

JULY 1985

The first days of the month saw migrant waders returning from their breeding grounds. Curlews were the most obvious as birds moved West at several sites, and by the 7th at least 300 were gathered near Shard Bridge. Other early migrants included a Greenshank and 6 Dunlin at the Mere on the 3rd, and a few days later, the 7th, another Greenshank by the R.Wyre at Skippool. The first returning Whimbrels were singles at Cleveleys and Thurnham on the 10th and 12th respectively. The 12th also saw a flurry of waders from the North, with 32 Dunlin at Conder Green, 10 Golden Plover at Thurnham, single Greenshank at Stanah, the Mere, and Conder Green, 5 Common Sandpipers at Conder Green and 5 at Freckleton, and a Green Sandpiper by the Wyre at Stanah. Seven Black tailed Godwits flew North over the Mere on the 13th, and the following day three more Greenshanks were at Little Singleton and 6 Ruff were on Newton Marsh.

On the 13th, amidst the flurry of arrivals from the North, 3 newly hatched Ringed Plover chicks were found at the Fleetwood Power Station site.

Seawatching at Rossall and South Prom produced several records of interest, but the largest numbers of birds appeared after mid-month. On the 17th, 50 Kittiwakes, 100 Common Terns, and 30 Gannets were off South Prom, on the 20th, 23 Manx Shearwaters and 8 Fulmars appeared off Rossall and 9 Fulmar off South Prom, and on the 22nd, 31 Manx Shearwaters, 86 Gannets, and 23 Fulmars were counted from South Prom. Two Arctic Skuas passed South Prom on the 11th, then singles at the same site on 13th, 14th, 18th, and 22nd, and 4 on the 29th. A diver flew south off South Prom on the 20th.

A Guillemot accompanied by a flightless juvenile was on the sea at South Prom on the 28th and 29th - an interesting record as the nearest breeding colony is probably that on the Gt.Orme, some forty miles away to the South.

Post breeding wildfowl showed signs of a return to local waters by mid-month. Up to 30 Tufted Duck were back at the Mere and 17 Pochard and 29 Mute Swans at the I.C.I. Pool. Coot numbers increased from about 100 to about 280 by the month end at the Mere. On the 13th/14th, 6 drake Ruddy Ducks were at the Mere, but once again there appears to have been no attempt to breed there, although females and drakes have been present. No successful breeding by Great Crested Grebes at the Mere was a major disappointment, but thankfully, five pairs of Little Grebe managed to raise young. Elsewhere, Little Grebes with young were seen on a small pond near Carleton Crematorium and Naze Pool at Freckleton.

On the sea, 36 Scoters were at Rossall on the 2nd and 22 off South Prom on the 12th, whilst 2 drake Eiders flew South at Anchorsholme on the 18th, and unusually, a female Goldeneye was seen off South Prom on the 27th.

Very few records of breeding birds were received, so once again an enormous gap in our knowledge of local birds remains unfilled. However, from those records submitted it would appear that Whitethroats were more plentiful than in previous years, but sadly, once again the small colonies of Sand Martins by the R.Wyre have not been occupied.

From mid-month, migrant passerines were noted moving South, and post breeding flocks of finches were growing. Swifts and Swallows numbered up to 200 and 350 respectively at the Mere, the Swallows roosting in the reed beds at the month end. Juvenile Wheatears came as singles to Pilling on the 21st and at St.Annes Prom on the 25th, and a few Yellow Wagtails appeared at Freckleton late in the month.

One might assume that the juvenile Coal Tits seen in Lowther Gardens during July were from local nests and not necessarily migrants.

Ninety five Pied Wagtails were at Pilling on the 21st, but unfortunately the observer didn't say whether the birds were in one flock, small groups, or passing through

A pair of Linnets was found nest building at Skippool on the last day of the month.

Fortunate seawatchers at South Prom on the 28th provided what was probably the most unusual record of the month, when 5 Risso's Dolphins appeared close inshore apparently feeding amongst the shoals of Mackerel.

AUGUST 1985

The dreadful Summer continued throughout August, and rain in varying amounts was recorded on nearly every day of the month. Hardly suitable conditions to encourage migration, and consequently the passage of birds through the area was somewhat patchy. However, a brief respite in the wind and rain on the 17th saw a small wave of migrants from the North, which included Wheatears, Willow Warblers, Common Sandpipers, Greenshanks, Whimbrels, Green Sandpipers, and a Little Stint.

Predominantly W.SW winds throughout the month ensured seawatchers would have a steady supply of seabirds, and as one might expect during August, a fair variety. Common Terns were most plentiful, the 900 which passed South off South Prom on the 4th being the highest count, and up to 300 on other dates in the same area indicated a steady Southerly movement of birds throughout the month. Elsewhere, up to 300 were roosting on Preesall Sands and up to 200 were counted at Rossall. Sandwich Terns also moved South with the Common Terns but in much smaller numbers, the largest count being 60 off South Prom on the 4th. All the regular seawatch sites produced Little Tern records, 11 off South Prom on the 18th and 8 at Rossall the same day proved to be maxima from those two areas, whilst 4 were at Preesall Sands (11th), up to 5 at Lane Ends (18th), and singles at Cockersands and Anchorsholme. The I.C.I. Pool held 2 Black Terns on the 3rd, and a single immature was seen over the sea at South Prom from the 18th to the 25th.

With all the tern activity offshore Skuas were also much in evidence. Arctic Skuas were seen almost daily along the coast, with maxima of 7 off Anchorsholme and 5 at South Prom - late in the month one was seen chasing terns in the Wyre Estuary at Fleetwood. Great Skuas are probably less dependent on terns as a source of food, so the presence these larger relatives of the Arctic Skuas was probably due to the weather rather than the passage of the terns. Single Great Skuas were off Rossall on the 3rd and 18th, then 3 off South Prom and 2 at Anchorsholme on the 24th, 5 off South Prom on the 25th, and a single there on the 26th.

The W.SW winds also pushed other seabirds close inshore. Manx Shearwaters peaked at 130 at South Prom and 68 at Rossall on the 3rd, but later in the month 85 flew South off South Prom on the 24th, and 50 more the following day. Three hundred Kittiwakes were off Blackpool on the 11th, and the same day a single was in Stanley Park.

For some reason Fulmars can be somewhat unpredictable off the Fylde Coast and don't always appear when conditions suggest that they should. August was such a month when Fulmars proved less than predictable. A few birds were noted up and down the coast up to the 24th, then suddenly on the 25th when conditions were no more severe than they had been throughout the month 96 appeared off South Prom.

Wader passage was light to mid-month, so the 12 Common Sandpipers at Conder Green on the 1st were probably British birds. However, a brief respite in the inclement weather on the 17th was just improvement enough to encourage birds to move into the area. Up to 5 Common Sandpipers were at the I.C.I. Pool and at Lane Ends, with ones and twos at several other sites, a total of 21 Greenshanks were at regularly watched sites, and a flock of 42 Whimbrels flew South over Newton Marsh. Single Green Sandpipers were at Fluke Hall, Freckleton and I.C.I. Pool, but a less fortunate individual was picked with a broken wing on Marton Moss and died the day after.

A juvenile Little Stint at Lane Ends on the 18th was early.

Later in the month, with pressure high to the East of Britain and winds from the S.SE, a few more waders of interest put in brief appearances. On the 29th a small mixed flock of Dunlin, Redshank and Curlews going South over the Mere had 2 Curlew Sandpipers for company, on the 30th, an immature Wood Sandpiper was at the Mere, and a Little Ringed Plover flew South over I.C.I. on the 31st.

Following a similar pattern to the wader passage, passerines appeared with the ridge of high pressure at mid-month. Prior to this a few birds had been seen at the well watched sites such as Pilling, Rossall, Fairhaven, and L.S.A.N.R.. The period from the 17th to the month end saw widespread arrivals of migrants, Wheatears were most plentiful with 20 at the Mere, 11 at Arm Hill, and 12 at Ansdell. Twenty four Wheatears were on Warton Marsh on the 26th and 16 on Fleetwood Golf Course on the 31st. Amongst the migrants on the 18th was a male Stonechat at Fleetwood Power Station and a female at Arm Hill, also moving through the same day were Whichats, with 9 at the Power Station, 3 at the Mere, and 2 at Fluke Hall.

Grey Wagtails were recorded almost daily from the 18th to the month end, but the least expected migrants encountered during August were probably Fieldfares, with 11 at

Hardhorn on the 22nd, 4 at Normoss on the 24th, and 12 at Preesall on the 25th- one can only speculate as to their origin.

A roost of Linnets at W.G.P. held up to 334 birds towards the end of the month, and yet on the 17th a bird was found sitting on four eggs at Ribby, and the pair found nest building at Skippool at the end of July went one better with five eggs.

At Ribby on the 10th a large mixed flock of passerines was seen feeding on aphids - the flock was made up of 18 Goldfinches, 14 Chaffinches, 9 Greenfinches, 10 Tree Sparrows, 50+ Blue Tits, 35+ Great Tits, 24 Willow Warblers, and 6 Whitethroats.

Coot numbers had built up to at least 320 at the Mere by the 6th, and to 140 at the I.C.I. Pool by the month end, and at least 700 Mallard at Lane Ends on Wader Count day was quite exceptional. Unexpected waterfowl sightings during the month included a Black Necked Grebe in winter plumage (14th-15th), a drake Gadwall with a duck Teal flying South off South Prom (18th), an eclipse drake Garganey at the Mere on the 26th, and a party of 3 Red Crested Pochards (drake + duck + juvenile) at Preesall Flashes on the 31st. Thirty Greylags and 54 Canada Geese were on W.G.P. on the 31st, whilst on the same day on the other side of the R.Wyre, a Greylag was with 42 Canadas on the I.C.I. Pool.

Contributors:- C.Band F.Bird L.Blacow R.Danson B.Dyson F.Ellis I.Gardner
S.Gibson P.Guy A.Hinchliffe M.Jones R.Leeming M.Meredith
Andy Myerscough Monty Myerscough Tony Myerscough P&M.Shakeshaft
P&P.Slade E.Stirling F.Walsh

A Grand Days Birdwatching

On Friday night of the 9th of August, I was looking around the old R.A.F. Camp at Kirkham. After about an hour, I decided to look in the old hospital. Just as I was about to leave the building I spotted a dog which was not much bigger than a rat. The dog ran away growling and tried to jump out of a window, but it didn't make it.

Then I remembered what some fellas at work had said about a missing Yorkshire Terrier, and a reward of £1000.

It didn't take me long to capture the dog, but now the problem of finding the owners. I knew they lived on Ribby Road, only about half a mile from the Camp. With the help of a couple of young girls who were walking along Ribby Road I managed to find the home of the owners, and they confirmed the £1000 reward.

The dog only weighed two pounds - that works out at £31 per ounce. Not bad for a days birdwatching.

Andy Myerscough.

Notes on the passage recorded on 18th August

Until Saturday August 17th, most of the Autumn passage had been dominated by almost constant West to South Westerly winds, resulting in very little movement.

On the 17th of August a "high" brought warm, settled conditions to our area, and at dusk there was a clear sky and a light N/E wind. By dawn on the 18th, the wind was a fresh S/E accompanied by showers, almost ideal conditions for a "fall".

Several species were affected and all the records I could gather have been included in this short summary.

Waders

Black Tailed Godwit - 3 S/W over the Mere and 1 south off South Prom.

Whimbrel - birds moving during the morning were 2 south off South Prom and singles S/W over the Mere and Fleetwood P.S.. Passage was possibly heavier than the morning records might suggest because in the evening 42 moved south over Newton Marsh (a good Autumn flock) and 5 moved south over the Mere.

Greenshank - 20 were recorded. Parties of 4 moved S/W over Rossall and the Mere, and a single moved S over Newton Marsh. Parties of 4 were grounded at Lane Ends, Pilling and Fleetwood P.S., and 3 were by the Ribble at Freckleton. Some of those grounded may not have been "new" birds, but all have been included for completeness.

Common Sandpiper - 17 were recorded. New arrivals were certainly 7 at Fairhaven Lake, 3 at I.C.I. Pool and singles at the Mere and St. Annes Beach. Elsewhere, 3 were at Lane Ends, Pilling, and 2 at Freckleton.

Passerines

Swift - In the early morning, groups of c.50 were over Fairhaven Lake, Freckleton and L.S.A.N.R., all had moved on by mid-morning.

Yellow Wagtail - 7 were at Fairhaven Lake and at Rossall Point.

Grey Wagtail - singles were at Fairhaven Lake, Freckleton and St. Annes Beach.

Wheatear - this species was most affected and small parties were seen all along the coast. The largest group, 20, were at the Mere, these arrived at 0900 after a heavy shower. Elsewhere there were 10 at Rossall, 7 at Fairhaven, 6 at St. Annes Beach, 5 at Fleetwood P.S., and groups of 3 at Fleetwood Golf Course, Lytham, South Shore, South Prom and St. Annes.
A total of 63 were recorded.

Len Blacow.

TAIL FEATHERS (A new feature, including items gleaned from other Bird Reports with a local connection, however slight).

The first are taken from the 1984 Walney Bird Report, and are due to the activities of our local ringers.

Sedge Warbler - one ringed at Walney on 19th July 1982 was trapped at the Mere on the 14th May 1984.

Blue Tit - one ringed at Walney on the 3rd October 1981 was controlled twice at Bispham on 26th October 1981, and the 4th March 1982, and again at Lakeside, Windermere, on the 24th March 1984. (After reading this, one can only speculate as to the origin of the 85 Blue Tits recorded at Fairhaven Lake on 27th September 1985 - see next months newsletter).

Greenfinch - one ringed at Walney on the 11th November 1983 was controlled at Fleetwood on 30th December 1984.

One ringed at Walney on 14th November 1983 was controlled at Blackpool on the 18th January 1984.

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