

Fylde Bird Club



NEWSLETTER No. 32

JANUARY 1988

The weather throughout the month was somewhat unsettled. Depressions and frontal systems coming in from the Atlantic ensured that overall we had reasonably mild conditions, but boy did it rain. With these unseasonal mild conditions there was little change in birdlife about the Fylde, the few highlights coming with a spell of strong to gale force winds during the first few days of the month when seabirds were blown to coastal sites.

With strong to gale force winds at this time of year we have come to expect considerable numbers of Little Gulls to be sheltering in the Fleetwood area. It was therefore no surprise to receive records of up to 200 Little Gulls at Rossall on the 3rd, with lesser numbers off Anchorsholme and Blackpool Promenade on the same day. Kittiwakes were also plentiful with up to 300 off South Promenade on the 2nd and 3rd. Unusual visitors included a Pomarine Skua to South Prom, and a Little Auk off Rossall. Another gale blown bird was a Grey Phalarope, this one found at the I.C.I. Pool on the 3rd. Up to 3 Red Throated Divers were noted offshore at the height of the storm, and a Black Throated Diver was at Rossall as the winds abated on the 5th. With the passing of the storm another wind blown vagrant was found, this time a Black Necked Grebe on the Marine Lake at Fleetwood.

The lack of cold spells during the month meant little change in wildfowl numbers at local sites. Nevertheless, wildfowl provided a few sightings of interest to those members prepared to persevere under such adverse conditions. Amongst the wildfowl records submitted were, 105 Pintail moving south off Anchorsholme on the 3rd, up to 120 Eider off Rossall, 100 Scoter and a Velvet Scoter off South Prom on the 3rd, 1026 Teal at Lane Ends, and a Ruddy Duck on the sea at South Prom on the 16th. A report from just outside our recording area concerned a gathering of at least 55 Goldeneye and 6 Goosanders on the R. Lune near Lancaster. Pinkfeet numbers peaked at about 7500 Over Wyre, and amongst these were at least 5 Whitefronts.

Peregrine and Merlin provided regular records from the Pilling area, whilst Sparrowhawks appeared reasonably plentiful with single birds at several scattered sites. Single Kestrels tend not to receive much attention from observers, so it was interesting to hear of a male seen taking worms from a freshly ploughed field at Nateby. Short Eared Owls were apparently hunting in pairs during January - two birds were regulars at the Mere, 2 at Out Rawcliffe on the 17th, 2 on Winmarleigh Moss on the 23rd, and 2 more at Poulton on the 31st. The only Barn Owl reported was a single by the M55 at Peel Corner on the 28th.

The mid month Birds of Estuaries Count was carried out by the dedicated band of members, and the results from this and the February count can be found elsewhere in this Newsletter. Other wader records of interest included, up to 1800 Golden Plover at Cockerham and another 1000 at Lane Ends, 110 Black Tailed Godwits at I.C.I. Pool, 800 Bar Tailed Godwits on the beach at Anchorsholme, single Ruff at Lane Ends and Cockerham, and a Spotted Redshank at Arm Hill. At this time of year Purple Sandpipers are more often than not to be found amongst the Turnstones at Rossall Point, so it was unusual to hear of a bird on the beach at South Prom on the 9th. The Golden Plover flock at Pilling held a strangely "grey" bird, but the observer concerned was convinced that it wasn't a Lesser Golden Plover. Woodcocks were unusually plentiful considering the mild season, birds were found at sites throughout the month, with at least three flushed on Winmarleigh Moss.

The lack of a severe cold spell during January meant that few birds were having to resort to visiting gardens to supplement shortfalls in food supplies. However, there is always the exception, and one Cleveleys garden had more than its' fair share of unusual visitors. The garden attracted a Redwing, 2 Bramblings, 2 Coal Tits, a Goldcrest, and an incredible flock of 40 Linnets. Elsewhere, gatherings of winter passerines were more predictable - 23 Snow Buntings at Rossall, 35 Twite on Fleetwood Tip, 300 Chaffinch and 100 Greenfinch on Warton Marsh, 100 Greenfinch and 180 House Sparrows at the Fleetwood Marine Lake roost, up to 300 Tree Sparrows at Nateby, and 2000+ Jackdaws near Eagland Hill and Out Rawcliffe. A Grey Wagtail was seen on rooftops in Wtarloo Road, Blackpool, late in the month, and 2 Stonechats were back on L.S.A.N.R. as early as the 13th.

The unusually mild January we have experienced was no doubt the reason for an early Mistle Thrush singing at Singleton on the 2nd, and for the first Skylark to be singing at L.S.A.N.R. on the 31st.

FEBRUARY 1988

The weather conditions for the early part of the month was a continuation of the unsettled January, with strong to gale force winds from the west becoming the norm. Forecasts for the 9th warned of storm force winds, gusting to 90m.p.h. in coastal areas. Therefore it came as no surprise when the Fylde Coast was lashed by severe gales for nearly 24 hours as a deep depression, centred over N.Scotland, tracked gradually eastwards.

Strong winds on the 2nd had the expected effect on seabirds, at least 100 Little Gulls were over the sewage outfall at Anchorsholme and a Little Auk at Rossall. Kittiwakes were affected but only in small numbers, and a Great Skua was at Lane Ends on the 7th. The severe storm of the 9th had considerably more effect on birds than did the "gentle blow" on the 2nd. Once again Little Gulls were most affected, with up to 200 off Rossall and Fleetwood, and at least 60 off South Prom. Another Little Auk was found, this one in a Thornton garden; this unfortunate bird died overnight.

Amongst the Little Gulls sheltering in the Wyre Estuary were 2 Grey Phalaropes.

During this particular storm several Little Gulls were noted sheltering at a few inland sites, and L.S.A.N.R. had its' first recorded visit of the species when a single bird was found bathing at the slack on the 10th. Tideline corpses collected at Squires Gate on the 17th were , 7 Razorbills, a Fulmar, a Kittiwake and a Puffin. A corpse identified as a possible Brunnich's Guillemot, was more likely to be a small billed 1st winter Razorbill. A Mediterranean Gull was on the beach at St.Annes on the 20th.

February saw very little change in wildfowl numbers, but there was however, a slight increase in the numbers of geese on the fields north of the Wyre - 8700 Pinkfeet were joined by 19 Whitefronts and a "pale bellied" Brent late in the month. Two Whooper Swans were at Cockersands throughout February, having arrived there late in January.

Passerine numbers were little affected by the severe storm, and as with the wildfowl the picture was little changed during February. However, one new arrival was a Hooded Crow on Marton Moss from the 17th to the 21st. The Cleveleys garden continued to provide sightings of interest, these included 2 Blackcaps on the 8th. Another Blackcap was found in a Marton garden on the 14th.

This amazingly mild winter we have so far had to endure may well catch us out with a late cold snap, but by the end of the month several species were showing signs that as far as they were concerned the winter was over. A pair of Great Crested Grebes were displaying at the Mere, 9 Black Tailed Godwits were back on Newton Marsh, a pair of Mistle Thrushes had a nest in Stanley Park, and Blackbirds were nest building at Carleton.

Contributors:- C.Band L.Blacow B.Dyson S.Eaves P.Ellis P.Guy M.Jones
D.McCullagh Tony Myerscough Paul Slade Phil Slade
E.Stirling M.Wilby

FYLDE BIRD CLUB - ANNUAL BIRD RACE

This year the Bird Club Bird Race will be held on Sunday the 8th May. Any number of teams may enter, provided that each team has at least three team members.

Once again the race will take place within the Fylde Bird Club recording area, and teams can start and finish at any time within the period beginning midnight on Saturday the 7th to midnight on Sunday the 8th. All birds recorded must be seen or heard by all the team members.

Each team may nominate up to 20% of the monies they raise to be donated to a charity of their own choice.

Please inform Alan Hinchliffe, as soon as possible, if you are prepared to enter a team.

BIRDS OF ESTUARIES

MORECAMBE BAY - SOUTH

24th JANUARY 1988

HIGH WATER 14.57 9.4m.

Sunny periods following rain
Wind fresh S.

COUNT 11.30 - 15.30.

	Rossall Point	Arm Hill	hane Eads	Goatsands Point	Glasson Marsh	St. Annes Beach	TOTALS.
Gt. Cr. Guebe			2		1		3
Cormorant			7	2	2		11
Mallard		45	1200	2	76		1323
Teal		126	900				1026
Wigeon			450	28	18		496
Pintail			1				1
Gadwall			1				1
Merganser	4	5	3	2	5		19
Shelduck		149	192		60		401
Pinkfoot			25				25
Oystercatcher	758	286	8300	3	2300		11647
Lapwing		600		275	1150		2025
Ringed Plover	115			24		20	159
Grey Plover		10	341	13	160	150	674
Golden Plover			35	110	150		295
Turnstone	503	97	30	9	214		853
Curlew		97	415	250	84		846
Black T. Godwit	32	89					121
Bar T. Godwit	1		301		171	2000	2473
Redshank	447	250	94	285	187		1263
Spott. Redshank		1					1
Knot		200	8000	2	100	3000	11302
Dunlin	198		3000	124	1800	3000	8122
Sanderling	18		1		3	300	322
Purple Sandpiper	1						1

BIRDS OF ESTUARIES

21st FEBRUARY 1988

MORECAMBE BAY SOUTH

HIGH WATER 13.48 9.9m

Fine with sunny periods
Light W. wind.

	Rossall Point	Arm Hill	Lane Ends	Cockersands * Point *	Thunham Glasson	I.C.I. Pools.	TOTALS.	
Gt. Cr. Grebe	1						1	* Cockersands - completely covered at High Water.
Cormorant		2	2				4	
Mallard	1	10	421	2	41	7	482	
Teal		32	102			11	145	
Gadwall			1♂				1	
Wigeon			103		4		107	
Pintail								
Goldeneye								
Merganser		2			4		6	
Shelduck		156	330	2	41		529	
Pinkfoot			437				437	
Oystercatcher	75	24	5000		1147		6246	Observers Thunham/Glasson } L. Bacon Cockersands } A. Hinchliffe
Lapwing		1100	380		400	410	2290	
Ringed Plover	41						41	Lane Ends. A. Dawe I. Fletcher I. Settle D. Jackson. P. Morgan R. Handsworth.
Grey Plover		2	4		289		295	
Golden Plover			36		47		83	Rossall Pt. } R. A. Cadman I.C.I. Pool. }
Turnstone	266	1			167	50	484	
Snipe			3				3	
Curlew		230	690		340		1360	Arm Hill. R. E. Danson.
Black T. Godwit	1					76	77	
Bar T. Godwit			60		312		372	St. Annes. M. Jones.
Redshank	1	490	320		258	300	1369	
Spott. Redshank			1				1	
Kestrel	6	57	1200		990		2253	
Dunlin	56	11	500		1530	30	2127	
Sanderling	1						1	
Purple Sandpiper	1						1	
Mute Swan						6	6	

THE NEW ATLAS OF BREEDING BIRDS IN BRITAIN AND IRELAND

The first season of fieldwork for the New Atlas is nearly upon us and volunteers will be out in the field from April 1st 1988. Please pass this information on to members of your bird club, as many of them may be interested in helping with the fieldwork.

The New Atlas, which is sponsored by the Central Electricity Generating Board through WWP-UK, and is supported by the Nature Conservancy Council, is being jointly organised by the BTO, the Scottish Ornithologists' Club and the Irish Wildbird Conservancy. The aims are to map the distribution and abundance of British and Irish breeding birds, and to attempt to understand the underlying causes behind these distributions. Although this may sound simple, it is not a small task and will take a number of years to achieve. The first and most important step is to obtain the information on bird distribution and abundance. The methods to be used to measure bird distribution are not new as they are based on those used in the original Atlas of Breeding Birds in Britain and Ireland (Sharrock 1976). The methods to be used to determine abundances, however, are new to this atlas, and were decided on only after a comprehensive season of pilot fieldwork and a great deal of thought. The original atlas has become a classic work and is probably one of the most quoted books in British ornithology. With your help, the New Atlas will achieve even greater success.

The fieldwork instructions have now been produced, and can be obtained from either the BTO, the SOC or the IWC (addresses given below). However, it may be more simple to get in touch directly with your BTO Regional Atlas Organiser who can supply you with both the cards and instructions. A list of addresses of organisers appears on the back page of this newsletter.

The fieldwork instructions allow observers to work either on their own or as part of a coordinated team. The latter may appeal very much to members of bird clubs who, after contacting their Regional Organiser and deciding which 10-km square(s) to survey, could form into teams to cover their local area.

The success of the New Atlas depends entirely on the effort put in by volunteers. The fieldwork is not only rewarding, it is enjoyable. Surely there can be few better ways of putting your birdwatching skills to greater use. If you would like to help, please get in touch with your Regional Organiser or the relevant National Organiser at the following addresses:

- Dr David Gibbons, BTO, Beech Grove, Tring, Herts HP23 5NR
 - Dr Jim Reid, SOC, 21 Regent's Terrace, Edinburgh EH7 5BT
 - Ian Herbert, IWC, c/o Corville Rd., Roscrea, Co. Tipperary
- David Gibbons



THE BTO APPEAL

The BTO Appeal for a National Centre for Ornithology has gathered great momentum since the last newsletter, thanks in no small part to the enthusiastic and most generous support from BTO and bird club members throughout the country.

At the time of writing (mid-February) the total raised or promised to the Appeal has passed the half-way mark to our target of £1.5 million. More than £80,000 has been raised or given by BTO members alone and by donations through bird clubs. Your support is most gratefully acknowledged. We fully appreciate that many clubs simply do not have the financial resources to make a donation towards the Centre, but substantial sums can be raised through sponsored bird counts, raffles etc.. If you think your club could help, please contact John Wyatt at Beech Grove.

THE WADER STUDY GROUP - the ultimate in co-operative studies

The Wader Study Group (WSG) is an association of amateur and professional wader enthusiasts from all parts of the world. The interests of the Group have diversified from the original concentration on migration-related studies (in the early 1970s) to embrace all aspects of wader biology. The Group's aims are to maintain contact between wader enthusiasts, to organise co-operative studies on waders (occasionally involving other organisations such as the BTO), and to provide a vehicle for the exchange of information.

Projects co-ordinated by WSG and currently ongoing include: studies of the spring migration systems of waders on the East Atlantic Fly-way and in the Americas, long-term monitoring of the usage of inland migration sites in Europe and a breeding wader monitoring scheme in Britain. Recently completed co-operative projects include an intensive study of breeding waders in the Outer Hebrides, an entire survey of the non-estuarine shores of the United Kingdom for wintering waders (Winter Shorebird Count) and an investigation into the effects of severe winter weather on waders.

Membership of the WSG is open to all individuals or groups interested in waders. Members receive the Wader Study Group Bulletin three times per year, providing a forum for news, notices, ringing recoveries, recent publications, new study methods, articles and preliminary or interim publication of results from all parts of the world. With all this plus an annual WSG conference, membership of the WSG is a must for all wader enthusiasts. Interested? Contact the Membership Secretary, PO Box 247, Tring, Hertfordshire, HP23 5SN.

Jeff Kirby
WSG Secretary

THE BTO SLIDE COLLECTION - IN NEED OF HELP

Over the years the BTO has acquired, through generous donations from many photographers, a collection of colour transparencies which are used to promote the BTO and its work. This takes a variety of forms, whether through lectures by BTO staff members or Regional Representatives, as part of a display about the Trust, or in the pages of the Trust's bulletin, BTO News.

The collection is far from comprehensive and is in particular need of birds (on the British list) in flight, or field shots of the more common passerines (i.e. birds not in the hand). Indeed any colour transparencies of birds would be most welcome and much appreciated. If any members of your club would be willing to pass on 'cast offs', or best quality slides for reproducing by the Trust, please contact Tim Davis at Beech Grove, Tring, Herts HP23 5NR.

FREE ADVERTISING FOR YOUR BIRD REPORT

We are again pleased to be able to offer member clubs the opportunity to place a free advertisement for their Bird Report in BTO News (max. 3 lines per year). Please contact Audrey Casner for further details.

ARE YOU INTO OWLS?
IF SO YOU'LL BE INTERESTED IN
THE OWL STUDY GROUP



Anyone with an interest in owls who would like to participate in this new group, please contact Steve Percival at the BTO, Beech Grove, Tring, Herts HP23 5NR. We are hoping to have a regular newsletter and occasional meetings to keep people informed about current owl projects and to encourage exchange of ideas.



BTO LAPWING SURVEY 1987 : LANCASHIRE SOUTH

The following results were obtained from this late April survey of sample tetrads searching for breeding pairs of Lapwing.

BASIC TETRADS	TOTAL (breeding pairs)	CROPS or BARE LAND	GRASSLAND
SD 32A	0	-	-
SD 33P	12	0	12
SD 34D	0	0	0
SD 41I	11	11	0
SD 42A	12	12	0
SD 43L	41	21	20
SD 44X	14	6	8
SD 51R	60	33	47
SD 52U	2	0	2
SD 53P	21	0	21
SD 54G	40	0	40

(- indicates no survey : unsuitable habitat in the tetrad)

I have presented the figures by a simple habitat classification but too many factors, not measured in this survey, will be operating to affect the birds choice of breeding habitat to allow the drawing of any firm conclusion from these figures.

EXTRA COVERAGE : In addition two extra areas were surveyed at Tarleton/Rufford and at Newton. These areas were chosen to approximate with descriptions of areas surveyed for breeding Lapwings in 1960 and 1961 by Mr. J. Robbins for the previous BTO Lapwing study. It must be borne in mind that the descriptions of these old survey areas were not complete or plotted on a map so some estimation was necessary to produce boundaries for an approximate 2 x 2 square kilometre survey area to offer some comparison of results. Nevertheless, it is interesting to note the following numbers of breeding pairs:-

Date	TARLETON/RUFFORD		NEWTON		
	1961	1987	1960	1961	1987
Acreage Surveyed	1020	989	700	700	989
Land Use - Crops	36	9	4	8	4
- Grass	0	4	9	12	20
- Uncertain	-	-	5	-	-
TOTAL	36	13	18	20	24

My thanks to P. Guy, A. Cadman, R. Worthington, Miss V. Mottram, M. Evans, L. Blacov, K. Green, A. Dave, J. Fletcher and R. Leeming for surveying tetrads.

David Jackson, Regional Representative of the BTO for Lancashire South
OCTOBER 1987