



Fylde Bird Club

Lancashire

www.fyldebirdclub.freeuk.com

NEWSLETTER MARCH 2002

Welcome to the March newsletter, I hope there is something here for everyone.

One of the pleasing features of the recent development of the club has been a resurgence in local patch interest. A request to help fill the vacant local BBS squares was a great success - well done to those who got involved. The Fylde was left out of the original plans for the Lapwing survey in SW Lancs this season, but we said we could deliver. All 60 1km squares in the Fylde were quickly allocated, another super effort. On the theme of local recording I am pleased that Barry Dyson has written up a good day he had at his local patch of Singleton, I hope it inspires others to cover their 'patch'.

They are not everybody's cup of tea, but it has been an exceptional year for unusual race Canada Geese with the Pink-feet. I have written a short piece to provide some context for those members who may want to a bit more about 'Todd's' Canada Geese, 'Cackling' Canada Geese and the like. On a similar theme some interpretation of Pink-feet collar recoveries is included following the piece on ringed Whoopers in the last newsletter. I would understand if anybody felt they had seen enough on marked wildfowl now, if you have something different to tell the club put pen to paper and share your knowledge or experiences.

The last three months have been one of the best spells for birding in the Fylde for many years. The Ivory Gull was clearly the unexpected highlight, but there have also been several other scarce gulls, an array of interesting geese with the Pinkfeet, seabirds including Little Auks and unseasonal Leach's Petrel as well as good numbers of Brambling. These have been the result of local patch birding, and in the case of the Over Wyre Brambling, a feeding programme launched by Bob Danson and supported by the club. Our collective efforts have shown just how bird rich the area we cover can be. The recent reports section is rather swollen as a result, but for those who can't access the club's website I hope this information is valuable.

SD

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W. SINGLETON LOCAL PATCH - BOXING DAY 2001.

The weather forecast for the last few days of the year was grim so I decided to walk my local patch on Boxing day and was rewarded with the highest species count of the year. Christmas had come a day late for me.

Not having to take Ellen into work I was able to start before sunrise and I found myself crossing the railway line over to Poulton Industrial estate at 8.05a.m. 6 Cormorants flew in single file north towards the River Wyre, my highest count of the year no doubt down to my 'early' start. A Blue Tit, 2 Woodpigeons, a Chaffinch and 15 Starlings were logged at my first stop not forgetting 5 House Sparrows that flew away on whirring wingbeats as rapid as auks out at sea.

Moving on, not a sound was to be heard or a soul to be seen as I passed through what is normally a buzzing industrial estate. Since I last wrote about my local patch the Asphalt plant is now up and running but today it was silent. The field immediately east of there and ending at the footbridge over the main dyke is fast being filled in with hardcore, although there is still some vestigial habitat that is worth checking out. The man made pond was iced over so no Moorhens there today. In fact the whole area seemed deserted save for a foraging Blackbird and a rattling Wren. Looking back towards the railway line several Jackdaws and Rooks were perched on the telephone wires and a Great Spotted Woodpecker landed on the telegraph pole. A Collared Dove flew by as did a Canada Goose and a Grey Heron. They were the only one of their species I was to see and it is being in the right place at the right time that enables a good species count to happen although I had no such thoughts at the time. In fact by the end of my visit 12 species comprised of one individual only.

Crossing over the footbridge a pair of Mute Swans passed underneath making their way slowly along the main dyke. 5 Moorhens were much more concerned about my presence as they either dived under the surface, flew along the dyke or made for cover. A Grey Wagtail appeared from nowhere and a startled Redshank took off, calling as it went. A Dunnock and a Robin were in the hawthorn bush by the bridge while up above a skein of 32 Pinkfeet flew over, occasionally correcting their direction as they flew northwards to Over Wyre.

Turning left I headed for the old fragmented hedgerow that separates the stubble field from the ryegrass field. Hugging the main dyke I once again flushed the Redshank together with 4 Mallard. Looking east toward Long Wood a flock of about 600 Woodpigeons took flight and set against the reddening sky a Peregrine went through them but to no avail. I reached the hedgerow but for once there was very little to see. Was I there too early I wondered. 3 Magpies flickered black and white as they flew away. A few Blackbirds and a single Song Thrush also scarpereed calling as they went. I ambled eastward alongside the hedgerow and across Carr flats. Reaching the end I turned south along another unkempt hedgerow which usually holds a good selection of passerines but not today.

As I neared the end the local farmer arrived in his 4x4 Isuzu which he does daily to drop off his sheep dog for its daily exercise. A dry old bugger, we often exchange pleasantries but he does like to wind me up, so I let him. Well it makes his day. Unfortunately today he was the bringer of bad tidings as he told me had sold the stubble field to Stanah feeds and it would be turned over to more ryegrass. I felt gutted. I just hope the hedgerow survives but I don't hold out much hope.

As I made my way up-hill towards Long Wood a Pheasant exploded out of the hedgerow, one of only four I saw today. No doubt Christmas had taken its toll. I looked skyward to see 3

LBB Gulls and 7 Herring Gulls making their way eastward. By now the sky was clear and blue except for the scarring left behind by the spent fuel vapours of Bocings and DC's. Suddenly some Meadow Pipits took flight from the adjacent field which was one of barley stubble. Like miniature Skylarks they created a chain reaction as one by one they joined up and flew randomly over the feeding area, occasionally calling 'peet peet' before settling down once more. I estimated 120, narrowly beating previous totals.

As I entered the wooded area it was deathly quiet as though a Sparrowhawk was in there. It had been like that since I resumed my visits following the Foot & Mouth epidemic. They had nested in the vicinity and were always about. I have to say that they had made an impression as passerines were much reduced in number in the wood compared to the previous year. I carried on to Knowle wood and made my way through the northern section as far as the pond. I inevitably advertised my presence as I walked over the frozen leaves which crunched under my weight. Facing into the light I managed to miss a perched Buzzard before it took off and wended its way through the wood and out into the open. Simultaneously a Jay started squawking and soon after two flew out of the wood and across the fields. Had they I wondered been returning to their stashes in this cold spell as I had last seen them here in the autumn carrying acorns.

I came out of Knowle wood and pondered on some of the birds I had seen so far. Peregrine, Jay, Buzzard, - birds that not too long ago I would have travelled to see, and now they are on my doorstep. Returning to the footpath I could see 40 Lapwings in a nearby field together with 18 BH Gulls and 38 Common Gulls, the same field where 350 Common gulls had been on the 4/12. I nosed on back and entered the stretch of woodland that connects Long wood to Knowle wood. Woodpigeons took to the sky no doubt thinking I was there to shoot them. Some flew over to nearby Carr wood while many landed in the recently planted oil-seed rape field. There numbers had now increased to approx 1200. Single Robin and Wren plus 2 Great Tits and 2 Blue Tits made on this occasion for a disappointing stretch of woodland.

Long wood was much the same until I saw my first Goldcrest here since the 22/10. Moving about the bramble leaves and stems it was hovering as much as it was creeping. It must have expended as much energy getting at its food as it gained nutritionally. It was a delight to see and completely oblivious to my presence. It was also good to see 3 Long-tailed Tits here as on my last visit I had only seen one whereas in October there had been up to 11 - my mind turning yet again to Sparrowhawk. A few more Tits, Wrens, Robins and Dunnocks showed and up to 11 Blackbirds were rustling about in the leaf litter. A male Great Spotted Woodpecker, my fourth sighting but third bird was busy hammering away at a rotting tree branch. A large piece of bark fell away as it gained access no doubt to some juicy morsels. As it bent its head forward the bright red nape patch doubled in size. Always a super bird to see I withdrew quietly leaving it busy feeding.

I left the wood at the northern edge and made my way across the ryegrass field to a feeder dyke that empties into the main dyke. Four Carrion Crows were in the adjacent field which was spoiled with mole hills. A few Blackbirds were probably looking for invertebrates by the molchills and also present were 9 Redwings and a Pied Wagtail which flew into a bush as I drew closer. As usual I flushed a couple of Snipe from the partially waterlogged field before making my way back to the stubble field alongside the main dyke that I had walked the perimeter of earlier.

The stubble field had been good for Skylarks this winter and sure enough some were still around. Disturbance of one bird always creates a knock-on effect as they rise and burst into

song. They seem to rise in steps with their quivering flight, occasionally looking to one side as much to say, I can still see you. In bright conditions like today their pale underparts and pot-bellied appearance shine in the sunlight. They also seem to take a delight in chasing one another. 4 Reed Buntings were mixed in with them before landing in the hedgerow.

In the distance crouched down, a Brown Hare attempted to conceal itself. As I got closer I could make out its teddy bear eyes before it loped off, tail tucked in, ears erect. It didn't go far before almost stopping, when the forward motion of its forelegs reminded me of Tommy Coopers hand and arm movements when he would say - 'just like that'. This was probably the same Hare I have seen now and then in the woods and which always brightens up my day.

I was now almost back at the footbridge and still seeing new species for the day. A single Goldfinch flew from the hedgerow to a hawthorn bush on the other side of the dyke. I scanned the next field left to right and saw again the Buzzard as it made its way to Carr wood where it perched up surrounded by Woodpigeons. The main dyke was now holding a pair of Coots and as I made my way across the footbridge, that most delightful of waders the Green Sandpiper rocketed out of the dyke. With a call I find phonetically impossible to describe, but once heard never forgotten, it flew out of sight as per usual. I last saw it on 21/11 but this is the third consecutive winter it has been here.

On returning to the railway line, the time had moved on to 11.10am. I am usually out for between 2 and 2 and a half hours but today 3 hours and 5 minutes. I had not seen any new species for the year but had been rewarded with the highest species count of the year i.e. 47. My previous best had been 42 on the 13/11 and before that 40 on the 23/11 whereas typically my lowest count fell in August when I saw just 20 on the 14/8. When you consider that average daylight through the year is about 14 hours a day or 98 hours a week and that my weekly visit represents between 2% to 3% of that time it makes you wonder just what I am missing during the 97% of the time I am not there!

Paul Ellis quite rightly enthuses about bird race day but nothing compares with the joy and experiences of local patch work. No two days are alike and when you finish your days visit you are always looking forward to your next visit and what that might bring. Just think of the data we could muster if we all did local patch recording. Adjoining patches would be even more beneficial.

The patch can be as large or as small as you want, perhaps your local park, a strip of coastline, one of the marine lakes, North Shore boating pool and adjacent cliffs, Lytham moss, Bispham marsh, The Towers, Warton bank, a golf course, a rubbish tip, a cemetery, a country lane, a stretch of river, a public footpath or look at the local ordnance survey map and plot your own route --- the list is endless, the choice is yours.

Wherever it is, I would, without reservation recommend local patch birding to you, and should you get hooked which you surely will, you too will look forward to your weekly fix - I guarantee it. Do it, do it now.

Barry Dyson.

PINK-FOOTED GOOSE RECOVERIES IN THE FYLDE - A FLAVOUR

Following on from the article on Whoopers in the last newsletter here is the promised note on Pink-foot ring and neck collar returns. This is not intended to be comprehensive, not least because a full set of Fylde records has not been obtained from the Wildfowl Trust (it is hoped to get this information during the summer). Rather, the intention is to give an indication of the normal movements and some of the more interesting life stories which have emerged from goose studies here in the Fylde, elsewhere in the UK and in Iceland.

A few points which may be helpful to readers:

- most of these birds have been identified by an individually sequenced grey 'collar' on their neck, which can be read through a telescope if the bird is 'one to two fields' away. More recent collars are three letter sequences, some of the first birds to be ringed have only two characters on the collar and some of these include numbers.
- there are birds with Darvic leg rings similar to those worn by swans, the recoveries for these tend to be more limited because they are more difficult to read. If you do read one of these it is important to note the ring colour, and to state that it was a leg ring not a neck collar.
- the birds which winter in or pass through the Fylde are generally the Icelandic breeding population, as are all other birds wintering in Britain. The smaller Svalbard population winters in Belgium and Holland. There has been very little interchange between the two populations despite Icelandic birds now getting as close to the low countries as Norfolk. Per Richard Hearn at the Wildfowl Trust only half a dozen Svalbard birds have been recorded in Britain, but one of these (neck collar C071) was seen in the Pilling and Preesall area a few years ago. If you see a bird with a neck collar which is not grey tell somebody!
- records for this winter have generally not been processed yet, so these are only included on an ad hoc basis where known

Whilst neck collars are a relatively recent development some birds which were given them had previously had Darvic rings, and in these cases life histories can be extremely informative. A good example of this is:-

collar 4N (formerly Darvic leg ring BFN)

| | |
|------------|---|
| 05/11/1988 | Martin Mere |
| 19/10/1991 | Martin Mere |
| 27/10/1991 | Marshside |
| 27/12/1992 | Halsall, Lancs |
| 11/03/1994 | Vane Farm area, Loch Leven, Perth & Kinross |
| 25/04/1995 | Vane Farm |
| 20/03- | Vane Farm |
| 25/04/1996 | |
| 22/11/1996 | Downholland Moss, Lancs |
| 22/03/1997 | Vane Farm area |
| 05/04/1997 | Blackburn to Kintore, Aberdeenshire |
| 28/12/1997 | Docking, Norfolk |
| 09/02/1999 | Folkham, Norfolk |

| | |
|------------|--|
| 21/02/1999 | Messingham Sand Quarries, Lincolnshire |
| 28/10/1999 | Martin Mere |
| 07/11/1999 | Marshside |
| 09/11/1999 | Winacre Farm, Southport |
| 17/11/1999 | Crossens Marsh, Southport |
| 08/01/2000 | Wighton, Norfolk |
| 14/03/2000 | Aldcliffe Marsh, Lancaster |
| 16/03/2000 | Heaton Marsh, Lancaster |
| 21/11/2000 | Burnham Market, Norfolk |
| 29/11/2000 | Burnham Market |
| 20/01/2001 | Cumming Carr, Pilling |
| 02/03/2001 | Mythop Road, Staining |
| 04/03/2001 | Mythop Road, Staining |

The pattern of ringing recoveries over recent years has shown a strong pattern of birds arriving in the country in Scotland, moving down to south west Lancs and on to Norfolk, returning via Pilling before heading back to Scotland. Some ringing recoveries providing evidence of this include:

collar LAH

| | |
|------------|---|
| 30/07/1999 | Nautalda, Thjorsarver, Arness., Iceland |
| 20/10/1999 | Lathones, Fife |
| 21/10/1999 | Lathones, Fife |
| 07/11/1999 | Ridge Farm, Pilling |
| 16/01/2000 | Brancaster, Norfolk |
| 02/04/2000 | Craigton area, Loch Leven, Peth & Kinross |
| 11/01/2001 | Ringstead Downs, Norfolk |
| 13/04/2001 | Ankerville, Nigg Bay, Ross & Cromarty |

collar CUA

| | |
|------------|-----------------------------------|
| 28/07/1999 | Thjorsarver, Arness., Iceland |
| 17/10/1999 | Martin Mere |
| 16/12/2000 | Holkham, Norfolk |
| 05/01/2001 | Thornham Corner, Docking, Norfolk |
| 28/01/2001 | Fishers Row, Pilling |
| 02/02/2001 | Fluke Hall Lanc, Pilling |
| 07/02/2001 | Horse Park Lane, Pilling |

This bird was recorded at Fleetwood, Pilling and Procsall in December and January of this winter.

collar LCI

| | |
|------------|--|
| 29/07/2000 | Oddkelsalda, Thjorsarver, Arness., Iceland |
| 25/12/2000 | Ivy Farm, Pilling |
| 29/12/2000 | south of Egmere, Norfolk |
| 03/01/2001 | Cumming Carr, Pilling |
| 01/03/2001 | Heaton Marsh, Lancaster |
| 07/04/2001 | Mound Rock, Loch Fleet, Sutherland |
| 15/04/2001 | Golspic, Sutherland |

Assuming the Norfolk ring reading was correct the move down to Norfolk and back in just over a week is surprising. This bird was in the Bagland Hill area over Christmas and New Year this winter, and a picture is in fact on our website!

It has been evident that some birds are pushed south to the Fylde from Scottish sites. Below is a hard weather movement in December 2000 where a bird has been recorded at Pilling two days after last being noted in the Borders.

collar A6

| | |
|------------|--|
| 20/03/1996 | Loch Leven, Perth and Kinross |
| 10/04/1996 | Loch Flemington, Inverness |
| 21/01/1997 | Ballicknowe, Dumfries & Galloway |
| 15/02/97 | Loch Leven area |
| -6/4 | |
| 27/12/1998 | near Lochhill, Urquhart, Moray |
| 10/01/2000 | Flitcham, Norfolk |
| 19/01/2000 | Sedgeford area, Norfolk |
| 07/04/2000 | Greenland Mains, Castletown, Caithness |
| 15/10/2000 | West Water Reservoir, Borders |
| 24/12/2000 | Broomlee Mains, West Linton, Borders |
| 26/12/2000 | Ivy Farm, Pilling |

Sometimes it would appear that the timing of this movement can be surprisingly late:

collar CPS

| | |
|------------|---|
| 31/07/1998 | Aftatjarnarflacda, S-Ping., Iceland |
| 07/02/1999 | Lochty Farm, Fife |
| 11/02/1999 | Wrampool, Pilling |
| 13/02/1999 | Fluke Hall, Pilling |
| 12/10/1999 | Starnafin Pools, Loch of Strathbeg, Aberdeenshire |
| 07/12/2000 | Fieldhouse, Brancaster, Norfolk |

And sometimes birds making apparent hard weather movements into the Fylde will then stay very late into the spring:

collar F3

| | |
|------------|---|
| 20/03/1996 | Loch Leven, Perth & Kinross (first ringed) |
| 01/05/1996 | Loch Leven (last of several sightings) |
| 22/12/1996 | West Park Farm, Auchterarder, Perth & Kinross |
| 04/04/1997 | Cockerham Moss |

Movements south out of the Fylde can also occur at surprising times, presumably also linked to hard weather.

collar FCU

| | |
|------------|---|
| 29/07/1999 | Oddkelsalda, Thjorsarvot, Arness., Iceland |
| 05/02/2000 | Sandy's Belt, Flitcham, Norfolk |
| 21/10/2000 | Vane Farm area, Loch Leven, Perth & Kinross |
| 24/12/2000 | Bird's Farm, Pilling |
| 03/01/2001 | Hamming Carr, Pilling |

09/01/2001 Fritcham Abbey, Norfolk

In recent years the North Fylde Pinkfeet have ranged more widely than in previous years. Some are now seen on and off at Mythop, not far from Marton Mere on the edge of Blackpool. The two recoveries below show that these birds do appear to head south from the Over Wyre roost, rather than heading north from the South West Lancs moss roosts.

collar LZ

| | |
|------------|-----------------------------------|
| 14/03/1995 | Loch Leven, Perth & Kinross |
| 27/09/1995 | Vane Farm area, Loch Leven |
| 21/10/1996 | Loch Leven area |
| 07/02/1997 | Vane Farm area, Loch Leven |
| 22/04/1997 | Loch Leven area |
| 23/10/1998 | Loch Leven |
| 06/11/1998 | Travebank, near Carnoustie, Angus |
| 11/11/1999 | Clatto, Fife |
| 13/11/1999 | Craigton area, Loch Leven |
| 14/11/1999 | Leslie, Fife |
| 24/10/2000 | Mawmill area, Loch Leven |
| 02/01/2001 | High Gate Lane, Stalmine |
| 03/01/2001 | High Gate Lane, Stalmine |
| 02/03/2001 | Mythop, Blackpool |

Below is a set of sightings of a bird which spent at least three months of last winter on the Fylde. The fact that such birds arrive via Scotland, and stop off there on their return journey, is not a great surprise but such a detailed set of records is unusual. It would be interesting to know where it was from late September to late December and late Feb to early April (the Solway or Borders perhaps). Note how it visited all the major feeding areas in North Fylde - Fleetwood, Staynall-Stalmine and Pilling-Eagland Hill.

collar IHL

| | |
|------------|--|
| 25/07/2000 | Mannabeinafla, A-Iluna., Iceland |
| 21/09/2000 | Windyedge Farm, Perth, Perth & Kinross |
| 26/12/2000 | Birk's Farm, Pilling |
| 26/12/2000 | Ivy Farm, Pilling |
| 31/12/2000 | Fleetwood Farm, Rossall |
| 01/01/2001 | north of Staynall, Hambleton |
| 02/01/2001 | High Gate Lane |
| 03/01/2001 | High Gate Lane, Stalmine |
| 02/02/2001 | Bonds Farm, Pilling |
| 05/02/2001 | Bonds Farm, Pilling |
| 06/02/2001 | Bonds Farm, Pilling |
| 09/02/2001 | Bonds Farm, Pilling |
| 12/02/2001 | Bonds Farm, Pilling |
| 23/02/2001 | Eagland Hill |
| 11.04.2001 | Ainess Bay, Ross & Cromarty |
| 22.04.2001 | Ainess Bay, Ross & Cromarty |

And on the same theme:

collar 78L

| | |
|------------|--|
| 28/07/2000 | Nautalda, Thjorsarver, Arness., Iceland |
| 22/10/2000 | Harc Cairns School, Walston, South Lanarkshire |
| 31/12/2000 | Fleetwood Farm, Rossall |
| 01/01/2001 | Fleetwood Farm, Rossall |
| 02/01/2001 | High Gate Lane, Stalmine |
| 03/01/2001 | High Gate Lane, Stalmine |
| 14/01/2001 | Eagland Hill |
| 22/01/2001 | Cumming Carr, Pilling |

Birds can change wintering patterns:

collar II

Seen in the Loch Leven area from ringing in December 1994 to late April 1995.

Back at Loch Leven from 27th September 1995 to late April 1996.

At Loch of Strathbeg in October 1996, then Loch Leven Feb-April 1997.

Seen at Martin Mere November 1997, at Loch Leven Feb-April 1998

In the 1998/9 winter only reported at Loch Leven Feb-April 1999.

In the 1999/00 winter only reported from Loch Leven Jan-April 2000.

then

| | |
|------------|---|
| 21/09/2000 | Windyedge Farm, Perth, Perth & Kinross |
| 24/10/2000 | Mawmill area, Loch Leven, Perth & Kinross |
| 26/11/2000 | Woodside Farm, Kirkby, Merseyside |
| 26/12/2000 | Birk's Farm, Pilling |
| 21/03/2001 | Findatie area, Loch Leven |

Similarly:

collar TP

Ringed March 1995 Loch Leven

In winters 1995/6 and 1996/7 only reported from Loch Leven

then

| | |
|------------|------------------------------------|
| 10/01/1998 | Lady Amnes Drive, Holkham, Norfolk |
| 23/10/1998 | Classloch area, Loch Leven |
| 06/11/1998 | Travebank, near Carnoustie, Angus |
| 11/11/1999 | Clatto, Fife |
| 14/11/1999 | Leslie, Fife |
| 24/10/2000 | Mawmill area, Loch Leven |
| 01/01/2001 | north of Staynall, Hambleton |
| 02/01/2001 | High Gate Lane, Stalmine |
| 03/01/2001 | High Gate Lane, Stalmine |
| 02/03/2001 | Mythop, Blackpool |

Hopefully this gives some insight into Pink-feet movements. If you have taken collar numbers at some point and never submitted them it is never too late, they can still be input. If you have access to the club's website check out the excellent page Paul Ellis has put together for further information.

Thanks to Bob Danson and Chris Batty for providing much of the above information.

STJ

POSSIBLY WILD CANADA GEESE IN THE FYLDE

Well I'm afraid it's not much of a life, but a bit of circumspection is necessary here. Waifs with Pink-foot flocks fall into three categories:

- definitely or almost certainly wild (Barnacles, White-fronts)
- certain escapes (Bar-headed Geese, some of the hybrids)
- unknown origin

In the latter category fall records of Snow, Red Breasted, Lesser White-front and Canada Geese. The credentials of every individual Canada is uncertain, though the pattern of occurrence in Lancashire suggests that some are wild birds.

This year has been a record one for 'non-British' Canadas with the Pink-foot flocks, and this short note provides some context for interested members.

Canada Geese records in the Fylde prior to the 2001/2 winter

Apparently wild birds remain genuinely rare in Lancashire, and with most reports coming from the south west they are vagrants in the Fylde. All known records of birds with Pinkfoot feeding flocks (as opposed to apparent or possible feral birds roost among the Pinkfeet) are:

| | | |
|----------------|---|------------|
| December 1980 | unspecified race | Cockerham |
| February 1982 | <i>hutchinsii</i> | Cockerham |
| March 1984 | prob. <i>taverneri</i> | Pilling |
| Feb-March 1991 | <i>interior</i> type and <i>parvipes</i> | Pilling |
| January 1997 | possible <i>minima</i> | Pilling |
| January 1998 | two (<i>parvipes</i> ?) | Cockerham* |

(* - no details of race in the Fylde report, not mentioned in Lancs bird report but this does refer to two *parvipes* in SW Lancs at the time and these appear likely to be the same birds)

Making just eight birds in six winters.

The 2001/2 season (as at the end of February)

Parvipes type (Pinkfoot sized birds, overall coloration similar to 'British' Canadas)

Two birds seen briefly at Duck Street, Pilling in late November were probably this species. One at Preesall in early December showed characteristics of this race, and sightings of one in the Pilling-Preesall area in late December and early January were probably this bird. One seen twice at Fleetwood in late January by different observers was considered by both to be *parvipes*. So there were at least two *parvipes* types in the area this winter, and perhaps three or more.

Minima type (Barnacle Goose sized birds, darker overall than 'British' birds including chest)

One was found at England Hill in late December, remaining in the Pilling area into early January. There is a colour ringed escaped *minima* in the recording area, but this was a different bird.

Interior type (only a little smaller than 'British' birds and similar colour, very long neck, long bill)

One at Staimine and then Pilling over a three day period in mid-February

RECENT REPORTS

Covering the period December 2001-February 2002, plus November reports to the December club meeting. All records of rare and scarce birds are subject to acceptance by appropriate rarities committees.

Divers and grebes

The only record of consequence received was 27 Red-throated Divers at South Shore in mid December.

'Seabirds'

Extremely unseasonal Leach's Petrels in February's gales included one off Cockersands on 4th, one off Rossall on 6th and two off Lane Ends and one past Rossall on the 11th. Fulmars were noted off Anchorsholme on 11th February and Rossall the next day.

Cormorant, Herons

The long-staying *sinensis* Cormorant remained on the Glasson Basin, another was on Stanley Park lake on Christmas Day. A Shag was off Starr Gate on 18th December.

There were at least two wintering Little Egrets, one at Warton Bank and another in the Lane Ends - Fluke Hall area. One near Poulton on 2nd January may have been a third bird. There were at least two Bitterns at Marton Mere in the period, with claims of up to four during the cold snap in early January.

Swans

The Over Wyre Whooper Swan commuting between Fluke Hall and Hy Fly, Preesall flock peaked at a healthy 117 Whoopers, with up to 35 Bewicks Swans among them. Leg rings on some of the Whoopers and neck collars sported by a couple of the Bewick's showed them to include regular wintering birds. Elsewhere well over 100 wild swans were regular at Saltcotes, Lytham during December, numbers of Whooper and Bewicks in the flock varied greatly but Bewicks tended to predominate. Bewicks roosting at the Mere peaked at over 50 in January.

Mute Swans are generally less newsworthy, however birds at Fairhaven in the period included immigrants from Telford and Porthmadog respectively. One of the Stanley Park pair was found dead, apparently killed by a fox, it had been ringed in 1991 at Bowness-on-Windermere.

Geese

A good run of possibly wild Canada Geese with Pinkfeet are documented elsewhere in this newsletter. At least three Barnacle Geese continued to be seen with the Pinkfeet Over Wyre until the end of December, thereafter only singles were reported until up to four were at Great Crimbles and nearby sites at the end of February. All White-fronted Geese seen early in the period were of the European / Russian race, with two different adults and a first year at several Over Wyre sites; an adult Greenland bird appeared towards the end of February. A Brent Geese was off Pilling Lane Ends on 3rd December, two Dart-bellied race birds were

field feeding with Pinkfeet at Preesall on Boxing Day but were not seen again. More unusually a Brent was seen on the Ribble at Warton Bank on two dates in February.

Bean Geese were much in evidence, with a family group of three *fabalis* in the Fluke Hall / Hy Fly area in February, and at least two others seen with Pink-feet at other sites. A blue phase Lesser Snow Goose first found at England Hill on 4th February was then seen at several sites across Over Wyre to at least the end of the month. A strange hybrid goose with the Pinkfeet in early February appeared to be a Barnacle x Greylag.

Immediately following the commencement of shooting on Pilling saltmarsh the Pink-footed Goose roost fell to 3000 in early December, but quickly increased again to a peak of 14000 during the cold snap, then dropped away again to c5000 for much of January and February. There were regular reports of 5000 feeding in the Fleetwood fields. Away from the usual haunts there were flocks up to 1500 near Staining, and small numbers feeding with wild swans on ploughed fields at Saltcotes, Lytham. Up to three Greylags with the Pinkfeet at Hy Fly, Preesall in January may have been wild birds but it is impossible to say with a growing feral population in the Preesall area.

Ducks

Up to 600 Teal were recorded at the Mere, with 1,000 on the Wyre off Burglars Alley. A drake Pintail x Mallard hybrid commuted, like many other ducks, between the Mere and Fairhaven. Up to four Gadwall were on Fairhaven Lake, with two or three in the Jameson Road / Burglars Alley area and two at the Mere. Shoveler counts on Stanley Park peaked at 50 in January. There were still up to 870 Pintail off Fairlawn Road, Lytham.

The drake Ferruginous Duck continued to commute between Fairhaven Lake and Marton Mere early in the period, before settling at Fairhaven in January then returning to the Mere with ironic timing on the day of the big Fairhaven Ivory Gull dip (16th Feb). A drake Red Crested Pochard on the Mere in early December had apparently escaped from nearby Blackpool Zoo. In the same vein as the Pochard an 'orange hybrid Shelduck' was at Lane Ends on 16th December. There were still up to two Scaup at Fairhaven Lake through to mid February, with singles at the Mere in early December and off Rossall on 10th February. A total of 84 Pochard were at the Mere on 15th December. A redhead Sniew found at the Mere on Christmas Day remained through January and February, another redhead was on the Lune estuary at Cockersands on 1st-2nd January before being seen further upriver outside our recording area.

The first winter drake Long-tailed Duck remained on Lane Ends ponds until the beginning of December; two including an adult male were off Rossall on 9th December, three were off South Prom on the 16th and two were again off Rossall on 10th February. The peak Eider count was 254 off Rossall on 16th December. There were up to 14 Red-breasted Mergansers on Fleetwood Marine Lake in December, and up to thirteen on Fairhaven Lake in January. During the period Gossanders were noted from Cartford Bridge (eleven), Glasson Dock (seven), Skippool (three), Stanley Park - something of an improvement on recent poor showings. The finding of the Cockersands Sniew focused more attention on the Goldeneye is associated with, the highest count being 131 on 3rd January.

During December Common Scoter were very obvious off Starr Gate, with up to 1800 birds noted. The aerial survey off Fleetwood in February produced an estimate 7000 birds. Less dramatically a drake was at Marton Mere on 23rd and 24th February.

Raptors

Perhaps just the one **Buzzard** was seen at Singleton and Weeton, favoured haunts of this species in the Fylde. A typical scattering of **Merlin** included records from Clifton Marsh, Cockerham Bank End, the Fleetwood and Over Wyre goose fields, Pilling Lane Ends, Staining, Warton Bank and the Wyre estuary. **Peregrines** were seen at several sites, including two on St Johns church in Blackpool town centre.

Hen Harriers are increasingly scarce in the Fylde, the only reports in the period were a ringtail near Cockersands on 2nd February, and a male at Carr House Green Common the next day.

Rails

Coverage of coastal sites on large tides produced **Water Rails** at Warton Bank, and at Burrows Marsh on the Wyre.

Waders

An unseasonal first year **Curlew Sandpiper** was on the Ribble adjacent to Clifton treatment works on 15 December. In November a **Green Sandpiper** was reported on Poulton main dyke on 21st, others were at Carr House Green Common on 12th and 27th January and at the traditional Larbreck site. A **Spotted Redshank** appeared settled for the winter at Bank End, Cockerham, perhaps this bird was seen at Lane Ends on 13th January and 3rd February.

There was a good influx of **Jack Snipe**, with double figure counts at two sites (details withheld at observer's request), with smaller numbers at several other mostly coastal sites. **Woodcock** were also conspicuous, with an excellent total of eight near Preesall Flashes, two at Thurnham Hall and singles at Carr House Green Common, Ellet Grange, Lane Ends and Marton Mere. Small numbers of **Ruff** were seen in flooded fields in the Pilling area in Jan and Feb. Up to 79 **Black-tailed Godwits** were on the Wyre, no counts were received from the Ribble.

Gulls

Easily the best bird of the period was an adult **Ivory Gull** at Fairhaven from 13th to 15th February. The first for Lancashire it was sometimes even seen on Fairhaven Lake. Many would be weekend observers were frustrated when it disappeared overnight on the Friday.

Other northern gulls were also much in evidence. **Iceland Gulls** were at Fairhaven Lake on the afternoon of 4th January only; followed by an exceptional influx in February with at least seen in the Fleetwood area and one at South Promenade. At least five **argentatus Herring Gulls** were seen in the Fleetwood area, with another three or more in the Starr Gate and St Annes area. A first winter **Glaucous Gull** at Fleetwood in early December was followed by at least three birds in that area in Jan and Feb, and at least one first winter on Blackpool central promenade in Feb.

Yellow Legged Gulls were seen in the gull assemblies at Clifton Marsh, Fairhaven, Fleetwood (at least two), St Annes and Starr Gate. An **intermedius Lesser-black Backed Gull** was at Skippool for much of the period. **Kittiwakes** were much in evidence during and after the storms - the peak offshore counts were 166 off Roscull Point and 191 off

Anchorsholme, up to 75 were 'wrecked' on Blackpool beaches and others turned up at several inland and estuarine sites.

Several **Mediterranean Gulls** were reported, including birds at Cockersands, Fairhaven, Freckleton, Glasson, Pilling and Skippool. At least four birds at Rossall and five around St Annes from late February were among the large numbers of gulls feeding on wrecked starfish. A Darwin ringed **Black-headed Gull** from Denmark was at Stanley Park on 8th December. A first winter **Glaucous Gull** was at Rossall Point on 9th December, the Fleetwood area remains the best bet for this species on the Fylde.

Onshore gales produced good **Little Gull** passage, including 26 off Rossall on 5th December, an estimated 100+ distantly there on 22nd Jan, 28 on 10th February and 42 on 23rd February. During and after the gales that produced these counts single figures were seen on the Ribble and Wyre estuaries, in Morecambe Bay and at Marton Mere.

Skuas

A skua sp south past Starr Gate on 21st December may have been a **Pomarine**. At least two long staying **Bonxies** spent much of February in the recording area, with at least one in Morecambe Bay and one on the Ribble estuary.

Auks

There was a good showing of **Little Auks**, with singles at Rossall Point on 5th December, Starr Gate on 14th January and Rossall again on 23rd February. Other auks were presumably under-reported, single **Guillemots** at Starr Gate on several dates were the only other records were received.

Owls

The only **Short Eared Owls** noted were at Barnaby's Sands on 6th December and up to 3 in the Warton area which were normally only seen when the marshes were covered by the tide. **Barn Owls** were reported Over Wyre and the Lytham-Warton areas.

Passerines

Kingfishers were reported from Marton Mere, Warton Bank and the Wyre estuary. **Water Pipits** were reported regularly when there were high tides, with up to 15 birds in February and March. The identity of these birds is the subject of ongoing debate, though '**Scandinavian**' **Rock Pipits** and **Rock Pipits** were reported alongside claimed **Water Pipits**. Elsewhere **Rock Pipits** were seen in single figures at several coastal sites.

Stonechats were reported from Cockersands (up to four), Eagland Hill, Fairhaven (up to three), Jameson Road (up to five), Marton Mere (two) and Rossall - a good spread of records which included the first spring movements at the end of February. The only significant winter thrush count received was 300 **Fieldfare** at Jarvis Carr on 8th February.

Following a dearth of reports in November **Chiff-Chaffs** were more evident in December, with up to three birds at Marton Mere and singles at The Nook and Preesall; there were none after the cold snap however. A **Blackcap** was at Singleton on 13th November. A **Nuthatch** was regular in Woodland Gardens-Stanley Park area in December, with another reliable birds at this time visiting a bird table at Lower Lodge, Lytham and also at Singleton.

A **Raven** was over Singleton on 13th November, at least two continued to be seen at their only regular sites on the North Ribble marshes. Wintering **Jays** away from normal sites were at the Mere, Union Lane at Hambleton and Hale Nook, Stalmine. The **Hooded Crow** from the autumn was seen again at Fairhaven in January, however flight video footage suggested the bird was in fact a **Hooded x Carrion Crow** integrade.

Up to 32 **Twite** were in the Cockersands area in December, birds were regular in the Jameson Road / Burglars Alley area with a peak of 55 birds and there were single figures at Fairhaven and Lane Ends. A **Lesser Redpoll** was reported from Poulton-le-Fylde, with up to six at the Mere. There were up to 5 **Siskins** at Witch Wood, and at least 3 at the Mere. **Brambling** were recorded in small numbers at several sites, easily the largest total was 23 at the second Eagland Hill feeding site. Nearby over 230 **Chaffinch** were at Rushy Slack Farm on 11th January. Up to 160 **Tree Sparrows**, 50 **Yellowhammers** and 200 **Corn Buntings** were recorded in the Eagland Hill area, coming to seed provided by Bob Danson at two sites. There were also up to 50 **Reed Buntings** in the Bradshaw Lane - Eagland Hill area.

AND FINALLY

Requests from Paul Slade

E-mail addresses

Could members who have recently gone 'on line' let Paul and Paul have their E-mail address if at all possible. E-mails are a quick and inexpensive way to contact people in a hurry, distribute newsletters etc.

2001 records

If anybody has 2001 records which they have not yet submitted could they please do so as soon as possible. Late sets of notes have been a cause of delay in several recent years, as it is a shame to exclude anything of value. Reports of common species are just as valuable as more scarce birds. Records can be handed in at club meetings, or E-mailed to Paul Ellis (address on this newsletter).

2002 records

These can be submitted as often as people like. Even daily submission is now a help, as it enables the website to be kept bang up to date with what's going on at Fylde sites.

Whoopers Swans in south Fylde

In the last newsletter the article on Whooper recoveries highlighted the dearth of ringing recoveries from south Fylde. This year the presence of regular flocks at Saltcotes with Bewick's Swans has led to half a dozen Darvic ringed birds being recorded. Four of these had been ringed relatively recently at Martin Mere or in Iceland, and their life histories were not that informative. Birds previously recorded on the Ouse washes and at Caerlaverock, Dumfriesshire were more useful.