

DUNE Project Newsletter

Hello and Happy New Year from the Cleethorpes DUNE Project!

Keep an eye out for me, your Coastal Ranger, in the New Year as I host pop-up observatories along the Cleethorpes coast. With my spotting scope and sightings board, I invite you to connect with our coastal birds as they spend their winter here. Come have a chat!

For further information, keep an eye out on our webpage: [Cleethorpes DUNE project | NELC](#)

Cleethorpes Local Nature Reserve: December Sightings

Our coast is the place to be to see wading and wetland birds in winter! Each month, I conduct a Wetland Bird Survey (WeBS) on the coastal stretch between Cleethorpes Leisure Centre and Anthony's Bank.

This survey is coordinated by the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) and has been running monthly since 1947 for wetland sites across the UK. This monitoring helps us to understand population trends in internationally important waterbirds.

But what is a “waterbird”? This term includes ducks, geese, swans, waders, gulls, terns, rails, divers, grebes and cormorants. A large number of these birds breed elsewhere – especially wading birds and geese whose breeding grounds are within the Arctic Circle.

December's count saw nearly 1,000 **Dunlin** on the outer sandbanks as well as 150 **Curlew** and 65 **Brent Geese**. A single **Eider** and a **Great Northern Diver** flying out of the Humber were of note as they are less frequently recorded along our coast. A **Purple Sandpiper** continues to be seen by the rock groyne at Wonderland accompanied by good numbers of **Turnstone**.

Elsewhere on the reserve, the juvenile **Glossy Ibis** continues to draw admiration as it overwinters on our coastline. It appears to be moulting into its adult breeding plumage! Keep your eye out for it on one of the saltmarsh lagoons but please give it the space it needs to feed undisturbed.

I was very lucky to see an elusive species at the beginning of December: a **Lapland Bunting**. Slightly larger than our resident **Reed Bunting**, the Lapland Bunting is often heard calling as it flies overhead but is not often seen. This species breeds in the Arctic and overwinters in coastal areas of the UK. I was fortunate enough to see this bird with another winter species, the **Snow Bunting**, showing well on the outer sand dunes.

North East Lincolnshire: Nature in Focus

A Norwegian Black-headed Gull in Cleethorpes

We know that our coast is vitally important for thousands of wading and wetland birds, especially in winter, but did you know that one bird in particular has been spending its winter at Cleethorpes Boating Lake for over a decade?

A **Black-headed Gull** (*Chroicocephalus ridibundus*) that was “ringed” as a chick near Oslo, Norway in 2011 has been returning to our resort yearly after each breeding season. But what is “ringing” and why is it done?

Applying a ring to a bird is a way to help us monitor populations and species. It builds a picture of the longevity and movements of different birds which helps us to know more about population changes. There are many different methods for ringing birds. The one that most people will notice is **colour ringing**.

Typically, rings of various colours are attached to the legs of larger birds such as waders, wildfowl and gulls. There can be one or multiple rings. Each ringing scheme has a unique combination of leg rings and codes, enabling us to find out where the bird was ringed and who to report it to.

Which brings us back to our Black-headed Gull. An individual bearing a white leg-ring with the code **J6N8** has been visiting Cleethorpes Boating Lake for 13 consecutive winters!



Black-headed Gull J6N8 ringed as a chick at the nest near Oslo, Norway in 2011.

This individual was ringed on the nest in June 2011 and was first seen at Cleethorpes in August 2013 after it had reached breeding age. Each year it completes a round trip of nearly 2,000km between its breeding site (Østensjøvannet Lake near Oslo) to its wintering site with us. Photos of the bird are on our webpage.

At 14 years of age, this individual has exceeded the average life expectancy for this species which is around 11 years. The maximum recorded age from a ringed Black-headed Gull was 32 years and 4 months! Over the course of its lifetime, this bird has logged an estimated 25,000km – this is over half of the Earth's circumference!

Gulls from a variety of different countries on the continent have been found at Cleethorpes over the years including Poland, Latvia, Lithuania and Denmark. I found a Polish-ringed Mediterranean Gull (*Ichthyaetus melanocephalus*) near the Boating Lake on 12th December.

If you spot a bird with a colour ring, try to get a photo or make a note of the species, ring colour and code. Send your sightings to us and we will look into it for you!

DUNEProject@nelincs.gov.uk

You can learn more about ringing on the BTO's website: [About bird ringing | BTO](#)



Black-headed Gull J6N8 seen as an adult in winter plumage in Cleethorpes. Photo courtesy of Chris Atkin.

Upcoming Events

Join Josh for a series of Guided Nature Walks this winter! All events are free but booking is required and spaces are limited. Binoculars are available upon request.

Please visit our EventBrite page for more information: [NELC Ecology Events](#)

When?	Where?
Friday 9 th January, 10:00 – 12:00	Cleethorpes LNR
Friday 16 th January, 10:00 – 12:00	Cleethorpes Country Park
Friday 23 rd January, 10:00 - 12:00	Cleethorpes LNR
Friday 30 th January, 10:00 – 12:00	Cleethorpes Boating Lake
Friday 27 th February, 10:00 – 12:00	Cleethorpes Country Park
Friday 27 th March, 10:00 – 12:00	Cleethorpes Boating Lake

Further dates are to be added for February and March. Make sure to 'Follow' our EventBrite page for updates.

How can I find out more about the DUNE Project?

Visit our DUNE Project webpage for further information: [Cleethorpes DUNE project](#) | [NELC](#)