

MARCH 1985

The weather during March followed a similar pattern to that experienced during January and February, by starting mild, a severe cold snap between the 15th and the 22nd, followed by another mild spell to the month end.

Winter wildfowl were very much on the move during March, and by the month end many birds had moved out of the area. The last large flocks of Pinkfeet were seen at Pilling and Eagland Hill on the 9th and 10th respectively, when the 2000 Pinkfeet had a couple of Barnacle Geese, a Whitefront, and a "dark bellied" Brent for company. One hundred and sixty Wigeon on Newton Marsh during the first few days of the month quickly dispersed leaving small groups of stragglers at a few sites. Pochard and Tufted Duck peaked at 66 and 73 at the Mere on the 3rd, then showed a gradual decline throughout the month as birds moved out. Teal were slightly later with their departure, with up to 40 at Pars Farm and at least 50 at Wesham Marsh until the last few days in the month. Six Pintail remained at Wesham Marsh until the 23rd.

Goldeneye were also on the move, with a noticeable increase between the 12th and 25th when up to 11 appeared at the Mere and 21 at the I.C.I. Pool, at the same time at least 6 were seen on the sea at Rossall. Similarly, Eiders turned up in spectacular numbers at coastal sites at mid month - on the 16th, 41 flew north during a two hour seawatch at Anchorsholme, and the following day 200+ were counted on the sea between Rossall Point and Rossall School - by the 24th numbers had been reduced to about 60. At the same time that the Eider flocks were off Rossall, 50 Common Scoters and 53 Red Breasted Mergansers were also present, and a drake Long tailed Duck was on the sea off Anchorsholme.

A record of interest from just outside the Fylde Recording Area was that of 19 Goosanders at Barnacre Reservoirs on the 17th (3 drakes and 16 ducks).

A Great Northern Diver on the sea at Anchorsholme on the 3rd and 6 Red Throated Divers off Rossall on the 17th, were the only diver records submitted by observers.

Two adult Gannets going north off Anchorsholme on the 3rd was the only record of that species during the month, until a single flew south at Anchorsholme and 14 more were seen off Rossall on the 31st, so ending an almost blank month for seawatchers. A Fulmar off Rossall on the 31st was the only sighting of that species. Little Gulls fared slightly better, with 3 off Central Prom on the 6th, 3 more off Central Prom on the 24th, 2 adults at Anchorsholme on the 25th, 4 adults at Anchorsholme on the 29th, and 4 at Rossall on the 31st.

The only Glaucous Gull seen was a 1st winter bird at the Mere on the 31st, and on the same day at the Mere, 119 adult Lesser Black Backs was a strong indication that the Spring passage of that species was well under way.

Black tailed Godwits appeared to be well dispersed about the area throughout the month, with up to 400 at Fairhaven, 260 by the River Wyre at Fleetwood, 150 at Pars Farm, and up to 20 on Newton Marsh. Ten Purple Sandpipers were at Rossall Point on the 17th, and 300 Turnstones at the same place on the 24th - more unusually, 63 Turnstones were found along the open sandy shore at Central Prom on the 3rd.

A somewhat unexpected record was that of a Woodcock in flight along St. Annes Promenade on the 2nd.

Few winter passerines were about during March, but amongst those remaining, was a Snow Bunting at Rossall on the 2nd, the 40 Twite in the Fleetwood area, and flocks of up to 300 Fieldfares at Thurnham and Eagland Hill on the 10th. The last large flock of Fieldfares seen was one of 100+ going north over Clifton on the 16th. Very few Redwings were encountered during March.

A cock Blackcap found in Honeysuckle in a Carleton garden on the 22nd was probably an overwintering bird, but the 35 Pied Wagtails at Fleetwood Power Station on the 25th was a firm indication that Spring passage was underway, and this was confirmed on the 26th when the first Wheatear was found on Fleetwood Golf Course. The next day, the 27th, single Wheatears were at Fleetwood Power Station and on Lytham Marsh, and by the 31st, 3 more had arrived at the Mere, 6 on L.S.A.N.R., and 4 at Rossall School. The first White Wagtails of the Spring were 2 at Ribby on the 30th.

APRIL 1985

On the 2nd of the month a weak ridge of high pressure moved slowly eastwards across Britain bringing light south westerly winds and breezes from the Mediterranean regions. The daytime temperatures during the 2nd and 3rd went up to 15/16°C, and the overnight temperature of the 3rd to the 4th was a very warm 8°C (slightly higher in S. Britain). My own notes for the 4th included the comment, "Possibility of some early migrants with such a high overnight temperature" - it proved true, with a veritable "flood" of birds providing some very early first dates for some species.

On the 2nd five Sand Martins appeared at the Mere, whilst the following day, the 3rd, two Chiff Chaffs and a Willow Warbler were at the Fishmeal Factory, and a Swallow was in flight over the M55 at Kirkham. The Wheatears seen at the end of March had been supplemented by new arrivals by the 3rd and at least 10 were found on L.S.A.N.R., 16 at the Airport, 16 at the Mere, and 21 at Fairhaven. The 5th saw more new arrivals, a House Martin at Kirkham and a Common Sandpiper at Conder Green, whilst at sites throughout the area Willow Warblers and Chiff Chaffs had become widespread, with up to six of each at a couple of sites and ones and twos elsewhere. The same day three more Swallows were noted going North off Rossall. On the 6th a cock Blackcap was found at the Fishmeal Factory, and the same day another House Martin was at Ribby and another Swallow at Poulton. The 8th saw the first Yellow Wagtail at Lane Ends, and yet another influx of Willow Warblers, with up to 20 at the Fishmeal Factory, 10 at the Mere, 6 at Ribby, and 6 at Fluke Hall; the following day a Little Ringed Plover was found at Wesham Marsh.

During the period of the 8th to the 15th the weather became somewhat changeable and unsettled, so bringing a temporary halt to the early movement of birds. However, observers were undeterred in their search for migrants, and on the 10th four Yellow Wagtails were found at the Mere, a cock Ring Ousel at L.S.A.N.R., and a cock Black Redstart at the D.H.S.S. at Norcross.

By the 16th a ridge of high pressure was building from the south, this dominated the weather for the next three days, bringing with it once again warm overnight temperatures of 8/9°C and fresh arrivals of migrants. On the 17th, up to 36 White Wagtails and a single Yellow Wagtail were on the Fleetwood Power Station site, and 3 Sand Martins and 3 Common Sandpipers at the Mere. The first Redstarts appeared on the 18th when singles were in the Railway Bushes by the Pleasure Beach and at Ryscar Farm near Bispham Marsh. The same day more Willow Warblers arrived, 14 at Bispham Marsh and up to 42 at the Fishmeal Factory, and Yellow Wagtails dropped in at several sites, the largest group being that of six on Newton Marsh. The first Cuckoo was at Lytham Promenade on the 19th, and the same day Whimbrels put in their first appearance when 14 were on fields near the Mere.

From the 19th to the month end a cold N.NE airflow became established over Britain, and consequently the number of migrants encountered locally declined markedly. However, birds were still obviously on the move as was evidenced by a male and female Ring Ousel and a cock Redstart at St. Annes Crematorium for a few days, a cock Redstart in Stanley Park, a Greenshank on Clifton Marsh (24th), a Sedge Warbler and a Lesser White-throat at the Mere on the 27th, two Whinchats at the Airport on the 28th, and the first Swift at the Mere on the 30th.

Early in the month passage of Redpolls was noticeable, with several observers commenting on small groups moving at various sites. On the 8th the last reported flock of Twite was at the Fishmeal Factory when twenty birds were counted, and the same day the last large flock of Fieldfares was reported from Carleton when fifty birds were found feeding below a thorn hedge.

The cold snap towards the end of the month was the suspected reason for a pair of the L.S.A.N.R. Stonechats deserting their clutch of three eggs.

Whilst many observers watched eagerly for early migrants, others continued their counts of the winter wildfowl and waders. Amongst the wildfowl counts, a count of 320 Eiders off Rossall on the 8th eclipsed the count of 200 made during March, and was almost certainly a record count for this area. The last Pinkfeet sighting was that of a skien of 80 over Lane Ends on the 2nd, and 24 Goldeneye at the I.C.I. Pool on the 18th indicated a peak in the movement of that species.

At coastal wader roosts maxima of species included 200+ Ringed Plover at Fairhaven, 250 Grey Plover at Lane Ends, 10000 Knot at Lane Ends, 500 Turnstone at Rossall, 700 Sanderling at Rossall and 300 at St. Annes, 2450 Dunlin at Lane Ends, 580 Black Tailed

Godwits at Fairhaven, and 10 Purple Sandpipers at Rossall.

Inland, Golden Plover flocks peaked at 500 on St. Annes Moss, 500 at Lane Ends, and 300 on Clifton Marsh, whilst Black Tailed Godwits and Ruff on Newton Marsh produced maxima of 300+ and 58 respectively. A Green Sandpiper was at Street Gravel Pits from the 5th to the 8th.

Seawatching produced little in the way of numbers, but nevertheless produced a few records of interest. The best day proved to be the 14th, when 41 adult Gannets, 22 Manx Shearwaters, 56 Fulmars, and 2 Great Skuas, were all noted going north off South Shore. Up to 26 Little Gulls were off Rossall early in the month, and at least 13 off Anchorsholme at mid month - 4 adult Little Gulls appeared at the Mere on the 14th. The first of the "Sterna" terns appeared as late as the 26th, when 2 Common Terns and 4 Little Terns were seen off Rossall. The first Arctic Terns were three over the River Ribble on the 30th.

A migrant not often encountered in our recording area was a Buzzard seen flying north along the sea wall at Lane Ends on the 7th.

Contributors:- C.Band, L.Blacow, S.Eaves, F.Ellis, M.Evans, B.Dyson, I.Gardner, P.Guy, A.Hinchliffe, G.Hudson, M.Jones, M.Meredith, Monty Myerscough, M.O'Brien, O.Roberts, Phil Slade, G.Smith, E.Stirling.

BIRD NOTES

Kingfisher in Urban Habitat

In the last Newsletter (No.14) the note on the Kingfisher passing through a built up area, reminded me of a similar sighting at Poulton.

At about 16.30 on the 14/2/85, I was walking down a busy road over a railway bridge which heads out of Poulton towards Bispham. On the right of the road was a field with a dyke running through it. The field was bounded by the road, a row of houses, a building site, and the railway line. A Kingfisher flew past me and along the dyke, straight down the middle of the field, and away through a line of bushes partially screening the building site. The bird made no sound.

It should also be noted that the dyke was unfrozen, when most water in the area was frozen over. This may have forced the Kingfisher into this urban habitat.

Paul Morgan.

The GREAT FYLDE BIRD RACE - RESULTS

The race was held on the 14th May 1985, and two teams participated. The two teams were sponsored by many members, and the monies raised provided a much needed boost to the Club's funds.

Team A
P.Slade
S.Eaves
P.Davies

Team B
F.Ellis
A.Hinchliffe
M.Morgan

86 species recorded.

89 species recorded.

Total species recorded 95

23.5.83 Salinas de Levante(Mallorca).

The salt pans of the Salinas de Levante were some fifteen miles west of Cala D'or our Majorcan holiday resort, even so I had every intention to visit them at some time during my holiday. Unfortunately there were no buses from the resort which passed the Salinas, the distance was too far to contemplate a long walk in the hot sun, and not having ridden a bicycle for over twenty years I wasn't about to re-enter that activity without a great deal of thought. A car was the obvious answer.

I left Cala D'or just after breakfast and headed west towards the town of Santanyi, along quiet Majorcan roads lined with olive groves and orange trees, and where there were smallholdings there were the inevitable cactus patches. Beyond Santanyi I saw my first Hoopoes of the day, three together on wires by the road. I stopped to watch the Hoopoes, but my attention was drawn to a Woodchat Shrike busily devouring some item of prey at the roadside, then to a Scops Owl perched in a tree behind me.

I continued my leisurely drive, watching right and left for anything of interest, until eventually the vast area of saltpans appeared on my right as I headed due south along the road to Colonia de Sant Jordi. After parking the car near the saltworks buildings I approached a couple of workers having their morning break, in my broken Spanish I asked if I could go onto the pans, they nodded in the affirmative, so with a grateful "Muchas gracias" I was on my way.

A field next to the buildings held a flock of some fifty Kentish Plovers, whilst above a wet area nearer the lagoons three Fan Tailed Warblers were in noisy agitated flight. A scan of the distant lagoons and scrub areas produced an Osprey in flight, and a harrier which wasn't identifiable, being too far away. I made my way along the main causeway, passing on the way a pair of very agitated Kentish Plovers trying to distract me from four eggs at the edge of the causeway. Kentish Plovers, and a few Ringed Plovers, seemed to be everywhere on the pans and causeways, whilst in flight were five Curlew Sandpipers in their bright summer plumage. A short distance along the main causeway I came across my first Black Winged Stilt, standing quietly in one of the flooded pans with a very pale Redshank for company.

Following a gentle stroll along the main causeway, which included many diversions to inspect hidden pans and lagoons, I eventually arrived at the main canal which carries water from the Mediterranean via a pumping station to the saltpans. Here the causeways and embankments were overgrown but passable, and beyond the canal was a vast area of marshy scrub and dead trees populated by a couple of hundred pairs of Black Winged Stilts and many pairs of Kentish Plovers. Water Rails squealed from the flooded scrub, two Cetti's Warblers exploded into song nearby, and a Spectacled Warbler appeared in a low bush close to where I was standing, having given its presence away by its harsh "tek-tek" alarm call. To a background of noisy Stilts and Water Rails I scanned the pans, a solitary Little Egret was feeding in a particularly large lagoon, a few Sardinian Warblers moved amongst the scrub, and the harrier seen earlier was identifiable as a male Marsh Harrier sitting in a dead tree. A Whiskered Tern passed low overhead and flew on North without pausing. Huge numbers of Swifts were in flight over the flooded scrub area (I made no attempt to count them- it would have been impossible), whilst on the ground, several Corn Buntings and Linnets reminded me of home.

Leaving the saltpans at their southern end, I walked back towards the saltworks along the public track which in the opposite direction leads down to the sea. A Woodchat Shrike was on wires by the track, whilst two Turtle Doves and two Hoopoes flew away into a conifer plantation. Greenfinches and Serins were plentiful in scrubby areas at the woodland edge, and a Tawny Pipit was located on an open area alongside the track.

Making my way back to the saltworks and the car, I came across what appeared to be a worked out sandpit surrounded by overhanging trees. One bank of the sandpit had several nest holes, each hole having a perfectly flat base to the tunnel. On closer inspection the tunnels appeared to be unoccupied. I was about to leave when a flash of orange below the overhanging trees caught my eye. Three Bee Eaters were in flight below the trees, the bright mid-day sunlight reflecting from their iridescent orange and gold mantles as the birds twisted and turned, and occasionally hovered in the warm but quite strong wind coming in from the sea - what a marvellous way to end a couple of hours birding.

Peter Guy.