

We managed our annual foray to northern shores at the beginning of last month when it was allowed and although we didn't see the dolphins despite lots of reported activity (always in the wrong place at the wrong time), we saw things I'd always wanted to see anyway. At this time of year, there is lots of bird movement and we saw quite a few skeins of geese overhead, something we'd seen here too. The most thrilling sight for me was not these or the basking shark but seeing a whole field full of curlews feeding. We were quite close to the coast but it was amazing to see as many as 50 or 60 together, especially when they're now endangered 'red list' birds. In the late Spring, curlews come inland, like here, to breed and the most I've seen before was five in a Walkerburn field so I consider myself doubly lucky. Here, at the moment, there is also lots of bird activity, albeit rural rather than coastal birds. The pheasants are busily feeding in the stubble fields and looking for beech mast which unfortunately is often found on the roadsides where we then see as many dead birds lying before crows dodging the traffic as they attempt to 'clean up'. In the garden, we may not yet have our siskins returning but the feeders have been very busy. With as many people working at home, surely more people are enjoying the distraction of watching the birds, at least from their windows.



Google image-Nuthatch

We've seen and heard the long tailed tits quite a bit and have been spoilt with nuthatches this year with at least 3 individuals. It seems incredible that up until a few years ago, they hadn't set up home in Scotland and I remember how thrilled my mother in law was on a visit to us when we lived in England, seeing one for the first time. They are birds with attitude!

Our parents' generation took far more notice, in their day, of 'life' going on around them. Nowadays the media seem to be more interested in distant perhaps more 'glamorous' animals and we see these advertisements on TV to save the snow leopard, rhino or elephant, which has its place. If everyone was helped and encouraged to look after their local animals and plants, we'd be in a much better world. So let's encourage our younger generation to 'take notice'. Be it nuthatches or basking sharks, these animals are here and can be seen in the flesh so to speak, rather than on the TV ...although if it sparks an interest.... Let's all get outside while the weather holds and take a look for ourselves.