

NOVEMBER 1983

With the onset of the winter months the hours of daylight are much reduced, and time spent in the field by observers becomes somewhat restricted. Therefore, it was interesting to note that for only five days during the month were no records submitted for inclusion in the newsletter - testimony to the activities of some members of the Fylde Bird Club.

Weatherwise, the first few days of the month were very mild (temperatures of 10-15°C) as a moderate SW airstream brought damp, overcast conditions from the Atlantic. Light overnight frosts came briefly at mid month as high pressure became established over the British Isles - by the 23rd, the high slipped away to the Continent allowing damp, changeable weather from the SW as troughs of low pressure crossed the country.

Early in the month (as in October), observers at L.S.A.N.R. continued their recording of the passage of finch flocks as they moved south down the Fylde coast. During a two hour watch on the 2nd, 103 Chaffinch and 50 Siskins (two flocks of 25) flew south - whilst a two and a half hour watch on the 6th included 293 Chaffinch, 36 Brambling and 14 Siskins. The next few days saw birds still moving south, but in much reduced numbers - the 13th saw the last large count of birds heading south and included 112 Chaffinch.

Although L.S.A.N.R. saw the largest 'movements' of finches, other localities held fairly large flocks of 'grounded' birds - at Fluke Hall on 4th, 100 Chaffinch and 15 Siskins - 30 Brambling at Warton Marsh on 6th - 20 Siskins at Fluke Hall on 12th - 70 Chaffinch, 15 Brambling and 200 Greenfinch at Warton on 13th, and on the same day, 40 Chaffinch, and 150 Greenfinch at Freckleton. A flock of 110 Chaffinch at Fleetwood fishmeal factory on the 26th was an interesting record from an unusual locality.

Following last months influx of Jays, it was good to see that birds remained at several sites throughout the area - up to 8 in Ribby Hall woods, 3 in Lowther Gardens, 2 at Crimbles Lane, 2 south at L.S.A.N.R. on the 6th, and singles at Fluke Hall, Warton, Stanley Park, Freckleton and the Woodland Gardens. (members are requested to continue submitting all records of Jays.)

Late 'summer' migrants encountered during the month were, a cock Ring Ousel flying south at L.S.A.N.R. on the 2nd, a Wheatear at Fluke Hall on the 10th, and another Wheatear (possibly the same bird) on Blackpool Zoo car park the following day.

Passerines of possible Scandinavian origin continued to be recorded (following last months Snow and Lapland Buntings) - a female Snow Bunting at Fluke Hall on the 6th, a Lapland Bunting going NW at L.S.A.N.R. on the 9th, Lapland Bunting at Pilling on 10th and Fluke on 12th, and another Snow Bunting, this one flying south at L.S.A.N.R. on the 13th. Less common passerines seen during the month included Long tailed Tits (max 15 at Freckleton, and groups of 2 - 8 at Stanley Park, Wesham, Ribby, Salwick and the Mere), Twite (a flock of 20 at Pilling), and Stonechat (2 at the Mere, 2 at Squires gate Ind. Estate, with singles at Fluke Hall, Wyre Estuary, Pleasure Beach and Fleetwood Power Station). A Firecrest spent the morning of the 9th at L.S.A.N.R., but all attempts to locate the bird in the afternoon failed. A Hooded Crow at Freckleton on the 20th was also an unexpected sighting for this area.

Twenty six species of waterfowl were recorded during the month - amongst the less common were 5 Bewicks Swans, 5 Whooper Swans, 2 Barnacle Geese, 3 Eider, a Goosander (a new species for L.S.A.N.R.), Long Tailed Duck, 3 Scaup, and a Water Rail.

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Of the commoner species, the 69 Shoveler at the Mere on 23rd, 640 Mallard at Pilling on the 20th, 70 Teal on the Wyre at Fleetwood on 20th, 484 Shelduck at Pilling on 20th, and 10 Goldeneye at the Mere on the 29th, were the highest counts of those species. The largest flock of Pinkfeet counted was that of 2,700 at Pilling on the 27th.

Peregrine records were fairly regular from the Pilling and Fleetwood Power Station areas - the only other records away from these sites being singles at Starr Hills and Fairhaven. Single Merlins appeared at Warton Marsh, South Station, Clifton, Lytham foreshore, and Pilling - 2 over Lytham foreshore on the 30th was the only report of more than one at any specific site. Sightings of Sparrowhawks from Poulton, the Mere, Ribby, Fleetwood Marsh, Salwick and Cogie Hill, indicated a more widespread distribution of wintering birds when compared with the near coastal distribution of Merlins and Peregrines. Three records of a female Hen Harrier from locations along the Ribble probably referred to a single individual.

Counts at St. Annes beach and the Pilling/Cockersands area on the 20th produced some reasonably high numbers of waders - at St. Annes, 650 Oystercatchers, 52 Ringed Plover, 145 Grey Plover, 600 Sanderlings, 1600 Dunlin, 1000 Knot, and 2000 Bar tailed Godwit - at Pilling/Cockersands, 3200 Oystercatchers, 277 Grey Plover, 2260 Lapwing, 1440 Dunlin, 2700 Knot, 740 Curlew, 315 Redshank, and 94 Turnstone. Elsewhere, Snipe peaked at 160 at the Mere on the 9th (the same day 22 were on L.S.A.N.R.), Fleetwood beach held 3,000 Knot on the 13th, and at least 4,000 Golden Plover frequented the Pilling area. Up to 3 Jack Snipe were present at L.S.A.N.R. during the month, but away from the reserve the only other record was that of 2 at Fleetwood Power Station on the 13th - also on the 13th a Green Sandpiper and 72 Snipe were put up from Carr House Moss at Inskip. The 13th (a Sunday) saw Woodcocks at four sites, 2 in Stanley Park, one at L.S.A.N.R., one in flight near the Mere, and at least 3 at Salwick - the following day one was found in the railway bushes near the Pleasure Beach. Two Purple Sandpipers at Rossall Point on the 19th was the only record received.

Seabird sightings were few during the fairly settled weather conditions. However, several records of interest were submitted - 2 Little Gulls at Fluke Hall on the 6th, a Little Auk (watched at about 50 yds) on the sea off South Shore, 2 Shags on Fleetwood Marine Lake throughout the month, 42 Cormorants in the Pilling area on the 20th, a Razorbill on the same day at Fleetwood, and a Glaucous Gull, also at Fleetwood on the 29th.

DECEMBER 1983

The weather during the month was mild but extremely changeable. This unseasonal mild spell with its lack of frosts ensured ample supplies of natural food for the birds, and this was reflected by the absence of some species from garden bird tables. However, a Meadow Pipit, a species one doesn't normally associate with urban gardens, was present throughout the month in a Carleton garden and was still being seen into the New Year.

Wintering wildfowl came in for much attention, none more so than the female Long tailed Duck at Fleetwood Docks and the Eiders off Rossall. The Eiders at Rossall peaked at 8 on the 11th, but the majority of sightings were of 3 or 4. Long tailed Ducks are never abundant in the Fylde and so the female on the dock at Fleetwood was a welcome addition to the variety of species available for observation - as well as this female, others of the species were noted off Rossall on the 11th and 29th (2 on each occasion). Records of Scoters were few, the 30 off South Shore on the 31st was the highest count, with 28 at Rossall on the 29th being a high count for north Fylde. Red Breasted Mergansers were at several coastal sites with the Rossall/Fleetwood area providing the majority of records, but 19 in the Pilling area on the 18th was the largest single count. Large numbers of Mallard indicated an influx to the area - the Mere had a maximum of 220 (3rd), Pilling and Fluke Hall maxima of 556 and 800 respectively (18th), and 450 on the Wyre (17th). Four hundred and fifty Wigeon at Cockersands (18th) was the largest concentration of that species, and the 10 at the Mere on the same day was the highest count from that site.

During the month all three species of swan were present in the area - 11 Bewicks in the Pilling/Cockerham area, 2 on St. Annes Moss on the 3rd, 6 Whoopers at Nateby on the 26th, and 9 Mutes on a flooded field at Inskip on the 29th. (Doesn't anyone count the Mute Swans on Fleetwood Marine Lake?). Of the several Pinkfeet counts carried out, the, 4,000 flighting in to the roost at Pilling on the 4th was a 'good' count for early December.

Red Throated Divers were noted fairly regularly off shore, with 4 at Rossall on the 11th the highest single count. A Grebe on Fairhaven Lake on 29th was Slavonian or Black-necked - the Grebe was too far out on the lake to identify specifically (the observer didn't have his binoculars), it was diving constantly, offering only brief views before departing to the south over the Ribble. On the same day a Little Grebe was busily diving in shallow water on a flooded field at Staining Village.

The monthly wader count on the 18th at Pilling and St. Annes produced the following results - Pilling, 2,960 Oystercatchers, 1,270 Lapwings, 455 Grey Plover, 680 Golden Plover, 10 Ringed Plover, 59 Turnstones, 4,610 Dunlin, 7,500 Knot, 122 Redshank, 355 Bar Tailed Godwit, and 253 Curlew - St. Annes, 1,000 Oystercatchers, 360 Grey Plover, 34 Ringed Plover, 2 Turnstone, 15,00 Dunlin, 600 Sanderling, and 2,800 Bar Tailed Godwits. On the R. Wyre mudflats east of Shard Bridge, one observer found 1,500 Lapwings and 3,500 Golden Plover on the 25th, whilst at Freckleton on the same day, 5,000 Lapwings were present. (How do you manage to get out of the house on Christmas Day? - answers to the editor). Snipe numbers remained fairly constant at the Mere with about 70 being the regular count, whilst the 3 Jack Snipe at L.S.A.N.R. would almost certainly be the regular birds. A Woodcock flushed at the Fleetwood Fishmeal Factory on the 3rd, probably surprised the observer more than he did the bird - single Woodcocks were also at the Mere (15th) and at Hardhorn (22nd).

Strong W/SW winds during the Christmas period injected a little activity amongst seabirds, but produced nothing really spectacular along the coast. However, just inland from the coast, a winter adult Mediterranean Gull was located amongst a roost of Black Headed Gulls on a field off Rossall Lane on the 28th - almost certainly the same bird, was the Mediterranean Gull seen in flight at the Wyre estuary on the 29th. Gulls were counted moving out of the Wyre at dusk on the 29th as they made their way to the roost off Fleetwood - the count was as follows:- 421 Common Gulls, 4888 Black Headed Gulls, 168 Lesser Black Back Gulls, 302 Herring Gulls, and one Mediterranean Gull. The Fleetwood Glaucous Gull was recorded throughout the month, and could be expected anywhere between Rossall Point and Fleetwood Pier.

Last winter Owls were quite plentiful, but this winter they appear to be in short supply. The only Barn Owl record received for this month was that of a dead bird at Cogie Hill (a road victim), whilst the only Short eared Owls were a single on St. Annes Moss, 2 at the Mere, and 3 at Arm Hill. Maurice Jones provided the only Little Owl sighting, that of a bird perched on the roof of his cabin at the L.S.A.N.R. on the 7th. Merlin and Peregrine remained at November sites, and the female Hen Harrier by the Ribble was still about Lytham Marsh at the start of the month. Single Sparrowhawks were at Winmarleigh (4th), the Mere (5th, 10th, 18th) and Wharles (11th), with 2 at Hardhorn on the 22nd. (A Peregrine at Rossall Point on 29th was seen to take a Turnstone from the beach).

At least 8 Jays were still at Ribby Hall throughout the month, also a single in Stanley Park, 2 at Freckleton Naze, and 2 at Preesall. (It will be interesting to see if any of these birds remain to breed in the Spring.)

Of the over wintering passerines, the ones generating most interest and providing most records were the flock of 10 Snow Buntings in the Rossall area, and the flocks of Twite at Pilling (21) and Fleetwood (34). - the latter were exceptionally good numbers for the Fylde area. Other flocks of passerines worthy of mention were,

100 Greenfinch at Lytham Marsh, 100 Chaffinch in Stanley Park, 36 Brambling at Lytham, 50 Tree Sparrows at Cockersands (18th) and 20 at Lytham (26th), 20 Yellowhammers at Pilling (26th) and 60 at Inskip (31st), and 160 Wood Pigeons at Newton. A flock of 150 Siskins by the R. Wyre at Scorton was just outside our recording area.

Stonechats were present at the Airport (3), the Mere (up to 3), Starr Hills (1), Fleetwood Power Station (1), and L.S.A.N.R. (1); up to 5 Long tailed Tits at the Mere; 5 Tree Creepers in Stanley Park (11th), and a Marsh Tit at the same site on the same day. A Greater Spotted Woodpecker was an unusual sighting at Warton Bank on the 3rd, but 3 Rock Pipits at Lytham on 27th might have been expected.

Finally, several observers commented on the sudden influx of Fieldfares to the area during the period 25th-26th-27th when some quite large flocks were reported. 150 at the Mere, 250 at Lytham, 260 at Fleetwood, and 1,000+ in Over Wyre - could these birds be the harbingers of bad weather to come?

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Records submitted by:- L.G. Blacow, J. Clift, P. Davies, B. Dyson, S. Eaves, F. Ellis, M. Evans, I. Gardner, S. Gibson, P. Guy, G. Hudson, M. Jones, R. Leeming, Any Myerscough., Mony Myerscough, P. and R. Scholes, P and P. Slade. E. Stirling.

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The following article has been submitted by Ed. Stirling.

"Birding - and getting paid as well! "

Thoughts of bird watching did not cross my mind, when, in February 1972 I left Blackpool Telephone Exchange to take a post as third Technical Officer at the smaller South Shore Exchange, situated above the Post Office on Waterloo Road. At that time, I had been birding for just over a year and my life list stood at ninety species.

The presence in the canteen of a seaward facing window did not immediately trigger any idea of seawatching, and during my early weeks, tea-breaks were spent sitting and talking about football etc.

A brief glimpse of two Grey Wagtails on a nearby roof, and a hovering Kestrel just outside the window, were the necessary incentives for me to bring my binoculars the next day, this inevitably invited the usual feeble jokes from my fellow workers. Taking binoculars opened up a new dimension to my being at work, and I can well recall the amazement I felt on first sighting flocks of Scoter on the sea - imagine, and actually being at work as well!

Soon I established a species list which included birds identified during walks to the sea wall - Greenshank was acquired on one such occasion - this list at present stands at a magnificent ninety-six, the most recent addition being Yellow Wagtail, which was long overdue.

The fact that this locality is in a built-up area is an obvious handicap, but this is offset by its close proximity to the sea from where a large slice of the total records have come. Much of what can be seen from Squires Gate can be seen from here, but I regard Arctic Tern as an impossibility.

Summer gales, and bright, cold October mornings have produced some memorable records, such as 96 Manx Shearwaters (3rd July 1978) and a Great Grey Shrike, the latter being my best ever sighting from here, although a Barn Owl seen flying over during darkness a year ago runs it a close second.

Unexpected sightings, like a Coot on the sea, and a Short-eared Owl at South Station figure amongst the species list, whilst Manx Shearwater, Leach's Petrel, and Velvet Scoter happened to be lifetime firsts when seen from here.

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Absent from the list are all the summer warblers, plus Dunnock and Wren, and surprisingly I have not yet obtained Black Tailed Godwit or Razorbill. I must confess that two species on the list are a bit "stringy", Sooty Shearwater and Stock Dove - I would appreciate a repeat of both these. On the other hand, I have denied myself Stonechat, Whinchat, Brambling, Reed Bunting, Turtle Dove, Tufted Duck and Long-tail Skua, owing to uncertainty at the time - of course there's always another day for these.

A few years ago the prospect of obtaining one hundred species from here seemed out of the question, but with just four required I expect to achieve this sooner or later - a Hoopoe for number one hundred would do very nicely.

The outstanding records are:-

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| Coot 11.3.74 | 2 Swift 12.10.78 |
| Great Skua 30.3.76. | 5 Brent Geese 13.11.78 |
| Cuckoo (over the sea) 13.7.77 | Velvet Scoter 16.2.79 |
| Wheatear 14.9.77 | Greenshank 31.8.79 |
| Great Grey Shrike 17.11.77 | Sand Martin 13.5.80 |
| 7 Snow Buntings 10.2.78 | Glaucous Gull 2.3.81 |
| Goldcrest 18.4.78 | Short-eared Owl 9.11.81 |
| Eider 27.6.78. | Barn Owl 28.12.82. |

Keep us informed as to how you go on Ed. - but please, no more "Stringy" ones!

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NOTICES

- 1) Over the next five years or so, Seumus Eaves intends to study Diurnal Passage Migration in The Fylde. He requires information on numbers and species moving through The Fylde (at any time of the year), and any factors which may affect movements (weather, time of day etc.).
Members wishing to be involved in this study can contact Seumus at Club meetings.
- 2) Phil Slade wants to thank all those members who provided records of sightings of Sparrowhawks during 1983. Please continue to report all occurrences - records of coastal migrants at the appropriate times of year are of particular interest, and any reports of breeding will be kept in confidence.
- 3) We have now completed the first twelve months publication of the Newsletter - do you want to see any changes in the format or content? Suggestions to the Editor as soon as possible if you want them included in the next Newsletter (Jan/Feb '84).
Does the Club need an emblem? - suggestions to the Secretary.

