

Frylde Bird Club



NEWSLETTER No. 27

MARCH 1987

March is traditionally the month when wildfowl depart their winter quarters. The largest of the remaining groups were at local sites early in the month, but by the end of the month most had moved out. On the 8th, 53 Teal, 41 Tufted Duck, 48 Pochard and 104 Coot were at the Mere, whilst elsewhere, 86 Eiders were at Rossall, 23 Mergansers in the Lune Estuary, 12 Goldeneye at the C.E.G.B. Pool, and up to 13 Goosanders on the R.Wyre at Out Rawcliffe.

The last large gathering of geese was noted at Moss Edge on the 15th, when up to 7000 Pinkfeet were still being accompanied by the 2 Snow Geese, 2 Whitefronts, 2 Bean Geese and 8 Barnacles. Evidence of the passage of Bewick's Swans on their way back to Siberia came on the 9th when a group of 6 was found on a pool of floodwater by the M55 at Bartle. Three Whooper Swans were still by the R.Wyre between Shard Bridge and Cartford Bridge at the month end. The Smew which appeared at the Mere was last seen there on the 21st.

Merlin and Peregrine appear to have been more scarce this winter than in the past few years, or it could be that observers haven't reported their sightings - the only birds reported for March were single Merlins at Moss Edge and Lytham, and a Peregrine at Cockersands. Similarly, Short Eared Owls have also been scarce, with one at L.S.A.N.R. on the 18th and 2 at Warton on the 31st. Sparrowhawks have been somewhat more abundant than the aforementioned species, with singles at several sites including one in a Cleveleys garden on the 25th. A Buzzard seen flying along the Central Promenade at Blackpool on the 9th was Ed Stirlings' 100th species seen from the South Shore Telephone Exchange.

Highlights from the "Birds of Estuaries Count" on the 15th, included 96 Wigeon on the R.Ribble at Freckleton; 900 Bar Tailed Godwits, 500 Knot and 400 Sanderlings at St.Annes Beach; 400 Oystercatchers, 519 Turnstone and 255 Redshank at Rossall; 2000 Knot, 1000 Dunlin and a Red Throated Diver at Lane Ends; and 564 Grey Plover at Thurnham. The largest gatherings of Curlew were 460 at Thurnham and 250 at Shard Bridge.

The passerine of the month was undoubtedly the Great Grey Shrike which played hide and seek with observers at Rawcliffe Hall - the bird was found on the 8th and remained in the area for about a week. The presence of the shrike at Rawcliffe meant that an area which would normally be overlooked got a fair amount of coverage, and so it was that Green Woodpecker, Great Spotted Woodpecker and Goosanders were found in the vicinity of the Hall.

A Hooded Crow was a visitor to Fleetwood Tip on the 12th, and a Blackcap in a

Cleveleys garden on the 13th was probably a wintering bird rather than an early migrant. Two Siskins, in the same Cleveleys garden as the Blackcap, coincided with sightings of Siskins at L.S.A.N.R. and Lytham Hall, which might suggest passage of the species during the month. A cock Black Redstart at the Mere on the 21st and 22nd was almost certainly a passage bird. Thirty or so Bramblings on the R.Wyre floodbank at Shard Bridge on the 29th would also be on their way north before long.

The arrival of the first summer migrants was heralded by Wheatears on the 25th, when singles were found at L.S.A.N.R. and Fleetwood Marine Parade, and a group of 5 at Rossall. These were followed on the 30th by a Willow Warbler singing at High-furlong, Blackpool.

APRIL 1987

The first few days of April saw changeable weather over most of the country, but the winds were from a S.SE direction. During the 5th and 6th these winds were strong to fresh, and on them came the first real influx of summer visitors from the south. On the 5th up to 12 Sand Martins were at the Mere, and the following day considerable numbers of Wheatears were at several sites, including 24 on Knowle School Playing Field and 30 on St. Annes Moss. The first Swallows had appeared at the Mere on the 2nd, then on the 5th another was at Fairhaven Lake, and the same day 3 Chiff Chaffs were at the Mere, 5 Whimbrel flew south at the Mere and 2 north over Carleton, and 5 Sandwich Terns off Blackpool. On the 8th a Ring Ousel was on L.S.A.N.R., and a Whitethroat had arrived at the Mere by the 12th. All of these species are amongst those traditionally early arrivals, and as one might expect we had to wait until later in the month for the rest to arrive.

However, that frustrating quiet period which always follows the first early arrivals can provide considerable interest to those observers prepared to persevere. Departing winter birds can be found on the move at this time - 50 Bramblings at Singleton at the end of the first week, up to 25 Fieldfares at Freckleton on the 12th, and the last Redwings reported being the 6 at Lytham on the 8th. A noticeable passage of Siskins was also evident, with small groups and single birds at several widespread sites throughout the Fylde. Regrettably, very few Goldcrests were recorded during April, a reflection of the sudden decline in the fortunes of this species in the past couple of years. The highlight of the "quiet" period was the finding of a Long Eared Owl in the Division Lane area of Squires Gate.

Come the 15th, eyes were once again watching the changing weather charts, and with the arrival of high pressure over Britain and the Continent all looked promising for the coming Easter weekend. The first signs that birds were once again on the move came on the 15th - a Marsh Harrier was hunting over Warton Marsh during the early morning before flying off to the east, and the first Common Sandpiper was by the lake in Stanley Park. The 17th, Good Friday, saw observers out in force in glorious weather - bright and sunny, with little or no wind, and very warm. The day saw a considerable influx of Willow Warblers on a wide front, 45 Sand Martins at the Mere,

2 Ring Ousels at Rossall and one at the Airport. The same day, the first 2 House Martins were at the Mere, 12 White Wagtails at Rossall, Tree Pipit at the Airport and a Blackcap at Singleton. The most unexpected migrant of Good Friday was an Osprey which came in off the sea at L.S.A.N.R., before flying away to the east. The following day, the first Sedge Warbler and Redstarts appeared at the Mere, Whinchats at Rossall and on Marton Moss, and a Pied Flycatcher in Stanley Park. New arrivals on the 19th were 3 Common Terns off Squires Gate and a Black Tern at I.C.I. Pool. During the last week of the month most of these migrant species were consolidated by further arrivals, whilst the few remaining late birds also put in their first appearances before the month end.

First dates of regular migrants :-

March 25th - Wheatear

30th - Willow Warbler

April 2nd - Swallow

5th - Sand Martin Sandwich Tern

6th - Whimbrel Chiff Chaff

8th - Ring Ousel

12th - Whitethroat

15th - Common Sandpiper

17th - House Martin White Wagtail Tree Pipit Blackcap

18th - Sedge Warbler Redstart Whinchat Pied Flycatcher

19th - Common Tern

22nd - Yellow Wagtail

23rd - Grasshopper Warbler

25th - Garden Warbler Spotted Flycatcher Cuckoo

26th - Lesser Whitethroat

29th - Swift Wood Warbler

Whilst the summer migrants attracted most attention from observers there was much activity amongst resident birds intent on raising families at local sites. Great Spotted Woodpeckers were showing signs of breeding at a few sites, and at least one pair of Lesser Spotted Woodpeckers was seen mating in one wooded area. Regular encounters with Green Woodpeckers also raised hopes of local breeding, and the Nuthatch at Singleton was still present early in the month. Amongst wildfowl at Fylde waters, 6 Ruddy Ducks at the Mere might provide successful breeding again this year, whilst 3 drake Ruddy Ducks at Bispham Marsh only require a female or two to become established at this recently improved site. A pair of Mute Swans have already found the improvements at Bispham Marsh to their liking, having built a nest by mid-month, as had two pairs at the Mere. Two pairs of Shelducks and a pair of Jays were found with nests at Lytham Hall. The most intriguing record of possible breeding in the area came with the sighting of a pair of Crossbills and an immature female, also in the

grounds of Lytham Hall.

The months of April and May can always be guaranteed to turn up unusual birds, and so this April was no exception - one observer reporting the finding of an adult Ivory Gull in a field near Ribby on the 23rd.

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A SAD RECOVERY

Readers may recall the male Sparrowhawk which had become trapped inside a building at B.N.F.L., Salwick, in March 1986. The bird was caught, ringed and released on the 10th of March, but had apparently not learned from its' previous experience that chasing sparrows around the works buildings was dangerous.

The Sparrowhawk (Ring No. DN 43890) was found dead at B.N.F.L. during April 1987, having apparently having flown into a glass door.

Phil Slade.

WADER COUNTS - LANE ENDS

April 12th	08.10	*Sept 13th	12.30
May 17th	11.49	Oct 25th	09.27
June 14th	10.55	Nov 22nd	08.29
July 12th	09.57	*Dec 20th	07.30
Aug 9th	08.59	*Priority Counts	

Times quoted are 3 hours before high water.

Anyone able to help should meet at the Lane Ends Car Park at the given time.

FUTURE EVENTS - CLUB EVENING MEETINGS

16th September 1987 - Jeff Kirby of the B.T.O. will be talking about Estuaries and their Conservation.

18th November 1987 - Derek Bunn, co-author of "The Barn Owl", will be providing an insight to this declining species.