

NORTH NORTHUMBERLAND BIRD CLUB

Dawn Chorus 2020 - 'The Dawn Chorus With A Difference'

Etal Manor Gardens, Saturday 9th May 2020
06.00-09.15

The period between late March and early May makes me feel like the Dover Coastguard. Every day brings new migrants.

The anticipation of seeing the first Sand Martins on the river or hearing the first Chiffchaffs in the woods is tingling. Will the birds arrive on the same date as last year? Will the numbers be higher or lower? They always come in familiar 'waves' and by the second week in May, when we hold the by-now traditional Dawn Chorus on Ford & Etal, it is sometimes touch-and-go whether the last ones have arrived.

This year things went to plan, with Swifts and Spotted Flycatchers arriving at Etal two days before the deadline; there was even a passing Cuckoo at the start of the week. So it was comforting to know that a walk around the gardens at Etal would probably allow a good number of species to be noted. It was, on the other hand, not so comforting to know that the usual expert help in identifying the competing peeps, trills and squeaks was not on hand, the experts no doubt standing elsewhere, ears strained, isolated in their own neighbourhoods.

If nothing else, the 'Dawn Chorus With A Difference' of 2020 has surely allowed the NNBC, through its members, to have compiled a snapshot of the total number of species present in North Northumberland on this one day. Stewart & Alison have bravely taken on the task of coordinating the records sent in. It should be a fascinating study.

For what it's worth, Etal Manor Gardens produced a list of 35 species, which is probably respectable. Blackcaps, Greenfinches and Spotted Flycatchers were numerous, and an acrobatic Treecreeper worked its way along the underside of a very long horizontal branch, completely upside down from start to finish.

The saddest part of the morning, however, was the fact that I had to have eggs and toast all on my own ...

Species seen / heard – in and from:

Greylag Goose, Pheasant, Oystercatcher, Lesser Black-backed Gull, Woodpigeon, Collared Dove, Swift, Great-spotted Woodpecker, Swallow, House Martin, Grey Wagtail, Pied Wagtail, Wren, Dunnock, Robin, Blackbird, Song Thrush, Mistle Thrush, Blackcap, Chiffchaff, Spotted Flycatcher, Long-tailed Tit, Blue Tit, Great Tit, Coal Tit, Nuthatch, Treecreeper, Jackdaw, Rook, Starling, House Sparrow, Tree Sparrow, Chaffinch, Greenfinch, Goldfinch.