

JANUARY 1983

The month was one of predominantly SW and W winds, bringing reasonably mild weather to the area for most of the time. However, at mid month a cold N/NW air stream became established for a few days, to bring a few wintry showers and a light fall of snow on the 13th.

By the 21st the SW winds were back, becoming gale force from 28th to 30th as a deep depression moved in from the Atlantic.

Thanks to the south westerlies, sea watchers had much to keep them occupied during the month, with unusually high numbers of Little Gulls and Kittiwakes seen between 6th and 12th. Maxima of 30 Little Gulls off Squires Gate on the 11th, and 143 Kittiwakes at the same site on the 9th, were high numbers for the time of year. During this period (6th to 12th), Scoter reached a maximum of 275 off South Shore on the 9th. Other birds encountered during sea watches from Squires Gate were 5 Red Throated Divers and 15 Great Crested Grebes 9th-11th, 2 immature Gannets and a Great Skua on the 9th, and a drake Eider on the 26th. Further north at central promenade on the 6th, one observer located a Pomarine Skua flying north during a strong SW gale.

Wildfowl numbers have been less than spectacular during the mild weather, but a slight increase did occur with the colder, frosty period from the 22nd-24th. On the 23rd at Marton Mere, 62 Shoveler, 65 Mallard, 36 Teal, 51 Pochard and 66 Tufted Duck were part of this cold weather influx, along with 200 Coot. The Wigeon flock at Newton Marsh never exceeded 200, but nearby on the R. Ribble at Freckleton sewage works, at least 400 Shelduck had been pushed onto the river by wildfowling activities on the south Ribble marshes - on the same day, the 23rd, a further 375 Shelduck were counted at Lytham. A Long Tailed Duck was on Fairhaven Lake, and seen by several observers during the month; small groups of Goldeneye were at coastal sites, but the largest gathering (10) was on Marton Mere on the 29th. Single Little Grebes were on Marton Mere and Newton Marsh.

Goose counts are always a feature of winter birding in Lancashire, with the largest flocks in this area being those in Over Wyre. The largest Pinkfoot flock in January was one of 4,000 birds at Cogie Hill; whilst a smaller flock at Cockersands Abbey had a Russian Whitefront for company on the 16th.

Records of Glaucous Gulls indicated that at least 3 of these large Arctic gulls were about during the month, the adult at Fleetwood being seen by several observers up to the month end.

Waders were plentiful on the coast as one might expect, but inland records were few. A wader count on the shore at Squires Gate/St. Annes on the 16th included 70 Grey Plover, 1500 Dunlin, 350 Sanderling and 3,000 Bar Tailed Godwits. The largest inland flock was one of 80 Dunlin at Freckleton. Farmland east of Marton Mere proved attractive to 275 Redshanks on the 13th, whilst the largest Golden Plover flock was one of 1400 at Pilling on the 16th. Sightings of less common waders were few - 2 Jack Snipe on the Lytham St. Annes Nature Reserve on the 12th, a Green Sandpiper at Cockerham Marsh on the 16th, and a single Ruff and 7 Black Tailed Godwits on Newton Marsh at the month end.

Peregrine and Merlin frequented the coastal marshes, but the sighting of a Peregrine at Blackpool South Station, and a Merlin over Ansdell Road Blackpool, surprised one observer. Sparrowhawks may well have been under recorded, with only four sightings of single birds at Marton Mere, Cogie Hill, Cockerham and Poulton. A male Hen Harrier was over Lytham Marsh on the 19th.

The open land around Marton Mere has proved attractive to Short Eared Owls, with up to 6 present on the 9th; whilst 3 at Freckleton sewage works have frequented the tip area since last October. A report of a single Long-eared Owl came from the Marton Mere area on the 9th, and the only Barn Owl reported was a road casualty, a bird found dead on Riversway at Preston early in the month. Roosting Tawny Owls were found at Lytham and Cockerham, single Little Owls were at Freckleton Village and Roseacre.

Flocks of corvids were present throughout the area, but those of 1,000 Jackdaws and 600 Carrion Crows at Pilling on the 16th were the largest.

Fieldfares and Redwings have been more noticeable by their absence rather than by numbers so far this year, with very few sightings of large flocks - 150 Fieldfares Over Wyre on the 16th and 125 Redwings at St. Annes cemetery on the 23rd have been the largest groups reported.

Talbot Square in Blackpool is probably one of the least likely of birding haunts in the Fylde, but a roost of at least 70 Pied Wagtails on the 3rd made it a worthwhile visit for at least one keen observer. Grey Wagtails, down from moorland sites, always find a plentiful supply of insect larvae on the filter beds of sewage works, with single birds almost daily at a couple of the works on the Fylde.

At least one Black Redstart continued to winter in the area, a bird being seen regularly in the vicinity of the Lytham St. Annes Nature Reserve from 2nd-11th; and a Chiffchaff was in Stanley Park on the 8th.

Records received of birds just outside our recording area, but nevertheless of interest included, 9 Red Throated Divers off Heysham on 1st, a Great Grey Shrike at Stocks Reservoir on 2nd, 900 Mallard and 2 Goosander at Barnacre Reservoir on 16th, 4 Goosander on the River Wyre at Scorton on 17th, and an adult Ross's Gull at Southport on 16th.

(Records for possible inclusion in the summary were submitted by L.G. Blacow, B. Dyson, S. Gibson, P. Cuy, A.J. Hinchcliffe, M. Jones, P. and P. Slade, E. Stirling and G.D. Wilby.)

General Notices

The following members require information:

Phil Slade	-	sightings of Sparrowhawks
Bob Dansen	-	" " Tree Sparrows and Wing tagged gulls
Tony Myerscough	-	" " Barn Owls
Len Blacow	-	" " Pinkfeet flocks of over 600
Patrick Davis	-	" " Blackcaps in winter, and Blackcaps, Wood warblers, and Garden Warblers in spring and summer.