

# Fylde Bird Club



NEWSLETTER NO. 44

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## FROM THE SECRETARY'S CHAIR

Fylde Bird Club is now in its eighth year having been formed in 1983 when twenty two people attended the inaugural meeting. The majority of you were not members in the early days but you are probably aware that the Club was formed with the intention of obtaining greater protection for the Marton Mere SSSI which at the time was suffering a great deal of abuse.

Eight years is a relatively short time in conservation terms and yet it recently came home to me how much the Club has achieved and the great advances made during this time. We are on the verge of our original objective of having the Mere designated a Local Nature Reserve which will give it much greater protection. Apart from this however, and to my mind of equal significance, is that over the years a wide range of other bodies have begun to approach us for information regarding local conservation issues. The RSPB, NCC and LTNC have all requested information for various reasons and as a result of member's work in collecting and supplying their records to the Bird Report and various surveys we have been able to respond positively. We have also become well known to local councils especially Wyre Borough with whom we have built up an excellent relationship through member's willingness to offer assistance in various ways. Most recently we have been asked by Lancashire County Council to supply information for an ecological survey on their behalf in the Freckleton area.

As well as being able to provide information however, members have shown themselves willing to actively take part in conservation work such as the litter collections, Spartina digs etc. This has been especially satisfying, proving to me that whereas some other local societies make noises about conservation Fylde Bird Club members are not afraid to go out and get the job done wherever possible.

It is becoming increasingly obvious and pleasing to me as Secretary that together with the Local Trust, our Club is gradually becoming recognised as the body worth consulting regarding local conservation issues and I have no doubt that with member's continued support and concern for important issues which will continue to arise we will become even more widely respected in the future.

Many thanks for your support.

A.J. Hinchliffe.

SECRETARY

# Future hangs in balance for biggest nature site

By John Grigsby  
Local Government Correspondent

A PROPOSAL to build a £2 billion theme park and film studios on the largest wildlife site in London is likely to be approved by the local councils involved next week.

Mr Patten, the Environment Secretary, will then have to decide whether to call in the application to build on 1,184 acres of Rainham Marshes in the Thames estuary for his own judgment. The developers say they will abandon the park if there is a public inquiry.

The London Borough of Havering will formally consider a proposal from Mr David Bradley, its chief executive, on Tuesday. This recommends that the development by MCA on the largest remaining stretch of Essex grazing marshes should be permitted.

The plan by MCA, which owns Universal Studios, the Rank Organisation and British Urban Development, is also likely to be backed by the London Planning Advisory Committee, which advises on strategic planning.

The councils are obliged to refer the project to Mr Patten if they want to approve it, if it departs from the structure plan or contains more than 250,000 square feet of shops.

In view of the likely recommendations of the planning bodies, Mr Patten may feel that he can leave the future of the proposed development on the North bank of the Thames at Coldharbour to the normal local government processes.

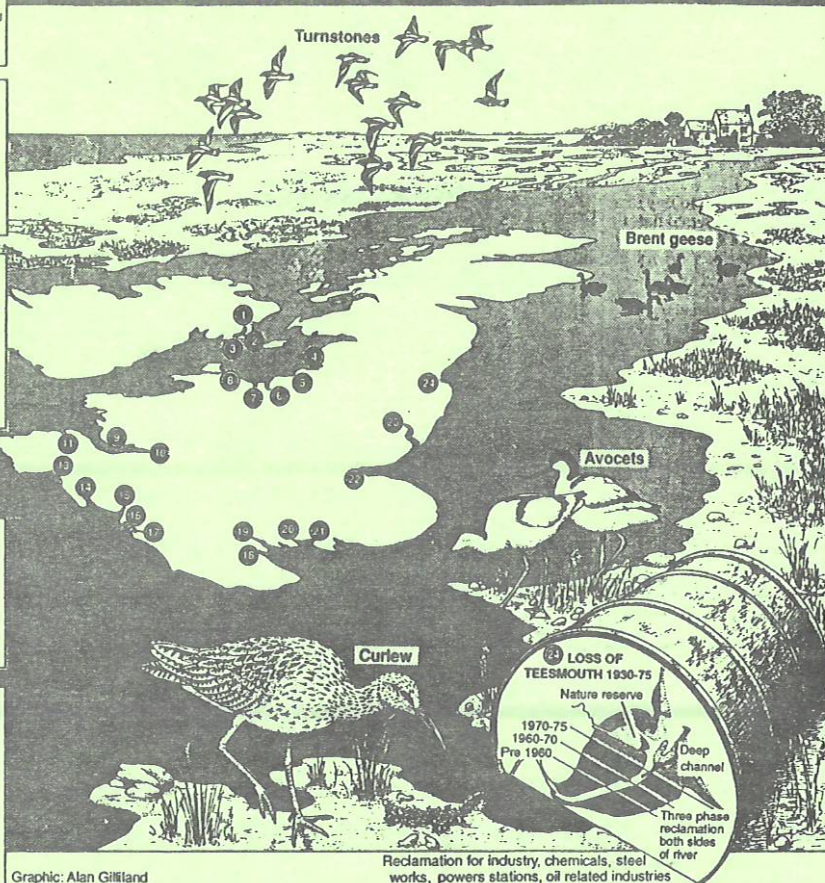
An official report to be considered by the all-party London Planning Advisory Committee says that the developers had made considerable progress in bringing forward proposals for conservation.

The land to be set aside as a nature reserve had been increased and an ecology park was now proposed. The riverbank would be undisturbed. The Nature Conservancy Council opposes the scheme.

The chief planner of the London Planning Advisory Committee says in his report: "The proposals represent an appropriate balance between the competing claims of our policies for development and nature conservation."

The marshland is owned by the Ministry of Defence and is regarded as surplus to its needs as a firing range.

## BRITAIN'S THREATENED ESTUARIES



- Northern Ireland**
  - 1 Belfast Lough: Land reclamation, industrial development and pollution - 15,000 waders and wildfowl
  - 2 Strangford Lough: Marinas, barrage, land reclamation and fish farming - 74,000 waders and wildfowl
  - 3 Kilough Harbour: Marina and land reclamation - 1,800 waders and wildfowl
- North-West**
  - 4 Duddon: Barrage and road development - 23,000 waders and wildfowl
  - 5 Ribbles: Marinas and land reclamation - 150,000 waders and wildfowl
  - 6 Mersey: Tidal barrage - more than 60,000 waders and wildfowl
  - 7 Welsh Dee: Waste-tipping, port expansion, road development, recreation - 105,000 waders and wildfowl
  - 8 Conway: Marina and barrage - 5,800 waders and wildfowl
- South Wales and South-West**
  - 9 Taff/Ely: Barrage - more than 8,000 waders and wildfowl
  - 10 Severn: Tidal barrage development - nearly 90,000 waders and wildfowl
  - 11 Taw/Torridge: Marinas, barrage, land reclamation and pollution - 15,000 waders and wildfowl
  - 12 Fel: Marinas, recreation, land reclamation, barrage, industrial development and pollution - 4,000 waders and wildfowl
  - 13 Exe: Marinas, land reclamation, uncontrolled water sports and pollution - 21,000 waders and wildfowl
- South Coast**
  - 14 Poole Harbour: Marinas, land reclamation, industrial development, uncontrolled water sports and pollution - 18,000 waders and wildfowl
  - 15 Southampton Water: Industrial developments - 13,500 waders and wildfowl
  - 16 Portsmouth Harbour: Marinas, industrial development and pollution - 11,500 waders and wildfowl
  - 17 Langstone Harbour: Marinas and pollution - 53,000 waders and wildfowl
- Thames and East Coast**
  - 18 Medway: Marinas, industrial development and pollution - 50,000 waders and wildfowl
  - 19 Greater Thames: Marinas, housing developments, dock expansion, tipping of waste and pollution - more than 250,000 waders and wildfowl
  - 20 Stour: Land reclamation and industrial development - 32,000 waders and wildfowl
  - 21 Orwell: Marinas, land reclamation and industrial development - 19,000 waders and wildfowl
  - 22 The Wash: Industrial development and pollution - 290,000 waders and wildfowl
  - 23 Humber: Barrage, industrial and port development, pollution - 105,000 waders and wildfowl

# Developers put estuaries' wildlife at risk

**WILDLIFE** in Britain's estuaries is under severe threat from development, the Nature Conservancy Council, the Government's "watchdog" wildlife advisory body, says in a report to be published later this year.

The report, the result of a two-year study of 155 sites around the coastline, will show that Britain's most valuable wildlife habitats are at risk from industrial, residential and leisure pressures.

The survey shows that the estuaries are "under continuing pressure from some human activities". The Council is to produce a strategy for the Government so that it can plug existing loopholes in legislation and protect the areas from development.

Dr Nick Davidson, of the Council's chief scientific directorate said: "Some developments may not directly affect the estuary while others may each affect only a small area but taken overall the effect can be considerable."

"The overall effect is a continuing decline in the

**By Robert Bedlow**

wildlife resource. The sites covered form a network that has maintained very great wildlife conservation importance, for which Britain has a major international responsibility.

The report, Nature Conservation and Estuaries in Great Britain, says that marinas have been built on 50 estuaries and last year there were proposals for marinas on about 40 more waterways.

The Council and other conservation groups are now opposing a plan to build a barrage across the estuaries of the rivers Taff and Ely in Cardiff Bay.

The report will also show concern over the Orwell Estuary, Suffolk, where the development of the Felixstowe dock complex upstream has "severely damaged" an internationally recognised wildlife site.

Dr Davidson said: "At Teesside, Portsmouth and Tyneside, developments have had a crippling effect on wildlife. On the Tyne, for instance, almost all the habitat has gone."

At Teesside more than 90 per cent of the estuary has disappeared since the 1930s, but now the local authority is planning to turn what remains into a protected nature reserve.

"It is a little late," said Mr Philip Rothwell, the coastal policy officer of the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds.

The RSPB has launched a £500,000 nationwide appeal for funds to help save the habitat of an estimated two million wildfowl and waders. It has also named 123 estuaries which it claims are "high risk" areas because of marinas, land reclamation, and port developments.

Earlier this year Estuary Conservation Groups were formed after a meeting of conservationists at Slimbridge, Gloucestershire, organised by the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust and the British Association for Shooting and Conservation.

The groups are to monitor developments and coordinate opposition at local and national level.

## Bunting alerts twitchers

**BIRDS** (the feathered variety that is) do not have to be stunning beauties to cause grown men to suddenly leave home and speed off to distant corners of the country.

The North's latest outburst of "twitching", the obsessive pursuit of rarities which has, incidentally, an almost exclusively male following, was a case in point.

Last Sunday twitchers drove in their hundreds to Big Waters nature reserve, near Newcastle upon Tyne, in search of ornithological treasure, the value of which was certainly not measured in physical appearance.

The pine bunting, which had suddenly come to light on the reserve, is unquestionably one of the drabber birds to have caused such mass excitement in Britain for a long time.

A male in summer plumage is quite an eyecatcher, but this individual was a female, basically grey, with dull, paler stripes on the side of the head and throat, and darker streaking over the upper parts, breast and flanks.

A casual observer may well have passed it off as just a large, very ordinary sparrow, but as far as dedicated "twitchers" are concerned its appearance was an opportunity not to be missed.

**BIRDWATCH**  
Brian Unwin

Pine buntings have an Asiatic breeding distribution, and Britain is thousands of miles off their beaten track. Only 16 had previously been recorded here and as most of those were on remote Scottish islands, the chance of seeing one had been denied to the majority of birdwatchers.

As a result, the Big Waters bird was afforded superstar status. Queues formed on a scale comparable with the sale of precious — but few — tickets for a major pop concert or sports event.

This was because it could only be viewed from a small hide, holding up to 10 people. Eventually the line of hopefuls stretched back nearly 300 yards.

When the bird flew in to feed, those inside could only watch it for a few minutes to enable the next-in-line to take their places.

Even then the turnover was so slow that many had to wait up to three hours for their big moment. Sunset brought dis-

appointment for 60 at the back who had travelled from the furthest parts of Britain.

They quickly shrugged it off, phoned to say they would not be returning home, and booked into local boarding houses to ensure head-of-the-queue places and success after dawn next day.

It certainly takes a lot to quench the determination of the most fervent of this roving band, who annually clock up tens of thousands of miles around the British Isles to expand their experience of the rare.

In fact a good percentage of Sunday's queue took their minds off the icy gale blasting over the reserve by planning their next venture, which will take them to Ireland.

There the big draw is equally unappealing if judged purely by appearances — a first winter Tpayser's gull, very similar to several other types of immature gull, and at one of the Republic's less salubrious spots, Cork City rubbish tip.

However, it happens to be only the third of its kind ever known to have wandered from Arctic Canada to Europe. To twist a familiar saying, it is a matter of "never mind the appearance, feel the rarity value".

## Rogue grass threatens wildlife

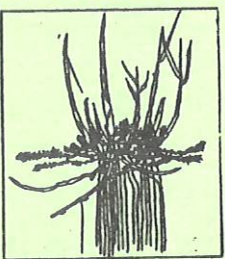
**By Charles Clover, Environment Editor**

AN AGGRESSIVE hybrid grass, *Spartina anglica*, is threatening to invade Morecambe Bay, the Solway Firth and other British and European estuaries. It can transform the ecology and banish many wading birds.

*Spartina anglica* has already invaded the Ribbles estuary in Lancashire and is beginning to appear in Morecambe Bay, according to the authors of a report on the grass published yesterday by the Institute of Terrestrial Ecology based in Grange-over-Sands, Cumbria.

"Grange-over-Sands may have to be renamed Grange-over-Saltmarsh if this stuff gets hold," said Dr Mike Hornung, of the institute.

A chance encounter between a European cordgrass and its North American cousin produced the new species some time in the late 19th century.



Boon for wildlife? Birds such as this tern might benefit

**Risk to birds**  
Some 800 rare birds are at risk after their sanctuary at Trispen near Truro was ordered to close yesterday.

19/2

# A land fit for harriers

Clive Price on 'creative conservation' schemes in the North-West

LOSS OF habitat is acknowledged as one of the main factors contributing to the decline of British wildlife. While it is essential to protect what remains, two schemes of creative conservation in the North-West are proving that it is possible to reverse the process.

In winter there is little to distinguish the steep hillside above Calf Hey Reservoir in the Rossendale Valley from the surrounding moors. In high summer, however, one 25-acre patch is already showing signs of a new burgeoning.

It was selected four years ago by Lancashire County Council and North-West Water, owners of the land, for an experimental regeneration scheme. The steeply sloping site drops from a line of disused quarries until, two thirds of the way down, it enters rushy pastures.

Explaining the choice of site, Lancashire County Council ecologist Geoff Morries says: "From a distance it looked as if

it was just a mixture of fescues and other matt grasses, but when you got closer there was quite a lot of bilberry. If you searched very carefully there were also about half a dozen areas of heather.

"They could not develop because they were heavily grazed by sheep. In winter they would home in on the best bits of grazing and these happened to be the heather and bilberry. So the seedlings never got a chance to become established."

The area was fenced off and the land left to its own devices. With the sheep excluded, the heather and bilberry are beginning to spread out after only two or three seasons.

"We have done nothing," says Morries, "apart from a small amount of tree planting in the gullies with oak, birch and rowan. These will bring a bit of cover back to the cloughs."

Walkers are not excluded, as

they are in similar schemes in the Peak District. The Rossendale Way, a long-distance footpath, runs within the higher boundary fence and there is also a linking footpath climbing up the hillside from the reservoir.

"We don't think human beings will have any detrimental effect," says Morries, "and in fact it would be nice to think that in a few years' time there will be quite a few bilberries for people to pick."

Moorland birds will also benefit from the regeneration. Today the meadow pipit and skylark are the principal avian inhabitants, but within living memory merlin actually bred within the experimental zone.

Other birds which have declined with the loss of heather and bilberry cover are curlew, golden plover and dunlin. Morries hopes to see all these returning.

As an outcome of this experiment, the county council has

been invited to join in a larger, national scheme organised by the Joseph Nickerson Foundation. Already an even more intractable piece of land has been earmarked on the West Pennine moors.

The aim of this, according to Morries, "is to show that wildlife, grazing, recreational and sporting interests can be reconciled while at the same time we can have a landscape that is attractive to look at".

Meanwhile, at the Nature Conservancy Council's Roudsea Moss Nature Reserve in Cumbria, warden Peter Singleton is involved in the regeneration of a lowland peat mossland. It has been estimated that 85 per cent of all such bogs in Britain have been lost or severely damaged as a result of drainage schemes for agriculture or peat extraction.

"Basically," he points out, "the area we're looking at begins about 6,000 years ago, when it would have been salt

marsh. Then with changing sea levels it gradually became a peat bog. The peat went on building up until, between 150 and 200 years ago, the then owner decided to drain it. So he put down a series of drains which extend over the whole surface. But for reasons I'm not certain about, he decided not to extract."

Pine, birch and even rhododendron took root until in 1981 a decision was taken to restore the mossland. All the trees were felled on Fishhouse Moss, which covers 250 acres, and some 500 ditches dammed to restore the water level to what it should have been.

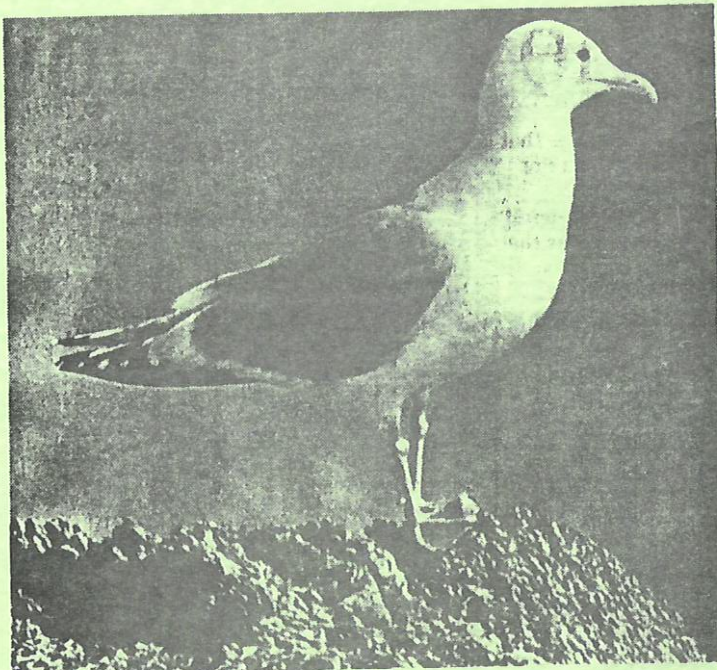
Because it would have been too expensive to remove the felled timber, Peter had to devise a "Heath Robinson" method of burning it on galvanised steel sheeting without setting the peat on fire.

Heather is currently the dominant plant species, but he is currently considering a pro-

gramme of controlled burning, because he would rather have "a matrix of Andromeda, Deer Grass and the White Big Sedge, which is the food plant of the Large Heath butterfly, a speciality of the area".

Fishhouse Moss is also a good habitat for moths, with a third of all British species recorded there. Another result of the new policy is a dramatic increase in the number of dragonflies. Some years they are so numerous that kestrels fly in to feed on them. Another predator seen here is the short-eared eagle, and Peter would like to see harriers.

With Fishhouse Moss returning to its original condition, Peter has started clearing the trees from neighbouring Deer Dyke Moss, which covers 450 acres. The two are separated by "The Lag", the original drainage ditch which is 6,000 years old. This will not be damaged because the bordering trees provide good nesting sites for buzzards and shelter for deer.



Flying visit: Bird watchers flocked to Dungeness, Kent, at the weekend when a Thayer's gull paid its first recorded visit to Britain. Thayer's gulls nest in Arctic Canada and until last year had never been recorded on this side of the Atlantic

## A Country Diary

OXFORDSHIRE: On April 27, on arrival at Farmoor Reservoirs, I had high hopes of seeing Sand Martins, and perhaps the first Swallow, for in a dead calm, over the mirror-like pools, insects swarmed in the sunshine. These were mainly the large chironomid gnats (identifiable by the feathery antennae of the males amongst the thousands trapped on cobwebs), but also over the grass borders smoke-like columns of smaller midges danced up and down. Ideal, one would have thought, for a gathering of hungry hirundines. But at first all I saw of migrants was a handsome cock Wheatear which kept just ahead of me for about half a mile, perching on the wall periodically, and a Ruff which flew across the water. Then, fairly high in the distance, I spotted a flock of birds

missed as mere starlings, but soon recognised as Sand Martins, and, of course, I expected them to swoop down to feast on the abundance below: but, out of about 150, only three or four bothered to descend for a quick mouthful, and straightway rose again to rejoin the flock speeding northward. From this one infers that these were truly birds on passage, and not those of the local breeding colonies. Another interesting feature of this visit was that the small parties of Meadow Pipits, well over a hundred in all, occasionally perched in the surrounding trees, behaviour which, in my experience, only occurs when this ground-feeding bird is on the move at this time of the year — a habit which, in the past, accounted for erroneous reports of early Tree Pipits in London parks in spring.

W. D. CAMPBELL



# The dying wilderness

Coto Doñana in southern Spain is one of the finest bird sanctuaries in the world but this may change. . .

## Foreign Fields

John Hooper  
in Seville

**I**T WAS an early spring afternoon like any other on the northern rim of the Coto Doñana National Park, south of Seville in Spain.

Flamingos were plodding and stooping among the wildfowl on the Hinojos Marsh. Herons guarded the banks of a stream which feeds it. Egrets clustered on the edge of the path that skirts it. A couple of marsh harriers had settled in the field behind when a herd of wild horses set off to amble across the shallow water, their shaggy forms silhouetted against the dying sun.

The Hinojos Marsh is but a tiny part of the Coto Doñana — a wilderness now facing what Mr Laurence Rose of the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds has called the "biggest potential disaster for European wildlife this century". Last December, the town council of nearby Almonte gave initial clearance for a leisure complex, called the Costa Doñana, which would extend to within a mile and a quarter of the park.

The decision set off a controversy that has reached far beyond the frontiers of Spain, and last month turned violent.

On March 14, there were angry scenes near the site of the proposed development between rival demonstrators supporting and opposing the project. Thirteen days later, intruders entered the park's fire-fighting station, sprinkled petrol over the vehicles inside and set off a blaze which caused damage estimated at some £250,000.

Spread across almost 200 square miles of sand dunes, marsh and scrubland near the mouth of the River Guadalquivir, the Doñana is the biggest nature reserve in Europe outside Russia. It is by far the most extensive wetland on the main route for Europe's migratory birds — visited by up to a mil-

lion birds each year — as well as the principal refuge for two of the world's rarest animals, the Iberian Lynx and the Spanish Imperial Eagle.

It is also, in the words of the Director of its Biological Research Station, Dr Miguel Delibes, a "magnificent natural laboratory". Field work carried out in the Doñana has led to the publication of some 1,200 learned articles by researchers from all parts of the world.

The Costa Doñana project is the latest of several threats. In 1967, work began on a holiday resort, Matalascañas, on the western tip of the park. Sold off in lots to a variety of developers, the result is an eye-jarring assembly of derivative styles from Hacienda Horrid to Bauhaus Bijou.

A drainage and irrigation project on land to the north, initiated in the early Seventies, has reduced the groundwater and is tapping the aquifer on which the Doñana's precarious eco-system depends. In 1987, a report by the Spanish Geology and Mining Institute (IGME), which simulated water levels to the year 2010, predicted that if there were only five years of drought — not uncommon in southern Spain — and pumping were to continue at the previous year's rate, irreparable damage would be done to the Park.

IGME recommended that that there should be no further expansion of the area under irrigation and the national park's governing body called for

pumping to be limited to the previous year's level.

Yet a report by three foreign hydrologists sent to the area by the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) in 1988 reproduced evidence from the regional agricultural development agency which showed the agency had "willfully overreached" the area recommended by IGME, and planned to expand it further, exceeding the annual pumpage called for by the national park's governing body.

The most extraordinary aspect of the latest controversy is that no one, apart from the developers and the council, actually knows what the Costa Doñana project involves. In Spain, outsiders — and, in this case, that includes the government-appointed officials in charge of the park — do not have a legal right to see plans until they are close to final approval.

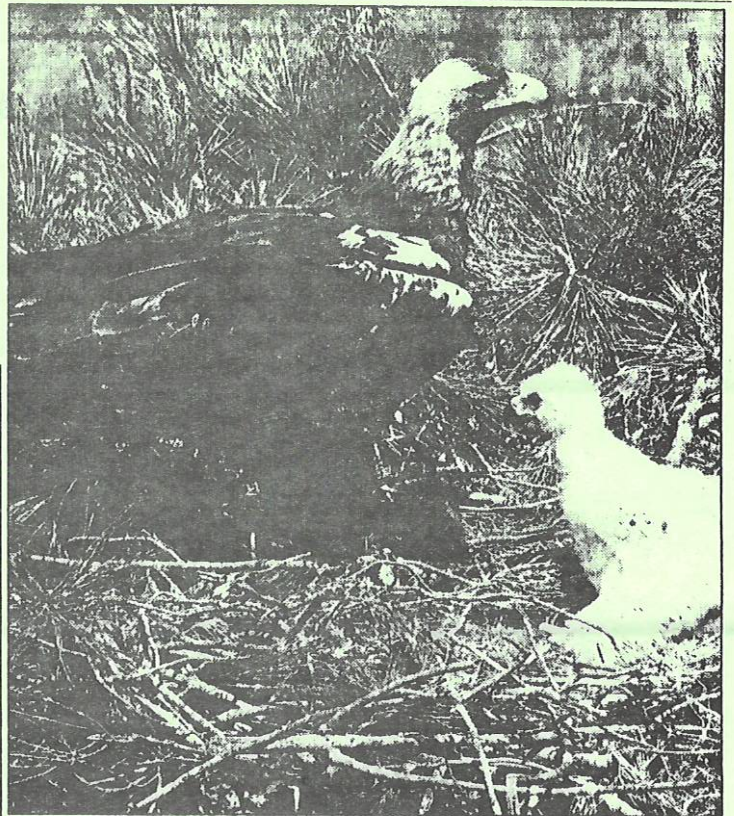
According to the Chairman of Costa Doñana, Mr Salvador Echevarría, "the object is to live up the coastline all the year round". The development, he said, was aimed at luring residential buyers from overseas with sophisticated facilities, including a promenade, a harbour and a golf course laid out by the internationally-renowned British designer, Mr Robert Trent Jones.

Mr Echevarría said that the original project — itself mainly low-density and low-rise — had since had to be drastically altered to fit in with additional legal requirements. The result



Threatened: the Spoonbill

PHOTOGRAPH NOL BINSBERGER/RSPB



Threatened: The rare Spanish Imperial Eagle

PHOTOGRAPH ERIC HOSKING/RSPB

was that Costa Doñana would have room for far fewer than the 32,000 people originally envisaged — "on the basis of experience in the rest of the world, less than half".

The Mayor of Almonte, Mr Rafael Domingo Díaz, maintained that "if Costa Doñana is blocked and the irrigation scheme frozen, then Almonte will return to penury". This is also the assumption underlying discernible resentment among many Sevillians at what they see as sentimental interference by outsiders in the affairs of a poor region.

In fact, Almonte has become an exception in Spain's needy South, precisely because of the success of reclamation and irrigation. Mr Díaz was unable to put a figure on unemployment in the town, and environmentalists say there is none.

Dr Javier Castroviejo, Chairman of the Friends of Doñana and Director of the Biological Station for 14 years, said he was not convinced that the majority of Almonte's inhabitants were in favour of Costa Doñana. Most he had spoken to held no strong views either way.

So far, criticism of the project has concentrated on the threat

to the park's water supply. But, according to Mr Díaz, Costa Doñana will not necessarily draw its water from the Doñana's aquifer as Matalascañas has done: it could be piped from at least two sources elsewhere at the same cost.

For the park's Conservation Director, Dr Jesus Casas, water is not the only issue, though.

*It is seen as sentimental interference by outsiders in the affairs of a poor region*

An extra resort on the edge of the Doñana would bring more rubbish, more noise and possibly the conversion to dual carriageway of a road built to Matalascañas from Almonte along the park's western perimeter. Several lynxes have been run over on the existing road.

"The Doñana," said Dr Casas "is becoming an island."

"There was the same apocalyptic talk when Matalascañas was built", remarked Mr Díaz dismissively. "It was said that the birds wouldn't come anymore, yet the birds keep coming every year at the same time".

That may not be a guarantee of the future. "The pressure on an area can grow progressively greater and, on the surface, everything is alright", said Dr Casas "until you reach a certain point after which the decline is extremely abrupt. We don't know how close we are to that limit, but there are a lot of naturalists who think we are very near it".

There is also the value of the site itself. According to his colleague at the biological station, Dr Delibes, "there is a lynx which we have tagged living there right now".

Dr Delibes, though, has taken a slightly different approach to the latest controversy. Costa Doñana, he said, was "just another menace, and not even the most serious. The problem is that it is not in place of, but in addition to, all the others. What I fear is that, if it is not built, people will think that the Coto Doñana is safe and cease to worry".

# Conservationists lose battle over theme park

Paul Brown, Environment Correspondent

**A** £2 billion theme park and film studio on Rainham Marshes, east of London, can go ahead, allowing the destruction of an important wildlife site, Chris Patten, the Environment Secretary, decided yesterday.

The development, which MCA International says will create 20,000 jobs, will destroy 70 per cent of the 1,200-acre Site of Special Scientific

Interest, the largest near London. Conservation groups were appalled by the decision, saying it created a precedent which encouraged developers to cast aside environmental issues.

The development, called Universal City, has already been approved in outline by Havering district council. It includes 110 acres of film and television studios and theme park; four hotels; 2.4 million square feet of business park and industrial development, offices and shops; 2,000 houses and flats; and a 175-

acre riverside nature and leisure park.

MCA and their partners, British Urban Development and the Rank Organisation, have begun site evaluation. The company said the development could still go to northern France if the site was not suitable.

Tony Young, the company president, said he was delighted by the decision and hoped that conservationists would now co-operate with the development of a 428-acre nature reserve on the site.

Philip Hurst, of London Wildlife Trust, said: "This decision makes a mockery of the protection of SSSIs afforded by the Countryside and Wildlife Act. These safeguards are now seen as pretty meaningless. This is a premeditated destruction of a vital habitat. Mr Patten is fast losing his green veneer."

David Pritchard, of the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, said: "Six hundred acres of this SSSI will now be destroyed at a stroke, but Mr Patten has not called this in for a public inquiry.

Issues of principle have been raised. It is a matter of national importance and yet it has been left to the local authority to make a decision when it has a vested interest in it going ahead. How Mr Patten will be able to hold his head up in Europe when he is asked about these issues, I do not know.

"The recent dismemberment of the Nature Conservation Council must be seen in context of this decision. It is now a weakened body, its resources spread too thin and its confidence shaken."

Michael Spicer, Planning Minister, said Mr Patten had noted that development in the area would be consistent with his strategy to redress the economic imbalance between the east and west of London, and with the Greater London Development Plan. He had considered carefully the significant effects for nature conservation of the development, in particular within a SSSI, but had concluded that it was appropriate for the application to be decided by the local planning authority.

THE LANCASHIRE AND CHESHIRE FAUNA SOCIETY (FORMERLY COMMITTEE)  
 (A POTTED AND VERY INCOMPLETE HISTORY)

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The idea to make a faunal survey of the two counties was presented by Dr. W.M Tattersall, keeper of the Manchester Museum to a meeting of Museum Curators held at Warrington in October 1913. This was favourably received and a public meeting was convened at Manchester Museum on March 14th 1914 at which the committee was founded.

Prominent ornithologists on the Executive Committee were T.A.Coward, A.W.Boyd and H.W.Robinson.

T.A.Coward (1867 - 1933) with CHARLES OLDHAM published their VERTEBRATE FAUNA OF CHESHIRE in 1910. Coward was a field naturalist of international repute and published several books and many papers yet never forgot his work within the Committee. In 1921 he was awarded the degree of Master of Science by Manchester University for his outstanding work..

After his death in 1933 an appeal established a Memorial Fund to purchase Marbury Reed Bed and Cotterill Clough in his memory.

After Coward's death the Bird section was taken over by A.W.Boyd (1885 - 1959) who collated and published many thousands of records in the Annual Reports. Like Coward, Boyd wrote several books, many papers and was a Pioneer Ringer.

The Committee has always maintained a panel of referees, expert on their faunal groups to help with identification and recording. To mention just a few of these we might single out N.F.ELLISON (Mammals, Reptiles and Amphibia) HARRY BRITTEN who earned international fame for his encyclopaedic knowledge of the lesser known families of Insecta. He was awarded the Honorary Degree of M.Sc. by Manchester University in 1952. He was succeeded by W.D. HINCKS M.Sc who was awarded a D.Sc. for his work on Dermaptera of the World.

William Falconer was Britain's senior 'Spiderman' and discovered 3 species new to Britain and 7 new to Science. Nora F. McMillan was an eminent Conchologist.

The years prior to the outbreak of the second World War were lean ones, as they were during the war itself but reports were published how and when they could.

The late Professor W.M. Tattersall wrote "The fauna of Lancashire and Cheshire has been more systematically investigated and is more completely known than that of any two counties in the whole of the British Isles".

The Fauna Committee is justifiably proud of this fact.

Clifford Oakes, author of 'The Birds of Lancashire' published in 1953 was recorder for several years, succeeded by K.G (Ken) Spencer. Ken used the criteria for publication that it must add to our knowledge as set out in Oakes's book and financed the report himself for several years. The report was available to members only.



I have aimed to print a much more full account of each years ornithological events and to sell reports to non-members. Don Mirams has compiled a Ringing report for many years and would welcome a replacement.

As County recorder, requests for full descriptive details of County or National rarities in no way cast doubt on any individual but it is important to bear in mind that he may not know the observer personally and in years to come when todays ornithologists are not even members our records will need to stand the scrutiny of others. Even easily identified birds like Avocet or Hoopoe should have some detail of plumage, habits, actions weather, for the reasons given above.

In addition to compiling the report - in recent years with much needed help - the recorder must liaise with the Secretary of the British Birds Rarities Committee and with that of the Rare Breeding Birds Panel and reply to many queries from resident or visiting birders. He must also provide all County records on request to any worker doing nationwide or local surveys.

Finally, may I thank all my friends in Fylde Bird Club for submitting their notes faithfully each year.

Maurice Jones.

COMMENT FROM L.G.B

At our last meeting the question was asked 'Do we need a County Report'. The answer must be 'Yes'. Without the collation of records from the whole of the county how would researchers and ornithologists from outside the county get to know of all the work done by groups such as ours.

In his article Maurice refers to the fine tradition of recording in our county. We owe it to our predecessors to carry on and attempt to reach the standards they set.

We cannot decide who or how the report is published but we must support our county report however it is published. We must also support Maurice in his efforts to raise the standard of recording in the county. Since he began editing the report the amount of information published has increased with each issue.

As you all know I help Maurice produce the Systematic list in the report and I see the many letters he receives, none so far have questioned the need for a County report. I'd like to add my thanks to all of you who submit records to the Fylde and Lancashire Bird Reports.

Len Blacow

BEST DAYS WITH FYLDE BIRDS

I have found that a year having a long hot summer seems to provide periods of superb birding from mid-August into October. Such a year was 1984 when the memorable Bank Holiday of Monday 27th August ranked as one of my 'Best days with Fylde Birds' - or in this case, South Shore birds.

Watson Road Park contained a Tree Pipit, Spotted Flycatcher, 2 Willow Warblers, Grey Wagtail and 2 late Swifts. A Black Tern fed with Common Terns off South Promenade but the hot spot that day was the bushy scrubland (or eyesore as a lady councillor described it) on former railway sidings near South Station, now sadly lost to the Central Car Park. In two lengthy visits there I turned up a Tree Pipit, Pied and Spotted Flycatchers (the latter taking a small Tortoiseshell) Lesser Whitethroat, Wheatear, 4 Willow Warblers and a very wary Garden Warbler. In the heat of the early afternoon a juvenile Cuckoo was entering Watson Road back gardens.

I was barely half a mile from home all day.

E. Stirling

RECENT REPORTSJANUARY

The year started with a particularly rainy and raw day with at least three local observers braving the elements over Wyre. There were 650 Fieldfare observed in the St. Michaels - out Rawcliffe area in two flocks of 450 and 200. In the same area only 20 Redwings were seen. 500 Pinkfeet were near the conifer plantation on the out Rawcliffe - Nateby road with another 300 frequenting the Staynall area. By way of contrast to the wintry feel of the day a Song Thrush was in song in a Poulton garden.

In the early part of the month the geese over Wyre proved elusive, no doubt as the result of the disturbance caused by shooting. On the 14th approximately 500-550 were found roosting on sandbanks in the middle of the River Wyre keeping company with a similar number of Lapwings on adjacent banks. 1000 Pinkfeet were at Little Tongues Lane, Preesall on the same day along with 2 Barnacle Geese. The Goose count on the 21st produced 1500 at Out Rawcliffe, 1400 at Preesall, 1200 at Moss Edge, 700 at Eagland Hill, 437 at Fleetwood and 70 at Newton Marsh - 5,307 in total. Later, on the 28th 2,500 Pinkfeet and 3 adult Russian Whitefronts were in the Rawcliffe area.

Marton Mere held its usual good variety and numbers of duck: on the 4th 352 Teal, 427 Mallard, 23 Shoveler, a male Pintail, 34 Pochard, 29 Tufted, 4 Goldeneye and a Great Crested Grebe were present. Numbers were similar on the 7th but 5 Wigeon added to the variety. By the 18th a pair of Great Crested Grebes were present and on the 21st a male Scaup was also seen.



Elsewhere three Goldeneye and seven Red Breasted Mergansers were on the Marine Lake at Fleetwood early in the month. As usual the number of Swans and Goldeneye fluctuated as birds commuted between the ICI/CEGB pools and the Marine Lake. At Lytham 370 Pintail were on the Ribble at Lytham on the 5th. 4 Gadwall, a good bird for the Fylde, were on the ICI pool on the 13th. 3 Male and 2 Female Goosanders were on the Wyre above Cartford Bridge on the 21st.

The 14th saw the monthly Birds of Estuaries count on south Morecambe Bay. As the high tide occurred in the early afternoon it was decided to hold the monthly low water count on the River Wyre on the same day starting at first light. Highlights were 800 Lapwing in the Skippool - Shard area with a further 1900 between Shard and Cartford bridges. A Ruddy Shelduck of questionable origin was also seen between Skippool and Shard and 6 Long Tailed Tits were in the hedgerow between these two points.

On the full count in the afternoon there were 1457 Teal (mainly at Armhill), 176 Wigeon, 27 Goldeneye, 37 Mergansers (Lune Estuary mainly) 615 Shelduck, 6752 Oystercatcher, 6880 Lapwing, 104 Ringed Plover, 784 Turnstone, 31 Black Tailed Godwit, 1067 Curlew and 883 Redshank. A further 600 Curlew and 100 Redshanks were on the fields in the Cockersands area.

Once again the Wader count totals emphasised how important Morecambe Bay is to both Waders and Wildfowl. Later on in the week there were 1400 Lapwing and 800 Golden Plover in the Fluke - Lane Ends area on flooded fields

The St. Annes shore roost correspondent in the Shape of Maurice Jones reported 380 Oystercatcher, 32 Ringed Plover, 3 Turnstone, 400 Sanderling, 1800 Bar Tailed Godwit, 1 Black Tailed Godwit, 1800 Dunlin and 2000 Knot on the 14th.

A Jack Snipe and a Spotted Redshank were present at Barnaby Sands on the 7th. At the coast 56 Little Gulls moved past Rossall on the 13th whilst on the 17th at Anchorsholme 105 Kittiwakes and 55 Little Gulls plus 1 Juvenile Gannet flew south in 1½ hours. Also on that day a solitary Little Gull was on the pool outside St. Annes baths.

Light south westerly winds on the 20th saw 21 Kittiwakes and 19 Little Gulls pass Starr Gate plus a single Guillemot and Razorbill. A week later after the gale of the 25th and 26th 85 Kittiwakes and 55 Little Gulls flew south whilst 395 Common Scoter drifted by on the tide.

Eiders were reported from South Promenade and as far as Lane Ends. White winged gulls were represented by the 'regular' but last year distinctly 'irregular' Glaucous Gull 'Biffer' which was seen at Fleetwood on the 15th. An adult Mediterranean was on Knowle High School fields and there are no prizes for guessing who saw that. The same observer found a colour ringed Cormorant at Fairhaven on the 30th, the bird having been ringed at St. Margarets in South Wales.

Raptors were in abundance at Warton Bank on the 6th with 2 male and 1 female Hen Harrier, single Kestrels and Merlin plus 4 Short Eared Owls. Female Sparrowhawks and Peregrines were ever present Over Wyre whilst 2 Merlins and a Short Eared hunted Fleetwood Marsh.

On the passerine front there were 200 Greenfinch in a roost at Singleton on the 5th plus 60 Redwing and 165 Chaffinch. At the same site 2 Sparrowhawks, 2 Jays, a Tawny Owl and a Woodcock were noted. 27 Chaffinch were ringed there on the 6th of which 13 were of the 'continental' type. Of 24 Chaffinch caught at Eagland Hill on the 21st at least 10 were similarly of the 'continental' variety. These birds were part of an impressive mixed flock which comprised 150 Chaffinch, 25 Yellowhammer, 50 Greenfinch and 65 Corn Bunting. The 27th saw 100 plus Skylark, 1 Brambling, 60 Greenfinch 20 Tree Sparrow and 170 plus Chaffinch in the same area.

Reed Buntings were very noticeable throughout the month many frequenting Spartina in the Fluke and Knott End areas.

On the 11th 2 Bullfinch were present at Lytham Hall. During the month there was a small influx of Stonechat with 1 on Fleetwood Marsh, 2 at Fleetwood Golf course and 2 at the Power Station. A male was also present at LSANR on the 3rd, 7th and 10th. On the former date Maurice found a dead Toad at the same site.

## FEBRUARY

The weather continued in the same vein as January i.e mild and very windy. In early February both Skylark and Corn Bunting could be heard in song on St. Annes Moss and Meadow Pipits were definitely on the move. At Eagland on the 3rd there were approximately 100 Skylarks.

Meanwhile in a certain ironmongery shop; I'm saying no more except to say it's in Vicarage Lane at 11.15 on the 28th a Goldcrest flew in through an open door. It spent 20 minutes inside being pursued by the owner, who shall remain nameless; finally succumbing to a net borrowed from the local pet shop. After it had been released in the Hawthorns across the road it flew all of one foot! Since then it was heard on several dates. It had obviously been wondering what was in the shop and perceptively realised that the owner was the County Recorder thereby guaranteeing being famous for at least one day.

On the 4th 30 Fieldfares were on St. Annes Moss whilst 200 were at Scronkey on the 18th and 320 at Rawcliffe on the 22nd.

The Pinkfeet over Wyre became more approachable as the month progressed. On Goose Count day on the 10th 9000 Pinkfeet were over Wyre accompanied by 3 adult Russian Whitefronts and 1 Barnacle Goose. A flock of Pinkfeet numbering 1800 were on fields at Fleetwood and 1200 were near the M55 junction at Great Eccleston, these two flocks represent an expansion of the normal range and it will be interesting to see if the expansion continues this forthcoming winter.

By the 18th 5000 Pinkfeet and 3 Russian Whitefronts had moved to Moss Edge. Perhaps the best views of the geese this winter were obtained from Birks Farm at Eagland Hill where the Farmer kindly invited several members of the Club into his back garden to view approximately 8000 Pinkfeet including three leucistics, the 3 Whitefronts and 1 Bean Goose grazing contentedly 100 Yards away. What's more to make this a really memorable occasion he served coffee and biscuits! Many thanks to this gentleman and his family for making us so welcome.

On the 4th a female Teal at LSANR became only the 2nd record for the reserve whilst the 11th saw the first Moorhen return to the Slack.

The Birds of Estuaries count took place on the 11th and totals included 45 Eider in the Lune Estuary, 3289 Oystercatchers, 4646 Dunlin (each one individually counted) 898 Curlew, 1474 Redshank, 464 Turnstone and one Spotted Redshank at Lane Ends.

On the same day the St. Annes shore roost held 2500 Bar Tailed Godwits, 2500 Knot, 500 Sanderling, 300 Dunlin, 100 Grey Plover, 292 Oystercatchers and 2 Turnstone.

Wet fields at Rawcliffe held 140 Redshank and 54 Shelduck on the 22nd. On the previous day 7 Black Tailed Godwits were in the same area at Rawcliffe Hall.

A drake Red Breasted Merganser on Lane Ends pool on the 22nd was unusual and on the 24th a Slavonian Grebe in winter plumage and 5 Great Crested Grebes were seen from South Promenade.

The continuing windy weather and particularly the severe gales of the 26th and 27th brought several Little Gulls and Kittiwakes to the shore. 3 storm driven Kittiwakes, one of which was oiled, were seen roosting separately in gull flocks from Knowle school fields to Central Car Park. Earlier in the month an immature was found dead at the school on the 12th and from the 9th - 12th an immature Little Gull frequented Central Car Park. Little Gulls were seen at Knowle School, 2 at Central Park, 1 at Fairhaven Lake and for good measure 2 Kittiwakes flew over St. Annes Moss with 4 at Granny's Bay.

The Mediterranean Gull of January was seen at Knowle School on the 9th and presumably the same bird off South Promenade on the 13th. A dead Razorbill was found at South Promenade on the 16th.

A Barn Owl, thought to be of the dark breasted race was seen at dusk at Marton Mere on the 16th, 17th and 18th. Also at the Mere, a female Merlin, 1 Sparrowhawk, a Water Rail and 'Maurice's Pheasant' were seen on the 21st.

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POSTSCRIPT

During March several members attended the clean up at Barnaby's Sands on the 18th and the Spartina dig at Fairhaven on the 25th. The Barnaby's Sands clean up attracted at least 70 people; members of the LTNC, BTCV, Fylde Bird Club and ordinary members of the public many of whom brought children along to help. The day was perfect, not too hot, and after a short time hard work could be seen to be paying dividends as the piles of wood, plastic and other debris grew higher. The wood was burnt on site and much of the other rubbish was put into bin liners and carted away for disposal.

The efforts of so many people resulted in the general appearance of the site being rapidly improved - the results were there for all to see, a relatively clean tide line and massive mounds of rubbish piled beyond.

The Spartina dig on the 25th took place under totally different weather conditions with a cool northerly wind making it almost a pleasure to be digging and to keep warm. Approximately 20 people participated, 10 from the Bird Club and the others from the BTCV. The day was graced by the presence of our Secretary happily now fit and well. He duly appeared in 'wellies' and dressed for the great outdoors, then advised us that he was there only in a supervisory capacity. Monty Myerscough sported a fetching Bushman's hat and was accompanied by a Tractor and a Trailer. This item certainly helped in the collection of the Spartina and transport to the skip provided by Fylde Borough Council. Thank you, Monty.

On another subject, the recent gales have severely damaged some of the Shelters along the Promenade (no, I'm not suggesting another work party). Most have some slates missing, others have had their seating ripped out by the combined force of the wind and waves. Sadly I must report that the Shelter at Starr Gate falls into the latter category, the 'gallery' in the North West quadrant has completely disappeared. Mind you the damage here is minor when you think that a complete Shelter at Anchorsholme has gone missing. It is to be hoped that Blackpool Borough Council get their priorities right and repair the Shelter for the seawatching season ahead.

Finally, our congratulations go to Tony Disley who has won this year's 'Richard Richardson Award' for artists under 21, sponsored by British Bird's magazine, at his first attempt. Most of you will be familiar with his drawings for the Fylde and Lancashire Bird Reports and I know that many of you already possess drawings by him - well this proves just how good he really is - so get your commissions in now! Well done Tony.