlington study area. It showed at least 17 territories of which eight were at Arcot Pond and six at West Hartford (STH/GMi/LJM/DM). Other records included two (one juvenile) at Big Waters on 9th July and twos at Hauxley NR and North Walbottle. During June-July 'reeling' birds were reported from additional areas including Bamburgh, Cheswick, Darras Hall (Ponteland), Dinnington, Hauxley, Kilham Hill (Cheviots), Low Newton and Morpeth, while singles were also noted at more than a dozen additional wetland sites. The most unusual record involved one 'reeling' at 320m asl in the Cheviots on 28th July. A migrant was on Holy Island two days later.

During August, a single was 'reeling' at West Hartford on 2nd, another was at Whittle Dene Reservoirs on 6th and one was singing strongly in a fen area near Stamfordham from 6th-8th. For the first time in ten years there was no definite September record, although one on Holy Island (The Snook) on 26th September was either this species or Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler *Locustella certhiola*.

Blackcap *Sylvia atricapilla*

STATUS: Common summer and well-represented passage visitor, uncommon in winter.

BREEDING: Common.

Four wintering individuals were present during the first quarter. A female frequented a garden in Newcastle (Walker) throughout the period. Elsewhere, during January, another female was in a Tynemouth garden on 7th, a male was at Cramlington (Northburn) on 25th and one was at Newcastle (Town Moor) on 29th.

The first indications of spring arrival were singles between 28th-31st March at Bedlington, Guyzance Mill, Hexham and Spartylea. As usual, much heavier arrival followed in April, with breeding areas being quickly occupied by singing males. Among higher counts were 22 at Aydon (Corbridge), 14 singing males in Holywell Dene, eight singing males at Backworth and Swallow Pond, eight birds at Plessey Woods and seven around Widdrington tip. Four to five were at Arcot Hall GC, Berwick, Cramlington (Valley Park), Jesmond Dene, Longhorsley Common and Stobswood, with one to three at a further 46 widespread sites.

Coastal passage resulted in six birds ringed at Bamburgh during April, when four to five were on Holy Island, increasing to six on 4th May, while, on the Farne Islands, one to four occurred on 14 dates from 15th April into mid-May, with a peak of 11 on 1st May. During May, birds in additional breeding areas, mostly comprising singing males, involved 16 at Whittle Woods (Ovingham), 13 at Craggside, seven at Allen Banks, Farnley Haughs and Gosforth Subsidence Pond, six at Howick, five at Derwent Reservoir, four at Haughton Strother GP and Marden Quarry and one to three at another 14 localities.

Successful breeding was indicated by a pair feeding young at a nest in Whitley Bay on 2nd June and with four juveniles seen at Chugdon Wood (Ellington) in July. Late song continued in several areas.

Very light coastal movements during August involved 11 ringed at Bamburgh, six birds at Marden Quarry, two at Alnmouth and coastal singles at Amble, Boulmer-Craster and St Mary's Wetland. Light passage continued throughout September, with day peaks of only three at Holy Island and Priors Park (Tynemouth) on 28th and one to two on the coast at Bamburgh, Craster, Druridge Pools, East Ord, Hauxley and Newbiggin. Passage increased during October, with peaks of 11 on Holy Island on 20th and at least 40 at Howick Hall on 27th (PHA/AHA). Elsewhere, a lowly total of seven were ringed at Bamburgh (13 in October 2016) and day peaks involved five at Craster, four on the Farne Islands, three at Bamburgh, Marden Quarry and Newbiggin, two at Brier Dene, (Whitley Bay), Cambois, Druridge Pools, Low Newton and St Mary's and one at Tynemouth. Singles remained well inland at Byrness on 5th and Derwent Reservoir on 26th.

A presumed late migrant was ringed at Hauxley on 4th November, whilst records in the second half of the month at Morpeth, Melkridge and Newcastle Quayside may have involved wintering birds. In December, single males were at Corbridge, Howick, Tynemouth and Woolsington and females at Gosforth Garden Village, Howick and Linden Hall, with unsexed individuals at Morpeth and West Monkseaton.

Garden Warbler *Sylvia borin*

STATUS: Well-represented summer and passage visitor.

BREEDING: Well-represented.

The first arrival, at the same site as last year's first, but a week earlier, involved one at Castlehills (Berwick) on 13th April. Others followed at Blyth (Red House Farm) on 20th and Haughton Strother GP on 21st. By the end of the month, two were at Longhorsley Moor and singles at Airy Holm Reservoir (Shotleyfield), Farnley Haughs, the Harthope Valley, Hulne Park and Middle Ord (Berwick). The only indications of very light coastal passage were May singles on Holy Island on 4th and the Farne Islands from 12th-13th.

Many more breeding localities were occupied during May, with higher counts of singing males including 11 in a young plantation at Wandylaw woods (Wingates) on 14th (ASJ), six at Farnley Haughs and Stonehaugh, five at Beacon Hill (Longhorsley), four at Berwick (Chain Bridge area), Longhorsley Moor and Twizel and three at Hareshaw Linn (Bellingham), Harthope Valley and between Heighley Gate-Linden Hall. One to two were recorded from 37 other widely scattered localities.

By June, with most settled down to breed, singing males were less prominent, although nine were still in full voice at Wandylaw woods on 17th. In additional breeding areas, three were at Fontburn and singles at Derwent Reservoir, Esp Hill (Haydon Bridge) and Wark (North Tyne). In July, four were at Mootlaw Quarry (Ryal) and singles at Belsay Hall and West Hartford. An unusual record involved one or more singles at Newcastle (Exhibition Park) on 31st July and 2nd-3rd, 8th, 16th and 18th August. Other August records,

perhaps involving birds on the move, were singles at Big Waters on 13th, Budle Point on 16th, the Blyth Estuary on 17th and Tynemouth on 28th.

Typically light coastal passage occurred during the second half of September, beginning with a single at Waren Mill on 16th. One ringed at Bamburgh on 17th was re-trapped on 26th, having increased in weight from 18.0 to 25.3g; another was ringed here on 19th. At the Farne Islands, singles were recorded on eight dates between 4th August-21st September, with two present on 19th September. Singles in September were also at Budle Point on 26th and Old Hartley and St Mary's on 28th and two were on Holy Island on 29th. The final sightings came in October and involved a single at Druridge Pools from 7th-10th, with two present on 9th, and a single at St Mary's on 19th.



Barred Warbler *Sylvia nisoria*

STATUS: Rare visitor. / FIRST RECORD: 1913 / LAST RECORD: 2016

It proved to be a quiet autumn for this skulker, with six individuals recorded, compared with eight in 2016 and 15 in both 2014 and 2015.

Autumn arrivals began in September, with a single on Brownsman (Farne Islands) on 5th, followed by others at Inner Farne and Low Newton on 25th. A single was at Newbiggin (ash lagoon bank) on 30th September-6th October. Also in October, singles were at Druridge Pools between 7th-10th and at Budle Point on 18th. Holy Island failed to register a Barred Warbler for the first time in 17 years.

Lesser Whitethroat *Sylvia curruca*

STATUS: Well-represented summer, and uncommon to well-represented passage, visitor.

BREEDING: Well-represented.

A 46 year record was broken on 9th April, when a single at Maiden's Hall (West Chevington) became the earliest ever recorded in the county (beating a bird at Hartford on 10th April 1971). More typically, one was at Big Waters on 24th, while, on 30th, two were at Cramlington, one at West Hartford and coastal singles at Budle Point, Cambois, the Farne Islands and Tynemouth. Passage increased in early May, with 15 on the Farne Islands on 1st, rising to 18 by 3rd (FIR), the second highest day count for the islands, before declining to four by 4th. Five were also on Holy Island on 1st, 11 on 4th, three from 6th to 7th (unusually including a singing male on the Straight Lonnen) and one on 13th.

Elsewhere during May, three pairs were in the Spindlestone area and three, including two singing males, were at Amble Sewage Works. Twos were at Arcot Pond, Beacon Hill (Cramlington) and Big Waters. A male sang at Priors Park (Tynemouth) from 5th until at least 20th, while other singles, mostly in song, were at a further 22 mainly coastal, or near-coastal, localities. During June, an adult carrying food to young on the Straight Lonnen provided the first breeding record for Holy Island. Elsewhere, three were at Bamburgh on 25th and singles at Castle Island, Druridge Pools, Meldon, Pegswood and Shadfen (Morpeth), while, during July, five were at Newburn Riverside on 11th and one at Hauxley on 16th.

Typical light return passage began on 30th July with a single on Holy Island. It, or another, was on the island on 2nd August, two were at the Aln Estuary on 23rd August and singles were at Tynemouth on 6th, Budle Point on 11th, Bamburgh on 16th, Hadston Carrs on 27th and St Mary's on 31st. Light passage continued through Holy Island during September, with one on 16th, three on 17th, two on 20th, 24th and 28th and a peak of four on 29th. Singles were on Inner Farne (Farne Islands) on 16th-17th and from 28th-1st October. Elsewhere in September, singles were at St Mary's on 18th and from 26th-28th and one was at Boulmer on 28th and 30th. The final records, in October, involved singles at Craster on 19th, St Mary's on 24th and East Chevington on 25th.

Whitethroat *Sylvia communis*

STATUS: Common summer and uncommon passage visitor.

BREEDING: Common.

Spring arrival began early, with one singing at Druridge Pools on 14th April and others at Cambois and Prestwick Carr on 17th. Further singles followed at Backworth on 20th, Budle Bay and Ellington on 23rd, Hadston Carrs and Lynemouth on 24th, St Mary's and Woodhorn Flashes on 27th, Arcot and Aydon (Corbridge) on 28th and East Chevington and Grindstonelaw on 29th. Greater numbers were reported on 30th, with threes at Budle Point and Holy Island, twos at Brier Dene Farm (Whitley Bay), Cambois, Cramlington (Brockwell) and Ellington and singles at East Sleekburn, Humshaugh and Newbiggin. During early May, further passage produced seven on the Farne Islands on 2nd, four on Holy Island on 4th and six at Beal Point on 13th.

Many breeding localities were quickly occupied during May, with some high counts of singing and displaying males. These included 21 in the Breamish Valley (ASJ), 19 in the Holywell Dene-Pond area and 18 at Wingates. At least 12 territories were found in the Ponteland-Dissington area, 12 were at Newbiggin, 11 at Prestwick Carr, seven at Aydon and East Chevington and five at Castle Island, Cramlington (Whitelea), Derwent Reservoir and Dunstanburgh. One to four singing males were in at least 36 other widespread localities. Song continued into the first half of June, with 17 males along the Holywell-Backworth waggonway and 14 in the Breamish Valley. At least two males were singing on Holy Island without apparently attracting mates.

The first indication of successful breeding involved fledged young at St Mary's on 20th June. Other family parties followed at Prestwick Carr and West Hartford.

Singles during July at Buston Links and Beal Point may have been on the move, or from local breeding populations. During August, family parties were found at Prestwick Carr, St Mary's Wetland and West Hartford. On the coast, a total of six were trapped at Bamburgh (five of which were on 22nd), two were seen at Boulmer and singles at Alnmouth, Cocklawburn, Druridge Pools, the Farne Islands (from 5th-8th), Hauxley NR and Low Newton. Inland singles came from Castle Island, Cramlington (Valley Park) and Mootlaw Quarry (Ryal), with a migrant at Newcastle (Exhibition Park) on 25th.

During September, a family party of three were together at Hadston Links on 1st and a juvenile was at West Hartford on 3rd. Passage movement may have been responsible for singles at Boulmer on 1st and 9th, Cocklawburn on 8th, Bamburgh on 13th and Inner Farne (Farne Islands) on 17th. Other singles were at Weetslade CP on 1st, Prestwick Carr on 16th and in a garden at Corbridge on 26th September.

Firecrest *Regulus ignicapilla*

STATUS: Rare, although regular, passage migrant and extremely rare winter visitor.

The only spring record of this rare migrant was a single in Northumberland Park (North Shields) on 2nd April.

An autumn bird was at Hauxley RS on 28th September and another at Holy Island (north dunes) on 18th October. A third autumn record involved another in Northumberland Park, found on 19th November, which stayed beyond the year end, to be seen and admired by many observers. One was at Rising Sun CP on 23rd November. On 3rd-4th December, a further record involved a single in a Gosforth garden.

Goldcrest *Regulus regulus*

STATUS: Abundant resident and passage visitor.

BREEDING: Abundant.

Very well-reported throughout the year, with small numbers of one to three being recorded in every month at numerous county-wide locations.

During the first two months, birds were found in mixed woodland and more open habitat, at least ten being seen in Hyons Wood (Prudhoe), four in Ponteland Park, two at Budle Point, Grindon Lough, Ridley Stokoe and, notably, Newcastle Civic Centre in February, with singles at 15 other widespread localities.

Spring passage in March was evident from 22nd-31st, when a significant 'fall' was recorded at Holy Island, with 108 on 25th (MJC) and 21 on 28th and, on Inner Farne (Farne Islands), one to six were present on most days, with a maximum of ten on 26th. Elsewhere in March, 12 were in Hepburn Woods on 23rd, with ten at Arcot Pond and Harwood Forest and seven at Ellington.

In the summer months, May-August, singing birds were reported from Brunswick village, Cramlington (Valley Park), Swallow Pond and Wark, with peak counts of six at Allen Banks, five at Grindon Lough and Wark (North Tyne) and four at Gosforth Park. An adult with two juveniles was in Chugdon Wood (Ellington) in early August, with more than three, presumably dispersing birds, at Bamburgh on 8th and 25th-31st August.

Light coastal passage was noted in September at Holy Island, with numbers rising from ten on 10th to 19 on 16th; elsewhere, 15-25 were at Hauxley RS on many days from 2nd-28th and six to seven at Bamburgh and Cresswell Pond. 'Fall' conditions during October produced counts of 100+ at Howick Hall on 19th, 40 at Hauxley RS on 14th, 30 at Craster on 26th, 26 at Holy Island on 19th and ten to 20 at Bamburgh, Druridge Pools, Inner Farne, Low Newton and Newbiggin; many birds were trapped and ringed during this period at Bamburgh, Hauxley RS and Howick Hall. Numbers at inland sites were boosted with high counts of 34 at Holystone, 30 at Bakethin Reservoir and 20 at Bolam Lake. There was little evidence of any further significant passage in November, with 11 at Hauxley RS on 4th, three to five at Holy Island from 2nd-8th and inland sites producing six at Harwood Burn, four at Valley Park and three at Prestwick Carr, Whitley Bay and Windyhaugh. During the final month, counts of 22 and 32 came from Hepburn Woods, with three to five at Chugdon Wood, Northumberland Park (North Shields) and Valley Park.

Wren *Troglodytes troglodytes*

STATUS: Abundant resident and common passage visitor.

BREEDING: Abundant.

During the first quarter, records were primarily of one to two, but a number of double-figure counts of ten to 16 came from the Druridge area, East Chevington, Morpeth, Prestwick Carr and Walker Riverside Park; a 17km walk in the Cheviots (Barrowburn-Windy Gyle) in early January found a total of 13. Elsewhere, five to nine were at Alwin Valley, Bewick Moor and Holy Island, with eight on Inner Farne (Farne Islands) on 29th.

The breeding season, April-July, produced large counts, including many singing birds, with a maximum of 36 at Arcot Hall GC, 20+ at Kielder Water, 19 at Holywell Dene, ten to 15 at Allen Banks, the Blyth Estuary, Derwent Reservoir, Gosforth Park NR, Haughton Strother GP, Longhorsley Moor and the River Tweed (Chain Bridge) and up to eight at 12 localities, including a singing male at 711m a.s.l. at the top of the Hen Hole (The Cheviot) on 26th May; the highest recorded Wren in the county (AB/LB). Breeding was confirmed at Letah Wood (Hexham), Longhorsley and Wallington Hall.

Coastal numbers increased markedly from August-October. During August, 17 were ringed at Bamburgh RS and, in September, an impressive 33 were found between Low Cocklaw-Canty's Brig (Berwick), with 13 in the Aln Estuary and eight at Holy Island. 'Fall' conditions in October brought 40-41 to Holy Island on 19th-20th (MJC/ADM/BCh), with 13-24 on five further dates from 6th-22nd, peaks of 20-30 on Inner Farne from 9th-23rd, 27 at Craster on 25th, a maximum of 13 at Hauxley RS on 14th and 11 from Ross-Guile Point on 16th; a total of 12 were ringed at Bamburgh RS during the month. Counts from inland sites in late October included 16 singing birds in the Cramlington area and six at Furnace Bridge (Blyth).

Further influxes occurred on Holy Island in November, with peaks of 26 on 2nd, 35 on 23rd and 14-19 on three further dates, and Hauxley RS recorded 19 on 4th, with 13 in the Aln Estuary on 29th; coastal reports elsewhere included ten at St Mary's on 23rd and six at Bamburgh (Castle Wood) on 5th. Inland, ten were at Prestwick Carr, seven at Callerton and five at Holywell Dene and one to three were at Brier Dene (Whitley Bay), Jesmond Dene and Spartylea. In December, an increase in numbers on Holy Island from six on 2nd to 20 by the month end perhaps suggested hard weather movement from the mainland where snow was lying. Two to four were seen at four other localities.

Nuthatch *Sitta europaea*

STATUS: Well-represented resident.

BREEDING: Well-represented.

This vocal and conspicuous species was, as usual, extremely well-reported throughout the year, with records from at least 100 widespread woodland and garden localities in both rural and suburban areas.

During the first four months, peak counts were eight at Gosforth Park NR in February, six at Wallington Hall in February, five at Holywell Dene in February and Jesmond Dene from February-April, four at Belsay and Furnace Bridge (Blyth) in January, Arcot Hall in February and River Tweed (Chain Bridge), Simonburn and Spartylea in April and three at Alnwick, Farnley, Gosforth (Black Plantation), Howick Hall, Ladykirk, Lambley Viaduct, Morpeth, Plessey Woods and Ulgham Lane. However, the majority of records comprised one to two in at least 50 county-wide localities, apart from high elevations to the west where suitable woodland habitat is not found. From the end of January, birds were singing at a number of these sites.

Confirmed breeding was noted during the summer months of May-August at Acomb, Chugdon Wood (Ellington), Fulbeck (Morpeth), Haughton Strother GP, Letah Wood (Hexham), Newcastle (Leazes Park), Spartylea and Stamfordham; at the latter site a pair fledged six young from a nest in an old brick wall and juveniles were also seen at another three of these sites. Numerous sightings of up to five birds were recorded during this period, although smaller numbers of one to two was the norm, of which many were juveniles.

The largest count of the year, involving at least ten, came from Howick Hall gardens on 5th December (BS). Elsewhere, during the final four months, many larger counts of five to seven were made at the well-watched sites of Bolam Lake, Gosforth Park NR, Holywell Dene, Humshaugh, Jesmond Dene and Wallington. Four were recorded at Bedlington (Attlee Park) and Letah Wood and one to three at a further 60+ localities, the majority in the southern half of the county, but also a few farther north, including the Border country, indicative of the expansion which has taken place in recent times.

Treecreeper *Certhia familiaris*

STATUS: Common resident and uncommon passage visitor.

BREEDING: Well-represented to common.

Mostly single birds were noted in January at 25 inland sites, all in the southern half of the county. In early February, eight were recorded at Gosforth Park NR on 5th (MJC) and four at Carey Burn, with three at Howick and one to two at 16 other localities, including two sites in the Berwick area. In March, four birds sang at Gosforth (Black Plantation), one of which was excavating a nest crevice, and pairs were nest building at Humshaugh and Spindleston by mid-month. Counts of three came from Farnley, the Harthope Valley, Hepburn Woods and Jesmond Dene, whilst reports of one to two came from 18 other sites.

In April, five were noted at Gosforth Park NR, otherwise all records were of one to two birds only; nest building was ongoing in Chugdon Wood (Ellington), whilst a pair attended a nest in Jesmond Dene. During the main summer period, May-August, a nest with five young was found at Comb (Falstone) and birds carrying food were recorded at Beacon Hill (Longhorsley), Pennypie (Blanchland) and Prestwick Carr; groups of four, five and seven at other localities may also have been family parties, however single birds comprised the majority

of records, which came from almost 40 sites. Four birds trapped and ringed at Bamburgh during August was described as unusual for that site in late summer.

The migration period of September-November did not produce any reports indicative of significant coastal movements this year, except for Hauxley RS, where three birds were ringed and two re-trapped in October-November. Sightings in the final quarter involved four at Holystone in October, three at Wallington in October, Bolam in November and Hepburn Woods in December and one to two at many other, mostly inland, sites.

Starling *Sturnus vulgaris*

STATUS: Abundant resident, passage and winter visitor.

BREEDING: Abundant.

The large winter roosts at Holy Island and East Chevington still held 8,000 and 5,000 respectively in early January; elsewhere, during the first quarter, 10,000 roosted at Brunswick village in mid-February, a murmuration of 2,500 was seen over Belford on 26th February, 2,000 were at Cresswell on 15th January and Fourstones on 5th March, 1,000 flew E over Prestwick Carr on 1st January, with the same number there on 4th March, and flocks of 500-800 were at Budle Bay, Derwent Reservoir, Druridge Pools, Fourstones, Houghton Strother GP and Meldon, with smaller counts of 30-300 at eight other sites. Very few reports came in April, but 30+ birds associating with Fieldfares *Turdus pilaris* at Derwent Reservoir on 19th, may possibly have been late migrants en route to the continent.

Summer flocks in May-June, nowhere greater than 300, and generally including many juveniles and family parties, were recorded at Berwick GC, Cresswell Pond, Derwent Reservoir, Holy Island, Longframlington, Newbiggin, Newton Pool and Prestwick Carr. Post-breeding concentrations built up through July-September, with monthly peak counts of 450 on Holy Island in July and 650 at Cresswell Pond and Grindon Lough in August and September respectively. Lesser flocks of 250-300 were reported from Howick, Newbiggin, Seahouses and St Mary's, with a dozen groups elsewhere of 100-200; many flocks of up to 100 were also reported at this time.

During October, the East Chevington roost quickly built up to 4,000 on 7th, increasing to 10,000 by 20th, and a similar sized flock accumulated at Gosforth Subsidence Pond/Gosforth Park NR on 29th; elsewhere, 1,000 were at Grindon Lough. The regular large roost at Holy Island Lough had built to 14,000 on 3rd November, when the East Chevington roost reached an estimated 12,000; large numbers were witnessed arriving 'in-off' at East Ord (Berwick) the following day. Elsewhere in November, the Gosforth Park NR roost was reported at 25,000 on 5th, rising to upwards of 30,000 by 19th (JBu), and flocks of up to 2,800 passing over Prestwick Carr at dusk on 5th and 13th-14th were likely to have been heading towards this roost. At Druridge Pools, 3,000-5,000 were estimated on 13th and a peak of 1,100 were at Grindon Lough on 16th. During December, reports of significant numbers involved several thousand flying W from the Gosforth Park roost at dawn on 7th and 1,500 moving E at Prestwick Carr on 2nd. Smaller flocks during the final quarter included 500-600 at Derwent Reservoir, Newbiggin and Otterburn and 200-400 at Goswick, Harwood Forest, Knowesgate and Ladyburn Lake, with 70-200 at several other sites.

Ring Ouzel *Turdus torquatus*

STATUS: Uncommon summer and passage visitor, rare in winter.

BREEDING: Uncommon.

Two males at Hawsen Burn on 24th March was the first report of this early migrant, while four (two males and two females) were reported here on 29th. Coastal males were noted at Holy Island and Holywell Pond on 28th. In April, further migrants were noted at Holywell Grange on 11th and at Druridge Pools on 13th-14th and 16th-17th, while at Holy Island there were one to two on 15th and four on 30th. In upland breeding areas of the Cheviot Hills, up to nine were in the College Valley, seven in the Harthope Valley and one in the Breamish Valley; while in the North Pennines one was at Allenheads on 3rd, two were collecting nest material at Thorngrafton Common on 9th and a singing male was at Sipton Burn on 30th.

Migrants continued to arrive in May, with one to two at Holy Island on several dates from 1st-13th, one at the Farne Islands on 1st, two at St Mary's on 2nd, with one on 4th, and two at Newbiggin GC from 12th-13th. In the Cheviots, five were in the College Valley, three at Hawsen Burn and one at Carey Burn, while three+ at Hepburn Crags and Ros Castle (Chillingham) were perhaps additional migrants. Singing males were at Carshope (Upper Coquetdale) and Simonside on 11th May. Seven were reported from the Harthope Valley

in June, while at Hawsen Burn, two males were seen on 9th June and a pair with two young on 1st July; singles were at Carey Burn in June and Makendon (Upper Coquetdale) in July.

Passage birds began arriving at the coast from late September, with six at Holy Island on 24th and singles at Boulmer and Holy Island on 26th and another at Holy Island on 28th. A notable mid-October influx produced a peak of 17 at Holy Island on 19th (MJC/ADM/RA), with 12 there on 20th and six on 21st. Singles were at the Farne Islands and Tynemouth on 19th, while on 20th, two were at Druridge Pools and Woodhorn and singles at Beadnell, Hadston and Lynemouth. Five were at Budle Bay and singles at East Chevington and Low Newton on 21st and at the Farne Islands from 21st-23rd, while further singles were noted at Hadston on 23rd and East Chevington on 25th. Inland, a male was at Grindon Lough on 18th and, finally, one was with Fieldfares *Turdus pilaris* on the summit of The Cheviot on 26th October.

Blackbird *Turdus merula*

STATUS: Abundant resident, passage and winter visitor.

BREEDING: Abundant.

Some notable counts in January included 28 over 1km at Horton Burn (Cramlington) on 15th, 26 at Haughton Strother GP on 1st and 25 at Prestwick Carr on 3rd; groups of 15+ were noted in several fields at Humshaugh during January-February. A bird was in full song at East Ord (Berwick) by 5th February. In March, a 4km walk at Horton Burn produced a total of 43 on 15th, 26 were counted during a short drive from the A69 to Whittle Dene Reservoirs on 25th and 20 were at Weetslade CP on 3rd. Elsewhere during the first quarter, 12-19 were reported from eight other localities. Passage was noted at Holy Island by the end of March, with peak counts of eight on 25th and 45 on 28th. Further passage in early April involved 12 at Beal and four at Holy Island on 2nd and one to three at the Farne Islands to 3rd.

Breeding activity included nest building at Corbridge, Humshaugh and Newcastle (Kenton) from 11th March and a female was feeding young in a nest at Morpeth (County Hall) on 30th March. Several sites reported fledged young in May, including a pair with two young at Holy Island on 12th. A pair nested on Coquet Island for the first time on record, although they didn't manage to rear any chicks.

Although reports remained sparse during the summer months, there were impressive counts of 29 singing males at Marden Estate (Cullercoats) on 3rd June and 26 at Holy Island on 30th July. A total of 15 were noted at Low Cocklaw-Cant'y Brig (Berwick) on 11th September, while some light coastal movement was reported at Holy Island from mid-month, beginning with 26-28 from 16th-17th, followed by 32 on 24th and a peak of 50+ on 28th, when 15 were also at Hauxley RS.

In October, 41 were noted at Cramlington (Southfield Green-Alexandra Park) area on 18th. A huge arrival was evident from mid-October, when 2,276 were on Holy Island on 19th (MJC/ADM/BCh), while elsewhere on the same day, 1,000+ moved W over the Farne Islands, 150+ were at Budle Point, and 60+ at St Mary's. The following day, 100+ were logged at the Farne Islands and Newbiggin, 45 at Druridge Pools, 40+ at Bamburgh and 20-25 at Marden Quarry and Woodhorn Church, by which time numbers at Holy Island had reduced significantly to 162. The peak count from Hauxley was 90 on 21st, the Aln Estuary held 35-45 from 21st-22nd and 23 and 20 were noted at the Farne Islands on 23rd and 21st respectively. Passage continued late into the month, with 125 at Craster, 40 at Howdon and 30+ at Low Newton on 25th, 101 at Holy Island on 26th, 50+ at Bamburgh on 27th and 20 'in-off' at Tynemouth on 30th.

There was continued light immigration in early November, with 17 at Hauxley RS on 4th, 48 at Holy Island on 8th, ten+ at Bamburgh on 10th, 30 with other thrushes at Low Cocklaw on 14th and 16 at the Farne Islands on 20th. Later in the month, a count of 36 at Haughton Strother GP on 27th suggested a recent influx, while 26 were at Corbridge on 28th and 21 at Ulgham and 18 at East Sleekburn on 25th. Further notable counts during the month included 25+ at Shadfen Farm (Bothal) on 11th and 20+ at Weetslade CP on 3rd. In December, 45 were noted in the Aln Estuary on 2nd and 33 recent arrivals were at Berwick on 22nd. Elsewhere, 25+ were at Wallington Hall on 27th and 12-20 at six other localities.



Black-throated Thrush

Turdus atrogularis

STATUS: Extremely rare visitor. / PREVIOUS RECORDS: 2 / FIRST: 1979 / LAST: 2006

An exceptional rarity for the county, with only two previous sightings ever. Hence two individuals this year were a decided bonus.

A first-winter was found at Whittle Dene Reservoirs on 2nd January (MR). Located in a large flock of Redwings *Turdus philomelos*, it was seen well on a hedgerow for

several minutes. It soon flew off with the Redwings towards Dodley and was not relocated. Another first-winter was found at Prestwick Carr on 20th March (ADM/PCF/IF *et al.*). It was initially seen near the sentry box at 11:30hrs, with good views obtained, before it flew off towards Mill Farm and the golf course. Here it was soon relocated at 13:00hrs and, with many birders arriving after the first report, it was suitably admired on the ground in a horse paddock through to 14:40hrs, when it flew off over the golf course. It was extremely well photographed. Both sightings were accepted by the British Birds Rarities Committee.

Fieldfare *Turdus pilaris*

STATUS: Abundant passage and winter visitor.

BREEDING: Extremely rare. / LAST BRED: 2012

Peak counts during January included 260+ at Belford Moor on 22nd, 180 at Longhorsley on 12th and 100-150 at Bewick Moor, Doddington, Humshaugh, Prestwick Carr, Whittle Dene Reservoirs and Widdrington. In February, 340 at Featherstone Castle on 14th was the largest gathering, followed by 304 at Alnham on 18th. Elsewhere, 180 were at Murton, 150 at Derwent Reservoir and Healey and ca. 100 at Eshott, Prestwick Carr and Weetslade CP. Numbers remained high during March, with 300 at Linden Hall on 18th and Hexhamshire Common on 25th and 230 at Longhorsley on 13th; 100-150 were noted at Carrow, Derwent Reservoir, Druridge Lane, Haughton Strother GP, Siloans Farm (Otterburn Training Area) and Spartylea during the month.

In April, 200 were at Haltwhistle Common on 20th, 185+ at Grindon Lough on 7th and 160 at Derwent Reservoir on 19th. Other notable April flocks included 100-135 at Bewick Moor, Carraw, Hexhamshire Common, Mootlaw Quarry (Ryal), Whitley Chapel and Whittle Dene Reservoirs. A single bird was feeding deep in the undergrowth in potential breeding habitat at Langleeford (Harthope Valley) on 26th April and seven passage birds were at Holy Island on 30th. A sizeable late flock of 100 was at Crow Stone (Otterburn Training Area) on 6th May, while six were at Hedgeley GP on 3rd and four at Holy Island on 1st. Singles were reported from Gosforth Subsidence Pond on 2nd, the Farne Islands and Plessey Woods on 5th, Holy Island on 13th and Kirkharle on 21st, while another single regularly frequented a garden at Bridge of Aln (near Alnwick) throughout May-16th June.

In September, two early arrivals were at Lynemouth on 12th, followed by one at Waren Mill on 25th and one to five at Holy Island from 27th-29th. A rather modest influx for October occurred from mid-month, beginning with 137 at Holy Island and 30 at Budle Point on 19th, 100 at Howick Hall on 20th and 18 at West Ord (Berwick) on 22nd. Peak counts from the Farne Islands were 13-16 on 23rd-24th. Well inland, 50 were noted at Edlingham on 21st and 50 flew W at Snods Edge (Allensford) on 27th.

Birds began to arrive in numbers during November, with a peak around mid-month, with most of the larger flocks reported well inland, including 500 at Spartylea on 12th and 400 at Haughton Strother GP on 20th. At Derwent Reservoir flocks of 100-152 were moving W-NW on 4th, 8th and 19th, while 100 were at Beanley on 1st. The only coastal flock of note was 50 at Low Cocklaw (Berwick) on 14th, while at the Farne Islands and Holy Island, where influxes can continue into November, the peak counts were only 17 on 3rd and seven on 12th respectively. Evidence of probable recent arrivals during December included 250-300 at Prestwick Carr during the first week, increasing to 800 by 10th (AJR/IK). The Berwick area produced counts of 140 at East Ord on 16th and 150-200 at Low Cocklaw on 22nd. Elsewhere, 100-120 were between Chollerford-Whittle Dene Reservoirs and at Derwent Reservoir and Haughton Strother GP.

Redwing *Turdus iliacus*

STATUS: Abundant passage migrant and common winter visitor.

BREEDING: Extremely rare. / LAST BRED: 1985

Several large mid-winter flocks remained in the area throughout January-February. In January, 200+ were at Grindon Rigg (Berwick) on 20th, 150 at Haughton Mains (Humshaugh) and Prestwick Carr on 29th, 120+ at Swallow Pond from 16th-19th, 120 at Ordley (Hexham) on 15th and Whittle Dene Reservoirs on 2nd and 95 at East Holywell on 22nd. Elsewhere, 40-60 were noted at Corbridge, Cramlington, Kiln Pit Hill, Longhorsley and Warden. The largest February gatherings were 200 at Meldon on 8th, 130+ at Swallow Pond on 2nd, 120 at Rothbury on 12th, 80 at Bywell and 50 at Farnley Haughs. Some notable flocks continued to be reported to mid-March, when 80 were at Corbridge on 15th and 60-70 in the Haughton Mains-Haughton Strother GP and Thorngraston Common areas.

Very few were reported in April, suggesting an early departure. The largest flock was 15 at Humshaugh on 1st, when six were also at Corbridge. Thereafter, one to two were reported from a further nine localities, including stragglers at Holy Island on 15th and Cambois on 17th. The final record was a very late individual at Newbiggin GC on 12th May.

The first returning birds were noted from 24th September, when 13 were at Holy Island. The following day, 50 were at Berwick and two well inland at Haughton Strother GP. Two to 12 were noted at Holy Island from 26th-29th, ten flew W at Blyth on 26th and singles were at St Mary's on 26th-27th and Ellington on 30th. A huge influx occurred on 19th October, when a co-ordinated effort by several observers produced a total of 17,260 at Holy Island (MJC/ADM/BCh *et al.*); local fishermen reported at least two snatched and eaten offshore by large gulls. On the same day, incoming birds were reported across a wide front at a number of coastal headlands, including over 7,000 moving W at the Farne Islands, 1,200 at Budle Point, 700 at Craster, 650+ at St Mary's, 500+ at Tynemouth and 283 at Boulmer, while 'hundreds' were arriving from the E at Howick Hall on both 19th and 20th. Elsewhere on 20th, 443 remained at Holy Island, 400 flew S at Humshaugh, 300 were at the Farne Islands, Low Cocklaw (Berwick) and Mootlaw Quarry (Ryal), 150+ at Bamburgh and Derwent Reservoir, 130 at Longhorsley Moor, 100 at Edlingham and 80+ at Newbiggin. Constant and daily passage SW was witnessed over a Stamfordham garden from 18th-31st. Lesser flocks of 28-65 were reported from nine additional localities.

In November, 100 were at Mootlaw Quarry on 9th, 65 at Dilston (Corbridge) on 29th and 60 at Low Cocklaw on 14th. Flocks of 30-54 were reported from seven further localities. A large flock at Prestwick Carr in December rose from 300 on 6th to 600 by 10th. Other notable gatherings included 120 at Derwent Reservoir on 5th, 100-120 at Low Cocklaw on 22nd and 75 at Bellshill (Belford) on 28th; 20-66 were noted at 12 further sites.

Song Thrush *Turdus philomelos*

STATUS: Common resident and passage visitor.

BREEDING: Common.

There were some encouraging counts in 2017 of a species 'Red Listed' by the BTO as a 'Bird of Conservation Concern'. Singing birds were noted from 17th January at Cramlington, Holy Island, Newcastle (Leazes Park), Ridley Stokoe and Woodhorn. In February-March, seven at Haughton Strother GP and Whittle Dene Reservoirs included four singing males at each, seven birds were at Chain Bridge (Berwick), while other singing males included four at Jesmond Dene, Plessey Woods and Whittle Dene Reservoirs and three at Holywell Dene and Spartylea. One to two were noted at 12 further localities, three migrants were at Holy Island on 28th and nest building was noted at Humshaugh by 24th.

Breeding evidence included 14 birds singing and feeding young in the Stonehaugh-Simonburn area on 18th May, fledged young at Holy Island and Whitley Bay by 20th May, at least three pairs with young at Allenheads on 9th August and three to four territories in the Cambois area. Further records for the period April-August included 12 in the Bardon Mill area, ten singing males in the Breamish Valley, nine birds at Yoke Burn (Upper Coquetdale), eight at Arcot Hall GC (including seven singing males) and Chain Bridge, four+ pairs in the Hauxley area, seven in song at Holywell Dene, six birds at Spartylea, three pairs at Newton, four singing at Longhorsley Moor, four birds at Allen Banks, Backworth and Gosforth Park and two pairs at Howdon.

Notable arrivals were apparent at Holy Island from mid-September, with four on 20th, 25 on 24th, nine on 26th, 91 on 28th and a peak of 95 on 29th. Smaller numbers were noted elsewhere, with 16-22 at the Farne Islands on 28th-29th, ten at Hauxley RS on 28th and six+ at Bamburgh and four at Newbiggin on 30th. A significantly larger coastal influx in mid-October began on 19th, when 4,000 flew W over the Farne Islands (the second highest-ever day count for the islands, although some way behind the 23,000 that moved W on the same day in 1987; FIR), 315 were at Holy Island, 120 at Budle Point and 100+ at Tynemouth. Numbers were much reduced thereafter, with 250 W at the Farne Islands, 33 at Holy Island, 20+ at Newbiggin and nine at Druridge on 20th and 16-35 at the Farne Islands, 16 in the Aln Estuary, 13-17 at Holy Island and 11 at Hauxley RS from 21st-23rd. Eight were at Howdon on 25th. Earlier inland movement included eight W at Arcot Pond and five S at East Cramlington LNR on 9th.

There was an obvious increase in numbers at inland localities from late November-early December, most notably at Dilston Haughs (Corbridge) where around 80 were feeding on hedgerow berries with other wintering thrushes. Another influx brought 50+ to Prestwick Carr on 6th December and eight to Backworth on 10th December. Elsewhere during the final two months of the year, three to four were noted at Fenham-le-Moor, Howdon and Mitford and one to two at 11 additional localities.

Mistle Thrush *Turdus viscivorus*

STATUS: Common resident and uncommon passage visitor.

BREEDING: Common.

By far the largest gathering of the first quarter was 22 at Swallow Pond on 28th January. Birds already in full song from the beginning of the year, included four at Alnwick, three at Felton and one to two at Colt Crag Reservoir, Haughton Strother GP, Hauxley RS, Morpeth (County Hall), Newcastle (Exhibition and Leazes Parks), Stamfordham, Whitley Bay and Whittle Dene Reservoirs. Additional high counts during the first quarter involved seven (three singing) at Haughton Strother GP in February, six in Jesmond Dene in February and singing in the Harthope Valley in March and five at Blanchland, East Cramlington LNR and Whiteadder Water. One to four, including many pairs, were reported from numerous other widespread localities.

A total of 12 in the Harthope Valley on 28th April included a pair with two fledged young mobbing a Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus* which was carrying prey, possibly a third fledgling. Breeding was also confirmed at Furnace Bridge (Blyth), Humshaugh, Longhorsley, Mitford and Rising Sun CP (Wallsend) in April; while in May-June, there was evidence of successful breeding from Arcot Hall GC, College Valley, Comb (Falstone) and Cramlington (Valley Park). Higher counts during the period included six at Whittle Dene Reservoirs in April, eight to ten at Derwent Reservoir in April-May and up to five at Jesmond Dene throughout. Elsewhere, one to four, many singing, were noted at more than 20 further localities.

Large post-breeding flocks began to gather from July, when 20+ were at Farnley Haughs, up to 17 at Backworth, ten at Warenton and six to eight at Cramlington, Haughton Castle (Humshaugh), Newcastle (Exhibition Park), Otterburn, Spartylea and Whittingham. Numbers increased during August, with an impressive 48 flying from a small wooded area at Plessey Checks (Cramlington) on 14th (STH), 30+ at Seghill on 23rd, 18 at Howick on 20th and seven to nine at Chugdon Wood (Ellington) on several dates. In September, 25 were noted at Sinderhope Gate (East Allen) on 15th, 21 were in the Aln Estuary on 1st, 18 at Horton on 22nd and 12 at Haughton Castle on 3rd. October counts began with 20 at Corbridge on 1st, seven at Arcot Pond on 9th and 20 at Edlingham on 21st. On the coast, a flock of 18 was at Bamburgh on 8th. A series of coastal records then corresponded with a large arrival of continental thrushes: singles at Holy Island (where the species is still something of a rarity) on 19th and 21st, one W at the Farne Islands on 20th and two at St Mary's (again rare here) and 15 at Howick on 23rd.

In November, 15 were still at Howick on 13th and 11 were at Blyth on 3rd. Eight to nine remained in the Warenton area, seven were at Mootlaw Quarry (Ryal), six at Rising Sun CP and four at Ulgham. In December, five were at Druridge Bay on 21st. One to three at a further 20 localities during November-December included three birds in song at Hepburn Woods on 2nd December.

Spotted Flycatcher *Muscicapa striata*

STATUS: Common summer and well-represented passage visitor.

BREEDING: Well-represented.

The first arrival was well inland at Spartylea on 10th May, followed by five in Upper Coquetdale, three at Fourstones and one at Lordenshaw on 11th. Coastal passage included one to four at Holy Island on seven dates from 12th-29th, with a peak of seven on 13th, when further passage singles were noted at Brownsman (Farne Islands), Druridge Bay and Tynemouth. In breeding areas, eight were noted from Brown Rigg-Hareshaw Linn (Bellingham) on 18th, three pairs were at Beacon Hill (Longhorsley) on 21st, four at Ingram, Linhope and Middleton Hall and one to three at a further 25 potential breeding localities. One, possibly two, late migrants were at Holy Island (The Snook) on 4th June.

The species was well-reported inland and evidence of successful breeding in June included a pair that fledged four young in a Stamfordham garden and another pair carrying food at Colt Crag Reservoir. On 1st July, one of four pairs in the Ingram Valley was feeding three fledged young. At Spartylea, seven in June included adults feeding young and up to 12 were noted in July-August, from two successful nests, the last of which fledged young on 7th August. Finally, at Allenheads, 23 birds on 6th August comprised four family parties (CB). Eight were at Chesterwood (Haydon Bridge) on 5th August, six at Derwent Reservoir on 21st August and five at Mootlaw Quarry (Ryal) on 23rd July. During the period June-August, one to three were reported from a further 30 potential breeding areas.

Four passage birds were at Holy Island on 30th July and a more unusual series of records came from Newcastle (Exhibition Park), where one to two were noted from 2nd-3rd, 15th-16th and 25th August. Other coastal reports in August involved singles at Budle Bay on 14th, Inner Farne (Farne Islands) on 20th, Alnmouth on 23rd and Boulmer on 26th. In September, singles were at Holy Island on 3rd, Big Waters on 5th and Bamburgh on 9th. Two were still at Felton on 17th September, with further singles at Holy Island on 20th and 26th. The final reports came on 28th, when one was on Inner Farne and two on Holy Island.

Robin *Erithacus rubecula*

STATUS: Abundant resident and common passage visitor.

BREEDING: Abundant.

Recurring counts from well-watched localities during the period January-March produced 12-15 at the Blyth Estuary and 11 at Prestwick Carr throughout. In January, 14 were noted along a 3km walk at Corbridge on 13th, 12 were at Walker Riverside Park on 25th, ten at East Chevington on 7th and seven at Rockcliffe (Whitley Bay) on 2nd. Eleven were counted at Wallington Hall on 19th February, ten were at Alnham on 18th and eight were in song at Longhorsley Moor on 17th. Passage was noted in March, with 16 at Holy Island on 25th, six there on 28th and one to three at the Farne Islands on various dates from 19th March-21st May. A total of 13 were noted at Chain Bridge (River Tweed) on 4th March and a pair was nest building in an open nest box at Corbridge by 27th.

In April, 11 were at Widdrington Tip on 23rd, nine at Prestwick Carr on 1st and up to nine were in song at Longhorsley Moor throughout April-May. An impressive 27 (18 in song) were noted at Arcot Hall GC on 9th May, while ten were at Gosforth Park NR on 22nd and eight at Newburn-Wylam on 8th and Prestwick Carr on 18th. Elsewhere in May, five to six (including some fledged juveniles) were reported from Allen Banks, Gosforth, Holy Island and Killingworth Lake. In June, seven were singing at Colt Crag Reservoir on 28th, five (including one juvenile) were at Longhorsley and five were at Spartylea throughout June-July.

Twenty in the Aln Estuary on 23rd August, increased to 30-33 during September-October. Coastal passage was witnessed at Holy Island from mid-September, beginning with 22 on 10th and 24-28 from 16th-17th; later in the month, numbers peaked here at 61-71 from 28th-29th (MJC). A total of 31 were noted from Low Cocklaw-Canty's Brig (Berwick) on 11th, 20 were at Hauxley RS on 28th and ten were ringed at Bamburgh during the month. Coastal passage continued in October, with counts from Holy Island of 24 on 6th, 24-33 from 15th-18th and 40-50 from 20th-22nd. Elsewhere, ten were at the Farne Islands from 8th-10th, with ten to 31 there from 18th-23rd, 29 at Craster on 25th and a further ten were ringed at Bamburgh. Inland, birds were conspicuously vocal, with 31 singing in Cramlington (Southfield Green-Alexandra Park) on 25th, 14 in Slaley village on 6th, 12 at Haughton Strother GP on 20th and Prestwick Carr on 29th and 11 at Furnace Bridge (Blyth) on 30th.

Further passage at Holy Island in November produced a peak count of 38 on 2nd, with six to 18 from 5th-9th and 11 on 23rd. Ten were at Farnley Haughs on 5th November and the Aln Estuary held 12-16 during November-December, whilst eight were on Holy Island on 30th December.



Pied Flycatcher - Nunnykirk - April (Alan Jack).



Spotted Flycatcher - Bellingham - May (Alan Jack).

Pied Flycatcher *Ficedula hypoleuca*

STATUS: Well-represented summer and passage visitor.

BREEDING: Well-represented.

The first, in a breeding area at Letah Wood (Hexham) on 9th April, became the joint earliest arrival for 13 years. It was followed by a passage bird at Tynemouth on 23rd and one was at Dipton Wood on 24th. A singing male was at Rothbury (Old Railway line) on 27th, while favoured breeding localities were occupied at Allen Banks (four males and one female) by 28th and Nunnykirk (three males and one female) by 29th and a single was at Fontburn on 29th.

In May, passage birds were at Brownsman (Farne Islands) from 1st-3rd, St Mary's on 2nd and one to two were at Inner Farne (Farne Islands) from 2nd-4th and Holy Island on 6th-7th. Breeding territories were well established by the beginning of the month, with pairs attending nest boxes at Letah Wood by 4th and a peak count of six (five males and one female) here on 5th (AJH). Up to five (four males) were noted at Nunnykirk, three males were at Allen Banks, Whitley Chapel and a confidential site and three birds at Dipton and Milkwellburn Woods (Shotleyfield). Two singing males were near Eals and at Low Carritheth (Hesleyside) and singles at Derwent Reservoir, Glen Aln, Hareshaw Linn, Kielder Water, Stanton (Netherwitton) and West Dipton Burn.

Data from nest box study areas was as follows:

Locality	Pairs	Eggs laid	Young fledged	Productivity	Observer
Linnels	22	141	16	0.7	AM
Letah Wood	7	47	39	5.6	RMH
Low Carritheth	7	46	26	3.7	JR
Dye House	4	26	25	6.2	RMH
March Burn	3	20	17	5.7	RMH

It was noted as a desperately poor year at Linnels, where productivity crashed from a relatively healthy 6.1 young fledged per pair in 2016. This is particularly surprising since three of the other four sites from which data was received this year showed increased productivity over 2016. Many failures at Linnels involved large chicks and were seemingly down to poor food supply when the weather was very dry. This situation then changed quickly and very wet weather that followed may have proved too challenging. These problems may have been compounded by some very late breeding attempts, with eggs laid on 11th and 18th June and, at another nest, sometime after 3rd June.

In August, a single was in a mixed flock with Chiffchaffs *Phylloscopus collybita* and a Spotted Flycatcher *Muscicapa striata* at Allenheads on 9th. Coastal passage in September produced single birds at Holy Island from 16th-17th, St Mary's from 25th-26th, Holy Island on 26th and Budle Point on 27th; meanwhile the Farne Islands had a first-ever blank autumn for the species.



Black Redstart *Phoenicurus ochruros*

STATUS: Uncommon passage visitor, rare in winter.

Wintering birds from 2016 were noted at Cullercoats to 20th January, North Blyth on 7th January (with probably the same bird at nearby Cambois on 18th) and Newcastle (St Nicholas Cathedral) on 3rd February. Early passage produced a male at Berwick from 16th-24th March and a first-winter female at Seaton Sluice on 23rd March.

A light influx in early May brought two to Holy Island, one in a Belford garden and another at Chugdon Wood (Ellington) on 1st, followed by four at the Farne Islands on 2nd (FIR): a male on Brownsman, a male and female on Staple Island and a female on Inner Farne; the latter remaining to 4th. A single followed at Boulmer on 10th May and a dowdy juvenile, still showing a pale gape, was found here on 12th July. An unseasonal male was on Inner Farne on 29th July and a female was at Tynemouth from 17th-19th August.

An adult male was at Holy Island (Straight Lonnen) on 24th September with it, or another, at the 'excavations' on 27th, and an un-aged bird on the island on 28th, when another was at Tynemouth Pier. In October, an immature male showed well at Boulmer from 19th-21st, a male was on Inner Farne from 20th-26th and an unaged bird was at Dunstanburgh on 21st.

Redstart *Phoenicurus phoenicurus*

STATUS: Common summer and well-represented passage visitor.

BREEDING: Well-represented.

A male at Muckley (Longhorsley) on 3rd April became the fourth earliest-ever arrival for the county. It was followed by an early passage bird, a female at Holy Island on 7th April. A more widespread arrival occurred from mid-month, with birds at Berwick on 14th, Beacon Hill (Longhorsley) on 15th, Derwent Reservoir on 17th, Newburn Business Park on 20th and Haughton Strother GP and Longframlington (two) on 21st. By the end of the month, there were counts of eight from Longhorsley-Wingates, four at Beacon Hill, three in the Harthope Valley, two at Letah Wood (Hexham) and singles at Alnwick, Dipton Wood, Edlingham, Great Whittington, Mitford, Prestwick Carr and Rothbury.

In May, three passage birds were at Holy Island on 1st, one at Brownsman (Farne Islands) from 1st-2nd, another at Inner Farne (Farne Islands) for six days from 4th and one at Cresswell Pond on 10th, with further singles reported from the Farne Islands on 13th and 19th. In breeding areas, at least ten singing

males were heard from Longhorsley-Forestburngate on 27th and eight+ were at Tarsset Burn on 26th. Six were singing between Linden Hall-Heighley Gate, five from Benridge-Beacon Hill, a further five from Brown Rigg-Hareshaw Linn (Bellingham), four at Holystone and Letah Wood and three at Haughton Strother GP, Scots Gap and West Dipton Burn. Elsewhere during the month, one to two were reported from a further 34 potential breeding areas.

A pair fledged at least two juveniles from a nest box at Haughton Strother GP in June, a female and juvenile were at Great Ryle (Whittingham) in July and a family party of four at Fourstones in August.

Data from one nest box study area was as follows:

Locality	Pairs	Eggs laid	Young fledged	Productivity	Observer
Low Carriteth	3	21	16	5.3	JR

Elsewhere during the period June-August, three pairs were at Wark (North Tyne) on 25th June and three birds were at Todburn (Longhorsley) on 19th June and Whittle Dene Reservoirs on 12th July, with one to two reported from 17 additional inland localities and an unseasonal female at Inner Farne on 27th July.

Passage birds in August were noted at Hadston on 9th, Newcastle (Exhibition Park) on 16th and 18th, again at Hadston on 20th and 22nd and at Big Waters, Budle Point and St Mary's on 27th. Further movement in September began with singles at Swallow Pond on 9th and Felton on 17th. Later in the month, two were at St Mary's on 25th and singles at Goswick and Ridley Park (Blyth) on 26th. On the latter date, a further two were noted at Holy Island, numbers here increasing to five on 27th and a peak of 12 on 28th (MJC/RA/CGK), with eight still present the following day. One to two were noted on Inner Farne from 24th September-2nd October, with another on 19th October. An adult male was at Holy Island on 1st October, with one or more late singles noted there on 20th, 22nd and 24th October.

Whinchat *Saxicola rubetra*

STATUS: Common summer and passage visitor.

BREEDING: Common.

The first arrival was a single at Hawsen Burn on 29th April, followed by three at nearby Harthope Linn and two at Acton Moor and Holy Island the following day. Coastal migrants in May involved two on Holy Island on 1st and 12th and singles at the Long Nanny on 3rd, Inner Farne (Farne Islands) on 7th, Brownsman (Farne Islands) on 8th, Boulmer on 9th and Newbiggin on 11th-12th. There were some high counts from upland breeding areas during the month, including 19 (16 males and three females) in Upper Coquetdale and seven at Alwinton on 10th, while in the Cheviots, 17 (14 singing males and three females) were in the Breamish Valley and three pairs at Hawsen Burn on 14th and 26th respectively and two in the College Valley on 28th. Elsewhere, five (four males) were at Harwood Forest on 19th, two at Acton Moor on 21st, two at Kirknewton and singles at Derwent Reservoir and Linhope Burn. One at Berwick on 3rd June was probably a late migrant.

Breeding evidence involved seven pairs feeding young in the Upper Breamish Valley on 17th June and an impressive count from Upper Coquetdale of 40+ on 16th July, comprising 13 pairs plus young (ASJ); 15 pairs and four males had been noted here on 10th June. Elsewhere in the Cheviots during June-July, six territories were identified on Alnham Moor, five birds were at Ingram, four in the Usway Burn Valley, three in College Valley and singles at three other sites.

Both inland and coastal movement was obvious from early August, beginning with singles at Whittle Dene Reservoirs on 1st and Cresswell Pond and Holy Island on 2nd. Others were at Druridge Pools on 4th, Cocklawburn on 8th and Gosforth Subsidence Pond from 11th-12th. A juvenile was at Old Hartley on 15th and an adult and juvenile were at Mootlaw Quarry (Ryal) from 15th-24th. Passage intensified from 20th, when two were at Old Hartley, with two also on 26th, and one to three at Boulmer from 21st-28th. A family party of five were on migration at Cheswick Sands on 23rd and perhaps more unusual were two at Newcastle (Exhibition Park) on 21st and 25th. Elsewhere, singles were reported at Arcot Pond from 21st-25th, Swallow Pond on 25th, St Mary's Wetland on 27th, Ellington on 28th and Arcot Pond and Brownsman on 30th. In September, four at Great Ryle (Whittingham) included a family party of three and three (including a juvenile) were at Mootlaw Quarry to 4th. A passage bird at Boulmer on 9th was followed by a more significant movement at the month end, with one to two at seven coastal localities from 22nd-26th and a peak of 12-16 at Holy Island on 27th-28th.

One to two were noted daily at Inner Farne from 26th September-2nd October. One was at Low Newton on 1st October, two at Holy Island on 6th and 18th and finally a late single at Boulmer on 23rd October.

Stonechat *Saxicola rubicola*

STATUS: Well-represented and increasing resident and uncommon passage visitor.

BREEDING: Well-represented.

The recovery of this species, following recent severe winters, continues apace. Coastal areas are now well populated and many traditional inland sites have been re-occupied. Peak counts during the first quarter included six at Cheswick, Druridge Pools, East Chevington and Holy Island, five at Cocklawburn, four at Cambois, Cresswell Pond, Embleton, Tynemouth and Winter's Gibbet (Harwood Forest) and three at Ottercops Moss. One to two occupied a further 17 coastal and 14 inland localities during this period.

Successful breeding was confirmed on the coast at Alnmouth, Boulmer, Cresswell Pond, East Chevington, Holy Island (Chare Ends and Sandham Bay), Howick, Long Nanny, Low Newton and North Blyth, while inland breeding was noted at Allendale, Alnwick Moor, Beanley Plantation (Eglington), Belton Burn, Bewick Moor, Broomlee Lough,



Stonechat (Mike Henry).

Chatton Moor, Hawsen Burn, Ingram, Mootlaw Quarry (Ryal), Rothbury Moor, Simonside, Stonehaugh, The Wanneys (near Ridsdale), Thrunton Wood, West Hartford, West Stobswood, Widehope (Edlington) and Winnows Hill (Slaley).

During the summer months (April-August), some higher counts of adults included ten at Dunstanburgh, eight at the Aln Estuary, Bewick Moor (four pairs), between Embleton-Low Newton and The Wanneys (four pairs) and five at Boulmer, East Chevington and Mootlaw Quarry. In addition, three to four were noted at the Alwin and Breamish Valleys, Chatton Moor, Cocklawburn, Cragside, Craster, Cresswell Pond, Druridge Links, Hawsen Burn, Holy Island, Longhoughton Steel, the Long Nanny, Lynemouth, Simonside, Slaley, St Mary's, Stonehaugh and West Hartford, with one to two at a further ten coastal and 11 inland sites; the latter included a fresh juvenile at Newcastle (Exhibition Park) on 2nd August.

Peak counts in September included 15 in Druridge Bay on 20th (MHem) and ten at Boulmer on 30th. Up to six were noted at Holy Island, five at North Blyth and four at Howick, with one to three at a further nine localities. In October, 11 were noted in the Old Hartley-St Mary's area, ten at Druridge Pools and nine at East Chevington, Holy Island and from Ross-Guile Point. Five were at Low Newton, four at Dunstan Steads, Goswick and Hauxley NR and up to three at a further six coastal and four inland localities. More unusual were two males on Inner Farne (Farne Islands) on 2nd October and another there on 17th October.

Numbers declined somewhat in November-December, with up to six at Cheswick, five at Holy Island, four at the Aln Estuary, East Chevington and Hauxley NR, three at Addycombe (Rothbury) and Howick and one to two at an additional 11 coastal and two inland localities.

'Continental Stonechat' *S. r. rubicola*

The male of a pair at Bewick Moor on 19th April showed many characteristics of the continental subspecies *S. r. rubicola* (MJC). Another male at Low Newton on 13th May also showed characteristics of this race (GW).



Wheatear *Oenanthe oenanthe*

STATUS: Common summer and passage visitor.

BREEDING: Common.

The first arrival was at Longhirst Flash on 19th March, followed by another at Grindstonelaw (Ryal) on 21st. Two were at Cocklawburn on 24th, three at Shillmoor (Upper Coquetdale) and a single at Holy Island on 25th and singles at Allendale Common and Stublick Moor on 26th-27th. The final few days of the month produced a light influx, with four at Cresswell Pond and three at St Mary's on 29th, and two at the Alwin Valley and Craster-Dunstanburgh and singles at Cresswell Pond and Ross Back Sands on 31st. Spring passage at the Farne Islands was logged on 24 dates from 28th March-31st May.

A modest arrival in mid-April produced peak counts of 18 at Boulmer, 15 at St Mary's, 11 at Old Hartley, eight at Craster, seven at Newton Links and four at Longhoughton Steel from 13th-16th. A huge 'fall' occurred on 30th April, when over 200 (including 48 in a single field) were in the Budle Bay area (GPK) and 99 were at Holy Island, with a more modest 15 at Ellington and ten at Bradford Kaims and the Farne Islands. Elsewhere in April, six to nine were reported from Derwent Reservoir on four dates from 13th-26th, eight were at Prestwick Carr on 24th and five to six at Allendale, Harthope Valley, Low Newton and Simonside; an earlier peak at the Farne Islands involved five on 9th. One to four were reported from a further 41 widespread localities. Around 24 remained at Holy Island on 1st May, with up to six here on a further seven dates from 4th-18th. Elsewhere during May, 13 were at Newbiggin on 3rd, with ten here on 6th, 15 at Boulmer on 10th and eight+ at the Long Nanny on 3rd. One to five were noted at a further ten coastal and 28 inland localities.

Very little breeding data was received from traditional upland areas during the summer period. Upper Coquetdale held at least three pairs on 10th June and 14 juveniles and four adults on 16th July. Juveniles were also reported from Derwent Reservoir, Greenleighton Quarry (Rothley) and Plashetts in June-July.

An early return migrant was on Brownsman (Farne Islands) on 9th July. Numerous August reports included many birds at the coast by mid-month. Five were in the Old Hartley-St Mary's area on 20th, when three were also at Druridge Pools and two at Hadston. Four were again at St Mary's on 26th, with eight at the Farne Islands the following day and twos at Alnmouth, Boulmer and Newbiggin. Inland, three were at Mootlaw Quarry (Ryal) on 27th, with twos at Newcastle (Town Moor) on 15th, Grindon Lough on 17th and Derwent Reservoir on 20th. Singles were at a further 14 coastal and ten inland localities, including Town Moor on 16th and 21st.

Continued coastal passage was evident during the first ten days of September, with peak counts of five at the Farne Islands on 1st and Low Newton on 7th, six at Boulmer and Holy Island on 9th and one to two at seven additional sites. Further movement later in the month produced one to three at 18 coastal localities. Inland sightings in September were rare, with singles at Mootlaw Quarry on 9th-12th, Carr Shield on 23rd and Prestwick Carr on 24th. In October, four were in the Newton area on 14th and three at Holy Island on 2nd and Craster on 15th, with one to two at 14 widespread coastal sites from 1st-20th. The sole inland record involved one at Grindon Lough on 12th. Late singles were at East Chevington on 25th, Hauxley Burn mouth on 26th and the Farne Islands on 31st October.

‘Greenland Wheatear’ *O. o. leucorhoa*

STATUS: Uncommon passage visitor.

In April, birds showing characteristics of ‘Greenland Wheatear’ involved one at Ryal on 21st, followed by four moving NW at Ord Moor (Berwick) (MHu) and several at Holy Island during the large ‘fall’ of Wheatears on 30th. A male showing characteristics of this race was at Holy Island on 7th May.

One with five Wheatears at Newton Point on 7th September was also judged to be a probable ‘Greenland’ bird.

Dipper *Cinclus cinclus*

STATUS: Well-represented resident.

BREEDING: Well-represented.

The first two months produced sightings from at least 30 locations, primarily from the major river systems, but there was a noticeable absence of reports from the far north of the county, almost certainly due to low observer coverage rather than a lack of suitable habitat for the species. Four singing males were on the River Coquet in Upper Coquetdale and four in the Rothbury area in early January, with eight, including three singing males, on the Carey Burn on 4th February (MJC) and three at Blanchland in February; all other records comprised singles or two birds, often as pairs. Nesting activity was in full swing by mid-March, when 11 nests were located in Coquetdale and pairs with nests were found at Cottonshopeburnfoot (Redesdale), Elsdon and three River North Tyne sites, whilst pairs were also noted at Bywell Bridge, Holywell Dene, Spartylea and West Dipton Burn (Hexham), with singles at ten other sites.

During early to mid-summer, April-July, further breeding records came from Spartylea, where two pairs were on the River East Allen, and at Furnace Bridge (Blyth). Breeding pairs/juveniles were noted at Allen Banks, Bothal (River Wansbeck), Hartford Bridge (Bedlington), the Harthope Valley, Hulne Park, Plessey Woods, Wallington Hall and Waters Meet (Hexham), with one to six birds at more than 30 other localities, most of which will have held breeding pairs.

In the Upper Coquetdale Dipper study area, 12 pairs with nests were located, of which only ten were successful, two having second broods, fledging a total of 48 young, the worst breeding season since the start of the study; one long stretch of the river, from Shillmoor Farm to Rowhope, contained no successful pairs. A lack of available food following winter floods was considered a possible cause of this failure (JR). A similar poor season was experienced on the River North Tyne, where three monitored pairs fledged only nine young from 14 eggs (JR); in contrast, two pairs in Redesdale, each with two broods, fledged an encouraging 18 young (JR).

Many records of one to three birds were received from August to the year end and, for the first time this year, two or three sightings came from the Rivers Till and Tweed in the north of the county, in addition to at least 40 other localities farther south, many as detailed above.

House Sparrow *Passer domesticus*

STATUS: Abundant resident.

BREEDING: Abundant.

In January, at least 60 were counted along 1.5km of the Horton Burn at Cramlington with 50-60 at Cullercoats Bay, Holywell and Rockcliffe (Whitley Bay). The Cullercoats flock was seen on several days throughout February-March. Additionally, during the first four months, counts of 24 and 79 came from the Southfield Green and Horton Grange areas of Cramlington, with 50 at Spital Point (Newbiggin), which largely dispersed during March, 40 at Low Cocklaw (Berwick), 30 on feeders at Wark (North Tyne) and 30-40 at Alnmouth, Druridge Farm, High Buston and Stobhill (Morpeth), with smaller groups of up to 20 at 12 other locations, many at garden feeders.

Flocks of up to 50 were recorded on a few days during May at Holy Island, but very few records came from other sites, comprising only five at Spartylea, pairs at garden feeders on the Marden Estate (Cullercoats) and at Tynemouth, plus three pairs each with three young at Newbiggin. Post-breeding flocks started to build up in June-July, although flock sizes were not as large as in recent years. At Holy Island, two gatherings of 110 and 80 were recorded in early June, with a larger count of 140 in July, and at Needles Eye, 150+ were noted in mid-July; however, flocks at Cullercoats, Newbiggin and Pegswood held only 50-70, with up to 30 at Seahouses, Weetslade CP and at seven other sites. In August, groups of ca.100 were noted near Berwick and at Laverock Hall (Blyth), with up to 79 at the Aln Estuary, the regular flock of 70 at Cullercoats Bay and 60 at garden feeders in Spital. During September, 125 were recorded on a 3km walk near Berwick, whilst 89 were at the Aln Estuary, 80 at Holy Island and Whittle Dene Reservoirs, 70 at Cullercoats, 60 still at Spital and 30-40 at Dinnington and Goswick GC. A gathering of 16 in an observer's Gosforth garden on 2nd was a record number.

During the last quarter, numbers remained encouragingly high, with peak counts of 250 at Holy Island on 30th December (MJC/ADM), 181 in the Aln Estuary, 80 at North Charlton, 40-70 at Cramlington, Cullercoats, Low Cocklaw, Newbiggin and Whittle Dene Reservoirs and 15-30 at Chapel House (Newcastle), Gosforth and Wark. An unusual sighting involved a female on Inner Farne (Farne Islands) on 26th October, only the 25th record for the islands and the first sighting there since 2006.



Tree Sparrow - Hipsburn -
March (Tom Cadwallender).

Tree Sparrow *Passer montanus*

STATUS: Well-represented resident.

BREEDING: Well-represented.

This charismatic little species was again well-reported and the numbers recorded throughout the year are indicative of a healthy population. The largest of many January flocks were 100+ at Newton-by-the-Sea, 70+ at Elwick, 40-50 at Chugdon Wood (Ellington), a Corbridge garden, Grindon Rigg (Berwick) and in a game crop at Shildon (Corbridge), 20-30 at Druridge Bay CP and Pools, East Chevington, East Ord, Holywell Pond, Low Newton and South Ord. Throughout February and into March, flock sizes declined a

little, with peak counts of 50+ at Low Newton, 42 at Big Waters, 20-30 at Branton, Cheswick, Cresswell Pond, Holywell Dene and Pond and Warren Mill, with up to 20 at a further 30 or so widespread localities.

During April, flock sizes diminished further, except for that at Chugdon Wood, which remained at 40-50; elsewhere, 28 were at Haughton Strother GP, 25 at Ulgham Lane and ten to 15 at Corbridge, Cresswell Pond, Holywell, Warren Mill and Weetslade CP. One to eight were at 14 other localities, including birds at garden feeders in Dinnington and Longbenton, a pair nesting in a house gutter at Heddon and a single on Inner Farne (Farne Islands) on 17th April; an unusual record, the first there since 2014. In May-June, apart from the regular flock of 40+ at Chugdon Wood, the largest counts were ten to 16 at Cresswell, Haughton Strother GP and Holywell Dene, with smaller numbers at 22 other sites, including nesting pairs and fledged young at Holywell Dene, Heddon, Humshaugh, Morpeth, Wark (North Tyne) and Weetslade CP.

Breeding data from the important nest box colonies at Big Waters (JCD/AJJ) and Hauxley NR (RMH) was as follows (with 2016 figures in parentheses):

Locality	Boxes used	Clutches	Eggs	Hatched	Fledged
Big Waters	37 (34)	63 (66)	291 (313)	208 (209)	165 (188)
Hauxley NR*	-- (3)	-- (- -)	-- (- -)	-- (15)	-- (13)

(*No coverage due to reserve closure for reconstruction activities).

Post-breeding flocks built up in July, with 60 at Waren Mill Caravan Park (Bamburgh) on 15th increasing at the month end to 150+, including many juveniles, and, in August, 100+ were at Haughton Strother GP and 80 at Brier Dene Farm (Whitley Bay); also during July-August, smaller counts of up to 30 came from Berwick, Boulmer, Cresswell Pond, Doddington, Druridge, East Chevington, Hauxley NR, Shellacres (River Till) and 12 other sites. Two young were successfully raised from a third brood at Fulbeck (Morpeth) in mid-August and, on 24th, a party of 18 flying S at East Chevington marked the commencement of the annual autumnal passage movement.

The final week in September saw further coastal passage S at St Mary's, where four small groups of 16, nine, five and three were recorded and this peaked with 44 on 30th; on the same day, 50 were seen moving S at Tynemouth, as were three flocks totalling 32 birds at Newbiggin. Elsewhere during September, a resident flock of 28 was at Haughton Strother GP and smaller groups of up to 20 were recorded at the Aln Estuary, Cresswell Pond, Dinnington, Ellington, Hauxley, Low Cocklaw (Berwick), QEII CP and Weetslade CP. Southerly movement continued throughout October, with counts of 170 (MJC) and 27 through East Chevington on 8th and 14th respectively; at St Mary's, up to 120 were recorded flying S on many days from 9th-27th and, elsewhere, 26 passed over Tynemouth on 20th, with 73 at Craster on 25th, some of which were possibly migrants. During the final three months, numbers remained encouragingly high, with flocks reported from numerous localities, including 55 at Brier Dene Farm, 47 at the Aln Estuary and Chugdon Wood, 20-40 at Doddington, Fenham-le-Moor, Haughton Strother GP, Hauxley, Lemington Hall, Waren Mill and Weetslade CP, ten to 20 at Alnham, Ashington, Corbridge, Cresswell Pond, Dinnington, Druridge Bay, Fulbeck and Low Cocklaw and up to ten at a further 30 sites, including up to three on Holy Island where the species is more unusual.

Dunnoek *Prunella modularis*

STATUS: Common resident and well-represented passage visitor.

BREEDING: Common.

The first four months produced as few as 21 reported sightings of this extremely common but unprepossessing species; the peak counts were eight at Prestwick Carr in January, up to 16 in Holywell Dene in February, seven at Whittle Dene Reservoirs in March and seven, again at Prestwick Carr, in April. Other counts during this period comprised six at Spartylea, five at Spital Point (Newbiggin), four in Jesmond Dene and Stamfordham, with one to three at 14 other sites, mainly in suburban areas, but including a single on Inner Farne (Farne Islands) on 17th March.

During the summer season, May-August, breeding success was first confirmed by a pair feeding fledged young in Gosforth as early as 2nd May and fledged young were seen on later dates at Cramlington, Marden (Cullercoats), Newbiggin and Spartylea; otherwise, records of one to three were received from only three other sites

Autumn coastal passage was apparent at Bamburgh, where small numbers passed through during September, peaking at six on 9th; 13 were trapped and ringed. Also at Bamburgh, ten to 11 were noted on 8th-20th October and 14 were trapped and ringed there during the month. A high count of 19 came from Craster on 25th October and six were noted at St Mary's on 19th. One to four were on Inner Farne (Farne Islands) on 9th-11th October, with one to two seen daily until the Rangers departed in November. Later passage was also noted at Hauxley RS, where 22 were recorded on 4th November (HRS). Elsewhere during the final four months, at least eight were at Howdon in late December, six were at Cramlington throughout September, four at Spartylea in November and one to three at seven other localities.

Yellow Wagtail *Motacilla flava flavissima*

STATUS: Well-represented summer and uncommon passage visitor.

BREEDING: Well-represented.

Spring passage began on 10th April, with singles at Cresswell Pond and Druridge Pools, followed by one at Boulmer on 13th and another at Cresswell Pond on 18th. Thereafter, a group of seven were at the favoured Whittle Dene Reservoirs on 20th, with four at Haughton Strother GP on 25th and Carham on 30th, three at Hoppen Kiln Flash on 29th and one to two at around a dozen other sites, mainly coastal, but also inland at Haydon Bridge and Ryal. During the first week in May, two males and a female were at a potential breeding site in a wheat field at Widdrington and 11 were counted at Whittle Dene Reservoirs on 11th (SR). Elsewhere during May, four were at Hallington Reservoir and three at Druridge Pools, with one to two at Bamburgh, Beal, Bell's Pond (Cresswell), Craster, Derwent Reservoir, Holy Island, Lynemouth Flash, West Fleetham and a further five sites.

During the high summer season, June-August, four probable breeding pairs were seen in arable fields at Whittle Dene Reservoirs in June, three juveniles were at Boulmer in mid-July and nine juveniles at Whittle Dene Reservoirs in August. Sightings elsewhere during this period involved eight at Druridge Pools and Newton Scape, seven at Boulmer, six at East Chevington, plus one to four at more than 30 widespread localities, mainly along the coastal strip from Berwick to Tynemouth, including an adult and a juvenile on Inner Farne (Farne Islands) on 11th August, but also inland at one or two sites. Indicative of the impending return migration, seven birds were observed moving S throughout the month at St Mary's, as were several at three other coastal sites.

Numbers declined rapidly throughout September as migration continued and a peak count of six at Cresswell Pond on 8th comprised three at the pond and another three seen flying S; five were at Boulmer on 2nd and four remained at Whittle Dene Reservoirs on 5th. Southbound migration was noted to 26th, with singles at Boulmer, Charlton Mires Pond, Craster, Gosforth, Hexham, Holy Island, Low Newton and Ross Back Sands. The last sighting of the year was a single at Hauxley on 7th October.



'Channel Wagtail' - Druridge Pools - May
(Jonathan Farooqi).

Blue-headed Wagtail *M. f. flava*

STATUS: Rare passage visitor, which appears in small numbers in most springs and has bred. / FIRST RECORD: 1880 / LAST RECORD: 2016

In April, singles were on Newton Scape on 22nd and Boulmer on 27th and a hybrid 'Channel Wagtail' (*flava* x *flavissima*) was at Druridge Pools on 24th. Further sightings in May comprised singles at Druridge Pools on 6th, 13th and 20th and another 'Channel Wagtail' was also present at Druridge Pools on 7th.

Citrine Wagtail *Motacilla citreola*

STATUS: Rare visitor. / PREVIOUS RECORDS: 11 / FIRST: 1967 / LAST: 2014

An excellent find, with a female located at Lynemouth Flash on 12th May (MSH *et al.*). It proved to be one of the most popular sightings of the year. News was soon put out and a procession of observers arrived, with fantastic views being possible at the edge of the flash, as it fed unconcernedly. It remained the following day and was comprehensively photographed. At one point, the local cat had to be persuaded to hunt elsewhere! The sighting was accepted by the British Birds Rarities Committee.

Citrine Wagtail - Lynemouth Flash - May



(Ian Fisher)



(Jonathan Farooqi)



(Andy Mould)

Grey Wagtail *Motacilla cinerea*

STATUS: Well-represented resident, and uncommon passage and winter visitor.

BREEDING: Well-represented.

The great majority of many records for the first two months were from the lowland south east of the county, with its well-watched coastline and suburban areas. Pairs were seen in Blyth Town Centre, Carham, Holywell and Jesmond Denes, Spital Point (Newbiggin), the Tweed Estuary and Whittle Dene Reservoirs, with singles at more than 30 other localities, including records from two sites in Newcastle City centre which are regular wintering spots for the species. From the middle of March, birds were returning to breeding territories on upland rivers and streams, pairs being seen at seven sites in Upper Coquetdale on 11th, as well as the Alwin Valley, Carey Burn, Sipton Burn, Spartylea, Usway Burn and Wark Forest; four were in Jesmond Dene and South Gosforth and two to three at a further 17 sites, including six in Newcastle City centre.

From April-May, pairs, some with young in the nest or fledged juveniles, were at many locations, including Bothal, Furnace Bridge (Blyth), Hartford Bridge, Plankey and Plessey Mills and multiple sites in the Coquet Valley and its tributaries, the College Valley and Harthope Burn and its tributaries, plus a number of other upland localities. The regular study at Coquetdale and the Otterburn Training Area found three pairs laid 15 eggs, from which 15 young hatched and ten fledged (JR). From June-August, further pairs and juveniles were recorded at Belford, the Breamish Valley, Haughton Strother GP, Howick, Jesmond Dene, Mootlaw Quarry (Ryal), Scotch Gill Woods (Morpeth), Spartylea, Whiteadder Water and Whittle Dene Reservoirs, with one to two noted at around 20 other sites. At East Chevington, six flew S on 24th August, probably early migrants leaving for warmer winter quarters farther south.

During September, a count of 13 came from Whittle Dene Reservoirs on 2nd (SR), declining to seven on 14th, five were at Whiteadder Water, four were at Bamburgh, Jesmond Dene and Wark (North Tyne) from 19th-25th and singles moved S at Beal Point, Cresswell Pond, Humshaugh and Warkworth Lane. No significant autumnal passage was reported in October, but two were seen flying E over Holy Island (The Snook) on 19th, one moved S at Hauxley RS on 21st and three records of one to two came from Inner Farne (Farne Islands) on 9th and 19th-20th. One to two birds were reported elsewhere from around 30-40 localities during September-October, the majority coming from the coastal plain, but also from sites such as Castron, Kielder Water, Rothbury and Wark.

In November-December, two were reported from Gosforth, Humshaugh, Jesmond Dene, Royal Quays (North Shields), Tynemouth Pier, Warden and Wark, with singles at 35 coastal, urban and suburban sites, mainly in the south east, but also from East Ord (Berwick), Haughton Castle, Howick, Humshaugh and Rothbury.

Pied Wagtail *Motacilla alba yarrellii*

STATUS: Common resident, well-represented in winter.

BREEDING: Common.

During the first two months, a period of generally mild and snow-free weather, peak counts were 30 at Chibburn Mouth in January and a similar number at St Mary's Hospital (Stannington) in February, with ten to 25 at Boulmer, Howick, North Charlton, QE II CP and St Mary's; two inland at Derwent Reservoir on 18th February were noted as quite unusual in winter. In March, spring passage N was first noted at Seaton Sluice from 11th-25th and 13 at Holy Island on 28th and at Whiteadder Water on 16th were considered to be migrant birds; an impressive roost of 60+ was at Gosforth Park on 18th (CGK) and inland records in late-March of nine at Derwent Reservoir and three to four at Fullhope Farm (Upper Coquetdale) and in the Harthope Valley were indicative of the return to the favoured upland breeding territories. The majority of a large count of 30 at Boulmer in early April were also likely to be passage birds.

The species was reported as 'common' in the Coquet Valley, west of Alwinton, on 11th May where at least 23 adults were counted on territory along 10km of river, but the first successful pair with young was seen at St Mary's on 30th May and a pair fledged young from a nest on Holy Island on the same day. It was a below-average breeding season on the Farne Islands, with a total of only four pairs (six in 2016) nesting on two islands. The regular study at Coquetdale and the Otterburn Training Area found seven pairs laid 42 eggs, from which 42 young hatched and 41 fledged (these figures include second clutches from two pairs, when nine eggs were laid, nine young hatched and nine young fledged) (JR). In June, flocks of 20+ at Colt Crag and Whittle Dene Reservoirs both contained juveniles and, elsewhere, newly-fledged young were seen at

Arcot Hall GC, Newsham (Blyth), Spital (Newbiggin), Spartlea and St Mary's with, notably, a pair at the Royal Victoria Infirmary in Newcastle, which fledged young from a nest at the end of the month. More family parties were recorded at several other localities in July.

Post-breeding flocks were seen throughout August-September, almost all at lowland sites away from the upland breeding areas, with peak counts of 60+ at Bothal Pond on 13th September (PRM), 59 at Charlton Mires Pond, 57 at Whitley Bay and 40 in Hexham Market Place, with smaller groups of 15-35 at the Aln Estuary, Bamburgh Castle, Burgham, Castle Island, Cocklawburn, Derwent Reservoir, Druridge Bay CP, Goswick, Longhorsley, Low Newton, St Mary's, the Tweed Estuary and Whittle Dene Reservoirs. On several dates towards the end of September, birds were seen moving S at Cresswell Pond, East Chevington and Holy Island. In October, gatherings of 48 and 34 were at East Chevington and Berwick GC respectively, but numbers had reduced considerably as birds left the county for their wintering quarters, with reports of up to 15 from only six coastal localities.

The few reports from November-December included birds feeding in several town and city centre locations, with peak monthly counts of 15 at Chibburn Mouth in November and 22 at Prestwick Carr in December. Elsewhere, three to ten were at Brier Dene (Whitley Bay), Gosforth, Newbiggin, St Mary's, Ulgham and Whitley Bay GC, with one to two at five other sites.

White Wagtail *M. a. alba*

STATUS: Uncommon passage visitor, mainly in the spring, although autumn birds may be overlooked.

The first passage birds appeared in March, with two at Haughton Strother GP on 20th, followed by singles at Derwent Reservoir on 24th and Chibburn Mouth on 31st. Sightings on many dates throughout April included 13 at Haughton Strother GP on 25th (MR), eight at East Chevington on 21st and Low Newton on 22nd, five at Carham and four at Boulmer, Hedgeley GP and North Sunderland Point, with one to two at ca.25 sites, mainly on the coastline from St Mary's to the Farne Islands and Holy Island, but also inland at Blagdon, Derwent Reservoir, Prestwick Carr and Ryal. Sightings in May comprised six at Haughton Strother GP, three on Inner Farne (Farne Islands) and two at Boulmer on 1st, four at the Long Nanny Estuary on 3rd and singles at Housesteads and Druridge Pools on 11th and 15th respectively. The last spring record was a single on Inner Farne on 2nd June.

There were two autumn sightings, with one at Castle Island on 10th September (STH/DM) and two at Newbiggin on 12th September (STH).

Meadow Pipit *Anthus pratensis*

STATUS: Abundant resident and passage visitor, less numerous in winter.

BREEDING: Abundant.

During the first two months, a benign winter ensured that good numbers remained and flock sizes in January were 30 at East Chevington, 15 at 'Northumberlandia' (Cramlington), 12 at Prestwick Carr and seven at St Mary's, with one to two at four sites, including the upland areas of Bewick Moor and Derwent Reservoir. Numbers increased in February as a trickle of birds returned to the county and 20-50 were at Annstead, Elwick, Seaton Sluice and Tyne Riverside CP, with up to 12 at four other localities; the return of migrants was noted at Bewick Moor on 19th, when 22 moved N and three birds were back on breeding territory at Ford Moss by 26th.

In March, passage movement was very noticeable, particularly from mid-month, with 50 arriving low over the sea from the south east at Holy Island on 19th, increasing to 188 on 25th. At Seaton Sluice, 68 passed N during the month, with four moving S. Further movement N or NW, involving up to 36 birds, was noted at Bamburgh, Gosforth, Marden Estate (Cullercoats), St Mary's and Winter's Gibbet; spring passage at the Farne Islands was described as 'light'. At inland breeding areas, 50+, many in pairs and displaying, were noted at Acton Fell and Ottercops Moss, and several small flocks were newly arrived on breeding areas in Harwood Forest on 11th. Several reports during the first week of April concerned birds on northward passage, including 96 (in two hours) at Seaton Sluice Watch Tower on 4th, 48 at East Chevington and 32-41 on three dates at Gosforth Garden Village; flocks of 30-31 at Cocklawburn and Mootlaw Quarry (Ryal) almost certainly included a majority of birds on passage. In upland breeding areas, birds were reported as less common than in previous years, possibly due to cold weather slowing their arrival.

Tree Pipit - Simonside - June (Mike Carr).



Meadow Pipit - Allendale -
March (Alan Jack).



Water Pipit - Druridge Pools - March (Ian Fisher).

'Scandinavian Rock Pipit' - East
Chevington - April (Chris Barlow).



Rock Pipit - Newbiggin - December (Chris Barlow).

However, numbers in May were encouraging and the species was described as common at Simonburn/Stonehaugh, where 60+ displayed, sang and fed young in nests on 18th, and at Buteland Fell/Wanneys on the same day, 40 pairs were counted. Elsewhere, around ten pairs were nesting in fields at St Mary's, with ten pairs in the College Valley, four birds displaying in Newcastle (near Exhibition Park) and a juvenile being fed at Blyth Harbour. Otterburn Training Area held high numbers in June, when 90+ pairs were counted along a 26km cycle ride on 10th; additionally, 50+ were breeding in heath/grassland habitat at Plashetts (Kielder), with many feeding young, and 18 were at Carey Burn. In late July, 79 were at Holy Island, 40 at Wark Forest, 30 at Boulmer and 22 at Derwent Reservoir.

Southerly passage was first noted on 21st August at St Mary's, with 30 birds landing from the N; light passage was noted on subsequent days, as it was at Cramlington and Seaton Point (Boulmer) on 26th and at Beacon Point (Newbiggin) on 30th, when many birds were also feeding in the area. Seasonal movement increased considerably in early September, when 458 moved S (in just over two hours) at East Cramlington on 7th (STH), with 130 the following day and 299 on 30th. Daily counts over Marden Estate (Cullercoats) totalled 350 for the month, 300+ moved S over St Mary's during the month, 1,132 moved S at Holy Island in nine days from 1st-28th, 450 passed over Newbiggin (in ten hours) from 11th-30th, with 370 over Warkworth Lane on 11th-12th, 346 over Cresswell in two days and 160 over Tynemouth on 30th. Flocks of 15-50 were also recorded at a further 13 sites. Conspicuous passage continued into October, particularly at the well-watched Holy Island, with almost 400 recorded in four days from 6th-19th and at East Chevington, where 200 were counted on 8th and 14th. An almost daily trickle of birds moved over the Farne Islands from mid-August to late November, with a peak of 15 on 5th October. Numbers declined after mid-October, with only small groups of up to 25 seen at five other coastal sites and inland at Ryal. These large autumn movements must surely comprise just a very small fraction of the enormous numbers which move through the county towards wintering grounds farther south in the UK and Europe.

During November, migration was largely at an end, save for 23 that flew NW at Gosforth at dusk on 4th and an arrival of 30 that touched down to feed briefly at St Mary's on 20th before continuing their southerly journey. Elsewhere, in late November, small groups of up to 12 were at Backworth, Derwent Reservoir, Haughton Strother GP, Murton, Prestwick Carr, Simonburn Common and Winter's Gibbet. In December, 20 were at Gosforth Park, with 12 at Fenham-le-Moor and up to ten at Backworth, Holy Island and St Mary's.

Tree Pipit *Anthus trivialis*

STATUS: Well-represented summer and uncommon passage visitor.

BREEDING: Well-represented.

The first returnee was one at East Chevington on 10th April, followed by two at Haughton Strother GP on 14th and five displaying at Netherwitton Common on 23rd April. During the last week of April, four singing males were at Beacon Hill (Longhorsley), four displayed in Windylaw Woods (Wingates), with three at Simonsides and singles at Dipton, Thrunton and Woodhall Woods (Sharperton).

During May, when the species is most easily identified by its prominent display flight and song, many sightings comprised 11 in Windylaw Woods on 25th (ASJ), with five males at nearby Simonsides, four at the well-watched Beacon Hill, three at Ladyhill (Stonehaugh), two at Debdon, Dipton Wood, Mootlaw Quarry (Ryal), Tarsset Burn, Thrunton Woods and Wark Forest and singles at Blakehopeburnhaugh, Carey Burn, Catcleugh, Falstone, Hepburn Woods, North Wood (Holystone), Slaley, Swin Hope/Wide Hope (Edlingham) and Woodhall Woods. Single migrants on the coast were recorded at Budle Point on 1st, Holy Island on three dates from 4th-13th, Newbiggin on 11th, where it was described by the observer as 'rare in spring', and at Beadnell Bay on 20th; a total of ten were on Inner Farne (Farne Islands) from 1st-3rd.

Very few records came in June; apart from ten males displaying in the Wingates area on 17th and three at Esp Hill (Wark Forest), only singles were noted at five sites, namely Beanley Plantation, Blanchland, the Harthope Valley, Longhorsley Moor and Wark. Singles were recorded in July at Batailshiel Haugh (Kidland Forest), Middleton and Mootlaw Quarry and in August one was still on breeding territory at Hepple on 2nd and a returning migrant was at St Mary's on 31st.

Two remained on breeding territory in the Harthope Valley on the late date of 8th September, two migrants were recorded at Holy Island on 10th and one was at Goswick on 26th. On Inner Farne, singles were noted on ten dates from 22nd August-11th October.

Water Pipit *Anthus spinoletta*

STATUS: Rare visitor. / FIRST RECORD: 1956 / LAST RECORD: 2016

Following on from the increase in sightings in 2016, this year also proved to be a good year for the species. The first wintering bird was found at Beacon Point (Newbiggin) on 8th January (GE/MN), with further sightings the following day. It, typically, liked the tidal seaweed area. One at Boulmer on 6th March (SS/ME) was likely to have over-wintered, as it was noted in same area as one in November 2016. It stayed through to 25th March. The main event of the year though was a gathering at Druridge Pools where, on 26th March, an unprecedented county total of five birds were on view together! (AC *et al.*). They were also seen the following day, with several noted through to 10th April, with good views obtainable from the 'budge screen'.

The next documented individual was at Holy Island (Sandham Bay) on 9th October (SR/AH *et al.*). Again favouring the tidal edge, amongst seaweed, it was feeding with Rock Pipits *Anthus petrosus*. It remained here through to 5th November. The year ended with further sightings in December. One at Cresswell Pond on 17th fed just north of the causeway (ADMc) and two more were found at Druridge Pools on 30th (MSH *et al.*). These were again seen from the 'budge screen' and this area seems to be the most favoured habitat in recent years. It is interesting to note that individuals are just as likely to be found on the tideline as in this typical wet meadow habitat.

Rock Pipit *Anthus petrosus*

STATUS: Well-represented resident, passage and winter visitor.

BREEDING: Uncommon.

During the first quarter, the peak monthly counts were 14 at Berwick Little Beach and 12 at Berwick Pier in January, 15 at Holy Island in February and 11 at Old Hartley in March. On other stretches of coastline during this period, four to ten were recorded at Boulmer, Craster, Cullercoats, Druridge Bay, Low Newton, Meadow Haven (Berwick), St Mary's and Tynemouth Haven, with one to three at more than 30 widespread coastal locations from Berwick to North Shields; one was also sighted on a tidal stretch of the River Tyne at Newcastle Business Park, some 11km inland, on two dates in January and February. Breeding pairs were already establishing territories on the Farne Islands when Rangers returned in mid-March.

Numbers declined in April as many birds moved away to more northerly breeding grounds, however ten were still present at Holy Island on 4th, with one to three at Boulmer, Cullercoats, East Chevington, Hauxley, Seaton Sluice and Tynemouth. In May, six were at Cullercoats, five at Newbiggin and one to four at a few other localities; a pair was watched nest building at Holy Island (Emmanuel Head) on 1st. On the Farne Islands, apart from three of the Outer Group, which were not counted, 11 pairs nested, somewhat less than in previous years, with a first egg date of 17th April and fledglings seen on 28th May.

Surprisingly few records were received from June-September. Six were at Holy Island, fours were at Dunstanburgh Castle, the Farne Islands, Football Hole and Meadow Haven, two to three at Annstead, Bamburgh, Boulmer, Cresswell, Cullercoats, St Mary's and Tynemouth Pier and singles at three other sites, including one carrying food at Newton in June, which was the only reported evidence of breeding on the mainland during this summer period.

During October-November, numbers rapidly swelled as birds returned to their winter territories. In October, 17 were counted across Holy Island on 22nd, whilst four days later the same number were found in Sandham Bay alone; 14 were at nearby Ross-Guile Point on 16th, with six to eight at East Chevington, Rockcliffe (Whitley Bay) and St Mary's early in the month and up to four in eight other locations, including a pair feeding in gardens at Cullercoats on several dates. Numbers increased on Holy Island in November, with 21 in Sandham Bay and up to 22 at five other locations on the island. Elsewhere, numbers at the other sites mentioned for October had also increased a little as additional birds returned to their winter quarters and four to five were also at Beacon Point (Newbiggin), Fenham-le-Moor, Meadow Haven and Snab Point. However, the Farne Islands did not record any significant influxes during the autumn.

In December, impressive counts again came from Holy Island, with 28 mainly along the north and east shores on 7th increasing to a maximum of 46 by 30th (MJC/ADM) and the beach alone near the 'excavations' hosted 20 on 31st. Other sightings comprised seven at St Mary's (North Bay), six at a flash pool at Hauxley, five at Newbiggin and one to three at 12 other sites.

'Scandinavian Rock Pipit' *A. p. littoralis*

STATUS: Uncommon visitor, mainly in the spring.

Spring sightings in March involved singles at Boulmer on 7th and 24th, with most of 12+ Rock Pipits at Seaton Point (Boulmer) on 8th showing characteristics of *littoralis* (ME); singles were also at Holy Island (Sandham Bay) on 17th and Chibburn Mouth on 31st. Records in April consisted of three at Chibburn Mouth on 1st and singles there on 3rd and 9th, with three at Holy Island on 4th.

Chaffinch *Fringilla coelebs*

STATUS: Abundant resident, passage and winter visitor.

BREEDING: Abundant.

The importance of stubble fields, game crops and garden feeders to this, and many other, species was again apparent in 2017. A flock of 100 were on stubbles with other finches at Ray Fell (Kirkwhelpington) on 31st January, while elsewhere during the month 20-30 were noted at Elwick, Longhorsley and Ordley (Hexham) and 11-18 were attracted to feeders at Spartylea. In February, 80 were at Park Farm (Whalton) on 8th and up to 67 at Wallington throughout. Other notable February gatherings included 50+ at Howick on 4th, 31 at Meldon on 8th, 30 at Alnham on 18th and 25-28 at Budle Bay, Haughton Strother GP and Longhorsley. A Rothbury garden attracted a flock of up to 45 in March, when 30+ were in breeding territory at Kielder Water and up to 20 at Spartylea.

Reports during the period April-August were typically sparse, with 21 at the Aln Estuary in late August, up to 14 at Spartylea and ten at Jesmond Dene the highest counts. A stubble field at Haughton Strother GP attracted a flock of 100 on 10th September and 23 were at Low Cocklaw (Berwick) on 11th. On 30th September, 36 passed S at Tynemouth and 11 S at East Cramlington LNR.

Further movement was witnessed in October, when 25 arrived at St Mary's on 19th, before moving quickly S, and, on the same day, numbers peaked at 12 on Inner Farne (Farne Islands), where birds were present from 16th-21st. Elsewhere, 35 were at Craster on 25th and 22 at Brier Dene (Whitley Bay) on 26th. A game crop at Aydon Castle (Corbridge) attracted up to 150 in November (MR), when there were several other notable gatherings, including 65 at Carterway Heads on 3rd, 45 on stubbles at Howick on 27th, 42 at Felton on 23rd, 40 at Harwood village on 18th and 25 at Bolam Lake and Whitley Bay Cemetery. In December, 45 were at Wallington on 16th, 30-31 at Alnham and near Alwinton and up to 16 at Spartylea.

Brambling *Fringilla montifringilla*

STATUS: Well-represented passage and winter visitor.

A large flock in Holywell Dene (present since December 2016) numbered around 100 birds on several dates in January and peaked at 130+ on 3rd (SPP). Elsewhere, 30 were at a traditional site at Bolam Lake and up to 20 were noted on feeders at 'Northumberlandia' (Cramlington) throughout the month, 20 were at Ray Mill (Kirkwhelpington) on 31st and at least ten at Snods Edge (Allensford) on 18th. A flock of up to 12-13 was attracted to feeders at Spartylea in January-February. Numbers at 'Northumberlandia' increased to 40 by early February as the Holywell Dene flock dispersed to leave around 30 on 9th. The only other gathering of note was at Wallington Hall, where ten on 28th increased to 15 by 14th March. The Holywell Dene flock reached 32 on 1st March, while numbers elsewhere remained relatively modest and included a good local count of up to 11 in a Cramlington garden, eight at Howick and Spartylea and six at Ordley (Hexham).

Six at Hexham on 13th was the highest April count, while up to four remained at Cramlington on 4th and at Spartylea to 20th, and one to two were noted at Farnley Haughs, Humshaugh, Kielder, Kylee, Linden Hall, Low Newton, Stamfordham, Swallow Pond and Wallington. Finally, at Holy Island, a single was noted on 30th April and two flew over The Snook on 2nd May.

The first returning birds were noted on 24th September, when five were on Holy Island, two arrived 'in-off' at Budle Point and a single was on the Farne Islands. Light passage continued during the remainder of the month, with one S at Whitley Bay on 25th, four at Holy Island and one at Tynemouth on 26th, 20 at Holy Island and two over Marden Estate (Cullercoats) on 29th and singles at Boulmer and Tynemouth on 30th. A large influx occurred on 19th October, when 1,144 were counted on Holy Island, most of which were moving quickly SW towards the mainland (MJC/ADM/BCh/BS) and 500 moved W over the Farne Islands (the joint second highest day count for the islands); a further 60+ arrived at Budle Point, 18 moved S at

St Mary's and 13 were at Boulmer. The following morning, 168 were on Holy Island, declining to 32 by 22nd. Fifty on the Farne Islands on 21st had reduced to 25 the next day. Elsewhere, flocks of 25 moved S at Tynemouth and Hadston on 20th and 23rd respectively. Numbers were significantly lower in November, with a peak count of seven at Spartylea, while four flew over Warkworth on 3rd and one to two were noted at Beanley, Bolam, Farnley Haughs, Holy Island, Humshaugh, North Shields, Rothbury, Slaley and Wallington. The species remained scarce during December, the largest gathering a meagre ten to 12 on a game crop at Holburn on 30th, when a further seven were noted at Hazelrigg Mill. Four to five were at Spartylea and Wallington, while one to two were reported from a further seven localities.

Hawfinch - Morpeth - November
(Jonathan Farooqi).



Hawfinch *Coccothraustes coccothraustes*

STATUS: Rare resident, passage and winter visitor.

BREEDING: Rare. / LAST BRED: 2005 (?)

After a blank year in 2016 (perhaps the first since around 1888) it was a welcome return by this species in 2017. The only spring record was one photographed in a Christon Bank garden on 24th April.

The first of the autumn involved one seen over Hexham recycling depot on 30th September. Another single, over Holy Island (Vicarage Garden) on 19th October, was part of an extraordinary national influx, which began the previous weekend and produced some very large gatherings across much of southern England. Although Northumberland missed out on some spectacular flocks, Abbey Mill (Morpeth) at least gave local birders the chance to engage with a memorable double-figure flock. Feeding in their favoured Hornbeams *Carpinus betulus*, the first sighting was of four on 31st October. On the same date, three flying W at Inner Farne (Farne Islands) were the 7th-9th individuals, and first multiple occurrence, for the islands.

The Abbey Mill flock increased in November to peak at ten on 3rd (TAC/ADMc) and again on 30th (TB). Two to four at nearby Mitford on three dates in November were assumed to be from this group and two at Linden Hall on 28th were the observers first here in 14 years. Abbey Mills continued to attract up to eight to the year end, while two remained at Linden Hall until at least 11th December. Farther afield, a single was seen at Humshaugh on 12th December.

Bullfinch *Pyrrhula pyrrhula*

STATUS: Well-represented resident.

BREEDING: Well-represented.

There were some notable gatherings of this colourful and perhaps increasing resident. In January, ten were near Shilbottle on 13th and up to nine at Gosforth Park NR throughout. Groups of eight were reported from Arcot Lane, Farnley Haughs, Prestwick Carr and Walker Riverside Park, seven were noted at Gosforth Subsidence Pond, Haughton Strother GP and six at East Sleekburn, with one to four at a further 16 widespread localities. Numbers and reports remained high in February, with a good count of 16 at Bewick Moor on 9th. Eight were noted at Ford Moss on 26th, while seven were at the Blyth Estuary and Branton GP, four to six at Fulbeck (Morpeth), Howdon, Howick, Letah Wood (Hexham), Park Village, Prestwick Carr and West Ord (Berwick) and one to three at a further 11 localities. In March, 17 were at Hepburn Woods on 23rd, six at Bedlington, three pairs at Holywell Dene, five in a Rothbury garden, four at Crookham and Harwood Head and one to two at a further four sites.

In April, 12 were at Gosforth Park NR on 14th and six pairs were at Holywell Dene on 27th. The latter site held 18 (nine pairs) on 9th May (ASJ). Elsewhere, in the period May-July, eight (four juveniles) were at Howdon, counts of six came from Craggside, Ellington (four juveniles) and Rothbury (still on garden feeders), five were at Bedlington and Fulbeck (two juveniles), four (two pairs) at Cramlington (Valley Park) and four at Hauxley RS. Six remained at Howdon in August, while four at Budle Point on 15th August was more unusual. During September, seven were noted at Low Cocklaw (Berwick) and Farnley Haughs, five at Prestwick Carr and four at Cresswell Pond, the Rothbury garden and Warkworth Lane.

Eleven at Prestwick Carr on 4th was the highest October count, followed by nine at Craster on 25th, five at Backworth and Linton Ponds and four at Hauxley RS and Holywell waggonway; a male at St Mary's on several dates was more unusual and four were trapped and ringed at Bamburgh during the month. In November, 11 were at Abbey Mill (Morpeth) on 5th and seven at Rising Sun CP on 14th and Gosforth Subsidence Pond on 17th. A Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus* took a male from feeders in the Rothbury garden, where up to six were noted in November and an impressive 14 in December. Further November counts included four to five at Corbridge, East Sleekburn, Holywell Dene, Humshaugh, Linton, Ulgham and Tynemouth. Ten were still at Abbey Mill and at Cramlington (Beaconhill) in December, when seven were reported from Farnley Haughs and Longhirst, six at Alnwick, Fulbeck, Howick and West Monkseaton and five at Humshaugh and Spartylea. In what was a very good month for the species, one to four were reported from another 29 localities.

Common Rosefinch *Carpodacus erythrina*

STATUS: Rare visitor. / FIRST RECORD: 1913 / LAST RECORD: 2016

A single sighting this year, with one found by the ash lagoon at Newbiggin on 29th September (DD/HG *et al.*). It was very well photographed, but only on view for ten minutes.

Greenfinch *Chloris chloris*

STATUS: Common resident and passage visitor.

BREEDING: Common.

The 20th annual Bird Trends report from the BTO highlights a 59% national decline in the last decade, reversing a previous period of sustained increase. A widely acknowledged contributor to this decline is the *trichomonosis* virus, a disease of cage birds. It is also found in pigeons and doves, where it is referred to as 'canker', and has been seen in raptors, perhaps passed on through the food chain. First detected in Greenfinch populations during mid-2006, it continues to affect the species and, while currently retained on the BTO Green List (species of least concern), it could be moved straight to the Red List (of greatest concern) when the next BTO report is published in 2018 (www.bto.org/about-birds/birdtrends/2017).

In Northumberland, this reverse has been apparent for a number of years. During 2017, there were 92 reports totalling around 850 individuals, this latter figure being somewhat misleading as it includes multiple pre-roost counts from East Ord (Berwick). The species is undoubtedly under-recorded; however, it is possible the actual number of individuals now falls well below the criteria of a 'common' species.

By far the largest counts came from the aforementioned roost at East Ord, where 98 in January increased to a peak of 105 on 18th February (CH), falling to 28 by early March. Elsewhere during this period, the only

other notable gatherings were 18 at Linden Hall (Longhorsley) on 17th February, up to 12 at Spartylea, eight at Darras Hall (Ponteland) and six to seven at Newcastle (Brandling Park and Jesmond Dene).

Reports between April-September were typically sparse, although a total of 37 singing males around residential Cramlington during five days of cycling in April was noteworthy. Maximum counts elsewhere included 20 at Whittle Dene Reservoirs, 12 at Ellington, 11 at St Mary's, nine at Quarry Cottage (Newbiggin), up to eight at a regular feeding station at Corbridge (a good count by recent standards) and seven at Spartylea.

Some sizable gatherings during October included 40+ at Snab Point on 8th, 30-35 at St Mary's on 19th, 25 at Hauxley NR on 28th, up to 20 in the Newbiggin area and eight at Gosforth Garden Village. During the final two months, maximum counts included 34 at East Ord, 25 at Linden Hall, 17 at Chain Bridge (River Tweed), 15 at Cramlington (Beaconhill) and 11 at Hauxley NR and Newbiggin.

One to seven were reported from a further 27 localities during the year, most of which were along the coastal belt south of Amble and in and around the suburban south east. Three observer comments in December highlighted the plight of this once very common species. Three at Newcastle (Chapel House) on 31st were the first of the winter (where once they were seen daily), one in a Rothbury garden on 5th was the first for several months and, unusually, none occurred all year in a Woolsington garden.

Twite *Linaria flavirostris*

STATUS: Well-represented passage and winter visitor.

BREEDING: Rare. / LAST BRED 2008 (?)

The traditional wintering sites in Druridge Bay and Lindisfarne NNR continued to support good numbers during both winter periods.

The provision of seed at Chibburn Mouth regularly attracted a flock of up to 104 in January-February. Nearby, flocks of 70 at Widdrington on 25th January and 40 at Hemscott Hill (Cresswell) on 7th January were no doubt part of this larger gathering. At Stag Rocks, the maximum count was 75 on 7th January and at Lindisfarne NNR, flocks of 30-50 were noted at Fenham-le-Moor in January-February, 20-30 on Holy Island in January and 55 at nearby Beal on 21st February. A little farther north, six frequented the Cocklawburn area on 12th January and 8th February. In March, the largest reported flock involved 60+ at Cresswell Pond on 11th, while up to 30+ frequented nearby Druridge Links.

At Chibburn Mouth, 40-42 were still present during the first week in April, dwindling to four by the end of the month. Elsewhere in April, one to 15 were recorded at Bell's and Cresswell Ponds, Druridge Pools, Fenham-le-Moor and Holy Island; more unusual were two feeding with Linnets *Linaria cannabina* well inland at Haughton Strother GP on 19th.

The first returnees were a flock of 60 at Low Newton on 4th October. At East Chevington, numbers increased from six on 14th October to 120 by the month end. Smaller wandering flocks, no doubt from this larger gathering, included 40+ at Druridge Links on 21st and 25 at Hemscott Hill on 18th. Elsewhere in October, 52 were on Coquet Island and six to 27 at Holy Island (The Snook); the latter flock increased to 20-106 during November, with the peak count noted on 9th. The peak count from East Chevington was 142 on 17th November (CB), with 50-133 on several other dates. Smaller November flocks included 20 at the Long Nanny Estuary on 26th, 18 W at Newbiggin on 18th and ten at Boulmer on 4th; one at Tynemouth on 4th was more unusual. Up to 100 continued to frequent various Druridge Bay sites in December, while 70 were at Goswick Farm on 3rd and 25 at the Aln Estuary on 2nd.

Linnet *Linaria cannabina*

STATUS: Common resident and passage visitor.

BREEDING: Common.

The first quarter began with a large flock of 200 at Stag Rocks on New Year's Day. Other impressive flocks included 180 at Brier Dene Farm (Whitley Bay) in January, 180 at Tranwell Woods on 5th February, 120 at Goswick Farm on 27th February and 250 gathered on a game crop at Laker Hall (near Corbridge) on 1st March. Elsewhere, 75 were at Wallsend, 50-60 at Berwick Little Beach, Druridge Links, Elwick, Howick, Old Hartley and Ray Mill (Kirkwhelpington) and 40 at Embleton Bay and Whittle Dene Reservoirs. Several pairs and singing males were in breeding territory at Holywell by the end of March. In April, a gathering of 280 was

Twite - East Chevington - April (Chris Barlow).



Twite - Chibburn Mouth - November (Heiko Peters).



at Coldwell (Humshaugh) and 60 at nearby Haughton Strother GP on 2nd, with 30-47 at Backworth, Derwent Reservoir, Holy Island and Prestwick Carr. A few smaller flocks remained into May, with 27 at Whittle Dene Reservoirs and 13-15 at three other localities.

Breeding reports in May included six pairs feeding young in nests along the Holywell waggonway and a family party at St Mary's, while another family party of six was at Newbiggin in early June.

Flocks re-formed throughout July, including 60 (with juveniles) at Mootlaw Quarry (Ryal) on 1st, 56 at Holy Island on 30th, 35 at Boulmer on 27th and 24 at Cocklawburn on 3rd. The latter flock had increased to 86 by 22nd August, by which time up to 200 were gathering at Boulmer and 110-120 were on stubbles at St Mary's. A large finch flock of 150 birds at Cresswell Pond on 16th August comprised mostly Linnets, while elsewhere 94 were in the Aln Estuary and 40-50 at Derwent Reservoir, East Chevington and Low Newton. Significant increases at some sites during September saw up to 300 at Whittle Dene Reservoirs by 20th (SR) and at St Mary's-Old Hartley from 22nd-25th (ASJ/MNC), 150 at Ross Sands on 5th, 100 at Kearsley and Mootlaw Quarry (including a 'leucistic' bird) and up to 80 on Holy Island.

In October, two large flocks in the Berwick area comprised 110 at Spittal on 9th and 84 at Cocklawburn on 19th, while 70-80 were at Craster, Holy Island and St Mary's and 40 at Newbiggin. The largest November gathering was 200 at Budle Bay on 18th and 50-75 were at Beal, Boulmer, Haughton Strother GP, Newton Point and Shadfen Farm (Morpeth). Small numbers at the Farne Islands during the autumn season peaked at 45 on 3rd November. A game crop at Fenham Mill attracted 120 in December, while at Holy Island (Sandham Bay), 29 on 2nd increased to 53 by 30th; 40 were noted at Holburn and 30 at Hazelrigg Mill.

Common Redpoll *Acanthis flammea*

STATUS: Uncommon to rare passage and winter visitor. Given to irruptive movements from Northern Europe when, in such years, it may become more numerous.

It was a very poor year for this irruptive winter visitor. The only early reports were all passage birds in the spring, when two fed with three Lesser Redpolls *Acanthis cabaret* at Mootlaw Quarry (Ryal) on 8th April and singles were at Holy Island on 1st May and Hedgeley GP on 7th May.

In October, two at Inner Farne (Farne Islands) from 16th-19th increased to four on 20th, when six were also at Holy Island (MJC), with two at Holy Island on 21st-22nd; another was at Bamburgh dunes on 21st, two at Inner Farne on 23rd and four flew S at Craster on 25th. The final record was a single bird feeding on a small patch of waste ground at North Shields Fish Quay from 12th-18th December.

Lesser Redpoll *Acanthis cabaret*

STATUS: Common resident and passage visitor.

BREEDING: Common.

This species was relatively common in Coquetdale during January, with flocks of 30-40 at Alwinton, Holystone and Sharperton. Elsewhere in January, 40+ were at Grindon Lough on 24th, 26 at Prestwick Carr on 29th (not identified to species) and 14 at Farnley Haughs. In February, 40 were at Towsbank on 5th, 15 at Hepburn Woods and up to nine visiting garden feeders at Rothbury.

Breeding territories were occupied by mid-March at Beacon Hill (Longhorsley), Harwood and Hexhamshire Common and good numbers, including displaying males, were also noted at Ingram, Simonside and Wingates by late April. Further April flocks included 30 at Dipton Wood on 24th (not identified to species), 12 at Hexham and ten at both Branton and Spartylea; two flew NW over Holy Island (The Snook) on 23rd. In May-June, several observers regarded the species as abundant in suitable breeding habitat at Lordenshaw, Simonburn, Simonside, Stonehaugh, The Wanneys (near Ridsdale) and Wark Forest. The regular breeding study at Coquetdale found one pair (at Makendon) that laid five eggs, from which five young hatched and fledged (JR). Gatherings of 20-30 were reported from the Breamish Valley in May and nine to ten were noted at Coanwood and Tower Knowe (Kielder) in June. At least six were at Sweethope Lough on 18th July and an adult fed a fledged juvenile at Mootlaw Quarry (Ryal) on 8th.

Flocks of 20 were at Derwent Reservoir and Grindon Lough by the end of August and singles were on the coast at Bamburgh and Tynemouth. Coastal movement gathered pace throughout September, with light passage noted all month at Budle Bay and on many days at Marden Estate (Cullercoats). Peak numbers occurred on 30th, with 110 S (in one hour 30 minutes) at Tynemouth (not identified to species), 77 S at

Seaton Point (Boulmer), 50 S at Newbiggin and 15 passing through East Cramlington LNR. Elsewhere, 15 were at Hadston and at Widdrington Moor Lake on 24th, ten at Bamburgh on 26th and 11 at Holy Island on 24th. Continued migration into October included 13 at Low Newton on 1st, a peak movement of 134 S at East Chevington on 8th (MJC), 17 at St Mary's on 19th, 29 S at Newbiggin on 22nd, with 14 here the following day, and 23 at Craster on 26th; smaller groups of five to nine moved S at Alnmouth, East Cramlington LNR and Gosforth Garden Village from 23rd-25th. Farther inland, nine were at Prestwick Carr and at Haughton Strother GP on 18th and 25th respectively.

Late migrants involved ten S at Hauxley NR on 4th November (not identified to species) and two S at Newbiggin the following day. A flock of ca.40 were at Paxton Dene (Longhorsley) on 22nd November and 14 were at Prestwick Carr on 11th. A notable 70-71 were at Hepburn Woods throughout December.

Crossbill *Loxia curvirostra*

STATUS: Common to well-represented resident, passage and winter visitor. Given to irruptive movements from Northern Europe when, in such years, it may become very numerous.

BREEDING: Common to well-represented.

Some sizeable gatherings in January included up to 50 at Holystone (JD), 45+ at Grindon Lough, 20-30 in the College Valley (Cheviots), 20 at Slaley, 15 at Thrunton Woods and 12 at nearby Callaly. In addition, singing males were noted at Belford Moor, Blakehopeburnhaugh, Broomleyfell Plantation, Linden Hall and Thrunton. Singing males and family groups were noted among a count of ca.50 at Harwood Forest in February (STE), when 20 were at Hepburn Woods. By contrast, numbers in the vast coniferous expanse of Kielder Forest were considered to be on the low side during this period. Thrunton Woods held up to 46 by the end of March, when 20+ were noted at Harwood, 12 at Hepburn Woods and seven to eight at Craggside (Rothbury), Minsteracres and Widehope (Kielder). Counts of 20-27 at Corby's Craggs (Alnwick), Craggside and Longframlington Moor in April included several small family groups. In addition, 22 were noted at Beanley Plantation and 14 flew over Linden Hall; more unusual was a single N over Hauxley NR on 18th.

Reports during May suggested a good breeding season, with small groups totalling 41 at Craggside and 30+ at Wark Forest. There were sightings of birds from most areas of coniferous woodland in the Bellingham and Otterburn areas during the month and 15 were at Kielder Water and seven at Thrunton Woods. They were a common sight in the Stonehaugh (Wark Forest) area during June, when 30 (including juveniles) were noted at Alnham Moor, nine were at Holburn Wood and a female and four juveniles were at Dilston (Corbridge). Typically, the species was very scarce during July-August with one to four noted from areas of Kielder Forest, Mootlaw Quarry (Ryal) and Thrunton Woods. Two over Holy Island on 25th July was an indication of early coastal movement. Further light passage produced three S over Beal on 23rd September and two at East Cramlington LNR and two S at Newbiggin on 30th.

Flocks began to assemble again by the end of October and included 27 at Holystone, 20 at Thrunton Woods and 12 at Rimside Moor (Rothbury). In November, 25 were at Elf Kirk (Kielder), ten at Heavenfield (Chollerford) and four at Simonside. Territorial males were in song by early December, with several among a count of 21 at Hepburn Woods on 3rd. Counts of 12 came from Harwood village on 3rd and Slaley on 21st, while six to seven were reported from Colt Crag Reservoir, Simonside and Stonehaugh; the latter including two singing males.

Goldfinch *Carduelis carduelis*

STATUS: Common resident and well-represented passage visitor.

BREEDING: Common.

A species which has definitely bucked the trend in recent years, an example of which came from The Riding (near Hexham), where during the period 1985-2005 a total of around 200 were trapped and ringed at this constant effort site. A remarkable increase has occurred here since, with 252 ringed in 2017 alone.

A large flock at East Chevington in January-February fluctuated widely at 52-120 birds, with a peak on 7th January. Elsewhere in January, 50+ were at Stag Rocks on 1st and, more unusually, 20 were at Newcastle's Bigg Market on 6th. A flock of 50-60 was at Farnley Haughs in January-February and up to 30 at Spartylea during January-March. An impressive 44-64 visited garden feeders at East Ord (Berwick) in February-March. Smaller flocks during this first winter period included 20-30 at Derwent Reservoir, Prestwick Carr, Swallow Pond and Whitley Bay.

In April, 60 were at Coldwell (Humshaugh) on 2nd and in May, ten+ were reported from Allenbanks, Killingworth Lake and Prestwick Carr. Peak counts of 14-20 continued to visit a garden at Spartylea throughout April-June. Flocks (including juveniles) began to assemble again from mid-June, with 25-30 at St Mary's; nine pairs were noted at Wark (North Tyne) on 25th. A large flock of 100 gathered at Weetslade CP by late July and 36 were feeding on thistle heads at Needles Eye on 17th.

Another large flock of ca.300-400 was at Swallow Pond on 27th August; elsewhere, 176 were in the Aln Estuary and 150 at Boulmer on 22nd, 120 at 'Northumberlandia' (Cramlington) on 6th and 100 at West Hartford on 28th. Impressive numbers were in evidence during September, with perhaps up to 1,000 in the Budle Bay-Stag Rocks area, including 300 at Budle Bay on 24th and 500 at Stag Rocks on 26th (CGK/GPK). Elsewhere along the coast, 250 were at Low Newton on 7th, 200 at Longhoughton Steel on 1st and flying S at Tynemouth on 30th, 150-200 in the Snab Point-Cresswell area from 19th-23rd, 150 at Hauxley NR on 16th, 125 still at the Aln Estuary and 110 at Cocklawburn on 12th. Inland, a flock of 200 was at Prestwick Carr on 28th, up to 80 were at Arcot Pond and 75 at Mootlaw Quarry (Ryal).

Some 200-300 remained in the Bamburgh area to early October, declining thereafter; at Bamburgh RS, 121 were trapped and ringed during the month. In Druridge Bay, a flock of 200 along the old coal road on 11th had reduced to 77 by 25th. Sixty at Beal on 6th October increased to 115 by 3rd November, by when most flock sizes were considerably reduced. Also in November, 50 were at North Sunderland and 30-38 at East Ord, the Farne Islands (38 on 14th being a record count for the islands), Howdon and Monkseaton. Hepburn Woods held up to 60 during December, while 45-50 were in the Cresswell-Druridge Links area and at Holburn at the end of the month. Garden feeders were again an attraction in December, with an impressive 44 at East Ord on 3rd and 37 at Gosforth Garden Village on 26th; 37 were at QEII CP on 7th.

Serin *Serinus serinus*

STATUS: Extremely rare visitor. / PREVIOUS RECORDS: 5 / FIRST: 1956 / LAST: 2002

A superb find for the Farne Islands' Rangers, with an adult female located on Inner Farne on 12th May (JCr *et al.*). Seemingly just arrived, it was watched that evening and the following morning. It unfortunately decided to move on before further birders could land on Inner Farne in the afternoon. It was well photographed on a picnic bench. Although there was a Serin species seen over North Shields on 7th April 2007, the previous confirmed record was at Seahouses in April 2002.

Siskin *Spinus spinus*

STATUS: Common to abundant resident, passage and winter visitor.

BREEDING: Common to abundant.

By far the largest flock of the year involved 200+ at Druridge Bay CP on 28th January (AJS). Elsewhere in January, 65 were noted at Bakethin on 14th, 55+ at Hyon's Wood on 7th, 40 at County Hall (Morpeth) on 18th and 20-30 at East Chevington, Farnley Haughs, Gosforth Subsidence Pond, Plessey Hall Wood (Cramlington) and Swallow Pond; a flock of 60-62 was at Houghton Strother GP from mid-January to the end of February. Further February flocks included 50+ at Big Waters on 10th and Hepburn Woods on 26th and 20-40 at Alnwick, Derwent Reservoir, Prestwick Carr and Swallow Pond. Large flocks during March numbered 60 at Humshaugh on 30th, 50+ in breeding territory at Harwood Forest and Wark (North Tyne) on 8th and 21st respectively and 20 at Craggside (Rothbury) and Gosforth Park NR. One at the Farne Islands on 21st March was their sole record of the year; the worst showing since the 1970s.

Up to 60 remained in the Humshaugh area to mid-April, while 15 were noted at Spartylea throughout the month. Garden feeders attracted small numbers, including 15 at Nunykirk and five at Rothbury. Eight flew N at Gosforth Garden Village on 6th April. Early summer reports were typically sparse, with peak counts of four to five from Fontburn, Humshaugh, Lordenshaw, Nunykirk, Rothbury and Spartylea during May-June and no reports in July. In August, a flock of 60 at Derwent Reservoir on 22nd was the only sizeable gathering. Another flock of 60 was at Humshaugh on 3rd September, while 18 were at nearby Houghton Strother GP on 19th and at Yearle on 7th.

Obvious coastal passage featured in October, including 74 S at Newbiggin from 19th-23rd, 25 S at Tynemouth on 20th and 61 S at Craster on 25th; 40 were also at East Sleekburn on 27th. Inland flocks included 50 at Houghton Strother GP on 18th and 46 at Holystone on 27th. Passage continued during early November, with 16 S at Tynemouth on 3rd, ten at Hauxley RS on 4th, 20 N at Seaton Sluice on 9th and 30+ at Bamburgh

on 10th. Sixty were at Alnham on 19th November, with 15-24 at Bothal, Derwent Reservoir and Haughton Strother GP. During December, a flock at Hepburn Woods increased from 55 on 2nd to 75 by the month end, up to 50 remained at Haughton Strother GP throughout, 45+ were at Wark (North Tyne) on 30th, 35 at Derwent Reservoir on 21st and 21 at Gosforth Subsidence Pond and 15 at Swallow Pond.

Corn Bunting - Boulmer - July (Alan Jack).



Corn Bunting *Emberiza calandra*

STATUS: Rare visitor. / FIRST RECORD: HISTORICAL / LAST RECORD: 2012

BREEDING: Rare. / LAST BRED: 2005

Basically extinct in the county as a breeding species, there still seem to be occasional birds found in the county. One was located in ideal habitat by the public car park at Low Newton on 5th March (BS). It was only present for one minute before flying off. A more co-operative male set up territory at Boulmer, where it sang from an area of mugwort near Longhoughton Point from 18th June-1st July (BS *et al.*). A long overdue county sighting for many birders with the last 'twitchable' bird being at Linden in 2010.

Yellowhammer - Buston Links - June (Tom Cadwallender).



Yellowhammer *Emberiza citrinella*

STATUS: Common resident.

BREEDING: Common.

In January, a large flock of 150+ was noted at Grindon Rigg (Berwick) on 20th, with other flocks of 45-55 at Longhorsley on 27th and 40+ at Low Newton and Shildon (Corbridge) on 18th, while 20 were noted at Felton Farm and 15 at Lilburn. A huge gathering of 200+, with Chaffinches *Fringilla coelebs*, at West Kyloe on 16th February was the largest in the county since 2012 (JBu). Another notable flock involved 90 at Callerton on two February dates, while the Longhorsley flock increased to 80 by 6th and 40+ were still at Low Newton on 23rd; 25-26 remained at Felton Farm to mid-March, when 12 were at Prestwick Carr.

Reports between April-August, many of singing males, included 29 during a cycle ride from Ponteland-Ingoe on 3rd June, 17 at Whittle Dene Reservoirs, 13 at Berwick, 12 from Kirkley Hall-Belsay and Linden Hall-Todburn, 11 in the Wark (North Tyne) area, ten at East Holywell (five pairs), Fenham-le-Moor, Weetslade CP (including a juvenile) and Whittle Dene Reservoirs, eight at the Breamish Valley, Prestwick Carr and Ulgham Lane, seven at Allen Banks and four to six at Big Waters, Cramlington (Beacon Lane) and the Holywell waggonways.

Possible immigration was suggested in mid-October, with a single arriving at St Mary's on 18th, two at Holy Island on 19th, one on Inner Farne (Farne Islands) from 19th-20th and another arriving at Newbiggin on 20th. Several sizable flocks were reported towards the end of the month, including 42 at Old Mousen on 21st, 38 at Craster on 25th, 25 on set-a-side at Doddington on 29th and 22 at Low Cocklaw (Berwick) on 30th. A stubble field at Callerton held 15 on 19th October, rising to an impressive 110 by 11th December. Elsewhere, in mid-November, 17 were at Alnham and Felton and 12 at Longhirst Flash, while December produced further flocks, including 20 at Outcheater, 13 at Big Waters and 12 at Holburn.



Little Bunting - Low Newton - October (Tim Dean).

Little Bunting *Emberiza pusilla*

STATUS: Rare visitor. / FIRST RECORD: 1920 / LAST RECORD: 2016

Increasingly expected now, with almost annual records since 2000. In fact, only 2004, 2008 and 2009 were blank years. The majority of sightings though are still on the Farne Islands and this proved to be the case again this year, with two found on Inner Farne on 15th October (JCr/TH). However, there was another found in October, on 20th, at Low Newton (GW *et al.*). This proved to be suitably photogenic, with close views obtained in the hedgerow west of the 'tin church'. It remained until 22nd and provided many birders with their first sighting in the county.



Reed Bunting (Mike Henry)

Reed Bunting

Emberiza schoeniclus

STATUS: Well-represented resident and passage visitor.

BREEDING: Well-represented.

Sizable gatherings of 20 were in the Druridge Links/ Pools area on 17th January and 15+ at Low Newton on 18th. There was an early return to breeding territory at Haughton Strother GP, which is usually vacated in winter, where eight were noted on 23rd January. Stubble fields at Callerton attracted 30 on 10th February, 15+ were still at Low Newton on 11th and ten at Big Waters on 26th. In March, 38 were on Holy Island on 25th (MJC). Elsewhere during the period January-April, four to eight, including singing males, were at Backworth, the Blyth Estuary, Derwent Reservoir, East Chevington, Haughton Strother GP, Holywell Pond, Longhorsley, Newburn, Prestwick Carr,

QEII CP, Upper Coquetdale, St Mary's and Whittle Dene Reservoirs; perhaps more unusually a singing male was at Newcastle (Exhibition Park) in April.

Breeding birds were well established by early May, with counts of 20 from the Dunstanburgh area and Holy Island. Elsewhere, during May-June, 13 males were at East Chevington, 12 were singing at St Mary's Wetland, nine were in Upper Coquetdale, eight at the Breamish Valley and West Hartford, seven at Plashetts (Kielder) and six at Cresswell Pond, Gosforth Park, Halton Le Gate, Haughton Strother GP (three breeding pairs) and Prestwick Carr. An adult was feeding young at Whittle Dene Reservoirs at the end of May. Singing in urban areas was noted at Howdon, Ponteland, Tyne Tunnel Trading Estate and West Allotment. Good numbers remained on Holy Island in July, with 29 noted on 30th; 11 were at Whittle Dene Reservoirs and eight at Arcot Pond.

By late August, some notable flocks were beginning to assemble, including 19-27 in the St Mary's-Old Hartley area into September, 15-16 of which were feeding together in a crop field at Hartley. Boulmer attracted 20 between 25th August-30th September, eight were in the Aln Valley on 22nd August and up to 23 on Holy Island in September. Birds were logged at the Farne Islands on 14 dates from 16th August-23rd October, with a peak of seven on 28th September.

The peak October counts at Holy Island and St Mary's-Old Hartley were 30 and 17 respectively, both on 19th. In November, the flock of 20 at Boulmer was still present on 4th, 12 were at Beaconhill (Cramlington) on 14th, eight at Berwick on 16th and five at a remote farm on Simonburn Common on 30th; more unusual was one at Newcastle (Exhibition Park) on 2nd. Numbers at St Mary's declined to six during November-December, ten were at Prestwick Carr on 18th December and three to five were noted at four further sites.

Lapland Bunting *Calcarius lapponicus*

STATUS: Uncommon autumn passage and winter visitor.

The only report during the first winter period involved a single at East Chevington on 29th January.

The first autumn arrivals were in September, beginning with a single S at Cullernose Point on 17th, followed by two at Beal on 20th, one at Holy Island on 26th and two E over Inner Farne (Farne Islands) on 27th. In October, two were again at Beal on 8th, while singles were at nearby Holy Island on 17th and 18th, Inner Farne on 20th and S at Holy Island (The Snook) on 21st; two flew S at Druridge and one was heard at East Chevington on 25th, another was seen at Goswick on 26th and one at Newbiggin on 30th.

During the final two months, all reports were from Lindisfarne NNR. Singles were at Ross on 5th November and at Beal Point on 19th, while three accompanied Skylarks *Alauda arvensis* at Holy Island (Chare Ends) on 23rd (IK). The only December sighting involved one calling in flight at Longbridge End (Lindisfarne) on 30th.

Snow Bunting - Newbiggin - November
(Chris Barlow).



Snow Bunting *Plectrophenax nivalis*

STATUS: Well-represented autumn passage and winter visitor.

Very scarce during the first winter period, the only January sighting being a single male at Chibburn Mouth on 19th-20th. There was little improvement in February, with one at Berwick on 17th and two at St Mary's on 19th. In March, five were at Chibburn Mouth on 13th, with singles on 12th and 19th, one was at Holy Island on several dates, with one at Newton Links on 6th and two at Church Point (Newbiggin) on 22nd. Two were reported from Holy Island on 4th April, while a late male was at Newbiggin from 8th-10th May.

The first arrival of the autumn was a single S over Holy Island (The Snook) on 4th October. Three were at St Cuthbert's Cove (Farne Islands) and another at Rockcliffe (Whitley Bay) on 7th; the latter remaining for a week. Further singles moved S at The Snook on 15th and 19th October, with two S on 20th. There was a more noticeable influx during the final week of the month, with one to two at East Chevington on 23rd, 27th and 29th and three at Cresswell beach from 24th-25th. A single moved N at Tynemouth on 29th and ten were at Fenham-le-Moor on 30th.

On Holy Island, six arrived 'in-off' at Sandham Bay on 6th November, followed by counts of up to nine at various island localities to the month end. Three to six were at Goswick on 11th and 28th and two to four at Beacon Point (Newbiggin) from 11th-15th. One to two were on the Farne Islands on 12th-13th, two were still at Beacon Point on 15th and pairs at South Beach (Blyth) on several dates and well inland at Newtown Park (Simonside) on 23rd; singles were noted at a further six localities. In December, a female was on Brownsman (Farne Islands) on 2nd. The gradual build-up of birds at Holy Island peaked at 26 along the north shore on 12th December (SR); counts of 14 at The Snook on 23rd and three to four in Sandham Bay on 7th, 21st and 30th may have been from this larger gathering. In addition, 20 were noted at Cheswick Sands on 4th and a single at Newbiggin from 8th-9th.

Birds of Unknown (although presumed not wild) Origin, Escapes and Hybrids

The identity of some of the species below has not been verified by the CRC and they are presented as a record of what is being found in Northumberland.

Unknown Origin

White Stork *Ciconia ciconia*

Two over Howdon on 10th April were accepted by CRC as origin unknown.

Escapes

Red-breasted Goose *Branta ruficollis*

Two flew in to Cresswell Pond on 2nd June, flying off N after ten minutes. Although they bore no rings, the date and circumstances of two together would lean towards these being escapes.

One at Big Waters from 20th October-19th November was accepted by BBRC as of unknown origin only. An adult on fields near Bell's Farm (Cresswell) from 17th-20th December was initially thought to be of potential wild origin, but closer views and photographs revealed the remains of a narrow blue plastic ring. Hence it was presumed to be an escape as there was no metal ring accompanying the colour ring.

Bar-headed Goose *Anser indicus*

The individual from December 2016 at Budle Bay was seen again, this time at Elwick on 7th January. It then moved to Ross, where it was seen on 9th February, with further sightings at Budle Bay from 20th February-14th March. Two were also seen at East Chevington on 2nd March.

Cape Shelduck *Tadorna cana*

A female-type was noted at Foxton Bends on 26th August and the AIn Estuary on 8th September.

Greater Rhea *Rhea Americana*

A surprise find on the last day of the year, with one nonchalantly wandering around a cattle field north of Thrunton Wood. The cattle eventually took exception and chased it to the edge of the field. Apparently the local caravan park owner keeps exotics and a local farmer confirmed that it was known to be part of his collection.

Helmeted Guineafowl *Numida melagris*

Three were seen feeding together in an arable field at Cheeseburn (near Stamfordham) on 1st June.

Budgerigar *Melopsittacus undulatus*

A blue individual flew W with Swallows *Hirundo rustica* at Big Waters on 11th September.

There were also two records of Muscovy Duck *Cairina moschata* and several records of Domestic Geese and Domestic Ducks from widespread localities throughout the year. A late report was also received of a Harris's Hawk *Parabuteo unicinctus* paired with a Common Buzzard *Buteo buteo* at Benton (North Tyneside), where they raised one chick.

Hybrids

Canada Goose x Barnacle Goose *Branta canadensis* x *Branta leucopsis*

One was seen at Grindon Lough on 10th November. An unusual pairing.

Canada Goose x Greylag Goose *Branta canadensis* x *Anser anser*

One was seen at Hauxley NR on 31st May and 22nd June and Killingworth Lake on 19th July. Two were at QEII CP on 10th September and a single at Hauxley NR again on 14th October.

Tufted Duck x Pochard *Aythya fuligula* x *Aythya ferina*

A drake was seen at Tynemouth on 22nd January, with further sightings of quite possibly the same individual at Killingworth Lake on 1st February, Gosforth Park on 5th February and, in March, at Arcot Pond on 6th and 12th, Big Waters on 17th, Arcot Pond again on 22nd, Killingworth Lake on 25th and Swallow Pond on 31st.

At the tail end of the year there were continued sightings, with one at Swallow Pond from at least 9th September-30th November, visiting Holywell Pond on 6th October. This bird was then thought to be responsible for the final sighting at Killingworth Lake on 28th December. Two other hybrids on 27th December at Killingworth Lake also resembled this species pairing, but were clearly different individuals to the long-stayer.

Tufted Duck x Scaup *Aythya fuligula* x *Aythya marila*

One was at West Allotment Pond on 17th March.

Gyr Falcon x Saker *Falco rusticolus* x *Falco cherrug*

The escape at large since September 2016 was seen again at North Shields Fish Quay on 3rd February and at Longhirst Flash on 5th March. The parentage is of some debate as these captive birds are widely cross-bred in falconry.

Glaucous Gull x Herring Gull *Larus hyperboreus* x *Larus argentatus*

A juvenile at Swallow Pond on 31st March resembled a bird of this parentage, colloquially known as 'Viking Gull'. It was feeding on a dead Canada Goose *Branta canadensis*.

List of Contributors

G.Aerts, R.Ahmed, A.Allen, P.J.Allott, N.Anderson, A.Armstrong (AAr), C.D.Barlow, S.R.Barrett, D.Beeckman, D.G. & R.H.Bell, S.Bell, R.J. & M.Bentley (RB/MB), R.Biggs (RBi), C.Bill (CBi), D.H.W.Blair, T.Blake, J.S.Booth, A.I.Bowman, G.Bowman, K.Bradley, C.Bradshaw, T.Brewis (TBr), A. & L.Brunts, O.Bryce (OBr), J.Bucknall (JBU), B.Bullough, T.A.Cadwallender, E.F.Carr, M.J.Carr, P.R.Cassells, B.Chambers, J.Clark, P.Clark, T.R.Cleeves, M.N.Coates, J.Common, M.J.Cook (MJCo), E.Corlett (ECo), E.Crabtree, J.Crymble (JCr), A.Curry, R.Cussen, D.Dack, R.Dack, J.Dailey (JDa), T.Daley, I.S.Davidson, I.B. & K.Davison (IBDa / KDa) M.Davison, J.C.Day, A.Deighton, T.R. & J.Dean, C.Dickinson, P.Dobson, J.Doleman (JDo), I.R.Douglas, J.Drew (JDr), R.Drew (RDr), T.Drew (TDr), L.Driver, C.Duncan, M.Eaton, M.Eccles (MEc), G.Edwards, M.Egan (MEg), D.T.Elliott, S.T.Elliott, E.Evans, J.Fairclough, J.Farooqi (JFa), T.Farooqi, I.Fisher, P.C.Fletcher, D.F.Forshaw, I.Forsyth (IFo), R.Fox (RFo), G.Foy, N.Franklin, H.Galley, P.Gilbert, A.Gilbertson, R.Goodwill, D.Grant, A.Griggs (AGr), A.Hall, J.Hall, M.S.Hall (MSHa), M.Hallett (MHal), D.Halpin, C.D.Hampton, P. & A.Hanmer (PHa / AHa), M.Harper (MHar), E.Harrison (EHa), P.M. & R.M. Harrison (PMHa / RMHa), A.S.Hart, C.Hartley, M.Hemmingway (MHem), M.Henderson (MHe), T.Hendry, M.Henry, M.Hepple (MHP), A.J.Hewitt, P.Higginson (PHi), D.R.Hind, S.J.Hingston, M.S.Hodgson, P.Hogg, S.T.Holliday, M.Holmes (MHo), M.Hughes (MHug), M.Hutcheson (MHu), A.S.Jack, R.Jamieson, A.Janes, R.Jaques (RJa), C.Jewitt, I.Johnson, A.J.Johnston, P.M.Jordan, M.G.Kerby (MK), I.Kerr, M.S.Kirby (MKir), D.Knight, C.G.Knox, G.P.Knox, S.Laing, P.Lamb, S.Lawrence (SLa), M.Lee, M.A.Lee, R.Lee, N.Littlewood, J.D.Lough, D.Lovatt (DLo), J.P.Lumby, S.March (SMa), P.R.Massey, T.Mason, A.J. & S.V. McCormick, L.J.Mcdougall S.Manning, S.J.McElwee, D.McKeown, A.D.Mclevy, M.McMahon, D.Miller, G.Milward (GMi), T.Mitcham, N.J.Moran, A.D.Mould, R.Narraway (RNa), M.Nattrass, M.Navin, A.J.Newson, N.F.Osborne, S.P.Parnaby, J.Parrack, H.Peters, R.Perryman, J.T.Philipson, M.Potts, R.Poyer (RPo), A.Priest, K.Redgrave, R.Regan, H.Reid, A.J.Richards, J.Richardson, M.Richardson, S.Rippon, J.Robinson (JRo), A.J.Robson, I.D.Robson, L.A.Robson, J.A.Roper, J.W.Rutter, J.Sanders, R.Sanders, C.Saunders (CSa), C.R.Saunders, S.Scowcroft (SSc), J.Scragg (JScr), C.Scrimgeour, S.Sexton, M.Sinclair (MSi), M.R.Smith, D.Southern (DSO), M.Sparrow, B.Steel, A.J.Steele, J.G.Steele, R.Stevens, P.Stewart, P.A.Tapsell, D.Taylor, S.Taylor, A.L.Todd, C.Tudge, G.Tuthill, K.Van Lierde, E.A.Walters, D.R.Watson, D.Weitowitz, S.Westerberg, B.Whittemore, T.Wiffen (TWi), M.Williamson (MWi), A.Wilson, G.Wolverson (GWO), G.Woodburn, C.Wright, S.F.Wrigley (SFW), K.W.York.

Alnwick Wildlife Group, Bamburgh Ringing Station, Berwick Wildlife Group, Farne Islands' Rangers, Friends of Red Kites (FoRK), Hauxley Ringing Station, National Trust, Natural History Society of Northumbria, North Northumberland Bird Club, Northumbria Ringing Group, Seaton Sluice Watch Tower.

Apologies for any accidental omissions.



First and Last Dates of Summer Visitors in 2017

Species	First Date	Last Date
Garganey	17th March	23rd October
Quail	13th May	24th September
Osprey	22nd March	30th September
Marsh Harrier	30th March	2nd November
Little Ringed Plover	24th March	5th September
Common Sandpiper	19th March	9th November
Sandwich Tern	22nd March	20th October
Little Tern	28th April	24th August
Roseate Tern	1st May	30th September
Common Tern	8th April	27th October
Arctic Tern	6th April	4th November
Cuckoo	16th April	26th September
Swift	15th April	3rd October
Sand Martin	12th March	17th October
Swallow	1st April	2nd November
House Martin	16th March	5th November
Willow Warbler	29th March	30th October
Wood Warbler	30th April	25th August
Sedge Warbler	12th April	30th September
Reed Warbler	21st April	14th October
Grasshopper Warbler	9th April	8th August
Garden Warbler	13th April	19th October
Lesser Whitethroat	9th April	25th October
Whitethroat	14th April	26th September
Ring Ouzel	24th March	26th October
Spotted Flycatcher	10th May	28th September
Pied Flycatcher	9th April	27th September
Redstart	3rd April	24th October
Whinchat	29th April	23rd October
Wheatear	19th March	31st October
Yellow Wagtail	10th April	7th October
Tree Pipit	10th April	11th October

Some obvious species, such as Blackcap and Chiffchaff, have been omitted from this table as the presence of wintering birds may obscure the first and last dates of summer visitors.

Last and First Dates of Winter Visitors 2017

Species	Last Date	First Date
Whooper Swan*	4th May	3rd October
Pale-bellied Brent Goose	7th May	27th August
Dark-bellied Brent Goose	31st March	24th September
Barnacle Goose*	30th May	10th September
Pink-footed Goose*	17th May	5th September
Tundra Bean Goose	22nd April	27th October
White-fronted Goose	12th April	3rd November
Long-tailed Duck	15th June	3rd October
Black-throated Diver*	26th April	13th September
Great Northern Diver*	20th May	16th September
Red-necked Grebe	10th March	23rd August
Slavonian Grebe*	31st March	26th September
Jack Snipe	27th May	30th September
Glaucous Gull*	29th May	18th September
Iceland Gull	25th April	28th November
Little Auk	7th March	5th November
Black Guillemot	13th May	2nd August
Waxwing	8th May	18th November
Fieldfare	16th June	12th September
Redwing	12th May	24th September
Brambling	2nd May	24th September
Twite	29th May	4th October
Lapland Bunting	29th January	17th September
Snow Bunting	10th May	4th October

*Obvious summering records omitted (see Classified List for specific records)

Additions and Corrections to Previous Reports

Additions

2016

Siberian Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus collybita tristis*

Two additional sightings have been accepted by the CRC, with singles at Boulmer on 15th October (ME) and Newcastle (Elswick) on 4th November (ME).

2015

Honey Buzzard *Pernis apivorus*

An additional documented record was accepted of a male over the Simonside Hills near Rothbury on 5th July (ME). It was well seen from the top of Simonside, being mobbed by a Merlin *Falco columbarius*, and was viewed circling and then moving off slowly to the west. One of only two Honey Buzzard sightings that year, with another at Ashington on 25th August.

2012

Common Rosefinch *Carpodacus erythrina*

A record was accepted of a first-winter at the 'strawberry field' near the coach park on Holy Island on 29th September (RA). There had been reports of one present there between 24th September-1st October, but no descriptions were forwarded. This becomes the only accepted sighting for Common Rosefinch in 2012.

2007

Caspian Gull *Larus cachinnans*

A report of a first-winter at Newburn on 17th December (GW) was originally submitted to the CRC and deemed 'Not Proven'. It has now been resubmitted with more detailed and corrected photo. This was accepted by the CRC and becomes the second record for the county after the initial sighting at Grindon Lough of a first-winter on 1st June 2007.

1975

Crane *Grus grus*

An observer noted that one seen at Holywell Pond on 28th and 31st August (SY) had not been submitted. As he was only 11 at the time, the sight of one flying around, and approachable to 50m, was a fond childhood memory. Hence this has been formally submitted and accepted by the CRC. At the time it was possible to walk around the pond and hence the excellent views obtained.

Corrections

2016

Leach's Petrel *Oceanodroma leucorhoa*

The month in which the bird was captured on the Farne Islands and Druridge was omitted from the main text – as stated in the Ringing Report it was caught in July.

Ring Ouzel *Turdus torquatus*

The following sentence was incorrectly placed and belonged in the Dipper *Cinclus cinclus* account:

Four in the Harthope Valley in June included a well-grown juvenile and four were at Coalcleugh on 3rd June, with birds at two nest sites in Jesmond Dene and singles at Blakehopeburnhaugh, Rothbury and Thrum Mill.

Isabelline Wheatear *Oenanthe isabellina*

The date on which the bird was found on Holy Island was omitted from the main text – as stated in the article 'Holy Island's Incredible Autumn', it was found on 18th October.

BBRC decisions and records under review

2017

Pallid Swift *Apus pallidus*

Bamburgh - 25th October

Not Proven

2016

'Todd's Canada Goose' *Branta canadensis interior*

Farne Islands / Budle Bay / Goswick - 19th–28th October

Decision Awaited

Great Grey Shrike *Lanius excubitor homeyeri*

Newbiggin – 15th October

Not Proven

Red-flanked Bluetail *Tarsiger cyanurus*

Amble Marina – 9th October

Decision Awaited

2015

Ross's Goose *Anser rossii*

East Chevington / Widdrington – 24th January–8th March

Decision Awaited

2014

'Northern Eider' *Somateria mollissima borealis*

Amble Harbour – 27th–28th August

Decision Awaited

2013

'Northern Eider' *Somateria mollissima borealis*

Seahouses (2) – 15th March–2nd April

Decision Awaited

2010

Ross's Goose *Anser rossii*

Doddington – 8th–10th March

Decision Awaited

'Ashy-headed Wagtail' *Motacilla flava cinereocapilla*

St Mary's – 29th April

Decision Awaited

2009

Cackling Goose *Branta hutchinsii*

Grindon Lough – 3rd–12th April

Decision Awaited

'Central Asian Lesser Whitethroat' *Sylvia curruca halimodendri*

St Mary's – 17th October

Decision Awaited

2007

Cackling Goose *Branta hutchinsii*

Linton Ponds and Bothal Pond – 6th January–24th March

Decision Awaited

2006

Cackling Goose *Branta hutchinsii*

Woodhorn Flashes – 22nd–24th November
Same East Chevington – 20th–30th December

Decision Awaited

2005

Cackling Goose *Branta hutchinsii*

Holy Island and Budle Bay – 6th–13th October

Decision Awaited

‘Eastern Whitethroat’ *Sylvia communis rubicola* / *volgensis*

Brownsman (Farne Islands) - 2nd November

Decision Awaited

2002

Ross’s Goose *Anser rossii*

Budle Bay - 5th October

Decision Awaited

1994

Siberian Common Tern *Sterna hirundo longipennis*

The Long Nanny Estuary (two) – 6th–24th June
Awaited

D e c i s i o n

1992

Siberian Common Tern *Sterna hirundo longipennis*

The Long Nanny Estuary (two) – 25th May
Awaited

D e c i s i o n

1986

Macaronesian Shearwater *Puffinus baroli*

Tynemouth – 8th August

Under Review

Although the identification is not in doubt, Ross’s Goose has yet to be accepted onto Category A of the British List by the British Ornithologists Union, hence it is not included in the official County List. The BOURC are still debating as to whether these records are of wild origin. Progress has been made with Lesser Canada Geese and several county records are now awaiting assessment as Cackling Goose.

Wetland Bird Survey (WeBS) 2017

By Steve Holliday and Kathy Evans

The following tables summarise Wetland Bird Survey (WeBS) counts for selected species in 2017.

Coverage in 2017 is shown below:

WeBS coverage	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Inland waters	47	47	48	28	26	29	21	24	45	46	49	48
Open coast, (max 84.5km)	79.5	72.5	84.5	49.8	22.9	16.6	36.3	37.8	69.8	83.1	74.3	71.8
Tweed Est., no. of sections	4	4	4	3	4	4	2	4	4	4	4	4
Aln Est.	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Coquet Est.	Y	Y	Y	N	N	N	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Blyth Est.	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Tyne Est., no. of sections	3	4	4	4	4	3	3	0	2	3	4	4

NB. Budle Bay, usually included within the Lindisfarne totals, was not counted during August 2017.

Dark-bellied Brent Goose

WeBS	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Lindisfarne	9	86	126	0	0	0	0	0	0	81	80	10
Total	9	86	126	0	0	0	0	0	0	81	80	10

Light-bellied Brent Goose

WeBS	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Inland	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Lindisfarne	1,272	155	250	43	6	4	3	0	1,314	4,000	2,860	1,596
Open coast	23	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Estuaries	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	1,295	155	250	44	6	4	3	0	1,314	4,000	2,860	1,596

Canada Goose

WeBS	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Inland	1,191	1,280	705	397	368	787	386	1,352	1,369	1,971	870	1,095
Lindisfarne	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	7	0	0	0
Open coast	0	2	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Estuaries	84	91	24	17	5	48	123	261	408	181	141	146
Total	1,275	1,373	731	415	373	835	509	1,613	1,784	2,122	1,011	1,241

Barnacle Goose

WeBS	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Inland	8	1	1	1	0	0	0	2	1	18	1	3
Lindisfarne	1,050	800	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	16,750	1,100	1,400
Open coast	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	18	0	0
Estuaries	0	0	0	0	4	0	1	1	1	1	0	0
Total	1,058	802	1	2	4	0	1	3	2	16,787	1,101	1,403

Greylag Goose

WeBS	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Inland	1,008	372	727	351	297	540	70	1,471	1,887	3,138	2,417	1,160
Lindisfarne	270	0	370	0	2	0	0	0	626	125	3	0
Open coast	104	132	156	38	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Estuaries	0	1	7	14	1	4	2	514	30	26	48	25
Total	1,382	505	1,260	403	302	544	72	1,985	2,543	3,289	2,468	1,185

Pink-footed Goose

WeBS	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Inland	1,103	173	211	38	0	0	1	0	0	2,796	172	234
Lindisfarne	0	0	700	0	0	0	0	0	9	8,139	330	1,000
Open coast	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Estuaries	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	43	0	0
Total	1,103	173	912	39	0	0	1	0	9	10,978	502	1,234

White-fronted Goose (Eurasian)

WeBS	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Inland	19	31	1	6	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Lindisfarne	0	0	12	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Open coast	8	14	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	27	45	17	6	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Mute Swan

WeBS	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Inland	347	344	346	107	105	155	169	252	490	385	391	458
Lindisfarne	11	10	5	3	2	0	5	0	10	28	6	18
Open coast	5	1	2	0	2	1	0	1	10	4	1	5
Estuaries	61	64	72	143	274	398	335	202	235	85	50	44
Total	424	419	425	253	383	554	509	455	745	502	448	525

Bewick's Swan

WeBS	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Inland	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Whooper Swan

WeBS	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Inland	21	38	103	26	1	0	0	0	0	17	61	44
Lindisfarne	21	19	120	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	30	2
Open coast	0	0	8	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Estuaries	5	3	86	3	0	2	1	1	1	7	0	1
Total	47	60	317	29	1	2	1	1	1	24	91	47

Shelduck

WeBS	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Inland	6	31	53	64	46	57	8	9	2	0	10	2
Lindisfarne	3,102	1,447	700	318	156	76	122	100	537	1,445	1,530	1,601
Open coast	2	13	37	85	29	21	10	0	0	0	0	0
Estuaries	21	41	118	94	100	71	31	10	4	2	3	4
Total	3,131	1,532	908	561	331	225	171	119	543	1,447	1,543	1,607

Shoveler

WeBS	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Inland	62	42	70	39	13	10	9	31	50	70	108	63
Lindisfarne	10	0	8	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	10	25
Estuaries	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	72	44	78	39	13	10	9	31	50	70	118	88

Gadwall

WeBS	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Inland	154	186	180	123	100	142	74	197	322	386	387	271
Open coast	0	3	1	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	2	5
Estuaries	26	0	4	15	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	180	189	185	138	102	142	76	197	322	386	389	276

Wigeon

WeBS	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Inland	3,426	3,643	2,067	148	21	19	29	53	234	1,172	3,242	3,020
Lindisfarne	1,296	962	571	95	0	0	0	0	1,535	17,182	7,336	1,250
Open coast	750	156	45	6	0	0	0	0	8	124	45	459
Estuaries	707	648	866	28	0	0	0	0	8	352	249	639
Total	6,179	5,409	3,549	277	21	19	29	53	1,785	18,830	10,872	5,368

Mallard

WeBS	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Inland	1,547	1,117	689	295	333	456	614	727	1,073	1,348	1,328	2,110
Lindisfarne	433	158	156	39	28	3	25	60	35	275	47	303
Open coast	136	125	47	29	13	8	23	4	13	21	53	0
Estuaries	443	353	249	126	188	178	159	220	414	439	452	528
Total	2,559	1,753	1,141	489	562	645	821	1,011	1,535	2,083	1,880	2,941

Pintail

WeBS	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Inland	0	1	4	6	1	2	0	1	7	9	5	2
Lindisfarne	277	170	0	9	0	0	0	0	124	72	180	273
Estuaries	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Total	278	171	4	15	1	2	0	1	131	81	185	276

Teal

WeBS	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Inland	3,103	1,307	841	228	24	16	10	63	535	830	1,100	2,069
Lindisfarne	700	115	249	8	9	2	8	0	133	266	111	320
Open coast	73	24	22	7	0	0	2	0	72	50	25	79
Estuaries	890	530	248	101	0	0	0	7	76	255	205	723
Total	4,766	1,976	1,360	344	33	18	20	70	816	1,401	1,441	3,191

Pochard

WeBS	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Inland	35	54	45	21	10	10	0	5	15	11	22	42
Total	35	54	45	21	10	10	0	5	15	11	22	42

Tufted Duck

WeBS	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Inland	580	643	696	346	221	225	180	287	456	516	588	647
Lindisfarne	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Open coast	6	4	2	0	1	2	3	2	2	0	10	14
Estuaries	0	10	7	2	0	2	0	0	5	1	0	10
Total	586	657	705	348	222	229	183	289	463	517	598	671

Scaup

WeBS	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Inland	3	15	15	2	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	2
Lindisfarne	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	0
Open coast	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Estuaries	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	3	15	17	2	0	0	0	1	0	1	4	2

Eider

WeBS	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Lindisfarne	357	281	431	317	309	185	190	73	230	657	394	213
Open coast	342	450	622	236	223	285	414	341	500	334	270	235
Estuaries	139	130	72	102	58	48	37	36	27	26	21	63
Total	838	861	1,125	655	590	518	641	450	757	1,017	685	511

Velvet Scoter

WeBS	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Open coast	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	0	0
Total	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	0	0

Common Scoter

WeBS	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Lindisfarne	300	0	6	0	0	0	0	0	170	518	120	380
Open coast	74	18	167	25	78	1	180	86	521	307	232	78
Total	374	18	173	25	78	1	180	86	691	825	352	458

Long-tailed Duck

WeBS	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Inland	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	2
Lindisfarne	0	0	50	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	3
Open coast	16	9	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	2
Total	16	9	54	2	0	0	0	0	0	1	4	7

Goldeneye

WeBS	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Inland	250	271	271	71	0	0	0	1	1	12	168	229
Lindisfarne	11	0	18	9	0	0	0	0	2	0	19	13
Open coast	18	18	6	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	30	23
Estuaries	101	129	110	5	0	0	0	0	0	5	66	98
Total	380	418	405	85	0	0	0	1	3	17	283	363

Smew

WeBS	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Inland	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Goosander

WeBS	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Inland	44	45	15	7	3	0	0	0	1	98	23	29
Lindisfarne	0	0	0	0	0	24	18	14	3	1	0	0
Open coast	0	1	1	0	0	37	146	29	139	2	0	2
Estuaries	35	19	17	58	17	37	100	120	85	43	26	39
Total	79	65	33	65	20	98	264	163	228	144	49	70

Red-breasted Merganser

WeBS	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Inland	9	8	7	13	1	0	0	0	2	1	2	4
Lindisfarne	38	8	37	55	21	3	36	3	42	23	20	11
Open coast	20	11	34	4	0	1	2	0	4	3	11	17
Estuaries	12	19	10	7	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	6
Total	79	46	88	79	22	4	38	3	51	27	33	38

Red-throated Diver

WeBS	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Lindisfarne	4	0	5	0	5	0	0	0	0	12	13	3
Open coast	19	14	35	5	5	0	0	1	5	59	29	41
Estuaries	2	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4
Total	25	14	42	5	10	0	0	1	5	71	42	48

Black-throated Diver

WeBS	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Lindisfarne	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	1
Open coast	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
Total	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	2	0	1

Great Northern Diver

WeBS	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Inland	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3
Lindisfarne	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
Open coast	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	1
Total	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	1	4

Little Grebe

WeBS	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Inland	86	42	65	47	31	48	64	112	226	156	127	71
Lindisfarne	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Open coast	4	3	1	0	0	0	0	2	3	1	0	1
Estuaries	13	23	10	0	3	1	1	0	20	32	31	34
Total	103	68	76	49	34	49	65	114	249	189	158	106

Red-necked Grebe

WeBS	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Open coast	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Great Crested Grebe

WeBS	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Inland	3	6	25	22	25	32	15	20	22	12	5	5
Lindisfarne	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Open coast	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0
Estuaries	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	3	6	25	23	25	32	15	20	22	12	7	5

Slavonian Grebe

WeBS	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Inland	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
Lindisfarne	5	7	2	0	0	0	0	0	4	0	0	5
Open coast	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	4
Estuaries	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	9	8	3	0	0	0	0	0	5	0	1	9

Black-necked Grebe

WeBS	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Inland	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
Total	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0

Bittern

WeBS	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Inland	3	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1
Total	3	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1

Grey Heron

WeBS	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Inland	41	40	36	25	23	36	21	34	46	49	46	37
Lindisfarne	8	8	5	7	9	14	10	0	8	7	4	4
Open coast	28	9	13	17	1	5	19	37	19	39	19	20
Estuaries	50	20	34	34	24	27	41	49	57	53	53	43
Total	127	77	88	83	57	82	91	120	130	148	122	104

Little Egret

WeBS	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Inland	3	4	4	5	4	2	11	11	6	8	5	2
Lindisfarne	3	3	3	1	1	3	9	11	18	29	7	7
Open coast	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	3	0	0
Estuaries	2	3	2	2	2	4	13	28	29	19	0	1
Total	8	10	9	8	7	9	34	50	54	59	12	10

Shag

WeBS	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Lindisfarne	8	6	8	0	6	0	0	0	13	0	65	0
Open coast	12	13	25	6	0	3	29	14	49	45	11	13
Estuaries	1	3	10	4	0	0	0	0	0	1	4	6
Total	21	22	43	10	6	3	29	14	62	46	80	19

Cormorant

WeBS	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Inland	119	84	50	37	27	40	49	96	94	125	90	90
Lindisfarne	20	11	11	13	17	21	21	1	42	46	123	9
Open coast	64	76	118	65	14	38	131	96	193	171	65	69
Estuaries	153	173	69	81	122	22	99	139	152	129	208	163
Total	356	344	248	196	180	121	300	332	481	471	486	331

Water Rail

WeBS	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Inland	11	9	11	7	2	3	0	7	10	11	20	14
Lindisfarne	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Open coast	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Estuaries	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	11	11	11	7	2	3	0	7	10	11	20	16

Moorhen

WeBS	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Inland	210	184	180	107	86	60	90	133	243	275	231	188
Lindisfarne	2	0	3	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	11
Open coast	4	7	4	5	2	0	5	3	8	1	9	5
Estuaries	40	39	42	27	8	13	16	7	20	26	24	22
Total	256	230	229	139	96	74	111	143	271	302	264	226

Coot

WeBS	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Inland	562	454	358	214	228	230	261	389	624	631	615	565
Lindisfarne	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	2
Open coast	5	4	4	2	0	1	1	0	6	0	3	6
Estuaries	1	4	2	3	0	2	2	0	0	0	0	0
Total	569	462	365	219	228	233	264	389	631	631	618	573

Oystercatcher

WeBS	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Inland	42	102	431	114	85	80	68	24	39	46	67	17
Lindisfarne	605	391	471	311	113	194	191	150	415	807	663	311
Open coast	1,262	1,027	845	426	152	343	478	619	1,077	1,162	1,084	1,182
Estuaries	291	240	273	63	108	65	151	165	165	220	196	147
Total	2,200	1,760	2,020	914	458	682	888	958	1,696	2,235	2,010	1,657

Avocet

WeBS	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Inland	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Estuaries	0	0	0	4	1	0	2	0	0	0	0	0
Total	0	0	2	4	1	0	2	0	0	0	0	0

Lapwing

WeBS	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Inland	1,279	2,515	353	192	152	201	306	1,051	1,634	2,276	876	1,153
Lindisfarne	1,187	2,680	69	11	0	29	11	65	386	2,284	20	62
Open coast	119	38	10	1	2	0	0	14	327	345	219	658
Estuaries	363	330	166	28	62	28	496	595	1,032	2,139	494	256
Total	2,948	5,563	598	232	216	258	813	1,725	3,379	7,044	1,609	2,219

Golden Plover

WeBS	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Inland	286	338	230	500	0	0	0	6	11	640	1,522	17
Lindisfarne	2,012	3,551	0	0	0	250	302	18	0	4,000	0	34
Open coast	84	13	83	3	0	0	0	331	1,517	913	663	573
Estuaries	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	118	128	53
Total	2,384	3,902	313	503	0	250	302	355	1,529	5,671	2,313	677

Grey Plover

WeBS	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Inland	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Lindisfarne	848	192	7	1	227	1	36	36	51	44	292	37
Open coast	52	72	47	13	2	0	0	0	13	34	47	62
Estuaries	1	71	1	0	0	0	0	0	13	21	5	8
Total	901	336	55	15	229	1	36	36	77	99	344	107

Ringed Plover

WeBS	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Inland	0	0	0	0	7	2	0	0	0	0	0	0
Lindisfarne	116	4	8	17	388	48	14	28	25	48	479+	96
Open coast	298	110	59	42	119+	1	27	155	249	195	169	181
Estuaries	76	45	6	2	30	0	19	67	25	126	94	35
Total	490	159	73	61	544	51	60	250	299	369	742	312

Little Ringed Plover

WeBS	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Inland	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	0
Total	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	0

Whimbrel

WeBS	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Inland	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0
Lindisfarne	0	0	0	0	1	1	19	2	0	0	0	0
Open coast	0	0	0	0	3	0	3	7	2	0	0	0
Estuaries	0	0	0	0	0	0	7	0	0	0	0	0
Total	0	0	0	0	4	1	31	9	2	0	0	0

Curlew

WeBS	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Inland	246	318	224	150	39	17	102	97	57	98	78	190
Lindisfarne	1,073	781	1,168	393	108	137	315	200	732	867	496	675
Open coast	701	521	600	92	6	7	283	377	462	511	132	694
Estuaries	309	304	658	115	15	8	401	486	434	238	265	189
Total	2,329	1,924	2,650	750	168	169	1,101	1,160	1,685	1,714	971	1,748

Bar-tailed Godwit

WeBS	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Inland	1	0	0	0	0	5	1	0	0	4	0	0
Lindisfarne	2,175	407	55	1,107	28	7	36	3	74	1,127	667	883
Open coast	23	51	41	9	0	0	3	1	43	53	32	55
Estuaries	23	7	4	0	0	0	0	0	2	22	0	19
Total	2,222	465	100	1,116	28	12	40	4	119	1,206	699	957

Black-tailed Godwit

WeBS	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Inland	0	6	1	0	3	17	1	85	7	1	0	8
Lindisfarne	14	0	0	5	0	0	2	0	0	0	5	9
Open coast	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0
Estuaries	0	0	29	8	3	0	9	17	232	84	3	2
Total	14	6	30	13	6	17	12	102	241	85	8	19

Turnstone

WeBS	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Inland	9	1	1	0	0	15	0	16	0	1	2	1
Lindisfarne	83	61	18	16	28	20	25	0	21	0	70	144
Open coast	667	394	608	448	158	65	175	198	426	640	458	548
Estuaries	17	47	18	17	1	0	8	8	17	12	33	30
Total	776	503	645	481	187	100	208	222	464	653	563	723

Knot

WeBS	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Inland	0	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Lindisfarne	1,721	1,443	15	500	40	0	117	0	12	40	100	574
Open coast	70	52	54	24	1	2	66	10	21	57	61	60
Estuaries	130	15	122	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
Total	1,921	1,512	193	524	41	2	184	10	33	97	161	634

Ruff

WeBS	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Inland	0	1	1	0	1	0	0	3	23	4	0	0
Lindisfarne	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	16	0	0
Open coast	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
Estuaries	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	19	1	0
Total	0	1	1	0	1	0	0	3	24	40	1	0

Curlew Sandpiper

WeBS	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Lindisfarne	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
Open coast	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
Estuaries	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
Total	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	0

Sanderling

WeBS	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Inland	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0
Lindisfarne	209	28	36	19	0	11	0	0	55	68	86	125
Open coast	612	344	398	265	139	0	203	6	90	209	359	347
Estuaries	5	20	34	0	0	0	0	0	0	32	3	0
Total	826	392	468	284	139	11	203	8	145	309	448	742

Dunlin

WeBS	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Inland	3	125	80	0	2	2	6	50	20	31	31	0
Lindisfarne	3,649	1,555	400	1,614	724	31	439	400	1,857	2,630	3,205	3,106
Open coast	827	415	228	35	76	0	200	306	145	243	220	475
Estuaries	444	348	271	27	0	0	45	64	45	139	192	425
Total	4,923	2,443	979	1,676	802	33	690	820	2,067	3,043	3,648	4,006

Purple Sandpiper

WeBS	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Lindisfarne	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	10	13
Open coast	275	82	201	166	48	0	0	3	11	57	153	280
Estuaries	1	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	6	0	0
Total	276	87	201	166	48	0	0	3	11	63	163	293

Woodcock

WeBS	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Inland	3	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	3
Total	3	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	3

Snipe

WeBS	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Inland	52	42	90	11	3	5	0	1	13	18	67	60
Lindisfarne	21	2	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	7
Open coast	2	3	3	0	0	0	1	0	0	5	0	2
Estuaries	8	0	0	5	0	0	0	0	11	13	7	3
Total	83	47	94	17	3	5	1	1	24	36	74	72

Common Sandpiper

WeBS	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Inland	0	0	0	0	7	7	25	6	1	1	0	0
Open coast	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
Estuaries	0	0	0	1	1	0	6	3	0	0	0	0
Total	0	0	0	1	8	7	32	9	1	1	0	0

Green Sandpiper

WeBS	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Inland	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	3	3	0
Open coast	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
Total	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	3	3	3	0

Redshank

WeBS	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Inland	188	262	148	93	12	18	71	129	56	85	65	34
Lindisfarne	1,533	376	324	670	34	1	56	300	1,091	1,114	1,337	411
Open coast	954	700	692	405	6	4	256	256	675	1,108	558	834
Estuaries	387	454	613	396	13	7	203	650	668	679	573	546
Total	3,062	1,792	1,777	1,564	65	30	586	1,335	2,490	2,986	2,533	1,825

Wood Sandpiper

WeBS	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Inland	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Greenshank

WeBS	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Inland	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	2	1	0	0
Lindisfarne	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	8	0	0	0
Estuaries	0	0	0	0	3	0	5	2	8	4	0	0
Total	0	0	0	0	3	0	7	6	18	5	0	0

Kingfisher

WeBS	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Inland	7	7	2	0	0	0	1	2	5	13	9	6
Open coast	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	4
Estuaries	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	2	1	2	2	0
Total	8	9	2	0	0	0	1	4	6	16	12	10

Notes on 2016

The following technical errors occurred with the WeBS tables:

1. The Lindisfarne NNR count data for August 2016 was omitted from the tables in last year's report. A count was, however, undertaken and the information is contained within the Coastal WeBS section on the NTBC website (www.ntbc.org.uk).
2. The Redshank table contained several errors; for clarity, the correct table is as follows:

Redshank 2016

WeBS	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Inland	201	50	178	68	16	8	66	46	18	44	37	37
Lindisfarne	641	441	314	397	6	4	791	284	1,208	933	250	597
Open coast	669	541	342	306	15	6	57	282	592	610	838	901
Estuaries	450	483	457	578	11	5	260	263	572	461	493	386
Total	1,961	1,515	1,291	1,349	48	23	1,174	875	2,390	2,048	1,618	1,921

Acknowledgements

That this information could be compiled is a tribute to the dedication of all volunteers who have covered our inland waters, coasts and estuaries. Credit is also due to Kevin Redgrave and team, of the National Trust, and to Andrew Craggs and his counters for the Lindisfarne data. With grateful acknowledgement to all WeBS contributors during 2016, comprising the names listed below, with apologies for any accidental omissions:

P.J. Allott, M.G. Anderson, N. Anderson, I. Armstrong, W. Banks, E. Barnes, S.L. Barratt, T. Blake, G. Bowman, K. Bradshaw, T. Brewis, K.V. Brooks, A. Brunt, K. Buchanan, P. Burnham, P. Buskin, M.L. & T.A. Cadwallender, I. Chadwick, P. Clark, A. Craggs, A. Curry, T. Daley, I.S. Davidson, K. Davison, M. Davison, J. Dean, W. Dickson, A. Donnelly, J. Eccles, M. Eccles, D. Elliott, K.A. Evans, I. Fisher, P.C. Fletcher, I. Forsyth, M.P. Frankis, E. Hall, C.D. Hampton, C. Hartley, S.T. Holliday, M. Hutcheson, M. Kerby, M.S. Kitching, C.G. Knox, J. Lancaster, J. Lavendar, R. Lee, P.R. Massey, L.J. McDougall, D. McKeown, A.D. McLevy, National Trust team, S.P. Parnaby, K. Potts, R. Poyer, A. Priest, K. Redgrave, M. Richardson, S. Rippon, I.D. Robson, J.A. Roper, C. Scrimgeour, P. Sheard, M.R. Smith, B. Steel, K. Sutfield, E. Tooth, D.M. Turner, A. Watson, T. Watson, S. Westerberg.

Ringling Recoveries reported in 2017

By Ian Fisher



Photo - Avocet - Cresswell Pond - May (Ian Fisher)

Key to symbols and terms used:

Age: terminology as applied at the time of ringing

1 – nestling or chick not yet able to fly

2 – fully grown, year of hatching quite unknown (current year not necessarily excluded)

3 – definitely hatched during current year

4 – hatched before current calendar year, exact year unknown

5 – definitely hatched during last calendar year

6 – hatched before last calendar year, exact year unknown

Sex: M – male

F – female

Manner of recovery:

R – caught and released by ringer

VV – sight record (ring read in field, or a colour-ringed bird)

+ – shot or killed by man

X – found dead or dying

XL – long dead

() – caught or trapped alive and not released, or released but with ring removed

/?! – manner of recovery unknown

Barnacle Goose *Branta leucopsis*

1509966	3 F	12/07/16	Highland Wildlife Park, Kincaig
	VV	31/07/17	Sheepwash
	VV	17/08/17	QEII CP

Pink-footed Goose *Branta brachyrhynchus*

142535	1 M	19/07/17	Haugakvisl, ICELAND
	+	22/10/17	Widdrington

Shelduck *Tadorna tadorna*

GN52078	1	03/07/04	Hauxley NR
	X	09/05/17	Boulmer

Wigeon *Mareca penelope*

FH70467	6 M	21/02/16	Slains, Grampian
	+	03/12/17	Lindisfarne

Leach's Petrel *Oceanodroma leucorhoa*

BX91489	4	29/07/14	Inner Farne, Farne Islands
	R	01/08/14	Inner Farne, Farne Islands
	R	20/07/16	Inner Farne, Farne Islands
	R	30/07/16	Druridge Links
	R	26/07/17	Sumburgh, Shetland

Fulmar *Fulmarus glacialis*

FR76125	1	28/07/86	Isle of May, Fife
	XF	03/05/17	Coquet Island
FV66794	1	18/08/86	Staple Island, Farne Islands
	XL	10/10/17	Cresswell (found dead inside the tower and had probably been there many years).

Little Egret *Egretta garzetta*

GR08375	1	18/05/14	Site confidential, Nottinghamshire
	VV	15/08/14	Tayport Bay, Fife
	VV	08/02/15	Skinflats, Grangemouth, Falkirk
	VV	03/02 & 19/09/16	Holy Island Causeway
	VV	05/01 - 05/03/17	Holy Island Causeway
	VV	25/06/17	Site confidential, Angus
	VV	21/12/17	Holy Island
GV05348	1	24/05/16	Site confidential, Hartlepool
	VV	11/06/17	Site confidential, East Yorkshire
	VV	01/10/17	Budle Bay
GR37108	1	20/05/15	North Cotes, Lincolnshire
	VV	16/07/15	Cresswell Pond
	VV	25/05/16	Castle Island
	VV	03/04/17	Gosforth Subsidence Pond
	VV	10/09/17	Castle Island

Coot *Fulica atra*

GR10922	4 M	12/10/11	Killingworth
	X	08/04/16	Sunderland
GR54348	4	24/01/14	Ford Green, near Stoke-on-Trent
	R	16/12/17	Killingworth

Avocet *Recurvirostra avosetta*

EG25243	1	16/06/10	Seal Sands, Teesside
	VV	14/06/12	North Cave Wetlands, East Yorkshire
	VV	18/04/13	Boue, Aisne, Picardy, FRANCE
	VV	19/02/14	Lytchett Bay, Upton, Dorset
	VV	13/08/15	Alkborough Flats, North Lincolnshire
	VV	22/04/16	North Cave Wetlands, East Yorkshire
	VV	12/05/16	Saltholme RSPB, Teesside
	VV	29/05/16	Minsmere RSPB, Suffolk
	VV	30/05/16	Saltholme RSPB, Teesside
	VV	13/02/17	Titchwell RSPB, Norfolk
	VV	15/04/17	North Cave Wetlands, East Yorkshire
	VV	17/4 - 25/05/17	Cresswell Pond
EX46891	1	12/06/11	Cresswell Pond
	VV	05/04/17	Saltholme RSPB, Teesside

Ringed Plover *Charadrius hiaticula*

8B80420	3	13/09/17	Makkevika, Giske, NORWAY
	VV	14/10/17	Berwick-upon-Tweed
8B80479	3	23/09/17	Makkevika, Giske, NORWAY
	VV	11/10/17	Hauxley

Bar-tailed Godwit *Limosa lapponica*

7218399	3 M	29/09/17	Revtangen, Klepp, NORWAY
	VV	11/10/17	Hauxley
K04740	3 M	29/09/17	Revtangen, Klepp, NORWAY
	VV	11/10 & 09/11/17	Boulmer

Sanderling *Calidris alba*

8109469	4	19/05/16	Sandgerdi, Gullbringu, ICELAND
	VV	09/03/17	Boulmer
NB00723	4	21/05/16	Ebb of the Riv, Sanday, Orkney
	VV	08/08/16-25/02/17	East Chevington beach
	VV	27/7 - 16/11/17	East Chevington beach

Dunlin *Calidris alpina*

JT64244	3	09/09/16	Ujscie Wisly, Swibno, POLAND
	VV	02/10/16	Boulmer

Redshank *Tringa totanus*

RLB/W/M/LLW/NF	3	29/10/16	Welwick Saltmarsh Pools, Humberside
	VV	29/12/16	Newbiggin-by-the-Sea
	VV	01/03 & 13/04/17	Newbiggin-by-the-Sea



Redshank - Boulmer - December (Mike Carr)

Black-headed Gull *Chroicocephalus ridibundus*

ST217140	3	01/07/01	Maalahti, Pohjanmaa, FINLAND
	VV	06/12/17	Newbiggin-by-the-Sea
ST254690	6	22/04/06	Turku, Varsinais-Suomi, FINLAND
	XF	15/10/17	North Shields
HA02829	1	23/06/06	Kiaules Nugaros Sala, LITHUANIA
	VV	04/12/17	Tynemouth
ST274143	4	18/04/09	Porvoo, Uusimaa, FINLAND
	VV	30/01/17	QEII CP
Green JN35	1	07/06/14	Boganesholmane, Stavanger, NORWAY
	VV	26/1 & 01/11/17	QEII CP
EY77579	4	06/12/14	Pitsea landfill site, Essex
	VV	03/11/16	Big Waters NR
	VV	05/11/17	Big Waters NR
Yellow ZRLL	4	02/04/16	Pitsea landfill site, Essex
	VV	16/10/17	Bothal Pond
2510725	2 M	09/12/16	Rotterdam, NETHERLANDS
	VV	04/11/17	Big Waters NR
FS23659	1	01/05/17	Malerzowice Wielkie, Lambinowice, POLAND
	VV	27/08/17	Dunstan, Gateshead, Durham
	VV	28/08/17	North Shields Fish Quay
	VV	04/09/17	Chester-le-Street, Durham
YellowT86W	8?	12/06/17	Jankowo, Kujawsko-Pomorskie, POLAND
	VV	15/11/17 into '18	Stag Rocks, Bamburgh
ST315372	1	08/07/17	Voyri, Vassa, FINLAND
	VV	15/10/17	Exhibition Park, Newcastle

Common Gull *Larus canus*

JA236	4 M	30/10/17	Stavanger, NORWAY
	VV	09/12/17	Big Waters NR

Great Black-backed Gull *Larus marinus*

YellowT:018	1	07/07/13	Bullers of Buchan, Grampian
	VV	06/10/17	Budle Bay
MA32879	1	14/06/16	Isle of May, Fife
	VV	17/03/17	Queen Mother Reservoir, Berkshire
	VV	01/04/17	North Shields Fish Quay

Herring Gull *Larus argentatus*

Yellow 3P9B	3	04/11/16	Rufforth Waste Disposal site, York
	VV	06/10/17	Budle Bay
Yellow 3V7B	3	04/11/16	Rufforth Waste Disposal site, York
	VV	19/09/17	Budle Bay
YellowT:52U	6 M	28/06/17	Wellington Park, Montrose
	VV	08/08 & 14/09/17	Coquet Estuary, Amble

Caspian Gull *Larus cachinnans* (the regular returning bird)

DN27681	1	26/05/11	Zb.Kozielno, Paczkow, POLAND
YellowPKCS	VV	03/07/12	Cley Marshes, Norfolk
	VV	27/07/13	Amble
	VV	09/08/14	Amble
	VV	18/07/15	Amble
	VV	21/08/16	Amble
	VV	26/07/17	Amble

Lesser Black-backed Gull *Larus fuscus*

GA16138	1	04/07/97	Isle of May, Fife
	X	01/02/17	Wooler
Blue Y	?	Pre 2007	Swansea Bay, Wales
	VV	09/11/17	Big Waters NR
LV6991	8	26/01/16	Algarve, PORTUGAL
	VV	22/07/17	Big Waters NR

Sandwich Tern *Sterna sandvicensis*

DB35690	1	18/06/98	Brownsman, Farne Islands
	VV	14/06/03	Hirsholm, Frederikshavn, DENMARK
	VV	10/05/11	Hirsholm, Frederikshavn, DENMARK
	VV	27/06/17	Sprogo, Korsor, DENMARK
DB35865	1	20/06/98	Coquet Island
	R	14/06 & 14/07/17	Stellendam, NETHERLANDS
DD04719	1	18/06/14	Blakeney Point, Norfolk
	VV	08/08/14	Findhorn, Moray
	VV	18/10/15	Storms River, SOUTH AFRICA
	VV	09/07/16	Inner Farne, Farne Islands
DK52530	1	23/06/14	Coquet Island
	VV	11/07/17	Kviljodden, Farsund, NORWAY
NLA1585731	1	19/06/17	Scheelhoek eilanden, Haringvliet, Zuid-Holland, NETH
	VV	12/07/17	Newbiggin-by-the-Sea

Roseate Tern *Sterna dougallii*

ST14583	1	24/06/14	Coquet Island
	VV	30/05/17	Isle of May, Fife
ST14589	1	24/06/14	Coquet Island
	VV	24/08/17	Carnoustie, Angus

Common Tern *Sterna hirundo*

SV63604	1	14/06/01	Coquet Island
	R	20/04/06	Zeebrugge, BELGIUM
	VV	26/05/17	Inner Farne, Farne Islands
CE99575	1	29/06/13	Royal Quays
	VV	06/16 & 14/05/17	Preston Docks, Lancashire
CE99597	1	29/06/13	Royal Quays
	VV	07/08/17	Coquet Island

Arctic Tern *Sterna paradisaea*

SV85332	1	03/07/01	Long Nanny Estuary
	VV	01/06/17	Long Nanny Estuary
ST58396	1	30/06/14	Long Nanny Estuary
	R	12/07/17	Ythan Estuary, Grampian
ST96918	1	23/06/17	Inner Farne, Farne Islands
	XF	09/10/17	Agona Swedru, GHANA

Guillemot *Uria aalge*

T74378	1	28/06/90	Compass Head, Shetland
	XF	19/09/17	Ebb's Snook, Beadnell
AAL666	1	23/06/04	Stora Karlo, SWEDEN
	VV	29/05/17	Inner Farne, Farne Islands

Puffin *Fratercula arctica*

EY63449	1	25/06/14	Inner Farne, Farne Islands
	VV	06/07/17	Ireland's Eye, Dublin

Woodpigeon *Columba palumbus*

FC65221	4	07/04/12	Benton
	+	13/08/17	Newcastle Airport

Barn Owl *Tyto alba*

GV41048	1	05/08/16	Landbeach, Cambridgeshire
	XF	15/01/17	Holy Island
GV38463	1	31/05/17	Red Row
	Injured	12/12/17	Kingston Deverill, Wiltshire

Sand Martin *Riparia riparia*

D825803	3	15/08/16	Kilnsea Clays, East Yorkshire
	R	17/06/17	Calder
S118166	4	18/08/16	Rye Meads, Hertfordshire
	R	18/06/17	Broad oak Quarry

Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus collybita*

CTA395	3	23/09/16	Dungeness, Kent
	XF	24/07/17	Heddon-on-the-Wall
DLC858	4	20/05/17	Copeland MBO, County Down
	R	04/06/17	Gosforth Park
JHJ278	3	25/06/17	Mickley Square Football Field
	R	12/09/17	Gibraltar Point MBO
HYE390	3	26/08/17	Howick Hall
	R	17/10/17	Icklesham, East Sussex
JYV572	3	28/08/17	Bamburgh
	R	23/09/17	Icklesham, East Sussex

Sedge Warbler *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus*

BE28709	3	29/08/11	La Maziere, FRANCE
	R=4F	26/06/12	Big Waters NR
X962375	3	31/08/11	Cardiff Wetland Reserve, Wales
	R	13/05/17	Bamburgh
S355428	3	09/08/16	Ely, Cambridgeshire
	R	17/05/17	Hauxley NR
S471098	4 M	22/06/17	East Chevington
	R	09/08/17	Tour au Moutons, FRANCE
S901830	3	19/07/17	Hauxley NR
	R	28/07/17	Siore sur Sambre, BELGIUM
S651998	3	25/08/17	Bamburgh
	R	10/09/17	Icklesham, East Sussex

Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus scirpaceus*

V710636	3 M	03/08/08	Gosforth Park
	R	18/06/17	Gosforth Park
Y952553	3 J	08/08/13	Icklesham, East Sussex
	R = 4 F	02/08/17	Hauxley NR
Z205148	3 M	07/08/14	Cauldwell Hall Farm, Suffolk
	R	09/07/17	Druridge Links
Z152098	3 J	15/07/15	East Chevington
	X F	20/08/17	Vlieland, NETHERLANDS
Z152136	3	02/08/15	East Chevington
	R	11/08/17	Sandwich Bay MBO, Kent
S368157	4	11/08/16	Minsmere RSPB, Suffolk
	R	17/05/17	Hauxley NR
D876151	3	13/09/16	Orfordness, Suffolk
	R	21/05/17	Gosforth Park
S471192	3	02/08/17	East Chevington
	R	16/08/17	Chasse du Masserau, FRANCE

Blackcap *Sylvia atricapilla*

4L18945	3 F	27/12/16	Cazalla de la Sierra, SPAIN
	R	08/07/17	Big Waters NR
S115507	3	08/07/17	Druridge Links
	R	03/09/17	Litlington, East Sussex
AJA4339	3	01/09/17	Howick Hall
	R	12/10/17	Icklesham, East Sussex
15053456	3 F	04/09/17	Stuivekenskerke, BELGIUM
	R	17/12/17	Abbey Mills Farm

Goldcrest *Regulus regulus*

CLJ133	3 M	22/10/16	Rippon Parks, North Yorkshire
	XF	12/05/17	Hexham
JXP511	3 F	14/10/17	St Cyrus, Grampian
	R	20/10/17	Howick Hall

Blackbird *Turdus merula*

LA27726	4 M	03/08/17	Bamburgh
	R	09/05/17	Bamburgh
7196697	3 M	18/04/11	Botaniske Hage, Oslo, NORWAY
	R	02/01/17	Branch End, Stocksfield

Redwing *Turdus iliacus*

RF24848	4	05/01/17	Whittle Farm
	R	11/12/17	Little Aston, Sutton Coldfield

Pied Flycatcher *Ficedula hypoleuca*

Z618763	1	09/06/16	Linnels
	R = 4 F	25/04/17	Portland Bill MBO, Dorset

Dunnock *Prunella modularis*

VZ28504	3	21/11/16	Chelmondiston, Suffolk
	R	25/03/17	West Moor

Grey Wagtail *Motacilla cinerea*

D532834	3 F	03/08/14	Howick Hall
	R	09/04/17	Hamsterley Mill Bridge, Durham
D632144	5 F	30/06/15	Dovecote, Cumbria
	VV	03/03/17	Big Waters NR

Rock Pipit *Anthus petrosus*

ED06697	4 F	12/09/16	Maletangen, Fraene, NORWAY
	VV	04 & 14/01/17	Newbiggin-by-the-Sea
8E28953	4 M	16/09/16	Makkevika Giske, NORWAY
	VV	16/03/17	Little Beach, Berwick

Chaffinch *Fringilla coelebs*

Z634632	3 F	06/02/16	Woolston Eyes, Cheshire
	XF	22/04/17	Holly Farm, Berwick

Greenfinch *Chloris chloris*

TV46374	3 F	17/12/16	Heysham Harbour, Lancashire
	R	25/04/17	Fenwick

Twite *Linaria flavirostris*

S109845	3	13/09/16	Lodes Marsh, Dove Holes, Derbyshire
	VV	31/01 & 03/04/17	East Chevington beach

Lesser Redpoll *Acanthis cabaret*

L547089	3 M	20/11/10	Finningly Airfield, South Yorkshire
	R	03/06/17	Airy Holm Reservoir, Shotleyfield
Z921045	3 M	26/09/15	Litlington, East Sussex
	R	18/02/17	Branch End, Stocksfield
K655800	4 M	19/03/16	Thetford, Norfolk
	R	21/02/17	Branch End, Stocksfield
Z457677	4 M	04/11/16	Sandwich Bay Estate, Kent
	R	06/07/17	Airy Holm Reservoir, Shotleyfield

Siskin *Spinus spinus*

D112788	5 F	23/04/13	Slaley
	X	01/08/17	Stonmitchan, Argyle & Bute
Z023053	4 M	02/04/14	Branch End, Stocksfield
	R	26/02/16	Hamme Sint Anna, BELGIUM
14496102	5 M	26/03/16	Ethe, BELGIUM
	R	14/04/17	Humshaugh
S202696	6 F	03/04/16	Bonehill, Staffordshire
	R	17/09/17	Broad oak Quarry
Z686928	5 F	29/05/16	Slaley
	X	05/05/17	Islay, Argyll & Bute
Z874259	5 M	04/07/16	Slaley
	R	24/04/17	Drummond, Inverness
S017059	6 M	12/03/17	Blagdon
	R	24/07/17	Herdla Fuglestasjon, NORWAY
Z874450	5 F	24/03/17	Slaley
	R	26/04/17	Kildary, Highland
S197555	5 M	15/05/17	Peebles, Borders
	R	02/07/17	Slaley

Reed Bunting *Emberiza schoeniclus*

S422899	3	21/10/16	Fontburn
	R	12/03/17	Fincaigs, Gauldry, Fife

Acknowledgements:

Most of the above was gleaned from the British Trust for Ornithology's website (link below) and the work of the Northumbria Ringing Group and Mike Hodgson/Bamburgh Ringing Station. My thanks are due to all the observers who keep reporting colour ringed birds – please keep it up!

References:

Robinson, R.A., Leech, D.I. & Clark, J.A. (2017) The Online Demography Report: Bird ringing and nest recording in Britain & Ireland in 2017. BTO, Thetford (<http://www.bto.org/ringing-report>, created on 5th September 2018).

Hen Harriers at a historical roost in Northumberland

By Mike Henry



Inspired by Donald Watson's Poyser monograph, *The Hen Harrier* (1977), I spent much of the 1980s searching for a roost similar to the ones he documented in south west Scotland, since a few harriers were wintering in Northumberland annually. I knew what to look for - boggy depressions with deep ground vegetation - and had found a site in the lowlands where an adult male roosted for a week in sedge and yellow flag in April 1986, but that proved just to be a passage bird. However, harriers still roost there occasionally today, and a sub-adult male Marsh Harrier *Circus aeruginosus* has even overwintered. A newly created reserve on the coast also became a roost site for two ringtails for over a month in March 1989. One was a male, the other a female, so it was instructive to watch them coming in, trying to sex them at a distance - and from the comfort of a hide too! However this roost would only be temporary; as far as I know it has never been used since, though the big clumps of sedge and *juncus* are still there.

While the ringtails were roosting at the coast, I was still searching inland. On 10th April 1989, after struggling across two miles of tussocky sheepwalk, through heavy snow showers, I emerged from the shelter of a sheep stell as the snow cleared out to look down on a flow not unlike Donald's and, moreover, a ringtail was mooching over it. Approaching cautiously, I watched as long as I dared. Being so far from a road, I could not stay until dusk, but I saw enough to convince me that the harrier was settled in the area. Hunting over a wide area of white moor (grassland) and young forestry, it kept coming back to the flow. It was late in the winter season, my Easter holiday was nearly over, so there could be no follow-up until the autumn. But I knew I would be back...

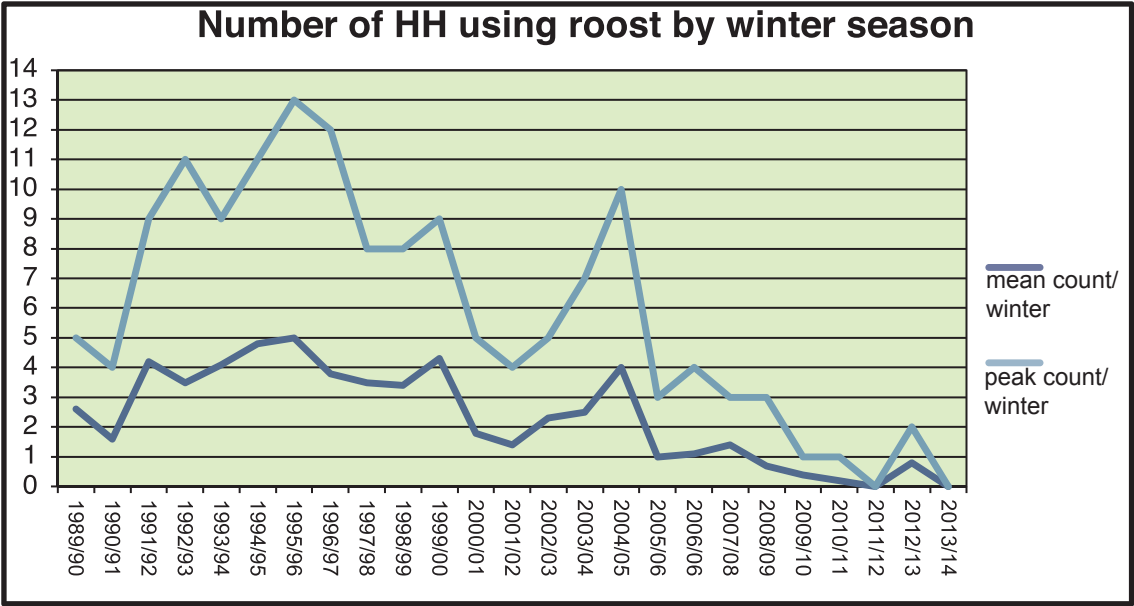
Taking a different, but no less arduous, approach, on 24th September, I sat with my young companion Andrew Hetherington and waited; it seemed almost interminably long. Then, at the last possible moment for us - the light was beginning to fail - a large female with a full crop flew in purposefully from the west and pitched into the rushes without the usual preliminary circling. We had a roost, but in my wildest dreams I could never have imagined how good it would turn out to be. For the next twenty years my life would be different!

The roost is a shallow depression in an area of white moor (or sheep walk) between Hadrian's Wall and the Cheviots. The whole area used to be aptly described as waste, a term which still survives in place names like Spadeadam Waste and Scotchcoulter Waste. Increasingly though, it has lost its wildness, derived from its open, empty vistas in the time of the Border Reivers, because of the systematic planting of the Border Forests stretching from Spadeadam in the west to Redesdale in the east. Nevertheless, on a winter's evening, with a low sun burnishing the bent grasses and *molinia* (purple moor grass), it is still a magical place, far from the hustle and bustle of Tyneside - never more so than when a cock Hen Harrier *Circus cyaneus* sweeps down from the ridge, its plumage gun-metal grey and white in the dusk.

A good yomp was necessary to reach the site over private land and we were lucky to have the blessing of several shepherds over whose land we tramped. Despite the obstacles to reaching the roost easily (including a footbridge being swept away in a spring flood), I was accompanied by Andrew Hetherington for the first decade and subsequently by Robin Reid (who has gone on to study and promote eagles in the Outer Hebrides). In the new Millennium, I invited Phil Curtis of Natural England to help me monitor the roost; he was one of two field workers involved in the Hen Harrier Recovery Project, the first of several Government initiatives to safeguard the Hen Harrier in England, which ran for three years from 2002. Phil proved to be an enthusiastic and quick learner who went on to salvage much from the ill-fated programme as far as Northumberland was concerned.

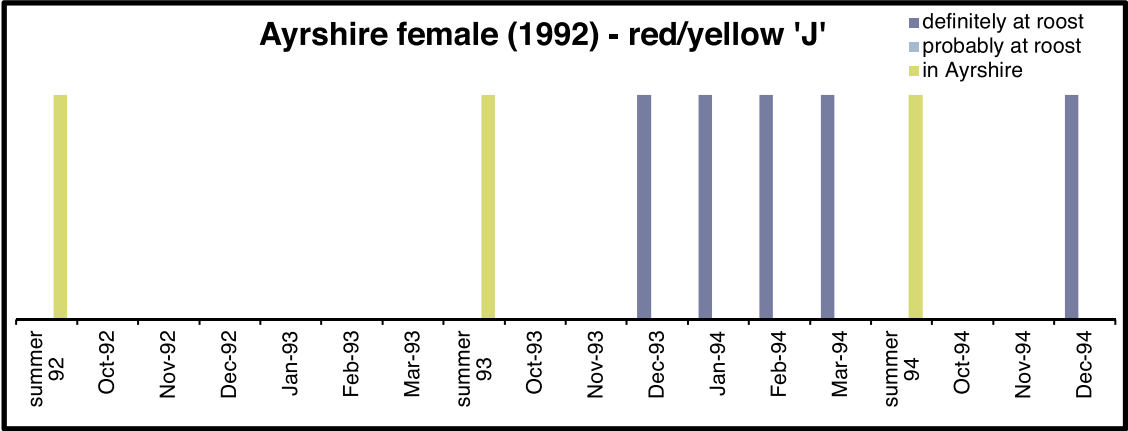
We checked the roost no less than 117 times in the first four years, with 44 visits in 1994 alone. This was because, in simple terms, it was so much fun, but more importantly it soon began to yield significant data. Roger Clarke roped me into the Winter Roost Survey, which he had just started with Donald Watson, and then the big wing-tagging programme got going in Scotland and I was soon sending sightings of tagged birds to its coordinator, Brian Etheridge, in Inverness. Through Brian, I came into contact with other enthusiasts like Ricky Gladwell in Ayrshire, who had tagged some of the birds which turned up at the Northumberland roost.

In retrospect, the discovery of this roost, on an important migration path for harriers, coincided with the best decade of the century (no less!) for the fortunes of the 'Blue Hawk', as it was known in Northumberland in the past. On TV, the Earl of Dalkeith (son of the Duke of Buccleuch), spoke of his willingness to accept Hen Harriers on his grouse moors. This was significant because Buccleuch owned vast swathes of land between the Anglo-Scottish Border and Edinburgh. Indeed, it was said that the Duke could travel from the border to Edinburgh on his own land. Soon the Buccleuch estates were tolerating harriers and, equally important, other major landowners, particularly in Dumfriesshire and Ayrshire, were following suit. Dalkeith provided his Langholm Moor for the Joint Raptor Study, which took place from 1992 to 1997, and the harriers responded so well to the invitation that, in the end, their success proved to be their nemesis in the new century. So productive was Langholm (which was some 40 miles away from my roost) that in 1993 we twice logged at least nine harriers at roost - seven grey males and two ringtails on 17th January and three grey males and a record six 'ringtails' (brown, females or juvenile males) on 29th December. In Northumberland terms, this was sensational as previous estimates had always suggested ca. eight maximum wintering in the whole county, upland and coastal (The late Geoff MacFarlane, pers. comm.). As the decade progressed, seven or eight became 'normal' on a good evening (i.e. windy and mild) and double figures were even attained as follows: 11 on 24th September 1994, ten (all males) on 15th February 1995, a record 13 on 24th January 1996 and 12 (seven grey males) on 29th September 1996. Those were the occasions when the count was verifiable; often we had to be content with eight+, for example. Once, as I was about to leave at dusk, a shot rang out from duck ponds nearby, and six males leapt up out of the rushes. I had only counted five incomers!



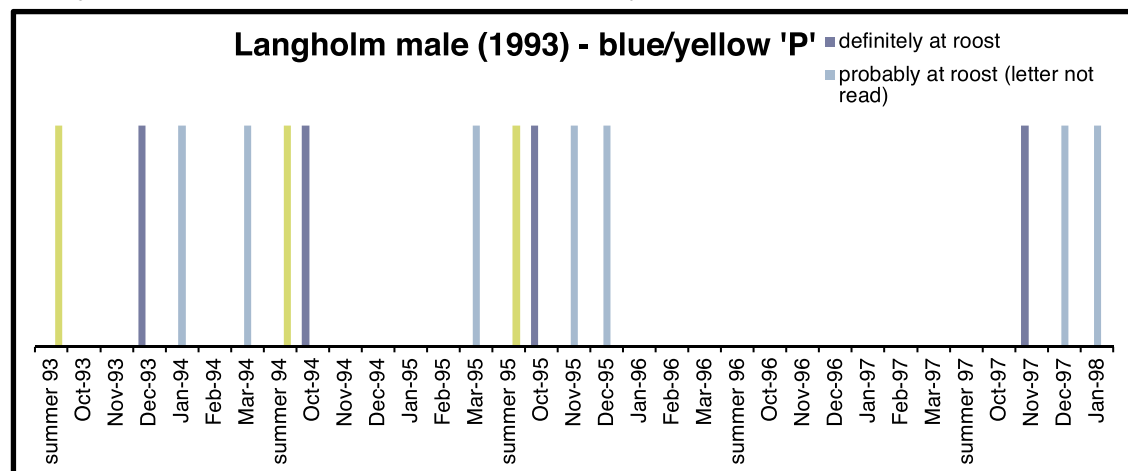
Not only were the numbers good, but they also included wing-tagged individuals from all over Scotland, not just Langholm. On 13 occasions in 1993, we noted birds with wing tags, many of which we were able to read using telescopes. So, for example, on 19th December, three ringtails (two females and a juvenile male) had all been tagged in Dumfries and Galloway. Others were from Ayrshire, Ardnamurchan and Inverness-shire, demonstrating how the central spine of Britain is an important flyway for Hen Harriers. Unfortunately, this includes the Pennines, where recent radio and satellite telemetry work has shown that harriers disappear without trace, especially in areas like the Yorkshire Dales, where there are, or have been, traditional roosts known to local raptor workers.

As the wing-tagging continued, so did the birds appearing at the roost: a Perthshire female in 1994, an Argyll male in 1996 and others from south west Scotland (the colours indicating origin where the tag could not be read). The roost was so productive (of data) that Brian Etheridge himself came down from Inverness to see it, accompanied by Ricky Gladwell, who had tagged many of the Ayrshire harriers. One of Ricky's Ayrshire females (red/yellow 'J') wintered in Northumberland and returned to nest in her Ayrshire territory the following spring. She was a remarkably small bird and an object lesson in not jumping to conclusions when sexing ringtails on size. Sparring with an admittedly huge female Peregrine *Falco peregrinus*, 15km from the roost, on 9th January 1994, female 'J' looked very much the weaker bird. At the time, female 'J' was the best documented harrier on record since her natal, breeding and wintering areas had all been established (B. Etheridge in litt.).

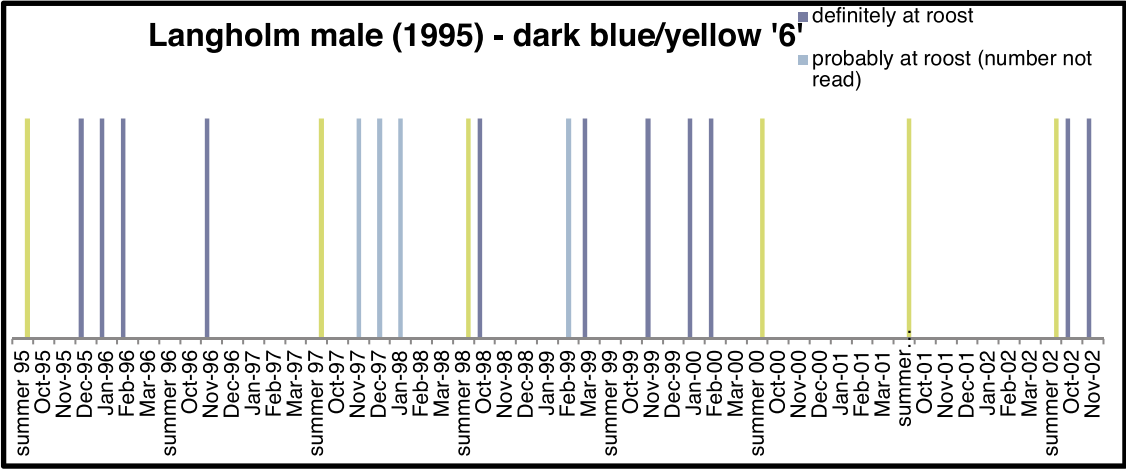


NB. Monthly occupation at the roost may represent a single visit, a continuous spell, or, most commonly, an intermittent period (with times of absence).

However 'J' was not the most interesting guest at the roost. That distinction must be shared by three males, all from Langholm. Male blue/yellow 'K', tagged at Langholm in June 1993, arrived at roost on 12th September and stayed until 13th October, returning a year later as a male in grey plumage, and he was recorded well into February 1995. Male blue/yellow 'P' appeared later than male 'K', on 4th December 1993, also in its brown, immature plumage. Like 'K', it had been ringed and tagged in July by Steve Redpath as part of the Langholm project. It then reappeared in the following two winters, 1994 and 1995, as a male in full grey plumage. In between, it returned to Langholm to breed. In autumn 1995, it briefly shared the roost with a juvenile, 'V', raised on the same moors in a nest only two kms from 'P's.

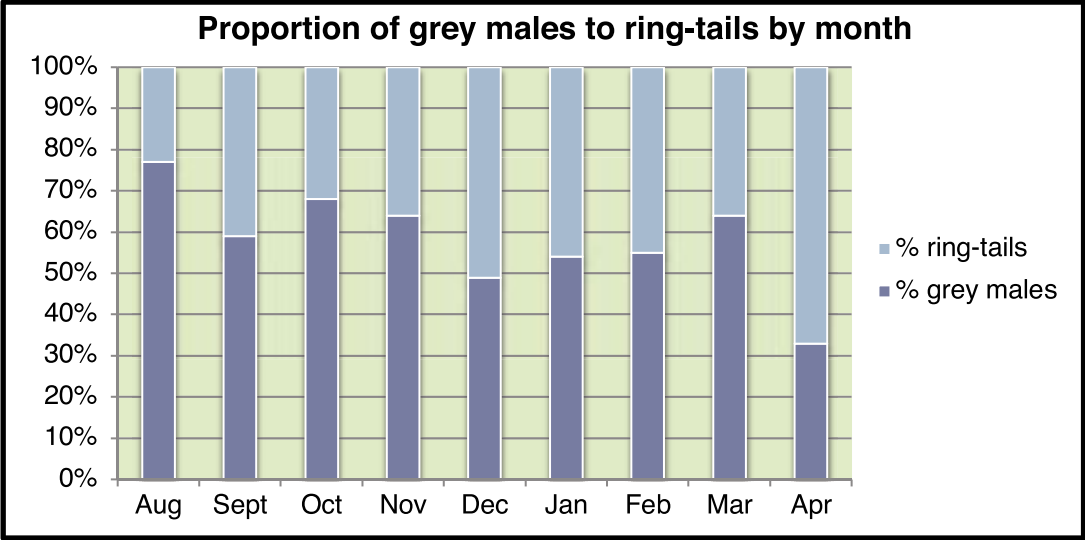


The third male was male blue/yellow '6'. He had been tagged on the Tarras Water (Langholm) by Steve in June 1995 and appeared at roost on 16th December in brown plumage. He reappeared as a grey male in November 1996. He was next located back at Langholm, where he bred in 1997 and 1998. His next appearance in Northumberland, at the roost, was in October 1998, after which he disappeared until November 1999, when he was back at the roost again. We saw him on five further occasions before the end of January 2000, before he moved on, returning to Langholm again in the spring. He nested for three years at Langholm (2000-2002), twice successfully, before reappearing for the last time at roost between 20th October-10th November 2002. We had not seen him in the intervening winters and we did not see him again. At over seven years old, he must be one of the oldest documented harriers in the UK. Seeing him again at roost after a winter's absence was a particular surprise and pleasure (on Roost Count day too!), but, as with so many other aspects of these nomads' lives, it raises as many questions as it answers. He normally used the roost in autumn and early winter and then moved on (except in 2000). How far south did he go? Where was his principal wintering area?



NB. All nine other 'readable' wing-tagged birds were recorded at the roost either on one occasion, or for a single spell of occupation of less than two weeks during September or October. None of these birds were seen to reappear in subsequent winter periods.

We collected as much data as we could (Roger's form was particularly demanding in this respect - some would say daunting), and I always enjoyed watching the harriers coming in, often against a low sunset, and noting times of arrival and where they settled. Invariably, dense rushes in the most treacherous part of the flow were the attraction but once, walking out in near darkness, we triggered an adult male from a rushy sike, a good km from the roost, and over the ridge from it. Equally, birds might suddenly leave at sunset and fly off, apparently to roost elsewhere. There was no lack of similar ground in the vicinity and I was later able to pinpoint a satellite roost only a km away, but not visible from the main roost.



Andrew was particularly interested in the effect of weather on roosting. Why, for example, was the hitherto maximum count of nine, on 29th December 1993, followed by a zero count on 2nd January 1994? This was the first negative since a cold snap in February 1993. Our average over the first four years was 3.2 harriers per visit. The answer was simple: bright, breezy conditions prevailed in late December but, on 2nd January, an occluded front moved through, with heavy snow on its leading edge. It snowed for three to four hours, enough to flatten the rushes and discourage the harriers, which presumably found somewhere more sheltered. On still nights, harriers are more likely to roost where they forage rather than travel to a communal roost.

Over the years, the roost has provided spectacular displays of behaviour, especially interaction with other species. In some winters, Short-eared Owls *Asio flammeus* would beat over the bent grasses (though they did not share the harriers' roost, roosting instead on the slopes above the flow). There were frequent clashes between harrier and owl (and between owl and owl), with exciting duels ensuing. Whenever Red Foxes *Vulpes vulpes* appeared, the harriers would lift off their fence post perches, or the ground, and mob them, chittering and dive-bombing them energetically. Peregrines and Northern Goshawks *Accipiter gentilis* occasionally appeared, but were usually ignored. Most Octobers it was not unusual to watch Merlins *Falco columbarius* (usually juveniles) hunting alongside a harrier around the roost, waiting opportunistically for flushed Meadow Pipits *Anthus pratensis* or Reed Buntings *Emberiza schoeniclus*. Uniquely, on 16th October 1991, six of the eight harriers present flew right up into the air and away in a tight flock to mob a juvenile Golden Eagle *Aquila chrysaetos* at least three kms away (we did not see the eagle but learned of its presence later). The roost, which had been a hotbed of jinking, swirling harriers, was devoid of life for several minutes before they came trickling back. In their absence, they had picked up a wing-tagged bird, which had not been there earlier. Incidentally, there was a severe weather warning that day and several blustery squalls - ideal for harriers!



2000 onwards

The roost continued to be productive for the first decade of the new Millennium, but the pattern has been one of inexorable decline. After a high count of nine on 25th February 2000, numbers settled down to a maximum of five or so mid-decade, dropping to two to three by 2009, and with longer intervals between birds' appearances. In the winter of 2011-12, no harriers at all appeared. For the first time since 1989, I had nothing to report to the Winter Roost Survey, now being run by the BTO after the untimely death of Roger Clarke. Nor was winter 2012-13 much better, though the unexpected arrival of two grey males one evening (but sadly not again) revived memories of the glory days. What is the reason, I keep asking myself?

I have never publicised the roost, never published any data and guarded it to the best of my ability. But others came to know of its existence as deer stalkers worked the adjacent forestry and a local hunt hunted the periphery occasionally. Furthermore, there were duck-shooting ponds in the vicinity and a favourite flight line of the harriers took them over one of them. One afternoon, Andrew and I arrived to find two hunters

hunkered down in the central rushes. I challenged them because I knew who owned the shooting rights and they had no permission to be there. They had some very aggressive dogs (one a lurcher-type), but were not aggressive themselves and claimed to be waiting for a fox! We conceded that they might shoot a fox, but we would stay to watch the proceedings until after sunset. With that, they withdrew over the hill and we never had any evidence of interference after that, though of course there may have been. The fact that there were two different ways in to the site (one a concealed approach allowing surprise), and that I varied the day of my visits and could turn up at any time, makes me confident that human interference has not been the main cause of the roost's decline - at least in the sense that the roost has not been shot out.

Donald Watson observed that rough shooters sometimes went through his roost and drove off the harriers, but they always came back after a day or two. The remarkable thing about a roost is that often the first bird to arrive in autumn is a juvenile. It has never been there before (by definition) and no adult has shown it the precise patch of rushes where they *always* roost - yet that is invariably where it goes down. So harriers find their own way there (as they do to moorlands which have been characterised as sinks) and the habitat has not changed. On the contrary, various countryside stewardships have halted and even reversed the very obvious 'improvements' of the 1990s, when drainage schemes could transform rush-covered ridges into green, but spongy, pastures in a season. Unlike Donald Watson's roost, which declined in the 1980s because the Galloway Forest Park grew up around it and reduced hunting opportunities, my roost lies in an area where there have been no significant changes in land management for the last 30 years. The reason for its decline must therefore lie somewhere else.

A species in decline

By 2010, I had formed the impression that harrier numbers were much lower than they had been a decade previously. In 2012, these suspicions were confirmed when the results of a 2010 survey were finally published (Holling *et al.* 2012). From 806 pairs in 2004, the breeding population had declined to 646 pairs, an 18% drop despite increases in Wales. The decline was most marked in the Isle of Man and Scotland, where only the Hebrides and Orkney displayed stable populations. Yet in 2010, there were still 12 nesting pairs in England, most in Bowland. Since that survey, matters have deteriorated. None nested successfully in Bowland in 2012, for the first time in half a century, and only one pair in the whole of England was successful (Pitches 2013). In 2013, the inevitable happened: none nested successfully in England (Winter 2014), though one pair tried to hang on in the county which they first colonised in the 1950s, namely Northumberland. The 2016 survey revealed a further drop in numbers to a total population of 575 pairs, a 'non-significant' decline of 13% (RSPB).

So, it's not a question of displacement either; they are not somewhere else. They simply do not exist; the population has declined in absolute terms. It seems that my roost situation is mirrored elsewhere. In Durham, 'alarmingly the frequency and number of birds appearing at upland winter roost sites has fallen significantly in the last decade' (Bowey and Newsome 2012). The Breeding Birds of Cleveland (2008), discussing the decline of Hen Harriers on the North York Moors, contains this significant sentence: 'Gone are the days of the late 1980s when up to eight birds could be seen coming in to the traditional roost site on the moors above Scaling Dam'. The blame for this decline is laid squarely on the intensification of grouse shooting on the northern edge of the moors around Whitby. It is very hard to get up-to-date figures, but I would be astonished if the moors above Sheffield hold the numbers they once had; 'the largest number of Hen Harriers ever recorded was eleven, including nine in the air together, on Derwent Moor on 11th November 1982' (Hornbuckle and Herringshaw 1985). The Humber basin certainly doesn't have the numbers it once had, and not just at the well-publicised roost at Blacktoft Sands, but right along the estuary (Graham Catley, pers. comm). Apparently, birds using the well documented New Forest roosts have halved in number since the 1980s (Eyre 2015).

While the decline at my roost seems to fit a pattern, there are also specific factors which can have contributed directly. There are far fewer harriers being fledged in south west Scotland than there were in the 1990s, and there are no harriers breeding in the North Pennines; whereas, in 1994, four pairs fledged 13 juveniles in Pennine Northumberland, the best figure in modern times, but, thereafter, persecution set in with a vengeance, successfully eliminating breeding on the grouse moors there (one might add and made it impossible for harriers to thrive, even on the extensive RSPB-owned moors at Geltsdale, because harriers do not recognise fence-lines!). Although places like Argyll and Orkney (back to strength since the cause of the decline there was identified as overgrazing) continue to produce a surplus (a hundred juveniles fledged in Orkney in 2011), there are just too many sinks for the population to remain stable. In the last three winters, it has been hard to find a single Hen Harrier in the vast emptiness along Hadrian's Wall. It is even less rewarding to go into the lovely South Tyne Valley, where Hen Harriers used to spar with Peregrines over the snowfields of the moorland ridges against leaden, snow-filled skies. Not any more, and the Peregrines are

gone too, their eyries deserted or occupied briefly by juveniles from elsewhere, before they too fall to the gun or the trap (should this be deemed fanciful, I have seen with my own eyes a keeper in a balaclava edging around a Peregrine nesting buttress, shotgun at the ready, on an April day of swirling hill fog and, on another occasion, masked men hunkered down in eroded gullies on a moor where a harrier had been 'skydancing'. On seeing me watching them through a scope, they crept away over a ridge and ten minutes later a male harrier 'yo-yo'd' low over the exact area where they had been concealed). Both incidents were reported at the time, but flatly denied by the estate concerned.

Nor is this limited to my area or own experience. A recent paper in Biological Conservation (Amar *et al.* 2012) has demonstrated scientifically that Peregrines on northern English grouse moors are no more productive than Peregrines in the 1960s at the height of organo-chlorine pesticides, whereas those nesting on moors not managed for grouse are more than twice as productive. They have increased (from 19 to 53 pairs over a 25 year period) as might be expected, whereas grouse moor pairs are stagnant or declining (from 23 to 21 pairs). In fact, grouse moor pairs are dependent on recruits from outside to sustain themselves. In other words, they are sinks. Even more striking to me as a layman was the conclusion in the Amar study that persecution masks the effects of weather. Productivity on grouse moors in a normal year is similar to that in other habitats only in the wettest Mays! (0.45 to 0.99 young per occupied territory as opposed to 1.51 or more per pair on unmanaged moorland). So, I am not imagining the decline in Hen Harriers - it is real, as documented in three surveys, and nowhere more marked than in north east Scotland, where at least 28 breeding pairs, the majority on kept grouse moors, in the 1990s declined to one pair in 2014 (Rebecca *et al.* 2016).

In conclusion, the roost studied intensively for over 20 years yielded a lot of data and gave much pleasure. It was imperative to keep its location secret for obvious reasons; as early as the late 1980s 'lamping' at the roost was a known method used to dispose of unwanted harriers and satellite-tagged harriers continue to vanish without trace, often after roosting - most recently 'John' on Threshfield Moor, a tiny grouse moor in a huge expanse of white moor in the Yorkshire Dales NP, and 'Manu' on Blenkinsopp Common in Northumberland (not a million miles from my roost) in late 2017. These two took the number of satellite-tagged harriers to disappear mysteriously in northern England to seven in just over a year (Pitches 2018). No satellite-tagged harrier has been recorded as roosting at the site discussed in this article since regular monitoring ceased (anon), which confirms my belief that the roost is now largely abandoned and, therefore, it seems safe and worthwhile to publish details of an era in Northumberland's long history of harriers attempting to make a comeback, which a few of us were privileged to witness.

Acknowledgements

Peter Howard patiently transformed pages of data into the graphs and charts which adorn the text. I am grateful for his support and expertise.

References

- Amar, A. *et al.* 2012. Linking nest histories, remotely sensed land use data and wildlife crime records to explore the impact of grouse moor management on peregrine falcon populations. *Biological Conservation* 145 (1).
- Bowey K. & Newsome M. (Eds). 2012. *The Birds of Durham*. Durham Bird Club.
- Eyre J. (Ed.). 2015. *Hampshire Bird Atlas 2007-2012*. Hampshire Ornithological Society.
- Holling M. *et al.* Rare Breeding Birds in the UK 2010. *British Birds*, 105: 377.
- Hornbuckle J. & Herringshaw P. (Eds). 1985. *Birds in the Sheffield Area*. Sheffield Bird Study Group & Libraries.
- Joynt G., Parker T. & Fairbrother V. 2008. *The Breeding Birds of Cleveland*. Teesmouth Bird Club.
- Pitches, A. (Compiler), 2013. News and Comment. *British Birds*, 106: 4.
- Pitches, A. (Compiler). 2018. News and Comment. *British Birds*, 111: 362.
- Rebecca G. *et al.* 2016. The past, current and potential status of breeding Hen Harriers in North-east Scotland. *British Birds*, 109: 69-134.
- Watson, D. 1977. *The Hen Harrier*. T & AD Poyser. Calton.
- Winter, S. 2014. Skydancers in peril. *Nature's Home*, Winter 2014: 47.

The colonisation of Ring-necked Parakeets in Newcastle upon Tyne and Northumberland

By Phil J. Allot



Ring-necked Parakeets - North Seaton - March 2014 (Hector Galley).

Introduction and context

I have always been intrigued by species that colonise urban areas and that is where my fascination with the Rose-ringed Parakeet *Psittacula krameri* (hereafter referred to by its British vernacular name of Ring-necked Parakeet) began. As a youngster, I regularly visited relatives in London and saw a range of colourful, exotic species alongside the drab natives I was used to seeing at home.

In Bushy Park (London), Egyptian Geese *Alopochen aegyptiaca* and Mandarin Duck *Aix galericulata* dazzled on the ponds, whilst the air was filled with the piercing call of the iridescent Ring-necked Parakeet, a strikingly green, tropical parrot species far more at home across Africa and south Asia! I stood fascinated by all of these alien species, none more so than the flocks of chattering parakeets. How exactly had so many ended up here?

With my interest sparked, I investigated their origins and found multiple theories ranging from the set of *The African Queen* in 1951, to public releases by Jimi Hendrix in the Sixties! (www.benthamopen.com). Although conclusions differ, the general consensus is that all of these birds have derived from caged birds (Holling *et al.*, 2011).

Over a 30-year period, well documented escapees were noted and by 1983, they were added to the official British list after they proved self-sustaining. The first breeding record was in Surrey in 1971 (Brown & Grice, 2005). Subsequently, they have gone from strength to strength. The popularity of the parakeet as a home pet, thanks to its glamorous appearance, must play its part. However, its incessant screeching and voracious appetite must surely dissuade many from ownership.

Along with London and the home counties, many European cities have found their urban parks and leafy suburbs under invasion, with an estimated 85,000 birds whose own origins are shrouded in mystery, scattered across the continent (www.benthamopen.com).

Status in the North East

Over the past 20 years, more towns and cities across England are housing parakeet populations. These are encroaching farther north and have now reached the North East. It is hard to say if the London birds have contributed towards the expansion throughout England, but the increase in numbers of stable populations, mixed with some escapees, would lead to a natural expansion.

The Ring-necked Parakeet's raucous, group-orientated behaviour easily outcompetes native species for both food and nest sites. At home in open woodland and parkland, they have found the many suburban parks of Europe to their liking, and this is very much the case in the North East of England.

In 2005, a series of records around Acklam (Middlesbrough) and the suburbs or Hartlepool were presumed to pertain to a few escaped individuals, with breeding confirmed at Acklam Hall in 2006. Since then, a small

self-sustaining population has chosen Ward Jackson Park in Hartlepool as their home. It has all the elements that parakeets need to succeed: open parkland with surrounding borders of mature trees; large gardens and a plentiful food source. It is not unusual to see the birds feeding in groups on the ground, foraging under trees (Joynt *et al.*, pers obs).

Origins and timeline

It is debatable how much the Parrot Farm trade and private collectors have contributed to the North East population, but during my research I came across several unconfirmed records of breeders releasing birds in the Darras Hall and Kirkley Hall areas of Northumberland.

Behaviour and habits in the Newcastle area

In 2014, the Ring-necked Parakeet was added to the Northumberland list after a series of increasing sightings resulted in successful breeding and a presumed self-sustaining population at Moorside Allotments (Nun's Moor).

Despite their gregarious nature, the parakeets can be hard to see once perched and often they can be located only by their call. The majority of records are therefore of flyovers. Sightings of perched birds have been recorded at Exhibition Park, Jesmond Dene, Walker Riverside Park and Richardson Dee's Park (Wallsend), with birds seen nest prospecting at the latter site. It was in the Newcastle area that the records of larger gatherings were first recorded, and a constant pattern soon became visible.

The parakeets tend to stick to a relatively narrow flight path. They commute from their roost site in the Denton Burn area of the city and head east over Cowgate and Fenham in early morning, often stopping to feed at regular garden sites. They then continue east over Newcastle Town Moor, before branching off, with some flying over Exhibition Park towards the Jesmond area and others flying over the BBC studio, continuing east towards Walker. Some go as far as Richardson Dee's Park; the extent of their typical range. The smaller part of the flock appears to stay together to feed (communally) along the spine of Jesmond Dene, extending to Heaton and Armstrong Park. They are frequently seen and heard travelling over Jesmond and Heaton; over the latter on a daily basis. The other part of the flock prefers the lure of the green areas of Walker and Wallsend at the eastern limit of their range. These two groups may consist of the same birds, but cross over is not clear and very difficult to monitor.

As a species, Ring-necked Parakeets are hardy birds, rarely affected by cold winter temperatures. Since 2013, there has not been a severe long winter in the North East and it seems that even the 'Beast from the East' did little to dent the population in late February-March 2018. An extended harsh winter, when their numbers were lower, could have had a dramatic impact on the current population, but it seems a few mild winters in a row have helped them to thrive.

During harder times, the parakeets were encouraged by locals in the Fenham area, who put out food daily in their gardens, providing a good first and last fuel stop at their post and pre-roost gathering site. It is from here that many of the early records from 2013 first alerted people to the numbers of parakeets in the vicinity. In February 2017, I observed 26 individuals in a pre-roost gathering in the trees surrounding Moorside Allotments. It was the largest record for the Newcastle area at the time, but is some way off the record 6,818 in a roost at Esher in Surrey!

A few locals living in houses backing onto Moorside Allotments also feed the parakeets daily and it is common to hear them feeding here before flying into the safety of the bordering trees.

Locals have also noted the negative impact that the parakeets can have and many are not keen on their new neighbours. One resident told me about a pair of parakeets who spent a weekend excavating a nest hole in a cherry tree below his vegetable patch, showering him with debris as they went. Chasing Great Spotted Woodpeckers *Dendrocopos major* from their nest holes seemed an ironic complaint that was raised to me, bearing in mind that the woodpeckers have done the same thing to other species. The consumption of large amounts of the locals' flower buds and fruit crop did seem more antisocial. However, one intriguing note came from someone who asked if they can be trapped and kept as pets in order to breed. A very strange role reversal!

The mature trees and gardens can provide safety and the potential reason for the parakeets' success could be down to the lack of predators. However, I have often witnessed Sparrowhawks *Accipiter nisus* targeting the parakeets, albeit unsuccessfully. With no recorded human persecution and Peregrines *Falco peregrinus* only recently establishing themselves in Newcastle, Sparrowhawks are the only viable

predator locally, although predation from Tawny Owls *Strix aluco* has been recorded in London and may play a part (Hancock, 2015). Whether it is the loud noise or bright colour that attract the Sparrowhawks, the parakeets are upsetting the local Magpie *Pica pica* population, who mob them mercilessly. However, in September 2016, five Ring-necked Parakeets were seen mobbing a Common Buzzard *Buteo buteo* over Nuns Moor (Fenham) alongside some crows (Birds in Northumbria 2016).

Outside the Newcastle area

Since the establishment of the population around their Newcastle stronghold in 2013, there has been an expansion north, which was first seen throughout 2016 in the Gosforth area. Birds, presumably exploring from the Town Moor, were noted around Gosforth High Street, Ilford Road and Brunton Park during the summer (Birds in Northumbria 2016).

In the winter of 2016-17, as many as 17-20 birds were noted roosting on the outskirts of Gosforth Park NR around the Black Plantation area and were subsequently seen regularly around Heathery Lane and Gosforth Garden Village. They were also seen well into the spring of 2017 (although in lower numbers) at multiple sites around these areas and whilst nest prospecting. This kind of expansion could lead to further ventures north into suitable habitats across North Tyneside and south east Northumberland (witnessed personally and by local sources and Birds in Northumbria 2016).

Although the majority of sightings before 2013 have been documented around the wider Newcastle area, there are a few intriguing records from other sites which add further speculation to this population's origins.

In late 2011, a pair of Ring-necked Parakeets was seen at various sites around the south east of the county, including Wallsend, and a pair was even seen excavating a nest hole in Churchill Park (Whitley Bay). Throughout 2010 and onwards, a regular bird was present in Ponteland and was often observed feeding its reflection in the window of its favoured perch; this lonely parakeet was miraculously joined by a mate in 2011, and the pair eventually disappeared. In 2014, singles were present in a Whitley Bay garden and neighbouring Brier Dene, Arcot Hall GC (Cramlington) and Matfen. Interestingly, there is also a record of a regular Alexandrine Parakeet *Psittacula eupatria* at Hauxley NR feeding station throughout 2013 and 2014; a genuine escapee, however, one Ring-necked Parakeet did fly north over Hauxley village in the summer of 2016. Also, small numbers were observed on a few occasions in a North Seaton (Ashington) garden in the winters of 2014 and 2015 (Birds in Northumbria 2011-2016 and pers.comm.).

Could all of these individuals have escaped and eventually met up in the suburbs of Newcastle and established the current population? We can never know for sure, but it does seem coincidental that a large population soon took hold after these birds were seen and then vacated their primary sites.

The future

At the time of writing (July 2018), as many as 20 Ring-necked Parakeets are currently occupying north Northumberland, with sightings at Belford, Embleton, Haggerston Castle, Longhoughton and Waren Mill (per local sources). How long these particular individuals will be around is anyone's guess, but the tenacity of this species should not be underestimated.

Overall, it seems that the key to the parakeets' success across Europe, England and Newcastle is down to a combination of factors, including climate change, stable and suitable habitat, a steady food source, relatively low numbers of predators, lack of persecution and low levels of competition for breeding habitat and food. These elements have created the ideal environment for this charismatic invader to thrive. They will, like all introduced species, divide opinion, and only time will show their true impact on our eco-system. Currently, I can only see the population gathering strength and expanding farther from Newcastle and North Tyneside into the suburbs of south east Northumberland and maybe even farther. Personally, I like them and, although potentially damaging, they have brightened up many a grey day in the North East for me.

Acknowledgements

Help, guidance and records were kindly provided by Steve Holiday, Dee McKeown, Graeme Bowman, Les Robson, Mike Carr, Tim Dean and the residents of Moorside Allotments (Fenham).

References

www.benthamopen.com

Birds in Northumbria: 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015 and 2016, Northumberland & Tyneside Bird Club.

Brown, A. & Grice, P. (2005). *Birds in England*. Poyser. London.

Hancock, R. (2015). Predation of Rose-Ringed Parakeets by raptors and owls in Central London. *British Birds*, 108, pp. 349-353.

Holling *et al.* (2011). Non-native breeding birds in the UK in 2006, 2007 and 2008. *British Birds*, 104, pp. 132-134.

Joynt, G. Parker, T. & Fairbrother, V. (2008). *The Breeding Birds of Cleveland, A Tetrad Atlas 1999-2006*. Teesmouth Bird Club

Bibliography

Woodward, I. & Arnold, R. (2012). The changing status of the breeding birds of the Inner London area, *British Birds*, 105, pp. 433-457.



Ring-necked Parakeets - North Seaton village - March 2014 (Hector Galley)

Barn Owl - An update on an out of control hobby; the 2017 season

By Phil Hanmer

Having written a substantial paper on my Barn Owl *Tyto alba* work in North Northumberland for Birds in Northumbria 2016 (Hanmer, 2017), it may seem a bit soon to revisit the subject of nesting Barn Owls. However, 2017 proved to be an exceptional year in terms of productivity; indeed this study (of around 100 sites) indicates that this was the most successful year since at least 2006 for Barn Owls and that the climate (or in simple terms the weather) was the predominate determining factor in this outcome.

Consequent on the exceptionally good weather, many birds started nesting early and we were ringing owlets in May (not normal until June or July). The number of owls attempting to breed was exceptionally high, with 64% occupancy of sites (I recorded 33% in 2014). Ultimately, we recorded 58 successful nests and 196 owlets were ringed. Some early nesting owls were able to raise a second brood and eight (all but one in the southern half of the coastal strip) had young that were ringed in September and October. Six broods failed, but two of these were replaced successfully, with new eggs laid in July and August. The success at surviving (of any of the later fledgling owlets) is, of course, influenced heavily by the weather in the last few months of the year.

The average number of owlets fledged was only 2.8 (not substantially higher than in other years) but there were eight notably larger broods, which may indicate a particular high 'local' density of small mammal prey. The largest individual brood encountered (of seven owlets in the Coast AONB area) was especially noteworthy as it included a bird which showed the beautiful genetic traits of a dark or buff-coloured owl from the eastern side of Europe (see accompanying photographs). The full scientific name of 'our' owl is '*Tyto alba alba*'; a buff-coloured eastern owl being '*Tyto alba guttata*'. There are two possible origins of this *guttata* genetic heritage in the parentage of our owl; one is the natural arrival of a bird that has flown across the North Sea (as for example has been proven by the presence of a breeding Dutch ringed *guttata* bird in East Anglia in 2008; Hudson, 2009). Alternatively, a *guttata* bird may have been released (illegally) from captivity and has survived successfully in the wild.



Barn Owl - Coastal AONB - September (Phil Hanmer)



Barn Owls - Coastal AONB - September (Phil Hanmer)

Elsewhere In the study, four newly fledged owlets died shortly after leaving their nests; two for unknown reasons, another drowned in a water butt; while the fourth travelled a distance of 6kms, only to hit a fence. Seventeen new adult Barn Owls were ringed and 34 were re-trapped, including one female which is eight years old and another three adults which are six years old. Our now resident female owl from Dumfries successfully bred again and two birds, both hatched on the coast in 2014, bred successfully inland this year. In one case, this was for the first time, although it had occupied its nest site (near Whittingham) in 2016; the

other bird had bred at the same inland site near Allerdean in 2016.

Five regular pairs were re-trapped. Another pair was identified in March in their regular nest site, before the female was found dead near Wooler. However, the male was successful at attracting a new mate and they were able to lay eggs before the end of April!

Jackdaws *Corvus monedula* again occupied a number of nest sites (15+ this year) but others were seemingly beaten to sites as the owls were able to start breeding so early in the year. Kestrels *Falco tinnunculus* did not seem able to take advantage of the early spring and only one pair used a nest box. However, this pair nested within a few metres of a successful Barn Owl and raised a large brood of six pulli. At another site, near Longhorsley, a pair of Barn Owls took over a small Kestrel-type box and raised a large brood of five owlets.

Tawny Owls *Strix aluco*, surprisingly, took over three Barn Owl boxes and two pairs succeeded in raising young in these less than ideal locations for this species.

Successful Barn Owl nests were monitored near the following locations: Alnmouth, Alnwick, Berwick-upon-Tweed, Boulmer, Craster, Doddington, Fallodon, Howick, Lindisfarne, Longhorsley, Lowick, Netherwitton, Rothbury, Warkworth, Whittingham and Wooler.

Finally, it is perhaps worth reporting that the national Barn Owl Trust collated information from 38 independent groups and published this as the 'State of the UK Barn Owl population - 2017' at the end of the year (Barn Owl Trust, 2017). They said that 'Across most of England and into mid-Wales, Barn Owls had a generally good, to very good, year'.

Acknowledgements

Thanks are due to all those who have helped with this project, in what was a very busy year.

References

- Barn Owl Trust. (2017). State of the UK Barn Owl population - 2017. Published on-line.
- Hanmer. P. (2017). Barn Owls - An out of control hobby. *Birds in Northumbria 2016*. Northumberland and Tyneside Bird Club.
- Hudson, N. (2009). Report on rare birds in Great Britain in 2008. *British Birds*, 102. pp. 565-566.

Editor's Note

The young bird pictured is obviously not a pure *guttata*, but whether it is an Intergrade between *alba* and *guttata*, or an aberrant *alba*, is not discernible from the photographs.

Tawny Owl and Barn Owl pellet analysis at Haughton Strother GP (near Humshaugh)

By Mike Richardson

In January 2002, I read an absorbing article by Steve Holliday on the examination and identification of owl pellet contents (Holliday 2001). At the time it was of particular interest, as I was aware of a Barn Owl *Tyto alba* roost site at Caistron Nature Reserve (now Caistron Fishery) an area I used to visit regularly. I took the liberty of approaching Steve via email to ask if he would be interested in examining any pellets I was likely to find there, to which he generously agreed. Over my next few visits to Caistron, I managed to collect 14 pellets, from which he identified a total of no less than 61 mammals (Holliday & Richardson 2002).

Fast forward a few years and I had cause to visit Steve at his home in Cramlington, where he introduced me to the techniques and intricacies of pellet identification. I was pretty much hooked from that day to this, and now examine pellets at every available opportunity.

Collecting pellets at Haughton Strother

Tawny Owls *Strix aluco* are resident at Haughton Strother and I often find pellets in a small conifer wood.

The Barn Owl is a regular visitor, which no doubt breeds locally. Their pellets are more difficult to find, unless a bird happens to be roosting on-site, as was the case in early 2013 when a bird roosted in a bale store at Haughton Strother Farm. I collected 34 pellets from here before the bird was predated, I suspect by the local cat. In other years, I regularly find Barn Owl pellets by walking fence lines. It is possible to identify a few favoured perches, where occasionally two to three pellets can be collected at a time. Finding pellets in summer is more difficult as they tend to be dropped closer to nest sites.

Identifying pellets

Barn Owl – Quite large (up to thumb size) and always black, often with a smooth, shiny surface made up of beetle wing casings.

Tawny Owl – Smaller than Barn Owl pellets, and grey in colour. Long and narrow, usually tapered at one end, but can be more irregular in shape.

Methods and initial analysis

Pellets come apart much easier if they are first soaked in water. Using forceps to tease the pellet apart soon reveals animal bones, the most obvious of which are the skull, lower jaw and pelvic girdle, all of which are very important aids to identification. Leg bones, the tibia, femur and humerus are also obvious. Skulls quickly separate voles from shrews, as does the lower jaw bone. Mouse skulls resemble voles but are often crushed. Pelvic girdles are very useful as vole, mouse and shrew are all different. It is important to be thorough when teasing away the fur, as small jaw bones are easily missed, particularly those of Pygmy Shrew *Sorex minutus*.

Identifying to species

This is where the fun starts.

Rodents

Voles can easily be identified by extracting the teeth from the upper and lower jaw bones, which is easier than it sounds. I use two pairs of forceps, a pair with a curved end to hold the jaw and a straight pair to extract the teeth. Field Vole *Microtus agrestis* teeth come out easily and are straight, whereas those of the Bank Vole *Myodes glareolus* can take a little more effort and show a cleft, sometimes obvious, but more subtle in younger animals. In mice, the tooth shows a more irregular pattern and when extracted the root is long and narrow (see Plate 1). Identifying mice to species requires a good hand lens or loop, or better still a microscope (not essential). With the teeth removed, counting the root holes in the jaw (5, 6 or 7) will determine the species, House Mouse *Mus musculus*, Wood Mouse *Apodemus sylvaticus* and Harvest Mouse *Micromys minutus* respectively. All the mice I have found in pellets so far have been Wood Mice.

Plate 1 – Rodents



Common Rat

Field Vole

Bank Vole

Wood Mouse

Shrews

Shrews are more difficult to identify than voles. Skulls and lower jaws are obviously distinctive, although the former is often crushed. Size of the lower jaw is an important guide and as mentioned earlier, Pygmy Shrew jaws are easily missed. The further reading section at the end of this paper gives more detail, but the images in Plate 2 are a handy guide to size.

Plate 2 - Shrews



Pygmy Shrew

Common Shrew

Water Shrew

Other species

From my analysis at Haughton Strother, it is clear that Barn Owls rarely take birds at this site, with only one found so far. Five birds have been found in Tawny Owl pellets, one of which was a male Blackbird *Turdus merula*, identified by its yellow-orange beak which was still intact. Another may have been a Pheasant *Phasianus colchicus* chick. Pellets which are 'stringy' and more difficult to tease apart can be a sign of bird remains; bird bones are very distinctive. Toads and frogs, as far as I am aware, cannot be separated but have a number of bones which are characteristic. Identification of invertebrates, which include beetle wing casings and worm chits, is well beyond my limited expertise.

Occurrence of species at Haughton Strother

Pellets collected from Haughton Strother (Humshaugh):

	No. of pellets	Field Vole	Bank Vole	Common Shrew	Pygmy Shrew	Water Shrew	Wood Mouse	Brown Rat	Total Mammals	Birds	Frogs or Toads
Tawny Owl	69	87	10	11	2	6	25	0	141	5	3
Barn Owl	61	116	6	41	3	6	14	1	187	1	0
TOTAL	130	203	16	52	5	12	39	1	328	6	3

By far the most numerous species found in owl pellets here is the Field Vole, numerically (i.e. not adjusted for prey weight), comprising a significant proportion of the diet for both Tawny (58.4%) and Barn Owl (61.7%). Wood Mouse is much more frequent in Tawny Owl pellets (16.8% to 7.4%), as would be expected given their habitat preferences. Conversely, Barn Owls take proportionately more shrews at 26.6%, compared to Tawny Owl at 12.8%. Overall, from 337 prey items found in pellets, 60% have been Field Voles, followed by 15.4% Common Shrew *Sorex araneus* and 11.6% Wood Mouse.

Bank Vole (4.7%) and Water Shrew *Neomys fodiens* (3.6%) are also found here, but at much lower densities; the latter having increased in response to the changing habitat. This transition from unimproved farmland to wetland appears to have had little or no effect on the Field Vole population. Pygmy Shrew is rare with only five animals, while only one Brown Rat *Rattus norvegicus* has been found. Birds represent 1.8% of the total and frogs or toads 0.9%; the latter however were found recently, again suggesting an increasing population in an expanding wetland habitat.

Other species which produce pellets

I have found Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus* pellets at a regular nest site at Haughton Strother. They are small, and the contents crushed beyond recognition. A Buzzard *Buteo buteo* pellet I once found here was, as would be expected, quite large. It was very difficult to open, comprising a mass of matted Rabbit *Orytolagus cuniculus* hair and claws; again all the bones were crushed. Carrion Crows *Corvus corone* often leave a pellet on fence posts. These are quite distinctive and fall apart easily as they are made up of nothing more than seeds and vegetable matter.

Acknowledgements

Thanks are due to the land owner, Jane Allgood, and the site operators, W&M Thompson (Quarries) Ltd., for unrestricted access to the site. Also to Steve Holliday, who proof read this article, adding valuable comments where necessary.

References

Holliday, S. (2001). Owl Pellets, Riveting or Revolting? *Bird News*: Issue No. 3.
Holliday, S. & Richardson, M. (2002). Barn Owl Pellets from Castron Nature Reserve & FMD. Northumberland and Tyneside Bird Club, Bulletin 2002, No. 3.

Further reading

Bond, I. (2012). Mammals, Amphibians and Reptiles of the North East, *Northumbrian Naturalist*, 73.
Field Studies Council. (2008). Guide to British owls and owl pellets.
Lawrence, M.J. & Brown, R.W. (1974). Mammals of Britain - Their Tracks, Trails and Signs. Second revised edition.
Yalden, D.W. (2003). The Analysis of Owl Pellets. The Mammal Society.

The County Records Committee in 2017

By Tim Dean

In 2017, the County Records Committee (CRC) consisted of the following members: Tim Dean (Chairman), Duncan Watson, Paul Massey, Graeme Bowman and Martin Kerby. Each member (apart from the Chairman) serves on the committee for a maximum of four years (and is ratified by the main committee each year). Duncan Watson at the end of his term, stepped down after his stint and was replaced by Stewart Sexton in December 2017.

The CRC meets three times a year and discusses all records of rare and scarce birds that have been supported by written notes/photographs. They also look at any record of a common species in an unusual context, i.e. large numbers at an unusual time of year, early or late dates, or a species well out of its normal range/habitat.

During 2017, 200 records of 70 species/sub-species were considered for publication in *Birds in Northumbria*. Of these, 179 (89%) were accepted, with 18 (9%) found to be not proven and three pending awaiting assessment by the British Birds Rarities Committee. Those reports not accepted fall into many categories, with some just falling short of acceptance, some by non-birders with inadequate detail, but increasingly a number via experienced birders, but with too brief a plumage description. In these latter cases the identification is rarely in doubt, but the historical record will only show the details given, which need to be comprehensive enough to support the identification.

A further 83 records were not submitted for adjudication by the CRC. The majority of the non-submitted claims this year appeared to be mainly due to views not being conclusive enough for submission. A wide variety of species were involved. This was a similar situation to last year. However, it has been noted again that a number of major rarities in 2017 were only accepted due to them being documented by observers other than the finder. Descriptions are always welcome, even if the observer is not the finder, to make the report comprehensive. A full list of all records considered in 2017 is available via the club website www.ntbc.org.uk under the Recording subsection of Members' Resources. The right-hand column gives links to all CRC Work in Progress files 2017 and 2018. Those records not submitted are shown as 'Awaiting Description', where the observer(s) are known. However, an increasing problem for all County Recorders are those sightings which are only submitted to the Bird News Services, e.g. Rare Bird Alert and BirdGuides, without any follow-up to the County Recorder. These are listed separately at the end of the report if no observer details could be verified. The County Recorder would gratefully receive any outstanding descriptions from 2017 for future deliberation by the CRC and possible inclusion in future Annual Reports.

The following is a list of species for which documentation is required. **Schedule A** species require full notes (preferably on a record form – available from the County Recorder), **Schedule B** species brief notes and for scarce sub-species we require notes as appropriate to confirm the identification of the race concerned.

1. Schedule A

All species and sub-species considered by the BBRC.

Any species or sub-species removed from the BBRC list after publication of these notes.

Any species or sub-species not previously recorded in Northumberland.

Any record for which the CRC have requested full notes.

The following: American Wigeon, Ring-necked Duck, Ferruginous Duck, Surf Scoter, White-billed Diver, Cory's Shearwater, Great Shearwater, Balearic Shearwater, Wilson's Petrel, Night Heron, Cattle Egret, Great White Egret, Purple Heron, White Stork, Glossy Ibis, Honey Buzzard, Black Kite, White-tailed Eagle, Montagu's Harrier, Rough-legged Buzzard, Golden Eagle, Spotted Crake, Corncrake, Crane, Stone Curlew, American Golden Plover, Kentish Plover, Temminck's Stint, White-rumped Sandpiper, Buff-breasted Sandpiper, Pectoral Sandpiper, Red-necked Phalarope, Grey Phalarope, White-winged Black Tern, Sabine's Gull, Ring-billed Gull, Yellow-legged Gull (all races), Caspian Gull, Alpine Swift, Bee-eater, Red-footed Falcon, Hobby, Woodchat Shrike, Chough, Crested Tit, Woodlark, Short-toed Lark, Red-rumped Swallow, Cetti's Warbler, Greenish Warbler, Radde's Warbler, Dusky Warbler, Subalpine Warbler, Melodious Warbler, Aquatic Warbler, Marsh Warbler, Rose-coloured Starling, Nightingale, Richard's Pipit, Red-throated Pipit, Water Pipit, Parrot Crossbill, Serin, Ortolan Bunting and Little Bunting.

2. Schedule B

Taiga Bean Goose, Snow Goose, Ruddy Shelduck, Green-winged Teal, Leach's Petrel, Goshawk (coastal records only), Dotterel, Long-tailed Skua (juvenile birds only), Black Guillemot (away from Farne Islands and Holy Island), Lesser Spotted Woodpecker, Bluethroat (autumn only), Icterine Warbler, Pallas's Warbler (inland or spring birds only), Yellow-browed Warbler (inland or spring birds only), Red-breasted Flycatcher, Golden Oriole, Common Rosefinch and Corn Bunting.

3. Sub-species

Lesser Black-backed Gull - sub-species **other than** *L. f. graellsii*, Herring Gull – sub-species **other than** *L. a. argenteus* and *L. a. argentatus*, Kumlien's Gull – *L. g. kumlieni*, 'Northern Great Spotted Woodpecker' – *D. m. major*, Yellow Wagtail – sub-species **other than** *M. f. flava* and *M. f. flavissima*, White Wagtail – *M. a. alba* (autumn only), 'Black-bellied Dipper' – *C. c. cinclus*, 'White-spotted Bluethroat' – *L. s. cyanecula*, Lesser Whitethroat – sub-species **other than** *S. c. curruca*, Chiffchaff – sub-species **other than** *P. c. collybita*, 'Northern Willow Warbler' - *P. t. acredula*, 'Northern Treecreeper' – *C. f. familiaris*, Jackdaw – sub-species **other than** *C. m. spermologus* and 'Northern Bullfinch' – *P. p. pyrrhula*.

Note: The County Recorder can ask for documentation of any record at any time for species not listed above.

Northumberland and Tyneside Bird Club Development Fund Grants 2017

By Jo Bentley

The Northumberland and Tyneside Bird Club's Development Fund was set up to support the development of the NTBC's aims outside the day to day running of the club. The club's committee welcomes applications from members to support projects that they are involved with. The fund supports conservation activities linked to ornithology and related aspects of natural history.

During 2017, the club agreed several grants relating to local projects. A donation was made towards geolocators for a project tracking breeding Goldeneye in the area. We supported the Beached Bird Survey, with a grant towards materials for use in displays and talks. The 2017 annual conference of the North East Raptor Forum was held in Newcastle and we were pleased to support the running of the day. Grants were also agreed towards the European Breeding Bird Atlas and the BTO's Owl survey appeal.

Applications for grants should be addressed to the Honorary Secretary.

Secretary's Report 2017

By Andrew Brunt

The trustees of the charity forming the club committee during 2017 were Martin Davison (Chair), Jo Bentley (Treasurer), Tim Dean (Recorder), Trevor Blake (Sales), Steve Anderson (Outdoor Meetings), Steve Barratt (Bulletin Editor) and Andrew Brunt (Secretary). We thank Steve Lowe who also served on the committee, but resigned during the spring, and the committee functioned with two members short for the rest of the year. Martin Davison continued with the work of planning and booking speakers for the indoor meetings.

At the first Indoor meeting of 2017, Richard Baines illustrated the conservation measures being taken at Flamborough Headland and the positive impact they are having on Red-Listed farmland birds, showing that the famous site is not just a good spot for migrants. The following month a tour of a relatively compact area of Arizona, but which included big variations of altitude, provided Tim Dean with material for an illustrated talk showing us species from a huge range of bird families, with supporting photographs from Janet Dean. In March, a single species, the Dotterel, was the subject of John Callion who gave us a very engaging and informative talk on this declining species. Conservation issues facing birds and wildlife in the Antarctic Peninsula and South Atlantic Islands was the subject of Tim Daley's presentation in April, with supporting photographs from David Horsley showing us some of the iconic species and scenes we all associate with this region. After the summer break the beaches and brightly coloured birds of Australia was Anthony Tooley's subject, with valuable advice on where to make a start with the avifauna of New South Wales and Queensland. After the 2017 AGM, Phil Hanmer showed us some spectacular ringing methods used for raptor studies in South Africa, with roadside traps and treetop height mist nets in action. Mark Eaton of the RSPB, in November, explained the range of monitoring schemes being used in the UK and what they tell us about the state of the UK's Birds. A lively and wide-ranging account of the importance of the Isle of May in seabird monitoring, delivered by David Steel, with a gallery of photos of migrants, brought the indoor meetings season to an exciting close. The committee thanks Martin Davison for his time and effort contacting people and arranging a wide variety of speakers.

Steve Anderson has continued to coordinate our outdoor programme. A well attended trip to Langholm had both good weather conditions and sightings of Hen Harriers and other raptors. Trips to Geltsdale and Kielder were not so well supported, but an outing to hear and see Nightjar in June was up to the maximum, and possibly had a waiting list, and was deemed a great success. Several club members withstood near gale force winds on a late October visit to Holy Island.

Steve Barratt has been indefatigable in getting the bulletin out on 4th or 5th of each month, and he and his team of dedicated regular, and reserve, writers deserve credit for that. Whilst on the subject of bulletins, we must thank Roger Norman for donating an almost full set of past bulletins, which have filled a few gaps in our collection.

Andy Mould has not been content with managing the production of BiN to such a high standard, but produced a thorough review of its production, with costings of future options for its development, and was kind enough to attend a committee meeting and discuss this with us and agree a way forward.

We continue to receive requests for data from our past surveys, many thanks again to Dick Myatt for managing the storage and extraction of the tetrad data. An administration charge is not always made for this, for instance to Northumberland Wildlife Trust for local site data. Dick has decided to relinquish this role, and the committee is deeply appreciative of his efforts in managing this data for so long. Regular monthly records collection during 2017 was the responsibility of Tom Brewis, and I am sure everyone is impressed by his polite efficiency in collecting and distributing records each month.

The club website continues to be a huge asset to members and to the furtherance of our aims. An interactive site guide is extremely effective at providing information about birding sites in our region and is proving very popular. The website also continues to be a repository of useful information and I remind members that they can contribute their own trip accounts and sightings. The long term work and expertise of Paul Buskin in developing the site is deeply appreciated.

The committee thought we were going to have to go into the building sub-contracting business on hearing of a leak in the roof of SSWT, but were very relieved and grateful when Tim and Ann Cleeves got the job done at their own trouble and expense. Our thanks go to them.

The Atlas takes up much less of our time in committee now, but we have decided not to supply retail outlets with further copies, the small remaining stock is available at indoor meetings, or from Trevor Blake by post.

Protracted correspondence with the Charities Commission was concluded at the AGM with the exact form of words approved by the Commission being accepted as our Charitable Aims by a majority vote. No nominations for committee members were received, beyond those already on the committee and willing to continue serving.

Tim Dean is in correspondence with BBRC who are not intending to keep the paper records of rarity reports from before 2007, so we are looking to 'reclaim' those of local significance.

The Development Fund has made grants to Flexigraze, the North East Raptor Forum Conference and to Dan Turner (North East Beached Birds Survey) for an educational display project. Contributions have been made to the BTO Owl Appeal and the European Breeding Bird Atlas.

Species on the County List not recorded in 2017

The following table contains details of the species currently on the County List which **do not appear in the Classified List** in this report. They are included here to make each Birds in Northumbria as complete a record of the county's birds as possible.

Column A	The year the species was LAST recorded.
Column B	TOTAL number of records in the extremely rare category.
Column C	The year the species was FIRST recorded.
Column D	The year the species LAST BRED.

Species	Latin name	A Last	B Total	C First	D Bred
Red-breasted Goose	<i>Branta ruficollis</i>	1991	2	1818	-
Snow Goose	<i>Anser caerulescens</i>	2012	-	1891	-
Lesser White-fronted Goose	<i>Anser erythropus</i>	1978	2	1886	-
Egyptian Goose	<i>Alopochen aegyptiaca</i>	2014	-	1974	-
Blue-winged Teal	<i>Spatula discors</i>	2014	7	1948	-
Lesser Scaup	<i>Aythya affinis</i>	2012	3	1999	-
King Eider	<i>Somateria spectabilis</i>	2016	-	1861	-
Harlequin Duck	<i>Histrionicus histrionicus</i>	1886	1	1886	-
Surf Scoter	<i>Melanitta perspicillata</i>	2015	-	1946	-
Hooded Merganser	<i>Lophodytes cucullatus</i>	2002	1	2002	-
Wilson's Petrel	<i>Oceanites oceanicus</i>	2002	1	2002	-
Swinhoe's Petrel	<i>Oceanodroma monorhis</i>	1994	3	1989	-
Fea's / Zino's Petrel	<i>Pterodroma feae / madeira</i>	2014	-	1993	-
Barolo Shearwater	<i>Puffinus baroli</i>	1989	2	1986	-
Pied-billed Grebe	<i>Podilymbus podiceps</i>	1994	1	1992	-
Black Stork	<i>Ciconia nigra</i>	2015	7	1959	-
White Stork	<i>Ciconia ciconia</i>	2000	-	1766	-
Glossy Ibis	<i>Plegadis falcinellus</i>	2016	-	1829	-
Little Bittern	<i>Ixobrychus minutus</i>	2014	8	1810	-
Squacco Heron	<i>Ardeola ralloides</i>	2010	4	1874	-
Cattle Egret	<i>Bubulcus ibis</i>	2014	3	1986	-
Purple Heron	<i>Ardea purpurea</i>	2013	7	1963	-
Spotted Eagle	<i>Aquila clanga</i>	1885	1	1885	-
Pallid Harrier	<i>Circus macrourus</i>	2016	2	2015	-
Montagu's Harrier	<i>Circus pygargus</i>	2011	-	1800s	1992
Black Kite	<i>Milvus migrans</i>	2014	-	1866	-
Rough-legged Buzzard	<i>Buteo lagopus</i>	2016	-	1831	-
Great Bustard	<i>Otis tarda</i>	1871	1	1871	-
Little Bustard	<i>Tetrax tetrax</i>	1937	5	ca.1820	-
Little Crane	<i>Porzana parva</i>	1956	1	1956	-
Baillon's Crane	<i>Porzana pusilla</i>	1942	1	1942	-
Sandhill Crane	<i>Antigone canadensis</i>	2011	1	2011	-

Species	Latin name	A Last	B Total	C First	D Bred
Stone-curlew	<i>Burhinus oediconemus</i>	2016	1	Pre-1883	
Black-winged Stilt	<i>Himantopus himantopus</i>	1993	4	1954	-
Sociable Plover	<i>Vanellus gregarius</i>	1971	1	1971	-
Pacific Golden Plover	<i>Pluvialis fulva</i>	2009	3	1991	-
Upland Sandpiper	<i>Bartramia longicauda</i>	1879	1	1879	-
Stilt Sandpiper	<i>Calidris himantopus</i>	2014	2	2012	-
Broad-billed Sandpiper	<i>Calidris falcinellus</i>	2016	6	1961	-
Red-necked Stint	<i>Calidris ruficollis</i>	1995	1	1995	-
Baird's Sandpiper	<i>Calidris bairdii</i>	2016	7	1967	-
Buff-breasted Sandpiper	<i>Calidris subruficollis</i>	2012	-	1968	-
Semipalmated Sandpiper	<i>Calidris pusilla</i>	2009	3	1992	-
Great Snipe	<i>Gallinago media</i>	2008	-	1822	-
Terek Sandpiper	<i>Xenus cinereus</i>	2015	6	1986	
Wilson's Phalarope	<i>Phalaropus tricolor</i>	2008	8	1964	-
Spotted Sandpiper	<i>Actitis macularius</i>	2016	4	2001	-
Lesser Yellowlegs	<i>Tringa flavipes</i>	2016	-	1977	-
Marsh Sandpiper	<i>Tringa stagnatilis</i>	1999	4	1955	-
Greater Yellowlegs	<i>Tringa melanoleuca</i>	2011	1	2011	-
Cream-coloured Courser	<i>Cursorius cursor</i>	1870	2	1846	-
Collared Pratincole	<i>Glareola pratincola</i>	2014	3	1966	-
Black-winged Pratincole	<i>Glareola nordmanni</i>	2015	2	2014	-
Ivory Gull	<i>Pagophila eburnea</i>	2013	8	pre-1874	-
Bonaparte's Gull	<i>Chroicocephalus philadelphia</i>	2016	8	1955	-
Laughing Gull	<i>Leucophaeus atricilla</i>	1999	4	1975	-
Franklin's Gull	<i>Leucophaeus pipixcan</i>	2016	2	2005	-
Ring-billed Gull	<i>Larus delawarensis</i>	2006	-	1985	-
Kumlien's Gull	<i>L. g. kumliemi</i>	2007	3	1993	-
Gull-billed Tern	<i>Gelochelidon nilotica</i>	2015	-	1955	-
Caspian Tern	<i>Hydroprogne caspia</i>	2016	3	1880	-
Lesser Crested Tern	<i>Thalasseus bengalensis</i>	1997	1	1984	1997 Hybrid
Aleutian Tern	<i>Onychoprion aleuticus</i>	1979	1	1979	-
Bridled Tern	<i>Onychoprion anaethetus</i>	2014	5	1988	-
Sooty Tern	<i>Onychoprion fuscatus</i>	1988	2	1966	-
Whiskered Tern	<i>Chlidonias hybrida</i>	1997	5	1938	-
Brunnich's Guillemot	<i>Uria lomvia</i>	1977	4	1883	-
Great Auk (Extinct)	<i>Pinguinus impennis</i>	1767	-	-	-
Pallas's Sandgrouse	<i>Syrhaptes paradoxus</i>	1969	-	1863	-
Great Spotted Cuckoo	<i>Clamator glandarius</i>	1870	1	1870	-
Yellow-billed Cuckoo	<i>Coccyzus americanus</i>	1995	1	1995	-
Snowy Owl	<i>Bubo scandiacus</i>	1973	6	1823	-
Tengmalm's Owl	<i>Aegolius funereus</i>	1995	7	1812	-

Species	Latin name	A Last	B Total	C First	D Bred
Red-necked Nightjar	<i>Caprimulgus ruficollis</i>	1856	1	1856	-
Chimney Swift	<i>Chaetura pelagica</i>	2005	1	2005	-
Alpine Swift	<i>Tachymarptis melba</i>	2010	-	1882	-
Pallid Swift	<i>Apus pallidus</i>	2015	8	2001	-
Roller	<i>Coracias garrulus</i>	2006	-	pre-1831	-
Lesser Spotted Woodpecker	<i>Dryobates minor</i>	2014	-	1988	1999 (?)
Lesser Kestrel	<i>Falco naumanni</i>	1963	1	1963	-
Red-footed Falcon	<i>Falco vespertinus</i>	2015	-	1857	-
Eleonora's Falcon	<i>Falco eleonorae</i>	2006	1	2006	-
Gyr Falcon	<i>Falco rusticolus</i>	1845	1	1845	-
Red-backed Shrike	<i>Lanius collurio</i>	2016	-	Historical	1977 (?)
Isabelline Shrike	<i>Lanius isabellinus</i>	2016	4	2000	-
Lesser Grey Shrike	<i>Lanius minor</i>	2016	-	1952	-
Woodchat Shrike	<i>Lanius senator</i>	2015	-	1859	-
Red-eyed Vireo	<i>Vireo olivaceus</i>	2014	2	1988	-
Nutcracker	<i>Nucifraga caryocatactes</i>	1958	2	1819	-
Chough	<i>Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax</i>	1976	1	1976	-
Crested Tit	<i>Lophophanes cristatus</i>	1984	1	1984	-
Bearded Tit	<i>Panurus biarmicus</i>	2015	-	1965	2015
Woodlark	<i>Lullula arborea</i>	2010	-	1827	-
Calandra Lark	<i>Melanocorypha calandra</i>	1999	1	1999	-
Iberian Chiffchaff	<i>Phylloscopus ibericus</i>	2004	1	2004	-
Western Bonelli's Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus bonelli</i>	2006	4	1967	-
Eastern Bonelli's Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus orientalis</i>	2014	2	1995	-
Radde's Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus schwarzi</i>	2015	-	1976	-
Pallas's Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus proregulus</i>	2016	-	1951	-
Hume's Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus humei</i>	2014	-	1970	-
Arctic Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus borealis</i>	2012	-	1924	-
Greenish Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus trochiloides</i>	2016	-	1965	-
Great Reed Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus arundinaceus</i>	2014	9	1990	-
Aquatic Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus paludicola</i>	1958	1	1958	-
Paddyfield Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus agricola</i>	1981	2	1974	-
Blyth's Reed Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus dumetorum</i>	2013	-	1912	-
Booted Warbler	<i>Iduna caligata</i>	2013	5	1990	-
Sykes's Warbler	<i>Iduna rama</i>	2010	1	2010	-
Melodious Warbler	<i>Hippolais polyglotta</i>	2010	1	2010	-
Icterine Warbler	<i>Hippolais icterina</i>	2016	-	1889	-
River Warbler	<i>Locustella fluviatilis</i>	1996	2	1996	-
Savi's Warbler	<i>Locustella luscinioides</i>	1992	2	1977	-
Lanceolated Warbler	<i>Locustella lanceolata</i>	2009	3	1984	-
Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler	<i>Locustella certhiola</i>	2001	2	1985	-

Species	Latin name	A Last	B Total	C First	D Bred
Subalpine Warbler	<i>Sylvia cantillans</i>	2016	-	1976	-
Rose-coloured Starling	<i>Pastor roseus</i>	2016	-	1818	-
White's Thrush	<i>Zoothera dauma</i>	2016	3	1914	-
Eyebrowed Thrush	<i>Turdus obscurus</i>	2016	1	2016	-
Brown Flycatcher	<i>Muscicapa dauurica</i>	1956	1	1956	-
Bluethroat	<i>Luscinia svecica</i>	2016	-	1826	-
<i>White-spotted Bluethroat</i>	<i>L. s. cyanecula</i>	2012	7	1953	-
Thrush Nightingale	<i>Luscinia luscinia</i>	2016	-	1965	-
Nightingale	<i>Luscinia megarhynchos</i>	2015	-	1893	-
Red-flanked Bluetail	<i>Tarsiger cyanurus</i>	2016	8	1960	-
Collared Flycatcher	<i>Ficedula albicollis</i>	2013	1	2013	-
Red-breasted Flycatcher	<i>Ficedula parva</i>	2016	-	1883	-
Siberian Stonechat	<i>Saxicola maurus</i>	2016	-	ca.1974	-
Isabelline Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe isabellina</i>	2016	2	1980	-
Desert Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe deserti</i>	2012	6	1997	-
Pied Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe pleschanka</i>	2012	5	1979	-
<i>Black-bellied Dipper</i>	<i>C. c. cinclus</i>	1989	2	1987	-
Siberian Accentor	<i>Prunella montanella</i>	2016	3	2016	-
<i>Spanish Wagtail</i>	<i>M. f. iberiae</i>	2010	1	2010	-
<i>Ashy-headed Wagtail</i>	<i>M. f. cinereocapilla</i>	1992	3	1983	-
<i>Black-headed Wagtail</i>	<i>M. f. feldegg</i>	1985	2	1985	-
<i>Syke's Wagtail</i>	<i>M. f. beema</i>	1992	1	1992	-
Richard's Pipit	<i>Anthus richardi</i>	2016	-	1831	-
Tawny Pipit	<i>Anthus campestris</i>	1998	6	1954	-
Olive-backed Pipit	<i>Anthus hodgsoni</i>	2014	-	1986	-
Red-throated Pipit	<i>Anthus cervinus</i>	2009	-	1963	-
Pine Grosbeak	<i>Pinicola enucleator</i>	1975	1	1975	-
Trumpeter Finch	<i>Bucanetes githagineus</i>	1987	1	1987	-
Arctic Redpoll	<i>Acanthis hornemanni</i>	2016	-	1962	-
Parrot Crossbill	<i>Loxia pytyopsittacus</i>	1991	4	1954	-
Two-barred Crossbill	<i>Loxia leucoptera</i>	2001	4	1972	-
Brown-headed Cowbird	<i>Molothrus ater</i>	2009	1	2009	-
Pine Bunting	<i>Emberiza leucocephalos</i>	1992	3	1990	-
Ortolan Bunting	<i>Emberiza hortulana</i>	2015	-	1945	-
Rustic Bunting	<i>Emberiza rustica</i>	2014	-	1903	-
Yellow-breasted Bunting	<i>Emberiza aureola</i>	2013	-	1972	-
Black-headed Bunting	<i>Emberiza melanocephala</i>	2013	7	1971	-
Black-faced Bunting	<i>Emberiza spodocephala</i>	1999	1	1999	-
White-throated Sparrow	<i>Zonotrichia albicollis</i>	2007	1	2007	-

Glossary of Terms

A number of standard abbreviations and terms have been used throughout this report; to avoid any confusion, their meanings are described below:

AON	Apparently Occupied Nests
AONB	Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
a.s.l.	above sea level
BBS	Breeding Bird Survey
BBRC	British Birds Rarities Committee
BTO	British Trust for Ornithology
BP	Business Park
CP	Country Park (other than with Weetslade, when CP = Community Park)
Controlled	A ringing term – a ringed bird is a control, rather than a retrap, when caught again at a point more than 5km from the locality where it was first ringed.
CRC	County Records Committee
<i>et al.</i>	and others
FIR	Farne Island Rangers
GC	Golf Course
GP	Gravel Pits
km	Kilometre
m	metre
MBO	Major Bird Observatory
NEWS	Non-Estuarine Waterbird Survey
NNBC	North Northumberland Bird Club
NNR	National Nature Reserve
NR	Nature Reserve
NSFQ	North Shields Fish Quay
NT	National Trust
NTBC	Northumberland & Tyneside Bird Club
NWT	Northumberland Wildlife Trust
Pullus	A nestling or chick
RS	Ringing Station
WeBS	Wetland Bird Survey

Species Index

A

Albatross	
Black-browed	55
Auk	
Little	121
sp.	121
Avocet	78

B

Bee-eater	131
Bittern	62
Blackbird	170
Blackcap	164
Brambling	190
Bullfinch	192
Bunting	
Corn	198
Lapland	200
Little	199
Reed	199
Snow	201
Buzzard	74
Honey-buzzard	70

C

Chaffinch	190
Chiffchaff	158
Siberian	159
Coot	76
Cormorant	68
Corncrake	75
Crake	
Spotted	75
Crane	77
Crossbill	196
Crow	
Carrion	144
Hooded	144

Cuckoo	125
Curlew	84

D

Dipper	180
Diver	
Black-throated	53
Great Northern	54
Pacific	54
Red-throated	53
White-billed	55
Dotterel	82
Dove	
Collared	125
Rock [Feral Pigeon]	124
Stock	124
Turtle	125

Dowitcher

Long-billed	95
-------------------	----

Duck

Ferruginous	40
Long-tailed	45
Mandarin	28
Ring-necked	40
Ruddy	49
Tufted	41

Dunlin	93
--------------	----

Duncock	182
---------------	-----

E

Eagle	
Golden	70
White-tailed	73

Egret

Great White	64
Little	65

Eider	43
-------------	----

F

Fieldfare	171
-----------------	-----

Firecrest.....	167	Grouse	
Flycatcher		Black	50
Pied.....	175	Red	51
Spotted.....	174	Guillemot	
Fulmar	56	Black	122
G		Common	122
Gadwall	31	Gull	
Gannet	66	Black-headed	102
Garganey.....	28	Caspian.....	110
Godwit		Common	106
Bar-tailed.....	84	Glaucous.....	107
Black-tailed	87	Great Black-backed	106
Goldcrest	167	Herring	109
Goldeneye	46	Iceland	108
Goldfinch	196	Lesser Black-backed.....	110
Goosander.....	48	Little	103
Goose		Mediterranean.....	105
Barnacle.....	19	Northern race Herring	109
Brent	18	Ross's	104
Canada	19	Sabine's	102
Dark-bellied Brent	18	Yellow-legged.....	110
Eurasian White-fronted	24	H	
Greenland White-fronted.....	24	Harrier	
Greylag	20	Hen	72
Pale-bellied Brent.....	18	Marsh	72
Pink-footed.....	22	Hawfinch.....	191
Taiga Bean	21	Heron	
Tundra Bean	23	Grey	64
White-fronted	24	Night-heron	64
Goshawk.....	71	Hobby	138
Grebe		Hoopoe	134
Black-necked	61	J	
Great Crested	60	Jackdaw.....	143
Little	59	Jay	140
Red-necked.....	59	K	
Slavonian	61	Kestrel	136
Greenfinch	192	Kingfisher.....	131
Greenshank.....	101		

Kite	
Red	73
Kittiwake	101
Knot	88
L	
Lapwing	79
Lark	
Shore	152
Short-toed	153
Linnet	193
M	
Magpie	142
Mallard	34
Martin	
House.....	155
Sand.....	154
Merganser	
Red-breasted	49
Merlin	137
Moorhen	75
N	
Nightjar	130
Nuthatch	168
O	
Oriole	
Golden	140
Osprey	69
Ouzel	
Ring.....	169
Owl	
Barn	126
Little	127
Long-eared.....	129
Long-eared / Short-eared.....	127
Short-eared	129
Tawny.....	126
Oystercatcher	77

P	
Parakeet	
Ring-necked.....	139
Partridge	
Grey	52
Red-legged	51
Peregrine.....	138
Petrel	
Leach's.....	56
Storm	56
Phalarope	
Grey	97
Red-necked.....	97
Pheasant	52
Pintail	36
Pipit	
Meadow	186
Rock.....	189
'Scandinavian Rock'.....	190
Tree.....	188
Water	189
Plover	
American Golden	80
Golden	79
Grey	80
Kentish	82
Little Ringed	82
Ringed.....	81
Pochard	39
Red-crested	38
Puffin	123
Q	
Quail	52
R	
Rail	
Water	74
Raven	144
Razorbill.....	122

Redpoll	Shelduck.....	26
Common	Ruddy.....	27
Lesser	Shoveler	30
Redshank	Shrike	
Spotted.....	Great Grey	140
Redstart.....	Siskin	197
Black	Skua	
Redwing.....	Arctic	120
Robin	Great	117
Rock Pipit	Long-tailed	120
Scandinavian	Pomarine.....	117
Rook	Skylark	152
Rosefinch	Smew	47
Common	Snipe	96
Ruff	Jack.....	96
S	Sparrow	
Sanderling	House.....	181
Sandpiper	Tree.....	181
Common	Sparrowhawk.....	70
Curlew.....	Spoonbill.....	62
Green	Starling	169
Pectoral.....	Stint	
Purple.....	Little	94
White-rumped	Temminck's	92
Wood.....	Stonechat	178
Scaup	Continental.....	178
Scoter	Swallow	154
Black	Red-rumped	156
Common	Swan	
Velvet	Bewick's	25
Serin	Mute	25
Shag	Whooper	25
Shearwater	Swift	130
Balearic.....	T	
Cory's.....	Teal	37
Great.....	Green-winged	38
Manx	Tern	
Sooty.....	Arctic	114

Black	116	Willow.....	157
Common	113	Wood.....	159
Little	112	Yellow-browed.....	160
Roseate.....	112	Waxwing	145
Sandwich	111	Wheatear.....	179
White-winged Black	115	Greenland	180
Thrush		Whimbrel	83
Black-throated.....	171	Whinchat.....	177
Mistle.....	173	Whitethroat	166
Song.....	172	Lesser	165
Tit		Wigeon	32
Blue.....	149	American	34
Coal.....	148	Woodcock.....	95
Great.....	151	Woodpecker	
Long-tailed	156	Great Spotted.....	135
Marsh.....	148	Green	135
Willow.....	149	Woodpigeon	124
Treecreeper	168	Wren	167
Turnstone	87	Wryneck.....	134
Twite	193	Y	
W		Yellowhammer	198
Wagtail			
Blue-headed.....	183		
Citrine.....	183		
Grey	185		
Pied.....	185		
White.....	186		
Yellow.....	183		
Warbler	162		
Barred	165		
Cetti's	156		
Dusky	160		
Garden	164		
Grasshopper	163		
Marsh	162		
Pallas's.....	160		
Reed	162		
Sedge.....	161		

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

This image shows a full page of blank, lined paper. It features approximately 20 evenly spaced horizontal grey lines across its entire width, providing a template for writing or drawing. The margins are consistent on all sides.

