

# Fylde Bird Club



NEWSLETTER No. 30

SEPTEMBER 1987

Fresh to strong SW winds during the first week of September brought good numbers of seabirds to the Fylde coast. Kittiwakes were most plentiful, with early morning watches off South Prom on the 4th, 5th and 6th providing counts of 250+ on each day. Many more Kittiwakes must have gone south unobserved during the hours of daylight, because on the evening of the 5th at least 230 more were counted between 17.30 and 19.30. Accompanying the Kittiwakes were unprecedented numbers of Arctic Skuas, with counts of 16, 12 and 16, on the 4th, 5th and 6th respectively. A couple of Great Skuas and an imm. Pomarine Skua were also seen from South Prom during the same period. On the 5th an adult Sabine's Gull was found on the beach at South Prom, the bird remaining for a fairly lengthy stay was last reported on the 23rd. The same day (5th) 3 Black Terns and up to 30 Fulmars were also off South Prom, and the following day a Storm Petrel. On the 7th a Black Guillemot was seen on the sea off North Prom.

More fresh to strong SW winds between the 10th and 15th brought in more seabirds, including the first of this Autumn's Leach's Petrels and another Storm Petrel. On the 10th, 6 Leach's Petrels were off South Prom and 2 at Anchorsholme. In strong winds on the 13th at least 150 Leach's Petrels appeared off South Prom, as did a Storm Petrel, 100+ Kittiwakes and 13 Arctic Skuas. The 14th saw up to 30 Leach's off Anchorsholme and 21 off South Prom during the morning, then 50 at the latter site in the evening. The same day 8 Manx Shearwaters off Norbreck was the best count of the month.

A point of interest regarding the the Arctic Skua passage was that although terns were seen moving south at most times, the skuas appeared at the time of peak Kittiwake passage. Len Blacow has recorded at least 100 Arctic Skuas off the Fylde this Autumn, mostly in conjunction with good Kittiwake passage and when tern passage was described as ordinary.

Later in the month seabirds became less conspicuous, with only occasional Leach's Petrels and single skuas reported offshore, but roosts of up to 300 Kittiwakes on the beach at St. Annes and Central Prom were noteworthy. On the 23rd, an adult and a juv. Pomarine Skua came in from the sea together to land on the beach at South Prom, whilst on the 26th the first Red Throated Divers (4) appeared off Rossall.

The rough weather during the early part of the month was the probable reason for the appearance of a Dotterel at Cockerham on the 5th and 6th, and for up to 12 Greenshanks, a Wood Sandpiper, a Green Sandpiper and a Whimbrel, all in the Pilling area. At Naze Pool, Freckleton, 5 Greenshanks, 4 Spotted Redshanks, 10 Ruff and the Little Egret, were all worth a visit to that site. The Little Egret, which has been about the Fylde since May, was last seen at Freckleton on the 14th. The second period

of inclement weather brought a Little Stint to Naze Pool on the 14th, and a Grey Phalarope to I.C.I. Pool on the 15th. The phalarope, in its almost all white plumage, looking for all the world like a tiny gull as it fed amongst the real gulls roosting at the site. A second Grey Phalarope turned up at South Prom on the 29th. For the most part fresh wader passage was light, with just a few birds reported at a couple of sites from mid month. Shore waders became more plentiful as the month progressed - 2500 Black Tailed Godwits at Fairhaven, 500 Grey Plover at Pilling, and 1350 Curlew at Cockerham. The earliest Jack Snipe reported was a bird flushed at L.S.A.N.R. on the 30th.

Sparrowhawks were encountered at several sites, including birds moving south at Fairhaven and over Poulton town centre, whilst Merlins and Peregrines were noted at regular wintering sites. A Merlin at Warton Marsh on the 7th was seen chasing and catching a Swallow. Incredibly, the 7th at Warton Marsh turned into something of a red letter day for one observer. Not only was the Merlin seen catching the Swallow, but also, an Osprey was watched over the Ribble Channel being mobbed by gulls and crows as it made its way south towards Southport, an adult Marsh Harrier was seen quartering the marsh before dropping in to roost for the night - a Sparrowhawk, seen at the same time, must have been something of an anti climax.

September wildfowl numbers were less than spectacular, and but for counts of 1230 Mallard, 750 Teal and 330 Shelduck at Pilling, observers records might have passed unnoticed. A little variety came in the form of a drake Scaup at the Mere for most of the month, and a Long Tailed Duck on the sea at Lane Ends on the 27th. The first of the Pinkfeet were 32 flying south over Rossall on the 19th, then 194 going south at Fairhaven on the 26th.

A sad note was the finding of a juvenile Great Crested Grebe near the Black Horse pub at Treales, the bird showing signs of having collided with overhead cables.

Early in the month, the Mere's Swallow roost held up to 8000 birds, but by the 8th these were down to about 3000. One might have expected the numbers of Swallows using the roost to tail off, but numbers once again increased to 8000 by the 22nd. This later influx may indicate a secondary movement of birds from more northerly breeding areas. The last Swifts reported were, 3 over L.S.A.N.R. on the 2nd and a single over Watson Road Park on the 6th, whilst the only Sand Martins recorded were singles at Fairhaven Lake (2nd) and the Mere (4th). The passage of warblers and chats appeared almost non existant, with just a few records from coastal sites. Flycatchers were also a little thin on the ground - a Pied Flycatcher in Watson Road Park on 3rd and 4th, and 3 Spotted Flycatchers at the same site on the 26th, being the only records. Goldcrest passage was also poor. A Ring Ousel was found in Watson Road Park on the 29th, and the following day a Great Spotted Woodpecker at the same site.

From mid month several observers moved their activities to Fairhaven to count di-urnal migrants making their way south over the Ribble Estuary. Meadow Pipits and Chaffinches were predictably the most numerous of the several species encountered, with

with early morning counts including 500+ Meadow Pipits and 200+ Chaffinches. Amongst the pipits and Chaffinches were small numbers of Redpolls, Siskins, Tree Pipits and Blue Tits. An unexpected southbound migrant at Fairhaven on the 26th was a Turtle Dove. Grey Wagtails were noted going south throughout the month at a number of sites, and on the 19th an amazing 37 were reported from the Fairhaven Lake area.

The first Autumn Redwings were heard in the darkness over Blackpool and Wesham on the 28th.

#### OCTOBER 1987

Records for October highlighted the change in seasons, with the last of the Summer visitors overlapping with the Winter visitors.

The late Summer migrants, although few, were nevertheless of some interest. On the 4th, the last Sedge Warbler was seen at the Mere and the last Garden Warbler at L.S.A.N.R. This last record, although the last Garden Warbler of this year, was amazingly the first record for the Reserve. L.S.A.N.R. also saw the last Redstart of the year, on the 7th. A very late Whitethroat was at Singleton on the 10th, and the same day the last Swallows in October were 18 at Clifton Hall. A few House Martins lingered to the 16th, whilst the latest Wheatear was a single at Rossall Point on the 22nd, and the last Whinchat was an imm. at the Mere on the 23rd. During the last four days of the month a late movement of Blackcaps was much in evidence - singles in the Railway Bushes and at South Station on the 28th, the same birds plus another in Revoc Park the following day, and on the 31st 3 males at the Fishmeal Factory, 2 in Stanley Park and 3 ringed at Clifton Hall. A Black Redstart appeared at the Mere on the 23rd, and the following day another was on Blackpool Football Ground car park.

Diurnal migration continued throughout October, and observers at Fairhaven were rewarded with one or two unusual sightings amongst the many Chaffinches, pipits and wagtails. On the 3rd the first Brambling went south, and on the 10th a Great Spotted Woodpecker was an unusual migrant. The 25th saw at least 41 Mistle Thrushes going south, coinciding with the first arrivals of Fieldfares to the area, suggesting a possible origin of the Mistle Thrushes as the Continent. The first individual Fieldfare noted was a bird at Ribby on the 14th, the same day that 250+ Redwings were at the same place. The earliest Snow Buntings reported were 2 at Rossall Point on the 22nd.

Ringling activities continued during October, although several of the Ringing Group were away in the Scillies at mid month. Phil Slade, ringling at Lane Ends Amenity Area on the 24th, trapped a 1st year male Lapland Bunting which had arrived from the north with a group of Meadow Pipits.

The most unusual small bird record for the month was undoubtedly that of a Dipper, found on the 29th by the Wyre Estuary behind the I.C.I. complex.

Following last months exciting seawatching October was disappointing. Odd Little Gulls and a few Gannets were the only species featuring in contributors notes, but one observer recorded the last Sandwich Terns when 2 were noted flying off South Prom on the 10th. Twelve Red Throated Divers were reported flying south on the 13th, but

unfortunately the observer didn't say where.

Lingering migrant "fresh" waders at Lane Ends were single Green Sandpiper on the 3rd, a Wood Sandpiper on the 17th, and a Greenshank on the 23rd, whilst on a nearby flooded field, 4 Curlew Sandpipers were present on the 10th. Following September's 2 Grey Phalaropes, another turned up on the beach at South Prom on the 18th. A Water Rail, found at the Mere on the 20th, will probably spend the Winter there.

Wildfowl reflected a quiet month, not only from the birds point of view, but also for birdwatchers. Very little change in numbers took place from September, but a few incidents of note are worth mentioning - a small influx of Eiders to sites around Rossall, 3 Whooper Swans at I.C.I. Pool on the 13th, a single Bewick's Swan flying south at Fairhaven on the 25th, and on the same day 2 dark bellied Brent Geese in the Lune Estuary.

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The Editor would like to thank all those members who regularly submit notes for the monthly summaries, without these contributions the Newsletter would very quickly cease to exist. The Newsletter can only be as interesting as you, the members, make it. If you don't normally put pen to paper give it a try, the more information I have, the more interesting the result.

#### BIRDS OF ESTUARIES COUNTS

October 25th 1987

##### Lane Ends/Cocker's Dyke/Knott End

Gt. Crest. Grebe 1, Shelduck 445, Mallard 750, Wigeon 512, Shoveler 6,  
Oystercatcher 3300, Knot 1000, Dunlin 1800, Grey Plover 182, Sanderling 50,  
Bar Tailed Godwit 350, Redshank 520, Spotted Redshank 1, Curlew 325, Turnstone 5.

##### Rossall Hospital/Fleetwood Marine Lake

Ringed Plover 44, Dunlin 1, Knot 8, Sanderling 169, Turnstone 486.