

NEBBS Newsletter No. 25 (v1)

4 January 2026

Compiled by NEBBS
Group coordinator

Sending New Year Greetings and continued thanks for your involvement!

Augmented 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 later bird flu testing. Other complete, fresh and intact birds should be reported to Defra online via this link

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/report-dead-wild-birds> and then click on 'Start Now'. You will need to report the finding location (with an Ordnance Survey grid reference if possible please, otherwise a What3Words . . . <https://what3words.com/about> reference is valid). If you report a bird in this way – please let me know (and report it on your survey form) and advise me of any results you receive. You can also phone the birds in to Defra on this number 03459 33 55 77.

- 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 but also complete bird.

Such additional 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 (for example with hot water). It is most helpful, when including a scale in a photograph, to ensure the scale is in the same plane as your subject and not at an angle. For example – taking photographs from vertically above the subject is very helpful in such matters with inclusion of a scale.

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Friday, 22 August 2025 (adjusted from NEBBS Coordinator's personal journal)

After collecting Linda at 10:45 we journeyed to **Hauxley Wildlife Discovery Centre** for my talk. At the centre, Druridge Bay Landscape Manager, Alex Lister (Northumberland Wildlife Trust) welcomed us and showed us to the Tynan Room which we were to use. Following lunch artist Ali Elly arrived with her son, another Dan. Ali had organised the event and had invited me to talk about the beached bird project and a little more. She prepared tables for her art activity which would follow. My display table was then readied. It held four taxidermy birds . . . little auk, puffin, redshank and water rail along with NEBBS information sheets, plastic samples and other shore finds plus Stephen Livingstone's painting of a little auk in the Dove Marine Laboratory.

At one o'clock Ali introduced me to the audience and my first talk got underway with detail about our beached bird surveys, group members, laboratory work and involvement with Holland and the international fulmar project. Some questions followed. After a break I began a shorter talk of fifteen minutes ... *Birds of the River Mouth* which featured several species watched in the mouth of the River Tyne over many years. This led into two of my poems which linked with each presentation. Artist Ali's creative workshop followed as we made collage pictures with coloured paper, art sticks, pens and coastal bird stamps of such species as curlew, oystercatcher, long-tailed skua, gulls in flight and flocks of waders. Some guests left their email addresses so I may send further information about our beached bird group and activities.



Display table at Hauxley Wildlife Discovery Centre



Ali Elly's creative workshop

Sunday, 21 September 2025 (adjusted from my personal journal)

Arriving at the **Dove Marine Laboratory** at eleven in the morning, it was to be their **Heritage Open Day** and I had things to set up in the Buchanan Room. A few trips up and down the stairs and my belongings were placed ready for me to display. I had two tables in a corner beside the heavily laden bookshelves. After placing tablecloths I unpacked the display birds from their variously sealed containers. Eventually the display was ready with taxidermy specimens, bird skulls, labels, plastic samples and small items of beach litter. Some of the laboratory staff and researchers came to take a look.

The doors were opened to the public and our first visitors appeared. Today it was the Buchanan Room alone which was open to guests and where a few researchers had their displays and microscopes for discovery of sea creatures. It was to be open to the public from 12:30 to 4 p.m. and there was a steady throughput of eager people. I talked to them about the issues of marine litter and the complications it caused to the environment. Several young children accompanied some of those who visited, and their young fingers were eager to touch the soft bird feathers. I asked them to



Display table, Buchanan Room, Dove Marine Lab



Water Rail specimen, found Seaburn
19 March 2012 by Peter Collins.

please be gentle. One young man brought with him some of his own beach finds to show me and this included a very fragile fulmar skull, a synsacrum (seabird pelvis), shark tooth, seal skull and a miscellany of interesting bones. He asked me if I was a scientist while his mother said that was what he wished to become. So I said he should study biology, chemistry and maths. Linda brought sandwiches for my lunch and one of her friends called by with her husband. Lutz Lemmer, regional Greenpeace campaigner, visited and we talked. He had given a short talk at the Jam Jar Cinema (Whitley Bay) when we showed the environmental film *Plastic Warriors* in October 2023. Another visitor was Anna who had spent several months working on Holy Island in the north of Northumberland and was now in North Tyneside. She wished to study birds further. Laboratory researcher Hannah Lloyd-Hartley (a plankton specialist) was finalising her PhD dissertation and had been accepted for a job with Cefas, but would continue to be based in the northeast of England. On conclusion, I tidied away the bird skulls to take home – the rest would wait until tomorrow morning when there would be more time. Jill Cowans (Newcastle University Outstations Operations Assistant) told me they had recorded 120 visitors.

October to December 2025, work at Dove Marine Laboratory

I had arranged to meet student **Matthew Harrison** on 16 April for the first time. We met at Newcastle. He was in his second year as an Environmental Science undergraduate student at Northumbria University and was an avid birdwatcher and considering planning his second and third-year project around the Tyneside kittiwakes. His university course involved geography and ecology in the main part. After talking over cups of tea we walked the Newcastle and Gateshead quaysides together where I pointed out different things about our super gulls. Summer passed and we discussed again and decided on a laboratory-based project investigating some of our NEBBS archive of frozen **kittiwakes**. I met Matthew's university supervisor, Dr Yao Lin, and things progressed with approval from our Northeast England Beached Bird Surveys group. We arranged initial laboratory days at Dove Marine Lab for October (7-9), November (18-20) and December (2-4) for necropsies and tissue collection and storage, under my leadership and guidance. To assist further with these lab days we had help from our friends and fellow beached bird surveyors Linda Charlton, Maggie Sheddan and Tom Patterson. I was able to locate the required specimens for this period from our different freezers, including those previously stored at Preston Village (thanks to Linda Charlton) and Morpeth (thanks to Marian Martin). During Oct-Dec we have performed initial analyses on 17 kittiwakes (see summary in Table 1, over page).



Matthew with RTRA-NEE-2018-004, 4 Dec



RTRA-NEE-2013-001 awaiting analysis, 9 Oct



Tom with RTRA-SEE-2012-001, 2 Dec



Tom and Maggie – helpers on Tuesday 2 Dec

Table 1. Beached kittiwakes collected and stored by NEBBS group which were processed initially in Dove Marine Laboratory during Oct-Dec 2025. Since finding, the birds were stored frozen (at approx. -20 degrees C). These specimens are generally found dead, washed up on the shore.

Age / Sex	Date found	Where found and bird reference no.	Finder	Comments
Adult Male	20.06.10	Whitley Bay beach, Tyne and Wear RTRA-NEE-2010-001 Bird kept for cabinet skin (ringed specimen).	D M Turner	Ringed bird. Initial DML processing 20.11.25: DMT with MH. Ringed as a nestling by J C Coulson, sex unk., 01-Jul-2007, Coquet Island, Northumberland.
First-year Male	13.08.10	John Muir Country Park, East Lothian RTRA-ESC-2010-001	Linda K Charlton	Initial DML processing 19.11.25: DMT with MH.
Adult Male	07.05.11	Whitburn, Tyne and Wear RTRA-NEE-2011-001	Peter Collins	Initial DML processing 07.10.25 and 08.10.25: DMT with MH.
Adult Sex = unk.	03.02.12	South Durham coast RTRA-NEE-2012-001 Abdomen empty: No stomach/intestines to coll.	Chris Beneke	Specimen A. Initial DML processing 03.12.25: DMT with MH.
Adult Fem.	03.02.12	South Durham coast RTRA-NEE-2012-002 Stomach and intestines both partially scavenged – coll. Bird kept for cabinet skin (adult winter plumage).	Chris Beneke	Specimen B. Initial DML processing 18.11.25: DMT with MH.
First-year Male	08.02.12	Found on a shingle ridge, Blakeney Point, Norfolk, TG032457 RTRA-SEE-2012-001 Bird kept for cabinet skin	Edward Stubbings	Initial DML processing 02.12.25: DMT with Maggie Sheddan and Tom Patterson. Some contaminated feathers from breast coll. – possible very light oiling.
First-year Sex = unk.	April to 25.05.12 We used 01.05.12	Blakeney Point, Norfolk RTRA-SEE-2012-002 Abdomen almost empty, partial stomach coll. (was mainly gizzard)	Edward Stubbings	Initial DML processing 02 to 03.12.25: DMT with Tom Patterson, Maggie Sheddan and Matthew Harrison.
First-year Fem.	28.11.12	Blakeney Point, Norfolk, TG015463 RTRA-SEE-2012-003 Bird kept for cabinet skin (nice first-winter plumage)	Edward Stubbings	Initial DML processing 03.12.25: DMT with MH.
Adult Fem.	26.02.13	Whitley Bay beach, Tyne and Wear RTRA-NEE-2013-001	D M Turner	Initial DML processing 09.10.25: DMT with Linda K Charlton.

First-year Fem.	25.03.13	Druridge Bay RTRA-NEE-2013-002	D Bay Country Park staff	Headless. Initial DML processing 04.12.25: DMT with MH.
First-year Male	29.03.13	Warkworth Bay, N/land RTRA-NEE-2013-003	D M Turner	Initial DML processing 18.11.25: DMT with MH.
Adult Fem.	12.04.13	Buston Links, Alnmouth, Northumberland RTRA-NEE-2013-004 Bird kept – taxidermy?	Steve T. Holliday	Initial DML processing 07.10.25: DMT with Matthew Harrison.
Adult Fem.	12.04.13	Buston Links, Alnmouth RTRA-NEE-2013-005	Steve T. Holliday	Initial DML processing 02.12.25: DMT with Maggie Sheddan.
Adult Male	18.05.18	Caught in netting at Hilton Hotel, Gateshead, on grassy bank. Released by BWR. RTRA-NEE-2018-004 Bird kept for cabinet skin (Tyneside bird)	Donated by Blyth Wildlife Rescue (BWR)	Alive on 17.05.18 (late hours), dead on 18.05.18 (died overnight 17-18.05.18). DMT received bird on 18.05.18. Initial DML processing 04.12.25: DMT with MH.
First-year Fem.	10.02.21	Blyth S beach, Northumberland RTRA-NEE-2021-001 Stomach and short length of intestines collected, due to scavenging.	Matthew Livsey	Initial DML processing 20.11.25: DMT with Matthew Harrison.
Adult Fem.	28.07.21	Marsden Bay, S Tyneside RTRA-NEE-2021-005	Matthew Livsey	Initial DML processing 19.11.25: DMT with MH.
Pullus Male	28.07.21	Marsden Bay, S Tyneside RTRA-NEE-2021-006	Matthew Livsey	Initial DML processing 08.10.25: DMT with MH.

Key

Pullus	Nestling, not yet quite fledged, may still be somewhat downy.
First-year	A bird in its first year of life i.e. up to the age of one year
Adult coll.	Generally a bird in its third full year of life or older. collected
RTRA	<i>Rissa tridactyla</i>
NEE	Northeast England
SEE	Southeast England
ESC	East Scotland
DML	Dove Marine Laboratory (Newcastle University)
MH	Matthew Harrison
DMT	Daniel Mark Turner (NEBBS group coordinator)
NEBBS	Northeast England Beached Bird Surveys group
Cabinet skin	A taxidermy specimen, preserved as skin + feathers in a drawer for study purposes.
Notes.	1. Unless specified – stomach and intestines were collected from each bird. Also many other tissues and feather samples were collected for future study. 2. Sex was determined by internal analysis.

These 17 kittiwake specimens have provided 14 complete stomachs, 2 partial stomachs and one bird with no stomach (due to scavenging). Many other tissues were also collected and stored.

Receipt of fulmar stomachs from Defra / APHA

On 16 Dec 2025 I received six packaged fulmar stomachs from the APHA (Animal and Plant Health Agency). These birds had tested negative for bird flu (HPAI) and the APHA agreed to extract their stomachs to return for use in the international *Save the North Sea* fulmar project. Normally the APHA would dispose of the corpses with no further work applied, especially of birds which tested positive for HPAI. I had dispatched 9 fulmars to APHA on 27 Feb 2024 along with another 26 birds of different species (see **NEBBS News Note No. 17** for full details). Paul Holmes from the Shrewsbury Veterinary Investigation Centre worked on the birds for us. At some point in the future the stomachs will be flushed and the detail of contents will be incorporated into the international study results. Stomachs were returned for all birds which tested **negative for HPAI** – apart from specimen NEE-2023-005 - this stomach may follow later.

Table 2. Northern Fulmar, *Fulmarus glacialis*. Specimens found beached from late April 2022 to October 2023 in Northeast England (NEE) and Southeast England (SEE). HPAI testing by APHA.

Ref	Date Found	Date placed in Freezer	From Where	Who found	Comments
NEE-2022-001	25 April 2022	25 April 2022	Seaton Sluice to Blyth, Northumberland GR: NZ325785	Maurice Hepple	HPAI test was negative
NEE-2022-002	29 April 2022	29 April 2022	Druridge Bay, 1.2 km stretch, Northumberland GR: NU277007	Jane Hardy [& D M Turner]	Head was detached but collected, legs mostly missing. LL phase, No oil. HPAI test was negative
NEE-2022-003	04 June 2022	04 June 2022	Roker/Seaburn, north from Sunderland, Tyne and Wear GR: NZ407595	Found: Adam Williams (twitter report) Collected by Peter Collins	Brief external examination by DMT: looks like first-year female, LL, no oil or rings, emaciated. HPAI test was negative
NEE-2023-001	10 Mar 2023	10 Mar 2023	Druridge Bay, Northumberland GR: NU280010	Alan Thompson	HPAI test was Positive
NEE-2023-002	10 Mar 2023	10 Mar 2023	Druridge Bay, Northumberland GR: NU280010	Alan Thompson	HPAI test was Positive
NEE-2023-003	06 June 2023 evening	08 June 2023	Seaton Sluice, Northumberland GR: NZ333774	Reported by Hannah Lloyd-Hartley, coll. by D M Turner	LL. HPAI test was negative
NEE-2023-004	06 June 2023 evening	08 June 2023	Seaton Sluice, Northumberland GR: NZ333774	Reported by Hannah Lloyd-Hartley, coll. by D M Turner	LL. HPAI test was negative
NEE-2023-005	22 Oct 2023 afternoon	22 Oct 2023 evening	Tynemouth Longsands, north end, Tyne and Wear GR: NZ364708	D M Turner	LL, emaciated, complete, intact, quite small bill, showing much wear in secondaries at least. HPAI test was negative
SEE-2022-002	08.05.22	08.05.22	Blakeney Point Approximate GR: TF9946	Duncan Halpin, Ranger with N Trust	Found dead on tideline. HPAI test was negative

Navigating Urban Ecologies, Northumbria University

During 2025-2026 I am involved in a project *Navigating Urban Ecologies* with Northumbria University. The project is funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) and led by Dr Jiayi (Jennifer) Jin (Principal Investigator) with Dr Ayşe Özbil Torun (Co-investigator) and Dr Bing Zhai (Co-investigator) at the university. The River Tyne urban kittiwakes are a most important element of this study and as a consequence my involvement comprises provision of some advice and oversight. Three public workshops of four hours each were held at the Baltic Centre for Contemporary Art (Gateshead) and I attended each to give tailored talks and guidance. The workshops included significant art and design aspects – led by Dr Jennifer Jin, Dr Karen Rann, Zoe Allen and Stephen Pardue. Dr Mingyu Zhu assisted during each workshop. Two associated national competitions have been held featuring kittiwake-related art and design work. During each workshop I had a small display table which included one or two of our NEBBS specimens with other specifically kittiwake related material and this enabled me to discuss the beached bird programme a little with some visitors and workshop attendees along with discussing the nesting gulls too.



Display table at Baltic Art Centre, 30 May



Baltic Art Centre, north face, 16 July 2025.

Very popular nesting ledges for Tyne kittiwakes.

A little thank you to those of our surveyors and supporters who have housed bird freezers and stored frozen birds over the years, including: Linda K Charlton, Martin A Blick, Scottish Seabird Centre, Dove Marine Lab, Rose Di Mascio, Prof. Helen F Wilson, Marian Martin and me(!).

Planned Events

January to March 2026, work at Dove Marine Laboratory

- a. January: Further kittiwake necropsies with student Matthew Harrison (and surveyor Tom Patterson), selected from those birds indicated below (plus up to 7 others).
 - a. St Ouen's Bay, Jersey, Cris Sellares, 16 Feb 2014 (SOE, South England)
 - b. Marske Beach, Cleveland, Martin A Blick, 14 Oct 2016 (NEE)
 - c. Hartlepool Headland, Cleveland, Martin A Blick, 14 Nov 2016 (NEE)
 - d. Druridge Bay (N/land), NIFCA, 08 Mar 2018, first-year (NEE)
 - e. Alnmouth (S) to Birling Carrs, Steve T Holliday, 12 Mar 2018, first-year (NEE)
 - f. Druridge Bay (N), Helen Wilson, 16 March 2021, first-year (NEE)
 - g. Druridge Bay, Pauline Gilbertson, 22 March 2021, adult (NEE)
- b. February: Kittiwake stomach flushing at Dove Marine Laboratory with student Matthew.
- c. March: Checking kittiwake stomach plastics (if found) including potential use of infra-red spectrometer (FTIR). Working with student Matthew Harrison.

24 February 2026 (Tuesday), Old Low Light, talk, 1-2 p.m.

A talk by D M Turner: *Kittiwakes along the Tyne and Northeast England Coast.*

Also includes a few minutes with Matthew Harrison talking about his kittiwake project.
Book a seat through the website of the Old Low Light, North Shields

<https://oldlowlight.co.uk/whats-on/>

NEBBS 'Plastic Warriors' III, 19 April 2026, Tyneside Cinema, Newcastle, 2 to 6 p.m.

Elements of the event,

- 1) Screening of 'Plastic Warriors' feature documentary
- 2) Nine speakers:
 - a) **Chi Onwurah**, Member of Parliament for Newcastle upon Tyne Central and West;
 - b) Urban Foresight, **Anneliese Allen-Norris**;
 - c) **Lutz Lemmer**, regional Greenpeace campaigner (NE England);
 - d) Newcastle City Council, Waste & Recycling Engagement Team, **Rebecca Wilson**;
 - e) **Ellie Davison**, Urban Naturalist, Natural History Society of Northumbria;
 - f) North Tyneside Council, Operations Manager, Cleansing & Enforcement, **Danny Hogg**;
 - g) **Hannah-Lloyd-Hartley**, Cefas, Plankton Scientist;
 - h) Northeast England Beached Bird Surveys (NEBBS) Coordinator, **Daniel Turner**;
 - i) **Matthew Harrison**, Environmental Science student, Northumbria University.
- 3) Facilitated discussion, questions from the audience (facilitated by Heather Devey of Wild Intrigue CIC)

In attendance will be artist Stephen Livingstone with some paintings from his exhibition 'Seabird Necropsy' based around the laboratory work of the NEBBS Group. Cain Scrimgeour from Wild Intrigue CIC will capture some photographs of the event.

Seats: £16 adult & £8 junior / concession

Contact: Daniel Turner: email: dan.m.turner@btinternet.com Mobile: 0794 010 9790

Saturday, 9 May 2026, North Shields Library, annual Local History Day, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.

I have attended this Local History Day for several years now – each time with my books, note cards and a few beached bird and kittiwake artefacts. It is great to talk with visitors and exchange stories. There are many other stalls with people to talk to and interesting things to see. Why not come and say 'Hello'? We shall be on the first floor drinking tea and coffee and eating our sandwiches.

October to December 2026, work at Dove Marine Laboratory (and into 2027)

I hope we shall be able tackle more work during autumn and winter 2026 / 2027. Potentially we can address a few remaining guillemots and kittiwakes, left over from before bird flu times. Then perhaps we can start to work on part of our puffin collection. There are also stomachs to flush from: guillemots, razorbills and little auks as well as intestines to process. Plenty to be going on with!

Malcolm Hutcheson

Malcolm passed away in early autumn 2024. He had been one of our beached bird surveyors in the north of Northumberland at Berwick and the sands to the north of Holy Island since the early days of NEBBS. I had also known Malcolm, though we never met, when I was a local organiser of the Wetland Bird Surveys when he again surveyed in the north of this wonderful county. He was a keen and committed observer and recorder – a person of experience who was the backbone of much good work and research. A life well lived.



Please continue to survey the beaches 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 kindly reviewing this Newsletter.

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

Email dan.m.turner@btinternet.com

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