



# **Fylde Bird Club**

## **Lancashire**

[www.fyldebirdclub.freeuk.com](http://www.fyldebirdclub.freeuk.com)

## **NEWSLETTER SEPTEMBER 2002**

Welcome to the September newsletter. As the fourth newsletter I have edited it means I have now spent a year in the job. Many thanks to those of you who have been supportive in terms of providing articles, bird records or kind words of support.

Following last issue's article on the 2002 Fylde bird race Maurice Jones has provided an account of a Lancs bird race he undertook in 1965. It is always fascinating to compare these accounts with more contemporary ones, both for the changes in birding culture (paggers, information services etc) and in the distribution of the birds themselves.

Persistent efforts by a number of keen local patch birders have highlighted the potential of green 'oases' in Blackpool for common and scarce migrants. I have done a short note highlighting some of the places to look if you want to give it a go. October and November can be productive so it is not too late when you read this.

Fair Isle is a fantastic place to go birding and it is always great fun to read about the experiences of those who have been there. Thanks to Stuart Piner for his account of two weeks spent there this August.

Some members (non-members?) have made it known that they are not keen on the lack of general nature interest among Fylde birders. In fact I think most of us take a wider interest in Fylde nature, though the extent of this varies from person to person. I have included some non-bird news from the last quarter to see if there is a wider demand for such news.

As I write this in early September the wild geese have already begun to trickle in. We are well placed to contribute to the knowledge of Pinkfeet in particular, and some ways in which we could all help are outlined in a short note from the WWT's Goose News. Thanks to Richard Hearn and the WWT for allowing use of this.

SD

## A LANCASHIRE CENTURY

It is a custom in America for a team of observers to travel the countryside and record as many species of bird as possible in 24 hours.

Following this example the great Cheshire naturalist the late AW Boyd started the ball rolling on this side of the Atlantic by recording 95 species in a day in his home county. This total was actually obtained by two parties, one covering the east and the other the coastal parts of the county.

This effort was followed and surpassed by A Macmillan and CK Mylne who recorded 101 species, but to do so covered the two Scottish counties of East Lothian and Berwickshire.

Suffolk, especially its coastal parts, is probably the richest area in Britain for bird variety, especially in May when residents, summer visitors, regular migrants and some scarce visitors can all be present. It is perhaps not surprising therefore that FK Cobb and party, on 22nd May, managed a total of 107 species including 97 in the parish of Westleton alone. Accounts of this expedition are given in the RSPB magazine Bird Notes, volumes 25 and 26.

Could our home county of Lancashire compete with such variety? I thought it could and on 9th May 1965 left Blackpool at 0600 hours BST with G Blackwell and S Payne.

Our first locality was Marton Mere, just behind the town. At this time of year it can be relied upon to have a good variety of bird life. Great Crested Grebe, a regular spring visitor and occasional breeder was present but no Little Grebes had returned following the severe 1962/3 frost. A surprise bird was a drake Garganey with the more normal Tufted Duck and Coot. A Common Sandpiper was on migration, Common Snipe flushed from the well developed reedswamp and Swallows, Sand Martins and Swift hawked for insects over the water. Before leaving for the shore at Squires Gate Kestrel, Wheatear and Common Whitethroat were added to the list.

On the shore a strong south westerly wind was blowing and this was to provide two species not on our list of probables. A passage of at least 50 Manx Shearwaters were moving north a quarter to half a mile offshore and an immature Gannet was with them. Various gull species were added and several Common and two Sandwich Terns. The beach here is sandy and not surprisingly the large May northwards passage of Sanderling produced 20 birds at the tide's edge.

A brief visit to the mossland behind St Annes found us Common Partridge, Corn Buntings and several common passerines. It being only 0730 hours our activities attracted the attention of the law, who suspected us of poaching and duly looked in the boot.

Fairhaven shore, closer to the Ribble, is largely of mud and attracts large numbers of waders to the vast inter-tidal areas. May sees a large movement of Grey Plover through the county and here we found 20 with several Turnstones, Knot, Dunlin, and out on the estuary a Cormorant. A Collared Dove fed near the lake.

A brief stop was made at a small woodland site at Lytham, part of the interesting woods of Lytham Hall Park now regrettably much fragmented by building. A cock Redstart was on migration, a Chiffchaff in song and the area is good for Lesser Redpolls. The usual Goldfinches, however, could not be found.

Lytham foreshore and marsh let us down in not having any Black-tailed Godwits. A thousand are sometimes there in Autumn, fewer in winter and several can usually be seen in full summer plumage from April to July.

Further up the Ribble the Freckleton area had two Ruff in nearly full summer plumage, and here we left the coast and sped through the lanes to Brock Mill between the A6 road and Beacon Fell.

Woodland birds are more varied here than in the windswept Fylde woodlands, there being better shrub and ground cover. The swift flowing River Brock had its usual Grey Wagtail, Dipper and Common Sandpipers and three or more Redstarts were here on breeding territory. We were pleased to hear a Goldcrest in song from a clump of pines.

In order to reach our total we had decided that the bird rich country around Silverdale in North Lancs must be visited so we hurried north arriving at about 1500 hours.

The area is a favourite locality for that rather elusive and superb finch the Hawfinch, and we found them at home and also Bullfinch and Long-tailed and Coal Tit.

In the woodland environs of Haweswater we found our luck was holding extremely well and we soon found Green and Great Spotted Woodpecker, Buzzard, Blackcap and Garden Warbler in song and a Jay. From the fen at the end of the lake a Bittern boomed, an extension from its nearby stronghold of Leighton Moss.

The latter is a 400 acre reed marsh, the finest in the North of England and now managed by the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds as a reserve.

Here we hoped to extend our list of duck species and did quite well with Mallard, Shelduck, Shoveler, Pochard, one pair of the rather scarce Gadwall and an immature male Goldeneye which was staying rather late. Our friend the warden, John Wilson, was helpful in telling us of certain breeding territories and assured us that Teal and Garganey were present though we saw none. Reed and Sedge Warblers sang from the pure stands of phragmites reed, and at one place with tussock sedge a Grasshopper Warbler gave its reeling song.

Bittern and Grey Heron were seen well and a Water Rail gave its 'pig squeal' cry from the reeds. Out on the main pool we enjoyed watching two Otters playing and 'mock fighting' in the water among the irises.

Our target was now quite close but each species more difficult to come by than the last. The surrounding woods and limestone pavements with scattered Oak, Yew and shrubs held other species if only we could find them. Thanks to John Wilson we found one of the few pairs of Tree Pipits in this area in song flight from the tree tops. Treecreeper and Marsh Tit were found close by the road but Lesser Whitethroat eluded us.

By now dusk was falling but 99 species were on our list. A Tawny Owl began to call a quarter of a mile away in a copse and our century was complete. Returning to the car a Barn Owl crossed the road clutching prey in its feet. The time was 2130 hours when our final species, a Woodcock, came roding over the treetops giving its alternate grunting and 'tswick' calls.

We failed to find a few species which we would normally have seen in the habitats visited, amongst them Goldfinch, Spotted Flycatcher, Whinchat, Black-tailed Godwit, Bar-tailed Godwit, Red Grouse, Sparrowhawk, Teal and Little Grebe.

Our species list for the day was: Great Crested Grebe, Manx Shearwater, Gannet, Cormorant, Heron, Bittern, Mallard, Garganey, Gadwall, Shoveler, Tufted, Pochard, Goldeneye, Shelduck, Canada Goose, Mute Swan, Buzzard, Kestrel, Common Partridge, Pheasant, Water Rail, Moorhen, Coot, Oystercatcher, Lapwing, Ring Plover, Grey Plover, Turnstone, Common Snipe, Woodcock, Curlew, Common Sandpiper, Redshank, Knot, Dunlin, Sanderling, Ruff, Greater Black Backed Gull, Lesser Black Backed Gull, Herring Gull, Common Gull, Sandwich Tern, Woodpigeon, Collared Dove, Cuckoo, Barn Owl, Tawny Owl, Swift, Green Woodpecker, Great Spotted Woodpecker, Skylark, Swallow, House Martin, Sand Martin, Carrion Crow, Rook, Jackdaw, Magpie, Jay, Great Tit, Blue Tit, Coal Tit, Marsh Tit, Long Tailed Tit, Treecreeper, Wren, Dipper, Mistle Thrush, Song Thrush, Blackbird, Wheatear, Redstart, Robin, Grasshopper Warbler, Reed Warbler, Sedge Warbler, Blackcap, Garden Warbler, Common Whitethroat, Willow Warbler, Chiffchaff, Goldcrest, Dunnock, Meadow Pipit, Tree Pipit, Pied Wagtail, Grey Wagtail, Yellow Wagtail, Starling, Hawfinch, Greenfinch, Linnet, Lesser Redpoll, Bullfinch, Chaffinch, Yellow Bunting, Corn Bunting, Reed Bunting, House Sparrow, Tree Sparrow.

Maurice Jones

## **MIGRANT PASSERINE SITES ON THE FYLDE IN AUTUMN**

Being a long straight coastline the Fylde coast lacks obvious 'geographical hotspots' on which to look for less common migrants like Heysham or Walney Island. However the flip side of this is that interesting migrants can and do turn up at just about any green oasis within reasonable distance of the open sea. When this newsletter is distributed in September much of the autumn passage will have already taken place, but the more interesting records are often in late September, October and even well into November. This note gives ideas of some potential places to look.

### Mount Park, Fleetwood

Accessed off the Esplanade and Mount Road the Mount is one of Fleetwood's most well known landmarks. Tucked in behind the monument is a sheltered area of trees in a hollow overlooking the children's swings which is ideally placed to be attractive to migrants. The remainder of the park contains several other trees which could also hold migrants.

A first winter Icterine Warbler was found at the on 24th September 1988, and just last year a Yellow-browed Warbler was found on the same red letter date. The site has a good track record for flycatchers, with Spotted regular and records of the much more scarce Pied also. Given its location and the obvious attractions for noisy children it is always preferable to get here early.

### Rossall Point

The area on the seaward side of Fleetwood golf course can be a productive area for migrants. There is a lack of trees and bushes at the point itself, so the birds seen tend to include wheatears, chats and pipits on the open ground and fence posts.

The best autumn passerine here in recent years was the Desert Wheatear found which lingered for two weeks in November 1991. There have also been a couple of Richard's Pipits and the area towards Rossall School has been productive for passage and wintering Black Redstarts. In the autumn here dog walkers can be out and about from first light, so the earlier your visit the less disturbance there will have been.

### Anchorsholme Park

This site has clear potential, with a lot of cover immediately inland of the shore at Queens Promenade. In practice interesting grounded migrants have been rather thin on the ground, and the shelter available in adjoining gardens may be a factor in this. However the site would probably still reward regular coverage, with chats and Wheatears not infrequent and the chance of something else. As with Rossall Point dog walkers mean getting their early would always be an advantage.

### Gynn Gardens

Gynn Gardens is at the seaward end of Warbreck Hill Road, to the west of its junction with Seafield Road. The site has not been as well covered as some of the others mentioned

here, but in theory should be a good site to watch regularly for passage migrants as there is plenty of cover and a lack of other suitable habitat nearby.

A Pallas's Warbler found here on 29th October 1994 highlights the potential of the place.

#### Watson Road ('Pleasure Beach') railway bushes

In the area around the junction of Watson Road and Bond Street, immediately inland of the pleasure beach, is a corridor of trees along the railway line. This area has been worked extensively over the years, and persistence has been well rewarded with birds including Barred Warbler, Red-breasted Flycatcher and Wryneck among many others.

Whilst you can be looking from some odd angles at times, and attracting some strange looks from passers by most of the time, there are a couple of major advantages to the site. The birds are in a relatively confined area, so if there is something there and you are persistent you stand a good chance of seeing it. Also because the railway line is private the disturbance to the birds is minimised and if you get lucky and find something it is likely to remain for others to enjoy.

#### Watson Road Park

Watson Road Park is at the junction of Watson Road and Thirlmere Road, it is triangular shaped and Yeadon Way forms the other boundary. Like Watson Road this is another site put on the birding map by the remarkable efforts of Ed Stirling, but a glance at the map shows it is the largest open space in south Blackpool and its attraction for migrants is clear. This is a good site for Pied Flycatcher, and rarities have included a Roller.

#### LSANR

This Fylde Borough Council nature reserve, south of the Pontins complex and east of Clifton Drive North, can be productive for migrants. Wheatears may be found throughout the reserve, but for warblers and others the buckthorn bushes behind the visitor centre and also at the southern end of the reserve are worth a look.

Maurice Jones was part time warden here for 20 years, members at the July meeting will have seen the presentation to him in recognition of this service. However the site is not presently wardened so any coverage will be beneficial. Autumn birds reported here include Barred Warblers and Black Redstarts. The site is also particularly well known for two spring Subalpine Warblers including in 2001, and there was a Hoopoe this April.

**FAIR ISLE**  
**(17th AUGUST 2002 – 1st SEPTEMBER 2002)**

The cold fresh air blew in my face as I stood on the upper deck of the MV St.Clair, at 5 am on the morning of Saturday 17th August. The unmistakable silhouette of a Bonxie soared over my head and a characteristic Tystie dived quickly out of the boats path. Although I was incredibly tired after travelling constantly for nearly 24 hours, and my surroundings had remarkably changed since the night before, I knew exactly where I was...Shetland.

For the second consecutive year my friend Robert Pocklington and I had been given grants to go and volunteer on Fair Isle. Our travel had been paid for and for two weeks, we had the opportunity to help the wardens in their day-to-day running of the island's ornithological studies...basically, we were going birding!

After making our way by bus down the coast of Shetland, (passing Hoswick, the site where the day after, an Eastern Olivaceous Warbler was to be found, but more on that later) we eventually reached Grutness, just in time to catch the Good Shepherd mail boat which would take us to the Magic Isle. Whilst waiting for the boat we got crippling views of a summer plumage Great Northern Diver. We'd have swapped this for the 1st summer White-Billed Diver that had been hanging around this area for a bit though, but no such luck!

The boat journey was, as would be expected, very rough. Trying to prevent yourself from falling overboard and managing to hold bins is a skill I struggle with, so we saw little on the journey bar a Sooty Shearwater and a few Stormies. However, a Meadow Pipit did fly onto the boat and hitched a ride stood at my feet, which was quite amusing.

When we arrived on the island, Alan Bull, the Ranger told us he'd found 4 Two-barred Crossbills on Dronger (which is at the very northern end of the island.) The island was covered in the mist, but we had to go for them. We hiked up the bleak heather moorland that makes up the majority of the northern end of Fair Isle, narrowly avoiding death on numerous occasions due to our inability to see the cliff edges. However it was worth it, as we were rewarded with absolutely fantastic views of a male, two females and a juvenile. Fully satisfied, it was now time to trudge all the way back down to the observatory to eat one of the cook's legendary meals. I'm sure many people believe that going to Fair Isle and walking around the crofts, covering many miles daily, is a good way of losing weight...they could not be further from the truth. The evening meals are so tasty, it is only polite to eat at least 3 portions!

The options for the evening were either to go to a party or go and search roosting White Wag flocks for a First winter Citrine Wagtail, that had been seen that morning. Due to missing an elusive

Citrine Wag last year, I decided I had to go for the latter option. I searched in increasingly fading light, and there was little chance of seeing it unless it flew over calling in one of the small white wag flocks and it didn't.

The next morning Paul French came in and told me he'd seen a juvenile Red-backed Shrike in 'the Gully'. Embarrassingly, this 'common' Fair Isle bird was a lifer for me, so Paul and I disappeared to go and see it. It showed very well, and we re-aged it as an adult female, which was proven when it was later trapped and ringed.

Every morning during spring and autumn, the wardens complete a thorough census of the island. There are three wardens, so the island is split into three sections (south-east, south-west and north). Each warden counts every bird in one of the sections, each morning. Deryk Shaw, head warden, decided Rob and I could do his census during the two weeks, so he could catch up on paperwork etc. Doing census is just the perfect job, as you just go birding, in a

different part of the island every morning, and being on Fair Isle, is a little more exciting than walking around some 'miserable sandpits' in the middle of Lancashire every morning. It is alarming that even after a few days you begin to walk back into the observatory after census and in reply to the question "Did you have anything?" you find yourself saying, "Nope, not much, just 6 Barred Warblers, 3 Wrynecks, 2 Common Rosefinch and a Icterine Warbler." I had to pinch myself and remember to appreciate these species, considering I would love to find just one of these during an autumn morning at my local patch!

The amazing thing about Fair Isle is, that if a good bird is present, you generally get absolutely crippling views of it, because it has few places to hide. Therefore during the first week we got unbelievable views of a Thrush Nightingale (an absolutely classic bird, which was instantly identifiable after brief views – no calling this one Nightingale spp), Greenish Warbler (down to less than 1m away) and Marsh Warbler (showing everything well). The weather during the first week was superb, with high pressure over Scandinavia and Fair Isle, with brisk easterlies blowing pretty much constantly. The second week however was poor, and little new arrived, and a reappearance of the Nightingale was the only real highlight.

Finds during the two weeks were unfortunately few and far between. However I did find the thirty-first island record of Marsh Harrier, and a Wood Warbler, which are scarce yet annual in low numbers on Fair Isle. I also found Barred Warblers, Wrynecks and Common Rosefinches, but these don't really count on Fair Isle!

Most afternoons were spent re-building the plantation heligoland trap, which was hard work, but still good fun 'having a laugh' with the wardens. It is not just the birds which makes Fair Isle so special and exhilarating. The whole island has a relentless sense of community and everyone gets on so well. We went to the island Rock Concert, and all the islanders joined in the had a great time, and other nights would be just spent discussing birds in the observatory. It was perfect.

The two weeks just flew by, and far too soon it was time to leave. We had hoped to do some birding around the Grutness/Sumburgh area of Shetland before we caught our boat back to Aberdeen on Sunday night. Which is exactly what we did...but we saw absolutely nothing! We chatted to Paul Harvey for quite a while, and even he couldn't find anything. We even went to try and find the Eastern Olivaceous Warbler mentioned previously – no luck at all! On Sunday morning we were sat near the Pool of Virkie, scanning the same piece of empty mud we'd already scanned several times before when my mobile rang. It was Paul French... "Hey lads! We've got a Buff-Breasted Sand and 2 Citrine Wags giving great views right now on the island..." We nearly cried. We'd seen nothing for the whole second week, and the day after we leave, three good birds turn up! Depression set in, and stayed until we eventually made it home.

Fair Isle is purely magic. The scenery is epic. The people are the best. The birds...well little else needs saying on the score! In fact the birds are rather too good...at the time of writing a female Chestnut Bunting has just been found on the island. Four days ago I was stood where it is showing very well. Life's not fair!

## PINK FEET (AND OTHER GESE) RECORDING

With the increase in colour-marking projects in recent years, of geese and numerous other species as well, many birdwatchers are now familiar with the basic information required when submitting sightings of colour-marked birds. Coupled with the development of the EURING colour-marking website (<http://www.cr-birding.be>) by Dirk Racs, that provides an excellent source of information on how to contact relevant co-ordinators, never before have so many sightings been forthcoming.

In order to maximise the value of these sightings, observers of colour-marked geese in the UK are encouraged to follow the guidelines below whenever possible. Currently, the additional requirements only apply to WWT projects. These may be different for other projects and it is recommended that you confirm this before submitting large numbers of sightings. The most important thing to remember, however, is that all sightings are required. If it is not possible to follow the suggestions below, your observations are still of great value and will be gratefully accepted.

### Essential information:

1. Species
2. Date
3. Location - please remember to record a 1-km grid reference with your location, e.g. SO7204.
4. Colour-marks seen, including colour, position (e.g. which leg) and engraved code (normally two or three alphanumeric characters).

### Additional information:

1. Social status – i.e. whether the marked bird has a mate and/or family. If it has a brood, please record the number of goslings. If any of these birds are also marked, please identify the relationship between these birds. This type of information is important for looking at age of first breeding and lifetime reproductive success, yet is rarely reported. Observers are encouraged to report observations of social status whenever possible.
2. Habitat – please record what habitat or crop type the bird/s are using, for example improved grasslands, water, sugar beet or cereal stubbles.
3. Flock size – please count the flock that the marked bird/s are with.
4. Time of day

### Submitting data:

An increasing number of observers now have access to home computers and choose to report sightings electronically. The benefits of this method could be increased considerably if these data were in a format that could be imported directly into the main databases at WWT. In order to facilitate this, a template will shortly be available as an Excel 2000 spreadsheet. If you would like to use this template during the coming winter, please contact me and I will forward a copy to you when it is available. Some other formats may also be suitable, particularly for those people submitting many hundreds of sightings each winter. Please contact me if you would like further details about these alternatives.

Sightings can be submitted at any time of the year. Due to the large number of sightings received for some species, however, it may not always be possible to provide immediate feedback. In such cases, observers will always be notified when to expect feedback on their sightings. For example, sightings of Pink-footed Geese are collated at the end of each winter. This reduces the time required to input data, especially if electronic data for the whole winter are submitted together, and means that observers get a full history for each bird that includes the whole of that winter, not just up to the point at which they submitted their sightings. If feedback is required before the normal reporting period, e.g. because observers pass this to land owners, I am always happy to process sightings immediately upon request.

If you would like further advice on any of the above, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Richard Hearn ([Richard.Hearn@wwt.org.uk](mailto:Richard.Hearn@wwt.org.uk))



## RECENT REPORTS - OTHER FAUNAL GROUPS

One of the recent comments on the club newsletter has been the lack of coverage of other faunal groups. Whilst other organisations (e.g. Fylde Naturalists) are probably better placed to make general reports there is no doubt that club members make significant observations of other nature whilst out birding.

Clearly there will be times of the year when there is little which could possibly be reported, but during the spring and summer a number of interesting observations came to light.

### *Mammals*

Both teams saw different Roe Deer at Eagland Hill during the bird race in May. Several participants had not seen deer in this area previously, showing the benefits which can be enjoyed from early morning nature watching on your 'doorstep'.

At the end of the July the Marine Conservation Society held a national cetacean watch. As part of this survey a porpoise was noted in the Ribble estuary and a dolphin was seen off Fleetwood (both 27th), prior to this a porpoise had been washed up dead at Norbreck in early July. Grey Seals were seen off the Fylde coast in small numbers throughout the period, and one was even seen on the Ribble in the centre of Preston.

There were 23 Hares on Newton Marsh on 16th March. Other reasonable counts were made in several 1km squares as part of the Lancashire Lapwing survey.

### *Butterflies*

The most significant butterfly report of the summer concerned a White-letter Hairstreak in Stanley Park on 6th August, this species has been very rare in Lancashire in recent years though it does appear to be on the upward curve again at present.

A couple of small influxes of Painted Lady occurred, which saw this attractive species widespread in small numbers. There was a good show of Gatekeeper at favoured sites in the south of the recording area such as Warton Bank and LSANR, also reflected in a site record nine at Marton Mere (where up to 15 species were on the wing at one time).

The important Large Heath colony on private land on Winmarleigh Moss did very well this year. At least four Clouded Yellows were reported during the summer.

### *Dragonflies*

Having come into the Fylde only last year Black-tailed Skimmers appear to be consolidating, with insects seen at Myerscough Quarry. This species was also seen at ponds on Herons Reach.

Emerald Damselflies, a scarce species in the Fylde, were seen on the pools at Herons Reach golf course. Emperor Dragonflies were reported from Marton Mere, Herons Reach golf course, Warton Bank and Jameson Road, Fleetwood.

The first Migrant Hawker was seen at Watson Road Park on 7th August, and they were widespread in September. Southern Hawkets were seen at Marton Mere, with Four Spotted Chasers here and at LSANR.

### *Reptiles*

Common Lizard was seen at LSANR and Rossall Point, this species hangs on in the dunes in this area but is always a welcome sight.

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

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Next Fylde Bird Club / Wyre Borough Council Guided Walk.

Meet at Pilling Lane Ends at 0700hrs on Sunday the 6th October, hopefully there will be geese leaving the roost or visible migration to enjoy.

Free to bird club members

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The RSPB Ribble Discovery Centre at Fairhaven Lake has the following talks coming up:

Wednesday 30th October 2002

Florida in winter-birds of the sunshine state

Thursday 28th November 2002

Finland and Arctic Norway

Thursday 12th December 2002

Birding the South African Cape

There is a small charge for these events.

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All records of incidents of Disturbance to Wader roosts on our coast and estuaries are requested.

A campaign is slowly forming with the aim of giving our wader roosts some protection from disturbance.

All forms of human disturbance should be recorded, e.g. Jet Skis, Microlights, Dog walkers etc, etc.

Large stretches of our coast and estuaries are classified as RAMSAR Sites, SSSIs and SPA's

however these designations offer no practical protection from human disturbance.

The aim is convince the authorities that this is a serious problem and that action must be taken.

Whilst many records of such disturbance already exist, the more we have

and the higher their quality, then the more evidence we will have to press our case.

So if you witness disturbance please record the following, as a starter for 10.

Location, Date & Time

Species disturbed and approx numbers

Duration of disturbance

Reaction of birds: e.g. Flew off and didn't come back or Flew round and came back, etc.

Nature of disturbance: e.g. Jet Skis, Dog walkers etc

Number of People and vehicles/animals involved

If Aircraft please try to note the Reg number and estimate its altitude

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Wing Tagged Hen Harriers

Stephen Murphy who is doing fieldwork for English Nature & RSPB on

breeding Hen Harriers has asked for reports of any sightings of wing-tagged Hen Harriers.

He has radio-tagged at least three birds and one of these has left the breeding grounds and he is anxious to locate it.

Ring him on 07973 911594.

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Request for help from the Police to combat Illegal Hare Coursing on Newton Marsh.

Please report anyone seen on the Marsh hunting with dogs to the Police and the Farmer.

Make detailed notes .

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The New Book 'Birds of Marton Mere Local Nature Reserve' by Pauline McGough is now available priced £6.50

It will be on sale at club meetings.

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Volunteers are desperately needed for the Morecambe Bay WeBS counts. If you are interested please contact the Secretary who will provide details of dates and meeting times.

## 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 and grebes

Dispersing **Little Grebes** turned up at one or two unusual sites, including the Naze Pool and the River Conder at Conder Green. There were up to 10 **Great Crested Grebes** off Pilling Lane Ends in late August.

### Seabirds

**Manxies** were seen regularly in reasonable numbers during onshore winds in early July, with over 50 seen from South Pier / Starr Gate. **Gannet** reports included one taken into care at St Annes in July. An immature **sinensis Cormorant** was at Skippool on 21st August. The largest **Fulmar** count was 13 off Little Bispham on 30th August.

### Herons and allies

**Little Egrets** reappeared at Skippool on 7th July only, and in the Warton-Freckleton area regularly from 27th July. An early **Bittern**, perhaps a displaced British juvenile, was back at Marton Mere by 18th August and there may have been two birds present by the month end.

### Swans and Geese

A minimum of 150 **Mute Swans** were in the moult flock at Fairhaven, remarkable numbers for this site. At least two full winged **Pink-footed Geese** which may have been summering wild birds were present at Pilling Lane Ends.

An escaped first summer **Snow Goose** was at Fairhaven for much of June and July, and a **Barnacle Goose** was often present also. Another Barnacle of similar origin successfully nested with a **minima Canada Goose** at Preesall. Completing the escaped and feral goose theme a **Lesser White-fronted Goose** joined Greylags at Preesall from late June.

## Ducks

A pair of **Garganey** were on a saltmarsh pond at Cockerham on 9th June, the Preesall drake was last seen on this date also. A very reasonable showing of this species on return passage in August comprised an eclipse drake at Fleetwood Tip and females/immatures near Pilling Lane Ends, at Marton Mere and on Newton Marsh. At least 500 **Teal** were at Lane Ends by the end of August. **Shoveler** were seen in low single figures at sites including the Naze Pool, Newton Marsh, Marton Mere and Stanley Park. **Gadwall** were reported in small numbers, five at Marton Mere was the peak count.

**Tufted Ducks** nested successfully at Stanley Park and Sand Villa Pool. An unseasonal drake **Scaup** was off Cockersands on 7th July, perhaps the same was in the Fairhaven area in early August.

At least three **Goosander** were on the Ribble at Avenham Park in August. **Common Scoter** were seen in reasonable numbers off Starr Gate from July, more unusual was a female at Myerscough Quarry on 27th July presumably on overland migration. A few **Eider** were seen on the Ribble during the period but there were no reports received from the Wyre.

## Rails, game birds, cranes

Regular coverage Over Wyre eventually produced the goods with several **Quail** heard in June and July. There were at least two singing males each at Bone Hill, Copthorne and around Eagland Hill, and presumably others elsewhere were overlooked. This was part of a decent national showing in favoured areas. One was still calling at Copthorne on 13th August.

Despite high spring tides the **Water Rails** at Warton Bank remained to nest, with at least three heard during the breeding season. Birds had also returned to Marton Mere by mid August.

## Raptors

**Buzzards** were seen regularly at Gipsy Hole Wood, Mythop and there were other reports from the Kirkham area through the summer. In late August records relating to dispersing birds were noted at Nateby (two together) and several sites on the North Ribble marshes.

At least three **Marsh Harriers** were regular on the Ribble from late July, with at least two in the Fluke Hall - Eagland Hill area late July and early August and three passage birds through Marton Mere later in the month.

The regular **Peregrine** reappeared on the pylon at Chain Lane, Mythop, with several other widely scattered reports of one to two birds including immatures. A **Hobby** was noted at Thistleton on 13th August, this species continues to expand in Lancs but remains very scarce in the Fylde. **Merlin** appeared at several coastal

sites in August. There were seven **Kestrels** seen together near Lane Ends on 11th August.

## **Waders**

Whilst it had been hoped for it was still much appreciated when the Marshside **Avocets** appeared on 'our' side of the Ribble at Freckleton; there were no fewer than eight on 27th July and three remained for several days. A leucistic nearly all white **Oystercatcher** was in the Lytham-Freckleton area in late July- early August.

**Greenshank** were regular from the beginning of July, peak numbers being up to 13 at Shard Bridge and 16 at Warton Bank. Single **Spotted Redshanks** were seen at Newton Marsh, Naze Point and Ramper Pot in July and Bank End, Cockerham, the Wyre at Fleetwood and Freckleton in August. After the last **Little Ringed Plover** reports from Myerscough Quarry in late June birds were seen on Newton Marsh on 9th July and at Fleetwood Tip and Cockersands in early August. Around 2000 **Dunlin** were recorded at Skippool, 24 at Marton Mere on 21st August was a good inland count. The peak **Ringed Plover** numbers were at Lytham where up to 200 were noted.

The **Black-tailed Godwit** flock at Fairhaven was estimated at up to 2000 birds in August, away from the estuaries 26 dropped in at Marton Mere on the 26th. **Whimbrel** were seen on return passage in ones and twos at several coastal and estuarine sites from late July. A number of **Green Sandpipers** were reported, including up to two at Newton Marsh and Jameson Road Tyre Pool and singles at Larbreck, Marton Mere, Myerscough Quarry, Pilling Lane Ends, the Naze Pool and Skippool. **Common Sandpiper** passage was, as always, most evident on the Wyre at Shard with an excellent peak of 51 on 7th July between there and Wardley's.

**Ruff** passage early in the period included a maximum of nine at Newton Marsh in July, smaller numbers were seen again towards the end of August. Adult **Curlew Sandpipers** were seen in August at Church Scar, Lytham on 2nd-3rd, Fleetwood Tip on the 6th and Fairhaven (two) on the 8th; the first juvenile of the autumn was at Skippool on the 31st into Sept. The only **Little Stint** of the period was at Skippool on 26th July. Up to 600 **Sanderling** were on St Annes beach in August. There were 24 **Snipe** over Carr House Green Common on 4th August, and 16 at Conder Green later that month.

## **Gulls**

A first summer **Little Gull** spent several days on flood pools at Saltcotes in early July until they dried up, presumably the same bird was off Lytham jetty on the 9th of that month. **Mediterranean Gulls** began post breeding dispersal from late June, there was a good run of records from Myerscough Quarry and the Ribble estuary in July and there was also a report from the Mere at the end of the month. The pace picked up even further in August with a regular adult at Fairhaven, an adult and two first summers at Preesall on the 7th, a juv. at Bank End on the 11th, a first summer at Myerscough Quarry on the 12th and a first summer at Cockersands on

the 14th and no fewer than four at Skippool (two adults, one second winter and a first winter) at Skippool towards the end of the month.

An adult **Yellow-legged Gull** was at Skippool on 18th-20th August, the annual returning Lune estuary bird was also seen from Glasson in the period. There were no passage **Kittiwake** counts in the period, but a juvenile was at Fairhaven on 8th August.

### **Terns**

During July **Common Terns** were regular at Marton Mere and Stanley Park, with two at the latter site on one occasion. Up to 15 each of Common and **Arctic Terns** were seen on the Ribble, and 35 of the latter passed Starr Gate on 2nd July.

By recent standards there was a good run of **Little Tern** reports from St Annes beach in August, with seven (including three juvs.) on the 12th, two on the 13th and four on the 14th. At least 30 **Sandwich Terns** were also on St Annes beach in early August, with at least ten still at the end of the month.

### **Skuas**

Surprisingly no reports of any skua species were received during the period.

### **Auks**

One of the most surprising records of the period was a juvenile **Black Guillemot** on the Lune at Cockersands Abbey (before flying upriver!) on 21st August.

### **Owls, Pigeons**

Up to five **Barn Owls** were reported from Lytham Moss and one was seen in the middle of the day at Staining having presumably been disturbed from its roost site.

A number of **Stock Dove** flocks Over Wyre included 91 at Copthorne on 31st August.

### **Woodpeckers, Cuckoos, Kingfishers**

A **Green Woodpecker** heard twice at Freckleton Naze on 28th July was an excellent record for the Fylde.

Dispersing **Kingfishers** were seen at several sites in August, including Avenham Park (Preston), Marton Mere, Myerscough Quarry and Warton Bank

### **Pipits and Wagtails**

A number of **Yellow Wagtails** were seen at Bank End between 6th and 26th August, with four on the 17th. **Grey Wagtails** were on the move in August, peak counts

being four at Starr Gate and Fairhaven. Up to 48 Pied Wagtails were reported at BNFL Salwick.

### **Hirundines**

At least 2000 **Swallows** roosted at Marton Mere in August. **House Martins** included at least 70 at Skippool in August.

### **Chats and thrushes**

Always a good find in the Fylde, a **Redstart** was at St Davids Road North, St Annes on 17th and 18th Aug. A very early juv. **Wheatear** was at Lambs Lane, Pilling on 27th July, thereafter only low single figures were recorded during August. A juvenile **Stonechat** at Cockersands on 21st July was early, there were no other reports.

**Mistle Thrush** assemblies included 26 at Cuddy Hill and 19 at Pilling in late July and 25 at Skippool and 35 at Newton Marsh in August.

### **Warblers**

**Lesser Whitethroats** continued to be recorded, with birds in June at Haslam Park (Preston), Ramper Pot (Wyre est.) Freckleton and Myerscough Quarry where up to four in August presumably reflected successful breeding.

### **Flycatchers, Nuthatches, Treecreepers**

A pair of **Spotted Flycatchers** nested at Catforth and three pairs were reported from the Pilling area. A **Pied Flycatcher** was a good find in Watson Road Park, South Shore on 5th August.

The only **Nuthatches** reported in the period were at the regular site of Avenham Park, Preston.

### **Crows, starlings**

**Ravens** were seen regularly in ones and twos in the Warton-Freckleton area and appear to be established visitors to our area. **Jays** were recorded from sites including the Freckleton Naze area. An all white apparently albino **Starling** was in the flock at Warton Bank on 31st August, up to 6000 birds of this species were roosting at Marton Mere around this time.

### **Finches, Sparrows and Buntings**

Up to 400 **Linnet** fed on a rape field at Copthorne in August. **Goldfinch** flocks included 65 at Myerscough Quarry and 50 at LSANR, presumably some larger flocks were not reported. **Tree Sparrow** assemblies included up to 50 at Copthorne in August, with good numbers at the Eagland Hill feeding stations also.