

SEPTEMBER 1985

One hundred Swifts which passed NW over Carleton during the evening of the 5th, was the last large movement of that species noted during September, and a single bird over Marton on the 18th was the latest for the month. The Swallow roost at the Mere had built up to an estimated 10,000 at mid month, but then reduced to about 300 by the 30th. Elsewhere, the Swallow roosts at the Power Station and Preesall Flashes had held up to 1000 and 300 birds respectively.

Up to mid month passerine migration appeared light, with only a few warblers, chats, wagtails, and a couple of Pied Flycatchers at local sites. However, an immature Barred Warbler at Fairhaven from the 12th to the 14th (3rd Fylde record and first since 1975) added some excitement to a quiet early part of the month.

The weather throughout September was mostly unsettled, but by the 25th high pressure became established over most of Britain, bringing winds from the SE and encouraging many birds to start moving South. This sudden influx of birds included the first Redstarts of the month with ones and twos at at least seven near coastal sites. Spotted Flycatchers also moved through, with at least 3 in Watson Road Park and singles at several other sites, whilst Pied Flycatchers appeared in Watson Road Park on the 27th and 30th, and at South Station on the 27th. A Ring Cusel at L.S.A.N.R. on the 25th was the only representative of that species reported during the month, and warblers continued to be scattered thinly.

Several observers submitted counts of diurnal migrants from the L.S.A.N.R., Fairhaven Lake, and Rossall areas late in the month. From those counts it is apparent that considerable numbers of some species were passing down the Fylde Coast. The highest counts were of Meadow Pipits, Chaffinches and Skylarks, but this one might have expected. More unexpected were the numbers of Coal Tits encountered at some sites, with at least 26 at Fairhaven on the 27th, 25 at Fairhaven and 25 at Rossall on the 28th, 20 at Bourne Hill and 26 at Fleetwood Marsh on the 29th, and incredibly another 52 at Fairhaven on the 30th - where did this lot come from?. Blue Tits were also plentiful at Fairhaven, with 85 going South on the 27th, and 70 more on the 28th.

Amongst the more plentiful species were lesser numbers of other interesting passerine migrants. Grey Wagtails in mostly single figures were recorded daily from the 6th to the month end, but numbers increased during the last week when up to 10 birds were noted going South over a number of sites. Migrant Great Spotted Woodpeckers also passed through Fairhaven, with 2 on the 27th, 2 more on the 28th, and a single on the 29th. A Treecreeper was in Watson Road Park on the 11th (only the 2nd record), and another was at Burglars Alley on the 28th. Siskins and Bramblings passed through Fairhaven and L.S.A.N.R. during the last few days of the month, but only managed single figures for both species on each day.

The 24th saw the first Redwings of the Winter, when 6 were reported from the area of Wilkinsons Gravel Pits(W.G.P) at Preesall.

On the 1st, the 3 Red Crested Pochards were still at Preesall Flashes, but no subsequent sightings were reported so one must assume that they moved on soon after the 1st. Pochard numbers increased at the I.C.I. Pool from 47 on the 1st to 107 at mid month, and similarly, Tufted Duck at I.C.I. increased from 42 to 143, but at the Mere numbers of both remained fairly stable, Pochard at about 30 and Tufted at about 50. The I.C.I. Pool also attracted 2 Scaup, 3 Pintail and a Gadwall, whilst Fairhaven Lake proved attractive to a drake Common Scoter from the 8th to at least the 28th. A Long Tailed Duck was off Anchorsholme on the 12th.

Up to 80 Canada Geese frequented the I.C.I. Pool throughout the month, but occasionally crossed the R.Wyre to spend some time on Preesall Flashes. Twenty four Greylags were with the Canadas on the I.C.I. Pool on the 6th, and the first of the returning Pinkfeet(110) flew South over the Mere on the 24th.

The unsettled weather early in the month pushed seabirds inshore, especially to Fleetwood and Rossall. On the 1st 10 Little Terns and 10 Arctic Skuas were in the Wyre Estuary at Fleetwood, and 3 Great Skuas, 28 Manx Shearwaters, 55 Fulmars, 31 Gannets, and 20 Kittiwakes off Rossall. A few days later, on the 8th, with a fresh westerly wind blowing, a Storm Petrel was off South Prom and an exhausted Fulmar was found on the nearby Go-Kart Track. The same day an adult Little Gull flew westwards low over houses at Carleton. Strong winds during the 11th to the 17th brought Leach's

Petrels close inshore, with a single at Anchorsholme on the 12th, 4 at South Prom on the 14th, 13 off Blackpool and 3 off Rossall on the 15th, 17 off Cleveleys on the 16th, and a single off South Prom on the 17th was the last seen. Arctic and Great Skuas also put in appearances during the same period, as did 2 Puffins off South Prom on the 15th. Manx Shearwaters, Fulmars and Gannets also appeared but in less numbers than at the start of the month. A Glaucous Gull turned up amongst the gulls at the Power Station on the 3rd.

During the Easterly winds late in the month 8 Black Terns were over the R. Wyre at the back of I.C.I., and 3 at the Mere.

Migrant waders were apparently less affected by the unsettled conditions and some interesting observations were made throughout the month. Greenshanks and Curlew Sandpipers provided the most outstanding records. A group of 6 Greenshanks flew South over the Mere on the 3rd, then on the 8th 2 were on Newton Marsh, 2 at Freckleton Pools, 4 at Lane Ends, and at least 20 between Lane Ends and Cockerham. The first Curlew Sandpiper seen was a single going West at the Mere on the 5th, but by the 8th 9 were at Lane Ends and 39 on a flooded field opposite Lane Ends Car Park. During the rest of the month up to 20 Curlew Sandpipers remained at Pilling, and on a few days twos and threes passed SW over the Mere. At Cockerham on the 8th, 15 Ruff had 2 Green Sandpipers and a Little Stint for company, and 2 more Little Stints were at Lane Ends on the 14th.

A single Purple Sandpiper was at Rossall on the 15th, the first to return for the Winter.

OCTOBER 1985

On the 1st the roost of Swallows at the Mere held at least 900 birds, but that was the last large count for October. Subsequent notes from observers indicated that very few Swallows were about the Fylde after the 3rd, and the latest sighting for the month was a single flying South at Fairhaven Lake on the 24th. The last House Martins recorded were 3 at Freckleton on the 14th.

Watson Road Park (as usual) provided some interesting late Summer migrants. The Pied Flycatcher from the 30th of September was still there until the 6th, but more surprisingly another late bird was found in the Park on the 19th and 20th, the latest on record for Lancashire (previous latest was 17.10.53). The Park also held 2 Spotted Flycatchers on the 1st, 2 Blackcaps on the 15th and a single on the 26th, and a female Redstart on the 21st.

Elsewhere, late migrants included up to 4 Blackcaps at Pars Farm (Fleetwood), 2 at L.S.A.N.R., singles in the Railway Bushes (Pleasure Beach) and in Stanley Park. Single Chiff Chaffs turned up at Bourne Hill and in Ashton Gardens, whilst an unidentified *Phylloscopus* skulked in bushes at Skipool, and the last Wheatear was near Rossall Hospital on the 26th.

The invasion of Coal Tits which came to the Fylde in September left a few stragglers at many sites during October, with birds in woodlands, parks, and a few in gardens. Along with the Coal Tits in gardens, were a Treecreeper and a Great Spotted Woodpecker in a Cleveleys garden, a party of 15 Long Tailed Tits moving through gardens at Ansdell, and Meadow Pipit and Pied Wagtail at Carleton.

Diurnal migrant watchers at coastal sites in South Fylde were rewarded with some unusual sightings amongst the more regular species. Watchers at Fairhaven Lake proved luckiest, with a Marsh Tit on the 5th, a Great Grey Shrike on the 12th, 3 Crossbills going South on the 13th, 2 Great Spotted Woodpeckers on the 15th, and 4 Siskins amongst 965 Chaffinches moving South on the 20th. The 20th also saw 3 Lapland Buntings going South over L.S.A.N.R..

Great Spotted Woodpeckers proved unusually plentiful at near coastal sites, with singles at Bourne Hill, South Station, W.G.P., L.S.A.N.R. (a new species), and in a Cleveleys garden. Grey Wagtails were also on the move throughout the month, with ones and twos noted going South at several sites almost daily. Movements of Jackdaws began on the 12th when 70 flew West over Wesham and 80 moved South over Cleveleys the next day, then a week later at least 1000 were seen circling high over St. Annes.

A Buzzard was seen being mobbed by Starlings as it circled over Cleveleys on 21st.

The only Greenshank seen during October was a bird at the Power Station on the 1st, but Curlew Sandpipers from the September influx were still on a flooded field at Lane Ends on the 10th, when at least 30 were busily feeding amongst Lapwings and Golden Plovers. By the 28th only one Curlew Sandpiper remained at Lane Ends.

Other late Summer waders were single Common Sandpipers at the Power Station on the 9th and at Skipool on the 12th, 4 Spotted Redshanks by the R.Wyre at Fleetwood on the 10th and a single at Lytham on the 29th, a Green Sandpiper by the R.Wyre on the 10th, and up to 2 Green Sandpipers at Carr House Green Common(Inskip) to the 30th.

The October Wader Count at Pilling produced 3930 Oystercatchers, 400 Grey Plovers, 104 Sanderlings, 7260 Dunlin, 2756 Knot, 96 Redshanks, 304 Curlew, and 149 Bar Tailed Godwits. The highest count for Black Tailed Godwits came from Fairhaven on the 27th, when 4500 birds were present.

A Spotted Crake was found at the Mere on the 28th, but the bird may have been present for some time and gone unseen in the earlier part of the month.

A juvenile Black Tern off Rossall on the 4th was the only record of that species for the month, whilst a juvenile Common Tern on St.Annes Beach was an exceptionally late bird. Single Great and Arctic Skuas off Rossall on the 4th were the only skua sightings for the month, and a Glaucous Gull at the I.C.I. Pool on the 24th was the sole representative of that species.

A Black Throated Diver was identified off Lytham on the 23rd, and a few Red Throated Divers were seen offshore throughout the month.

A species which hasn't featured in observers notes before is the Mandarin Duck, so it was something of a surprise to find mention of a female at Salwick on the 15th. Another drake Common Scoter was on Fairhaven Lake from the 8th to the 12th, and by the 25th the Eiders off Rossall had increased to 49. A juvenile drake Goosander was on the Mere from the 25th to the 27th.

A juvenile Whooper Swan appeared on the C.E.G.B. Pool at Fleetwood on the 10th.

Contributors:- C.Band F.Bird L.Blacow R.Danson B.Dyson F.Ellis M.Evans
I.Gardner P.Guy M.Jones R.Leeming D.McCullagh Andy Myerscough
Monty Myerscough Tony Myerscough M.O'Brien P & P.Slade G.Smith
E.Stirling F.Walsh M.Wilby

BIRD NOTES

Unseasonal behaviour of Blue Tit

In the Summer of 1980, a standard BTO nest box in a South Shore garden was occupied by wasps(Vespa). Their nest was cleared out at the end of September, and a new lid fitted to the box. In earlier years this box had frequently been used by breeding Blue Tits.

In late November or early December the house owner saw a Blue Tit carrying nest material into the box. One bird was seen entering the box whilst a second bird was in the vicinity. On the 24th December after dark, the box was inspected. A single Blue Tit was present on the "nest". At 15.00 on the 25th December I examined the nest. The nest proved to be a substantial pad of moss, lichens and grass, and two small feathers. The "nest" did not cover the whole of the floor of the box, and there were plenty of droppings about. Neither Perrins nor Barnes, in their monographs on Tits, mentioned the making of "roosting nests", so presumably this was a case of out of season abortive breeding behaviour, followed by roosting.

Frank Walsh.

COLOUR MARKED GULLS

A substantial minority of Herring Gulls seen along the Lancashire Coast carry wing tags or are colour ringed. Derek Forshaw (who has kindly provided the following details), has made a particular effort to obtain details of these birds. His endeavours have added greatly to our knowledge of the provenance of gulls on passage or wintering in South Lancashire. Many colour marked gulls are also seen on the Fylde Coast beaches and rubbish tips, but these have not been so well studied.

Several gull marking schemes have operated in recent years, the most pertinent being the Walney Scheme, which has now ceased. Herring Gulls at Walney were colour ringed with three rings on the right leg and one on the left. Some were also fitted with a metal BTO Ring on the left leg. Additionally some of the birds were tagged, using yellow or orange plastic wing tags, each tag bearing a letter and a number in black. Several Walney marked birds have been seen this Autumn (1985) on Lytham Beach.

Durham University have been colour ringing for several years, but their systems have been more varied. Up to 1978, birds were ringed with two colour rings on one leg and a single ring on the other, from 1979 to 1981 two colour rings on each leg. From 1981 to the present, a single deep ring, usually on the right leg, and three shallow rings on the left leg has been applied, but in most cases a BTO Ring has also been fitted.

Nestlings have been ringed with a single colour ring denoting the year of ringing, together with a metal ring on the same or the other leg. The year codes are - 1978 yellow, 1979 red, 1980 blue, 1981 orange, 1982 green, 1983 white, 1984 black. The position of the rings determines the area from which the bird originates. Most birds are from the Solway, Clyde, and Firth of Forth - both rings on the right leg are usually from the Forth, both rings on the left leg are Solway birds, and metal on the right leg and colour on the left are usually Clyde birds.

Lesser Black Backed Gulls have been ringed by Ian Spence on Walney Island and at the tip at Leigh. These birds have three rings on the right leg and a white ring on the left leg.

Occasional Common and Black Headed Gulls are to be seen carrying colour rings.

Please make every effort to read the letter/number of all wing tagged gulls, and to accurately determine the correct sequence of colour rings on the legs of all marked gulls. All details should be submitted to Bob Danson.

Frank Walsh.

WADER COUNTS - 1986

January 12th*, February 9th*, March 9th, April 13th, May 25th, June 22nd,
July 20th, August 10th, September 21st*, October 19th, November 16th, December 14th*.

* Priority Counts - volunteers are required for these counts, PLEASE.