



**Fylde
Bird Club**

LANCASHIRE

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**FYLDE BIRD CLUB NEWSLETTER
NOVEMBER 1997**

The views expressed in this newsletter do not necessarily represent the views of the Club members or its committee.

FROM THE CHAIR

I am writing this piece after watching the superb Pallas's Warbler near Blackpool Football Ground, much better fare outside the ground than inside. Very experienced observers were agreed that they were enjoying their best ever views of the species. Here was another example of the value of working local patches. With two months left, 1997 looks set to go down as one of the best ever for local rarities.

Whilst celebrating rarities we must not forget our local birds, the October wader count was marred by disturbance from a helicopter and two microlights. Their numbers were recorded and sent off with the count results. Assuming many of you will be checking Lane Ends for a Black Brant this winter, examples of disturbance will be seen. I know we have asked before but please report incidents of disturbance, the problem is increasing.

Recent survey has produced some very interesting results. Buzzard and Yellow Wagtail are increasing but Sparrowhawk is declining. Grey Partridge is beginning to hold its own but Swift and Wood Warbler are in decline. Do not forget to comment on commoner birds when reporting your rarities at the year end.

Talking of surveys, today's paper reveals that a five year study in Scotland, costing £500,000 has revealed that grouse numbers decline and raptor numbers increase when a heather moor is left without interference. As they say around here, "we could have told them that for nowt!"

Look, it's mid November, get out this weekend and find your rare bird for the year. Good luck and good birding.

LGB

RECENT REPORTS

July Sightings

July was unsettled for the first few days, then a period of settled warm weather followed with high temperatures. Later in the month showers and longer outbreaks of rain occurred. Winds were generally light and variable.

The only notable seawatch reported was on the evening of the 15th when 100 Gannets, 200 Kittiwakes, 100+ Manx Shearwaters, 1 Fulmar and 2 Arctic Skuas were reported past South Promenade on a light SW wind and drizzle.

Hobbies were reported at the Mere on the 15th and over the car park at Stanah on the 16th. The Little Egret was seen at the Naze Pool on the 12th.

170 Lapwing were at Stanah on the 6th whilst on the same date 180 Black Tailed Godwits were at Warton Bank. The best bird of the month was the Collared Pratincole found at Lane Ends on the 7th by Tony Sharples. Most people managed to see it in the evening but it did not linger, disappearing by the next day. A Kingfisher gave good views on the dyke the same evening. On the 9th a Whimbrel was at Stanah and a Green Sandpiper was at the Mere on the 11th. The 12th brought 2 Spotted Redshank and 2 Greenshank to the Naze Pool at Freckleton with another Greenshank at Stanah on the 13th. Return wader passage was well under way and there were 24 Common Sandpipers at Shard Bridge on the 15th. On the same date 400 Lapwing were at Skippool and 200 at Stanah.

Quail were much in evidence Over Wyre during the month with an estimated 36 calling off Bradshaw Lane and neighbouring roads.

These were the only records received in what is traditionally the quietest birdwatching month of the year.

August Sightings

Most of the month was dominated by high pressure with the occasional thunderstorm. However, the last week brought low pressure with more rain. There was either not many birds about or people were not bothering to go out as very few records were received for the month.

A Little Grebe was on the Mere on the 31st, whilst 2 Garganey were on Newton Marsh on the 24th. Two Buzzards were seen at the Mere on the 25th with one there on the 26th. One Buzzard and 1 Marsh Harrier were on Winmarleigh Moss on the 25th with a Marsh Harrier at the Naze at Freckleton on the 26th. Two Kingfishers were noted at Condor Green on the 14th. The Mere had an adult winter Med Gull on the 10th with a juvenile/1st winter there on the 27th. An Arctic Tern passed through on the 31st while 48 Common

Terns, 25 Sandwich Terns and one Little Tern passed Rossall Coastguard on the 29th. Whinchats were seen at the Mere with one there on the 10th and 2 on the 31st together with 2 Wheatears. A Lesser Whitethroat was at the Mere on the 24th and 4 Goldcrests were at Stanah on the 31st.

September Sightings

September was very mild with strong westerly winds and a fair amount of rainfall in the first 2 weeks. High pressure then became established with light easterlies to the end of the month.

The first couple of weeks brought some good seawatching to the Fylde Coast, with Divers, Fulmars, Leach's Petrels, Skuas, Kittiwakes and Terns all much in evidence. Odd Leach's were seen on various dates, with 20 off Rossall on 14th and c90 off South Promenade on the same date. 11 Arctic Skuas were off Rossall also on the 14th. A Long Tailed Skua at Lane Ends found by the wader counters on the 14th caused a bit of controversy but was an excellent sighting for those lucky enough to catch up with it. 3 Great Skuas were off South Promenade on the 15th.

A Gadwall was on the Mere on the 5th and 7th with a Pintail noted there from 9th to 26th. A good record was a Long Tailed Duck off Rossall on the 4th.

Marsh Harriers were seen at the Naze on the 11th with a female at the Mere on the 17th. Two Peregrines were off North Pier on the 13th, one of which caught a Leach's Petrel only for it to get away. Further sightings of Peregrine came from the Mere on the 17th, 19th and 23rd. Two sightings of Merlin were reported - one at Lane Ends on the 8th and one at Fairlawn Road, Lytham on the 17th. A Water Rail was present at the Mere for most of the month.

Wader passage was in full swing with 5 Curlew Sandpipers, 2 Spotted Redshanks, 1 Ruff and 1 Greenshank at Condor Green on the 8th, whilst 5 Greenshanks, 1 Ruff and 1 Whimbrel were at Lane Ends on the same day. 11 Ruff were at Stalmine on the 16th and 2 Jack Snipe were reported - one on the island at the Mere on the 25th and one at Fleetwood on the 30th.

A Black Tern was noted off South Promenade on the 7th with the usual Med Gull being noted at the Mere on the 19th and 28th. Several late Swifts were reported - including 6 on the 1st and 5 on the 3rd at Cleveleys with 1 at Rossall on the 20th. The last was at Fairhaven on the 27th.

Passerine migration was much in evidence over our area on certain dates with 100 Meadow Pipits and 2 Grey Wagtails over Stanah on the 10th and 639 Meadow Pipits and 50 Pied Wagtails over Fairhaven on the 27th. 12 Coal Tits and 18 Long Tailed Tits were at Stanah on the 25th with numbers of the same species at the Mere towards the end of the month. Record numbers of Redpoll and Siskin passed through the Mere during the last

week of the month with a good passage of Goldcrest and Siskin at Stanah during the same period.

Two Chiffchaffs and 2 Lesser Whitethroats were at Stanah on the 9th whilst a male Redstart was at Bourne Hill, Fleetwood on the 25th. The Mere hosted Whinchats on the 24th and 28th, a Pied Flycatcher on the 23rd, 7 Blackcaps on the 28th and a Ring Ouzel on the 30th, whilst 2 male Bramblings were seen at the Zoo Car Park on the 23rd.

Many thanks to all those who submitted records - any articles for the newsletter will be welcome also.

AJH

Article from Monty Myerscough

I have been a member of the Fylde Bird Club since it was formed, way back in the 70's. God is it that long ago! and it is a testament to the durability of the small band of keen and dedicated bird watchers who started the club that they are still an integral part of it. Indeed I'm sure that if for any reason that same small group had to leave the club it would cease to exist, and conservation locally would be that much the poorer. Although we call ourselves a bird club and that is the main interest of most of the members, there is a very wide range of knowledge and expertise in other fields of natural history such as insects or creepy crawlies.

Butterflies and moths - Malcolm Evans

Flies - Frank Walsh

Spiders or Arachnids - Pauline

Plants - Dave McGrath

Fungi - there must be somebody!!

Dinosaurs - Maurice Jones

Vermin - Monty Myerscough

Seriously though the point I'm trying to make is that all things are inter-dependent on one another from the smallest invertebrate and insignificant plant to the predators at the top of the food chain. It is a delicate balance and in a healthy environment that balance is maintained through natural selection and evolution so no single species dominates at the expense of others. If left to nature, diversity is maintained with a place for everything and everything in its place. All too often that balance is upset at the hands of the most ruthless predator this planet has ever seen "Homo Sapien". Apart from the wholesale destruction of vast areas of land, pollution of water and atmosphere, upsetting the Earth's weather systems this species seems to be pre-occupied in introducing alien species of flora and fauna to areas where they never existed naturally. Usually with disastrous effects on the native wild life of that area. Whether this is done intentionally or by accident the effect is

still the same. A few examples of the more obvious ones from a list that is growing at an alarming rate, even in these so called enlightened times:

Sycamore into British woodland
Indian Balsam along our waterways
Dutch Elm disease (Elm Bark beetle)
Rhododendron into our woodlands
Spartina on our salt marshes
Italian Rye grass on our fields

Coypu, Mink, Grey Squirrel, Black Rat, Ring-necked Parakeet, Flat worm and many species of Wild Fowl e.g. Greylag, Ruddy Duck, Mandarin, Canada Goose to name but a few. Other disasters include Rabbit introduced to Australia, Starlings to North America, Ruddy Duck to Spain, African killer bees to Central America, rats and domestic cats to the Galapagos Islands, Red Deer to New Zealand, the list is endless. Of all these introductions of alien species, the little Owl, introduced into Britain last century is the only one I know of that hasn't had any adverse effect on our native wild life. There is very little that can be done once we realise what effects these introductions are having to native flora and fauna and it is usually too little too late.

I personally think that all none native species should be classed as vermin and treated as such. I wish I had £1 for every Grey Squirrel I've shot over the last few years and if I added Magpies to that I'd be rich. Some people reading this might think that we shouldn't interfere and let nature take its course. What I say to that is B?!!*?! The problem is there because we interfered in the first place, and man is the only species that is capable of doing anything about it, even if it is usually futile and ineffective. Speaking from my own experience as Warden of Lytham Hall, I witnessed many incidents of predation of song birds nests, and nests of ground nesting birds such as Lapwing, Partridge, Mallard etc. by an unnaturally large population of Magpies and Grey Squirrels. Within 5 years I had shot or trapped, using only humane live traps, approximately 700 Grey Squirrels and 550 Magpies, a total that any Gamekeeper would have been proud of, especially as the area I covered was less than 80 acres. And in answer to your question, Yes! the song bird population did benefit greatly. Song Thrushes up from 0 to 5 pairs, Long Tailed Tit up from 1 to 4 pairs, Wren far more abundant, significant increase in Blackcaps, Chiffchaffs and Willow Warbler, Stock Dove up from 1 to 4 pairs, Lapwings and Mallards actually managing to hatch and rear chicks. Even the box nesting Tits, Tawny Owl and Stock Dove didn't find their living quarters vandalised or taken over by Grey Squirrels.

I know I didn't completely solve the problem but I certainly learned from the experience. Magpies are much easier to trap than shoot with an air rifle, and Grey Squirrels pack a very nasty bite. To me, the only good Magpie, Grey Squirrel, Mink and a host of other aliens is a dead one.

Monty Myerscough.



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LANCASHIRE

FYLDE BIRD CLUB
BUSINESS MEETING MINUTES

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT 7:51 PM ON WEDNESDAY
THE 10 TH OF JULY AT BLACKPOOL CRICKET CLUB

Present

Chairman; Secretary and 24 members. Apologies were received from Dave Pitman.

Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The minutes of the last business meeting held on the 21st of May were read and approved.

Matters Arising

1) Marton Mere

The Chairman reported that the issue of hides will be raised with Blackpool Borough Council at the next Management Committee Meeting. Blackpool Borough Council have agreed in principal to recruit new Volunteer Wardens specifically to man the Information Centre at weekends. The Chairman also reported that the support group, 'The Friends of Marton Mere', would be re-launched this autumn and he requested the members to support it.

2) RSPB Fairhaven

The membership were reminded that there were still opportunities to help at the centre and with guided walks.

3) Tip Planning Application at Todderstaffe Hall

The Chairman reported that he had visited the site and that the Secretary had written to the Planning Office expressing the Club's opposition to the proposal. The letter recommended that a thorough survey of the flora and fauna should be conducted before any decision was made to allow tipping on the site. Lancashire County Council had not yet made a decision on the application.

Correspondence See Item 3) under Matters Arising.

Agenda

1) Moss Side

The Chairman announced that the membership must now reach a decision on whether the Club should proceed with the purchase of the land at Moss Side. Details of the proposed purchase had been widely publicised within the membership and there had been ample opportunities for the members to visit and assess the site.

The debate was opened to the floor and many members expressed their reservations with the proposal. Amongst the views expressed were:

That the site was of insufficient conservation value to warrant the asking price of approximately £3800.

It was vulnerable to disturbance from the adjacent residents and their pets.

It may suffer from drying out as a result of new drainage works between the site and the River Ribble.

It was of little value as a Birdwatching Site.

The Chairman reminded the members that the concept had been to create/preserve habitat for birds and that its use as a birdwatching facility, had never been a priority.

Steven Dunstan asked if there was any project which was competing with this proposal, for Club funds. The Secretary replied that there were no proposals to spend the Club's Special Projects Fund on any other project.

Alan Hinchliffe asked if the owners would still be willing to give the adjacent area of land to the Club if the Club declined to purchase the land in question. The Secretary replied that the owners had stated that they intended to donate the adjacent land to the Club regardless of the Club's decision on this purchase.

Maurice Jones asked if the harvest mice had been found in the 'free part' or on the land which was for sale. The Secretary replied that they were on the 'free part'.

A vote was taken and the result was 15 against the purchase and 4 in favour.

It was pointed out that individuals had made contributions to the Club's Special Projects Fund and sponsored the Bird Race, on the understanding that the proceeds would go towards the purchase of Moss Side. It was agreed that these sponsors would be able to reclaim their contributions from the Club. It was agreed that any funds remaining should be retained by the Club for the future up keep of the 'Free' part of the site.

2) Rossall Point Coast Guards Tower

The Chairman reported that Wyre Borough Council had allocated £2500 to spend on the building and refurbishment work had started today. Amongst the planned works was the re-glazing of the windows in polycarbonate, re-decoration restoration of the electrical supply; and provision of a rainwater fed system to service the toilet. The work is anticipated to take two to three weeks after which it will be handed over to Wyre Countryside Service. Arrangements for key holders had yet to be agreed but the Chairman stressed that Fylde Bird Club would be involved in the running and promotion of the facility.

Announcements

- 1) There would be a Fylde Bird Club/ Wyre Borough Council guided walk at Carr House Green Common tomorrow night at 7.00pm.
- 2) The Treasurer requested members to forward monies raised during the Bird Race.
- 3) The proposed trip by the local RSPB group to the Rutland Bird Fair has been cancelled.
- 4) The date of the next meeting was the 29th August, when Maurice Jones would present a talk on the changing status of Lancashire's Birds.

Any Other Business

1) Attendance at Club Meetings by Non Members

Alan Hinchliffe noted that there were instances of individuals who regularly attended Club meetings over periods of many months but who never paid their subscriptions. He suggested that after March if anyone had not paid up and continued to attend meetings then they should be asked to pay up or leave. It was agreed that while it was Club policy to allow prospective new members to attend several meetings before deciding on whether to join, the Club should not tolerate individuals who abused this policy. The Chairman offered to speak to such individuals if the situation arose again. Pauline McGough offered to provide a reminder on membership subs. for inclusion in the newsletter.

2) Tape Luring

Steven Dunstan raised the issue of tape luring of birds. He stated that he had heard reports that Club members had recently been tape luring Quail Over Wyre and that he considered this practice to be unacceptable. Steven stated that the Club should take a line on this subject. The Chairman asked how the Club could do this. Steven replied that an article should appear in the Newsletter. The question of whether the activity was illegal was raised. Don Rusling proposed that the matter should be put on the AGM agenda and this was agreed.

3) Caravan Site at Willow Green

Alan Stamford reported that the owners of this site had forbidden people to feed the wildfowl on the site's pond and had destroyed nests with eggs. The Chairman advised Alan to inform the RSPCA and the Environment Agency. As there is no public access to the site, there was little Club members could do to collect evidence of persecution to any protected species which may have been affected.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 8:44 pm.