

Impact of poor weather, Northeast England, March to April 2018

Weather incident report (beached birds) by Daniel M Turner, NEBBS Group Coordinator
Interim report (version 4), 11 April 2018

The poor weather commenced on 27 February 2018 with increasing snowfall over several days. This lay widely over the country with drifts and notable impact on highways. In northeast England the snow had initially cleared well by 4-5 March, certainly on lower ground and towards the coast. There were subsequent accompanying and following easterly winds off the sea for several days, with stormy seas and high tidal surges. The temperature dropped a little below freezing during this time, but thawing was well in place by 4 March and day-time temperatures rising in northeast England to 6-7 C by 13 March. 15-16 March were both very wet days in northeast England, with constant rain and strengthening easterlies again. Sat 17 March brought stronger winds and snow, with freezing conditions overnight into Sunday – with snow lying Sunday and freezing temperatures with strong easterlies, heavy seas with very high tides. This weather eased on Monday 19 March as snow and ice melted away and temperature rising to 3 C. This second brief bad weather period (15-18 March) brought more birds washed onto our beaches, especially guillemots. Tuesday 20 March was much more settled with light NE wind and temperature up to 7 C.

Late March and early April through to Sat, 7th, rain coming and going again with a warmer spell up to 12 C. On Tue, 10 April, cool 6 C with rain all day, some beached birds getting reported by end of day with onshore wind. 11 April: 5-6 C, overcast day, light easterlies, dry, sea still quite rough.

The northeast England beached bird network of surveyors was prompted (4, 13, 15 and 20 March) to visit their beaches in order to monitor the situation and record any impact.

Table 1. Summary of bird corpses reported in northeast England during 1 March - 11 April 2018

Species	Total corpses	Notes
Guillemot	439	Three stored frozen (an adult and two first-years)
Razorbill	45	One stored frozen (adult, W+2)
Puffin	26	Two stored frozen (first-year birds).
Little Auk	2	
Fulmar	14	Nine stored frozen for ‘Save the North Sea’ fulmar project: two headless, otherwise complete (includes 2 collected from E Yorkshire). Five further, more incomplete, fulmar remains found, northeast England (Annstead, Druridge Bay and Blyth South), unsuitable for North Sea fulmar study. In addition: one complete fulmar collected from Petticur Bay, Fife, Scotland; brought to Tyneside (16 March) for the fulmar study.
Kittiwake	36	Twenty-four first-year (one ringed), ten adult (one complete), plus 2 (ages unknown at present). Two of the first-year birds stored frozen.
Oystercatcher	6	
Curlew	1	
Lapwing	6	
Golden Plover	5	
Woodcock	11	
Snipe	1	
Pheasant	2	One male
Herring gull	11	First-year, second-year, immature, six adults, two unknown age.
(LBB) gull	1	Immature
GBB gull	4	Three first-year birds.
Common gull	9	
Black-headed g	18	
Med. Gull	2	Adults

Shag	15	Two colour-ringed birds (immature and unaged) stored frozen. Other birds recorded: ringed birds (one first-year, one unaged); two unaged colour-ringed; others un-ringed (6 adults, one immature, 3 unaged).
Cormorant	1	
Mute swan	2	
Whooper swan	1	First-year
Swan sp.	1	Remains, mainly wings.
Eider	1	Drake
Barn owl	2	
(Feral) pigeon	3	
Meadow pipit	1	
Rock pipit	1	Possibly predated by sparrowhawk.
Song thrush	3	
Redwing	22	
Fieldfare	12	
Blackbird	1	
Starling	1	Male
Carrion crow	1	
Jackdaw	1	

Table 2. Late Feb through March and into April 2018, weather incidents. Beached bird corpses recorded in their region by the Northeast England Beached Bird Surveys (NEBBS) Group network.

Date	Puffin	Guillemot	Razor	Location, notes
25.02.18	0	0	0	Marsden Bay, J Everett. No fresh bird corpses.
27.02.18	0	0	1	Seaton Sluice to Blyth, MHe. Razorbill: sternum and wings i.e. dead for some days at least. Heavy snow showers.
04.03.18	3	10	2	Whitburn Steel to Roker, PC. Plus one lapwing, common gull, redwing, kittiwake (first-winter), meadow pipit, a few ballan wrasse and two sunstar starfish.
05.03.18	0	2	0	Druridge Bay (S), MD.
05.03.18	1	6	0	South Blyth, MHe. Dozens of octopus, large no's starfish, crabs, fish of several species lobsters etc. Also: two kittiwakes (one first-year), poor condition fulmar (unsuitable to collect), bhgull, oystercatcher, woodcock wings
06.03.18	0	1	0	Blyth south, STH.
06.03.18	0	0	0	Skinningrove, MAB. 2 Oystercatcher, bhg (ad), common gull, kittiwake (first-year).
07.03.18	0	0	0	Cheswick Black Rocks, MHu. One herring gull (2nd yr)
07.03.18	0	7	3	Hartlepool and Seaton Carew, MAB. Also 4 woodcock, 2 common gull, 2 fieldfare, 1 kittiwake (first-year), 1 black-headed gull.
07.03.18	0	0	0	Beacon Point, Newbiggin, AP. Two adult Med gulls and four black-headed gulls.
08.03.18	0	2	0	Berwick area, MHu. One kittiwake (immature)
08.03.18	0	4	1	Seaton Point to Boulmer, LS. Also herring gull wings (adult), kittiwake wing (adult) and song thrush.
08.03.18	0	0	0	Seaton Sluice, RD.
08.03.18	1	11	0	Druridge Bay, NIFCA. One fulmar (headless, collected), two kittiwakes (adult, remains, and first-year headless), one herring gull (adult, remains), puffin was headless.
09.03.18	2	3	0	Annstead, LS. Also fulmar wings only, kittiwake wing remains (adult), rock pipit remains, hundreds of small cuttlefish bones, two dead seal pups.

09.03.18	0	0	0	Spittal, Coast Care volunteer. Ringed mute swan.
09.03.18	0	1	0	Boulmer to Alnmouth, MD.
09.03.18	0	0	1	Druridge Bay, STH. One fulmar (headless. Bird collected) and a razorbill, both collected.
09.03.18	0	0	0	Collywell Bay, DZ. Fourteen octopus, one starfish, two miscellaneous fish, 1 lobster shell, no bird corpses. SL: one octopus.
09.03.18	0	0	0	Seaton Sands, Teesside, DC. First-year shag (ringed, chick, Isle of May, 2017, not collected?), one golden plover.
10.03.18	3	14	2	Druridge Bay, DMT. All were emaciated.
11.03.18	0	1	0	Tweed Estuary, MHu.
11.03.18	0	3	1	Embleton Bay, LS. Also complete kittiwake adult.
11.03.18	0	1	0	North Blyth, KM. Dead sea life: 15 octopus, 6 starfish
12.03.18	1	8	0	Saltburn and Redcar, MAB. One fulmar (complete and collected), plus 19 redwing, 6 fieldfare, 5 lapwing (one ringed, information received), 5 common gull, 2 kittiwake (adult and first-yr), 2 golden plover, 2 woodcock, One each of: oystercatcher, black-headed gull, snipe and blackbird
12.03.18	0	20	2	Alnmouth to Birling Carrs, STH. Plus one: redwing, barn owl, feral pigeon, oystercatcher, kittiwake (1st yr, collected and stored frozen), gbbg.
12.03.18	0	2	0	Boulmer, Coast Care volunteer.
12.03.18	1	2	0	Craster, Coast Care volunteer. Also fulmar remains, two bhg, one herring gull remains, one carrion crow
12.03.18	1	5	1	Tweed Estuary, MHu. Plus: two song thrush, one un-ringed shag, one mute swan. Puffin was immature (first- or second-year)
12.03.18	0	0	0	Druridge Bay, NIFCA. One little auk, one fulmar remains (unsuitable for study), one colour-ringed shag (collected).
12.03.18	0	1	0	Blyth south, MHe. Also one herring gull, one adult bhgull.
14.03.18	0	1	0	Seaton Sluice, GD.
14.03.18	0	6	1	Druridge Bay, DMT. Also: two black-headed gull remains, one kittiwake (first-year) wing, woodcock wings, jackdaw remains, one fieldfare, five octopus. One fresh guillemot collected (first-year). All auks were emaciated.
15.03.18	0	1	0	Lindisfarne causeway, AC.
16.03.18	0	5	0	Alnmouth, Coast Care volunteer. Also colour-ringed shag, Blue FWS, BTO 1499530.
17.03.18	0	0	0	North Blyth, KM. One complete fulmar (likely female, collected).
17.03.18	0	1	0	Beadnell, Coast Care volunteer.
18.03.18	1	24	0	Whitburn Steel to Roker, PC. Puffin collected. Two kittiwakes (adult and first-year), one GBBG, one common gull, one golden plover, seal pup, lots of cuttlefish bones and sewage-related litter, four beached live guillemots and a single live little gull in flight over surf.
18.03.18	1	1	0	Marsden Bay, JE. Both birds brought to DMT who took photos. Puffin stored frozen (first-year bird).
18.03.18	0	3	0	Druridge Bay (part), SL. 105 cuttlefish bones, plus two unidentified remains – both collected for later checking.
18.03.18	0	0	0	Beadnell, Coast Care volunteer. One complete little auk.
19.03.18	0	yes	0	Cullercoats Bay, JK. One colour-ringed shag (stored frozen).

19.03.18	0	3	1	Cullercoats Bay, DMT. Many cuttlefish remains.
19.03.18	0	6	0	Collywell Bay, Seaton Sluice, DZ.
19.03.18	0	4	0	Warkworth beach, STH. Two first-year kittiwakes.
19.03.18	0	2	0	Newbiggin (north), STH. One ballan wrasse.
19.03.18	3	30	3	Blyth south beach, MHe. Also one incomplete fulmar (not collected), 2 kittiwake (first-year), 1 cormorant, herring gull adult, gbbg first-year, black-headed gull adult, 1 fieldfare, large numbers of cuttlefish 'bones'.
19.03.18	0	0	0	Brown's Bay, Whitley Bay, AR. First-year kittiwake.
19.03.18	0	3	0	Little Beach, Berwick shoreline and Cheswick to Spittal, MHu.
19.03.18	1	3	0	Longsands (north), Cullercoats, CF. Collected (for RB).
20.03.18	0	0	0	Longsands, Tynemouth, DMT. First-year kittiwake, adult herring gull wing – both specimens with slight oiling.
20.03.18	1	0	0	Beadnell Bay, NIFCA. First-year puffin.
20.03.18	0	41	5	Buston Links, STH. One pheasant, one woodcock, adult bhg, adult and first-year kittiwake, grey seal pup.
20.03.18	0	4	0	Seaton Sluice, RD. One complete fulmar (collected), an octopus, several cuttlefish bones, lots of plastic cotton bud stems.
21.03.18	0	7	0	Seaburn beach, Sunderland, per ACt.
22.03.18	0	0	0	Bamburgh beach, Coast Care volunteer. Colour-ringed shag, green XCE.
22.03.18	0	13	4	Low Newton to Embleton Bay, B&JR. Bhg (1), Lbbg (1?).
23.03.18	0	1	0	Warkworth, Coast Care volunteer.
24.03.18	0	0	0	St Aidan's beach, Seahouses, Coast Care. One complete fulmar (collected), found at 7 pm.
24.03.18	1	23	1	Druridge Bay (part), NIFCA. Plus bits & pieces (to id)
25.03.18	0	0	0	Whitburn Steel to Roker (by 'Cat and Dogs'), PC: One complete fulmar (collected) this morning.
26.03.18	0	1	0	Newbiggin (north), STH. Herring gull remains (first-year).
26.03.18	0	0	1	Whitburn, ACt.
27.03.18	0	5	0	Druridge Bay (S), MD. One conger eel (female, 1.4 metres).
29.03.18	0	37	0	Alnmouth to Boulmer, MD. Bhg (adult, remains).
31.03.18	0	3	0	Whitley Bay, DMT. Herring gull (adult).
Mar '18 i.e. 1-30 March	3	30	8	Lindisfarne, GDRM. Herring gull (2: imm plus one), oystercatcher, curlew, golden plover, kittiwake, shag (2), eider (drake).
01.04.18	0	0	0	Whitburn to Roker, PC. Two adult shags.
01.04.18	0	8	0	Buston Links, STH. 3 shag, fieldfare, kit (first-yr), grey seal pup.
03.04.18	0	2	0	Tynemouth Longsands, MC.
03.04.18	0	3	0	Warkworth beach, STH. Kittiwake (first-year), grey seal pup, whooper swan (first-year).
06.04.18	1	25	4	Druridge Bay (part), DMT & LKC. Golden plover, kittiwake (ad), shag (2), gbbg (first-year), woodcock (2), pigeon sp. (2), bhg (ad), fieldfare. One first-year guillemot collected.
07.04.18	0	10	1	Druridge Bay (part), DMT. Wings of a redwing (likely ssp. T.i.coburni, wings dark and of length 130-133 mm).
07.04.18	0	5	2	North Blyth, KM. Two kittiwakes (adult and a ringed first-year).
09.04.18	0	1	0	Seahouses beach, GK.

11.04.18	0	2	0	Tynemouth Longsands, DMT. Barn owl wing, starling.
11.04.18	1	21	0	Holy Island (part), STH. One guillemot with light oiling over whole body. Five kittiwakes (4 x first-year, 1 adult), shag (col-ringed), swan sp. and pheasant remains. All birds likely dead 1-2+ weeks.
Totals	26	439	45	-----

Plus, extra reports, southeast Scotland:

9.3.18: N Berwick (East beach), E Lothian, Scotland: two guillemot, one oystercatcher, M-She.

10.3.18: Petticur Bay, Fife: 20 guillemot, HT.

13.3.18: N Berwick, E Lothian: one guillemot and colour-ringed shag, Red A92 (ringed as chick on Isle of May, 24.6.17), M-She.

17.3.18: Shag, Blue HRE, East Beach, N Berwick and one guillemot West Beach, M-She.

18.3.18: Shag, Blue HEP, (ringed 23,6,17, chick), N Berwick; also one guillemot, East Beach, plus one live oiled razorbill and one exhausted guillemot – latter two birds sent to rescue centre, M-She.

24.3.18: Shag, Red ALH (19 years old, raised 34 chicks in total, had a data logger), Craigleith. Also a second dead Craigleith shag. Records via M-She.

31.3.18: one guillemot, North Berwick, east beach. Seton Sands (E Lothian): another Red-ringed shag (ringed Isle of May 2008). Records via M-She.

Table 3. Guillemots found & recorded by D M Turner & L K Charlton

Date	Total	Adult	First-year	Age unk.	Emaciated	Scavenged / rotting / rotted	Birds with full body	Headless birds with full body	Headless with incomplete body
10.03.18	14	7	5	2	13	2	12	5	0
14.03.18	6	3	3	0	6	0	6	1	---
19.03.18	3	1	1	1	---	3	0	---	1 w & b
31.03.18	3		1	2	---	3	0	---	1 wings & bones
06.04.18	25	4	21	0	16	8	16	10	4
07.04.18	10	3	7	0	4	6	4	2	1 w & b
11.04.18	2	0	2	0	1	1	1	0	0
Total	63	18	40	5	40	23	39	18	4 + 3w&b

From Table 3: a) Of birds with full bodies – all 39 were emaciated, plus one of the scavenged birds (otherwise unable to check for emaciation on scavenged / rotting birds).

b) From 63 total guillemots: 28.6 % adult, 63.5 % first-year and 7.9 % age unknown.

c) Of 39 guillemots with otherwise full bodies 46.2 % were headless.

Key to names

MAB (Martin A Blick), Coast Care (northern part of Northumberland), LKC (Linda K Charlton), DC (Derek Clayton), MC (Miriam Clare), PC (Peter Collins), AC (Andrew Craggs), ACt (Anne Curtis), RD (Russell Davis), MD (Mo Dewar), GD (Gavin Dudley), JE (Jon Everett), CF (Clare Freeman), MHe (Maurice Hepple), GK (Genine Keogh), NIFCA (Northumberland Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority: Darren Graham, Jon Green, Natalie Wallace, Ricky Willis), STH (Steve Holliday), MHu (Malcolm Hutcheson), JK (John Knowles), SL (Steve Lowe), KM (Kevin Monaghan), GDRM (George D R Moody), AP (Alan Priest), AR (Alice Richardson), LS (Laura Shearer), M-She (Maggie Sheddan), HT (Hazel Terry), DMT (Daniel M Turner), DZ (Donna Zajac). NEBBS (Northeast England Beached Bird Surveys Group)

Note. More surveys will be completed during April with further data to be recorded.

NEBBS group webpage <http://www.nhsn.ncl.ac.uk/activities/conservation-research/beached-birds/>