

FYLDE BIRD CLUB NEWSLETTER

JUNE 2002

Firstly apologies for the lack of the normal artwork on the cover, due to the absence of the Secretary I was unable to include this on this occasion. Normal service will be resumed next time.

The club is still a relatively young organisation, though one with several notable achievements to its name. However the lack of a long history as a club means that many of us are probably unaware of earlier Fylde birders and what they have contributed to our knowledge and understanding. Maurice Jones has provided an account of some of the pioneers of birding in the Fylde, which I am sure you will find enlightening.

The bird race was contested by two teams this year, and proved to be a close run affair with some excellent birds seen and just one species separating the old stagers and new boys. Paul Ellis was to write an account from the winner's perspective, but unfortunately (!) he has been busy birding Alaska so we include some thoughts from the losing team. Thanks to Stuart for his account of the day.

For newer members I have done a short note explaining some of the more unusual waders to be seen during July, with an indication of the best places to look for them.

Recent reports take up a sizeable chunk of this newsletter. I would welcome feedback on how useful these are to members. For those who have access to pagers or the web it is presumably telling them what they already know. Do the rest of you find them useful, the editor is working on the basis that you do but times have changed and it would be good to see what people think.

SD

SOME EARLY FYLDE BIRDWATCHERS

Mitchell's 'The Birds of Lancashire' (1884) records some sources of information from our area. These are:

Hugh P Hornby and James J Hornby	-	Around St Michaels
R Drummond	-	Blackpool
John Hall	-	Nateby
TH Miller	-	Singleton
JA St Clair	-	Blackpool
RH Thompson	-	Lytham

HP Hornby wrote 'The Birds of St Michaels' (1924). Hugh died in 1944 and had established a private museum in the village. This collection was 'lost' in the late 1950s.

Oakes's 'Birds of Lancashire' (1953) acknowledged help in the Fylde region from JR Charnley, who was Hon. Curator of the above museum after the death of its founder.

Oakes also thanks individual field observers from all over Lancashire and the following are those known by me to have been active in the Fylde:

AF Airey; RM Band; GA Bowden; C Carter; J Carter; GH Clarke; N Duerden; T Duerden; A Harrison; N Harwood; JV Morley; D Rusling; WR Scholes; H Shorrocks.

Below I will give brief details of those in this list known to me and of other observers active in our area in the 1950s and 1960s.

AF Airey

Contributed many records to Oakes. I met him a few times, the last being in May 1983 when he was on the Lytham reserve the day I found the Subalpine Warbler - good timing.

RM Band

Was an early bird ringer.

GA Bowden

A colleague of Band and fellow ringer. He was a member of Fylde Bird Club in its early years. Ed Stirling knew him in another capacity as a skilled bandsman.

Stanley Clarke

Stan was a pioneer bird photographer and member and secretary of the Fylde Naturalists Society. He made special studies of sand dune birds, especially Stonechats. He was a piano tuner by trade.

T & N Duerden

Have several records in Oakes, including breeding Long Eared Owls in 'almost every copse Over Wyre' in the 1930s!

Alan Harrison

With Harry Sharrock a pioneer of the old sewage works at Freckleton. Left this area in the 1950s to live in Bristol.

Nelson Harwood

Retired to Lytham St Annes in the early 1950s and was in the field almost daily, visiting especially the Squires Gate to St Annes beach, Freckleton sewage farm, Green Drive / Lytham Hall, Lytham Moss and Marton Mere. He was especially interested in bird song and calls. He died in December 1977.

JV Morley

Victor Morley and his wife were Secretary / Treasurer of the Fylde Naturalists Society into the 1950s. During a long convalescence in 1957 he recorded Lancashire's first Yellow Browed Warbler and a Firecrest in his own St Annes garden! His family earlier farmed at Moss House Lane, Marton with breeding Long Eared Owls (the copse by the M55 roundabout and strip of trees by Whitehills Road pool). In the 1960s he left the area to warden Bridgewater Bay and other reserves in Somerset for the Nature Conservancy before retiring to Taunton. He returned to St Annes after his wife's death c1996.

Don Rusling

Don contributed to Oakes and is still known to us as a member of the club and organiser of North Fylde YOC (Wildlife Explorers).

C & J Carter

The brothers have several records in Oakes and had a house full of taxidermy specimens at Carleton.

WR Scholes

Was a friend of Stanley Clarke and fellow photographer, and a member of Fylde Naturalists Society. They recorded nesting Hawfinch at Lytham Hall in 1953.

Harry Shorrocks

Harry began to visit Freckleton sewage farm in 1946 and continued until its demise in the late 1960s. He can be credited with 'discovering' this superb haunt of rare waders. Latterly he has been active in areas outside the Fylde. Harry is an all-round naturalist of vast experience.

Phillip Thompson

Began to visit Freckleton c1959 with his friend Len Knowles. Both still live in Preston and are knowledgeable all-round naturalists.

Mike Ainscough

Joined the 'Freckleton regulars' a few years after Phillip and Len. Like them he lives in Preston and is a knowledgeable all round naturalist.

David Hindle

In his early years Dave joined Norman Duerden in the Ribble Valley before becoming a Freckleton 'regular' in c1959. He now lives at Grimsargh.

Lawrence Eccles

Lawrence lived in Preston and joined the Freckleton 'regulars' in the 1960s. He was a pioneer of mirror lens photography (Temminck's Stint, White Rumped Sandpiper and Wilson's Phalarope at Freckleton, Shorelark at Fairhaven). A lecturer at Preston Polytechnic, he made extensive studies of Whinchat in Bowland and Stonechat at Heysham. His interest in bird of prey migration took him to Falsterbo in Sweden. It was a great loss to Lancashire ornithology when Lawrence died suddenly in his thirties.

Peter Carah

Peter was Biology master at King Edward School, Fairhaven and bird watched daily in that area, finding many scarce migrants until he retired and left the county c1980. He inspired several students to

take up birding and was a late regular at Freckleton from the mid 1960s.

Keith Hague

Keith was North Lancashire's most active and experienced birder in the late 1950s and 1960s. Although active mostly north of Lancaster / Morecambe he paid visits to North Fylde and the Lune estuary. He now lives in Orkney and is still finding rare birds.

Malcolm Greenhalgh

Malcolm joined the Freckleton 'regulars' c1960 and later did studies of the South Ribble marshes bird populations and contributed papers to the BTO. Latterly he has lived near Wigan and did field and editorial work for the county's new Breeding Bird Atlas.

Arthur Watson

Arthur was originally a farmer and from 1968 the first warden of Lytham St Annes NR. He was known principally in entomological circles for his encyclopaedic knowledge of butterflies and moths, but was an all round naturalist. For many years he was Chairman of the Fylde Naturalists Society, and they have an annual walk at Silverdale in his memory. He died in 1980.

John Morgan

John began birding in North Fylde in the late 1950s whilst a student at Salford Polytechnic (he invited me on their caving trips!). He was an active ringer at sites including Marton Mere. Since leaving the Fylde he has lived in Libya, Canada, Israel (where he was chief ringer at Eilat for several years) and now lives in southern France. He was formerly an active member of Christchurch Harbour Ringing Group.

Kenneth Smith

Ken worked for the Evening Gazette and began birding c1960, making frequent visits to Freckleton, Marton Mere, Scorton area and Leighton Moss. After retiring he moved to Orkney.

Harry Andrews

Harry worked with Ken at the Gazette and like him began frequent visits to Fylde sites, Marton Mere and North Lancs. An all round Naturalist / photographer he has been involved with both the Fylde

Naturalists Society and Fylde Bird Club, both of which he still attends.

Andrew Cadman

Andrew taught at Rossall School where he did a daily bird census for many years. An active ringer he trained several others and rang birds at Marton Mere with John Morgan and others. He was a member of Fylde Bird Club, and latterly Lancaster and District Birdwatching Society. He has helped John Wilson with ringing Bearded Tits at Leighton Moss in recent years and has been active at Heysham.

Derek McCullagh

Derek made very frequent visits to Marton Mere from c1954 until he left to work in London. He again became the Mere's most frequent visitor when he returned to live in Blackpool c1980. Poor health prevented him visiting the Mere after 1993. He made detailed botanical studies of the Mere area in addition to those of birds. He most famously found the American Bittern in 1990 but had found a Little Bittern in August 1956.

Neville Yates

Nev was a Marton Mere regular in the 1950s before medical studies took him away. He had a practice in Formby before emigrating to Australia.

Roy Kendall

Roy also visited the Mere from 1952 but later work as an Air Traffic Controller in RAF and civilian life took him to Dungeness, Norfolk and the North Sea oil rigs before returning to Blackpool and now Pilling. He found the White Stork behind his house there last year and remains a serious racing cyclist - perhaps his main passion despite several accidents!

Douglas Talbot

Doug birded the Fylde (and lots of foreign destinations) in the 1960s and 1970s, mostly Marton Mere, the Over Wyre goose fields and coast. He left the area to work at Alderley Edge and continued his birding at Cheshire sites.

Raymond Wilson

Raymond worked with Ken and Harry at the Gazette and birded mostly Marton Mere, other Fylde sites and Scorton. He heard the Mere's first Bearded Tits in October 1965. He also climbed Cross Fell (with John Morgan and I), the highest of the Pennines, in wellington boots - a two day trip that failed to find Dotterels. Ill health stopped his birding.

Graham Blackwell

Graham joined Ken Smith and soon John Morgan, Andrew Cadman, Harry Shorrocks and I on birding trips in the early 1960s. Trained by John as a ringer he was active at Marton Mere. He became a qualified PE teacher and emigrated to Australia c1980, where he still birds at every opportunity, With Andrew he rang the Mere's first Bearded Tits in winter 1965-66 and 'controlled' a Dutch bird there.

David Shenton

Dave was an early contemporary of Graham, Roy and Neville, visiting especially Marton Mere in the 1950s. He is an all round naturalist / conservationist, work having taken him to North Yorkshire and Central Scotland. In both areas he became involved in reserve management.

And for the sake of completeness...

Maurice Jones

I began birding at Marton Mere in March 1952 and at Freckleton the following October. In autumn I visited the sewage works there twice weekly for c15 years until it was modernised. Having lived for periods at Southport and Preston and now St Annes I have birded most sites in the west of the county. An early interest in plants and butterflies was encouraged by Harry Shorrocks. I have been part time warden of the Lytham St Annes Local NR from 1982 to 2002.

**Maurice Jones
May 2002**

THE 2002 FYLDE BIRD RACE

A few weeks before the 2002 Fylde Bird Club bird race was due to take place, Stephen asked me if I wanted to be on 'his' team. I was chuffed to be asked and almost immediately said yes. Stephen explained to me that all the team would be Fylde bird race 'virgins', and the aim was to take it easy and basically 'have a laugh'... However when Chris's itinerary for the day arrived in my email inbox, about a week before the event, it became apparent that the schedule was a little more intensive than I had anticipated. Chris obviously wanted to win this thing! But there is nothing wrong with that. If we were going to take part, we might as well have aimed to win.

The day (or should that be night?) started with Chris picking me up at my house. We aimed to meet Stephen and Dave outside Stanley Park. By the time we did so, we were already running nearly an hour behind schedule. This was naturally all Chris's fault, according to Stephen and he proclaimed that if we failed to reach even a respectable total, the blame would be placed firmly on Chris's shoulders!

The first target species was Tawny Owl near Stanley Park. Of course, we failed to hear one! So basically we were running very late, we had only 1 species on our list (Singing Blackbird), no one had any previous experience of bird racing in this area and we had dipped on our first target species. So far, so good.

However we resisted the temptation to 'throw in the towel' and crawl back to bed, and gradually our perseverance began to produce the goods, as our list began to look slightly more respectable. By midday the highlights had included 2 Wood Warblers and a load of Lesser Redpolls in Fleetwood, and undoubtedly the highlight of the trip for Stephen and Dave so far, was their first ever trip to the birding Mecca of the Fylde that is Myerscough Quarry! I'm sure that experience will live with them for a long, long time (or not!)

By late afternoon we found ourselves sat on Blackpool sea front, staring desperately at a flat, calm, empty sea. Sea-watching was a perfect and literate description of our activities (or inactivity). This was probably the lowest part of the whole day, as the number of species that were easy to find to add to our list seemed to be few and far between. The list was stuttering around the 100 mark, ready to grind to a halt, until Dave decided, in a moment of inspiration and a rush of energy, to drive us to Warton Bank and the Naze. Here we added about 6 new species in 30 minutes, the best of which being two Med gulls nailed from seemingly miles away, by Chris. Within 30 seconds he had found the first bird and aged it, then found a second and aged that. This was at a considerable distance in an enormous amount of Black-headed Gulls. Unsurprisingly, I for one was VERY impressed.

The Fylde Bird Club bird race record is 114 species. We now knew that was well within our reach. The enthusiasm was back! We carried on and eventually as dark fell we had scraped together 113 species. The aim was to get to Carr House Green Common to tick Snipe. At about 10pm I found myself wading ankle deep in mud, likely to fall in a dyke, praying for a Snipe to fly out in front of me and call. It wasn't to be. The total was staying at 113.

So the race ended with a little disappointment, but overall it was a great day and a great laugh. Good birding in fantastic company. The 5th May 2002 was an excellent day for the bird race as many migrants were on the move, and therefore this probably was one of the reasons why we came so close to the record, without an immense amount of effort. Next year however, the 120 barrier can be broken, if a little more time is spent staking out some of the more tricky species before the event. Next year I look forward to Chris's itinerary hitting my email inbox with the words "Target total: 120 species" in big, bold letters. Not a problem! Next year we'll be old timers at this game.

Stuart Piner

BIRD RACE RESULTS IN FULL

Team A: Ian Gardner & Paul Ellis

Team B: Chris Batty, Stephen Dunstan, Stuart Piner and Dave Satterthwaite

Species seen by both teams:

Red-throated Diver; Little Grebe; Great Crested Grebe; Cormorant; Grey Heron; Ruddy Duck; Mute Swan; Pink-footed Goose; Greylag Goose; Canada Goose; Shelduck; Eurasian Wigeon; Gadwall; Common Teal; Mallard; Shoveler; Tufted Duck; Common Eider; Sparrowhawk; Common Kestrel; Peregrine Falcon; Red-legged Partridge; Grey Partridge; Common Pheasant; Common Moorhen; Coot; Oystercatcher; Grey Plover; Ringed Plover; Little Ringed Plover; Lapwing; Black-tailed Godwit; Whimbrel; Curlew; Common Redshank; Common Sandpiper; Ruddy Turnstone; Knot; Sanderling; Dunlin; Common Gull; Great Black-backed Gull; Herring Gull; Lesser Black-backed Gull; Black-headed Gull; Sandwich Tern; Common Tern; Arctic Tern; Feral Pigeon; Stock Dove; Wood Pigeon; Collared-dove; Cuckoo; Tawny Owl; Little Owl; Swift; Kingfisher; Great Spotted Woodpecker; Skylark; Sand Martin; Swallow; House Martin; Meadow Pipit; Pied Wagtail; Grey Wagtail; Dipper; Wren; Dunnock; Robin; Whinchat; Stonechat; Wheatear; Blackbird; Song Thrush; Mistle Thrush; Grasshopper-warbler; Sedge Warbler; Reed-warbler; Blackcap; Common Whitethroat; Lesser Whitethroat; Willow Warbler; Chiffchaff; Wood Warbler; Goldcrest; Long-tailed Tit; Coal Tit; Great Tit; Blue Tit; Nuthatch; Treecreeper; Magpie; Jackdaw; Rook; Carrion Crow; Starling; House Sparrow; Tree Sparrow; Chaffinch; Greenfinch; Goldfinch; Lesser Redpoll; Linnet; Yellowhammer; Reed Bunting; Corn Bunting.

=114 species

The following nine species were seen by Team A but not Team B:

**Gannet
Common Scoter
Goosander
Buzzard
Guillemot
Tree Pipit
Yellow Wagtail
Dipper
Siskin**

The following eight species were seen by Team B but not Team A:

**Little Egret
Pintail
Red-breasted Merganser
Bar-tailed Godwit
Mediterranean Gull
Little Gull
Garden Warbler
Jay**

THE MONTH AHEAD PASSAGE WADERS

One of the main features of July on the Fylde is the commencement of return wader passage. Some birds, particularly Common Sandpipers and Spotted Redshank, are already on the move in June but from early July the pace begins to accelerate. This note sets out some species to look out for and where to see them.

Spotted Redshank

July is *the* month to look for Spotted Redshanks in the Fylde, as it is easily the best chance of seeing adults in their stunning black breeding dress. In recent years adults have been regular early in the autumn on Freckleton Naze Pool, any state of tide may produce birds but over the high tide is always the best bet.

To access the Naze Pool park in Freckleton village or carefully outside the boat yard on Naze Lane. Follow the footpath which heads south to Naze Point, and view the pool on your left from the elevated path.

During the autumn birds become rather more widespread in the area, but always a highlight of a day's birding on the Fylde. Favoured sites include the Wyre estuary and Pilling, and birds often continue to pass through Freckleton. If you find a Spotted Redshank make a note of its age and plumage (summer, moulting, grey winter bird of buffish juvenile) as this can be useful in estimating total numbers of birds passing through sites.

Greenshank

Greenshank are uncommon in the Fylde in spring, but much more regular in the autumn from the end of June through into October. Again the Naze Pool is a favoured site, and birds may roost together with Spotted Redshank. However the Greenshank is more numerous and widespread than its close relative, with birds widespread from Conder Green in the north down to the Ribble. Inland records are relatively regular, including flyovers particularly at well watched sites such as Marton Mere.

The 'tu tu tu' call of the Greenshank can sound rather like that of the Redshank, though with experience it becomes recognisable and a useful way of picking up birds, particularly those flying overhead.

Double figure counts of Greenshank are occasionally made on the Fylde, but the species remains sufficiently uncommon for all records to be valuable to the bird report editorial team.

Common Sandpiper

Common Sandpipers are always among the first waders not breeding locally to appear in autumn, from late June onwards. Although not a difficult species to catch up with in the Fylde in spring numbers in the autumn are always much more spectacular.

The prime site is the River Wyre at Shard Bridge, where upwards of 50 birds may be seen at the peak time of mid July. Passage of Common Sands through the area typically lasts right through to early October, and birds seen after this should be carefully checked if possible as it could just possibly be a rare Spotted Sandpiper from America.

RECENT REPORTS

The recent reports section of the newsletter is compiled from records supplied to the club's website news pages. Records are collated periodically during the quarter, so some reports which go on the website late may be missed for which apologies.

All records are subject to acceptance by appropriate records committees. Many thanks to all members who contribute news, which has enabled the web page to be updated on an almost daily basis.

Divers

The largest reported counts of **Red-throated Divers** came from Starr Gate, with eight on 13th March and seven on 12th April. A possible **Black-throated Diver** was off Starr Gate with Red-throats on 12th April. There were still two Red-throats off Rossall and one at Starr Gate on the bird race on 5th May.

Hérons and allies

A welcome new **Grey Heron** nest site was at Bispham Marsh, where two young fledged. A **White Stork** was a surprise find in the Todderstaffe-Singleton area on 17th May, and stayed to the next day; unfortunately free flying birds from Harewood House are making the position with storks in the north of England very unclear. A **Bittern** was seen to leave the Mere high to the north on 16th March.

A **Spoonbill** was on the Naze Pool on 2nd May only, possibly the bird also seen at Leighton Moss and Marshside. The **Little Egret** at Pilling - Fluke Hall and Warton Bank was seen to at least 18th March; the bird at Warton Bank remained into May and there were three here on 13th April and a county record equalling four the next day.

Swans and Geese

There were still 68 **Whooper Swans** in the Longton / Freckleton area on 31 March, when only 10 were left at Martin Mere. Passage of this species was recorded at several sites. Over 1000 **Pink-footed Geese** remained in the Pilling area into April, with 500 still there on 5th May.

Ducks

Gadwall reports included up to six at Warton Bank (where they may breed), four at Marton Mere and three at Fleetwood Tip. At least 90 **Shoveler** were at Marton Mere in mid March, and one that lingered on Herons Reach hotel pool took a shine to an escaped Cinnamon Teal! At least three **Teal** were on the Mere into May.

There was a healthy showing of 5+ **Garganey** in the period. An early pair were well watched at Myerscough Quarry from 20th to 31st March. Two males and a female were at a private Preesall site on 3rd April, perhaps one of these drakes then took up residence at Willowgrove, Preesall. A drake at Fleetwood Tip lagoon on 24th April and 2nd-3rd May is likely to have been the Willowgrove bird, as both were with Mallard. A drake was at Newton Marsh on 15th May.

A drake **Green-winged Teal** was seen paired to a presumed female Eurasian Teal at a private site at Preesall on 24th April. The **Pintail x Mallard** hybrid was again reported from Fairhaven, the Mere and Newton Marsh early in the period, before moving to the ornamental pond at Cypress Point, St Annes. **Pintail** lingered at Fleetwood Tip and Warton Bank into early May.

The **Ferruginous Duck** remained at Marton Mere into March, and a drake **Common Scoter** was there on 10th March. **Ruddy Duck** were seen at Bispham Marsh as well as the Mere and Fleetwood. The best of several **Goosander** records was up to 11 on the Ribble at Avenham Park into May. **Mergansers** lingered into May, with four at Cockersands and one at Fleetwood Dock on bird race day.

Eider were seen on the Ribble, Wyre and Lune estuaries into May, with an exceptional 44 off Lytham Jetty on 20th May. There were still 22+ **Goldeneye** at Marton Mere in April.

Rails, game birds, cranes

Water Rails were noted at Carr House Green as well as Warton Bank and Marton Mere. At least one was at Warton Bank to late May, but they are less evident there than in the last couple of years and may not be breeding here.

Two **Cranes** were reported by farmers at Eagland Hill on 19th March, when there was a marked influx into the country. Another over Marton Mere on 10th April was later seen over Heysham.

Raptors

A **ringtail harrier sp** heading quickly through Lytham Moss on 8th May was seen without binoculars, but may have been a Montagu's. Passage **Marsh Harriers** were seen at Newton Marsh on 18th April and at Marton Mere on 5th May, Freckleton Naze on 17th May and Warton Bank on 23rd. **Buzzards** were seen regularly in the Kirkham area, up to three could be seen from Marton Mere and there were other reports from Bartle and Newton Marsh.

Merlins were in evidence to early April, including up to three at Warton Bank. **Ospreys** were seen over Marton Mere on 25th March and 13th April, Woodland Gardens on 2nd April, Kirkham on 3rd April and Warton Bank on 8th April.

Waders

Wader highlight was an elusive **Temminck's Stint** on Newton Marsh on 17th May.

A pair of **Little Ringed Plover** were seen on several dates at Newton Marsh, up to four were at Myerscough Quarry in May. A good count of c100 **Ringed Plover** at Naze Point presumably involved *tundrae* race birds.

A **Wood Sandpiper** was at Myerscough Quarry on the morning of 4th May, and a **Green Sandpiper** was on Newton Marsh on 9th April. The best of a handful of **Ruff** reports was 16 at Fleetwood Tip. A **Woodcock** was on Fleetwood golf course on 17th March. Following the good influx earlier in the winter **Jack Snipe** were seen at Newton March, Warton Bank and the Hambleton area of the Wyre. A large count of 1500 **Sanderling** was made at Rossall Point on 19th May.

Greenshank were noted at Jameson Road on 27th April and Marton Mere on 8th May. A **Spotted Redshank** was reported on a couple of dates in April at Newton Marsh, and another was at Lane Ends at this time. **Whimbrel** were seen in double figures at several sites but access difficulties on the Ribble meant few large counts were made. **Black-tailed Godwits** lingered on the Ribble in three figure flocks into May, 73 at Bartle pools on 19th April was more unusual.

Gulls

Following the starfish wreck **Med Gulls** were still being seen at Central Promenade (four), Fairhaven Lake, Fleetwood, Marton Mere, North Shore (two), St Annes (four) and Starr Gate (two). At least two were in the Warton Bank area in May, and what may have been one of these was on Lytham Moss in April. Up to 20 **Kittiwakes** were still being seen with other gulls having been wrecked in the February storms.

Little Gulls lingered at several sites in March after the gales, an interesting record concerned four adults which came in from the east at Clifton Marsh on 28th April, this was followed by two plus first summers in the Mere / Stanley Park area into May.

Glaucous Gulls were seen into March on Blackpool Prom (second winter) and at Fleetwood Tip (first winter). There were still two **Iceland Gulls** at Fleetwood Tip in March, a first winter and a second

winter. Two or three **Yellow-legged Gulls** were in the Starr Gate - St Annes area in early March, with one at Fleetwood Tip in early May.

Terns

Black Terns, part of a national influx, were seen on the Ribble (four) and at Marton Mere (two) on 17th May; earlier another had moved east up the Ribble on the 10th. **Little Terns** are increasingly scarce, the only report was of two off Rossall on 27th April.

Some excellent **Arctic Tern** passage on the Ribble included 60 on 5th and 98 on 9th May. One was on the CEGB pool for several days late April and one at Marton Mere during onshore gales on 24th May. Several **Common Terns** were seen on the Ribble with small numbers on the coast.

Skuas

Bonxies lingered on the Ribble and off Pilling in early March. Four Arctic Skuas were seen off Rossall in late April.

Auks

The only report in the period was a single **Guillemot** at Rossall Point on the bird race (May 5th).

Owls

As usual **Tawny Owls** were under-recorded, on the bird race teams saw them at Nateby and Woodplumpton. Up to 3 **Short-eared Owls** were flushed from the marsh off Warton Bank during the high spring tides.

Hoopoes, Cuckoos, Kingfishers

A much appreciated **Hoopoe** was at LSANR 22nd-24th April, the first for the reserve and the first twitchable one in the Fylde since 1992.

Cuckoos were thin on the ground, but reports came from Marton Mere, Myerscough Quarry and a number of Over Wyre sites. **Kingfishers** were seen at Ellel Grange and on the Wyre at Churchtown.

Pipits and Wagtails

Grey Wagtails were proved to breed at Brock, and may have nested in the Greyfriars area where they were seen on the bird race. **Yellow Wagtail** reports were restricted to one over Rossall on 5th May, and two in the Stanah ICI site early that month. Strong **White Wagtail** passage was recorded at Fleetwood site as a result of good coverage, grounded birds were at several other sites including several at the Mere.

Water Pipits were recorded at Warton Bank on several dates in March where tides were suitable, with at least 8 birds whilst up to 3 were seen at Jameson Rd. **Scandinavian Rock** and **Rock Pipits** were also seen at Warton Bank, and up to 12 of the latter were at Barnaby's Sands in early March. **Tree Pipits** were recorded on several dates over Rossall, with two at Blackpool Industrial Estate on May 9th.

Dippers, Chats and thrushes

As usual in the run up to the bird race and on the race itself **Dipper** were well recorded, with up to three seen on the Brock.

The only **Redstart** was a male at Mount Park, Fleetwood on 27th April. Attention focused on Blackpool Airport land during the Hoopoe twitch yielded a nesting pair of **Stonechat**, an extremely welcome discovery but have they been overlooked here? Four young were seen on LSANR in May. Passage of this species was pronounced in mid March, with peaks of 3 at Fluke Hall on 16th and an excellent eight at Jameson Road on the 9th.

Wheatear counts included 21 at Singleton and 15 at LSANR on 22nd April, 19 at Bone Hill on 24th April; in May up to 14 were on Lytham Moss and many of these were Greenland types. There were ten **Whinchats** reported other than on Bird Race day (May 5th), when the two teams found no fewer 13 than with seven at Marton Mere, two at Rossall, two at Fleetwood Tip and two at Warton Bank.

Warblers

There were at least two singing **Grasshopper Warblers** at the Mere, other reports possibly including some passage birds came from Ingol School (Preston), Preesall Flashes, Rossall School and Stanley Park.

Garden Warblers were noted at several sites, though no more than one was seen anywhere. **Lesser Whitethroats** were very much in evidence, including five at Freckleton, three at Bourne Hill and two at Carr House Green Common, Fleetwood Tip and Marton Mere. It was an exceptional spring for **Wood Warblers**, with three around Fleetwood on bird race day as well as a number at Woodland Gardens and singles at Stanah and Queensway, St Annes on other dates.

Goldcrests were still present in May, and potentially breeding, at Ellel Grange, Greyfriars, Lowther Gardens, Stanley Park and Woodland Gardens. seen bird race. Away from these sites little passage was reported but presumably bird moved through these favoured sites.

Flycatchers, Nuthatches, Treecreepers

Spotted Flycatchers were seen in May at Blackpool Industrial Estate (9th) and Mount Park (two on 16th and on 19th). More unusual was a male **Pied Flycatcher** in Stanley Park in late April.

Up to four **Nuthatches** were seen at Ellel Grange, with one singing at Singleton and Churchtown also.

Crows

Ravens were seen at both Thurnham and Warton Bank on 20th March. The hybrid **Hooded x Carrion Crow** remained in the Fairhaven-Heyhouses area to at least mid April.

Finches and Buntings

Lesser Redpolls were much in evidence this spring. A remarkable set of sightings on the bird race included 45 in Fleetwood cemetery, 19 in Mount Park, 14 in Fleetwood memorial park, two over the CEGB pool and one at Thurnham Hall. There were also nine at Preesall Flashes on 25th April. At least one possible **Mealy Redpoll** was with up to six Lessers at Marton Mere at the end of March and beginning of April.

Up to 70 **Twite** were seen in the Pilling area into March. There were still 19 **Brambling** at the Eagland Hill feeding stations in March. At least two **Bullfinches** were reported at the Fylde stronghold site of Greyfriars. **Siskins** were widespread on passage in single figures, particularly at Fairhaven and Rossall. Notably 3 **Crossbills** were in a Warton garden on 23rd March.

Over 100 **Corn Buntings** were seen at Eagland Hill, and up to 60 **Tree Sparrow**.