

NEBBS News Note No. 18 (v2)

29 June 2025

Compiled by NEBBS
Group coordinator

Sending Summer Greetings and many thanks for your involvement!

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 potentially intended for bird flu testing.

- a) For guillemots, please try to photograph head and bill and outstretched underwing;
- b) For razorbills and puffins, 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. You may perhaps touch a corpse with a stick from the beach – to turn it over and leave the stick on the beach. If you cut off wing tips as a sign that a bird has been recorded, please ensure you clean the scissors later.

Note. This is just a brief News Note – to keep in touch and show you I have not run away.

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Linskill Centre, Community Day, part of North Shields 800 Anniversary events.

Saturday, 28 June 2025 (Extract from NEBBS Coordinator's personal Journal)

This entry is for my diary, but written in a style so I may use it in a short newsletter to our beached bird group. My phone alarm was set for 05:35 and I arose on time, ready to greet the dawn and prepare for my day. It was a particularly early start as there was much to prepare. I tidied around a little and breakfasted on Weetabix before washing my hair and beginning to gather everything I would need for my day at the Linskill Centre. My car was loaded during two trips up and down, to and from my apartment and I was able to arrive by 8:30 to unload into Trevelyan Hall before parking up. Stall holders were arriving and it was good to see Ainsley and Phoebe, two PhD students from Newcastle University, gathering goods from their car. One of the crew from the Old Low Light had welcomed me into the car park and indicated where I should go. My table was in a nice spot between the North Tyneside Libraries stall and that of the Women's Institute. Both of these groups were beginning to prepare their tables as I arrived. Over the next 45 minutes I set out my stall with a lovely 'White Wings Publishing' tablecloth (Photo 1, over page) before touring the hall to briefly view the other stalls and capture a few photographs of my own setup before hunkering down for a ten o'clock start.

It was Community Day, a special celebration as part of the 800th anniversary of North Shields and the old Linskill High School (North Shields), now a Community Centre, was being well used. The main part of the day would complete at four o'clock and there were many rooms and spaces in use with music, talks, choirs and information. There was an absolutely packed programme. It had been a mammoth task for Alan Fidler to organise. Author, local historian and fellow birder Michael Coates came over with a few words of encouragement. He had his own stall here. I also said hello to Joyce and Clare on the Libraries stand and they each captured a picture of the layout of my table. Visitors began to filter through. It was a free event. My best friend Linda came to keep me company for ninety minutes up to midday as did good friend Derek in the afternoon. Niece Laura arrived mid-afternoon with her fella, Tyler. She was to sing in a choir at 2:45 p.m. ... the *Can't Sing Choir*. They sounded great! As the day progressed I met and talked with several people I already knew and who passed close by, but also to many new friends too. They were interested in the things I had on display which included my five published books, notecards and sets of beached bird and kittiwake artefacts.

One young lad who came to me said he wanted to be an entomologist and asked if he would need to study mathematics. He had great aspiration and was pleased to know that the birds with me had died naturally. He thanked me nicely for our conversation. Two other young boys quizzed me about the birds and looked them over in great detail. With me I had taxidermy specimens of little auk and North Shields specialities of kittiwake, redshank and oystercatcher also crotched examples of an adult kittiwake and adult herring gull. In addition there were bird bones and plastic samples, etc, collected from the beach and an information sheet to take away. Some visitors flicked through the pages of my books and bought notecards. One book was sold to Les, a copy of *Life on the Tyne* which I stamped and signed for him. He was a member of Tynemouth Photographic Society. The conversations were important and I learned further details about some of our North Shields population. I spoke with several adults about seabirds and plastic pollution. Another visitor was a gentleman who had last talked to me on Local History Day in May at North Shields library and we discussed methods of handling and recording beached birds. Dorian stopped by. He had attended each of the two recent kittiwake workshops at the Baltic Art Centre as part of our *Navigating Urban Ecologies* project with Northumbria University. An elderly gentleman wearing a wide-brimmed, pink felt hat approached me and said he had three types of dementia and was looking for his wife before wandering off. Later I saw him with his wife and deep in conversation with one of the event stewards. Ainsley kindly talked with me about his and co-worker Phoebe's work (Photo 2, below) in support of the inshore fisheries from Berwick to Plymouth and their representations to parliament. Ainsley had interviewed me, last November, as part of their investigations along with interviews with several thousands of others around the country. He gave me some of his report documentation. Someone from the Linskell Centre with a relevant link suggested I could have a table with my books at the occasional book fairs at Tynemouth Station.

As four o'clock approached we began to tidy away our belongings and reload our vehicles. It had been a super experience.



Photo 1. Stall at Linskell Centre: birds, books, etc



Photo2. Phoebe and Ainsley at part of their display.

I hope we may be able tackle more work in the Dove Marine Laboratory this coming autumn and winter. Potentially we can address a few old guillemots and kittiwakes, from before bird flu times. This should include further work with PhD student Elayna Daniels from Liverpool University.

Please continue to survey and record your finds regularly (monthly if at all possible), returning your completed forms and reports to me. Thank you! Your work is most important and encouraging. With thanks to Linda for reviewing my Journal notes that are included here.

Kind regards, Dan Turner (NEBBS Group Coordinator), North Shields.

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

NEBBS News Note No. 18; Sunday, 29 June 2025