



# **Fylde Bird Club**

## **Lancashire**

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

### **NEWSLETTER JUNE 2003**

There is rather a strong focus on the bird race in this edition of the newsletter. I don't apologise for this as I didn't receive any material which hasn't been used, but I realise bird races are often more interesting to take part in than read about. Hopefully the accounts of this year's efforts will encourage those who haven't had a go to take the plunge next year. Paul's account of a June bird race shows that even at a supposedly quiet time you can see over 90 species in the Fylde without burning the candle at both ends.

In the last edition I had planned to use some excellent Black-headed Gull data which was being accumulated from Fairhaven in particular, but also other sites where the species gathers in any numbers. This had to be pulled to find the space for Barry's excellent travelogue, so I have included something this time.

Due to shortage of space there is no 'where to watch' article in this quarter's newsletter. However tips on what to look for and where are put on the club's website every Friday for the forthcoming weekend so why not have a look every week.

SD

## THE 2003 BIRD RACE(S)

### THE MAY BIRD RACE BY STEPHEN DUNSTAN

The Chairman / Secretary's team was heavily depleted by foreign trips and didn't race this on the day itself this year, so far as we know we (Chris Batty, Stephen Dunstan and Stuart Piner) were the only team to give it a go. On Saturday 3rd May this didn't look the best decision, with a forecast for the big day of extensive showers and onshore winds. As there might not be another opportunity we decided to give it a go, and stepped onto a roller coaster of a ride round the Fylde recording area.

In 2002 we had been rather late starting due to some of the team oversleeping. This year we made an effort to have a crack at some nocturnal species before dawn, and this paid dividends with Tawny Owl, Barn Owl and perhaps more usefully Water Rail and surprisingly singing Lesser Whitethroat in south Fylde. As the first light began to appear in the sky the singing Grasshopper Warbler at the Nook was another good bird to get under the belt. We had a major stint at Rossall planned, but made a fruitful diversion for Cuckoo Over Wyre before making our way to the coast.

Seawatching at Rossall was rather hard work, but we picked up one or two useful bird race species including Red-throated Diver, Gannet, Eider and Sandwich Tern and a good selection of waders. Passerine migration was non-existent, it had been inspiring in 2002, but some hope for a decent score was rekindled when a pair of Yellow Wagtails came in from the north (!) and landed on the golf course in front of us.

The next major site was Fleetwood Tip / CEGB pool, where we were able to pick up Gadwall and Ruddy Duck as well as some waders and gulls. Following a quick stop for breakfast it was round to Pilling Lane Ends for the essential Pink-footed Goose stop. Several hundred birds were soon located off the car park and we were able to head on to the northern edge of the recording area.

Last year we had done very well 'up North' and it was similar again this year. Biggest surprise was a drake Scaup on the Lune estuary, but Pintail, Merganser, Wigeon and a fly past Goosander were all useful additions as the list began to take some shape. Moving inland for woodland species several musts for a good score were duly ticked off, including Goldcrest, Garden Warbler, Treecreeper, Coal Tit, Long-tailed Tit (can be tricky) and Great Spotted Woodpecker. A nesting Kingfisher was also seen.

Although we already had Tree Sparrow a check of some Over Wyre sites was still necessary for Corn Bunting and Yellowhammer, we got the Yellowhammer and also Grey Partridge but the Corn Bunting eluded us. Eventually we had to give up and head for a riverine site.

It is no secret that we looked for Dipper and Grey Wagtail on the A6 at Brock. Initially there was no sign of either, and it was looking bleak before a Grey

Shag had been seen off Rossall, we obviously couldn't have stayed there all day but it just showed what was out there. Maybe next year...

### **A BIRD RACE IN JUNE BY PAUL ELLIS**

For the first time in years I missed the spring Bird Race owing to a holiday in Ethiopia. On the day in question we did see 117 species (and so beat the other lot anyway) but that's another story...

Having dealt with some pressing domestic chores and the odd Black Lark, I eventually resolved to venture out and see what I could find on the 7th June. To my surprise but good fortune, Kinta decided to join me. We knew that a miracle would be required to approach the record in June but we decided to try our best. I guessed that 100 was still possible with a following wind.

A 5am start saw us at Todderstaffe where 'our' Tree Sparrows obliged. Thurnham was next, where Garden Warbler gave itself up straight away (we dipped last year). A quick stop at the new 'scrape' at Conder Green held the hoped for Little Ringed Plover. Ellel confirmed its 'must do' status by providing 3 Kingfishers, Nuthatch, Treecreeper, Goldcrest and remarkably, Spotted Flycatcher. This was a great start and hopes were high of reaching the ton.

We still needed farmland species, so headed to the rich area around Eagland Hill. Corn Bunting & Yellowhammer fell and Curlews with a chick were a good find. However Grey Partridge remained well hidden in the high crops. A quick foray to Lane Ends proved its value with 3 Pinkfeet out on the saltmarsh, Lesser Whitethroat singing by the car park and amazingly, another Spotted Flycatcher. However, the sea was nowhere to be seen and neither were Little Grebe and Tufted Duck. We weren't worried about the latter two at the time but should have been.

Our zigzag tour continued with a dash to the A6. The road bridges at the Wyre and Brock provided nothing but a huge carp and even that wasn't in the Fylde. There was nothing for it but a time consuming walk down the Brock. Our efforts were rewarded with a Dipper and 3 Grey Wags but the continued absence of Jays was becoming reminiscent of last year, when we dipped it.

Having incorrectly decided Myerscough Quarry had nothing for us, we pressed on to Lightfoot Green where our luck held with a pair of Bullfinches.

We made the short hop to Grey Friars and entered the doldrums. We'd done so well in the woods that Jay was the only likely addition. It was now 1:15 and the sane option would have been to cut and run to the Ribble and the coast with so much to gain. Alas, I wouldn't give up on Jay. Grey Friars added nothing. A time draining grind through Preston added the staked out Goosanders but the accompanying Black Swan failed to qualify. The Jay quest resumed with visits to Salwick, Clifton and Bartle Hall but nothing was added to the list!

lengthy quick-march from the car, Painted Lady and another Lesser Whitethroat were noted but little did we know what was awaiting us. As we stood, sweating and listening, little flies appeared. At first they were a minor nuisance but as their numbers increased their intentions became apparent. Midges: millions of 'em all trying to eat us! The pressure of time and blood loss forced us away at 8:30pm with another blank.

By now we knew that doing both Fleetwood and the Mere was going to be impossible, so we hatched a cunning plan to abandon Fleetwood and get Little Grebe at an untried site near Robins Lane. We arrived at the site only to find the pond invisible from the footpath and the intervening ground occupied by an unreasoning farmer, who informed us that they, 'have a lot of grass growing'. Rule 101 of bird racing: never go anywhere you haven't been before.

We arrived at the Mere at 9:15pm with the light fading. The most reliable Little Owl in the world appeared on cue at the east barn. The expected drake Gadwall floated out from the scape as a fox appeared and sat down chewing on something. But that was that! I have never, ever seen the Mere so devoid of waterfowl, not even when it has been frozen solid! In addition to the gadwall, there was a handful of mallard, about a hundred coots and a few swans. No grebes, ruddies and no Tufted Ducks! I refused to believe it and walked the length of the lake scoping every lilly pad but to no avail.

Desperation set in and I dragged us to Ream Hills to scope the lake in the 10pm gloom. Needless to say I couldn't see much and what I could see wasn't tick shaped.

There was one more site on the agenda that I was determined to do. Staining Nook for Grasshopper Warbler at 10:30pm— silence! By now I was dead on my feet, having eaten only two bags of crisps all day. The attraction of food and a cold beer were becoming overwhelming when something weird flew over like a rocket. It was dark and I barely got my bins on it and I don't know what it was! My best guess is too outrageous to pen. I was so tired I thought I may have been hallucinating and so consigned it to the bin, together with thoughts of picking up a lamp to get Tuftie on Stanley Park and Lytham Moss for Barn Owl.

The list ended with the Gadwall on 93, not bad for June, when many folk give up birding. I still think 100 in June is possible, given a proper plan. It was hot and sunny all day with light winds. We covered about 130 miles in 17.5 hours during my best day's local birding since the last bird race.

I'll be back.

|                 |   |   |   |   |
|-----------------|---|---|---|---|
| Black-H Gull    | X | X | X | X |
| Common Gull     | X | X | X | X |
| LBB Gull        | X | X | X | X |
| Herring Gull    | X | X | X | X |
| GBB Gull        | X | X | X | X |
| Sandwich Tern   | X | X | X | X |
| Common Tern     | X |   | X | X |
| Arctic Tern     | X | X | X | X |
| Guillemot       |   |   | X |   |
| Feral Pigeon    | X | X | X | X |
| Stock Dove      | X | X | X | X |
| Woodpigeon      | X | X | X | X |
| Collared Dove   | X | X | X | X |
| Cuckoo          |   | X | X | X |
| Barn Owl        |   | X |   |   |
| Little Owl      | X | X | X | X |
| Tawny Owl       |   | X | X | X |
| Swift           | X | X | X | X |
| Kingfisher      | X | X | X | X |
| GS Woodpecker   | X | X | X | X |
| Skylark         | X | X | X | X |
| Sand Martin     | X | X | X | X |
| Swallow         | X | X | X | X |
| House Martin    | X | X | X | X |
| Tree Pipit      |   |   | X |   |
| Meadow Pipit    | X | X | X | X |
| Yellow Wagtail  |   | X | X |   |
| Grey Wagtail    | X | X | X | X |
| Pied Wagtail    | X | X | X | X |
| Dipper          | X | X | X |   |
| Wren            | X | X | X | X |
| Dunnock         | X | X | X | X |
| Robin           | X | X | X | X |
| Whinchat        |   |   | X | X |
| Stonechat       |   |   | X | X |
| Wheatear        |   | X | X | X |
| Blackbird       | X | X | X | X |
| Song Thrush     | X | X | X | X |
| Mistle Thrush   | X | X | X | X |
| G/hopper Warb   |   | X | X | X |
| Sedge Warbler   | X | X | X | X |
| Reed Warbler    | X | X | X | X |
| Lsr Whitethroat | X | X | X | X |
| Whitethroat     | X | X | X | X |
| Garden Warbler  | X | X |   | X |
| Blackcap        | X | X | X | X |
| Wood Warbler    |   |   | X | X |
| Chiffchaff      | X | X | X | X |
| Willow Warbler  | X | X | X | X |
| Goldcrest       | X | X | X | X |
| Sp Flycatcher   | X |   | X | X |
| LT Tit          | X | X | X | X |
| Coal Tit        | X | X | X | X |
| Blue Tit        | X | X | X | X |
| Great Tit       | X | X | X | X |
| Nuthatch        | X |   | X | X |
| Treecreeper     | X | X | X | X |
| Jay             |   | X |   | X |
| Magpie          | X | X | X | X |
| Jackdaw         | X | X | X | X |

### **Norway**

Metal ringed 6174020 was ringed as an adult in Oslo on 8th April 1998, and was seen at Fairhaven on 17 July, 25 July, 1 August, 23 September, 24 September, 19 October and 9 November 2002.

Metal ringed 6192046 was ringed as a pullus at Hole on 4 July 2000, and was seen at Fairhaven on 23 September, 25 September, 27 September, 10 October, 20 October and 17 December 2002 and 7 February 2003.

### **Sweden**

Metal ringed 6177991 ringed as an adult at Malmo on 20 March 1999 was seen at Fairhaven on 25 July, 22 September and 24 September 2002. Interestingly 6403608 was ringed in Malmo on 22 June 2002 before being seen a couple of months later at Fairhaven on 1 August and 5 August.

No life history has been received for Swedish ringed bird 6198564 which was seen at Fairhaven on 28 November 2002.

### **Poland**

No life history has been received for Polish ringed bird metal FN14943, seen at Fairhaven on seven dates between 26 November 2002 and 3rd March 2003.

### **Finland**

No life history has been received for a Finnish ringed first winter seen at Fairhaven on 20 January, 25 January and 18 February 2003.

### **Skippool**

#### **England**

Red Darvic ringed 2J78 at Skippool on 8 June was ringed at Thorne Moors NNR near Doncaster on 15 June 2002 as a pullus. It had also been seen at Marton Mere on 29 May.

#### **Germany**

Yellow Darvic ringed AAJ1 was seen at Skippool on 20 June, 7 July, 21 July and 25 September 2002. A first summer bird, it had been ringed as a pullus at Kreis Nienburg 818km away on 14 June 2001.

#### **Finland**

White Darvic C798 was at Skippool on 28 December 2002. It had been ringed five years previously on the Finnish nesting grounds, and other than several sightings at the nesting area in summer had not been recorded anywhere else in that period.

#### **Stanley Park**

The latest of a number of recoveries from the site Darvic ringed HLP was on Stanley Park in February 2003. It had been ringed in 2001 in Denmark, and seen there in October of that year before spending December 2001 and January 2002 at the park. In March 2002 it was again seen at the Danish breeding grounds before returning to the park to winter again.

At least three other Scandinavian metal ringed birds were present on site but could not be read in full.

**(Marton Mere - see Skippool above)**

30th. The only **Bewick's Swans** reported in the period were four at Warton Bank on 1st March. The only significant **Mute Swan** gathering was 80 feeding in fields at Cokcersands on 12th April.

Goose highlights were largely leftovers from February. Up to 900 **Pinkfeet** were still at Pilling Lane Ends in early May. Previously when the Pinkfoot numbers were higher birds among them included up to 12 **European White-fronted Geese** at Mythop in March; an adult **Pale-bellied Brent Goose** and a first winter **Dark-bellied Brent Goose** over Wyre to early April and early March respectively; and up to two Barnacles Over Wyre and one at Mythop. At least one **Greylag** of potentially wild origin was with the Pinkfeet at Eagland Hill in early March.

### Ducks

An extraordinary early arrival of **Garganey** brought no fewer than six to Fleetwood Tip lagoon on 15 March, dropping to four the next day with two lingering until 1st April. This would have been a good spring in itself, but was followed in April by pairs at Carleton 8th-13th and Marton Mere 18th-27th, with a drake on the Ribble estuary on 17th. **Wigeon** counts included an excellent inland total of 267 at Myerscough Quarry on 1st March, late birds included seven south at Starr Gate on 10th May and one on Newton Marsh on 15th. A late drake **Pintail** was at Cockersands on 4th May.

**Shoveler** counts included up to 61 at Marton Mere and 29 on Fleetwood Tip or the neighbouring Wyre estuary. During the period **Gadwall** were resident at Warton Bank, with four still present in late May, and there were up to four at Fleetwood Tip; a female north past Starr Gate on 24th April and a pair on Stanley Park in the middle of that month were more unusual. On the diving duck front **Scaup** reports consisted of a female on Glasson basin on 3rd March, the long staying female on Stanah ICI reservoir to 11th April and a drake off Crook Farm, Cockersands on 4th May which was a bonus for the bird race team which stumbled on it.

**Goosander** were generally rather scarce away from Myerscough area, where there was a peak of seven birds. There were widespread reports of **Red-breasted Merganser** on the coast, with a peak of 17 at Pilling Marsh on 3rd April. Typically **Goldeneye** lingered at Marton Mere until late April, but the peak count in the period was 35 on the Lune estuary on 2nd March.

Turning to sea duck a very good winter for **Long-tailed Duck** given numbers elsewhere wrapped up with females off Starr Gate on 25th March and 10th April. Perhaps more sought after given their infrequent freshwater occurrences, female **Velvet Scoters** were seen off Starr Gate on 2nd and 17th April with two birds on the latter date. **Common Scoter** counts during the period included 2800 off Starr Gate in April, on the 4th of that month two were seen at Marton Mere. **Eider** flocks included up to 41 at Rossall, and 39 presumed breeding birds on the Ribble estuary off Lytham-Fairhaven.

### Raptors

A **Black Kite** briefly over Little Singleton on 15th April is the first Fylde record, subject to BBRC ratification. **Ospreys** are becoming increasingly regular at they

normally coastal waders included up to five **Dunlin** and a single **Turnstone** at Myerscough Quarry.

There were 364 **Whimbrel** in the Longton March roost as viewed from Clifton Marsh on 30th April, double figure counts were made on the Over Wyre mosses and on the coast. **Knot** gatherings included 10000 at Cleveleys and 5000 at Starr Gate. Away from the nest site **Black-tailed Godwit** records included up to 450 at Fairhaven in March and 18 inland at Barlte pools in April. There were 370 **Bar-tailed Godwits** on Glasson Marsh on 30th March.

### Skuas

There was a very respectable showing of **Arctic Skuas**, with 20 reported between 1st April and 23rd May from the usual sites including peaks of four on 19th April and three on 20th April at Rossall Point. Otherwise it was rather heavy going in apparently very good conditions, with a single **great Skua** off Rossall on 26th April and a single **Pomarine Skua** off Bispham the next day.

### Gulls

An adult **Ring-billed Gull** was a very good find in fields at Myerscough from 27th to 29th April, though it was rather mobile and difficult to catch up with. Other rarer gulls in the period included a first summer **Iceland Gull** at Fairhaven briefly on 5th April and adult **Yellow-legged Gulls** at Fleetwood Tup on 28th March and 12th April and Marton Mere on 6th April.

The increase in **Mediterranean Gull** reports continued, with absolute minima of three adult, two second summers and three first summers and reports coming from Bradshaw Lane, Fairhaven Lake, Fleetwood Tip, Glasson, Myerscough area, Mythop, Out Rawcliffe and Warton Bank. Records included an adult displaying to Black-headed Gulls and an adult and second summer pair on the Ribble.

**Little Gull** passage during April included up to 70 at Rossall, which always does well for this species, and 28 at Starr Gate; there were very few inland reports. **Kittiwakes** were rather thin on the ground, 58 at Starr Gate on 29 April was easily the highest count despite three figure totals regularly in Morecambe Bay during the period.

### Terns

The first **Sandwich Terns** were not recorded until 25th March, but there were then some very respectable counts including 270 at Starr Gate on 29th April and 250 at Rossall on 18th; three east at Freckleton may have been heading inland. **Common Terns** included up to three at Myerscough Quarry and two at Stanley Park, with up to 13 at Rossall. A pronounced **Arctic Tern** passage included 434 past Starr Gate on 17th April, 108 east up the Ribble estuary on 16th was also notable.

**Little Terns** put up a good showing by recent standards, with no fewer than nine birds off Starr Gate and two off Rossall, the peak count being three at Starr Gate on May 9th. Two large **Black Tern** groups were seen among other records of



### Thrushes, chats

A **Black Redstart** was a great bonus for Water Pipit watchers at Warton Bank on 19th March, one had been reported in the Preston area within the recording area at Plungington earlier in the month. **Stonechats** continued to move through until 25th March, including site maxima of three at Fluke Hall, three at the Mere and two at LSANR, with others at Blackpool Airport, Cockersands, Fleetwood Jameson Road, Myerscough Quarry and St Annes Moss.

Not all the **Redstart** reports received came complete with dates, what can be said is that there were at least two through Stanley Park, one at Marton Mere and one at Rossall School in April. There were ten **Whinchats** in the period from 16th April to 10th May at sites including Marton Mere, Myerscough Quarry, Singleton and Warton Bank then a late bird at Marton Mere on 29th May.

The first **Wheatear** was reported in February, the next was at Rossall on 7th March. The peak count was 25 in the Rossall area on 4th May, a number of Greenland race birds were seen in late May. There were a couple of **Ring Ousels** seen, at Marton Mere on 31st March and Rossall on 12th April. A large gathering of 390 **Fieldfare** was seen at Eagland Hill on 4th March.

### Warblers

Pride of place went to the singing male **Great Reed Warbler** at Marton Mere from 21st to 29th May, the first for the Fylde and the third for Lancashire following two at Leighton Moss. The bird generally showed well to all comers during its extended stay.

There was at least one **Grasshopper Warbler** in the Staining Nook / Marton Mere area, probably more, but otherwise the only report was on at Pilling Lane Ends on 26th April. Three **Wood Warblers** were reported in Stanley Park between 22nd April and 7th May. There were up to five male **Lesser Whitethroats** at Marton Mere and Staining Nook, but otherwise they were rather thin on the ground with reports of two at Warton Bank and Naze Point but otherwise just singles at Bartle, Carr House Green Common, Catforth, Newton Marsh and Wrea Green.

The only **Garden Warblers** seen in the period were singing males at Thurnham and Carr House Green Common, with two birds at each site. The peak **Chiff Chaff** count was seven males at Marton Mere, **Blackcaps** were widespread from late March. Away from breeding sites in the east and Woodland Gardens there were small numbers of **Goldcrests** seen passing through a number of sites. **Blackcaps** widespread from late March

### Flycatchers, Nuthatch

Following regular reports of up to two **Spotted Flycatchers** at Stanley Park during May there were several late in the month, including two at Fleetwood Crematorium, one at Marton Mere and one at Lytham St Annes NR. Up to three **Nuthatches** were at Stanley Park March, birds were also widespread in the east' including up to four at Ellel Grange.