



**Fylde
Bird Club**

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FYLDE BIRD CLUB NEWSLETTER

FEBRUARY 1998

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

FROM THE CHAIR

By now you will have read our 1998 meetings programme and I am sure you will approve of it. Dave works hard putting it together, hoping you will find it interesting. At our next committee meeting we will be discussing the 1999 programme; as you know, outside speakers need to be contacted well in advance. We have to remember that the programme is yours and we would welcome your suggestions.

Do you want more speakers, more identification features, are the migration reviews useful? Please let us have your ideas as soon as possible. Talking about ideas, Alan still needs copy for the newsletter, like the programme it is your newsletter. Alan just has the job of producing it! What would you like including in it? Thanks in advance for the deluge of suggestions. It will be mid February when you read this, looking forward to the spring migration. Please record your sightings for our recent reports and the review of spring at our July meeting.

LGB

FROM THE EDITOR

Twelve months have passed since I took over production of the newsletter from Alan Dawe. I took over with some enthusiasm, several new ideas having been put forward for inclusion. These were duly introduced i.e the inclusion of business meeting minutes, committee meeting minutes, site guides and more members articles and views.

Some members responded to the call for articles and the odd new member has made a valuable contribution. Many thanks to them. However, I cannot help feeling that members can contribute a great deal more to the newsletter.

Articles of a light hearted nature, accounts of birding trips, controversial views; all would be very welcome, and are urgently needed if the newsletter is not to lapse into just a record of recent sightings. Please don't take this to mean that your sightings are not wanted. Indeed many thanks to those who contribute regularly, but now that the newsletter is published 4 times a year I like to think that it should be bulging with all sorts of interesting stories and articles.

So come on – it's your newsletter. It's only as good (or bad) as you care to make it – put pen to paper and **CONTRIBUTE.**

AJH

RECENT REPORTS

October Sightings

The first week of the month was very mild but then the weather returned to normal with low pressure and strong westerly and south westerly winds dominating. High pressure arrived again mid month with strong easterly winds for a time. Settled conditions remained until the month end with the odd overnight frost.

Marton Mere played host to a Black-necked Grebe on the 15th and 16th with a Slavonian Grebe there on the 31st. Three Whooper Swans moved south over the Mere on the 12th with 7 on the 13th. Small numbers continued to be seen at and over the site all month together with the odd Bewick's. A good number of Pink-feet were Over Wyre for the time of year with 4,000 at Bond's Farm on the 15th. A Red-breasted Merganser was seen most days from the 16th to the 21st at the Mere. Three Scaup were there on the 6th, a pair of Gadwall until the 18th, 6 Wigeon on the 21st, whilst the Shoveller count peaked at 97 on the 27th. A Water Rail was present in early October.

Few waders sightings were reported but a Ruff on the CEGB pool at Fleetwood on the 1st was noteworthy. On the 3rd 104 Grey Plover were at Fairhaven and on the 4th 105 Black-tailed Godwits were at Stanah. Woodcock were noted at Marton Mere with one on the 18th and 23rd and 2 on the 21st. A Stock Dove over LSANR on the 29th was an unusual record. A number of Mediterranean Gulls were seen throughout the month, mostly at the Mere. These were mostly singles but 2 were there on the 24th. At Rossall an adult Mediterranean Gull was seen on the 4th and a 1st winter Little Gull was seen on the 11th.

Short-eared Owls returned to Marton Mere during the month with one seen intermittently from the 12th to the 25th and 2 on the 15th. A Barn Owl was seen at the site on the 20th and 21st. A Kingfisher was noted on the 12th and late Swallows on the 12th and 13th, with the last at the Mere on the 24th. A Peregrine was seen on a number of dates eating pigeons in the East Field. A good record was 3 Buzzards in the East Field on the 5th.

Six Grey Wagtails were together at the Mere on the 4th with several others on passage and a Rock Pipit was noted on the 24th. On the 1st a Whinchat was at LSANR, whilst Ed Stirling returned to form with a Barred Warbler found at the Railway bushes behind the Pleasure Beach which remained until the 12th. A Whitethroat was noted at the same site on the 3rd, whilst on the same date a male Redstart was at Jameson Road, Fleetwood. Stonechat were present at the Mere on the 5th and 6th with up to 3 regularly from the 18th, and at LSANR on the 22nd. Thrushes began to appear with 42 Fieldfare going south over Fairhaven on the 21st and 20 going south east at Marton Mere on the 8th. Smaller numbers were noted throughout the month together with 9 Redwing at the Mere on the 12th. A Ring Ouzel was also at the Mere on the 18th. A few Warblers were noted, mainly at the Mere, with Reed Warbler there up to the 19th, Chiffchaff to the 12th, and 3 Blackcaps on the 3rd with one up to the 13th. A Black Redstart was at Rossall early in the month.

A late breeding record was a Dunnock at the Mere on the 7th with recently fledged young. 26 Goldcrests and 2 Brambling were at Fluke Hall on the 5th with 20 Goldfinches at LSANR on the 28th. At the the Mere 3 Siskin were present on the 18th with 6 on the 20th. Also on the 20th 2 Redpoll were going south at the Mere with one on the 28th. Up to 1,000 Starlings were also roosting at the site. The 24th saw 4 Jays in the North hedgerow on the Golf Course at the Mere, further indication of the spread of this species in our area.

November Sightings

The weather was generally unsettled with low pressure systems dominating giving south easterly airstreams for the first part of the month and southerlies later. Numerous belts of rain swept the country but temperatures were generally extremely mild.

On the 30th 16 Red-throated Divers were off South Promenade. On the 28th 21 Red-breasted Mergansers were on Fleetwood Marine Lake whilst 2 Slavonian Grebes were off Rossall on the 17th. A Black-necked Grebe was again at the Mere on the 30th when there were also 3 female Goosander and 2 Bewick's Swans on the water. Shoveler numbers peaked there at 109 on the 11th whilst on the 19th 350+ Teal were present together with 4 Wigeon. On the 21st 4 Pintail were noted. 500 Common Scoter were off South Promenade on the 30th together with 135 Pintail flying north and 4 Scaup. At Rossall a female/immature Long-tailed Duck was present on the 8th when an immature Bewick's Swan moved south on the same date. Also on the 18th 600 Pink-feet were viewable on fields at Fleetwood from Westbourne Road tram shelter. Small parties of Whooper Swans were noted flying over the Mere on various dates in the first part of the month.

At the Mere, a Peregrine was noted on the 9th and a Merlin on the 15th with a Water Rail present there on the 7th. There was also a Water Rail at Stanah on the 12th. A Ruff was at the Mere on the 3rd whilst a Ringed Plover flew east there on the 7th. On the 16th 138 Oystercatchers were on Pontins roof, with 205 Bar-tailed Godwits, 230 Knot, 1,020 Dunlin, 43 Grey Plover, 1 Turnstone and 1 Ringed Plover on St Annes Beach. A Woodcock was present at the Mere on the 7th and the 16th with a Great Spotted Woodpecker reported at the same site on the 6th and 7th. Mediterranean Gulls were present there on the 3rd, 5th and 6th along with 450 Common Gulls on the latter date. A Barn Owl was in the area around The Nook on the 12th whilst a Short-eared Owl was noted on the Mere in the first part of the month. A very late record was of a Swallow over Rossall on the 13th, whilst a Tree Sparrow flew in off the sea there on the 11th. 3 Rock Pipits were present at Stanah on the 12th.

On the 1st of the month Ed Stirling struck again, falling over a Pallas's Warbler at Central Car Park, Blackpool. Male and female Blackcaps were noted at the Mere on a few dates early in the month whilst a pair of Stonechats were present on the 21st with 5 there on the 25th. 3 Goldcrests were at Stanah on the 3rd whilst at the Mere up to 7 Redpolls were seen to the 13th.

December Sightings

The month was dominated by a constant series of Atlantic depressions with some gale force winds and frequent belts of rain. Temperatures were very mild except for a brief spell of cold easterlies mid month.

On the 3rd 8 Great-crested Grebes and 19 Red-throated Divers were off Rossall with 10 Red-throats there on the 13th. 7 Red-breasted Mergansers were at Stanah on the 24th, whilst 5 Goosanders were on the Mere on the 6th, 2 on the 19th and 3 there on the 26th/27th. Two Bitterns were present there on the 17th and on various dates later in the month. On the 3rd 185 Common Scoter were off South Promenade, 137 Eider off Rossall and 13 Goldeneye on Fleetwood Marine Lake. 3 Whooper Swans were at Rossall on the 4th and 2 were on the Mere on

the 13th. Roosts of Bewick's were reported on the Mere on various dates, with the maximum reported being 27 on the 21st. 120 Bewick's were reported at Longton Marsh on the 15th whilst on the 21st 200 Bewick's and 60 Whoopers were at Freckleton. 10 Whooper were on Cockerham Moss on the 23rd whilst a Gadwall was on Fleetwood Marine Lake on the 30th. A Scaup was off South Promenade on the 7th and a female Smew was found on the Mere on the 19th remaining all month.

A Merlin was at the Mere on the 23rd whilst a Peregrine was seen to take a Teal on the 25th. It was also present on the 29th. A female Merlin was at Lane Ends on the 12th whilst a good record was of a Common Buzzard on the 26th at Preston New Road opposite Wyrevale Garden Centre.

Another good record was of a Little Auk flying north at Rossall on the 3rd. On the Wader count at St Annes Beach on the 14th 970 Oystercatchers, 209 Grey Plover, 68 Bar-tailed Godwits, 335 Sanderling, 62 Knot, 950 Dunlins and 18 Ringed Plover were present. A large flock of Lapwings of 5,000+ were at Longton Marsh on the 15th whilst at the Mere a Jack Snipe was present on the 17th with a Woodcock there on the 20th. On the 24th 12 Grey Partridge were noted on the Golf Course at Heron's Reach.

An adult Mediterranean Gull was reported at the Mere on the 31st whilst on the 25th 2 or 3 Kittiwakes had been storm driven to the same site. A Little Owl was present on the old Home opposite LSANR on various dates early in the month, whilst the Black Redstart was reported there up to the 14th. Two Stonechats were at the Mere from the 19th with 3 there on the 29th. An uncommon record was of 11 Long-tailed Tits there on the 21st and 25th with at least 8 still present at the year's end. At least 3 Snow Buntings were present at Fairhaven on the 1st to the 9th and again on the 21st. 3 were also present on the beach near Fleetwood Marine Lake on the 3rd. A good flock of 80 Twite frequented the area between Lane Ends and the River Cocker on the 14th, whilst 200 Chaffinch were at Bank Lane, Warton on the 15th. 6 Redpoll flew south at the Mere on the 20th and a pair of Bullfinch were present at Ribby Hall in late December. 200 Magpies roosted at Blackpool Zoo on the 13th.

ALTERNATIVE FYLDE BIRD RACE – ISLAY 4TH MAY 1997

Arrived on the island at 8pm the previous day. We had never been before, so the only knowledge we had was from 'Where to Watch Birds in Scotland', the last 'British Breeding Atlas' and an O.S map.

The island is famous for its wintering birds – up to 50,000 can be seen, 70% of which will be Geese. By late spring about half of this amount are present, 60% of which are Fulmar and Auk species. In early May there are still a few Divers, Geese and Scaup around, plus you get the spring passage and summer visitors coming in. Over 100 species are present on every day of the year, about 105 breed, and at least 265 have been recorded in all.

On the first night we just had time to pitch the tent at Kintra and grab a fish and chip supper in Port Ellen. The ferry crossing had been excellent - over 30 Great Northern Divers were still present, mostly near the mainland, plus lots of Razorbill and Guillemot nearer to Islay.

The following morning we were all set for the Bird Race and the weather was wonderful. First birds of the day were a Great Northern Diver, Waders and Twite before leaving the campsite. Just down the road Short-eared Owl and a superb male Hen Harrier were next. After adding reeling Grasshopper Warblers, a migrant Redstart and plenty of Rock Doves we entered Bridgend Woods. The expected woodland species were seen, a pair of Grey Wagtails nest building by the stream and a Turtle Dove! On to Port Askaig, where the delightful Black Guillemots are just a few feet away and the only Cuckoo of our visit was heard. Loch Ballygrant was very quiet except for one Wood Warbler. By early afternoon we had explored around the head of Loch Indaal and the north west part of the island. Nearly 90 species had already been seen including Golden Eagle, Chough, Terns, most of the seabirds and Waders, and a Ruddy Shelduck.

BEST LAID PLANS AND ALL THAT – disaster struck. The heavens opened without warning, so we decided to have a break at Loch Gorm. On arrival, in heavy rain, we hadn't noticed the overgrown ditch lurking by the track! When Michael moved the car round later one of the back wheels found this ditch, which left the car rocking. Michael, being a resourceful type, set about the problem with a piece of wood and some large cattle feed bags that were lying around. Whilst he put his weight on the front end I was under instruction in the driving seat. Unfortunately, with not being a driver, I was revving too hard and worked the clutch wrongly. There was mud, gravel and very bad language everywhere – the engine (and myself) ended up in grave danger of "Don't panic" I said – "We're in the middle of nowhere" he said – "We passed a farm on the way here" I said. Fortunately, not only was this farm only 15 minutes walk away and the rain had now stopped, there was someone in!. He was the friendliest, most obliging farmer we could ever wish to meet. Time ticked away though, as he found a "tow rope", then decided he had a better one somewhere – "I'm sure I only saw it the

other day". His six dogs were very intrigued at the sight of us stood politely outside and their master rummaging around in the barn. By the time we were ready to go they were very excited by the prospect of a big adventure, so all nine of us piled into the Land Rover. On arrival he took one look at the car's predicament and said something like "Oh dear, I wish I had brought the tractor". The rope was put in place and, while a decision was made on the right direction to pull, the dogs had great fun jumping back and forth over the rope. Despite the doubts the car came out straight away. No sooner had we given many thanks the Magnificent Seven were on their way.

The weather conditions for the rest of the day fluctuated wildly between fine, windy and torrential downpours. We managed a mini-seawatch, adding Red-throated Diver and Manx Shearwater, then most of the Wildfowl at RSPB Gruinart. We hadn't been east of Port Ellen to Claggain Bay or managed the Rhinns – so despite all the problems and a meagre diet we clocked up the magical 100. More than 20 other species were possible though.

The end of an eventful day found us looking forward to a good nights sleep. Have you ever woke up in the middle of the night with a numb arm or leg? How about a numb head! The coldest northerly wind I have ever experienced whilst camping was going right through the tent – even the flask in the rucksack had cold water next morning. Michael, though, had been oblivious to all this – well, you know what they say!

We stayed on the island till the Tuesday, adding more species including Arctic Skua, more raptors and six lovely Brent Geese by the road at Bruichladdich. Alas, only the odd Corncrake was about and were not obliging us. The Islay Wildlife Information Centre at Port Charlotte is well worth visiting. There are excellent displays covering all aspects of the island's natural history, and the staff are very helpful. Malcolm Ogilvie's booklet, 'The Birds of Islay', is also excellent.

We thoroughly enjoyed our visit to Islay and would recommend it to anyone. This, of course, was only the start of our 10 day trip. Unknown to Michael, I had plenty more adventures for him, but that's another story(s).

Pauline McGough

Divers <i>Gaviidae</i>	Osprey <i>Pandionidae</i>	Terns <i>Sternae</i>	Warblers <i>Sylviidae</i>
Red-throated Diver	Osprey	*Gull-billed Tern	Cetti's Warbler
Black-throated Diver		*Caspian Tern	Grasshopper Warbler
Great Northern Diver	Falcons <i>Falconidae</i>	Sandwich Tern	Savi's Warbler
*White-billed Diver	Kestrel	Roseate Tern	Aquatic Warbler
Grebes <i>Podicipedidae</i>	*Red-footed Falcon	Common Tern	Sedge Warbler
Little Grebe	Merlin	Arctic Tern	Marsh Warbler
Great Crested Grebe	Hobby	Little Tern	Reed Warbler
Red-necked Grebe	*Gyr Falcon	*Whiskered Tern	*Great Reed Warbler
Slavonian Grebe	Peregrine	Black Tern	Icterine Warbler
Black-necked Grebe	Grouse <i>Tetraonidae</i>	*White-winged Black Tern	Melodious Warbler
Petrels, shearwaters <i>Procellariidae</i>	Red Grouse	Auks <i>Alcidae</i>	Dartford Warbler
Fulmar	Ptarmigan	Guillemot	*Subalpine Warbler
Cory's Shearwater	Black Grouse	Razorbill	Barred Warbler
Great Shearwater	Capercaillie	Black Guillemot	Lesser Whitethroat
Sooty Shearwater	Partridges, pheasants <i>Phasianidae</i>	Little Auk	Whitethroat
Manx Shearwater	Red-legged Partridge	Puffin	Garden Warbler
*Little Shearwater	Grey Partridge	Doves, pigeons <i>Columbidae</i>	Blackcap
Storm petrels <i>Hydrobatidae</i>	Quail	Rock Dove	*Greenish Warbler
*Wilson's Petrel	Pheasant	Stock Dove	*Arctic Warbler
Storm Petrel	Golden Pheasant	Woodpigeon	Pallas's Warbler
Leach's Petrel	Lady Amherst's Pheasant	Collared Dove	Yellow-browed Warbler
Gannets <i>Sulidae</i>	Rails, crakes, coots <i>Rallidae</i>	Turtle Dove	*Radde's Warbler
Gannet	Water Rail	Parakeets <i>Psittacidae</i>	*Dusky Warbler
Cormorants <i>Phalacrocoracidae</i>	Spotted Crake	Ring-necked Parakeet	*Bonelli's Warbler
Cormorant	Corncrake	Cuckoos <i>Cuculidae</i>	Wood Warbler
Shag	Moorhen	Cuckoo	Chiffchaff
Herons, bitterns <i>Ardeidae</i>	Coot	Barn owls <i>Tytonidae</i>	Willow Warbler
Bittern	Cranes <i>Gruidae</i>	Barn owl	Goldcrest
*Little Bittern	Crane	Owls <i>Strigidae</i>	Flycatchers <i>Muscicapidae</i>
*Night Heron	Oystercatchers <i>Haematopodidae</i>	*Snowy Owl	Spotted Flycatcher
*Cattle Egret	Oystercatcher	Little Owl	Red-breasted Flycatcher
Little Egret	Avocets, stilts <i>Recurvirostridae</i>	Tawny Owl	Pied Flycatcher
Grey Heron	*Black-winged Stilt	Long-eared Owl	Babblers <i>Timaliidae</i>
Purple Heron	Avocet	Short-eared Owl	Bearded Tit
Storks <i>Ciconiidae</i>	Thick-knees <i>Burhinidae</i>	Nightjars <i>Caprimulgidae</i>	Long-tailed tits <i>Aegithalidae</i>
*Black Stork	Stone-curlew	Nightjar	Long-tailed Tit
White Stork	Plovers <i>Charadriidae</i>	Swifts <i>Apodidae</i>	Tits <i>Paridae</i>
Ibises, spoonbills <i>Threskiornithidae</i>	Little Ringed Plover	Swift	Marsh Tit
*Glossy Ibis	Ringed Plover	*Alpine Swift	Willow Tit
Spoonbill	Kentish Plover	Kingfishers <i>Alcedinidae</i>	Crested Tit
Geese, swans, ducks <i>Anatidae</i>	Dotterel	Kingfisher	Coal Tit
Mute Swan	*American Golden Plover	Bee-eaters <i>Meropidae</i>	Blue Tit
Bewick's Swan	Golden Plover	Bee-eater	Great Tit
Whooper Swan	Grey Plover	Rollers <i>Coraciidae</i>	Nuthatches <i>Sittidae</i>
Bean Goose	Lapwing	*Roller	Nuthatch
Pink-footed Goose	Snipe, curlews, godwits, sandpipers <i>Scolopacidae</i>	Hoopoes <i>Upupidae</i>	Treecreepers <i>Certhiidae</i>
White-fronted Goose	Knot	Hoopoe	Tree creeper
*Lesser White-fronted Goose	Sanderling	Woodpeckers <i>Picidae</i>	Orioles <i>Oriolidae</i>
Greylag Goose	*Semipalmated Sandpiper	Wryneck	Golden Oriole
Snow Goose	Little Stint	Green Woodpecker	Shrikes <i>Laniidae</i>
Canada Goose	Temminck's Stint	Great Spotted Woodpecker	Red-backed Shrike
Barnacle Goose	*White-rumped Sandpiper	Lesser Spotted Woodpecker	*Lesser Grey Shrike
Brent Goose	*Baird's Sandpiper	Swallow	Great Grey Shrike
Egyptian Goose	Pectoral Sandpiper	House Martin	Woodchat Shrike
Ruddy Shelduck	Curlew Sandpiper	Pipits, wagtails <i>Motacillidae</i>	Crows <i>Corvidae</i>
Shelduck	Purple Sandpiper	Richard's Pipit	Jay
Mandarin	Dunlin	Tawny Pipit	Magpie
Wigeon	*Broad-billed Sandpiper	*Olive-backed Pipit	*Nuthacker
*American Wigeon	Buff-breasted Sandpiper	Tree Pipit	Chough
Gadwall	Ruff	Meadow Pipit	Jackdaw
Teal	Jack Snipe	*Red-throated Pipit	Rook
Mallard	Snipe	Rock Pipit	Carrion Crow (MOOD)
Pintail	*Great Snipe	Water Pipit	Raven
Garganey	*Long-billed Dowitcher	Yellow Wagtail	Starlings <i>Sturnidae</i>
*Blue-winged Teal	Woodcock	*Citrine Wagtail	Starling
Shoveler	Black-tailed Godwit	Grey Wagtail	*Rose-coloured Starling
Red-crested Pochard	Bar-tailed Godwit	Pied Wagtail	Sparrows <i>Passeridae</i>
Pochard	Whimbrel	Waxwings <i>Bombycillidae</i>	House Sparrow
Ring-necked Duck	Curlew	Waxwing	Tree Sparrow
Ferruginous Duck	Spotted Redshank	Dippers <i>Cinclidae</i>	Vireos <i>Vireonidae</i>
Tufted Duck	Redshank	Dipper	*Red-eyed Vireo
Scaup	*Marsh Sandpiper	Wrens <i>Troglodytidae</i>	Finches <i>Fringillidae</i>
Eider	Greenshank	Wren	Chaffinch
*King Eider	*Lesser Yellowlegs	Accentors <i>Prunellidae</i>	Brambling
Long-tailed Duck	Green Sandpiper	Duncock	Serin
Common Scoter	Wood Sandpiper	Thrushes, chats <i>Turdidae</i>	Greenfinch
Surf Scoter	Common Sandpiper	Robin	Goldfinch
Velvet Scoter	*Spotted Sandpiper	*Thrush Nightingale	Siskin
Goldeneye	Turnstone	Nightingale	Linnet
Smew	*Wilson's Phalarope	Bluthroat	Twite
Red-breasted Merganser	Red-necked Phalarope	Black Redstart	Redpoll
Goosander	Grey Phalarope	Redstart	*Arctic Redpoll
Ruddy Duck	Skuas <i>Stercorariidae</i>	Whinchat	*Two-barred Crossbill
Eagles, buzzards, hawks, kites, harriers <i>Accipitridae</i>	Pomarine Skua	Stonechat	Crossbill
Honey Buzzard	Arctic Skua	Wheatear	Scottish Crossbill
*Black Kite	Long-tailed Skua	Ring Ouzel	*Parrot Crossbill
Red Kite	Great Skua	Blackbird	Scarlet Rosefinch
Marsh Harrier	Gulls <i>Laridae</i>	Fieldfare	Bullfinch
Hen Harrier	Mediterranean Gull	Song Thrush	Hawfinch
Montagu's Harrier	*Laughing Gull	Redwing	Buntings <i>Emberizidae</i>
Goshawk	Little Gull	Mistle Thrush	Lapland Bunting
Sparrowhawk	Sabine's Gull		Snow Bunting
Buzzard	*Bonaparte's Gull		Yellowhammer
Rough-legged Buzzard	Black-headed Gull		Chil Bunting
Golden Eagle	Ring-billed Gull		Ortolan Bunting
	Common Gull		*Rustic Bunting
	Lesser Black-backed Gull		Little Bunting
	Herring Gull		*Yellow-breasted Bunting
	Iceland Gull		Reed Bunting
	Glaucous Gull		*Black-headed Bunting
	Great Black-backed Gull		Corn Bunting
	*Ross's Gull		
	Kitiwake		

BEWICK'S SWANS IN SOUTH FYLDE

A feature of the last couple of years has been increasing numbers of Bewick's Swans in the south of the Fylde, particularly at Marton Mere and especially Freckleton (both the Naze and the old tip). This article is intended to bring this to the attention of members who were unaware or only partly aware of the numbers of birds involved, and describe where to look. Although wild swans cannot be guaranteed at Freckleton they may be present in three figure flocks on many occasions during the winter.

Freckleton

The number of Bewick's Swans at Freckleton vary greatly depending on the time of day you visit, whether they have been flushed off the adjacent Longton Marsh or disturbed from the Naze itself etc. It is almost always the case however that if wild swans are present, except late in the season, then Bewick's Swans will outnumber Whoopers, which may not be present at all. This ties in with the fact that Whoopers use Martin Mere and vicinity for feeding as well as roosting more than Bewick's do, the latter dispersing to the Ribble Marshes.

Counts at Freckleton may be very substantial. The highest number of Bewick's I have seen was circa 200 last December, however this was clearly the result of temporary displacement of birds off Longton Marsh. I have made a handful of counts of over 100 Bewick's around the Naze Pool however, despite my visits to the site being relatively infrequent over the winter period. The farmer at Naze Point has apparently seen over 500 wild swans, presumably mostly Bewick's, at the Naze earlier this winter.

Neck collared birds are very regular at Freckleton. These can be much more easy to read than Darvic leg rings; for example with persistence I have been able to get neck collar readings of birds in the field beyond the Naze Pool (looking from the elevated path) whereas I cannot read Darvic rings on birds even when they are stood in front of the pool.

Neck collars are a rather controversial area of swan research. The Bewick's Swans at Freckleton with neck collars have all been ringed by Dutch researchers in the Pechora area of Russia. British scientists working in this area are against using such neck collars as they believe they have evidence that they hinder bird's feeding (Charlie Liggett, pers comm). However once a neck collar has been put on a bird it is clearly important that as many sightings as possible are obtained in the limited lifespan of the ring. For example I saw a bird at Freckleton this December which appeared to have a completely blank neck collar. From discussion with Charlie Liggett it transpired that this Darvic ring (192P) was four years old, and had become so worn that it could only be read at close quarters.

If you see a neck collared Bewick on the Fylde make sure you take the details down, I will gladly pass them on to the Wildfowl Trust if people would prefer. Similarly if you see any Darvic ringed birds in feeding flocks, particularly away from Over Wyre, then try and make sure you submit them. The neck collars are normally blue, with three numbers and a letter, but may be yellow so it is important to note the colour. With Darvic leg rings always make sure you note the colour as well as the sequence, and ensure you have read the sequence the 'right way round'.

Marton Mere

When good numbers of Bewick's Swans began to come in to roost at the mere several of us who saw them speculated that they were from the group at Freckleton. This now appears unlikely.

As described elsewhere in this article there are a number of neck collared birds occurring regularly at Freckleton. If birds from the north Ribble were roosting on the mere then the law of averages suggests some of these neck collared birds would be recorded, in fact at the time of writing no neck collared birds have been recorded on the mere in either of the last two years.

In addition my own experience of birds at Freckleton, including observations at dusk, has never included birds moving off inland. All movements of birds at the Naze have been to and from the south Ribble Marshes and Martin Mere WWT.

The birds at the mere thus seem most likely to feed on the Fylde. Chris Batty has suggested that the Bewick's Swans feeding on Over Wyre have possibly changed roost site to the mere. This ties in with an observation last year of what was obviously the 'mere flock' feeding near Singleton crossroads, on a flight line with the Over Wyre feeding grounds.

I am not aware of any ringing recoveries from the swans at the mere, hopefully some will be obtained this winter. Per Chris Batty ringing recoveries by Bob Danson and himself showed that birds feeding on Over Wyre were not roosting at Martin Mere WWT. It will be interesting to see if the same applies with the birds turning up at the mere. There have certainly been birds with Darvic leg rings at the site in both the last winters, they are only likely to be readable though if the birds are stood on any ice when the mere is frozen.

Additional - on 16 January Dave McGrath recorded neck collared swans 807P and 192P, the Freckleton birds above, in a group of 52 Bewick's which came in to roost at the mere. The obvious conclusion to draw is that they had flown in to roost from Freckleton. On 17th and 18th January 807P was in flock of 47 and 48 birds respectively on the mere, which like the records earlier in the winter appeared to come in from the north-east. From discussion with Charlie Liggett at Martin Mere it transpires that a large number of Bewick's had vacated the Ribble estuary in recent weeks, presumably to feed on flooded fields. It thus seems likely that the birds which have been visiting the Mere in January, if not the earlier ones, have been on undiscovered feeding sites on the Fylde. Some of the earlier groups were seen feeding on pasture beside the M55 on occasion, and similar habitat exists in many places less well-viewed.

Stephen Dunstan



**Fylde
Bird Club**
LANCASHIRE

FYLDE BIRD CLUB COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT 8:10 PM ON WEDNESDAY THE 12TH OF DECEMBER AT THE PLOUGH AT STAINING

PRESENT

Chairman; Secretary; Treasurer; Paul Slade; Andrew Cadman; Alan Dawe and Dave Pitman.
Apologies were received from Alan Hinchliffe.

MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the previous meeting held on the 24th of September were approved and used as the agenda for this meeting.

MATTERS ARISING

1) Breeding Birds Survey

Andrew Cadnam agreed to hand over data to Stephan Dunstan at the AGM to allow the task to progress.

Action : Andrew Cadman

2) Marion Mere

The Chairman and Secretary reported from the recent Marion Mere Management Committee Meeting. Blackpool Council had stated that planning permission would not be forthcoming for a permanent structure on the south bank of the Mere owing to its former use as a tip. The perceived problem is that of methane gas entrapment. Clearly this presents an obstacle to the membership's wish to see a substantial hide built on the Caravan site side of the Mere. The Council officers agreed to investigate the issue of planning permission further, to determine what criteria would need to be satisfied. The Council Officers announced that a replacement hide similar to the one which was destroyed by arson would shortly be delivered to the site.

It was proposed that the Volunteer Wardens should have a representative on the management committee and this was agreed.

The Bye Laws were said to be approved and that remained to allow them to come into force was for copies to be displayed at the access points to the site.

5) New Club Car Sticker

Paul Slade reported that he had obtained a price of £250 for 500 three inch diameter two colour stickers, however the minimum order size was 500. It was agreed that the minimum quantity was far too large. The meeting agreed that the procurement should be pursued and Paul Slade agreed to look for a better offer.

Action: Paul Slade

6) Newsletter Copy

A site guide for the Bank Lane area had still not been procured.

Action continuing: Dave Pitman

7) Fylde Bird Club Rarities Committee

Dave Pitman proposed to call a meeting of the Rarities Committee on the 12/1/98 at Blackpool Cricket Club to discuss the content of the proposed newsletter article on rarity recording. This was agreed by those members of the RC who were present. A revamped Rarities Recording Form had not yet been produced.

**Actions continuing: Dave Pitman to call Rarities Committee Meeting and to produce Rarities Form Specification.
Treasurer to produce new Rarities Recording Form.**

8) Newton Marsh

The Secretary reported that he had written to the local naturalist who had offered to supply important records of breeding birds but that he had received no reply. He also reported that he had attempted to contact him by telephone but that the number was no longer in use. Action closed.

The Treasurer suggested that there were other local birders who should have a wealth of breeding bird records for Newton Marsh. The Secretary replied that he too had assumed this but had been assured that all records had been passed to Maurice Jones, however Maurice had no significant records of breeding birds from the site.

The Treasurer offered to speak to individuals who may still have useful data.

Action : Treasurer to secure breeding bird records.

9) Proposed Wildfowl Reserve Over Wyre

The Secretary reported that he not contacted the RSPB since the last meeting. (The RSPB's initial response was that land ownership was not the way to conserve geese). The Secretary offered to secure a formal response from the RSPB's on the concept of a refuge.

Action continuing : Secretary to contact to the RSPB

10) Bird Report

The Secretary announced that Kinta Beaver had been progressing well with the task of typing up the 1996 Bird Report and that the draft was now back with the editors for proof reading and resolution of a few queries. An editorial and copies of the site guides for inclusion were still required.

The Secretary stated that Kinta had offered to collate all the raw data for the 1997 Bird Report. The intention was to input all the year's records into the Bird Recorder Database program, which would automatically sort the data by species; location and date. This collated data would then be printed out and passed to the editors for their use. It was anticipated that this approach would greatly reduce the time taken to prepare the report. Providing contributors submitted their records before the end of February then the collated data should be available during April and the report could be published before mid year.

The Chairman offered to perform the task of editor and to divide the editing of the report between several sub editors. Alan Dawe agreed to cover seabirds, Paul Slade agreed to cover passerines and the Secretary agreed to cover freshwater wildfowl.

The content of the report was discussed and it was agreed that detailed articles on specific subjects should be included whenever available. The Ribble whimbrel roost, Rossall Coasts

Guards and the pinkfeet Over Wyre were given as examples. It was agreed that a column on how to report a rarity, written by Dave Pitman, could also be included. A review of Marton Mere was not considered suitable as the site had its own annual report. It was agreed that all the site guides we had should be included.

The Chairman stated that he received few records from South Fylde and the Ribble. The Treasurer offered to send copies of wader and wildfowl counts to the Chairman on an ongoing basis.

The Secretary stated that he had sent a copy of the '95 issue to the BTO for review.

The Treasurer noted that Wyre Borough Council had not yet paid for their advertisement in the last Bird Report. The Secretary stated that he had invoiced them months ago and agreed to pursue the matter.

Actions: Chairman to co-ordinate completion of the 1997 Bird Report and to act as Chief Editor for the 1997 Bird Report.
Secretary to remind WBC about payment for advertising.

11) Special Projects

The Chairman reported from the results of canvassing members about potential uses for the Club's Special Projects Fund. The results were as follows:

- a) Contributions to Woodland and/or Hedgerow regeneration projects. — **Unpopular.**
- b) Production of an updated published list of He the Birds of the Fylde. — **Unpopular**
- c) Establishment of a Bird Book Library for use by the membership. — **Unpopular**
- d) Sponsorship, (including organisation and provision of prizes) of some of Environmental Competition for local schools. — **Unpopular**
- e) Provision of Sign Boards for Marton Mere. — **Unpopular**
- f) Establishment of a Wader Scrape with Hide in co-operation with a willing landowner, possibly Over Wyre or on the Ribble. — **Very Popular**

Paul Slade reported that he had made an approach regarding the possibility of establishing a site on the Ribble and that the idea may have a future, He stated however that from the landowners side, the subject was very sensitive and it would be best not to make the proposal public yet. However the offer of Bird Club money and the idea of public involvement seemed to be important. It was agreed that the Secretary should write a carefully worded letter to a contact and see where it led. It was questioned whether it was worth pursuing a similar scheme Over Wyre but eventually agreed that we should investigate both sites in case one failed to materialise. The Chairman agreed to pursue the possibility of such a scheme at a site Over Wyre.

The Chairman suggested that the Club might wish to consider purchasing Display Boards for promotion of the Club. The cost would be around £500. The committee felt that this seemed a lot of money and that the possibility of obtaining second hand items should be explored. The possibility of co-operating with other bodies, in their procurement and use, such as LWT, Marton Mere LNR and the Lancs Bird Club was also raised. It was agreed that the idea should be put to the membership.

Actions: Chairman and Secretary.

12) Planning Application at College Farm Cleveleys

The Secretary produced a newspaper cutting detailing plans to build houses on part of the land used by geese between Blackpool and Fleetwood. All were agreed that the Club should oppose the plan and the Secretary was actioned to write to the Chief Planning Officer.

Action: Secretary.

13) 1998 Meeting Programme

Dave Pitman presented a draft programme for 1998, which was agreed. Dave agreed to arrange to produce typed up copies for distribution at the AGM.

Action: Dave Pitman.

14) Friends of Marton Mere

The Chairman announced that Phil Tomkinson had offered to donate a framed photograph as a prize for the raffle at the AGM. He also asked if the Committee would support the idea of allowing the Friends of Marton Mere Group to be given the proceeds from the raffle. The proposal was agreed.

15) 1998 Bird Race

The Chairman announced that the North Fylde YOC Group was attempting to raise £2.5k to fund the provision of an information panel for outside the Rossall Point Coast Guards Tower. In support of this project they were holding a sponsored Abseil on the weekend of 21/22 of March and an event at Stanah. It was proposed that the Bird Club should hold a Bird Race on 22/3/98 with the proceeds going towards this cause. The proposal was agreed.

16) Annual General Meeting

The Chairman, Secretary, Treasurer; Paul Slade Alan Hinchliffe and Dave Pitman all agreed to stand for re-election. Andrew Cadman and Alan Dawe stated that they would not stand for re-election but in the event of no one new coming forward then they would offer to continue to serve.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 11:00 pm.



**Fylde
Bird Club**
LANCASHIRE

FYLDE BIRD CLUB 1997 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT 8:00 PM ON WEDNESDAY
THE 17TH OF DECEMBER AT BLACKPOOL CRICKET CLUB

Present

Chairman; Secretary, Treasurer and 24 members.

Apologies were received from Alan Dawe; Roger Scholes; Peter Scholes; Maurice Jones; Alan Stamford and Harry Andrews.

Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The minutes of the previous meeting held on the 18th December 1996 were read and approved.

Chairman,s Review of the Year

The Chairman made the following address : -

As you know it is time for me to review the past year and look forward to 1998.

I will start by thanking all who have helped the Club during the year.

First many thanks are due to our Secretary Paul for another year's hard work, much of it at very short notice but always to his usual very high standards. On behalf of all of us, many thanks Paul.

I also have to thank our Treasurer Peter for all his work, his report will demonstrate how well he has looked after our money this year. Thanks also to Malcolm Evans for auditing Peter's accounts.

Thanks to Dave Pitman for preparing our meeting programme and Paul Slade for his work on the annual bird report and to Kinta and Paul for their help in producing it.

Thanks to Alan Hinchliffe for producing our newsletter and to Alan Dawe and Stephen Dunstan for their help in producing it.

I must also thank all the committee members for their work during the year. Several individual members have helped us during the year, to all of them, thank you for your help.

We led 6 guided walks attracting 87 people, thank you to all who helped with this important part of our work. Thanks also to those members who attended the St. Micheals Country Show.

I must also thank all of you who supported our annual Bird Race so enthusiastically, unfortunately we couldn't spend the money raised as we intended.

Members continued to support field work, particularly the estuary counts and the new county wide breeding birds survey. During the year we attended 11 meetings with other bodies and were asked to

comment on 5 other issues. We have also been involved with the selection of ornithological sites to be included in the Lancashire Biological County Heritage sites List and contributed to the Morecombe Bay Strategy.

Some of our members were instrumental in forming the Friends of Marton Mere. I would urge you to support this group as it compliments our own efforts on behalf of the Mere.

A good deal of work went unrewarded when the membership decided not to purchase the proposed nature reserve at Moss Side and the refurbished hide at Marton Mere was destroyed by vandals. Our highlight of the year was the successful conversion of the former coast guards tower into the Rossall Birdwatching Centre. I must apologise for the delay in making keys available but access arrangements have been out of my control.

Looking ahead briefly, I can tell you that along with our usual guided walks there will be several birdwatching events at Rossall during the next year and I hope that some of you will be able to support them. A management plan for the Marton Mere Nature Reserve Extension will be produced.

Most of you will be aware that publication of our Annual Bird Report has again been delayed. At our recent Committee meeting we spent a good deal of time discussing the Bird Report and as a result we have completely overhauled the means of writing and producing it and we promise to produce a high quality report much sooner in the future. I have no doubt that you will let us know if we fail to keep that promise.

Finally I must thank you all of you for your continued support and can assure you that the officers and committee of the Fylde Bird Club will continue to work hard on behalf of the birds of the Fylde and their habitats.

Treasurer's Review of the Year

The Treasurer presented the accounts for the previous year which had been audited by Malcolm Evans. The Treasurer's conclusion was the Club's finances were in a healthy position and that no action was required. After removing the effects of extraordinary items he stated that the Club had a running surplus of £93. The donation of £395 was towards for the Ex Coast Guards Tower project. He reported that the membership now stood at 60 having increased from 47 last year.

Treasurer recommended that the membership subscription should remain unchanged at £10 for an ordinary member; £5 for an O.A.P. and £3 for a student. This was agreed.

Frank Walsh complimented the Treasurer on his accounts and then asked about the fate of monies raised for the purchase of land at Moss Side now that the purchase had been cancelled. The Secretary replied that at the Club's July meeting it had been agreed that all contributors could reclaim their donations if they so wished. Any remaining monies would be held to be used for the upkeep of the land which the Builders intended to donate to the Club. The Treasurer noted that might be better if the money raised for Moss Side was held in a separate account.

Alan Hinchliffe pointed out that the revenue from advertising was significantly lower than in the previous year and asked why this was so. The Chairman replied that monies were still owed to the Club from the advertiser who made the largest contribution, however this account was expected to be settled shortly.

The Chairman thanked the Treasurer for his report.

Election of Officers

Chairman : Len Blacow was proposed by Paul Slade and seconded by Don Rusling.
The vote was in favour.

Secretary : Paul Ellis was proposed by Monty Myerscough and seconded by
Dave Pitman.
The vote was in favour.

Treasurer : Peter Bainbridge was proposed by Frank Walsh and seconded by Don Rusling.
The vote was in favour.

Auditor : Malcolm Evans was proposed by Paul Ellis and seconded by Len Blacow.
The vote was in favour.

Committee: Dave Pitman; Alan Hinchliffe and Paul Slade were prepared to stand again.
They were proposed on block by Malcolm Evans and seconded by Frank Walsh
The Vote was in favour.

The Chairman reported that Andrew Cadman and Alan Dawe had decided not to stand for re-election and therefore there were two vacancies. He then invited nominations from the floor.

Mike McGough was proposed by Alan Hinchliffe and seconded by Kinta Beaver.
The Vote was in favour.

Stephan Dunstan was proposed by Mike McGough and seconded by Phil Ashman.
The vote was in favour.

Subscriptions to Outside Bodies

The Treasurers read out the names and subscription costs of the bodies to which the Club had belonged to last year. They were: -

BTO	£19
LWT	£25
Lancashire and Cheshire Fauna Society	£10

Renewed membership of all was proposed by Frank Walsh and seconded by Robert Stinger.
The vote was in favour.

Any Other Business

1) Moss Side

Frank Walsh asked if it was still the intention of Newfield Jones Homes to donate an area of land to the Club. The Secretary replied that they had twice confirmed this intention, during telephone conversations, since the Clubs decision not to proceed with the purchase of additional land. Frank stated that the Club should have called an Extraordinary General Meeting before taking a vote to overturn the purchase decision and recommended that EGMs should be called before any similar decisions are taken in the future. Alan Hinchliffe stated that none present at the meeting which originally voted in favour of proceeding, requested that that an Extraordinary General Meeting should be called.

Malcolm Evans reminded the meeting that the constitution accompanying the Special Projects Fund requires an Extraordinary General Meeting to be called, with 14 days notice, before Special Projects Fund Monies are disposed of. Mike Mc.Gough questioned whether it was reasonable to be required to call a meeting to discuss the use of money which had been raised for a specific purpose.

It was agreed that the club's constitutions should be reviewed at the next AGM.

Mike Mc.Gough asked if the Club was going to find a use for the money which had been collected for the Moss Side project. The Chairman replied that it would be discussed at the February Club Meeting. Andrew Myerscough reminded that meeting that some money would be needed to manage and upkeep the 'Free' area of land.

Frank Walsh proposed a vote of thanks to the officers of the Club, Don Rusling seconded the proposal. The Chairman acknowledged the vote on behalf of the officers.

There being no further AGM business the meeting closed at 8:54 pm.