

Fylde Bird Club



NEWSLETTER No. 22

MAY 1986

Cool, unsettled weather throughout the month, left one wondering when our spring would eventually arrive. In spite of the cool conditions, summer migrants consolidated their numbers during the first few days of the month, and those species which hadn't appeared in late April put in first appearances as follows - Swift, Grasshopper Warbler, Wood Warbler, and Pied Flycatcher on the 2nd, Garden Warbler on the 5th, Spotted Flycatcher on the 11th, and Reed Warbler on the 14th. Wood Warblers were much in evidence between the 2nd and 6th when single birds were at eight sites, and likewise, single Pied Flycatchers were at five sites. The encouraging increase in Sand Martins noted last month continued into May, on the 1st at least 57 were counted in a roost in willows at Wilkinsons Gravel Pits. Twenty Five Sedge Warblers were at the Power Station site by the 3rd, and 20 at the Mere by the 9th - a Sedge Warbler was at Rossall Point on the 7th, an unusual record for this site. Three Grasshopper Warblers were heard singing at the Mere from the 13th to the month end, also at the month end at least 9 Reed Warblers were singing at the Power Station, and eight Spotted Flycatchers were in Bourne Hill Wood. A ringing record of interest during May was that of a Blackcap trapped at Singleton on the 13th, the bird having been ringed there on the 18th April 1985. A male Firecrest was found in the copse at Pars Farm, Fleetwood, on the 7th.

Records of Redpolls never figure prominently in observers notes, so it was interesting to see a passage of this species through The Fylde during May - 2 at the Power Station on the 2nd, one in Stanley Park on the 3rd, 2 at Newton Marsh on the 4th, 3 at Pars Farm on the 11th, 4 in Watson Road Park on the 20th, and 5 at Fairhaven Lake on the 24th.

Single Fieldfares at the Power Station and Rossall on the 1st and 2nd were the latest records of these departing winter visitors.

Two drake Scaup at the Mere from the 17th to the 19th provided one of the few wildfowl records of interest, and 5 Ruddy Duck at the same site again raised hopes of first time breeding. By the end of the month the resident pair of swans at the Mere had successfully hatched 3 cygnets, but unfortunately the Great Crested Grebes appear to have been unsuccessful.

The Mere also provided some interesting tern records during May - 2 Black Terns on the 5th and singles on the 17th, 23rd, and 26th, whilst a Little Tern on the 27th and 28th was the first record at the Mere for thirty years. Six Arctic Terns were noted on the 26th, and the following day a "mystery" tern which was a possible Arctic in "Portlandica" plumage provided observers with plenty of points for discussion. The 27th also saw a Pomarine Skua at the Mere, and two days later 2 imm. Little Gulls were at the same site.

A SW gale on the 11th brought a few seabirds inshore to Rossall - 6 Little Terns, 56 Gannets, 11 Little Gulls, a Pomarine Skua, 2 Arctic Skuas, and a Great Skua. Up to 18 Fulmars were noted off South Prom on the 27th.

As is usual during May, two distinct passage periods of waders was noted. Early in the month Common Sandpipers, Whimbrel, Ruff and Greenshank, were seen at a few sites but not in any significant numbers. Later in the month, Dunlin, Ringed Plover, Turnstones and Sanderlings, all increased dramatically as birds moving north through Britain paused for a few days before departing for Arctic breeding grounds. Amongst this latter movement were up to 800 Turnstones at Rossall and an incredible 120 at the I.C.I. Pool, 2500 Sanderlings at Pilling and 3200 at Rossall, 450 Ringed Plover at Pilling and 162 at I.C.I., and 1250 Dunlin at Pilling and 260 at I.C.I.. At least 2 Little Stints were amongst the many waders at the I.C.I. Pool during the last few days of the month.

JUNE 1986

A few of the waders which arrived at the I.C.I.Pool at the end of May lingered there during the first few days of June. A close scrutiny of those remaining by Ian Gardner on the 2nd produced what might prove to be the bird of the year in the Fylde, a Broad Billed Sandpiper, the 6th for Lancashire, which stayed at the site until at least the 8th. A Curlew Sandpiper was also at the I.C.I.Pool on the 5th.

The last large count of spring passage waders was one of 940 Sanderlings at Rossall on the 8th, and by the 15th Curlew and Redshank were noted at the start of their autumn movements back to the coast, as was a single Common Sandpiper at the Mere. On the 23rd 2 Common Sandpipers were at Lane Ends Car Park pools, and the following day an incredible 16 Spotted Redshanks (15 of them in summer plumage), were by the Ribble at Lytham - by the 28th these were reduced to 2. Two more Common Sandpipers were below the sea wall at South Prom on the 29th, whilst on the 30th 17 Dunlin flew west over the Mere. Throughout the month at least 400 Knot and 20 Black Tailed Godwits were at Lytham Marsh.

During the wader count at Pilling on the 22nd, the counters were treated to the sight of an immature Spoonbill flying north, the bird eventually landed at Cockerham where it spent a few hours resting before moving on.

June is a notoriously poor month for seawatching off the Fylde, therefore a "dark phase" Arctic Skua and a Great Skua off Rossall on the 8th provided some sparkle during what was generally a lack-lustre month for seabirds.

A "late" spring passage bird was a Turtle Dove flying south over L.S.A.N.R. on the 15th - a "new" bird for the reserve. A hen Wheatear at the Airport on the 21st may also have been a "late" bird, the date being somewhat early for a returning bird.

Very few records of breeding birds were submitted for the month, but amongst those received was one of a pair of Kingfishers and a pair of Dippers by the R.Brock at Myerscough, a pair of Spotted Flycatchers feeding young in an old Swallows nest at Singleton Hall, and a pair of Kestrels raising young in a nest on the Imperial Hotel on Blackpool Promenade.

The ringers were active during the month, and on the 29th at Winmarleigh Hall some 93 birds were trapped, these included 2 Tawny Owls and 11 Blackcaps - earlier in the month (11th) they had caught and ringed 35 Swifts at the Mere.

Mallard numbers at the Mere were fairly stable throughout the month with about 50 birds present on most days. By the end of the month only 7 broods of young Mallard had been seen. A few Teal had returned to the Mere by mid-month along with 3 Pochard and 22 Tufted Duck. Late in the month a drake Scaup was an unexpected visitor at the Mere.

Contributors:- F.Bird L.Blacow R.Danson B.Dyson I.Gardner P.Guy R.Hadley
M.Jones R.Lesming S.Meredith Monty Myerscough P.Slade
P.G.Slade E.Stirling

Sponsored Bird Race - 11th MAY 1986Result

Winners - P.G.Slade P.Scholes P.Davies 100 species

Runners

Up - P.Slade F.Ellis M.Myerscough 98 species

WADER COUNTSMay 25th

Freckleton No Count
 Fairhaven Ringed Plover 9, Sanderling 350, Dunlin 2
 Rossall Point Oystercatcher 1, Ringed Plover 178, Knot 1, Sanderling 3211,
 Dunlin 314, Turnstone 315
 Lane Ends Oystercatcher 110, Ringed Plover 13, Grey Plover 35,
 Sanderling 700, Dunlin 2300

June 22nd

Rossall Point Cystercatcher 4, Ringed Plover 13, Sanderling 63, Dunlin 1,
 Curlew 1, Turnstone 246
 Lane Ends Shelduck 67, Teal 12, Mallard 192, Scoter 4,
 Oystercatcher 153, Ringed Plover 6, Grey Plover 10, Dunlin 9,
 Curlew 34, Redshank 8
 Cockersands Shelduck 1, Oystercatcher 6, Ringed Plover 28, Lapwing 4,
 Dunlin 22, Turnstone 5
 Thurnham Shelduck 24 Mallard 7, Lapwing 51, Redshank 23

Request from the Fylde Ringing Group

Will members of the Fylde Bird Club please report all sightings of flocks of finches during the coming autumn and winter.

Last winter the Ringing Group ringed over 1200 finches, most of these at roosting sites at Clifton Hall, Singleton, and Fleetwood. Good numbers of Linnets were ringed during spring and summer in the Marton Mere/Nook area.

The Ringing Group is especially interested in Linnet and Goldfinch flocks, these species are normally found in only small numbers in the Fylde in winter. It is usually possible to trap birds at reasonably accessible roosts, stubble fields present more of a problem, but fields with surrounding hedgerows can sometimes be worked to advantage as birds use the hedges as escape routes.

Interested non-ringers are welcome to ringing sites at any time, however be prepared for extremely early starts or late evenings.

Fylde Ringing Group - Mark Oakley Peter Scholes Patrick Davies
 Paul Slade Phil Slade

Examples of Greenfinch recoveries

NJ 02828	2.04.85	Darlington, Newark, Nottinghamshire
	8.12.85	Fleetwood Marine Lake
VA 16112	13.01.85	Fleetwood Marine Lake
	15.02.86	Lancaster University
VA 41936	17.11.85	Fleetwood Marine Lake
	15.02.86	Lancaster University
VA 92882	15.12.85	Fleetwood Marine Lake
	15.02.86	Lancaster University
VA 92865	15.12.85	Fleetwood Marine Lake
	8.02.86	Lancaster University
VA 41929	17.11.85	Fleetwood Marine Lake
	13.02.86	Lancaster University
VA 16069	6.01.85	Fleetwood Marine Lake
	11.01.86	Lancaster University

The following article has been submitted by Monty Myerscough

Monday 10th March 1986

Whilst having my early morning brew in the office before starting work at British Nuclear Fuels(Salwick), I looked out of the door to a very unusual sight. A Sparrowhawk was flying around the workshop. After tripping over my chair in my haste to get out of the office I quickly ascertained that the bird was an adult male.

I found out later that the bird had arrived in the building during the previous day(Sunday), so had already been there for a day and a night, but this had not prevented it catching and eating one of the workshop's resident House Sparrows, whose remains lay scattered on the floor.

The unfortunate bird had obviously to be caught and released before it injured itself amongst the tangle of girders in the workshop roof. This was obviously a job for the Fylde Ringing Group, so I arranged, through Mark Oakley, for Phil Slade to come onto the site with his mist net. Between contacting Phil and his arrival, everyone in the workshop was treated to the spectacular sight of the Sparrowhawk making a kill on another hapless House Sparrow. Not content with providing such a superb floor show, the Sparrowhawk then proceeded to pluck and eat its' prey within a few feet of the assembled onlookers. If only I had taken my camera into work, the resulting pictures would have required a special section in the next Fylde Bird Club photographic competition.

When Phil arrived we quickly set to work putting up the nets, a difficult task because of the mass of iron-work in the roof structure. However, the bird was eventually netted, but not before it had made a laughing stock of the pair of us. Much to the delight of everyone in the workshop, the bird flew in and out of the net on several occasions before it finally gave in - or was it feeling sorry for us?. After Phil had put a ring on the bird it was weighed and measured, and one of the works' photographers came to take a few pictures for the local newspapers and for the B.N.F.L. magazine(fame at last).

It was an obvious thrill to see such a marvellous bird at such close range, many birdwatchers will never see a wild Sparrowhawk at close quarters, it was a privilege to be there. The Management offered to pay Phil for his time and expertise, but he wouldn't accept anything(silly fool), so I suggested that a donation be made to the Fylde Bird Club - the Management were only too pleased to oblige.

Monday the 10th March 1986 was a day I wouldn't have missed going to work for anything.

Bittern in Central Fylde

On the afternoon of 26th August 1975, I parked my car at a quiet road junction at Greenhalgh, just to the east of Weeton, and walked a short distance towards Kirkham. Almost immediately I observed a large brown bird flying low over a meadow being followed by a group of Black Headed Gulls. At first I took it to be a Short Eared Owl, but within seconds I saw its' large, yellowish, dagger-like bill, short neck, and general heron-like appearance - I then realised the birds' true identity.

The Bittern disappeared over a hedge and was unfortunately not re-located.

This was the eighth of only nine Fylde records of this species.

Ed Stirling.
