

NEBBS News Note No. 16 (v1-Final)

18 September 2023

Compiled by NEBBS
Group coordinator

Sending Autumn Greetings and many thanks for your continuing involvement!

There is an incident at present with **many auks (esp. guillemot and razorbill) being beached:**

- a) For guillemots, please try to photograph head and bill and outstretched underwing;
- b) For razorbills, please try to photograph head and bill.

Such photographs would enable ageing of the birds. Please include a cm / mm scale in your photographs if you can. **Note.** At this time – we should not touch, with bare hands or footwear, the plumage of any beached birds due to potential concerns over avian influenza (HPAI). You can turn a bag inside out and use it as a glove, however, or use gloves to handle birds. Please only collect fulmars at this time – they should be double-bagged and are intended for bird flu testing.

I have carefully collected & stored a few birds for **bird flu testing** in the past two years as follows:

Species	2022	2023	Notes
Guillemot	5-6	2	Incl. 3 adult, 2 first-year, one immature and 2 current unk. age.
Razorbill	--	2	One adult (age W+2) one juvenile (age 0+0), 17.09.23, Blyth.
Puffin	--	1	Adult, 06.06.23, Seaton Sluice.
Fulmar (NEE birds)	3	4	Finders: M Hepple, Jane Hardy, D M Turner, Adam Williams, Peter Collins, Alan Thompson and Hannah Lloyd-Hartley. Also 1 SEE (Norfolk, SE England) 2022 bird (Duncan Halpin).
Kittiwake	6	3	Mostly nestlings collected Newcastle & Gateshead riverside; 1 adult (Gateshead); 1 first-summer (Tynemouth Longsands).
Sandwich tern	1	0	24.06.22, Druridge Bay.
Total	15-16	12	27-28 plus one SEE fulmar

I hope to pass these specimens to the APHA (Animal and Plant Health Agency) quite soon for HPAI testing and potential return of birds / tissues if any test negative.

So far, processing the collection of frozen guillemots (collected during 2011 to 2021), from 71 recorded specimens, 69 have received an initial necropsy (during 2018-2022) in the Dove Marine Laboratory with assistance from our group members and also some Newcastle and Cumbria University students. Some of the stomachs have been flushed and contents sorted, but many further stomachs are still to be flushed. Intestines remain to be flushed. Many further tissue samples have been collected from these birds, for example including: breast muscle, liver, fat, kidney, breast feathers and wings – these are for future analysis. Tissues from a small number of these birds have undergone chemical analysis and the data are feeding into a scientific paper which is in preparation.

From the collection of 29 frozen little auks (collected during 2007-2016), 18 have received an initial necropsy at the Dove Marine Laboratory (DML; during 2021-2022). Again tissues have been collected and some stomachs flushed up to this point.

From the collection of 38 razorbills (collected during 2010-2021), five (collected Sept 2021) were processed at DML in November 2021 and tissues sent for chemical analysis for inclusion in a scientific paper which is in preparation.

During 2003-2021 our NEE group has collected 139 northern fulmars to process for the 'Save the North Sea' international fulmar project. These data are very important. In recent years we have also extracted at DML additional tissues from some of these fulmars (additional to stomachs) for future research. All seven of the NEE fulmars collected during 2022-2023 are intended for HPAI testing.

We have many more seabirds stored frozen for analysis as time and resources permit.

Current incident of beached auks

As an example, during 16-17 September 2023, from approx. 1.2 km at South Blyth and Seaton Sluice (Northumberland) beaches, D M Turner recorded beached auks as follows:

9 guillemots (4 ad., 4 first-year & 1 unknown age) and 6 razorbills (5 x 0+0; 1 x W+2).

It is likely some birds from this incident are suffering starvation and not all will be victims of HPAI.

Plastic Warriors (see pgs 5-7): From 46 places in Screen One, 36 are now reserved. **So book soon!**
Three VIPs will be attending.

Taxidermy bird update

Due to issues with moths, five good taxidermy birds from our NEBBS group collection have been donated (during April to June 2023) to Tyne and Wear Archives and Museums (Discovery Museum storage) to catalogue for their long-term care and storage for educational and study purposes:

- Shag, imm.; Finder: Jim Donnelly, Amble, 10 January 2012; Taxidermy by Ralph Robson;
- Greenshank; Finder: Tarek Farooqi, Cresswell, 4 Sept 2016; Taxidermy by A Johnstone;
- Black-headed gull, ad.; Finders: George McVitie & Gordon Hyslop, Seaham, 23 March 2010; Taxidermy by Ralph Robson;
- Kestrel, imm.; Found: Boulby area of Co. Cleveland, mid-Sept 2009, received via Martin Blick; Taxidermy by Ralph Robson;
- Ringed Plover; Finder: Peter Collins, Whitburn Steel, 9 Dec 2010, a BTO ringed specimen; Taxidermy by Ralph Robson;

Twelve additional specimens from the D M Turner taxidermy bird collection were donated at the same time (**details to include at a future date**) to be catalogued for safe long-term storage.

Article in September 2023 Newsletter (No. 356) of Tynemouth Photographic Society

Northumberland coast, 29 June 2023 (article by Daniel M Turner)

I left in the afternoon for my Druridge Bay beached bird survey to the north of the country park with its visitor centre which stood beside picturesque Ladyburn Lake reclaimed by landscaping of this one-time opencast mining site. It was warm and a light easterly wind blew as the tide receded down the shore. The beach was noticeably quiet and lacked significant human presence, allowing me to enjoy quite unimpeded coastal scenery. Two black-headed gulls lay rotting along with a fresher adult puffin and I snipped off their wing tips. These three were my main beached bird finds. A few light-reflective and bulging lion's mane jellyfish had been left by the falling tide; three or four were quite significant in their diameter which measured from eighteen to thirty-three inches. The bulging impression of parts of these jellyfish appeared a little akin to human lips which had been injected with Botox. There were also one or two much smaller moon jellyfish with shades of pale blue colouration. I spoke with three women who sat on the sand close to the deceased puffin, explaining what I was doing. They were interested and accepted copies of my project information sheet to peruse; one of them was particularly keen on such matters. The three were from Bishop Auckland, County Durham, and they told me this was their favourite beach. As I climbed the wooden steps from the beach a super, large skipper butterfly (a possible male) fed on the nectar from a creeping thistle flower-head and the local cetti's warbler loudly pronounced its presence.

On leaving the country park I saw a group of young scouts being lectured by their leaders before they went on a nature ramble. I made my way towards Cresswell village and passed its ice cream parlour, closed now since it was after 5:30 p.m. I continued at 20 mph to the small car park at Snab Point, parking up and gathering together all my kit for a descent to the shore. The time of low tide was fast approaching and the sea was well out, exposing plentiful dry rock for a safe survey. Some anglers were already right out at the water's edge with their fishing rods. The purpose of my visit was to check on the nesting fulmars of the cliff section. I stepped down to a rocky platform and made my way out and round the headland to a good vantage area to start my observations. Some of the fulmars cackled happily together, other single birds rested contentedly, quietly incubating an egg. It was always a joy to view them and see their behaviours. From a presence of thirty fulmars I

detected a dozen apparently occupied nest sites each of which very likely held an egg beneath an incubating adult. This was three less than last year when I had visited ten days earlier in the month.

I returned to my car and drove it to another parking spot in the little bay to the north. Here I descended an easy sloping path to the beach. There were two reasons for coming. The first was to investigate a small cliff for nesting fulmars and the other was to survey the strandline for beached birds. The cliff revealed three incubating fulmars, and after recording them I could concentrate on the shore remains. It was a relatively short stretch of beach, perhaps four hundred metres, which today held substantial bird remains likely in association with bird flu. There were remains of thirteen black-headed gulls, an adult gannet, two puffins and an oystercatcher. These were all recorded in my notebook, some were photographed and I snipped off their wing tips. As I retraced my steps towards the beach exit point, I noticed a live common tern, an adult, standing just a few feet away from me. This was most unusual. Such a tern would naturally be wary of humans and keep its distance. It stood and danced around a little at its position on the sand next to some rotting, crunchy seaweed. It quite likely had bird flu. My instinct was to collect and care for the unfortunate specimen, but this would have been wrong for me if it was infected. I approached quite closely and noticed it carried a BTO metal ring around the right tarsus, but I was unable to read it. I left it, standing there, a little hunched; it may pass away in the night. I was sad to leave it, but this was my only real option. It was after half past eight by now and I began my evening journey home.



Photo 1 (first picture from left):
Deceased adult puffin with
mm scale, Druridge Bay.

Photo 2 (to immediate left):
Lion's mane jellyfish,
Druridge Bay,
Northumberland.



Photo 3:
Large skipper butterfly on creeping thistle.



Photo 4:
Fulmar incubating egg at nest site.



Photo 5: Immature black-headed gull remains, south of Cresswell.



Photo 6: Poorly adult common tern, at shore south of Cresswell.

Selected [recent] papers and publications (which feature: marine life, plastics, pollution & litter)

Marie Y. Azzarello & Edward S. Van Vleet. (1987, May 6). Marine birds and plastic pollution. MARINE ECOLOGY - PROGRESS SERIES. Mar. Ecol. Prog. Ser. Vol. 37: 295303. 1987

J. Baak, J. Linnebjerg, T. Barry, M. Gavrilov, Mark L. Mallory, C Price, J. Provencher. (2021, January). Plastic ingestion by seabirds in the circumpolar Arctic: A review. Conservation of Arctic Flora and Fauna (CAFF) International Secretariat: Akureyri, Iceland. ISBN 978-9935-431-88-2.

Hayley S. Charlton-Howard, Alexander L. Bond, Jack Rivers-Auty, Jennifer L. Lavers. (2023). 'Plasticosis': Characterising macro- and microplastic-associated fibrosis in seabird tissues. Journal of Hazardous Materials, Volume 450, 2023, 131090, ISSN 0304-3894. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jhazmat.2023.131090>.

Clark, B.L., Carneiro, A.P.B., Pearmain, E.J. et al. Global assessment of marine plastic exposure risk for oceanic birds. Nat Commun 14, 3665 (2023). <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41467-023-38900-z>

Gilbert, J.M., Reichelt-Brushett, A.J., Bowling, A.C., Christidis, L. (2016). Plastic ingestion in marine and coastal bird species of southeastern Australia. Marine Ornithology 44: 21–26.

Hamilton, B., Clark, B., & Borrelle, S. (2023). Monitoring to conservation: The science–policy nexus of plastics and seabirds. Cambridge Prisms: Plastics, 1, E3. doi:10.1017/plc.2023.2

Jack Rivers-Auty, Alexander L. Bond, Megan L. Grant, Jennifer L. Lavers. (2023). The one-two punch of plastic exposure: Macro- and micro-plastics induce multi-organ damage in seabirds. Journal of Hazardous Materials, Volume 442, 2023, 130117, ISSN 0304-3894. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jhazmat.2022.130117>.

Van Franeker, J.A., Kühn, S., Pedersen, J. & Hansen, P.L. (2018) Fulmar Litter EcoQO monitoring in Denmark 2002-2017. Report for the Danish Environmental Protection Agency. Wageningen Marine Research Den Helder, The Netherlands. 25pp.

Please continue to survey and record your finds regularly (monthly if at all possible), returning your completed forms and reports to the NEBBS Group Coordinator.

Kind regards, Dan Turner (NEBBS Group Coordinator).

Email dan.m.turner@btinternet.com

NEBBS Group web page: <https://www.nhsn.org.uk/north-east-beached-bird-surveys/>

A screening of '**Plastic Warriors**'
in Screen One at the Jam Jar Cinema (Whitley Bay)
on **Sunday 15 October 2023**, 1:30 p.m.

Agenda: 1:30 p.m. Screening of 'Plastic Warriors' (1 hour 23 minutes); 2:55 p.m. Break
3:10 p.m. Discussion around the issues (in Screen One)

Has our plastic problem improved? Despite enormous public, industry and policy attention in the past 5 years, this new eye-opening feature documentary investigates the damaging effects plastic pollution is continuing to have on our health, lifestyle, and wildlife with a strong focus on the UK. The film tells the story of the Plastic Warriors – from eminent scientists, campaigners on the front line, to the innovators and designers working on solutions to solve this global crisis that politicians and governments are largely ignoring.

The film takes audiences on a journey to deep sea coral reefs, basking shark hotspots and huge seabird colonies, to discover first-hand the extreme danger of the scourge of plastic that is engulfing every aspect of their lives. Plastic Warriors is an urgent reminder about the wider issues and a film that inspires action.

The Northeast England Beached Bird Surveys group (founded 2002) features in the film with some of their 'Save the North Sea' fulmar project work at the Dove Marine Laboratory (Newcastle University), Cullercoats.

Film trailer <https://plasticpioneersdocumentary.com/>

Attendance Price: £8.00 each seat

To book a place – please contact Northeast England Beached Bird Surveys group Coordinator at:
email: nebbs_group@btinternet.com or phone / text to 0794 010 9790

Please pay the Coordinator (Dan Turner) cash on the day at the venue (or preferably in advance to ensure we can cover the costs).

Some tickets may be bookable though Jam Jar Cinema website from mid Sept – otherwise please make your reservation with Dan to ensure your place.

Any profit from sales will go to the Northeast England Beached Bird Surveys Group.

Venue: Jam Jar Cinema, 18-24 Park Ave, Whitley Bay NE26 1DG

<https://www.jamjarcinema.com/about-us>

- Car parking is available in Whitley Bay, including on the upper level at Park View Shopping Centre which is opposite the cinema.
- There is a Metro station in Whitley Bay town centre, just a few minutes' walk away;
- Many local buses visit Whitley Bay.
- There are Cycle Parking Bays opposite the cinema.

'Plastic Warriors' a feature documentary film produced by Outpost Pictures Ltd

<http://www.outpost-pictures.com/#documentary-corporate-content-specialists>

Northeast England Beached Bird Surveys (see Natural History Society of Northumbria website: select Regional Citizen Science, Conservation and Research, North East Beached Bird Surveys) ...

<https://www.nhsn.org.uk/north-east-beached-bird-surveys/>



Plastic Warriors

A feature documentary film by Outpost Pictures (Brighton)

A few notes written by the Coordinator of the Northeast England Beached Bird Surveys (NEBBS) group after a home viewing of the film on 5 June 2023.

The film lasts 1 hour and 23 minutes.

General topics (in rough order), appearances and areas of interest (overview):

1. Scottish Seabird Centre (Andrew Grieve), Bass Rock;
2. Bempton (Yorkshire), RSPB, Gareth Cunningham;
3. Dr Alex Bond, (seabird) investigations;
4. Cullercoats, Dove Marine Laboratory, 'Save the North Sea' fulmar project, (NEBBS, Dan Turner);
5. Greenpeace;
6. Natalie Lee (City to Sea);
7. Amount of plastic dumped in our oceans every year;
8. Atlantic Ocean;
9. Dr Lucy Woodall (Oxford Uni), Deep Sea, Arctic;
10. Dr David Santillo, Senior Scientist, Greenpeace;
11. Lucy Siegle 'Turning the tide on Plastic';
12. Dr Sarah Nelms (Plymouth Uni), zooplankton;
13. Dr Matthew Cole;
14. Dr Nicola Beaumont (Plymouth Uni);
15. Scotland, cold waters, Hebrides;
16. Tish Brown, Greenpeace;
17. Basking sharks, Basking Shark Scotland (Inga Dehnhart, Colin Speedie, Luke Saddler), Alisha & Joey Postma;
18. Microplastics;
19. Plastics in rivers (Manchester Uni), Jamie Woodward, James Rothwell, Dr Rachel Hurley;
20. Impact on humans (John Vidal, Frank Kelly – Kings College London, Prof. of Env. Health);
21. Clothing (designers);
22. Surfers Against Sewage (Hugo Tagholm);
23. Torbay (marine);
24. Seals (Seal Protection Action Group);
25. Period Products (Ella Daish);
26. Recycling;
27. Fast fashion (Vin & Omi);
28. Research & development - materials;
29. Children's thoughts;
30. Responsibility;

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Agenda: 1:00 p.m. Screen One opens to visitors
1:30 p.m. Screening of ‘Plastic Warriors’ (1 hour 23 minutes)
2:55 p.m. Break
3:10 p.m. **Discussion** around the issues (in Screen One)

The **Discussion** will proceed for about one hour from 3:10 p.m. as follows (each of the three main speakers will talk for up to 15 minutes):

Lutz Lemmer, Greenpeace Speaker (Volunteer).

Discussion around previous and current Greenpeace plastic waste reduction campaigns / petitions and what Greenpeace asked for at the International Plastics Treaty negotiations. Will also talk about a personal experience story on plastic collection and recycling in Sri Lanka.



Hannah Lloyd-Hartley, Research Assistant (Dove Time Series), Dove Marine Laboratory, Newcastle University.

Small but mighty indicators:

Integration of molecular and morphological techniques for development of indicators and marine ecosystem health using a plankton time series. Plankton are ocean drifters and are easily susceptible to change. Monitoring of these organisms via a blend of methods and recording environmental readings can be used to measure the marine health. When monitored fully, potential impacts can be detected earlier before consequences higher up the food chain and into other marine systems.



Third Speaker/s ...

From local plastic-free groups

Brief speaker (five minutes):

Dan Turner, Coordinator of Northeast England Beached Bird Surveys group and River Tyne Nesting Kittiwake Surveyor (Volunteer).

Will provide a little background on the beached bird (NEBBS) group, their methods and projects.



Following the speakers – the floor will be opened briefly for the audience to ask questions.

To book a place – please contact Northeast England Beached Bird Surveys group Coordinator at: email: nebbs_group@btinternet.com or phone / text to 0794 010 9790. Cost £8 per seat.

Northeast England Beached Bird Surveys (see Natural History Society of Northumbria website: select Regional Citizen Science, Conservation and Research, North East Beached Bird Surveys) ...
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